

TS 1 — *Training Module*

Technical Support



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UNHCR
Training Service
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UNHCR/A. Holtman—Refugees from Mozambique in Malawi

Foreword

This training module has been produced by the Technical Support Service of UNHCR, with the assistance of the Training Service. Copies may be obtained from the Training Resource Centre.

Editorial services have been provided by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Disaster Management Center. These services have mainly concerned the educational components of this module, as well as its formatting.

Introduction

Why this training module?

From a small organisation with a modest budget, UNHCR has grown into an agency which manages large-scale assistance programmes in diverse locations throughout the world. Many of these are in remote areas in developing countries, where the basic infrastructure is inexistence or inadequate.

Much of this assistance is provided through *operational partners*—which may be a governmental department, or a non-governmental organization. But the ultimate responsibility for the way the assistance is provided through those programmes and the actual benefit it brings to refugees *rests with UNHCR*.

The choice of the wrong site for a refugee settlement, neglect of nutritional needs, failure to diagnose an epidemic and take the necessary steps—these are mistakes we cannot afford to make. The international community which finances the assistance may lose credibility and waste resources. For the refugees these mistakes may be fatal. In most cases these mistakes can be avoided through proper technical planning.

This training module is designed to help you understand:

- what technical support is all about
- when technical support is needed
- what forms it can take
- how you can use it

Who will use this module?

This module will be of interest to those concerned with assistance programmes, whether in field offices or at Headquarters. Staff of implementing partners will also find it useful.

In addition to these specific audiences, this module is designed to raise awareness of the importance of technical support for all UNHCR staff, particularly newly employed staff members.

***How to use
this module***

Each chapter begins with learning objectives, and ends with a self-assessment test. If you are using this module for self-instruction, use these tests to measure what you have learned, and compare your answers to the answer key you will find at the end of each chapter. You will also find case studies which you can analyze to help you learn by example. Again, you will be able to compare your own thoughts and conclusions with those of the specialists. Don't hesitate to write in the spaces provided for this purpose within the pages of this module, or use separate sheets if you prefer this method.

There is a separate *Trainer's Guide* for those of you who are presenting this module to a group. This guide gives you suggestions as to how to make your presentation as effective as possible, including audio-visual aids to bring the subject alive.

Basic facts you should know about technical support



UNHCR/A Hallman

Vietnamese boat people in Malaysia

Chapter Learning Objectives

In this chapter you will learn

- *the role of technical support in UNHCR's programmes*
- *when technical support is needed*
- *the need for multi-sectoral applications*

A large group of persons, probably refugees, is reported to have crossed from country "A" to country "B". How does UNHCR respond? In country "C" the Government has just decided to move 15,000 refugees from border camps to a rural settlement: what technical actions are necessary? Nearby, in country "D" the authorities are in the process of concluding an agreement with country "E" which will allow 50,000 refugees to return home: what planning steps should be considered?

Situations like these frequently arise. The questions you must ask are:

?

*In what areas is technical support necessary?
What types are available, both inside and outside UNHCR?
What is the Technical Support Service?
How can you obtain technical expertise in UNHCR?*

These are some of the questions we shall try to answer in this module.

The context

In the introductory section describing the purpose of this module, we mentioned the rapid growth of UNHCR's programmes which occurred in the latter part of the 1970's and the challenge it brought. The task of providing assistance on a larger scale has been made all the more complex since many of the refugee and returnee movements have taken place in low-income countries.

UNHCR's operational role

The notion of UNHCR's operational role is fundamental to understanding the importance of technical support. It is also a subject on which ideas have evolved with the changing scale of UNHCR's assistance programmes.

UNHCR's statute

If you refer to UNHCR's Statute, adopted by governments in 1950, you will see that it was the intention that UNHCR should seek "permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and, subject to the approval of the Governments concerned, private organizations . . ."

At that time the world's attention was focused on Europe and the situations created by the Second World War. UNHCR was a new institution, with virtually no funds for assistance programmes. It took several years before governments authorized the High Commissioner to raise funds for this very purpose.

UNHCR's accountability

Since then the situation has changed radically. UNHCR is responsible for large-scale assistance activities. Most of them are still implemented by operational partners. These include government agencies, other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. However, the responsibility and accountability for these programmes remain largely with UNHCR.

This fundamental principle was recalled in IOM/62/86—FOM/54/86 which states that: "We are fully responsible and accountable to the international community and the refugees for operations during the full life cycle of a refugee situation—all the way from early warning/contingency planning through lasting solutions to the plight of refugees."

What is meant by technical support?

Let's begin with a general definition:



Technical support comprises the utilization of technical assistance (personnel, approaches, materials) in the planning, design, and implementation of UNHCR programmes and projects.

In practice, it can mean a whole range of activities, which we shall be looking at in some detail when we come to *Chapter 2*. Meanwhile, a few examples will help you form some idea:

- responding to a medium- or large-scale emergency
- considering all the aspects of a new integrated rural development or settlement scheme
- including various elements in a refugee assistance programme oriented towards development

- putting into place a comprehensive urban case management system
- developing and integrating an educational curriculum benefiting refugees within a national educational programme

Technical expertise is needed in each of these activities—and in many others besides.

The tools

TSS

Technical support is provided through a variety of means, which we shall be examining in *Chapter 3*. In this context, we shall be looking in particular at the structure of the Technical Support Service (TSS) at Headquarters, which represents a major vehicle for this purpose.

When is technical support needed?

Technical support forms an integral part of all aspects of UNHCR's assistance programmes. The various types of programmes (General and Special Programmes) are described in the Training Module on programme management, which you may wish to consult for background information.

Of direct relevance to this module are the five phases of assistance, and the UNHCR programming cycle, which we shall now consider from the point of view of technical support.

The five phases of assistance

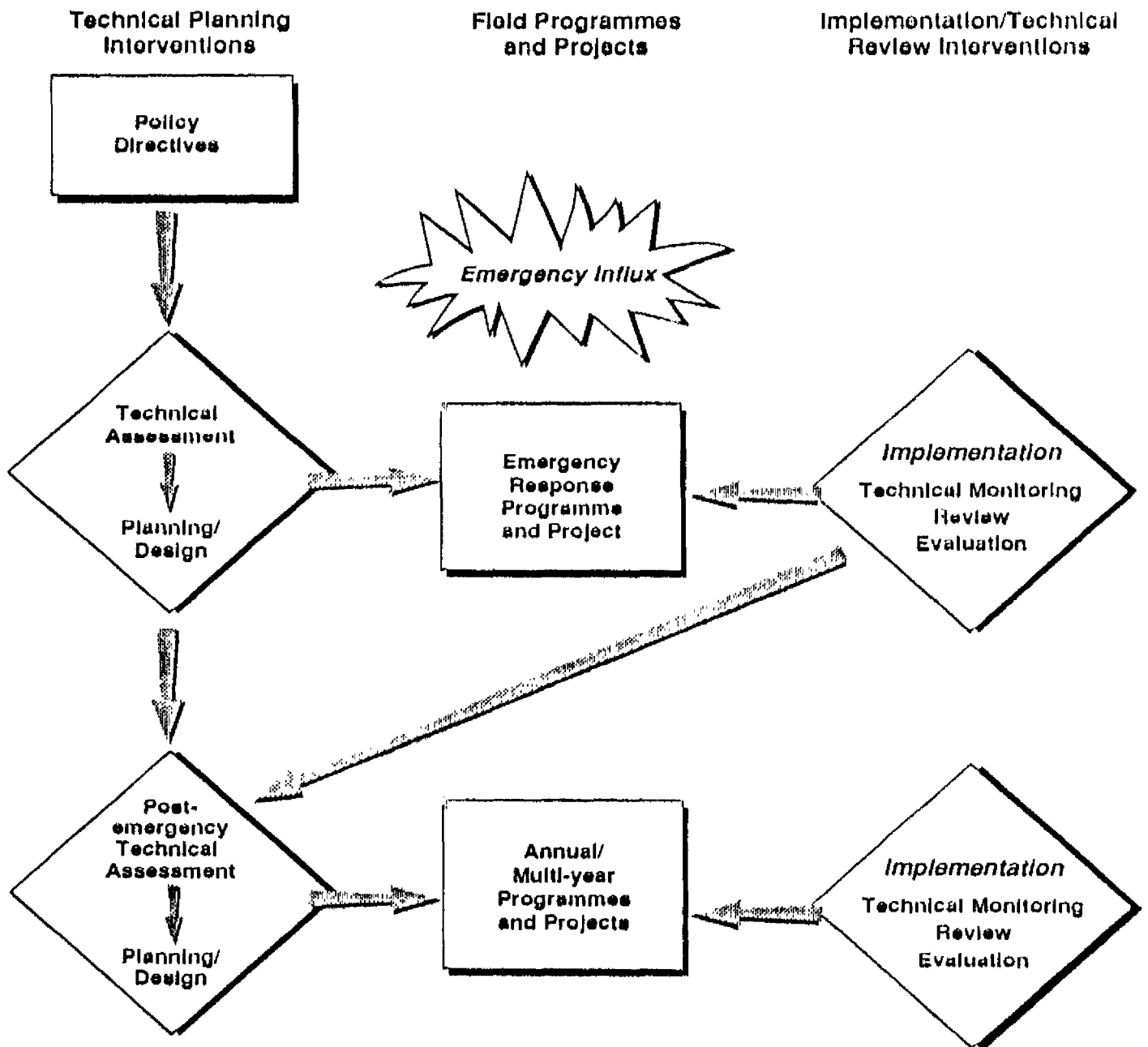


The five phases of assistance are:

- Emergency (EM)
- Care and Maintenance (CM)
- Local Settlement (LS)
- Voluntary Repatriation (RP)
- Resettlement (RE)

A brief description of technical inputs in each of these phases is given on the following page.

Technical Interventions In Field Programmes



Care and maintenance	Refugee camp planning and management, and other technical solutions to assist refugees pending identification of durable solutions.
Local settlement	Technical assistance to spontaneously-settled refugees, refugees in rural or sub-urban settlements, and programmes benefiting urban refugees.
Voluntary repatriation	Technical aspects of operations planning and implementation of a voluntary repatriation programme.
Resettlement	Technical assistance (medical checks, counselling) prior to departure.

Technical interventions in field programmes are summarized in the flow chart on the preceding page. It shows how planning, design, and implementation of an emergency response is succeeded by longer-term assistance.

The UNHCR programme cycle

Excom UNHCR's programming activities follow a specific sequence each year, commonly referred to as the programme cycle. You will find this illustrated on the following page. The major date within the cycle is that of the annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. It is then that the report on the previous year's programme, revisions for the current year, and proposals for the coming year, are submitted for approval.

Look carefully at the figure on the following page. It shows the various operations which form part of the cycle. Those involving technical support are indicated in bold print. You will see that they mainly concern the formulation of programmes, their monitoring and evaluation.

The UNHCR Programme Cycle

JANUARY	Reports by field offices on assistance activities previous year; Statement of Field Objectives.	
FEBRUARY		
MARCH	Re-assessment of needs for current year	
APRIL	First monitoring report of current year Project revisions for current year (proposed) Project submissions for next year (proposed)	Headquarters review of revisions/submissions
MAY	Review by High Commissioner and setting of budget level (referred to as target review)	
JUNE		Preparation of report to Executive Committee
JULY		
AUGUST	Second monitoring report	
SEPTEMBER	Current year's programme review to adjust target Transmission of High Commissioner's report to Executive Committee Updated project descriptions and budgets for next year	
OCTOBER	Examination (and approval of programmes by Executive Committee)	Preparation of implementing instruments for coming year
NOVEMBER	Plugging Conference (General Assembly, NY)	
DECEMBER		

A more detailed view of technical support at the various stages of the programme cycle is shown below. This time the tasks are listed according to activities of the past, current, and forthcoming years.

Technical Inputs In Annual Reporting Exercise	
Past year	Technical review, evaluation, proposal for corrective action, revision of multi-year project planning.
Current year	Technical review of on-going projects (approved at preceding year's EXCOM), consolidation and refinement of planning.
Coming year	Planning of new and consolidation of existing projects.
Annual Report on assistance activities to Executive Committee	

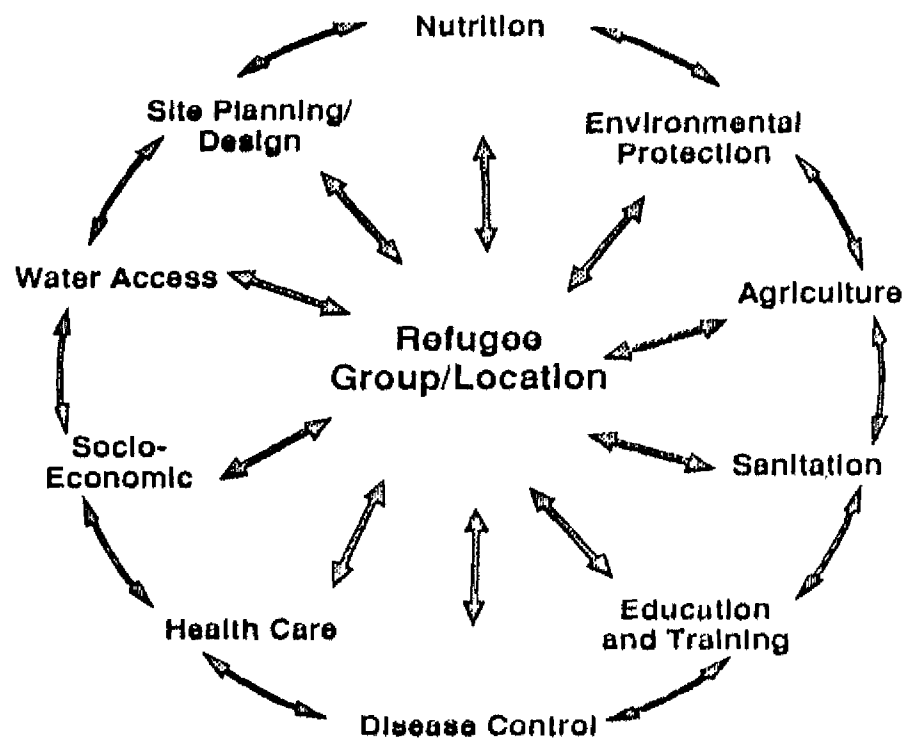
What is meant by the multi-sectoral approach?

From what we have just described, it might appear that technical support is sector-specific. You might imagine that plans for an emergency water system are made quite separately from a health care delivery system. In reality the two operations are complementary. A few examples can illustrate this further.

- The installation of a water system may need to be accompanied by the establishment of refugee water and sanitation committees.
- The development of medical programmes must include primary health care and nutrition, as well as curative components.
- A viable urban case management programme must incorporate programmes for education/vocational training and income-generating activities.
- Proper site planning must take into account environmental considerations, access to water, drainage locations, distance to sanitation and refuse points, and other factors.

As an example, the following figure may help you visualize the various components of the design of a local settlement situ.

The multi-sectoral approach



Always remember the importance of a multi-sectoral approach when planning a programme. Although there may be a need to focus on a specific sectoral problem, the technical know-how which you use must have a multi-sectoral dimension.

Review



1. Choose appropriate examples in the following list of activities, in which technical support is needed.

- _____ designing an integrated rural development scheme
- _____ assistance in the preparation of the annual report to the Executive Committee
- _____ putting into place an urban case management system
- _____ interviewing an applicant for refugee status
- _____ developing an educational curriculum for a refugee population
- _____ communicating with donors for the purpose of raising funds in support of a project

2. Technical support is an integral part of several stages of the UNHCR programme cycle. Give at least 3 examples.

3. What is meant by the multi-sectoral approach?

Answer Key



1. Choose appropriate examples in the following list of activities, in which technical support is needed.

- designing an integrated rural development scheme
- assistance in the preparation of the annual report to the Executive Committee
- putting into place an urban case management system
- interviewing an applicant for refugee status
- developing an educational curriculum for a refugee population
- communicating with donors for the purpose of raising funds in support of a project

2. Technical support is an integral part of several stages of the UNHCR programme cycle. Give at least 3 examples.

1. Evaluation of past year's projects
2. Revision of needs for current year
3. Review of project submissions for next year
4. Preparation of report to Executive Committee

3. What is meant by the multi-sectoral approach?

The multi-sectoral approach means taking account of the interdependence of individual technical sectors, and of the impact of one sector on another, in planning and implementing assistance programmes and projects.

