

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CAPABILITIES OF UNRWA

UNRWA's poor performance in field operations is a result of lack of emergency operations capabilities in the field, lack of training or experience in emergency operations, and problems due to its structure and bureaucratic systems. In order to reduce the problems and improve field performance, the following steps are recommended:

1. Conduct a detailed management study of UNRWA. This study should include:
 - a. A review of UNRWA's system of organization;
 - b. An examination of lines of authority within the organization to determine ways in which operational decisions having little or no political significance could be made at the field level, and to determine ways of establishing better coordination at the lower levels of the organization;
 - c. A review of decision-making procedures to determine changes in the table of organization which could streamline decisions in an emergency;
 - d. An examination of project management capabilities and procedures for field level operations. This review would include:
 - 1) Examination of UNRWA's ability to monitor and assess field projects, and

- 2) Determination of the personnel and staffing patterns required in order to improve field level performance.

2. Establish an emergency operations/preparedness unit. UNRWA can expect to be periodically engaged in some form of emergency operations. It is therefore imperative that UNRWA develop a permanent field emergency operations capability and that adequate steps be taken to prepare and train personnel for emergency service in the field. An emergency unit similar to that established by the UNHCR should be established at UNRWA's headquarters with personnel who are recruited for their technical capabilities and trained in emergency operations and the required technologies. As part of their terms of reference, personnel in the unit should be prepared to go to the field at a moment's notice for periods of not less than 1 year.

Funding for the emergency unit should enable it to acquire training for field operations. The unit should have computer capabilities to enable it to develop resource lists and consultant rosters, and to tie into the existing emergency materials stockpiles of other agencies.

In establishing this unit, special emergency operations procedures should be established to enable it to operate as expeditiously in the field as possible.

3. Develop methods for helping UNRWA operationally. Many of the services required by refugees in an emergency can be provided by other organizations operating under contract or in partnership with UNRWA. UNRWA should be encouraged to expand its contact with voluntary agencies, professional relief experts and specialized consultants. By contracting other agencies that have these skills, UNRWA will be better prepared for emergency

operations and will be able to offer a full range of services without having to maintain a large staff.

Recommendations for improving operational capabilities could include:

- a. Establishment of a joint UNRWA/VOLAG advisory and coordination group or committee.
 - b. Establishment of a VOLAG liaison officer or office to promote and develop contacts between UNRWA and potential operating partners.
 - c. Establishment of standing agreements with voluntary agencies, professional relief experts and specialized consulting firms to provide services in an emergency.
 - d. Establishment of a roster of specialized service officers and/or consultants to assist in emergency operations. These individuals would be screened and organized into teams, and would receive specialized training prior to assignment in an emergency operation. Standby contracts for teams could be offered for terms up to 2 years with no obligations unless an emergency occurs.
4. Establish emergency operations training as a part of UNRWA staff development. UNRWA staff should receive orientation and training in emergency operations. Training modules could be prepared that would provide training to UNRWA staff at the entry level as well as specialized management training for senior administrative personnel on various aspects of emergency operations. Because UNRWA has been set up to deal with refugees, all career personnel should be familiar with the requirements of

emergency operations and the basic techniques/technologies that are used to provide emergency services.

5. Establish an Inspector General. In order to stimulate UNRWA to get its own house in order, donors may want to consider establishing the position of Inspector General within UNRWA. The Inspector General would be appointed by a committee of the major donors and would report to the Commissioner General of UNRWA as well as to the donors' committee. The Inspector General would be an ombudsman with authority to examine at his own discretion various aspects of the operations of UNRWA and to report on ways in which the operation could be improved. The Inspector General should have a separate budget that would enable him to hire management consultants as well as relief specialists to examine the full range of UNRWA's operational capabilities. The Inspector General should be appointed to a non-renewable term of 3 years so that different perspectives and fresh ideas could be brought into the process.

6. Strengthen the oversight capability. At the present time, the Commissioner General of UNRWA reports directly to the General Assembly. There is an Advisory Committee (made up of a mixture of representatives from host countries and donors); however, it only meets once a year to review the annual report. Some form of oversight organization should be established by the donors to ensure that UNRWA improves its performance and operational capabilities. Care should be taken to appoint an oversight committee that can truly evaluate the operations of the organization. A large, political committee like UNHCR's Ex-Com where decision-making is made difficult, due to the large number of persons and countries involved, should be avoided. A donor-selected committee made up of various experts such as management specialists, financial and accounting experts, operations specialists, etc., could provide periodic review of UNRWA's activities. The com-

mittee would report to the donors as well as to the General Assembly.

If the above recommendations are carried out, it should be possible to improve UNRWA's performance to a great degree. These measures should help UNRWA to streamline operations, improve their performance in the field, and reduce overall costs.

Frederick C. Cuny

INTERTECT

January 1983