

UNHCR Guide on Selected Good Practices in Reintegration

The UNHCR Guide on Selected Good Practices in Reintegration is born from the need expressed by field offices, to provide additional guidance to UNHCR staff in the planning and implementation of reintegration programmes. Although UNHCR has been involved in reintegration operations worldwide for the past 20 years, among the many publications, manuals and handbooks, a ‘good practices’-type guide, which would group and describe implemented reintegration-related activities, is missing. This Guide offers a compiled overview of selected reintegration activities, which have been undertaken in the framework of UNHCR’s programmes, accentuating those aspects that have made specific practices worth of future replication.

The Guide is a practical tool, produced with inputs from colleagues involved in several operations, which will help future managers in assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating reintegration programmes. In addition, the Guide’s flexibility will allow all users interested to contribute to its development by incorporating new experiences (i.e. good practices) worth sharing with others. The Guide is, in a way, an eternal *work in progress*.

The notion of good practice can be freely modelled to fit the context of a specific situation. In order to avoid any misconceptions of meaning, this Guide will refer to the following elements as characteristic of a good practice:

- The planned activity/exercise achieves its stated objectives in a cost-effective manner;
- A contribution to anchoring persons to their area of origin/choice is made;
- There is a measurable direct impact on any of the aspects of life (e.g. social, economic, political, cultural);
- Principles such as community participation and gender equality are respected;
- The practice introduces a creative/innovative element moving the reintegration programme beyond traditional response approaches;
- Local realities are taken into consideration and projects are designed accordingly;
- A good practice links actors and stakeholders;
- A contribution to the process of sustainable development is made.

Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean that all factors listed above must be present in every activity herein described. On the contrary, these are merely some among many other aspects which may be found in a good practice. The definition given in this introduction should only be considered as a general guideline to give some terms of reference, without however becoming too restrictive and confining the concept into a ‘box’.

Adding to the potential value of this Guide is the diversity not only in types of practices analysed, but also in selecting activities from reintegration programmes in a range of different geographical areas. Countries examined include Eritrea, Liberia, Angola, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Afghanistan, and Guatemala¹. Each office has handled its reintegration programme differently and examining in detail some of these activities will most likely emphasize that cookie cutter solutions will not suffice. This Guide provides examples of how the multifaceted nature of refugee reintegration can be dealt with in ways that are alternative and blow away the staleness of tradition.

The aspiration in producing this Guide is that it may help UNHCR staff, as well as government counterparts, implementing partners and donors in designing reintegration programmes where the potential of the activities envisaged is maximised. We hope this review of tested practices may influence future operations by stressing the importance of certain common traits, which if replicated appropriately could yield positive and satisfying results.

¹ Separate country studies are available with detailed information about selected operations.

I. Planning: Strategic Development

Afghanistan: National Strategy for Return, Displacement and Reintegration for the Year 1382/2003 (the “Reintegration Strategy”)

The Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, aware of its responsibilities to promote the safe and sustainable return of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons to their areas of origin, has prepared the National Strategy for Return, Displacement and Reintegration for the Year 1382/2003. This Reintegration Strategy was the principal planning document of the Afghan Interim Administration (AIA), signed by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) with the support of UNHCR. As an initial document in the planning phase of reintegration, this co-ordination represented a unique effort to develop a policy document through inter-ministerial cooperation to mainstream reintegration.

The two specific objectives of the Reintegration Strategy were to:

1. **Mainstream returnee and IDP reintegration** concerns into major development policies and programmes;
2. **Strengthen the capacity** of the Government to deal with reintegration issues at both central and provincial levels.

The Strategy stressed that assistance must be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned in order to provide for sustainable development. The Afghan Interim Administration (AIA) insisted on national ownership of the reconstruction and development process. Following this Government request, the UN’s support to Afghanistan centred on working with Ministries and national institutions to enhance and strengthen national capacity, to enable Afghans themselves to lead the transition and recovery towards development. UNHCR thus promoted capacity building within the Afghan Government, as well as co-operation with development actors in line with the 4Rs Strategy.

The Strategy covers the return process, the contents of assistance provided and the role of key actors throughout the process of return and reintegration. It also contains a description of UNHCR’s initial reintegration and proposes concrete mechanisms to ensure that larger strategic and development plans incorporate aspects related to social and economic reintegration of displaced populations.

The **4Rs Strategy** approach promotes linkages to find lasting solutions for returnees by ensuring poverty reduction and good governance. In 2003, there was a shift in the way UNHCR and other organisations worked following the initial emergency phase, and emphasis was placed on building government capacity and linking up with other organisations.

Mozambique: The Reintegration Strategy and the Reintegration Task Force

The Reintegration Strategy was produced and coordinated by a Reintegration Task Force established by UNHCR. It outlined an area and community-based approach for 34 priority districts where the percentage of returned population was higher than 30%. It also provided a clear indication of UNHCR's timetable and guidance on how to achieve UNHCR's contribution to reintegration, including the development of benchmarks to measure outcomes. The Strategy streamlined UNHCR's program to allow staff to focus on priorities, despite the endless needs of the returned population and of Mozambique as a whole.

The Reintegration Task Force combined a team of field professional staff supported by headquarters, to jointly produce the Reintegration Strategy. The Strategy, in turn, stressed the need for a community-based approach towards the provision of assistance, targeting both refugees and the local population rather than focusing on returning refugees exclusively. The area-focused approach also meant that UNHCR would target particular areas or geographical communities, as opposed to specific segments of the population. Moreover, the Strategy articulated the need to link with development agencies to ensure a smooth transition between the emergency and development phases of the post-conflict situation.

The Reintegration Strategy was drafted with cross-sectional staff representation, which led to a general staff acceptance as well as providing an operational basis for international and local staff without prior UNHCR experience. A main feature of the strategy was to focus on supporting the re-establishment of social services. It also outlined conditions and minimum requirements to engage UNHCR in supporting infrastructure projects. These conditions included: approval from line ministries at national and provincial level; commitment by the community to support infrastructures; ensured that operational costs were included in provincial and national budgets; ensure benefit to communities as a whole; and promote absorption of returnee qualified staff in social sectors. The Strategy was also prepared in consultation with potential implementing partners, which helped facilitate the transition from planning to implementation.

The Strategy enhanced communication in three ways:

- It facilitated dialogue between development actors and the government: A series of workshops were conducted by Sub-offices and Field Offices to introduce the strategy to all relevant stakeholders;
- It provided a common forum for dialogue between UNHCR and donors: It served to ensure understanding by donors of UNHCR's contribution to reintegration.

It assisted with communication within UNHCR at several levels: between headquarters and the field, between field offices, and between experienced and inexperienced staff members.

II. Implementation: Sector Priorities and Methodology

Afghanistan: Focused sectoral-based intervention

UNHCR initially envisioned that its implementation strategy would play a supporting role with other organizations in several sectors, such as health, education, agriculture and employment. However, this plan was revised given the significant challenges faced in implementing projects with the greater than expected number of returnees and the level of investment required in the social sectors.

UNHCR's reintegration interventions were concentrated in four key sectors (shelter, water, income generation and legal assistance) as a result of a Government strategy and directive for agencies to only intervene in certain sectors. This enabled UNHCR to concentrate effectively on key sectors, ensure a clear contribution to reintegration and develop a greater impact on family and individual livelihoods.

The Reintegration Strategy highlighted five sectors of intervention (shelter, water, employment creation and income generation, food security and social security), and directed UNHCR to intervene only in specific geographic areas. This focalisation assisted in securing donor support, who may have been reluctant to fund projects spread across many sectors and geographic areas. UNHCR shared its strategy with the government and the donor community and sought support from specialised agencies to ensure assistance to social sectors. A series of MOUs were signed with key specialised agencies such as UNICEF and UNDP.

In addition, targeting provinces of high or potential return meant that projects in all sectors benefited both returnees and receiving communities. Identified needs were not exclusively of returnees, but also involved the entire community.

Shelter: It is estimated that more than 500,000 homes were destroyed during 25 years of violence. UNHCR's shelter project has been one of the most visible aspects of the initial reintegration programme and was often reported as most appreciated by returnees. Shelter remained central to sectoral interventions as a result of returnee monitoring indicating it was returnee's single most important need.

As stated in the Reintegration Strategy for Afghanistan, initial reintegration assistance in the sector of shelter consisted of, above all, self-construction and repair of houses by returnees and IDPs. Under the Urban Reconstruction Plan it was envisaged to build houses in 6 main cities, as well as an estimated 100,000 in rural areas. The MoRR was assigned to carry out activities in this sector, with the Municipalities and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MUDH) coordinating.

In addition to the support for the construction of 100,000 rural houses, UNHCR assisted with the development of a National Policy for Rural Housing. The policy borrowed many elements from UNHCR's programme (e.g. model of houses, self-construction modalities, earthquake specifications) and provided guidelines and principles to agencies supporting the shelter and housing sector.

The main feature of UNHCR's shelter programme was its community-based approach. This meant that the community was responsible in identifying eligible families based on agreed

selection criteria. Priority was given to vulnerable returnee families who either possessed land or who were allowed to use land but lacked the necessary financial or material resources to reconstruct their house (families headed by a female, elderly or disabled person, very large families, families with very low income and those who could not build their home alone). The Beneficiary Selection Committees consisted of the village *shura* (the council of the village elders), MoRR representatives, UNHCR and an implementing partner until 2004. Women were involved in the selection and implementation process to the maximum extent possible given the local cultural context, which often helped identify eligible families who may otherwise not be recognised.

The Shelter package was a self-help programme that supported returnees by providing essential construction materials such as tools, roofing beams, doors and windows, as well as a small cash grant of US\$ 50-200. The grant amount depended on the type of shelter and was intended to compensate for reduced wage earning opportunities during the construction period.

OUTPUTS
Number of shelters completed: 39,859 (2002), 51,285 (2003), 26,462 (2004), 117,606 (Total, as of April 2005).
Shelter assistance was provided to more than 117,000 returnee families, mainly in rural areas (2002-2004).
Shelter assistance to returnees accounted for over 45% of the budget (2004).
UNHCR achieved an impressive 99% annual completion rate over 2002-04 and surpassed its annual target by reaching approximately 22 % of vulnerable returnees.

Water: Approximately 14 million out of Afghanistan's rural population of 18 million do not have access to safe drinking water. Water shortages following years of severe drought is compounded by the lack of major water infrastructure for collection and distribution. Protracted conflict, low maintenance capacity and limited availability of spare parts have left many of the wells damaged and unusable.

UNHCR's water activities were community-based and benefited all Afghans, returnees as well as the locals. Complementing Government efforts in the water sector, UNHCR targeted provinces of high or potential return, as well as drought-affected areas. UNHCR used a standard of daily water consumption needs of 20 litres per person, excluding water needs for animals and crops.

Construction of water points was a major priority in direct interventions during 2002-03. UNHCR-sponsored water interventions were carried out in co-operation with UNDP, as well as UNICEF, under the auspices of MRRD and formed joint technical monitoring teams with these partners to monitor implementation. Furthermore, training sessions on operation and maintenance of water points were conducted and Water Committees were established in communities to participate in the construction process, ensure maintenance of the wells and set up a spare part supply system. In addition, basic hygiene education was provided to keep minimum sanitation standards and avoid water-borne diseases. Women were consulted to the extent possible in the selection of sites for wells as they and their children are traditionally the ones who collect water. From 2004, UNHCR implemented half of its programmes through the Water Supply and Sanitation Programme of the MRRD, which supported the building of

Government capacity. In 2005, UNHCR officially passed responsibility for supplying water to returnees to the MRRD, ending its operational involvement in this sector.

OUTPUTS
Number of wells completed (dug and tube wells): 2,699 (2002), 3,465 (2003), 1,955 (2004), 8,199 (Total).

Income Generation/Employment Opportunities: UNHCR maintained a focus on areas with high numbers of returnees, mainly rural areas where job opportunities were scarce. UNHCR followed a community based approach in beneficiary selection and focused on the most vulnerable members of the communities, such as single-headed households, families with handicapped, sick or otherwise disadvantaged members or large families. Projects were also implemented in the IDP settlements in the South to provide short-term income and skill development opportunities.

Cash for work activities aimed at providing a short period of immediate gainful employment and target mainly unskilled labour (60 % of project resources) often in the rehabilitation of minor infrastructure in the community such as secondary roads, bridges, canals or traditional irrigation systems. **Income generating activities** were designed to transfer skills and provide more sustainable opportunities to increase household incomes. **Vocational skills training** was often part of such project to foster self-reliance. However, these projects sometimes suffered from the absence of systematic linkages with the employment sector and to demand for labour.

As a national development program, the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP) was designed to create short term emergency employment opportunities on labour based rural access infrastructure restoration/maintenance projects. Under management by the MRRD, the UNHCR-Sponsored Reintegration Unit actively worked to ensure that programme design and implementation was “returnee sensitive”. For instance, it was insisted that there should be a minimum of five percent returnee beneficiaries for each project.

OUTPUTS
53 Cash for Work projects in 2004.
39 projects for Income Generating Activities (IGA)/ Vocational Skills Training (VT) in 2004
In 2005, interventions consisted of small-scale animal husbandry projects, carpet weaving, craft-making, carpentry and community market-oriented agriculture

Afghanistan: Women at Risk Project and support to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission

In most displacement situations, approximately 50 percent of the people affected are women and girls. Stripped of the protection of their homes, their government and often their family structure, females are often particularly vulnerable. They face the rigours of long journeys into exile, official harassment or indifference and frequent sexual abuse even after reaching an apparent place of safety. Return and the subsequent reintegration into fragile and unstable areas is also full of risks and challenges. Women must cope with these threats while being nurse, teacher, breadwinner and physical protector of their families. In the last few years, UNHCR has developed a series of special programmes to ensure women have equal access to protection, basic goods and services as they attempt to rebuild their lives.

As a result of border monitoring activities taking place in Afghanistan, UNHCR recognised the need to get involved with women-at risk especially in the provision of immediate protection responses for unaccompanied women (often travelling with children) returning to Afghanistan from countries of asylum. Convinced that international efforts could only be sustainable if linked to the services locally available, UNHCR set out to strengthen the response and management capacity of national institutions and of civil society.

Co-ordination on strategies and activities to assist women at risk or survivors of violence was developed with various partners, including Medica Mondiale, Afghan Women NGOs, UN Agencies, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and the Ministry for Women Affairs (MoWA). In addition, a Coordinating Commission was established in Herat and discussions were held on a draft protocol and framework on so-called safe houses.

In 2005, in the framework of this initiative, some 232 women at risk sought refuge and were provided safe accommodation as well as legal, psycho-social and medical assistance. UNHCR supported three national NGO-run safe houses (mainly through funding from ECHO), where women and girls escaping situations of domestic violence or forced marriages were counselled and legally assisted. In addition, UNHCR focused on providing some long term protection through the search for the appropriate durable solution for each individual case. The establishment of safe houses compensated for a lack in operational activities (i.e. protection mechanisms) in an environment dominated by capacity-building and awareness raising approaches.

SAFE HOUSES in 2005	
Kabul	HAWCA: 100 women (12 from 2004, 88 from 2005), 87 cases resolved, 13 women remaining
Kabul	AWSDC: 63 women, 39 cases resolved, 24 remaining
Herat	WASSA/Voice of Women: 69 women (48 forcibly returned from Iran, 13 voluntary returnees, 8 special cases), 60 cases resolved, 9 women remaining

In the same year, UNHCR and Medica Mondiale also organized several regional meetings which enhanced the participation of women from remote areas all over Afghanistan. Issues of violence

were discussed during these gatherings, which were followed by concrete recommendations for the national meeting on ways to address violence against women and to assist and protect victims of violence. The national meeting was held in December 2005 bringing together over 70 women activists as well as representatives of the government.

UNHCR continues to prioritize the mainstreaming of gender into policy making and programming with a focus on returnee women, IDPs and vulnerable cases (deportees, women-at-risk, single-heads of household, and victims of discrimination and gender-based violence). It also continues to implement advisory, capacity building and gender awareness activities for the MoWA and the MoRR, through advocacy, trainings and joint monitoring missions also in partnership with other Afghan women NGOs. These activities are aimed at enhancing the ability of national institutions to address issues of violence, among other, against women.

As a complementary activity, and in order to address the issue of human rights more effectively and to contribute to the strengthening of the national capacity to monitor, document and address abuses, UNHCR started a partnership with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in 2005. The collaboration stemmed from UNHCR's activities in Returnee Monitoring and was an effort to transfer knowledge to local institutions. The Kabul Branch Office entered into a partnership with the AIHRC to coordinate and strengthen human rights monitoring. In turn, this ensured crucial issues of instability were addressed for returnees and the local population at large.

UNHCR's collaboration with AIHRC was remarkable as it represented a partnership with an independent human rights institution and not with an implementing partner. Indeed, UNHCR only assisted AIHRC in delivering an already existing and government-issued mandate.

UNHCR and AIHRC also developed a joint methodology for data gathering and monitoring. In other words, information regarding returnees is collected in a systematic way through standard questionnaires for instance, which means that the resulting data is comparable and quantifiable, regardless of whether it was assembled by staff from UNHCR or AIHRC. In addition, no information gathered is left 'idle'; all monitored cases are discussed and followed up. The resulting information is reflected in joint work plans (i.e. agreed interventions) devised by both organisations.

UNHCR and AIHRC have renewed their partnership in 2006 and are jointly designing a revised human rights field monitoring form based on lessons learned from data analysis, as well as reviewing areas which will need further development (e.g. data entry and export, use of information for linkages with programme and development actors). In this respect, AIHRC has started, with UNHCR's support, to reassess its complaints and case-management procedure in order to strengthen the Monitoring and Investigation Unit and ensure that it can handle a large number of cases simultaneously and efficiently.

Guatemala: Innovative Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

One principle vehicle for the implementation of reintegration activities in Guatemala was a series of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) funded by UNHCR and other agencies and implemented between 1993 and 1999. QIPs were initially developed from the model applied by UNHCR in Nicaragua. They were small UNHCR-financed projects in returnee communities administered by an international NGO, the Centre Canadien d'Étude et de Coopération Internationale (CECI), and implemented by communities, and national NGOs. QIPs were aimed at providing immediate support towards urgent needs identified by communities with large numbers of returning refugees. Reintegration interventions were focused toward supporting livelihood strategies through the improvement of productive assets and social services and implemented as rapid development-based community projects.

UNHCR implemented 364 QIPs benefiting around 286,000 returnees in their immediate socio-economic reintegration. Interventions were made in the following sectors: community services; agriculture (crop production, provision of inputs, livestock); domestic needs/household support; education; food; fisheries and forestry; health/nutrition; income generation (credit schemes); legal assistance; sanitation; shelter/other infrastructure; transport/logistics; and drinking water (including pipe line systems).

This multi-sectoral approach was beyond traditional UNHCR small scale recovery-type intervention on shelter, water and in-kind inputs (i.e. the standard practice in the 1980s) and involved many aspects not seen in other operations. Moreover, it was effective as it responded to realities by working with implementing partners who had expertise that UNHCR did not possess. Planning mechanisms were made flexible to allow for this type of response, a practice which has become a positive lesson to follow.

Other innovative elements worth highlighting are:

- QIPs addressed not only the needs pertaining to social services, but promoted livelihood and productive infrastructure.
- QIPs were effective in bringing new actors (i.e. national NGOs) into isolated and neglected regions (i.e. returnee communities in rural areas).
- QIPs encouraged people to share ideas, skills and resources.
- Priority was given to community organisations (including those run by women) to act as counterparts, resulting in highly positive outcomes. For instance, specific women's projects were stimulated and the rate of success was relatively high. NGOs, on the other hand, acted as technical advisors.

QIPs implemented in Guatemala during UNHCR's reintegration programme are considered a 'good practice' because they focused on complementing community initiatives and supporting creative livelihood initiatives. They built on returnee communities' potential and pay particular attention to building capacities at community level rather than using implementing partners on a purely contractual basis.

Guatemala: Legal reintegration through Personal Documentation

UNHCR's Personal Documentation initiative in Guatemala represented one of the most important aspects of facilitating local reintegration for refugees and IDPs. For returning refugees and uprooted populations living in a country with a strict legal system, the lack of documentation increased vulnerability and limited access to basic services, and to civil, political and socio-economic rights. This deficiency made it impossible to have a legally-recognised name and nationality, to legally marry and register births of children, to vote, to gain access to education, health benefits or credit and to own or inherit land and property. Thereof lack of documentation made the reintegration of refugees and IDPs in Guatemala illusory.

Consequently, UNHCR addressed this lack of documentation as a priority. One of the main components of UNHCR's documentation strategy for 1997 and 1998 was to influence a change in legislation that would result in less cumbersome procedures for birth registration, death certificates and marriages, thus easing requirements for gaining documentation and providing greater access to the registry system. With the support of Guatemalan legal experts, UNHCR was directly involved in drafting more flexible documentation legislation. Indeed, the *Special Temporary Law on Personal Identification* was approved by the government in 1995 and provided special treatment for returnees in registration and documentation processes which reduced bureaucratic procedures and improved access to documentation and the registry system.

UNHCR provided 42,000 persons with documentation, allowing them to realise an array of basic human and civil rights to assist their legal reintegration. Early priority was given to ensuring registration and providing birth certificates and ID cards. Persons benefiting from this initiative were mostly returnees (96 per cent of all Guatemalan returnees), but also 4,000 IDPs, demobilized combatants and others. Returnees were provided with necessary papers for the purchase, transfer and/or basic titling of land.

UNHCR deployed staff to support the municipalities, where birth or baptismal certificates were notarized. By doing this, UNHCR helped to equip the municipalities with knowledge, awareness and infrastructure in order to facilitate new documentation. A total of 70 Civil Registries benefited from legal training seminars and four Civil Registries were computerized, a handbook of regulations governing documentation was published and distributed, mobile registrations were set up.

Public awareness-raising was achieved through a national documentation campaign, while 16 civil registries benefited from institutional strengthening. A national campaign to promote personal documentation was able to heighten awareness among the population at large of the importance of documentation. The campaign aimed to sensitize the entire population of the need to be documented and relevant procedures. Radio messages were used to broadcast in Spanish and six Mayan languages, while basic training of 'documentation promoters' in each sizeable settlement in return areas was provided by a local NGO and UNHCR-employed consultants.

A coalition was formed between 28 actors (UN agencies, donors, local and international NGOs, government), to advocate and promote a national documentation campaign not only for returnees but for isolated rural communities in Guatemala.

Sierra Leone and Liberia: Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs)

In order to adapt to changing reintegration methodologies, to an extension and revision of UNHCR's activities in this sector and to a constantly shifting environment and needs, the original QIPs have undergone a slow process of transformation resulting in what we now call Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs). The CEP is an example of a community-based approach, which attempts to channel assistance directly to communities to increase empowerment, improve responsiveness to citizens' demands and priorities, accelerate service delivery and improve the quality of life.

The CEP concept has the advantage of maximising community involvement in decision making and implementation. Community empowerment projects are built upon the weaknesses of the QIPs (i.e. top-down decision-making and restrained beneficiary participation) in order to devolve centralized management and to empower returnee communities. This allows existing and returning communities to decide on assistance priorities and to participate actively in all stages of project planning, implementation and management.

In Sierra Leone, in the course of 2003-2004, several hundred multi-sectoral CEPs were introduced. Projects were implemented in a range of sectors, including agriculture, health, water, sanitation and community services. As opposed to the first phase of the reintegration programme (2001-2002) whereby activities were prioritised by implementing partners, CEPs gave communities the opportunity to select projects in accordance with their own priorities. In turn they would contribute to their implementation by providing resources such as unskilled labour and local raw materials. This approach proved successful by directly involving the communities in the decision-making process, thus giving them a sense of ownership. This, for instance, helped to undermine the sense of neglect rural communities had previously felt and which had contributed to the outbreak of the conflict. Consequently, community involvement built confidence and fostered social cohesion. UNHCR's implementing partners, on the other hand, were tasked with sensitising and training community members, supervising and monitoring the implementation and providing financial control.

In order to enable local people to run their projects themselves, Project Management Committees (PMCs) were formed, which took part in planning, implementing and evaluating the project and assumed responsibility for drafting project documents, storing materials, keeping records as well as collecting and distributing revenue. They also focused on strengthening the position of all vulnerable groups, especially women.

The CEP concept became one of the guiding principles in the 2004 UN Transitional Appeal for Relief and Recovery where CEP implementation was described as a joint UNHCR-UNDP activity. Furthermore, the CEP approach went hand in hand with the Community-driven Development (CDD) concept which the World Bank produced as part of its longer term development programmes in Sierra Leone.

CEPs represented a learning exercise for both Sierra Leonean local communities, implementing partners and international organisations and thus were implemented differently in the various Districts. The most sophisticated and well documented was perhaps the one found in Kailahun, which included a comprehensive set of procedures, with each stage clearly defined and supplied with reporting forms and procedural guidelines.

In Liberia, Community Empowerment Projects, funded and supported by humanitarian and development actors, were aimed at contributing to the recovery process by laying the foundation for empowering communities to gain control of resources. At the basis of the CEP concept was the idea of establishing transparent, inclusive and participatory procedures in resource management.

During the first phases of the Liberian reintegration programmes CEPs had become effective start up tools at community level. Prioritised were projects in the areas of agriculture, micro-loan schemes, water and sanitation (e.g. hand pumps and communal latrines), and school rehabilitation. In 2004, more than 200 CEPs were functioning at different stages of implementation, including several targeting youth and women.

For instance, World Vision International (UNHCR's partner) and the community of Harper city developed skills training programmes targeting female ex-combatants and returnees in that city. Training was offered in tie-and-dye, soap making and baking. The project's aim was to help war-affected individuals integrate in the community. In addition, a CEP on community capacity building and SGBV sensitization was also being implemented for the urban communities of Harper city.

III. Information and Partnerships

Angola: Municipal Profiles

In an effort to approach the reintegration programme in Angola in an innovative way, UNHCR engaged in supporting the national government, mainly through the Ministry for Assistance and Social Reinsertion – MINARS, in the production of Municipal Profiles in key Municipalities of return. UNHCR's proactive methodology in conducting this exercise at all government levels provided for an exemplary activity with the potential for reproduction in other cases.

In May 2005, a pilot experience of municipality profiling was carried out in Bundas in the Moxico province, home to 50% of the beneficiaries of the exercise. Prior to initiating any type of activity, the approval of the government of Angola on the methodological tools used was sought. The process was then conducted at three distinct operational levels in order to ensure full participation by communities and national authorities. In turn, it was hoped this would guarantee national ownership of the profiles produced and of the overall project. Clearance was requested and granted at national level; the necessary data was collected at communal level (e.g. farmer's associations, women's groups); thirdly, municipal administrations were involved in the organisation of workshops for the validation of the results. In a final stage, the information gathered was returned to the capital to be presented and analysed at ministerial level.

The final result in early 2006 was 7 Municipal Profiles, launched during a meeting in Luanda on March 28. The Profiles are detailed descriptions of the six areas of the country with the highest percentage of former refugees (i.e. an analysis of the economic and social situation including existing local capabilities and needs) and they will serve as guidelines to set real priorities for the successful reconstruction of the country, a process which begins with suitable reintegration strategies.

The main goals of this project have been three-fold. First, the aim has been to incorporate these isolated areas into the government's poverty reduction plans and into national reintegration policies. This has been achieved by using the profiling activity as an awareness-raising tool to bring communities, which are extremely difficult to access (due to landmines, poor road infrastructure, safety hazards), higher on the government's priority list. The Profiles have also brought to the attention of development actors specific inaccessible and long ignored areas, which urge the mobilisation of national and international resources. Agencies such as UNDP, ILO, FAO, UNICEF and UNAIDS will now be provided with detailed area-specific data along with guidelines on how to get involved.

The production of the Municipal Profiles brought together officials of all levels of government as well as humanitarian organisations and potential donors and it represents another step in the efforts made to ensure that the reintegration of nearly half a million Angolans becomes part of the national development plans. Indeed, the government of Angola has officially recognised that the reintegration of returnees in their home areas is a formal goal and has asked donors and NGOs to focus on the needs of the areas of return in their own assistance plans. UNHCR sees the Municipal Profiles, which are part of the Sustainable Reintegration Strategy run by UNHCR and the government, as a roadmap for others to follow. On the basis of the information provided in the Profiles municipal administrations, provincial directions, national and international NGOs and other UN agencies will implement reintegration projects prioritising capacity building and gender mainstreaming. In addition, the data gathered is also being analysed as part of the creation of Municipal Action Plans, whereby sectoral priorities are being established and incorporated into provincial policies.

While not part of the initial sectoral interventions, UNHCR's involvement in land issues in Afghanistan arose from returnee monitoring that highlighted the importance of land for returnees. Many questions revolving around the issue of land continued to cause concern (i.e. conflicts over multiple landholdings, warlord confiscation, discriminatory practices providing preferential land access to certain ethnic groups and power bases, landlessness - returnee monitoring and repatriation data indicated up to 70 per cent of Afghans remained landless). Many conflicts over multiple landholdings only arose following the fall of the Taliban and UNHCR's intervention needed to respond to this changing context.

This aspect of *flexibility* in programming was noted by field presence in Afghanistan as the essential requirement enabling UNHCR to respond to the needs of returning and host populations. Moreover, it highlights the importance of acquiring accurate information to plan the reintegration strategy and make necessary adjustments based on the protection and assistance needs of the refugee and IDP populations.

The complex and related issues of access to land, contested property rights and housing represent the main impediment to sustainable reintegration for many returnees. However, it will take many years before land rights can be addressed effectively through the development of formal legislation. In the absence of a constant, stable 'rule of law', issues can only be resolved through conciliation or by recourse to traditional and tribal mechanisms, which can work in tandem with more formal structures as these are gradually established. The UNHCR-supported Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) *legal aid project* has been able to resolve many land disputes through these more informal traditional means.

With help from the NRC, UNHCR began to develop legal aid clinics in 2003 to provide information on land and property cases. UNHCR was one of the first advocates in this area. In addition, The Branch Office was commended on its work on the land issue through the publication of a handbook in co-operation with the NRC.

Eritrea: Early Situation Analysis and Information Gathering

In 2004, the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC), together with local authorities and in collaboration with UNHCR, updated a comprehensive village monitoring exercise in 20 of the largest returnee communities in Gash Barka. First assessed in 2001 before the mass repatriation of Eritreans from Sudan, sites were revisited to provide an updated profile of receiving communities and the remaining needs to facilitate sustainable reintegration. To this end, a checklist of returnees' profiles was devised, which was used in the early situation analysis in the prospective returnee areas. Useful information such as socio-economic and skills profile, education levels, intended areas of return, returnee aspirations, sex- and age-desegregated data was sought from the country of asylum.

The exercise was initiated by the Field Office Tesseney under the name of Village Assessment. The information gathered enabled the office to make proper advance planning for the actual repatriation as well as its initial short-term reintegration interventions. In addition, information was fed into a reintegration database system, to analyse key information regarding areas of return, and shared with development agencies and the local authorities.

The major findings of the assessment included shortfalls in health, water and facilities. They also indicated significant needs for socio-economic support; sustainable livelihood mechanisms such as income generating and labor-intensive projects.

Information on all sectors was compiled, including the communities' views of their strengths, weaknesses and potential for future development. The final product was a socioeconomic survey involving interviewing village leaders, women's groups and water and sanitation committees.

Mozambique: District Development Mapping (DDM) Project (UNHCR / UNDP)

The District Development Mapping (DDM) project was a partnership between UNDP and UNHCR, along with local authorities, to gather critical socio-demographic information for areas of return and aimed to produce comprehensive District Profiles. The main objective was to coordinate the work of UNHCR/UNDP with the efforts of counterpart organisations to make an assessment of the major priorities, problems, and potential of the districts most affected by conflict and population displacement. It produced 34 District Profiles which remain publicly available and acted as a development planning tool.

Initial planning discussions between UNHCR and UNDP on collecting socio-demographic information were held in UNHCR-assisted refugee camps. With support from many international organizations, the National Reconstruction Plan (a government agency) conducted a Needs Assessment which identified limited and poor access to reliable information where organizations possessed separate information systems that fulfilled individual operational requirements, but did not provide a coherent statistical representation of the country. The DDM project therefore aimed to aggregate and systematize existing sources of socioeconomic information to enable greater access to development-oriented information at the district level. UNHCR, UNDP and Provincial Government Planning Commissions drafted a questionnaire to gather information.

DDM was implemented as a data collection, analysis, and report writing process that could be completed in an ad-hoc way using local resources and a small team of UNHCR and UNDP staff. Thirty four districts were selected as priority districts. Implementation attempted to involve government officials at provincial and district levels to be responsible for coordinating implementation of subsequent plans. Localities were randomly selected in each of the chosen districts, as were households within each site. The heads of 10 to 60 households were interviewed using a questionnaire in the presence of the village headman.

DDM produced the first complete and homogenous series of district-based information on Mozambique, gathering basic data on 75 districts and drafted District Profiles for the 34 priority districts. The Profiles are based on district, village and household surveys and additional information including UNHCR reports, the QIP database, FAO data, Government and NGO reports². The Profiles were not simply a baseline data collection exercise, but also served as a training and planning tool for local authorities to take their own priorities to developmental actors.

² This information remains publicly available at www.unsystemmoz.org/districts for use by civil society, communities and government.

The Sierra Leone Information System (SLIS)

The Sierra Leone Information System (SLIS) was born out of a UNHCR proposal and started operating in March 2001. Jointly funded by UNHCR and ECHO (Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission), and provided with technical support and expertise from UNHCR Headquarters, it was devised to ensure that all information on assistance and reintegration activities was available to agencies involved in reconstruction efforts. The intention was to create a comprehensive information management system that would incorporate developmentally-relevant data and would involve government authorities in the collection, management and dissemination of information. In turn, this would build and strengthen local and central Government information management capacity. Finally, it was hoped that it would also turn out to be a powerful peace building instrument.

The SLIS was located in the Humanitarian Information Centre run by OCHA, which subsequently assumed responsibility for maintaining and updating the system. In its initial stages, the main objective of SLIS was to provide data at chiefdom level on population, health, education and food supplies (i.e. the level of socio-economic destruction), as well as to promote the use of common information standards. In addition, a Who, What, Where data bank was also established to identify the various actors with the chiefdoms. SLIS went on to provide a range of mapping products used to enhance analysis and decision making and became instrumental in assisting the National Recovery Committee to monitor recovery activities. Thus, it also supported the important role that information sharing plays in the 4Rs activities by mapping out needs and activities to ensure that all actors base their planning on the same information platform.

Today, The SLIS is a component of the Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO). The unit collects and analyses data in order to create coordination tools to enhance informed decision-making and policy formulation for key government ministries, donors, UN organisations and its implementing partners (www.daco-sl.org).

The Transition Support Team (TST)

In the context of the 4Rs process, which began in Sierra Leone approximately four years after the signing of the Lomé Agreement, and in an effort to consolidate the strategy at an operational level, the UN Country Team (UNCT) decided to establish a Transition Support Team (TST). The TST was tasked with supporting the transition from relief to development by facilitating stronger linkages between the relief programmes phasing out and the development programmes phasing in. It assisted the UN peace-keeping mission and its field units, but above all the government authorities in taking the lead in the recovery and transition processes and in promoting community-driven initiatives. Furthermore, it helped to identify needs and priorities to generate integrated strategies plans and projects for a smooth transition from humanitarian aid to development, especially in areas with a high concentration of resettling population.

The TST consisted of a Coordinator attached to the UNDP Office in the capital, Freetown, and three Field Officers posted in the UNHCR Offices initially in the three regions with the highest return: Kambia, Kono and Kailahun. Through the existing coordination mechanisms, TST Field Officers assessed gaps in social services, livelihoods and capacity of government authorities at the

local level. It helped organise workshops to bring together UN Agencies, NGOs and the local District Recovery Committees. The aim was to review activities undertaken to date, train in planning and data handling, and work towards a joint district recovery strategy.

The establishment of the TST team has been of considerable use in bringing development actors together at a provincial level and strengthening the planning capacity of the local Government. It has proved to be a useful tool for the UN country team to ensure that poverty reduction, decentralization and community-development efforts were trickling down to local levels.

IV. Building Capacities

Strengthening capacity, a core activity in the area of protection, seeks to help States meet their international legal obligations to protect refugees. Capacity building activities are geared towards strengthening national authorities, laws and policies to ensure the proper handling of refugee and asylum issues, the reception and care of refugees, the promotion of self-reliance of refugees and the realisation of durable solutions. But the task cannot be accomplished alone. It requires a partnership framework involving host and donor governments, humanitarian assistance and developmental agencies, civil society, including NGOs, together with refugees themselves.

(www.unhcr.org)

Afghanistan: UNHCR-sponsored Reintegration Unit within the MRRD and the Coordination with MoRR

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) established, in coordination with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH), a Reintegration Unit with support from UNHCR. This initiative was a unique case of building internal Government reintegration capacity and mainstreaming reintegration into national development transition.

MRRD coordinates strategies and programs for poverty alleviation in rural areas and is one of the major partners of international donors and considered one of the few ministries capable of successful program implementation. UNHCR's support was instrumental in enabling the Ministry to establish the Unit in 2002. This involved both technical and financial resources, including redeployment of part of UNHCR's own Reintegration Unit, operational support and capacity development of MRRD Staff. A unique and effective innovation was the secondment of a Senior UNHCR staff member who was an experienced advisor to the MRRD to act as Reintegration Adviser.

The Reintegration Unit was responsible for mainstreaming policies (design and promotion of a Government reintegration plan, the development of a policy, the mainstreaming of reintegration priorities into the national development programmes); planning of projects and activities; supporting coordination mechanisms (coordination and liaison with the Consultative Group (CG) mechanism for the Production of the National Budget), disseminating information; establishing linkages with other line ministries and programs (successfully influenced the design of MRRD-controlled National Priority Programmes (NPP) at the central level); monitoring and evaluating activities and projects; and supporting capacity development.

Outputs:

- Produced the Reintegration Strategy.
- Produced a policy on provision of shelter for returnees and other vulnerable Afghans.
- Incorporated specific criteria for absorption of returnees into national development programmes, such as the NEEP, NSP and National Water Programme.
- Appointed Provincial Development Advisors to all MRRD provincial offices with a clear mandate to ensure reintegration activities were implemented in coordination with Provincial governments.
- Provided training to all MRRD staff on aspects relating to return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs.

- Developed the Policy and Operational Plan for return and reintegration of IDPs.

In addition to this, UNHCR also assisted the MoRR in various ways. For instance, UNHCR and MoRR received and interviewed Afghans returning to Afghanistan under tripartite agreements to ensure problems of return in safety and with dignity were addressed. Furthermore, it assisted MoRR staff in border-monitoring activities providing information on Afghan refugees regarding personal documentation, ill-treatment and problems of safety on the way back to Afghanistan. In addition, UNHCR helped the MoRR and MRRD in providing landless returnees and IDPs a timely, fair and transparent distribution of viable land for the purpose of establishing a home. Another example of a UNHCR initiated activity was the EVI Assistance Project to identify and support extremely vulnerable individuals. While UNHCR provided technical and financial support, the MoRR and DoRRs played the main role. Created in order to contribute to the development of more sustainable networks for support at the local level, the EVI project aimed at building the capacity of the MoRR and its provincial departments in 11 provinces.

Joint UNHCR/MoRR Capacity Development Teams (JCDT) were established to in order to assist the MoRR in developing its managerial and administrative capacity in the protection of refugees, IDPs and returnees. Following the objectives envisaged in the Reintegration Strategy 1382/2003 MoRR personnel and UNHCR national staff cooperated in order to improve MoRR's operational capacities especially at provincial level; define a series of activities which could be under the MoRR's responsibility (e.g. border monitoring, shelter assessment); identify the different stages of the transferral process from UNHCR to the Ministry.

The International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) 1987-1994

The CIREFCA was more than just an event taking place in 1989; it was a process spanning from 1987 to 1994. Today it is considered as a commendable example demonstrating that burden and responsibility-sharing between all actors involved in reintegration processes may lead to the identification of durable solutions for displaced and refugee populations. CIREFCA promoted a global approach to a regional refugee problem. It advocated that durable solutions could be found through an integrated development approach addressing the inter-related issues of population displacement, reconciliation and development. Therefore, it focused on devising a comprehensive regional programme for the repatriation and reintegration of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Central America and indirectly addressed some of the root causes of displacement.

Initially, CIREFCA channelled funds for a portfolio of 36 projects. Each project was tailored to a specific situation and devised according to whether the country under review was of origin or asylum, and on the type of refugee policy in place. Projects mainly focused on areas of immediate assistance, rehabilitation, economic development, and institution-building. For instance, several projects aimed at reintegrating returnees by strengthening and ensuring access to basic services; others promoted labour market integration by improving access to jobs; some encouraged self-reliance by putting forward agricultural projects; where national refugee policy was exceptionally restrictive projects aimed at strengthening UNHCR's assistance in camps. Gradually, the number of projects proposed increased and the budget was enlarged. Complementary initiatives were also developed, such as the Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) introduced by UNHCR in Nicaragua and Guatemala.

The CIREFCA process owes much of its success to its 3-dimensionality. It was comprehensive by drawing on several durable solutions simultaneously; cooperative by involving all actors (i.e. governments of the countries of origin and asylum, donors and/or resettlement countries); and collaborative by working across UN agencies and with NGOs.

CIREFCA facilitated reintegration for returnees in Guatemala; promoted social and economic integration in Costa Rica; focused on self-reliance and rural settlement in Mexico; assisted rehabilitation for returnees in Nicaragua; improving local integration opportunities in Belize; strengthening international assistance in Honduras in view of repatriation; fulfilling IDP needs in El Salvador.

CIREFCA involved regional governments as well as international donors and UN agencies, ensuring many of the concerns and needs burdening vulnerable sections of the population were addressed. Indeed, the promotion of a 'regional' solution for refugees through a highly visible international conference created positive pressure on the national governments to offer more favourable conditions for refugees and returnees.

CIREFCA's operations were jointly implemented by UNHCR and UNDP and represented an attempt by the international community to support countries engaged in post-conflict peace-building and to contribute to the consolidation of peace. Donors channelled funds through UNHCR and UNDP to implement a range of projects targeting war affected groups and agreed

that funds would support the whole community and not only individual returnee families. The collaboration with UNDP aimed at bridging the gap between relief and development. In other words, efforts were concentrated on addressing the needs of refugee and displaced populations and at the same time facilitating reintegration and rehabilitation benefiting local communities as well.

The Permanent Commissions (CCPP)

The new government of Guatemala assumed office in 1986 and set out to attract refugees to return home, a gesture deemed to convince the international community that human rights issues were given appropriate attention. Nevertheless, refugees remained fearful of returning knowing their land had been either occupied or was situated in conflict zones. As a result, refugee leaders started gathering into groups (male refugees as early as 1987, while the first refugee women's organisation was successfully established in 1990) and were charged with demanding from the Guatemalan government collective returns and guaranteed basic conditions of return with the international community as witness. These groups became to be known as the *Comisiones Permanentes* or Permanent Commissions (CCPP).

UNHCR backed and assisted the Permanent Commissions in getting their demands heard, mainly by drafting the Letter of Understanding which recognised the efforts made by the Guatemalan government for repatriates and refugees. The Letter also secured UNHCR's presence and role in Guatemala and in returnee issues. The CCPPs articulated concerns regarding discrimination and distributional inequities and resulted in substantive negotiations with the government. Demands included guarantees of gaining access to land, ensuring security, recognition of their rights to return collectively (in large groups), to settle, organize and move freely, as well as the right to international accompaniment in the return process. The CCPP also secured UN participation in the verification of ongoing human rights abuses and wide-ranging commitments to the rights of indigenous peoples, ceasefire and disarmament provisions, and a comprehensive program for the reintegration of ex-guerrillas.

The Technical Commission for the Resettlement of Populations Displaced by the Armed Conflict (CTEAR)

The Technical Commission for the Resettlement of Populations Displaced by the Armed Conflict (CTEAR) was created in 1994 as a six person body with four voting members and two observers from the international community (UNDP and the EU). UNHCR was invited to attend CTEAR (the 'Commission') meetings regularly only in 1997 once the final peace accords were signed. It served both as a coordinating body, by keeping track of CTEAR's complementary initiatives, and as a contributor providing the Commission with specialised aid.

The Commission was constituted by refugee representatives from the CCPP, the Government, as well as the international community forming a consultative group of donor countries and several UN observers from UNHCR, IOM and IM-GRICAR. The IM-GRICAR were two of the members of the Mediating Group created during the return process, the *Mediation Commission* (Instancia Mediadora, IM) and its advisor the *International Group for Consolidation and Support to the Return* (GRICAR). The main responsibilities of the Commission were the overall verification and monitoring of the Resettlement Accord, the negotiation of land and reporting on human rights violations.

UNHCR worked closely with CTEAR to formulate recommendations for development-oriented agencies which would assist the repatriation and reintegration process. The Commission meetings held on a weekly basis were an opportunity for capacity building and information sharing for all parties and allowed them to update planning when returning to their respective organisations.

Through CTEAR forum UNHCR was able to:

- launch the inter-institutional documentation campaign which combined CTEAR trust fund financing (administered by UNDP) and UNHCR 'know-how';
- develop linkages with government development institutions such as the social investment fund (FIS) for the construction of infrastructure, especially schools;
- establish a sub-committee on land issues, which was an area in which UNHCR possessed background knowledge, but had had no previous access to the state powers who could resolve land problems.

V. Sharing Knowledge

Guatemala: Lessons Learned and Evaluation Exercises

In view of an operational phase-down and eventual closure of the Office, in 1998 UNHCR Guatemala began planning and implementing a series of 'lessons learned' activities. It considered its unique experience in the repatriation of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico as an important know-how resource for future operations. The exercises undertaken created the opportunity to reflect and analyse the successes and shortcomings of the repatriation and reintegration operations in Guatemala from all institutional points of view: UNHCR as well as other national and international actors.

The main objective was to highlight the so-called 'best practices' in order to reutilise them in the future, while at the same time trying to overcome the identified limitations. Another aim was to identify 'gaps' that UNHCR had been unable to meet, in order to promote appropriate linkages with long-term development actors present in the areas of return. Finally, these activities were envisaged as tools for the dissemination of information about UNHCR's work in Guatemala, highlighting the importance of the international community's contribution to the achievement of a lasting peace through the donors' support for repatriation process. The lessons learned activities were an example of commitment to organizational learning.

In February 2000 a **Lessons Learned Workshop** was held in Geneva, led by UNHCR but attended by several key personalities and organisations involved in the operations in Guatemala (including professional and field staff). The workshop served as a tool to examine the Guatemalan experience and derive positive and negative lessons for the benefit of future repatriation and reintegration programmes.

It brought together a wide range of participants from the humanitarian and governmental sectors, including UNHCR, UNDP, MINUGUA, government representatives from region and donor states, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and the academic community. It was convened by RBAC and EPAU, which underscored UNHCR's commitment for systematic assessment.

A **Paper** by **Paula Worby**, entitled *Refugee Return and Reintegration in Guatemala: Lessons Learned by UNHCR through its presence and intervention* (1999), helped participants in their analysis of the reintegration process undertaken in Guatemala. Moreover, the discussion was extended to consider globally relevant issues of concern in all repatriation and reintegration operations.

Lessons learned exercises included:

- Mediating Group/GRICAR Evaluation Workshop
- Forum on Lessons Learned in UNHCR's Work with Refugee/Returnee Women's Organisations
- Permanent Commissions (CCPP) Workshops on the Return Process
- Workshop on Reintegration and QIPs (UNHCR/CECI)
- Workshop on the Documentation of the Uprooted Population (UNHCR/CTEAR/EU)
- Workshop on Linkage Strategy and Sustainable Development in Returnee Areas (UNHCR/UNDP/CEAR/CTEAR)

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