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SUPPORT

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
AT ITS PREVIOUS SESSIONS

Refugees and displaced persons - present and future role of
the United Nations Development Programme in the field of
refugee aid and development

Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in connection with General Assembly resolution 89/65 of 30 June 1989 and with reference to further discussion on the subject at the special session of the Council in February 1990. The report reviews the impact of the growing numbers of refugees and displaced persons on temporary and permanent host environments, creating an impediment to development, diverting scarce resources and engendering hostile reactions as their presence creates economic hardships. The report refers to the current and future role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in helping to bridge the gap between relief assistance and development. Among future strategies recommended are inclusion of the problem of displacement as a new criterion for calculating indicative planning figure (IPF) levels; co-ordination of overall United Nations assistance in the field; continued collaboration between UNDP and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in formulating programmes and mobilizing resources; establishment of a trust fund; promotion of the fullest participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in refugee-related rehabilitation; integration of women into mainstream activities relating to refugees and development efforts; and the establishment of a focal point for United Nations policy on this matter.

INTRODUCTION

1. During earlier sessions of the Governing Council, the Administrator has provided information on the involvement of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in programmes to address the effects of massive population displacement, resulting from both natural and political causes. Events in Afghanistan, the Sudan and southern Africa have been brought to the attention of the Council on different occasions. At its thirty-sixth session, the Council, in its decision 89/64 of 30 June 1989, endorsed the results of the Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America (PEC), 1/ which sought to galvanize the resources and commitments of the international community to tackle the problem of displacement.

2. The present report on refugees and displaced persons has been prepared in connection with Governing Council decision 89/65 of 30 June 1989 and with reference to further discussion on the subject at the special session of the Council in February 1990, prompted by the growing significance of this category of human beings, both in numbers and in world-wide impact. It is the first written report on the subject to be placed before the Council by the Administrator.

I. IMPACT OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

3. The world-wide impact of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, competing for scarce resources otherwise prescribed for development, demands the attention of the international community. In sheer numbers, the situation is worsening; according to most recent estimates, there are 15 million officially recognized refugees, 14 million displaced persons and 277,930 returnees. 2/

4. The phenomenon of displacement reflected in the number of refugees, returnees and displaced persons is captured in various resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. It is evident from these resolutions, that the international community treats the three categories of uprootedness as part of the same problem, although the causes may differ. The effects of refugees, returnees and displaced persons on the temporary or permanent host environment are destructive in that they create an impediment to development, cause the diversion of scarce human and financial resources, bring severe pressure upon already weak national and local administrative structures and oftentimes provide a fertile breeding ground for hostility between different communities. Refugees and displaced persons also contribute to environmental degradation through overcrowding and increased pressures on available land, forestry, grazing and water resources.

5. In general, the proportion of women and their dependent children among the various categories of displaced people is estimated at 70 per cent. Programmes aimed at improving the conditions of refugees can only be effectively developed through an adequate understanding of the needs of women refugees. Women's participation in both planning and implementing technical assistance activities is essential, since it is through women that the majority of communities can be mobilized. It is of special importance to ensure equitable access to resettlement efforts, including help in such critical areas as shelter, health and education which are essential to growth and development.

A. Effects on development

6. Approximately 33 countries (16 in Africa, 7 in Asia and 10 in Latin America) are affected by disruptive and persistent forms of uprootedness. In most cases, large numbers of people are unable to be economically productive and must rely on the host Government and the international community for support. In many rural communities, refugees add to the already high population density. The resulting stress on the local economy puts at risk the fragile economic environment.

7. In many affected communities formerly able to support themselves through their own efforts at virtually no cost to their Government and to produce marketable surpluses for the benefit of the national economy, the result of displacement has invariably damaged the economic infrastructure and destroyed the productive base, thereby creating a new dependency. In such instances, the capacity to produce and distribute food collapses, placing large segments of the population at risk of starvation. In southern Africa, it is estimated that the cost of humanitarian assistance needed to support an uprooted population of around 1 million families ranges from \$750 million to \$1 billion a year.

8. Hostilities in southern Africa have closed down critical transport routes and cut the lifelines of the international import/export trade, setting in motion a chain of negative economic results: (a) freight rate increases have made exports less competitive and imports more costly; (b) the volume and terms of trade have become unfavourable; and (c) the balance of trade, balance of payments and foreign exchange situation have worsened. Roads, vehicles, warehouses and other essential facilities, barely adequate for the local population, have become stretched to the limits of capacity in order to serve an incremental population.

9. Invariably, the already inadequate supply of potable water in areas hosting refugees becomes severely over-used with attendant health problems. Health staff and facilities are strained to meet the demand and prevent epidemics. Already weakened educational facilities creak under the weight of unplanned student intake.

B. Reactions within host communities

10. With increased economic hardships caused by the mushrooming of transient populations, hostilities become more evident. Tribal and other ethnic rivalries surface. Matters worsen where the newcomers benefit from public assistance, channelled through governmental organs, regardless of the source of such help. In most cases, emergency relief focuses on the refugees and displaced people, overlooking the needs of the host community which kept the refugees/displaced persons alive before the advent of international assistance. Furthermore, host government personnel sacrifice much valuable time dealing with the emergency, that could otherwise be directed towards sustainable development. Health services, food distribution, water supply and other emergency services are staffed by host government nationals who often neglect their regular jobs. The constant flow of international personnel attracted by the emergency increases their burden, without benefits to the total community.

11. Assistance to refugees introduces economic goods without any system of value exchange. Instead it creates conflict between market-driven, incentive-motivated production and humanitarian aid delivered "free" for those in need. In southern Africa and Central America, however, these conflicts are being resolved by making resources available in such a way as to eliminate shortages and constraints to rehabilitation, and are supportive of production incentives.

C. General Assembly resolutions

12. Successive reports of the Secretary-General on refugees, returnees and displaced persons, culminating with his report to the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly 3/ have enunciated the magnitude and urgency of the problem. In this connection, the General Assembly in its resolution 44/136 of 15 December 1989, endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation, aimed at attributing to the United Nations resident co-ordinators, the function of co-ordinating assistance for internally displaced persons, in close co-operation with Governments, local representatives of donor countries and United Nations agencies in the field. Furthermore, in its resolution 42/107 of 7 December 1987, the Assembly requested UNDP "to increase its efforts to mobilize additional resources for refugee-related development projects and, in general, to promote and co-ordinate with the host countries and the donor community the integration of refugee-related activities into national development planning". In addition, the General Assembly, in various other resolutions adopted at the same session, 4/ requested UNHCR, UNDP and other members of the United Nations system to play a major role in helping to solve these problems in several host countries throughout Africa, Asia and Central America. The recurrent theme throughout the various General Assembly resolutions emphasizes the need to bridge the gap between relief assistance for refugees, returnees and displaced persons and development aid to host countries. Similarly, the report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the work of its fortieth session, 5/ points to the continuing crisis world wide. In its resolution 44/137 of 15 December 1989, the General Assembly approved the decision of the UNHCR Executive Committee entitled "Sharing of responsibilities for operational activities relating to refugees". 6/

II. INVOLVEMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

13. Uprootedness, which results in massive population movements seeking refuge across national borders, is normally the responsibility of UNHCR. On the basis of its statute, that organization has the mandate to assure protection and assistance to refugees while searching for durable solutions.

14. Population displacement within national borders remains the responsibility of the sovereign Government but there are many instances where the Government is unwilling or unable to exercise its mandate, owing to lack of resources or other constraints. On those occasions, the international community is invited to provide support.

15. The UNDP becomes involved because displacement of any significance poses serious threats to development. A search for durable solutions for refugees, the

reintegration of returnees or the resettlement of internally displaced persons, all constitute a developmental challenge to Governments. Although different approaches are pursued, determined by the requirements and circumstances of each situation, it is clear that all categories of displacement, regardless of cause, need to be integrated in the socio-economic environment through carefully designed plans and programmes. Accordingly, prime collaboration between UNHCR and UNDP, and the appropriate involvement of the United Nations development system, arises from recognition that rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development are essential ingredients for permanent solutions to uprootedness. This recognition was evident in a joint communiqué issued by the Administrator and the High Commissioner in 1987. Similarly, several agreements have been reached in Africa 7/ and Central America 8/ which concretize the collaboration. Both UNHCR and UNDP participate in the inter-agency African Emergency Task Force, under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, which seeks to co-ordinate the response of the United Nations system to emergencies, including that of unplanned displacement.

16. The Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II), 7/ led to an understanding of the necessity to link refugee aid and development for which UNDP has been entrusted in the implementation and follow-up of development assistance related to refugees and returnees. The UNDP provides support to Governments to strengthen their capacity and cope with the burden of hosting large numbers of uprooted persons through the formulation of programmes and projects and the mobilization of resources. As recommended by the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action, 7/ UNDP resident representatives serve as focal points within the United Nations system in the identification, formulation and implementation of rehabilitation, recovery and development programmes in southern Africa. In all its activities, UNDP collaborates with UNHCR in joint exploratory missions to formulate programmes and projects and to mobilize resources.

17. In its resolution 42/231 of 12 May 1988, the General Assembly approved the Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America (PEC) 1/ as one of the support instruments for the Peace Plan 9/ agreed upon by the Presidents of the region. Assistance to refugees, displaced populations and repatriates is the immediate emergency priority within the Special Plan as agreed upon by the six Central American Governments and the Government of Mexico in their regional strategy on the subject. The various agreements adopted by the recipient countries led to the convening of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) 8/ in May 1989, aided by PEC and the work of UNHCR. The International Conference, attended by 58 countries, approved a plan of action 8/ for three years which sets the basis on which to manage solutions to the problems of the 2.2 million refugees and displaced persons involved. Projects formulated by Governments with the co-operation of UNHCR and UNDP within the plan of action form part of the country development plans aimed at the economic and social integration of the uprooted populations. The countries that approved the plan of action have established national and international mechanisms under CIREFCA, with the participation of recipient countries, donors, the representative of the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, UNDP, UNHCR, the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. These

mechanisms have made possible important changes in the mobilization of resources and have secured financing for a significant percentage of projects. The center-piece of this initiative is the Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Repatriated Persons (PRODERE), a major integrated project, the objective of which is the social and economic integration of displaced persons. This project was approved in 1989 by the recipient countries (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua), as well as the components of the United Nations system and a first donor (Italy). The aim of PRODERE is to improve living conditions and promote self-sustaining development in Central America. PRODERE is being implemented by UNDP with the co-operation of UNHCR, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in conjunction with the Pan American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO). Beneficiaries, including host communities, are expected to number 445,000. A task force composed of the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General and the representatives of UNHCR and UNDP was established in July 1989, and meets regularly to co-ordinate and provide optimal support for the requirements of the Governments of the countries of Central America and Mexico.

18. In Afghanistan, the UNDP, under the overall umbrella of its reconstruction and rehabilitation programme, is funding and executing several projects costing about \$14 million. More than 50 low-cost sub-projects are being implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) under sub-contractual arrangements with UNDP. The sub-projects cover a wide range of rehabilitation and reconstruction activities which include emergency supplies of seeds and fertilizers; rehabilitation of roads and irrigation canals; training in agriculture, veterinary sciences and office management; and control of drug abuse.

19. The Resident Representative of UNDP at Bangkok has been the Director of the United Nations Border Relief Operations (UNBRO) since 1982. UNBRO is supervised by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Humanitarian Assistance to Cambodia and provides humanitarian relief assistance to about 290,000 displaced Cambodians living along the border of Thailand as well as in Thai villages. Since January 1988, administrative and supervisory arrangements have been taken over by UNDP under a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and UNDP.

20. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) have traditionally been closely involved in humanitarian endeavours, tackling the problems of uprooted population by being impartial intermediaries between communities torn by strife and dislocation. United Nations volunteer specialists in Africa, Asia, Central America and the Arab States play an important role by participating in programmes aimed at sensitizing world opinion to the plight of uprooted people; ensuring food aid, shelter, medical care and other immediate relief; planning and implementing reconstruction and sanitation activities; providing counselling services and vocational training; and promoting income-generating activities.

21. Resident representatives in their capacity as United Nations resident co-ordinators, have a distinct role to perform in co-ordinating policies and programmes governing external flows, including those to tackle emergencies. Their ongoing dialogue with Governments and with the donor community, as well as with UNHCR and the pertinent agencies in the United Nations system, enables them to identify and promote solutions within the development framework of the host country.

22. In 1988, the Administrator established an inter-bureau task force, charged with the responsibility for examining the issues of displacement by drawing on the experience of Africa, Asia, Central America and the Middle East, with a view to proposing a UNDP corporate policy relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The Administrator appointed a senior consultant who, through extensive field study and the support of the various bureaux, demonstrated the necessity for UNDP to establish a focal point for its policy on this issue. The work of the task force is the basis for the present report to the Governing Council.

III. FUTURE STRATEGIES

23. Displacement or uprootedness is now correctly viewed as being a constraint to development, regardless of its origin. For UNDP, however, it gives an added dimension to its Programme. Although the provision of resources and support to Governments is clearly within the mandate of the Programme, the attendant conditions normally spawned by emergencies, are beyond the capacity of UNDP. When these emergencies arise from natural disasters, the resident representative has recourse to seeking headquarters approval of limited, project-related funds from Special Programme Resources (SPR). When the disaster is from man-made causes, no such recourse is currently available.

24. The developmental mandate of UNDP, translated into medium-term to long-term projects and programmes, with resources provided through the framework of national and inter-country indicative planning figures does not lend itself to the speedy or flexible response required to meet emergencies caused by displacement. In a few instances, Governments have drawn on IPF for modest injections of resources linked to displacement, but this procedure is not the norm.

25. The problem becomes more acute when the resident representative in his/her capacity of resident co-ordinator (or Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Emergency Operations) is unable to allocate resources to underpin the co-ordination functions needed in such operations. The practice which grew out of the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa (OEOA), where various organs and agencies of the seconded United Nations staff work directly under the resident co-ordinator, should be institutionalized whenever an emergency of any significance arises. Similarly, inter-agency task forces at United Nations headquarters must be sustained to ensure overall institutional co-ordination. Equally, the country level United Nations disaster management groups, under the chairmanship of the resident co-ordinator, and comprised of representatives of appropriate United Nations agencies and programmes, is well suited to co-ordinate the response of the United Nations system in the affected country.

26. Scarcity of resources remains a major problem in the face of emergencies, more so when they arise from political circumstances. On an operational level, the resident representative (in his/her capacity as resident co-ordinator) needs to be able to obtain access to resources speedily, including cash contributions from the donor community, to put together a special set of emergency, although recognizably

temporary, measures. For example, the resident representative should be able to travel, approve immediate disbursements and engage specialized nationals for short periods, in order to provide prompt, on-the-spot assessment. Although, at present, SPR cannot be obtained for the financing of relief requirements caused by man-made disasters, the Governing Council should consider SPR as a source of temporary operational emergency funds to enable the resident co-ordinator to undertake assessments of emergencies relating to refugees and displaced persons.

27. The collaboration of UNHCR and UNDP at major conferences on the issue of uprootedness, e.g., Oslo (1988) 7/ and CIREFCA (1989) 8/ has in the past reflected parallel approaches. Emphasis for the future will be on joint approaches in the formulation of projects and programmes, the mobilization of resources and the co-ordination of aid. The strategy is to recognize that relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development are part of the same continuum and, therefore, to integrate investment with humanitarian assistance. One means of establishing this approach is to ensure that Governments create within their planning organs the necessary capacity to respond as a matter of priority when upheavals occur. Assessment of development assistance requirements when uprootedness becomes long term must be included whenever a national needs assessment is conducted, as in the National Technical Co-operation Assessments and Programme (NaTCAP). At the same time, Governments must be prepared to bring the problem to the attention of the international community, including the placing of the subject on the agenda of round table and consultative group meetings.

28. The Council's attention is also drawn to the discussion on SPR in the Administrator's note on resources for the fifth cycle (DP/1990/8). This includes an outline of the measures being undertaken for the training of UNDP staff to upgrade their skills in disaster management in the context of longer-term development. The measures foreseen provide a framework to offer training to UNDP field office staff in the areas of refugees and displaced persons, at least for the initial emergency phase.

29. Furthermore, a better understanding of the important contributions made by NGOs in the provision of emergency humanitarian aid and/or long-term development assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and their potential for possible future assistance in countries like Cambodia and Namibia must be recognized. The UNDP should build on its experiences to date to further operational co-operation with NGOs in ongoing and new situations.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

30. The Administrator proposes the following recommendations:

(a) The Governing Council should consider the possible inclusion of the problem of displacement as a new criterion for calculating IPF levels;

(b) The UNDP should allocate sufficient financial resources to ensure that Resident Representatives in their capacity as resident co-ordinators are able to co-ordinate United Nations assistance in the field, by providing:

- (i) Access to SPR resources for prompt, on-the-spot assessment of emergencies relating to refugees and displaced persons, subject to a prescribed limit applicable in all cases;
- (ii) Resources for rehabilitation and longer-term development assistance needs of refugees, returnees and displaced persons;
- (iii) Training of UNDP field office staff in disaster management within the context of development, including matters related to the handling of refugees and displaced persons to enable the field office staff to co-ordinate United Nations assistance at the country level;

(c) In situations where the Secretary-General appoints an overall co-ordinator for the United Nations system and for external donor emergency, rehabilitation and longer-term development assistance, UNHCR and UNDP should provide, as appropriate, a co-ordinating emergency unit for the planning of the response on the basis of respective responsibilities for refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

(d) Recognizing the mandate of UNHCR with regard to the protection of and assistance to refugees, and the search for durable solutions, increasingly closer co-operation between UNHCR and UNDP is recommended both at United Nations Headquarters and in the field, to ensure that their complementary mandates and capacities are fully exploited in formulating programmes and mobilizing resources. In connection with the latter, joint UNHCR/UNDP missions should be sent to specific donor countries;

(e) The UNDP should establish specific trust funds as a means of attracting resources for displaced persons, possibly including funding from private sources;

(f) Given the role that NGOs and UNVs have played in refugee assistance programmes and their access to sources of funding other than those readily open to governmental organizations, UNDP should also promote maximum participation of NGOs and UNVs in rehabilitation and development efforts for refugees and displaced persons. This could include involving NGOs in the discussions of regional and national strategies, improved communications with NGOs at the field level so that governmental and non-governmental activities will complement and reinforce each other and supporting NGO activities that bring a degree of outreach or acceptability not otherwise attainable;

(g) Recognizing that women and their dependants make up the majority of the refugee and displaced populations, programmes should recognize women's roles as decision-makers and as an economic resource. Assessment missions should address the needs of women and their dependants to ensure that they are integrated into mainstream activities aimed at improving the conditions of refugees and displaced populations;

(h) The UNDP should establish a focal point at its headquarters to ensure inter-bureau co-ordination and to provide staff support with respect to refugees, returnees and displaced persons.

Notes

1/ A/42/949, annex.

2/ World Refugee Survey. 1988 in Review (Washington, D.C., U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1989).

3/ A/44/520.

4/ See, for example, General Assembly resolutions 44/137, 44/139, 44/151 and 44/154 of 15 December 1989.

5/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 12 A (A/44/12/Add.1).

6/ Ibid., para. 33.

7/ Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II) held at Geneva from 9 to 11 July 1984. Declaration and Programme of Action (A/39/402, annex). See also General Assembly resolution 39/139 of 14 December 1984; International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa, held at Oslo from 22 to 24 August 1988; Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa (A/43/717 and Corr.1, annex). See also Assembly resolution 43/116 of 8 December 1988.

8/ International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA), held at Guatemala City from 29 to 31 May 1989. Declaration and Concerted Plan of Action in favour of Central American Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons (A/44/523, annex). See also General Assembly resolution 44/139 of 15 December 1989.

9/ Esquipulas II summit meeting. See Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-second Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1987, document S/19085, annex.
