## Executive Summary

### Context and Background

1.    Following the dissolution of the Centre for Documentation and Research (CDR), a Working Group recommended that the former CDR' core protection functions of research/analysis and legal information become integrated into the Division of International Protection (DIP). As a result, the Protection Information Section (PIS) was established in December 2001.

2.    The stated aims of PIS at its inception were 'to support UNHCR's protection role, in particular in the area of research, the provision of country of origin and legal information and the issuing of Refworld. . .and assist the refugee protection efforts of governments by providing pertinent country analysis and refugee-related legal information in order to ensure accurate and sound decision-making and policy formulation relating to refugee protection.'

3.    In its short life, PIS has faced a number of challenges. Chief among these are lack of a clearly prioritized and supported institutional role, tension and resistance in its internal relations, and lack of staff and resources. These challenges have manifested themselves as frustrations and tensions in inter-departmental, inter-unit relationships and between and among staff. Another equally important challenge is related to the fact that PIS is part of a larger organisational need for an information management strategy that would address what the Joint Inspection Unit has termed the problems posed by 'information systems run by various entities which have led to compartmentalization and self-centred approaches.'[1]

4.    In the light of these concerns, the Director of the Department of International Protection (DIP) requested consideration by the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit for an evaluation of PIS of which this report is the final product. The current evaluation follows a user survey of PIS undertaken in 2003, and another in 2005 both of which have centred around user views of the PIS information product, Refworld. An audit was completed in 2004.

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[1] Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), August, 2004, Recommendation 7, p. vii. In its report of August 2004, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) noted that 'UNHCR does not have [an information management strategy] and recommended as a starting point the appointment or designation of a senior official as Chief Information Officer whose central task would be to develop the organisation's information strategy.' At the same time the JIU mentioned that in addition to the need for an information management strategy, there were additional challenges in the form of 'information systems run by various entities (including ITTS, MRSP, Electronic Publishing Unit (DCI), Protection Information Section (DIP) Project Profile and Geographic and Mapping Unit (DOS), DHRM) which has led to compartmentalization and self-centred approaches. In addition. . .problems such as obstruction of information flows, overabundance of scattered information not created as 'knowledge' assets. . .need to be addressed.'

**Purpose and Method**

5. The purpose of the evaluation was to review PIS by focussing on outputs, products and management, with special emphasis on its main product Refworld, with a view to assessing Refworld's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, value-added, impact and sustainability.

6. The evaluation was conducted between June and October 2005 over a 56 day period. An Evaluation Committee provided the oversight for the appointment of an independent evaluator and the subsequent evaluation phases. The evaluation occurred during the fourth year of activity of PIS and should form the basis for future planning.

7. The evaluation methodology comprised three phases over 56 days, the first phase beginning with a literature review. Over the course of the second phase findings were drawn from interviews in HQs, field locations and via telephone, a user survey and five Focus Groups. The interviews were conducted with UNHCR staff, key donors, UN sister organisations, NGOs (national and international), and others identified as having a vested interest in protection information like ECOI.net. The evaluator presented initial findings to the Evaluation Committee. The list of interviewees is attached as Annex 3. The third phase included a presentation of the draft report to the Evaluation Committee and, following the Committee's direction, finalization of the report.

8. The user survey was disseminated via the UNHCR website and via Branch and Field Offices in line with a request for dissemination by the evaluator to 'those identified generally as users of protection information,' and via email to a selected list of users drawn from the PIS client list, targeting those NOT requested to complete an earlier PIS survey. (see Evaluation Survey results p. 19).

9. The major research question addressed by the evaluation was: What are the key components of an effective protection information system? This question was posed to all interviewees as the overall frame for their responses to a series of interview questions. Three indicators were used as entry points for the analysis of data collected via the interviews: client satisfaction, influence and sustainability.

## Principal Findings and Recommendations

### PIS's Institutional role

The evaluation found that though PIS has successfully developed and maintained a key information source, Refworld, and to the extent possible delivered on its other objectives: standard-setting on COI, information requests, background papers and advocacy with governments, it only partially fills a value-added institutional role as a consequence of three inter-related challenges: lack of a clearly articulated and supported role, divisive internal relations and lack of staff and resources.