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UNHCR Audit Service

Project Profile

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Project Profile

“Refugee registration is the recording, verifying, and updating of information on persons of concern to UNHCR, with the aim to protect and document them and to implement durable solutions.”

UNHCR Handbook for Registration , September 2003

“The introduction of PROFILE must be viewed with a long-term perspective as it will have a major impact on the way UNHCR conducts its business.”

“PROFILE will provide significant benefits for all external stakeholders and will enhance partnerships in the humanitarian space. Countries of asylum will benefit from receiving a clearer picture of the refugee population they are hosting. UNHCR partner organisations (WFP, IOM, etc.), independent NGOs and implementing partners will be able to improve their programme delivery to refugees. Donor governments will receive programmes based on realistic population indicators and verifiable assumptions. Last but not least, refugees will benefit from PROFILE through improved protection (better identification, tracing, registration and documentation) and efficient and targeted service delivery.”

Study for Scoping of Project PROFILE, January 2001

“Has your operation budgeted for additional resources to support the use of ProGres in 2006?
-No (mistake, we should have!)”

Field office answer to the OIOS audit field questionnaire

Audit of Project Profile

Executive Summary

- ✓ Between September and December 2005, OIOS conducted an audit of UNHCR's Project Profile. Overall OIOS assessed that the project was competently managed, and that considerable advancement had been made with its implementation. The findings and conclusions were discussed with the Project Board on 22 March 2006. A draft of the report was shared with the Director, Division of Operational Support, whose comments, which were received in May 2006, are reflected in this final report.
- ✓ As a 'project', Profile has been a success. However, for UNHCR's new registration process/system to be effective and sustainable and to achieve its long-term objectives, UNHCR needs to ensure that sufficient attention is given and oversight is provided to field offices to make sure they adequately budget for the necessary technological requirements and the required level of skilled staff.
- ✓ As outlined in the Project Board's Terms of Reference (ToR) its responsibilities included making substantive decisions related to the project plans, scope, objectives, staff and resources. OIOS noted that while the added value of the Board was recognised, particularly in light of the fact that Profile was a cross-Divisional project and input from the various players was essential, it did not fully fulfil its responsibilities. Instead of being a decision making body, and providing direction and oversight where necessary, it was more of a platform for information sharing. For the future, UNHCR needs to assess the rational of having a decision-making Project Board. Senior management are not always available which results in infrequent meetings, while the accountability for the success or failure of the project cannot be clearly assigned.
- ✓ The standard registration procedures need to be sharpened and improved with regard to information sharing and privacy. In light of this, special attention should be given to the system's added functionality of biometrics, as well as related issues, such as data storage and archiving.
- ✓ As long as the system is not fully operational within UNHCR, the suggestion of government support and third party data sharing should be reconsidered, or at least sensitised and limited.
- ✓ The knowledge transfer within and outside UNHCR should be improved. A future development plan for Project Profile should be established, including the impact of the expansion of UNHCR's mandate to IDPs.
- ✓ In conclusion, OIOS was of the opinion that the Project Profile team has made commendable efforts, but in light of the project vision UNHCR still has to address issues such as senior management support, resources and building on project results. Without ensuring the future viability and development of the project, especially in the current tight financial situation, there is a risk that the system is too complicated and expensive to be sustained in the long-term.

Audit of Project Profile

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5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1. Introduction

- ✓ From September to December 2005 OIOS conducted an audit of UNHCR's Project Profile. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. OIOS reviewed the activities of the Project Profile team at UNHCR Headquarters including related activities by the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS), the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications (DIST) and the Division of Operational Support (DOS).
- ✓ Project Profile is based on Executive Committee Conclusion No. 91 (LII) – 2001, dated 5 October 2001, that confirmed the fundamental principles on which all registration activities should be based. It recommended basic considerations for registration and encouraged the development of registration guidelines, as well as new techniques and tools.
- ✓ The overall objectives of the project are to:
 - a) Design new standards and procedures to improve the quality of registration and up-date guidelines accordingly;
 - b) Develop new tools such as software and biometrics to help make registration tasks more uniform and effective;
 - c) Provide direct support to field operations in carrying out registration activities by using new methods and tools; and
 - d) Ensure that staff are well-versed in the latest procedures, standards and tools for conducting registration activities.
- ✓ The main activities of the project to date comprised:
 - a) The finalization of the UNHCR Handbook for Registration – by DIPS in conjunction with the Population and Geographic Data Section (PGDS) in September 2003 (provisional release);
 - b) The creation of a new global registration application (proGres); and
 - c) The roll-out of proGres, as well as staff training in all UNHCR offices that register a certain level of persons of concern.
- ✓ The expected impact of the project is an improved quality of registration management, and an improved quality of documentation and protection provided to persons of concern, as well as ensuring equitable access to services and entitlements. In addition it was expected to improve the UNHCR programme delivery with realistic population indicators and verifiable assumptions.

2. Audit Objectives

The main objectives of the audit were to:

- ✓ Assess whether the project accomplishments appropriately reflect the objectives for the project, and the expected outcome is achievable within the timelines established;
- ✓ Evaluate whether the outcome of the project will be viable and sustainable (sufficient strategic plans have been developed, adequate staffing resources with the skills and experience required, etc.);
- ✓ Review the administration of the project to determine compliance with UNHCR rules, policies and administrative instructions, and
- ✓ Evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the controls in place to ensure the reliability and integrity of financial and operational information.

3. Audit Scope and Methodology

- ✓ The audit focused on the period between the start of the project in 2002 and the end of 2005, with a total expenditure of some US\$ 9.3 million and with a remaining budget of some US\$ 2.5 million for 2006. Our review concentrated on the activities of the Project Profile team, as well as the other UNHCR divisions involved, such as DIST, DOS and DIPS.
- ✓ The audit activities included a review and an assessment of internal control systems, interviews with staff, an analysis of the applicable data and a review of the available documents and records. More in particular OIOS:
 - ✓ Reviewed pertinent staff members' personnel files to determine whether staff assigned to a function had the necessary qualifications and experience;
 - ✓ Sent questionnaires to the 42 field offices that had proGres installed over the course of the project to obtain feedback on the status of implementation, the problems encountered, and the adequacy of the support from Headquarters, and
 - ✓ Attended a workshop on Project Profile that was organised for the Project Profile staff at Headquarters and in the field.

4. Audit Findings and Recommendations

4.1. Project Management

4.1.1 Objectives

- ✓ Prior to embarking on Project Profile, consultants (Deloitte) were engaged to study and make recommendations on the scope of the project. OIOS understands that the results of the study and its recommendations were generally supported by UNHCR.
- ✓ It was concluded that senior management's continued support of a population data management system was essential to the future success of the project. The report also identified that:
 - ✓ There were no clear owners for the major population data processes, and hence a lack of common procedures, standards and definitions, which resulted in sub-optimal information management processes;
 - ✓ The technical infrastructure (i.e. tools and techniques) was fragmented, limiting the operational mechanisms for information capture, usage and exchange, and
 - ✓ Only very limited resources were dedicated to registration and population data management, both at Headquarters and in the field. The limited knowledge, experience and information available was continuously threatened due to a lack of training provided.
- ✓ In OIOS' opinion, commendable efforts have been made to address the findings and recommendations of the Deloitte Report and to incorporate them into Project Profile's objectives. For example, common registration standards have been developed; an improved technical infrastructure has been established by providing computer hardware, consultant's time and registration training to field operations. A new registration manual was provisionally published in 2003 and the final version is expected to be published by mid-2006.

4.1. Project Management

4.1.1 Objectives (cont'd)

- ✓ OIOS appreciates that the risks of non-achievement of the project objectives are well known to the Project Team. The main risks identified by the project are incomplete and/or inadequate registration of persons of concern, as field operations do not consistently record and maintain information on persons of concern, as well as proliferation of locally developed independent systems and the lack of consistent practices. This can result in the loss of credibility with governmental and other partners and a waste of resources, both human and financial.
- ✓ In order to address these risks there needs to be continuity in the deployment and development of registration standards and procedures, including IT systems. OIOS appreciates that UNHCR's present serious financial constraints may have an effect on this in the short-term. Nonetheless, it is important that the Project Team under the guidance of the Project Board prioritise what is achievable in 2006 and 2007 to ensure that the new registration process/system becomes effective and that its sustainability is guaranteed. Otherwise all work done will be lost, and the envisaged long-term advantages of the project will not be realized.
- ✓ In OIOS' opinion, further steering and prioritising, especially with regard to the individual country operations, is required. This cannot be achieved by the Project Team on its own and this must therefore be the responsibility of UNHCR senior management both at Headquarters and at the field level. The discussions whether to continue Project Profile in 2007 will not, in OIOS' opinion, resolve the fundamental issues challenging the viability and sustainability of the project results, but only postpone the inevitable need for their resolution.

4.1. Project Management

4.1.2. Ownership and Governance

Project Profile Project Board

- ✓ Project Profile is an inter-divisional effort led by the Division of Operational Support. The project is governed by a Project Board, headed by the Deputy High Commissioner. The Project Board formally consists of the:
 - ✓ Deputy High Commissioner (Chair)
 - ✓ Assistant High Commissioner (Alternate Chair)
 - ✓ Director, Division of Operational Support
 - ✓ Director, Division of International Protection Service
 - ✓ Director, Division of External Relations
 - ✓ Director, Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
 - ✓ Chief, Population and Geographic Data Section (ex-officio)
 - ✓ Project coordinator, Project Profile (ex-officio)
- ✓ OIOS noted that the official composition of the Board did not include a representative of DIST.¹ Representatives of DIST have nevertheless attended Board meetings. In OIOS' opinion, as Project Profile is an information technology intensive project and one of the strategic platforms for future application development in UNHCR, DIST should have been an official member from the outset. *The Board agreed to this.*
- ✓ According to its Terms of Reference, the Project Board should have made “all the substantive decisions related to the project, including those related to project plans, content, scope, objectives, staffing, resources and budgets”. The Board was responsible for overseeing the work, reviewing external contracts entered into before submission to the Committee on Contracts, monitoring achievements, ensuring adequate and appropriate progress, and making recommendations to adjust, re-focus and re-direct the Project as necessary to meet the project objectives.
- ✓ In OIOS' view the Board did not meet regularly enough to fulfill its responsibilities. OIOS received minutes of only four meetings, and was not able to establish if any other meetings were held.
- ✓ The Board added value as an information sharing platform, since it was a cross-divisional project and input and opinions from the various players involved were essential. It did not however fully fulfil its responsibilities as decision making body.

¹ at the time ITTS

4.1. Project Management

4.1.2. Ownership and Governance (cont'd)

- ✓ For the future, UNHCR needs to assess the rational of having a decision-making Project Board where accountability for the success or failure of the project cannot be clearly assigned.
- ✓ OIOS is pleased to note that a new IT Governance Board has been established, that will be responsible for reviewing the substance of all IT related projects.

Ownership of registration

- ✓ Project Profile is formally a part of DOS, although the project is inter-divisional by nature and content. According to the latest plans presented to OIOS, after the phase-out of the project, its content (registration expertise) will stay within DOS under PGDS while technical support will be provided by DIST.
- ✓ There is a further layer of ownership, namely of the registered data. OIOS understands that the registration data is currently owned by the country operations responsible for the registration, that are also directly responsible for assuring adequate resources to allow for registration.
- ✓ OIOS noted that DIPS has no direct role in the registration process, even though registration data are utilized and refined for protection purposes at later stages of the 'life cycle' of UNHCR's persons of concern. The registration process and the systems used for that process thus form an inseparable part of protection. OIOS was informed that DIPS had suspended the development efforts of case management systems awaiting the outcome of Project Profile. If the development work is to continue, DIPS and DOS need to agree on system(s) and data ownership, as well as the management of the development efforts.
- ✓ OIOS is of the opinion that without clear ownership the sustainability of the registration process is ambiguous.

(Recommendation 01)

4.1. Project Management

4.1.3. Resources

- ✓ At the time of the audit, the Project Team consisted of nine staff working directly for the project; an additional three DIST staff formed part of the field roll-out teams. Out of the nine project team staff, five were hired under temporary assistance (TA). For 2006, two persons were selected for their respective posts and one TA contract expired at the end of 2005.
- ✓ Although Project Profile was initially set out to last only two years, in light of which it may have been appropriate to hire the Project Coordinator through a TA contract, in retrospect this may not have been the correct approach. The Project Coordinator contract has had to be continually extended since September 2002. The other four staff on TA contracts also occupied functions with an expected duration of more than 12 months, namely those of the technical architect of the proGres system and the roll-out team registration officer. This way of hiring staff for a project, although it allowed flexibility and timeliness in getting the team on board, has in the long-run caused an additional administrative burden to the project.
- ✓ With regard to the budget, the following table indicates the estimates as well as the actual budget spent on project profile:

	Estimate in Study for Scoping Project Profile Jan 2001	Original budget in Business Case Nov 2002	Current estimate
Budget million US\$	12	10	12
Timeframe years	3	2	4 (maybe 5)

4.1. Project Management

4.1.3. Resources (cont'd)

- ✓ As the table indicates, the budget initially (at the project scope stage) estimated that the project would cost US\$ 12 million over a three-year period. The budget was later decreased to US\$ 10 million over a two-year period. Current cost estimates relate to US\$ 12 million while the project is moving into its fourth year and may be extended to a fifth year, which will have financial consequences.
- ✓ The bulk of the expenditure to date comprised:
 - ✓ Staffing costs (about US\$ 5 million);
 - ✓ Information system development contracts (US\$ 1.9 million);
 - ✓ Travel related to the field roll-out (US\$ 1.9 million), and
 - ✓ New IT equipment for about US\$ 1.5 million.
- ✓ This does not, however, reflect the actual costs of the project, as other additional ‘supporting contributions’ were made by PGDS and DIST (e.g. DIST has dedicated seven full-time posts to Project Profile in 2006). The Project has also supported ongoing registration efforts that would have created expenditure. *It was correctly pointed out however that costs savings resulted from those costs associated with registration activities (and included in the normal budget submissions). It is difficult therefore to quantify the ‘true’ additional costs.*
- ✓ OIOS observed that considering the importance and high expectations of the project, it had to operate with a bare minimum of staff. This has been a huge challenge for the project, especially as the implementation teams were travelling to field operations some 70 per cent of their time.
- ✓ Given the availability of funds, the project provided some country operations with additional resources (equipment and technical support) for the proGres system. This additional support - at no cost for the operation - will not be available after the project ends. OIOS found little evidence in the country operations plans for 2006, that they had prepared for the project implementation by budgeting the necessary resources (equipment, staffing skills, training, etc) to maintain proGres (rather the contrary in the responses to the OIOS field questionnaire).

4.2. Project Results

4.2.1. Standard Registration Procedures

- ✓ The introduction of the ‘UNHCR standard registration procedures’ is a challenge considering the wide range of registration practices adopted by field offices, including the different interpretations for some commonly used terms. These challenges were encountered by the implementation teams during the roll out and the training of staff at field offices.
- ✓ Without forward direction and monitoring of field procedures, and with the passage of time, OIOS is concerned that the new common registration standards may be eroded. While UNHCR’s new registration handbook describes the principles and standards of registration and provides practical information on how to register, manage population data and issue documentation, this alone is not sufficient to ensure a consistent global UNHCR registration system in the longer term. Already, a number of follow-up missions of the Project Profile team have been requested for additional training, report development and data cleaning.
- ✓ As noted above, each country operation implementing the new registration standards was provided with training on the new registration standards and the proGres system. OIOS was informed that key persons were not always selected for the training, and in some cases the training was allocated simply to staff showing an interest in the subject. Training is costly to the Organization and it should have been focused and directed to the correct persons. If not, the future and the sustainability of the project is in jeopardy, and the long-term capacity of staff responsible for this function is not assured. *The Board Members mentioned that as field staff (field officers and assistants) are normally responsible for the registration process, efforts should be made to provide these staff with the necessary skills and expertise to conduct their functions effectively.*

(Recommendation 02)

4.2. Project Results

4.2.2. ProGres System and User Support

- ✓ According to the most recent plan Project Profile will have rolled out proGres in most country operations performing registration before the Project is phased out.
- ✓ In some field offices, where there is a large caseload and highly customised systems are already in use (e.g. Iran and Afghanistan) the systems will not be replaced by proGres, at least in the short-term. Also for some country operations, where caseloads are small, a system like proGres, with a database server and technical support requirements, will be too advanced (and costly) to handle.
- ✓ ProGres is a distributed database application and, unlike previous registration systems, it is not a stand-alone application that could – in terms of technical skills - be operated by all staff. ProGres requires specialized technical support for long term and large-scale use. The current support plan is based on the idea that DIST provides technical support and DOS/PDGS provides the registration related ‘content support’ for field operations.
- ✓ After the proGres system has gone live the responsibility for operating it rests with each field location. This requires a willingness of each field office to allocate the necessary resources to maintain the data and the system. These skills are not always available locally, which could mean the recruitment of international staff. This comes at a price.
- ✓ The support issue should be considered in a wider context, considering the need for consolidated field data management and the different support layers at local, regional and Headquarters level.

(Recommendation 03)

4.2. Project Results

4.2.2. ProGres System and User Support (cont'd)

- ✓ Due to budget constraints during the development stage of proGres, the reporting feature was excluded from the first release, and was only later included as an add-on functionality. As proGres is highly configurable and the reporting needs in country operations vary greatly, various field operations have developed their own reports. There are no standard reports developed or consistently installed to address most of the general country or Headquarter level reporting needs. In OIOS' opinion, without fully standardizing at least a few reports, some of the advantages of proGres are lost.
- ✓ To be able to provide support for the current variety of reports developed at the country level may become a challenge – if for example 50 country operations have 10 different reports each, the end result is 500 different reports. OIOS is concerned that by concentrating on the needs of individual country operations, the opportunities for improvement and streamlining of management information will be lost.
- ✓ In the responses to the OIOS field questionnaire, reporting was the area most mentioned as requiring improvement in terms of the possibility to create new reports and/or the skills needed to produce reports.

(Recommendation 04)

4.2. Project Results

4.2.3. Biometrics

- ✓ Over the course of the project the introduction of biometrics has been considered. The currently tested biometric features is fingerprinting. The fingerprinting technology has been attached to the core proGres system as an add-on function, sponsored by the Dutch Government and developed by HSB Netherlands.
- ✓ While biometrics is seen as a very valuable tool for validating the registration process, it is a costly method to use. Further consideration of using the feature is therefore necessary and the Project Profile team should clarify in which situations the use of biometrics is recommended.

(Recommendation 05)

- ✓ With regard to the storage of the fingerprint data, it has been decided that only the template of the fingerprint will be stored (i.e. not the actual image but rather a coded description of the fingerprint). OIOS agrees with this approach, as it saves storage space and eases the capacity requirements of the database servers. In addition it provides extra security, as the original fingerprint is not readily available.
- ✓ It should be highlighted however that this storage limitation binds UNHCR to the currently selected vendor, as the coding methodology used is proprietary technology.

4.2. Project Results

4.2.4. Government/Implementing Partner Support

- ✓ The use of registration data is not limited to country operations. As field offices are required to provide a wide range of statistics based on proGres, the system indirectly facilitates data analyses of themes or regions (e.g. general statistics of a particular region, movements of persons of concern from one country operation to another, etc.). In addition, specific data may be required for external partners (e.g. countries considering resettlement of refugees).
- ✓ In paragraph (v) of the Conclusion of the ExCom dated October 2001, UNHCR is requested to “explore the modalities for sharing data with States, for the specific purposes acknowledged in paragraph (f) of Conclusion No. 91, in a manner that fully respects international norms and standards regarding personal data protection”. Para. (f) of Conclusion No. 91 reads: “the confidential nature of personal data and the need to continue to protect confidentiality, also recognizes that the appropriate sharing of some personal data in line with data protection principles can assist States to combat fraud, to address irregular movements of refugees and asylum seekers, and to identify those not entitled to international protection under the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol.”
- ✓ The latest proGres version (2.0) supports a functionality to share a partial registration database with third parties, like implementing partners and governments. This functionality has not been tested and therefore, there is no information available on whether the planned operational scenario would work in practice, nor on the amount of support required by the third party concerned. The system requires a technical competence that is not readily available in some regions of the world. Noting the challenges proGres support brings to UNHCR field offices, considerably more thought should be given to the practicalities involved in sharing the system with third parties. If UNHCR field offices do not have the expertise to maintain the system, it is unlikely that many of its counterparts (governments/implementing partners) will.

(Recommendation 06)

4.2. Project Results

4.2.4. Government/Partner Support (Cont'd)

- ✓ There are currently no clear guidelines for the privacy issues related to individual refugee data in electronic format, including data sharing within UNHCR, as well as with the host country, country of origin and country of (possible) resettlement. This issue becomes even more pertinent in light of the fingerprinting technology.
- ✓ To overcome some of the challenges created by the current Headquarters based support of proGres, the technical support group has direct remote access to proGres in some country operations, and back-up field information at the Geneva level in others. This direct access means that there is a possibility to remotely access the confidential data collected by the field systems. Although this access enables advanced users to support field operations, there is no formal (security) policy to guide and safeguard the use of these confidential data.
- ✓ OIOS appreciates that DOS and DIPS are currently developing policies concerning the use of biometric data and data confidentiality. Nonetheless, in OIOS' view, the coverage should be widened to include guidelines and policies on electronic refugee data storage, - archiving and - sharing. The sharing of information also requires clear guidelines on the validation of data received from third parties.

(Recommendation 07)

4.3. Building on the Project Results

- ✓ As the project is ending, there is a need to establish a strategic plan to ensure that the accumulated knowledge is documented and shared. This includes data sharing with the system vendors, but also internal data sharing.

(Recommendation 08)

- ✓ OIOS observed that there are no strategic plans on how to further develop proGres. In particular development relating to the maintenance of the system - should it only include fixing (severe) bugs or should it include (small) enhancements - and possibilities for new development, such as the expansion of the use of data and adding protection related components for case management, need to be addressed.
- ✓ Moreover, UNHCR, while building the proGres system, procured the system development from an outside vendor. The understanding was that by the end of the development process the vendor would provide UNHCR with the source code, as well as the other documentation relating to the system, to enable UNHCR to support and further develop proGres. The source code has been provided to UNHCR, but OIOS was informed that the related documentation was not currently readily available. OIOS has established that there are only two staff members in UNHCR who have any notable experience in the proGres system development environment, and they are not highly experienced in using system development tools. It thus seems that the further development of the system within UNHCR, even though it has obtained the source code, is currently not a viable option.

(Recommendation 09)

4.4. Recommendations

Recommendation 01:

- The UNHCR Division of Operational Support and the Division of International Protection Services should explore the modalities of future protection related components based on registration data and draw up a realistic development plan.

In response, DOS stated that DIPS and DOS should agree on priorities for additional development of protection-related aspects of ProGres by the end of 2006. OIOS is pleased to note the proposed action and will monitor its implementation for which DOS indicated its design, development and testing would take at least one year.

Recommendation 02:

- The UNHCR Division of Operational Support in conjunction with the Division of Human Resources Management (Staff Development Section) should integrate training on the new registration systems and procedures (by way of a training module or other method) in ‘mainstream staff training’. Moreover, the ability to use the proGres system should be considered as a standard requirement for Field Officers assigned to country operations performing registration.

In response, DOS stated that updated sections on registration have already been included, or are in the process of being included in UNHCR core publications such as the Operations Management Learning Programme, the Handbook for Emergencies, and Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual. By the end of May 2006, a User Guide for Version 2 of proGres will be launched, and an Operational Data Management Learning Programme should become available to staff before the end of 2006. Finally DOS is working with DHRM on the introduction of ‘Operational Data Management’ as one of the standard functional competencies in the UNHCR CMS system, which should also be introduced by the end of 2006. OIOS is pleased to note the development work already done and will monitor the implementation of the various up-dates in manuals and learning programmes.

4.4. Recommendations Cont'd

Recommendation 03:

- The UNHCR Department of Operations should set priorities for registration (proGres) and effectively communicate these to field operations. It should also ensure that resource requirements are adequately reflected in the country operation plans. In addition a plan should be developed to clearly define the need, role, and skill requirements for local support, as well as the support structure within regional and Headquarter contexts.

In response, DOS stated that the 2007 Programming Instructions included instructions with regard to prioritizing and budgeting for registration activities. In addition, DOS has been working with the Bureaux regarding key registration-related posts that need to be created at the regional and local level in 2007, as was also reflected in the recent annual submissions to the ORB. At the Headquarter level, Project Profile will be mainstreamed into DOS, DIST and DIPS at the end of 2006, with all functional responsibility reverting to DOS (FICSS), policy development to DIPS and FICSS, and technical responsibility to DIST. A clear written framework defining roles and responsibilities at the local, regional and Headquarters levels will be agreed upon by the end of 2006. OIOS is again pleased to note the action already taken, and will monitor its implementation.

Recommendation 04:

- The UNHCR Division of Operational Support should, in cooperation with Division of International Protection Services and the Bureaux, revisit the reporting features of proGres to ensure that standard reports provide adequate information and that the data provided is consistent to ensure reliable global reporting.

In response, DOS agreed and noted that the initial review of reporting requirements and formats is “underway and will continue through 2006”. OIOS is pleased to note that action is being taken to ensure consistency in reporting.

4.4. Recommendations Cont'd

Recommendation 05:

- The UNHCR Division of Operational Support should create a realistic and time-bound plan for testing biometrics and determining whether, or under which circumstances, they should be used as part of the standard registration process.

In response, DOS stated that DIPS is already in the process of developing policy guidance on the use of biometrics, to be completed by 1 July 2006. In addition DOS and DIST are piloting the application and should complete the initial piloting phase by the end of 2006. OIOS is pleased to note the action taken in the development of policy guidance and will monitor its implementation.

Recommendation 06:

- The UNHCR Division of Operational Support should proceed with the testing of the functionality to share registration data with third parties. In addition, an assessment should be done to determine in which cases it is practical and cost effective to share information taking into consideration the support and resources that may have to be provided to implementing partners and governments in order to make this functionality effective and reliable.

In response, DOS agreed and added that testing and piloting should be conducted in a limited number of operations through 2006. In addition, a review should be conducted in early 2007 to determine the practicality and cost effectiveness of data sharing activities with partners using proGres. As part of that review, practical guidelines should be established on how and under what circumstances shared registration activities with partners may/should be undertaken. OIOS will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendation.

4.4. Recommendations Cont'd

Recommendation 07:

- The UNHCR Division of Operational Support should, in cooperation with the Division of International Protection Services and the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications, continue to develop clear and concise policies and guidelines to govern the access, storage, sharing, and archiving of refugee data, specifically addressing issues relating to electronic data. Such policy and subsequent guidelines should form part of UNHCR wide guidelines for access to electronic data.

In response, DOS agreed, but stressed that DIPS “has the lead” in policy development in this area. A policy framework agreement is expected by 31 October 2006. OIOS will monitor the implementation of the recommendation.

Recommendation 08:

- The UNHCR Division of Operational Support (Project Team) in conjunction with the Project Board should ensure that lessons learned from Project Profile are properly documented and communicated within UNHCR.

In response, DOS referred to its comments made under recommendation 3 and reiterated that a full handover of the work of Project Profile, including all documentation, records and responsibilities will take place in December 2006. In addition four staff positions from Project Profile will move to FICSS to maintain the continuity of activities initiated under the Project. Furthermore Project Profile is in the process of discussing with Microsoft its willingness and ability to assist in documenting on a pro-bono basis the work done by the system vendors. OIOS appreciates that already constructive hand-over procedures are being developed, as this is crucial to the continued success of the project.

4.4. Recommendations Cont'd

Recommendation 09:

- The UNHCR Department of Operations, together with the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications, should strategically consider what further developments may be required of proGres and ensure that the necessary resources (in-house or otherwise) can be adequately sourced as and when required.

In response, DOS agreed but noted, with reference to its comments made under recommendation 1, that further development related to proGres will be subject to organization-wide prioritization . DOS further suggested that the mechanism to be used should be the development of joint recommendations to the IT Management Board. This Board, which is currently in the process of being established will be chaired by the Director of DIST and will serve as a clearing house / approval body for all IT development in UNHCR. OIOS is aware of the new governance structure on IT development within UNHCR, and agrees that a joint presentation to the IT Governance Board would be appropriate.

5. Acknowledgement

- ✓ I wish to express my appreciation for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors by the staff of UNHCR.

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