

Background and scope

1. The high profile of humanitarian operations and growth in aid spending in the post Cold War era have led to greater public scrutiny of aid allocations. UNHCR has become vulnerable to criticism on the issue of accountability for funding spent through implementing partners, not subject to stringent procedures governing direct UN expenditure.
2. The series of large scale emergencies in the early nineties brought about significant innovations in implementing arrangements. New approaches were introduced, including standby arrangements and the use of military forces and "service packages". UNHCR has had to meet new challenges, often in hitherto untouched geographical areas. Many new NGOs have emerged, both international and local, including some created by UNHCR itself.
3. UNHCR's Statute states that funds shall be disbursed through "those private and public agencies deemed best qualified to administer such assistance". Traditionally implementing partners have included host governments, international and national NGOs, UN other multilateral agencies, and commercial contractors. UNHCR has also become increasingly operational.
4. Despite the fact that the Office spends annually some US \$ 500 million through more than 600 implementing partners, it has been almost 15 years since the last comprehensive review of these arrangements. Mounting criticism by auditors and donors underlined the urgent need for improvement in selecting and monitoring the Office's partners.
5. A more structured approach to implementing arrangements is therefore recommended in an in-depth review conducted in 1997 by the UNHCR Inspection and Evaluation Service. The review assessed the positive and negative aspects of different approaches which have evolved over the years, largely as a result of trial and error.
6. Models examined ranged from traditional local refugee settlement programmes in Africa and Latin America, through mass voluntary repatriation schemes in three continents, to major humanitarian emergencies such as in the former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes region of Africa. New types of programmes in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, sometimes embodying a preventive, institution-building approach, were also reviewed.
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