UNITED NATIONS

Office of Internal Oversight Services UNHCR Audit Service

Assignments AR2006/160/03 Audit Report R06/R004 15 February 2007

REVIEW OF UNHCR REGIONAL SUPPORT HUBS

Auditors:

Alpha Diallo Krishna Menon Anita Hirsch Humphrey Kagunda Gesine Aden **UNITED NATIONS**



NATIONS UNIES

Office of Internal Oversight Services UNHCR Audit Service

REVIEW OF UNHCR REGIONAL SUPPORT HUBS (AR2006/160/03)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June to November 2006, OIOS conducted an audit of UNHCR's Regional Support Hubs (RSH) in Ghana and Kenya as well as Headquarters' role in monitoring and managing the RSHs. The audit covered the functioning of the RSHs, the nature and quality of services provided, the procedures and practices of the functional units at Headquarters and the Bureau for Africa in assessing and planning the use of regional resources. *The Bureau has accepted most of the recommendations made and are in the process of implementing them.*

Overall Assessment

• OIOS established that there was overall satisfaction with the work undertaken by RSHs and the regional global officers although the functioning of the RSHs could be improved to ensure they are more effective and efficient in achieving their objectives. As UNHCR is considering outposting in the near future, it is essential that the RSH lessons are learned and that clearer objectives and expectations for outposting functions be defined from the outset to allow for the measurement and evaluation of the benefits obtained.

OIOS findings and recommendations

- The RSHs have been established in Ghana and Kenya. While the RSH in Kenya met most of the criteria for determining the location of the RSH, OIOS found that the position of the hub in Accra was less than ideal in terms of logistics, language spoken locally as opposed to that in the region covered and UN presence. In OIOS' view, the cost and logistics aspects may not have received proper consideration prior to determining the establishment of an RSH in Accra.
- The Bureau for Africa and most functional units at UNHCR Headquarters foresaw benefits for the RSHs in terms of proximity to the operations and the ability to react quickly in addressing areas of concern and the provision of assistance. Most functional units found tangible benefits emerging from the regional global posts, although these could not be measured.
- The creation of new posts at the RSHs had not been preceded by a needs assessment based on clear criteria of the expected added value. Also, considering changing strategic objectives and operational priorities, a post-by-post review had not been regularly and systematically performed.
- In reviewing the country coverage of each regional function, there did not appear to be any consistency in a given RSH, nor was the coverage in-line with that of the desks. Considering

the number of countries in both regions, the Bureau for Africa and functional units should agree on a more realistic coverage based on predefined criteria and a fully documented needs assessment involving field operations.

- Work procedures and reporting varied from one RSH to the other and interaction between the two had been limited. More interaction would ensure synergies are achieved by the sharing of best practices and experiences resulting in efficiencies and reducing the duplication of work. *The Bureau stated that more interaction between the hubs has taken place and will continue.*
- The regional global posts should serve the Bureau's strategy in their own specific field of expertise. It was indicated that sometimes strategies as implemented by the regional officers conflicted with those of the Bureau or that the agenda of functional units prevailed. The desks, identified as the principal Bureau interlocutors, admitted having little input in the planning or feedback for regional functions. Strategic planning meetings with all stakeholders of respective RSHs would allow for better global planning and arbitration on the RSHs operational plans. *The Bureau for Africa agreed to OIOS' recommendation and stated it would be taken into consideration as part of the overall strategic planning exercise.*
- An improved consultation process was necessary for the development of the regional global officers' workplans. Improvements as to the development of workplans by the Kenya RSH were evident in 2006. An effective consultation process would ensure that country operations' needs were properly reflected as well as achieving buy-in to the plan from the representations. *In response to the draft report the Kenya RSH also stated that they had developed standard operating procedures, which ensured that flexible workplans were developed in consultation with functional units, desks/Bureau and representations.* OIOS suggests that the standard operating procedures be reviewed, and if approved, be finalised for use by both RSHs.
- For assessing the performance of regional global officers, OIOS ascertained that due to multiple reporting lines there was a lack of clarity and understanding regarding the chain of supervision and command. Some units have almost entirely delegated the responsibility of the Performance Appraisal Report to the hub manager, on the grounds that they are not in a position to judge the performance of the regional incumbents. OIOS recommended that a process be established to ensure there is systematic feedback on the quality of services provided, as well as clearer reporting lines for regional global officers. *The Kenya RSH was of the opinion that these were clear and that functional units assessed function competencies with the hub manager focusing on core competencies.*

February 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION	1-6
II.	AUDIT OBJECTIVES	7-8
III.	AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	9-10
IV.	AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	A. Country location	11-13
	B. Added value of the Regional Support Hubs	14-16
	C. Needs assessment	17-23
	D. Country coverage	24-28
	E. Bureau's coordination role	29-32
	F. Review of regional functions	33-52
	G. Promotion of the regional services	53-56
	H. Appraisal of the regional global officers	57-65
	I. Client satisfaction from beneficiary offices	66-71
	J. Conclusion	72-74
V.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	75

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION