

6. The evaluation, initially slated for Spring 2003, was postponed until autumn because of the Iraq crisis and reasons pertaining to the Unit's schedule. Throughout the evaluation, the team operated under the clear understanding that its conclusions and recommendations were to be independent and public. The evaluation's terms of reference (TOR) state that the "results of the evaluation will be made public on OCHA's website."⁵ In the course of its research, the team found high levels of interest in the evaluation's outcome.

7. The evaluation followed a review exercise conducted by an external analyst in September 2002⁶, and an internal review prepared later in 2002. There is substantial agreement between the conclusions of this evaluation and those of the September 2002 review.

8. We would like to thank all who agreed to share their time and insights with us. Special thanks go to OCHA staff in Geneva, Belgrade, Prishtina, Nairobi, Kinshasa, Goma and New York who worked so hard to keep our days full and our travel pleasant.

Methodology

9. The team conducted roughly 200 interviews with individuals from UN agencies, non-governmental and international organizations, diplomats and donor representatives, and local authorities in Geneva, Rome, Belgrade, Prishtina, Nairobi, Kinshasa, Goma, London, Kabul, New York and Washington, DC. The team also reviewed numerous public and internal documents.

10. OCHA and the Unit selected Serbia and D.R. Congo as the two main case studies that best reflected the breadth of the Unit's work. The team's initial discussions with OCHA had settled on Sudan and West Africa as case-studies, with a third, non-African country to be determined. After the evaluation was postponed, OCHA decided that Serbia and D.R. Congo were better case-studies, due to logistical and institutional concerns. The team agreed to these substitutions, with some reservations.⁷

11. By design, the team met with few of those most directly affected by whether the Unit – and the UN system above it – is successful in its job: internally displaced persons themselves. The reason for this is that the Unit deals with the system, not with the displaced themselves. Our research focused on the dynamics of institutional relationships, which are remote to most internally displaced populations. Also, we felt that they should be spared having to dedicate time to another set of ignorant visitors.

12. The team conducted most interviews in person and followed a semi-structured interview format. We spoke to key informants who had worked directly with the Unit, been involved in the initial debate on the creation of the Unit, focused on internal displacement or related issues in their own work, funded the Unit, participated in the Unit's workshops, been debriefed by the Unit, or simply followed the evolution of the Unit since its inception. OCHA and the Unit

⁵ *Ibid.*: p. 5

⁶ "Internal Displacement Unit, Interim Review," Jon Bennett, Oxford Development Consultants, Oxford, September 2002.

⁷ OCHA has explained that the choice of West Africa was not practical or preferable due to the large number of missions to West Africa in summer 2003 and the focus of UN agencies on the crisis in Liberia. It was felt that it was not appropriate to deploy another assessment mission to this region. The arrival of a new HC in Sudan with plans for reforming the response to internal displacement made the recent work of the Unit in the country less relevant. The team accepted OCHA's argument for the change in case studies, and found value in the case studies eventually selected (especially Congo), but does wish to point out that OCHA did not retain the team's original choice of cases.

developed the original lists of key contacts for the evaluation team in each country, and this list was then expanded with contacts suggested by interviewees or through the team's own contacts and experience. The list of interviewees expanded and evolved over the course of the evaluation.

13. The team held phone interviews with informants in countries not visited (e.g., Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea), as well as with people who were unavailable at the time of our visits. Follow-up questions and clarifications were made via phone and email. When necessary, the team split up to conduct interviews in places with a large number of respondents, such as Geneva. The team also split up for certain visits: only one team member visited Prishtina, Goma, Kabul, London and New York. A small number of interviews were held simultaneously with two or more interviewees from the same organization or agency. All interviews were conducted on a not for attribution basis. (Annex Two lists names and affiliation of interviewees).

14. The team conducted an extensive document review of public documents relating to the Unit (e.g., mission reports and progress reports) and internal Unit documents, such as yearly work plans, self-evaluation reports, budgets and funding reports, previous internal evaluations, training strategies, training modules, TORs of Unit staff, and reports on the collaborative approach, Protection Survey, and protection coalition. We also received internal documents from a number of individual sources, including Unit staff (e.g., correspondence, notes on projects in progress), donors (e.g., internal reports to capitals), other UN agencies (e.g., memos on relations with the Unit, thoughts on initial establishment and evolution of the Unit), partners and UN staff in the field (e.g., memos on interaction with the Unit, memos from IDP Advisors on progress and problems). The team also reviewed current publications and grey literature on the major topics and trends in internal displacement, with specific focus on protection, sovereignty, and the on-going debate on the international response to internal displacement.

15. The team's review of documents and current trends highlighted key issues and questions. We raised these questions in our interviews and considered these issues throughout our fieldwork and analysis. Broadly speaking, we examined the nature and effectiveness of the systematic response to the problem of internal displacement and also considered the broader and more ideological questions of responsibility, resolution, and the role of the international community. For instance: Is the Unit (or has the Unit become) synonymous with the collaborative approach? Is it possible for a Unit that is non-operational and situated within a non-operational agency (OCHA) to have the clout and voice to engender change within the UN system and with recalcitrant country governments? Is the Unit currently "the best" means for the UN to address internal displacement? If not, should the Unit be eradicated or should it be reformed? Does the greatest responsibility for the faults and shortcomings in responding to internal displacement lie with the national governments, the operational agencies, the IDP Unit, or the UN system? If the international community adopts responsibility for the problem of internal displacement, does this excuse country governments from assisting and protecting their own citizens? Does this perpetuate (or even encourage) the continuation of the problem at the country level? Should the international community (and the Unit) seek to engage with governments or to provide assistance to displaced populations in countries where the authorities have intentionally created internal displacement for personal or political gain, such as Sudan or Zimbabwe? This evaluation cannot and does not attempt to address all of these questions, but these issues came up repeatedly in our interviews and our analysis, and form the underpinnings of this evaluation.

16. The team made a set of preliminary conclusions available to OCHA and the Unit prior to finalization. The Unit and OCHA were given the opportunity to respond via teleconference and in written comments. The team also discussed its findings with a number of key informants. We factored in these exchanges when finalizing the summary note submitted to OCHA on 6 November 2003. The team submitted a draft of the full report to OCHA on 11 November 2003.

This draft was widely circulated and comments requested. The team reviewed the comments and made adjustments or corrections where appropriate in preparing the final full report.

17. Finally, this report has sought to avoid using the acronym 'IDPs' to describe the internally displaced.

Main Argument of the Evaluation:

18. The United Nations continues to fall short in its response to the internally displaced. In the 22 months since its inception, OCHA's Internal Displacement Unit has not changed the way the UN addresses internal displacement, and is not likely to do so unless radical changes in outlook occur. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the Unit has lacked focus and strategic purpose. Its activities have been numerous but scattered. It has not managed to leverage its direct link to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). It has not played its central role of premier advocate within the UN system on behalf of the internally displaced aggressively enough. Second, and more pointedly, the UN system is not ready for change. The out-going ERC did not effectively use the Unit to fully perform his mandate as the Secretary General's focal point for the internally displaced. UN operational agencies remain more concerned with their organizational interests than with the interests of the internally displaced. They do not display the collegiality necessary for a truly collaborative response to crises of internal displacement

19. The evaluation's main recommendation is that the Unit concentrates on internal UN advocacy. This is in keeping with the Unit's original terms of reference. The Unit should become the premier advocate for the internally displaced within the UN system, advising the ERC on specific breakdowns or weaknesses within the UN's response to internal displacement crises, and making practical recommendations on how to address these problems. The Unit must, within the confines of its relationship with the ERC, name and shame those who do not step to the plate to respond to the needs of the internally displaced. This will require an increase in conceptual and management focus on the part of the Unit. The ERC in turn must commit to soliciting, endorsing and following through on the Unit's recommendations. Finally, if both the Unit and the ERC appear committed to a real effort on enforcing more accountability in the UN system's response to the internally displaced, donors should offer a pluri-annual commitment to the Unit.

20. If, on the other hand, after a period of two to three years there is still no progress in the collaborative approach, then the Unit should be shut down – at that point it will have become a veil masking inherent failures of the system.