

specialised institutions or structures are in place. These two reasons, made these types of projects a necessity in the scope of QIPs in Guatemala while recognising that their more ambitious nature limited UNHCR's ability to ensure their sustainability.

- Notable innovations of QIP programme in Guatemala

The QIP programme in Guatemala began in 1993, making it part of the first generation of QIP programmes carried out by UNHCR and thus it did not benefit from later attempts to systematise and standardise QIP guidelines. In evaluation exercises, some of the particular strengths of the QIP programme, either innovative for UNHCR or within the Guatemalan context, include:

The extensive **use of community organisation counterparts** as implementing partners. In these cases NGOs often acted as technical advisors to the communities, but were not the formal project counterparts. This formula was used to invert the traditional roles (wherein NGOs control the funds and terms of the project while the community signs off) and give more organisational capacity to community groups.

In addition to the principal goal of aiding in reintegration, or at least addressing immediate and basic needs, an important collateral goal was the **use of projects as a means of promoting reconciliation**. The dynamic of bringing together diverse populations around their common needs and mutual interests (both within and between communities) proved strategic in breaking down different obstacles for communication between groups. In other cases, the reconciliation effect occurred because communities neighbouring returnees had reason to believe that their needs were also being considered and the presence of the returnees had helped attract much needed attention to their communities.

The strategy of using the QIPs **to attract national NGOs to open operations in new geographical areas** (that were also the most isolated and tense due to the continuing armed conflict) was effective. On the one hand, a single project or a group of projects allocated to an NGO often gave the organisation a funding base with which to justify new projects in the area for which funding was sought elsewhere. On the other hand, the presence and sponsorship of UNHCR was seen as institutional backing in a difficult political climate. There were also cases of NGOs specialised in certain sectors taking on new sectoral activities through QIPs once the NGO had developed rapport with a community and become familiar with a region. In at least one case a newly-formed NGO, created by professionals living in the rural area it covered, became an established, economically viable actor on the local scene through the QIP programme.

- Gender focus in QIP projects

While an ongoing stated starting point and ultimate goal of the QIP projects, a gender focus proved difficult to incorporate in an ideal manner and gender equity did not result from many of the projects. At the planning stages of the projects, some efforts were made to at least nominally include women, such as inviting women to meetings and adjusting the meeting time to one they could attend. While this meant that women's participation in planning was not specifically facilitated, an effort to not discriminate against women was made and women's status was reinforced in that outside and "important" institutions such as UNHCR and CECI insisted on them being present. There were also cases where community women emphasised their particular community priorities (often access to potable water) and these priorities were adopted by the community as a whole.

Often, however, women's participation was limited to so-called "women's projects" which tended to be smaller in terms of resources and impact when compared to what were considered "community projects" generally under the control of a group of male leaders. These "women's projects" were, in their own terms successful for the most part and included collective mechanised corn grinding mills, fuel-saving stoves, community stores and backyard animal or gardening production. *Ad hoc* committees were formed among women to run these projects or local affiliates of one of three returnee women's organisations were approached as counterparts.

The QIP programme emphasised the training and organisational components of these projects with the hope that the skills imparted and the experience of running a successful project would help the women improve their position or status in the community and further qualify them for

more important roles in other, male-controlled projects. The results were mixed: in some cases, women did learn valuable skills and have maintained successful projects to date. In other cases, women have become further divided as a result of a project and/or demoralised if the project has failed. Of the "typical" projects listed above, however, most were successful in resolving part of the day to day burden placed on women because of their domestic labour (fetching water from a distance, grinding corn by hand and gathering firewood) and were considerable positive priorities for returnee communities.

In regards to encouraging and enabling women's participation in larger projects that were desired and generally co-ordinated by men, the general rule is that the higher the stakes (the more resources involved or the more financially successful the project) the harder it was for men to cede space for women's participation and the harder it was to motivate women that they were capable and worthy of participating. The methodology of obligating the community to assign women to make up one-half of any counterpart project committee was not usually successful (with some exceptions). Women committee members were often silent observers and/or not taken into account when 'real' decisions were made.

An ultimate conclusion in this regard is that CECI received mixed messages from UNHCR in regard to gender policies and form of implementation. While CECI projects were often criticised for their apparent lack of gender focus or uneven participation of women, CECI was simultaneously pressured to execute more projects in less time and with fewer resources indirectly precluding the gradual process of creating the necessary conditions wherein women felt comfortable and able to participate. Also, from CECI's point of view, UNHCR gave vague criticism of gender-focus problems but did not provide close accompaniment or specific methodologies for overcoming them.

- QIPs carried out after closure of the QIP programme

In 1999, financial considerations led to the scaling back of the QIP programme, the focus for the year was restricted to new returning communities, follow-up for selected 1998 projects and administrative closure (transfer of project ownership etc.). Nevertheless, the last handful of collective return groups encountered many obstacles in negotiating land for settlement and several arrived in late 1998 and early 1999. Thus UNHCR decided to proceed with the closure of the QIP programme through CECI but reserve approximately U.S. \$100,000 for a handful of emergency projects in the new communities. Twenty-four projects were carried out in 15 communities. The projects included basic infrastructure (simple water systems or feasibility studies for water or electricity), support for schools and schoolteachers, corn-grinding mills and initial support for agricultural production or processing. UNHCR used Guatemalan consultants to design and follow-up project implementation and chose NGOs that were already active in the areas/communities in order to insure some follow-up for each project although UNHCR would not financially contribute to the NGO once the project was formally finished.

Although these small-scale QIPs implemented in 1999 were a mitigation strategy without ambitious goals, UNHCR-Guatemala evaluated the experience as extremely positive and cost-efficient. In some ways, the experience promoted reflection on the pros and cons of the "umbrella agency" model as opposed to UNHCR's direct implementation through a locally-employed technical team. While direct comparison of the two experiences is not possible in financial terms (because of the way the administrative costs were distributed differently in the two methodologies) and long-term sustainability of any of the projects can only be evaluated in the future, the following observations are pertinent:

Most implementing agencies will have fewer incentives to be more cost-efficient (with UNHCR funds) than does UNHCR when directly involved in implementation.

Any implementation methodology benefits from the presence of existing NGO (or other) counterparts in the communities, whose commitment to the project and relationship with the community goes beyond the funding period.

Reducing QIPs to their most minimal and basic expression, in line with the QIP methodology promoted by UNHCR in general, are satisfactory in that they do address emergency, immediate needs and are fairly simple and cost-effective. However, the reality for many returnees is the evident need for more ambitious projects that help build their economic security and, even without calling them development projects, UNHCR has often felt compelled to address these needs where other actors are not yet present.

Lessons learned: QIPs

- As practised in Guatemala, the QIP programme is a generally successful approach for addressing important community needs. Even when other institutions are available to provide similar projects, UNHCR QIPs are often more rapid. Speed, efficiency and flexibility are therefore characteristics to be conserved and fomented.
- QIPs can be utilised as a tool to meet the basic needs of a newly established community more efficiently to the extent that these are contemplated in a standard checklist that could generally include basic standards of water supply, education, sanitation, harvest processing for food or sale (in Guatemala: collective corn grinders and coffee or cardamom processing equipment).
- The potential for QIPs to be used as a reconciliation tool should be promoted and not underestimated. The opposite is also true: projects that foment divisions within and between communities undermine whatever other success the project promises.
- It is never too early to seek linkage and transition strategies for QIPs and QIP-like projects. NGOs successful at implementing certain standard QIPs can be presented for direct funding by other sources, long-term projects initiated by UNHCR must be channelled to others early on for long-term follow-up and tasks done well by other actors should be those that UNHCR is willing to cede as this becomes viable.
- The trade-off between the potential for productive and income-generating products (both credit and non-credit) which make repatriation a truly durable solution cannot be ignored but, as is evident, the follow-up involved and amounts of funding necessary is normally beyond the scope of QIPs as they are typically defined.
- The benefit of "quick" projects with rapid results is normally at odds with the requirements of conducting a project with a gender focus: rapid planning and implementation is often carried out with men who may or may not be representative of their community. The human and financial resources necessary to ensure gender equity in project planning and implementation must be considered as well as the time limits placed on project implementing partners.
- Other "short cuts" to reinforce women's participation (such as quotas in activities and committees or, as applied in Guatemala, the obligation for a male-run project to hand over a percentage of their projects to a women's organisation) not only ignore the more profound issues at hand but can, in some cases, further disadvantage women (either setting them up for failure or causing men, women and institutions to conform to solutions that look good on paper but do not change their reality).

#### ***d. Promoting women's community participation***

Guatemalan women faced new challenges in Mexican refugee camps in comparison to their prior experience in Guatemala. Ultimately, responding to these challenges led to an unprecedented transformation in how many women saw themselves and their potential participation in the community. Initially these women were largely unable to communicate with each other because of their different languages and lack of knowledge of Spanish as a *lingua franca*. Coming as they did from rural villages with no schools and no tradition of educating girls, refugee women at first had limited capacity and very low self-confidence with which to participate visibly in the organisation of refugee life. Nevertheless, the crisis of flight and emergency and of making the initial refugee camps to function forced women into new roles. Later, women were singled out to implement small economic projects. Even when these were unsuccessful economically, they were beneficial in that they brought refugee women together to collaborate.

In Mexico, NGOs, UNHCR and the refugee women's organisations eventually approached work with refugees with a defined agenda of empowering women as a necessary step to ensuring women's participation in creating durable solutions for themselves, their families and the community. Once refugee women's organisations had been created (with support from NGOs) a joint commission between UNHCR, the women's organisations and the NGOs was formed to co-ordinate their complementary agendas. UNHCR Mexico initiated a gender-based approach to its work in general, which included promoting the following in its work with Guatemalan refugee women:

- A literacy campaign designed with women's organisations which was used as a tool for raising women's self-esteem and contact with one another

- Implementation of time- and labour-saving devices such as mechanical corn-grinders and fuel-saving stoves.
- Reproductive health services.
- Training in improving communication skills was offered to refugee women and one result was a refugee women-run radio programme for other refugee women. This became an important vehicle for spreading information and improving skills of the women involved
- Protection and rights training encompassing human rights, women's rights, land rights, and awareness of sexual and domestic violence (including mechanisms to report such violations and how to receive follow-up from UNHCR).

These programmes were all undertaken with a clear decision by UNHCR Mexico to work closely with NGOs and to create an "open door" policy whereby both refugee women and men would feel comfortable approaching and working with UNHCR staff.

These and parallel efforts by other institutions and the growing enthusiasm of the refugee women helped lead to new possibilities as women spoke out more in regard to community matters, derived pride from having their own organisations, designated young women as health, education and human rights promoters and sent their daughters, as well as their sons, to school

Nevertheless, the high expectations that UNHCR, the women themselves and other actors had in regard to how refugee women would apply these skills and their new-found confidence once they had returned home, were unfulfilled. For the most part, women were not attaining leadership positions in community structures apart from in women's committees or as members of returnee women's organisations. Most women with partners were often discouraged or prohibited outright from joining the community co-operatives which in most cases was the equivalent of being excluded from community land ownership. Widows and other women heading households alone were not given any special considerations when asked to fulfil obligations to the community (in terms of paying co-operative dues or contributing with manual labour to community tasks) and thus these women were at a great disadvantage compared to two-person headed households. In general, women's visibility in the community in regard to decision-making and their contacts with the outside world were reduced upon return.

The reasons for this "backslide" when compared to women's expectations and the skills in evidence in the refugee camps, are more or less three-fold. Firstly, the objective conditions in the returnee communities were very different than those in the refugee camps. In the camps, basic needs were covered and in some cases, refugee families were generating adequate income. In general, education, health and other services were consistently available and many families had drinking water close to their homes as well as other advantages. Houses were close to one another and a dynamic had developed over many years between community women and their leaders.

Upon returning to Guatemala, at least initially, these factors changed completely. Women did not necessarily return with the same women leaders from their camp or settlement and in many cases, did not know most of the other families at all. Life once again revolved around daily survival; by necessity women were busy in their newly-established houses often dedicating considerable time to retrieving water or firewood and were engaged in any activity that could generate income. Women became more isolated and the lack of a pressing common objective (which as refugees had been to organise themselves in order to demand their return home) left them with no clear single common priority.

Secondly, in retrospect, there is evidence that the opportunity for women to meet together and exchange ideas, attend workshops, and voice opinions was tolerated and encouraged by men in refugee camps but stifled in return communities. The change of attitude both at the household level and at the level of community leadership was also due to many factors including the economic duress of the families already described. But the political organisation of the refugees as expressed through male leadership also had less use for women's organisation once the return had occurred; women's participation in Mexico had conveniently lured in extra funding and created pressure against the government. Ultimately, many men felt threatened that women would demand increasing quotas of decision-making power and/or felt that women had nothing to contribute where 'real' decisions were to be made. Moreover, both men and women were affected by the illusion that going back home meant that everything that had been upset during wartime would now go back to 'normal' and for some this normality was premised upon women limiting themselves to child-care and domestic work within the home

Thirdly, the organisational support that existed for Guatemalan refugee women in Mexico, did not exist for the most part for returnees. Few special opportunities were provided to women to enable them to continue their training and consciousness-raising activities. Institutional help focused on helping the women's organisations develop centralised structures which did not necessarily permit the organisations to work effectively with women at the grassroots. Many NGOs and government institutions were not aware of or interested in incorporating women and thus women remained invisible when resources were given out or projects implemented. When government institutions (often out of ignorance, not malice) told women that it was "impossible" to include them in the provision of some benefits, women were unsure how to assert their rights: where male community leaders and other institutions did not actively support them, these mixed messages sowed confusion and conflict. Overall, UNHCR underestimated how much special backing women would need in order to consolidate and apply the gains made in Mexico.

Lessons learned: women's participation

- Effective protection and genuinely durable solutions for women require an institutional approach at all levels based on rights advocacy. Anything less places women and their control of the resources received from UNHCR in a vulnerable situation, thus undermining the principal objectives of UNHCR intervention.
- In regard to the role of UNHCR, taking on an issue that challenges common practice and personal belief for many within and outside the institution, requires a unified approach within the institution. As illustrated by the case at hand, all staff in any context must be prepared to respond effectively to any attempt to sow doubt in the minds of the women regarding their rights.
- It is necessary for women to organise in order to be able to take on these issues in any serious way, and to be able to face and overcome obstacles and opposition. Specific actions must be taken to strengthen women technically and politically at a grassroots level and to promote recognition of their right to autonomy from specific political tendencies. Institutional support clearly plays an important role in furthering/strengthening the cause of women in working towards gender equity through women's organisations. It must be recognised that such activities require long-term commitments from UN and other funding agencies and cannot be limited to one side of the border or the other.
- It is necessary to clarify legal processes and prepare for administrative, normative and cultural obstacles in order for women to truly be able to exercise their rights. A strategy for working at each level simultaneously and to involve all the relevant actors early on is critical in this regard.
- A further essential aspect is for women's productive and community role to be made visible and recognised. Until women's full contribution to family and community daily life is fully understood and valued by both men and women as well as the institutions providing aid, it will be difficult to assimilate the concept and practise of women's rights with that of community participation in general; and their full access to and control of the resources and benefits derived from community development, and land in particular, will be very limited.
- Forming women's organisations without parallel work on the traditional male structures will not necessarily lead to long-term overall change. For sustainable empowerment to be achieved, it is important to work with both women and men, separately and together. Greater understanding of the gender power relations is always required; any strategy must consider men's contribution, role and fears.
- Public affirmation of women's rights (through events with broad institutional participation) and formal affirmation (accords, documents) have a multiplier effect as institutions and governments are publicly committed and written agreements provide an organising tool for women. Moreover, where women's organisations have been responsible for the content of an agreement or commitment, their pride and confidence in their own abilities increases, especially where women have a direct voice in expressing their demands.
- Small economic projects in refugee camps brought women together and helped validate women's skills and share experiences despite their differences. On the other hand, where these projects fail, women's confidence drops and their initiatives lose momentum. Women's outright ownership and direct control of their projects is an

important step to building confidence. Models for joint-ownership of community projects and joint-ownership of land can also be of great value.

- Women were given the opportunity to participate by men, due to the extraordinary nature of war and displacement, the new needs which emerged as a result, the existence of more widows and also because of the manipulation of women's new role for political ends. To the extent that men learn not only to accommodate but appreciate the advantages of breaking down gender roles, these changes will be more lasting upon returning home and onwards.
- Women's personal identification documents are necessary for them to be landowners and exercise their rights. Their organisations may need to be legally recognised as well.

#### **e. Transition from emergency to development**

UNHCR initiated its expanded presence in Guatemala in 1992 in the shadow of an important conclusion throughout Central America and especially in regard to the QIP programme in Nicaragua: many UNHCR activities were judged to be satisfactory on their own terms but failed to become incorporated into the agenda of other long-standing actors (and therefore risked backsliding or disappearing once UNHCR had withdrawn). During the CIREFCA process and through the joint technical CIREFCA support unit formed by UNDP and UNHCR, both agencies promoted the idea that the temporary work of UNHCR could be eventually taken over and sustained by UNDP. All activities, therefore, were to be co-ordinated from the beginning with the relevant government institutions, UN agencies and NGOs with the joint goal of UNHCR eventually and continually ceding activities to other appropriate actors.

Even with the heightened consciousness of the challenge involved, UNHCR predictably encountered the same obstacles of similar programmes while indirectly (and unconsciously) following a strategy that was put forth in a 1994 UNHCR discussion paper:

- UNHCR was modest in describing and publicising its role in post-return reintegration although some of its programmes were very ambitious.
- For the most part UNHCR looked for national and regional-level partnerships and not to UNDP or other large-scale/International development agencies to find solutions for problems at the community level.
- Theoretically at least, UNHCR sought to leave many smaller projects as self-supporting within and by the community itself or leave a task completely finished (personal documentation for returnees, for example) thereby reducing the volume of initiatives which needed to be adopted actively by other actors.
- At the same time UNHCR sought to exercise its "catalytic" role and contribute its accumulated experience in regard to larger and more complex tasks to those actors formally responsible for them.

#### **UN co-ordination**

UNHCR depended on UNDP as Guatemala's lead UN agency for many practical and administrative matters given the absence of an *accord d' siege* for UNHCR. Also UNDP led, especially as of 1993, an active inter-agency forum involving heads of agency for both ongoing analysis of the country and for internal matters such as UN reform. In operational matters, UNDP's field presence in Guatemala was limited to the PRODERE programme carried out between 1990 and 1994 in two rural regions, one of which coincided with UNHCR presence. In general, therefore, the inter-institutional relationship sometimes suffered from the different focus each agency gave to its work; UNHCR's more field- and action-oriented activities versus a more academic, policy-oriented and centralised approach from UNDP.

After the UN Verification Mission (MINUGUA) was formally initiated in November 1994 (first to verify the partial peace accord addressing human rights and, after December 1996, charged with overall verification of peace accord implementation), MINUGUA became a routine counterpart for UNHCR. MINUGUA field offices coincided with all five UNHCR field sites and in these areas, MINUGUA could take advantage of UNHCR's previous knowledge and contacts. UNHCR, in turn, would rely on MINUGUA to take a lead role in addressing human rights or related concerns of the returnee populations. In general, resources were often shared or co-ordinated and coverage of events or incidents dealt with jointly or with one organisation informally taking into account the interests of the other. The generally positive personal attitudes and behaviour of the staff of both MINUGUA and UNHCR (as the two principal faces

experienced by the rural communities of the "United Nations") were important in establishing and maintaining credibility

As mentioned elsewhere in this document, WFP and UNCHS/Habitat were key operational partners with whom co-ordination went smoothly. UNICEF briefly co-ordinated a handful of water projects but was not generally involved in the same rural areas as UNHCR and different co-ordination attempts were not successful. UNICEF did contribute expertise, based on its previous experience in El Salvador, to a campaign in 1994 aimed at risk-prevention in areas affected by mines and explosive artefacts.

Of the different UN inter-agency commissions, UNHCR was most involved in the one focusing on gender issues. Although time-consuming for the individuals involved and not always directed at activities of practical use for UNHCR, the opportunity to exchange information and reinforce processes taking place within each agency was deemed important.

- Government institutions

In regards to the relationship with the governmental counterpart, CEAR, significant ups and downs occurred over the years. The institution changed personnel and policies under each of four ensuing governments and during most of its existence (especially until 1996) suffered from a lack of support from the central government in financial and political terms. As UNHCR did not finance the salaries of CEAR staff, employees were often underpaid and thus unmotivated (with important exceptions), with no incentives to travel to distant communities or undertake proper follow-up. In general, the CEAR field staff had very little autonomy and depended on a centralised bureaucracy for most activities, further limiting effective action and individual initiative

A major discrepancy with CEAR in regard to their reporting of the allocation and management of UNHCR funds in 1995 led to the total suspension of new project funds for several months.

During this time, UNHCR directly implemented all purchases and activities, co-ordinating with CEAR field staff for actual project delivery. The rupture of the financial relationship was effective in generating the institutional changes necessary to resume the project. In the final years of CEAR's operation, improved support from the central government (which significantly improved CEAR's overall capability) coincided with increasing cut backs from UNHCR due to funding constraints. CEAR, nevertheless, was closed down in June 1999 and responsibilities in regard to returnees were dispersed among several government offices. CEAR employees, however, have been transferred over the years to other government institutions where their specific background and sensitivity to returned refugees has been important

As referenced in the discussion on mediation issues, UNHCR maintained working relationships with many other government institutions, often to lobby for specific solutions or policies or to show support for and accompany certain initiatives

- Co-ordination with NGOs

A range of both national and international NGOs and other institutions also implemented various components of both assistance and reintegration work but in general, working relationships with NGOs went beyond financial arrangements. UNHCR was frequently called upon to be involved in co-ordination forums with institutions completely independent of a funding relationship.

Indeed, for several years the office maintained a parallel dialogue with NGOs who were politically involved in the return process and its negotiation (and influential through their guidance of the refugee organisations) while holding separate, "technical" discussions with the NGOs involved in carrying out UNHCR-funded activities.

Over the years there was more and more overlap between the two groups and in general the politicised and tense environment often affecting programme implementation slowly subsided. In general, it can be observed that the initial stereotypes of UNHCR as a bureaucratic institution that by nature would oppose returnee and NGO initiatives were transformed by the continual presence of UNHCR staff alongside the returnees in their negotiations and their isolated communities. UNHCR's global "Partners in Action" (PARinAC) initiative was used in Guatemala as a way to generate discussion generally on the overriding political issues as opposed to the technical ones and was appreciated as an opportunity to share ideas although few concrete results emerged.

- Developing a linkage strategy

UNHCR initiated efforts to involve long term developmental actors during the first years of operation without a clear and consolidated strategy. The complexity of actors, the lack of institutional presence in areas of return, the ongoing war and political pressures made it difficult to consolidate future plans in the initial part of the programme.

Governmental actors, donors, UN agencies and some NGOs did not consider returnee communities as a specific priority for development activities due to their limited number and the visibility of support given the return itself (including UNHCR assistance and the fact that the government was aiding land purchase). Co-ordination within the government in regard to overall policy on displaced population was extremely weak and translated into the government's inability to co-ordinate with other institutions on the topic.

The first plausible opportunity for inter-institutional co-ordination based on the implementation of the peace accords was the creation of the CTEAR, the Technical Commission for the Implementation of the Accord for the Resettlement of Population Displaced by the Armed Conflict. This commission, created in 1994, was mandated as a six-person body with four voting members and two observers from the international community. The voting members were two representatives of the government and two from the population, in turn backed by a newly-created organisation of several grassroots groups representing displaced persons, refugees and returnees. The international community formed a consultative group of donor countries and UN agencies which elected UNDP (stipulated by the accord to administrate the CTEAR's trust fund) and the European Commission as formal representatives. During the first year and-a-half of the CTEAR, UNHCR was not given much access to the forum, which in any case had limited scope of action until the final peace accords were signed in December 1996.

As of 1997, UNHCR was invited to regularly attend CTEAR meetings (as an advisor to UNDP) and used the CTEAR to keep track of complementary initiatives and contribute to the same through UNHCR's particular expertise. Two examples of UNHCR's ability to take advantage of the CTEAR as a co-ordinating body while offering specialised aid in return was (i) the possibility to launch the inter-institutional documentation campaign with CTEAR trust fund financing and UNHCR know-how and (ii) the use of a sub-committee on land problems where UNHCR had much of the background knowledge but previously had insufficient access to the state powers with the potential to resolve land problems in returnee communities. Other sub-committees of interest to UNHCR included those concerned with health, education and productive reintegration projects.

Therefore, following the signing of the peace accords, the creation of better co-ordination mechanisms and with clarity about which regions would remain or become sites for refugee resettlement, UNHCR was able to formally lay-out a strategy for linkages in 1997 based on the following three objectives:

1. Identification of partner institutions and consolidation of joint efforts and/or a transition strategy at a regional and national level to **promote sustainability** of UNHCR interventions;
2. Preparation of a document jointly with CEAR and the CTEAR, **focusing on the pending agenda for reintegration in returnee areas**, as well as promotion and dissemination of information to all relevant actors;
3. **Formal agreements for joint initiatives** with several actors through bilateral or multilateral agreements for follow-up and to implement priority activities.

Throughout 1998, UNHCR intensified identification of new linkages and the strengthening of existing ones, at the local, regional and central levels in order to promote the sustainability of UNHCR's interventions and highlight the pending agenda for reintegration in returnee areas. To that effect, UNHCR has been consistently sharing profiles of returnee communities with a large number of governmental, non-governmental and other national and international actors. The profiles are aimed at documenting the overall situation in returnee areas from health, education, roads, food security, women's groups and other social organisation and the environment. UNHCR has also facilitated joint visits to returnee communities, held joint workshops and participated regularly in inter-agency meetings.

Concrete results include:

- the integration of several ongoing QIPs to the CECI project in the departments of Huehuetenango and Quiché under the Inter-American Development Bank-funded community development programme DECOPAZ, for reintegration of uprooted populations and strengthening of grass-roots organisations;
- a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the government social investment fund (FIS) for the construction of infrastructure, especially schools;
- the presentation of a comprehensive list of water projects completed by UNHCR/CECI to the respective municipalities, the FIS, UNICEF and the Institute of Municipal Development for the "Water, Source of Peace" programme for inclusion in their regular support plans;
- the support provided by UNHCR to the Technical Commission for the Implementation of the Accord for the Resettlement of Population Displaced by the Armed Conflict (CTEAR), in particular its documentation sub-commission to follow up on personal documentation activities; and
- an agreement with the National Institute of Co-operatives (INACOP) for their follow-up, training, support to the productive sectors and strengthening of co-operatives (including promotion of women's participation) in more than 15 returnee communities in Ixcán, Petén, Huehuetenango and the southern coast.

#### Lessons learned: co-ordination and linkages

- UNHCR did not have a comprehensive strategy to establish linkages early on given the constantly changing context of Guatemala. Although the situation was clearly unstable, identification of one or two key counterparts for ongoing transfer of responsibilities might have been possible.
- UNHCR acted with a great deal of independence during the first years of operation especially in regard to the Quick Impact Projects. UNHCR and CECI did not promote sufficiently the active involvement of local authorities, line ministries, and developmental NGOs in returnee communities.
- Efforts to decentralise the task of establishing linkages through each field office during the last two years of the operation facilitated improved exchange of information and the involvement of new actors from an earlier stage with new returnee communities. It was difficult to consolidate linkages during the last part of the operation due to the lack of resources to motivate and encourage those linkages.
- UN agencies with a development-oriented mandate were mostly involved in institutional strengthening at the national level and were not very interested in supporting specific interventions in specific communities or even returnee areas.
- Given the dispersion and varied conditions of returnee communities, the focus on specific projects, sectors and geographical areas for the establishment of linkages was more effective than a global linkage strategy
- Signed memorandums, agreements and other ways of formalising linkages, was an initial goal to ensure commitments by other institutions but proved weak in terms of enforcement or guaranteed results to the extent that they were negotiated on paper but without the relevant commitment behind them (for example, an agreement outlining the respective contribution of five actors to improving education infrastructure and services, signed in 1997, was celebrated at the time but was in fact never implemented).
- The use of non-expendable property for consolidation of linkages has proven to be a good tool considering the lack of financial incentives: the donation of equipment was an incentive for different institutions to carry on initiatives begun by UNHCR.
- UNHCR's promotion of the concept of creating linkages or transition strategies, once publicised had a positive effect on some institutions. For example, the CTEAR in 1998 began to develop its own linkage strategy foreseeing its eventual closure as a co-ordinating structure and has advanced especially in the areas of health, education and infrastructure during 1999.