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BASIC PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN FIELD OFFICE RESETTLEMENT OPERATIONS

6.1 Overview of Basic Resettlement Procedures

Resettlement is a vital instrument of protection and a durable solution for refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental human rights are at risk in the country where they sought refuge. The decision to resettle a refugee is normally taken, with priority, when there is no alternative way to guarantee the legal or physical security of the person concerned. UNHCR resettlement criteria aim not only at resolving possible immediate danger to a refugee's life and security. Resettlement, as a tool of international protection, is also directed at addressing the special needs of a refugee which cannot be met adequately in the country of refuge. Finally, resettlement is a durable solution for larger numbers or groups of refugees, alongside the other durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration.

6.1.1 Range of resettlement contexts

UNHCR's resettlement activities have expanded significantly in the recent years. This expansion has resulted in both the diversification of nationalities resettled and in the diversification of the contexts within which resettlement activities take place.

UNHCR resettlement activities currently take place in almost all contexts of UNHCR's work, with urban refugee populations, in refugee camps, and in refugee settlements.

Resettlement may be undertaken in field operations where refugees systematically undergo individual status determination procedures. In other cases, UNHCR undertakes resettlement activities in *prima facie* refugee situations.

Resettlement activities are both possible and potentially necessary in any and all of these circumstances. Given the diversity of field contexts, however, the individual procedures of various Offices will likely differ, according to their capacity and resettlement needs. At the same time, it is recognized that the detail of an Office's procedures will be a reflection of the scale of its on-going resettlement activities.

6.1.2 Stages in the resettlement process

Regardless of the field context, all resettlement activities must conform to basic standards. The preparation of individual resettlement submissions must pass through the following common stages of the resettlement process:

1. **Identification** of refugees in need of resettlement consideration

2. **Assessment** of individual resettlement need

3. **Preparation** of a resettlement submission

4. UNHCR **submission** decision

5. Resettlement **country decision**

6. **Departure** arrangements and monitoring

The purpose of this Chapter is to specify the potential roles that UNHCR Field Offices have to play in each of these stages and to provide guidelines on how these roles may most effectively be met. This Chapter will also introduce a number of practical tools designed to facilitate the implementation of these standards that Field Offices may develop to their particular resettlement needs.

6.2 Standards, Accountability and Safeguards in the Resettlement Process

Given the diversity of field contexts, specific resettlement procedures will differ from Field Office to Field Office. It is neither possible nor desirable to have a single, universal set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be followed by all UNHCR Field Offices. Instead, each Field Office should review their capacities and resettlement needs and determine a resettlement process appropriate to their context and in adherence with the basic standards contained in the Resettlement Handbook.

The High Commissioner's IOM/25/2002 – FOM/24/2002 dated 15 March 2002 (included in Annex 11) clearly specifies the importance of the effective management of all protection activities, including resettlement. While Chapter 8 addresses the more general question of managing resettlement activities in Field Offices, this Chapter illustrates that there are a number of safeguards that must be incorporated into the resettlement process at each stage to ensure its integrity and credibility.

These safeguards include:

Standards – All resettlement submissions prepared in a Field Office must be processed according to established and objective standards and procedures. These standards must be developed to address the needs and capacities of individual Field Offices, and in adherence with the basic standards contained in this Handbook.

IOM/25/2002 – FOM/24/2002 outlines the responsibility of each Field Office to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), as addressed in Chapter 8.1 of the Resettlement Handbook.

Transparency – All resettlement decisions must be taken in a transparent manner. The most effective means of ensuring transparency is through the documentation of all stages of the resettlement process. The file belonging to a refugee under consideration for resettlement must contain sufficient documentation justifying the decisions taken on that individual case. All documentation contained in a file must be signed and dated.

It is also important that the resettlement process be transparent *vis-à-vis* refugees and resettlement partners. In this regard, information meetings may be held to inform refugees and resettlement partners of the standards and procedures governing the resettlement process in a given Field Office. Such transparency will serve to enhance the credibility of resettlement, and is an important foundation for greater co-operation and confidence in the resettlement process.

This external transparency should not, however, extend to disclosure of the names of UNHCR Staff responsible for taking decisions in the resettlement process, and must not extend to sharing the contents of an IC's file (Please see UNHCR's *Guidelines on the Sharing of Information on Individual Cases*).

Authorization and Accountability – In all Field Offices, the UNHCR Representative must designate an officer accountable for resettlement activities. Designating an officer accountable for all resettlement activities is an important first step in ensuring the effective management of resettlement activities within a Field Office. The decision to both process and submit a refugee's case to a resettlement country for their consideration must be authorized by the officer accountable for resettlement activities. (Please see Chapter 8.1.2)

Oversight **–** Resettlement activities must benefit from the oversight of a designated officer within individual field offices. The preparation of resettlement submissions should benefit from periodic random checks to ensure that individual submissions are prepared according to the criteria contained in this Handbook and as a means of ensuring quality control. Oversight of the resettlement process should also result in an on-going review and improvement of the process as needs resettlement needs and Field Office capacities change over time.

At the same time, the resettlement process in an individual Field Office may benefit from oversight by external or regional UNHCR Officers, in the same way that the accuracy and credibility of financial procedures are ensured through external oversight.

Combating fraud and corruption in the resettlement process – Safeguards must be incorporated into every step of the resettlement process to combat fraud and corruption. Such steps include, but are not limited to:

- verifying registration details and refugee status prior to the preparation of a resettlement submission;
- paying particular attention to family compositions;
- ensuring that photographs of each member of the resettlement case are included in the refugee's file and attached in a tamper-proof manner;
- sensitizing the refugee population to the potential consequences of fraud;
- conducting identity checks at key stages in the resettlement process; and,
- ensuring that all decisions relating to resettlement are documented, dated and signed

While combating resettlement fraud and corruption is addressed more comprehensively in Chapter 8.4, various elements of fraud and corruption prevention will be proposed through the steps outlined in this Chapter.

As emphasized by the High Commissioner's IOM/25/2002 – FOM/24/2002, resettlement activities are particularly vulnerable to fraud because of the benefits they offer. Incorporating safeguards into the resettlement process minimizes fraud possibilities, protects refugees from further victimization, protects innocent staff from false allegations, and contributes to the overall credibility and effectiveness of UNHCR's resettlement activities.

The only way to effectively combat fraud and corruption in the resettlement process is proactively through the development and implementation of accountable and transparent resettlement procedures. Field Offices must not wait until allegations emerge before undertaking measures to combat fraud and corruption in the resettlement process.

6.3 Step 1: Case Identification

EXCOM Conclusion 90 (LII) – 2001 acknowledged that resettlement "is a process beginning with the identification and assessment of refugees requiring protection…" Identification is arguably the most crucial and challenging aspect of the resettlement process. Failure to identify a refugee in need of resettlement in a correct and timely manner will result in an unnecessary continuation of insecurity for that refugee. Incorrect identification of a refugee for resettlement could result in the development of unobtainable expectations.

These challenges are especially acute in protracted *prima facie* refugee situations. In such situations, identifying refugees in need of resettlement, without the benefit of early and effective registration and individual refugee status determination, is an essential but complex task.

Active and systematic case identification among UNHCR offices in the field and with operational partners in the field, as well as co-operation between the relevant sections *within* a given Field Office, are essential in order to ensure that cases in need of resettlement are identified.

Resettlement needs should be identified proactively and as part of UNHCR's standard assessment of protection and durable solutions needs, rather than reactively through the demand of an individual. For this reason, resettlement must be employed as part of a comprehensive protection strategy to address the needs of refugees in a country of asylum and include an *identification and referral system* to facilitate the active identification of cases.

The initial registration of refugees should ensure the early identification of specific categories of refugees who may have special needs. Such categories will include unaccompanied children and the physically or mentally disabled, single women and single parents. Officers working directly with refugees will furthermore be in a position to identify individuals and families for resettlement consideration.

Early and effective registration coupled, where possible, with individual status determination procedures provide the most effective means of identifying refugees in need of resettlement consideration in a pro-active and on-going basis.

It should, however, be noted that the identification of a refugee as being vulnerable in their country of asylum does not necessarily mean that the refugee is either eligible for or in need of resettlement. Resettlement is one possible tool at the disposal of field offices to address a refugee's particular vulnerability.

In addition to the identification carried out by UNHCR directly, information from other organizations, especially those dealing with medical and social services, may prove useful. It is important to utilize structures within a refugee population to identify individuals who may need special attention.

It is not, however, advisable to ask persons like refugee community leaders who they would select or recommend for resettlement. While refugee community leaders can play an important role in identifying persistent protection concerns and in disseminating information on resettlement, involving them in the referral of refugees for resettlement is a process that has proven to be problematic.

6.3.1. Identification actors and procedures

While various actors may be engaged in the initial identification of a refugee in need of resettlement consideration, it is essential that these activities are closely managed by the officer accountable for resettlement activities, that the identification process is well documented, and that cases are followed-up in a timely manner. It is also important that transparent identification procedures are developed and implemented in all Field Offices.

The focus of this section is the identification of individual refugees in need of resettlement consideration. The identification of groups or populations in need of resettlement consideration is addressed in Chapter 7.3 of this Handbook.

The identification of an individual refugee in need of resettlement consideration is typically the result of a referral received from within UNHCR, from an organization external to UNHCR working with refugees, or from refugees themselves. The most effective and responsive resettlement procedures will include consideration of referrals from all three sources.

By considering referrals from all three sources, Field Offices may also ensure effective access to the resettlement process for those most in need. Ensuring access to the resettlement process should be seen as a priority, especially as those refugees who are most vulnerable are often the least visible and the least vocal. Effective identification and referral mechanisms should concentrate on ensuring access to the resettlement process for those most in need in a proactive way.

6.3.2 Internal referrals

Various sections within a Field Office may be well-placed to make resettlement referrals on the basis of their day-to-day contact with refugees. The Protection Unit will be well-placed to identify refugees with persistent protection problems that cannot be addressed in the country of asylum. The Community or Social Services Unit may identify vulnerable refugees according to the criteria established in Chapter 4 of this Handbook, most particularly Women-at-risk, Survivors of Violence and Torture, Unaccompanied Minors and refugees with particular Medical Needs.

Co-ordination and training are essential within a Field Office to ensure that internal referrals are effective in identifying refugees in need of resettlement consideration. Field Office staff must be informed on the nature and limitations of resettlement to ensure that only appropriate referrals are made, and to ensure that unrealistic resettlement expectations are not raised.

Standard procedures must be developed in all Field Offices governing the referral of refugees in need of resettlement consideration from other Sections. **All referrals must be in writing**, and contain the following basic information:

- basic bio-data of the Principal Applicant and all dependents;
- the basis of the referral;
- the immediacy of the need;
- the name and title of the referring staff member; and,
- the date of the referral

A **focal-point** should be identified within all field offices for receiving internal referrals. This focal-point would be responsible for documenting receipt of the referral in the resettlement database or registry, retrieving any file or documentation held by the Field Office on the refugee in question, and forwarding the referral and documentation to the designated officer responsible for conducting a Resettlement-Needs Assessment (see below).

If the Field Office does not hold a file for the refugee under consideration, an individual file should be created for the refugee at this stage, and in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Chapter 8.2.2.

The task of making, receiving and assessing internal referrals has been greatly facilitated in a number of UNHCR Field Offices through the development of a standard referral form. A "Sample Referral Form" is included in Section 2 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit. This form may be adapted by individual Field Offices to suit their particular context and needs.

6.3.3 External referrals

Actors external to UNHCR can also potentially play a valuable role in the identification of individual refugees in need of resettlement consideration. This is especially true when considering the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working directly with refugees. (For more information on the role of NGOs in global resettlement efforts, please see Chapter 10.)

Using the criteria contained in this Handbook, there is great potential for NGO involvement in the identification process. In many field operations, NGOs have a greater degree of qualitative contact with refugees on a day-to-day basis through the particular nature of their projects. As outlined in *Protecting Refugees: A Field Guide for NGOs*, NGOs can, on the basis of such contact, identify refugees with special concerns who may be in need of resettlement.

There are three primary arrangements through which NGOs may play a role in identifying potential resettlement cases:

1. **Formal arrangements:** Through a specific sub-agreement, NGOs may run pre-screening programs to assess protection and other needs in large refugee populations. Such sub-agreements should not be concluded at the field level, but the potential benefits of such an arrangement, especially in the context of large, protracted *prima facie* refugee situations, could be raised with the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

2. **Partnerships with secondary protection functions:** Refugee assistance programs benefit greatly from the contribution of partners who, by the terms of their sub-agreement with UNHCR, provide certain services in refugee camps and settlements. The possibility of writing protection and resettlement-identification functions into these sub-agreements, especially in the case of NGOs working with particular groups of vulnerable refugees, could be explored at the field level. The development of any such arrangement must, however, be the responsibility of the officer accountable for resettlement in a given Field Office, in consultation with UNHCR's Country Representative, and with the agreement of the NGOs country representative, where applicable.

3. **Case-by-Case NGO referrals:** In many field operations, NGOs working with vulnerable refugees may not wish to incorporate formal protection components into their programs for fear of compromising the integrity of the original program. In such cases, however, mechanisms could still exist to facilitate informal referrals on a case-by-case basis.

The success of these three possible approaches, individually or as part of a combined approach, will depend on the field situation, the urgency of resettlement need, the nature of resettlement need, and the field capacities of NGOs and UNHCR. All three approaches do, however, hold significant potential and are, to a certain degree, already employed in various forms.

The formal development of any external referral mechanisms must be authorized by the officer accountable for resettlement activities and must incorporate a number of important elements:

- **Training:** Any resettlement-referral mechanisms involving actors external to UNHCR must be preceded by appropriate training on resettlement procedures and criteria.

- **Accountability and oversight:** Any referral mechanism must be formalized to the extent that it operates according to accountable and transparent standards. To this end, all arrangements must specify, **in writing**, guidelines on the specific roles and responsibilities of the NGO and UNHCR, responsibilities of feedback to the NGO and to the refugee, a definition of the relationship between the NGO and UNHCR, and recognition of the criteria contained in the Resettlement Handbook. Oversight must also be ensured through regular meetings between representatives of the NGO and UNHCR to discuss activities and concerns, and to conduct spot-checks on the referral activities.

- **Standardization:** A separate set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) must be developed detailing the referral, reception, treatment and follow-up on NGO-referred cases, and measures must be implemented to ensure that all cases are referred according to these SOPs.

- **Safeguards:** In the interest of maintaining the integrity of not only the resettlement activities of the Field Office, but also the original NGO program, safeguards must be incorporated into the mechanisms to ensure that possibilities for abuse are reduced.

- **Managing expectations:** Any increase in identification activities will likely result in heightened resettlement expectations within the resettlement population. As such, a common strategy must be developed for the management of resettlement expectations (Please see Chapter 8.5).

A **focal-point** should be identified for receiving external referrals. Where appropriate, multiple **focal-points** may be identified for receiving external referrals, depending on the nature of the external referral source. These focal-points would be responsible for documenting receipt of the referral in the resettlement database or registry, retrieving any file or documentation held by the field office on the refugee in question, and forwarding the referral and documentation to the designated officer responsible for conducting a Resettlement-Needs Assessment (see below).

These focal-points would retain responsibility for liaising with the external referral source throughout the resettlement process, and providing the referral source with regular updates on the status of the resettlement case.

Depending on the capacity of a given Field Office, the focal-point for external referrals may be the same individual as the focal-point for internal referrals.

If the Field Office does not hold a file for the refugee under consideration, an individual file should be created for the refugee at this stage, and in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Chapter 8.2.2.

6.3.4 Dealing with unsolicited requests

While priority should be placed on the identification of refugees in need of resettlement consideration through internal and external pro-active referral mechanisms, Field Offices should also develop procedures for responding to unsolicited resettlement requests from individual refugees. These requests, typically – but not exclusively – written requests, have become a common feature of resettlement activities in most UNHCR Field Offices around the world.

While the credibility of written resettlement requests, including unsolicited requests sent by e-mail, may be considered questionable, they have proven to be both an effective means of identifying vulnerable refugees and providing refugees with direct access to the resettlement process. When dealing with written requests for resettlement, it is important that the contents of the request are not taken at face-value, but are independently confirmed through either an interview, a home-visit or a file study.

The difficulty with treating unsolicited requests is the bias it often has against refugees who are not capable of expressing their protection needs in writing. It is for this reason that resettlement activities must never be based exclusively on the treatment of unsolicited resettlement requests.

Dealing with unsolicited requests can prove to be an exceptionally time-consuming task, and Field Offices should ensure that time dedicated to the treatment of unsolicited requests is not at the expense of the treatment of internal and external referrals.

Central to the effective treatment of unsolicited requests is managing the expectations of refugees sending such requests. Refugees submitting resettlement requests must be advised that the submission of a request will not necessarily result in the opening of a resettlement case, and will certainly not necessarily result in the resettlement of the refugee (Please see Chapter 8.5).

Refugees submitting unsolicited requests for resettlement should also be advised on the processing times for such requests or if, in fact, all unsolicited requests will receive a response. These issues should be decided, in advance, by the officer accountable for resettlement in consultation with the Senior Staff responsible for Protection.

Refugees may request resettlement in response to a need that can and should be met by other Units within UNHCR. Unsolicited requests should consequently be screened upon receipt to possibly identify a Unit within UNHCR that would be better suited to address the need conveyed by the refugee – typically the Protection Unit or the Community or Social Services Unit.

A **focal-point** should be identified within all Field Offices for dealing with unsolicited requests. The focal-point, under the supervision of the accountable officer, would be responsible for screening unsolicited requests for resettlement and directing non-resettlement requests to the relevant Units of the UNHCR office. The focal-point would then be responsible for documenting receipt of the resettlement-related request in the resettlement database or registry, retrieving any file or documentation held by the Field Office on the refugee in question, and forwarding the referral and documentation to the designated officer responsible for conducting a Resettlement-Needs Assessment (see below).

Depending on the capacity of a given Field Office, the focal-point for unsolicited requests may be the same individual as the focal-point for internal and external referrals.

If the Field Office does not hold a file for the refugee under consideration, an individual file should be created for the refugee at this stage, and in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Chapter 8.2.2.

6.4 Step 2: Case Assessment and Verification

Organizational structures and the availability of human resources vary among Field Offices. The recommendations provided in this Section, therefore, will have to be adapted to the specific circumstances of a particular Field Office.

All refugees identified as being in need of resettlement consideration must pass through two stages before a resettlement submission may be prepared:

1. Resettlement-Needs Assessment
2. Verification of registration details and refugee status

These stages are designed to ensure the credibility and need of the individual case, and to ensure consistency in the Field Office's resettlement activities. The introduction of these stages need not necessarily add to the processing time of individual cases if Field Office's develop efficient and effective mechanisms and procedures appropriate to their field context. The Resettlement Tool-Kit contains a number of sample forms that will assist Field Offices in developing such procedures.

6.4.1 Resettlement-Needs Assessment

Under the supervision of the officer accountable for resettlement activities, resettlement referrals should be assigned, according to the urgency of resettlement need, to UNHCR staff with designated resettlement responsibilities for a **Resettlement-Needs Assessment**. This assessment should be conducted on the basis of the information contained in the referral (internal, external or unsolicited) and any relevant information contained in the refugee's file.

The **Resettlement-Needs Assessment** should be a written assessment of the refugee's need for resettlement based on the information provided, and should included, at minimum, the following information:

- Source and date of the referral
- Name of the Principal Applicant (PA)
- Country of birth (and nationality if different)
- Date of birth
- Family size and composition
- Information on family links abroad
- Remarks on protection environment and vulnerability in country of asylum
- Brief assessment of resettlement need
- Basis of the referral according to the criteria of Chapter 4
- Recommended follow-up action
- Priority of case
- Name of staff member conducting Assessment
- Date of assessment

A sample Resettlement-Needs Assessment form is included in Section 2 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit. The Tool-Kit also contains the Resettlement Needs Assessment as a Microsoft Word template, to facilitate completing the form in electronic format and the later transfer of this information directly to the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF).

On the basis of the analysis of the assessment, one of three possible follow-up actions may be recommended:

- The resettlement referral appears **founded**, and should proceed to the verification stage;

- **Additional information** is required from the referral source; or,

- The resettlement referral appears **unfounded**, and the referral source should be notified that the refugee will not be considered for resettlement referral at that time.

If the assessment indicates that the resettlement referral appears **founded**, then the Resettlement-Needs Assessment Form and the refugee's file should be forwarded to the relevant Unit for **verification**.

If the assessment indicates that the resettlement referral appears **unfounded**, the assessment should be forwarded to the officer accountable for resettlement for authorization. If the assessment is authorized, the referral source should be notified **in writing** that the refugee will not be considered for resettlement at that time and outline the basis of this assessment. A copy of this notification should be kept in the refugee's file.

The referral source may request UNHCR to **reconsider this assessment**. Such requests must be made in writing, and should be considered by the Field Office in light of the priorities of other pending resettlement cases. Senior Staff responsible for Protection should be consulted on the development of a mechanism for considering requests to reconsider resettlement assessments appropriate to the given field context.

If the assessment indicates that **additional information** is required from the referral source, the assessment should be forwarded to the officer accountable for resettlement for authorization. If the assessment is authorized, a letter requesting additional information should be sent to the referral source.

Both forms of notification should be in writing, and signed by the officer accountable for resettlement. The original letter should be sent to the referral source, while a copy of the letter, along with the Resettlement-Needs Assessment, should be retained in the refugee's file.

Sample texts for these letters are included in Section 2 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit.

In situations where individual case files are not maintained by a Field Office, an interview with the refugee may be required to gather sufficient information to adequately complete the Resettlement-Needs Assessment. Such interviews should be scheduled in consultation with the officer accountable for resettlement.

It is important to emphasize that the completion of a Resettlement-Needs Assessment does not necessarily mean that a refugee will be found to be eligible for a UNHCR resettlement referral. As such, special care should be taken not to raise resettlement expectations at this stage in the process.

6.4.2 Verification of registration details and refugee status

If the **Resettlement-Needs Assessment** indicates that the resettlement referral appears **founded**, then the the following elements of the refugee's file should be verified:

- That the **registration details** contained in the refugee's file are current, with particular emphasis on family composition, and **include a recent photograph of the Principal Applicant and all dependants**; and,

- That the refugee has been recognized, at minimum, as a refugee under UNHCR's Mandate as the result of an **individual status determination** procedure, and that this assessment is still valid. Any details regarding protection concerns that the refugee may face in the country of refuge should also be noted. (Please see Chapter 3 of the Resettlement Handbook)

These two elements should be confirmed in a **non-resettlement context** (i.e. through a home-visit, or an interview with a protection assistant where resettlement is not mentioned directly with the refugee). This precaution is important for two reasons. First, it ensures that the details contained in the file, especially family composition, are accurate and not biased by resettlement considerations. Second, it does not raise premature resettlement expectations on the part of the refugee.

The UNHCR staff who conducted the initial assessment maintains responsibility for the case through the verification process, and is specifically responsible for ensuring that the verification is conducted in a timely manner.

If all elements are current and contained in the refugee's file, the confirmation should be noted in the relevant field of the Resettlement-Needs Assessment Form, dated and signed by the UNHCR staff member responsible for that element of the verification.

Once all elements of the Assessment and Verification stage have been completed, the Resettlement-Needs Assessment requires the authorization of the officer accountable for resettlement activities before a resettlement submission may be prepared.

If any of these elements are missing from the refugee's file, the officer accountable for resettlement should forward the file to the relevant Units of the Field Office to complete the necessary sections, and assign a caseworker to follow-up in a specified time-frame.

6.4.4 Regular Resettlement Meetings

A number of Field Offices have adopted the practice of holding regular resettlement meetings, chaired by the officer accountable for resettlement, to discuss the assessments of Resettlement-Needs Assessments and, as discussed below, the subsequent submission of resettlement cases.

These resettlement meetings, with the participation of relevant staff from the Protection and Community or Social Services Units, may provide an effective forum for discussing and approving individual resettlement cases and for reviewing resettlement practices and procedures.

Resettlement meeting may, however, result in a bottle-neck in the resettlement process if cases are strictly required to pass through a resettlement meeting for authorization. While resettlement meetings can provide a useful forum for discussing particular or difficult resettlement cases, they cannot replace the authorization of the officer accountable for resettlement activities.

The responsibility of authorizing the progress of cases through the resettlement process remains with the officer accountable for resettlement activities.

Once authorization has been granted, the designated UNHCR staff member may pursue follow-up activities. It is important that the decision be recorded in writing in the refugee's file and that the referral source be notified of the progress of the case at this stage.

6.4.5 Use of specialist staff

Care must be taken to identify and prepare cases for resettlement submission with particular regard to recording specifics on all medical cases. Even in Field Offices with medical and community services staff, recognized and qualified experts (surgeons, psychologists, etc.) may have to be requested to provide a specialist opinion. For this purpose, recognized UN doctors should be given preference.

In the same way, the preparation and submission of Unaccompanied Minors for resettlement requires a Best Interest Determination according to the standards and procedures outlined in Chapter 8.1 of the Resettlement Handbook. Given the particular expertise required for conducting Best Interest Determinations, specialist staff should be involved.

Should the situation arise where there is no access to specialist staff or for any reason there are unusual delays in preparing necessary reports, the Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters should be consulted for advice.

FURTHER REFERENCE:

📖 *UNHCR Handbook for Social Services.* UNHCR Geneva, 1984.

6.5 Conducting Interviews

6.5.1 Preparing and conducting an interview

Interviews may play an important role in the preparation of a Resettlement-Needs Assessment, and will **always** be necessary during the preparation of a resettlement submission.

It is important to be fully prepared for interviews, and be fully versed in the contents of the refugee's file, in addition to the current conditions in the country of origin and country of refuge.

It is also important that the Principal Applicant and all dependants be present for the initial and final resettlement interview, and that the identity of all dependants be verified before the start of the interview.

The documents referred to under "Essential Reading" contain important information on how to prepare and conduct interviews in a refugee context. Of particular relevance is the Training Module on Interviewing Applicants for Refugee Status in which issues pertaining to the effects of trauma (Chapter Three), interviewing women refugees (Chapter Four) and interviewing children (Chapter Five) are elaborated upon.

6.5.2 Security recommendations when conducting interviews

Regrettably, hostile acts against persons conducting interviews sometimes occur. Therefore it is crucial that security measures are guaranteed prior to meeting or interviewing individuals or groups.

The following recommendations are meant to enhance the safety of UNHCR officers and staff of partners involved in the interview process:

- all interviews should, where possible, be by appointment;

- trained guards should control access to the building and the main entrance to the interview area. If deemed necessary, the guards should carry out searches of individuals seeking access to the building or use a metal detector;

- the interview area should not be exposed visually to the waiting room;

- only a minimum number of people should be allowed into the waiting area at any one time;

- any known record of violent behavior should be noted on the individual's file. This will alert the interviewer to take precautionary measures if deemed necessary;

- there should be no objects in the interview room which could be used as weapons (e.g. heavy paper weight, letter opener, stapler, etc.);

- no wall lights or electrical wires should be exposed as these might be used as a weapon or for suicide attempts;

- procedures to evacuate an interview room should be established and a mechanism or procedure should be in place for summoning help;

- furniture in the interview room should be arranged to give protection to the interviewer. Interviewers should have their chair located so as to provide easy access to the door. Doors to the interview rooms should be lockable from the outside only;

- in the case of security incidents, serious consideration must be given to bringing to justice any individual who assaults an interviewing officer.

  The following addition recommendations should be considered when conducting interviews in remote field locations:

- interviews should be conducted in a discreet location so as not to attract undue attention;

- ground transportation should remain on stand-by at all times;

- arrangements should be made to ensure proper communications at all times (radios or walkie-talkies);

- several staff should travel together and arrangements should be made with local authorities for assistance to be provided if needed;

Concerning precautions and practices to be followed in specific locations, it is suggested that advice be sought from specialized security personnel, especially the Field Security Advisor.

6.5.3 Working with interpreters

Interpreters play a vital communication role in interviews with refugees. The majority of interviews are held with the assistance of an interpreter. Interpreting is a skill, and interpreters should have access to special training so they may carry out their task more efficiently and professionally.

Interpreters should always:

- receive an adequate briefing before the interview;
- have a clearly defined role;
- have the support of the interviewer;
- work with accuracy;
- be treated with respect.

It is also essential that interpreters understand the confidential nature of all protection interviews, and resettlement interviews in particular. Interpreters must agree, in advance, to the following conditions:

- that they will not share the contents or nature of any interview in which they assisted;
- that they will not share the contents or nature of any documents they handle within the UNHCR premises related to their duties as an interpreter;
- that they will not solicit or accept any fee, either directly or indirectly, from refugees;
- that they will not provide advice or guidance to any refugee about the resettlement process, either during interviews or outside their official functions;
- that they will uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in their work;
- that they will be dismissed from their duties as an interpreter is they breach these conditions.

Many Field Offices have adopted the practice of having all interpreters sign an undertaking prior to the start of their first interview. A sample of such an undertaking is included in Section 1 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit.

It is important to be sensitive to a refugee's culture and background when selecting an interpreter. Remember that a woman refugee will likely be more comfortable speaking through a female interpreter to a female interviewer. Many women refugees are unwilling to speak to male interpreters and interviewers.

There may also be occasions when a male refugee would be more at ease with a male interpreter and a male interviewer.

When working with children and adolescents, care should be exercised to select interpreters who have the necessary skills. Interpreters should be both neutral and objective in their role.

Given the importance of an interpreter's neutrality and objectivity, Field Offices should avoid using refugee interpreters. Where refugee interpreters are used, it is important to ensure that they are not in any way related to the refugee, either through family relationship, or other ties such as political associations. In the same way, interpreters must indicate if they have a conflict of interest related to the refugee being interviewed before the start of the interview.

To ensure the independence of the interpreter, it is also recommended that, where possible, the interpreter for a resettlement interview should not be the same interpreter that was used during the refugee status determination interview.

Before starting an interview, it should be ensured that the interpreter is properly briefed and understands his or her role and the purpose of the interview. Confidentiality for the refugee is of the utmost importance and should be stressed, even though a trained interpreter will be aware of this. An interview should begin by introducing the interpreter to the refugee and explaining his or her role. It is also important to assure the refugees of their right to confidentiality, and that both the interviewer and the interpreter will respect this.

Questions should be directed to the refugee, and not to the interpreter. The interpreter should translate precisely what is said by the interviewer and the refugee, and not summarize, elaborate or attempt to provide an explanation of what is said. The interpreter should also be trained to take notes during the interview. This will assist in recording all the information accurately, especially important facts such as dates, names of persons and places. All notes taken by the interpreter during an interview should be kept in the refugee's file.

Refugees should also be advised that they may stop the interview or refuse the services of a given interpreter if they are not satisfied with the interpretation.

Special attention should also be paid to the security of interpreters. Cases have been reported where interpreters have been threatened and even attacked by refugees not referred for resettlement. Interpreters may be blamed for influencing the outcome of the resettlement interview, and consequently the resettlement process. It is for this reason that special attention must be paid not only to the selection and training of interpreters, but also arrangements to ensure the personal safety and security of interpreters involved with the resettlement process. In this regard, it is suggested that advice be sought from specialized security personnel, especially the Field Security Advisor.

6.5.4 Conducting interviews in places of detention

In some circumstances one may be obliged to conduct an interview in a place of detention, which means that an applicant is not free to leave a place under official control. This could include airport detention centers, prisons, or police stations. Conducting interviews in such locations should, if at all possible, be avoided. However, authorities may not allow access to the individual in any other location.

It should be recalled that the UNHCR Executive Committee has recommended that refugees and asylum seekers who are detained be provided with an opportunity to contact UNHCR, or in the absence of such office, available national refugee assistance agencies. In countries without a UNHCR office, but with UNDP representation, the latter usually assists in interviewing asylum-seekers and refugees and in documenting their cases.

The following precautions should be taken if an interview is to be conducted in a place of detention:

- the interviewer and any accompanying personnel should have proper identification documents when attending to an interview. It is also important to seek prior authorization from the competent authorities to access the detention center. The person to be interviewed should be given advance notice of the appointment;

- the interpreter should be provided by UNHCR and be briefed on the circumstances of the interview, including the interview environment;

- the interview should be conducted in a private room. If this is not possible, no other persons (such as guards, other detainees, etc.) should be present or able to overhear the interview proceedings;

- before beginning the interview, a brief discussion should be held with the applicant to create a calm and reassuring atmosphere;

- when taking notes during the interview, it should be considered whether they may be confiscated or photocopied by the authorities upon leaving the detention center. If this is a possibility, only brief notes using key words should be made during the interview and full notes prepared immediately after leaving the premises.

ESSENTIAL READING:

🕮 *Interviewing Applicants for Refugee Status (RLD 4). Training Module*. UNHCR Geneva, 1995.

🕮 *Interpreting in a Refugee Context (RLD 3). Training Module RLD 3.* UNHCR Geneva, June 1993.

🕮 *Guidelines on Security Incidents (Sample Indicators and Scenarios) (OMS 2).* UNHCR Geneva, December 1992.

🕮 *Guidelines on Security (PER 2).* UNHCR Geneva, December 1992.

* These resources are contained in Resettlement Tool-Kit

FURTHER REFERENCE:

🕮 *Interview Management. "A Reader"*. UNHCR Geneva, October 1995.

Training Video: *Interpreting in a Refugee Context.* UNHCR Geneva, 1995.

🕮 *Security Recommendations.* UNHCR Geneva, 1995.

6.6 Step 3: Preparation of a Resettlement Submission

On the basis of a **Resettlement-Needs Assessment**, the officer accountable for resettlement may authorize the preparation of a resettlement submission. Each submission ***must*** include a **Resettlement Registration Form (RRF)**, with a special needs assessment and medical reports prepared by a *Community Services Officer* or a *Health Coordinator* if appropriate, drawing on the information and recommendations provided by competent UNHCR Staff.

In addition to a substantiated explanation of the need for resettlement, it is important that the RRF include a comprehensive outline of the refugee claim and of the UNHCR determination of the case. This is of particular relevance as the majority of resettlement countries will, as part of their decision-making process, carry out an eligibility determination, either through selection missions or on the basis of the case file received in capitals (see Chapter 3 of this Handbook). For the compilation of relevant additional information gathered during the case assessment, the section of the RRF entitled *Special Needs* and the Medical Assessment Form may be used. Photocopies of supporting documents should be attached.

The electronic version of the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) allows for initial referrals to be made by e-mail. Submissions by e-mail must be followed by the submission of hard copies of the RRF, including photographs and signatures (see below). The system also includes built-in links to the Resettlement Handbook and other useful information concerning resettlement policies and activities.

The electronic versions of the RRF and the Resettlement-Needs Assessment are also compatible. To save time in the preparation of resettlement submissions, the assessment completed in the Resettlement-Needs Assessment may be transferred to the RRF, on the condition that the information is prepared according to the standards presented in this section.

Two templates of the RRF are contained in Section 3 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit. Version 1 is the standard format for resettlement submissions of 7 individuals or less. Version 2 is the standard format for resettlement submissions of 13 individuals or less. Guidance should be sought from the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters for the submission of resettlement cases including more than 13 individuals.

Section 3 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit also contains templates of the supplemental *Medical Needs* and *Social Assessment*.

6.6.2 The Step-by-Step User Guide

In December 2001, the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters issued the *Step-by-Step User Guide* for completing the RRF. This Guide is an invaluable resource, and is included in Section 3 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit.

Ensuring a high standard in the RRF is essential to ensuring a high level of acceptance of resettlement cases as the RRF is the primary tool at UNHCR's disposal to represent the needs of individual refugees to resettlement countries.

The *Step-by-Step User Guide* was prepared to provide objective standards for the preparation of individual submissions. To increase the quality of individual submissions, thereby increasing the probability of acceptance by resettlement countries and reducing the number of returned RRFs, it is important that the standards of the Guide are adhered to by all Offices.

All UNHCR staff members responsible for preparing resettlement submissions should, therefore, be fully versed in, and adhere to, the standards presented in the *Step-by-Step User Guide*.

Ensuring quality control for the preparation of RRFs will make resettlement activities more efficient, as fewer RRFs are returned for questions and corrections, and more credible, as RRFs received by resettlement countries will be more consistent.

It is the responsibility of the officer accountable for resettlement to ensure that all RRF submitted from their Field Office conform to the standards established in the *Step-by-Step User Guide*.

6.6.3 *Additional RRF controls*

RRFs must be filled out by UNHCR staff and not by the refugee. There can be *no exceptions* to this standard.

RRFs should be typed and not hand-written. Corrections by hand should be avoided. If corrections by hand are absolutely necessary, they should not be made with white-out. Instead, the old information should be crossed-out, the new information written above in pen, and the date and initials of the individual changing the information should be noted next to the correction.

Electronic versions of RRFs must be stored on a limited access computer drive or be password protected. Electronic versions of partial or completed RRFs must be stored in a way that prevents unauthorized access and/or alterations. In cases where RRFs are stored on a network drive, safeguards should be implemented to ensure that accesses to those documents are password protected. In cases where RRFs are stored on a computer's hard-drive, it should be ensured that access to that drive is strictly limited.

A photograph of the Principal Applicant and all dependants in Section 2 of the RRF must be attached to the RRF in a tamper-proof manner. Each Field Office should develop their own means of ensuring that the photos affixed to the RRF cannot be subsequently altered without proper authorization. Such means might include the use of the UNHCR dry embosser, the use of serial-issued codes, the use of special backgrounds in the photographs, and the use of wet-stamps. The name, date of birth and registration number of the individual in the photo should be written on the back of each photograph. In the same way, a photograph of the Principal Applicant and all dependants must be attached in the refugee's file for future verification and to prevent the substitution of family members. Where possible, Field Offices should consider the possibility of using digital cameras.

6.6.4 *The Special Needs* section of the RRF

The purpose of a special needs assessment is to provide valuable background information concerning the particular needs of refugees in order to assist the resettlement country in the selection process and in post-arrival service delivery.

While all cases submitted for resettlement would benefit from a special needs assessment, a duly completed Special Needs section of the RRF is compulsory for:

- survivors of violence and torture;
- medically-at-risk/disabled refugees;
- women-at-risk;
- unaccompanied minors;
- elderly refugees; and
- other cases deemed to have special needs or be at-risk.

Information provided in the Special Needs section should include:

- simple description of the refugee;
- family situation;
- living conditions;
- daily activities;
- prospects for self-reliance;
- efforts made to promote local integration or voluntary repatriation.

The Special Needs section of the RRF should be completed on the basis of an assessment by UNHCR staff, preferably a Community Services Officer, or by qualified implementing partners.

For cases submitted under the Medical Needs criteria (see Chapter 4.4), a Medical Needs Assessment form must also be completed.

6.6.5 Country-specific guides for RRF preparation

A number of Field Offices have prepared country-specific guides for completing RRFs, intended to provide specific guidelines on issues related to the particular contexts of that office. Such guides may address particular recurring concerns relating to family relations, presentation of names, validity of travel documents or period of detentions. Such guides typically make reference to issues particular to that field context that would affect a significant number of refugees submitted for resettlement.

The preparation of such country-specific guides is a useful practice, but should be undertaken mindful of the standards contained in the *Step-by-Step User Guide* and in consultation with either a Regional Resettlement Officer or with the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

6.6.6 Family Composition

As emphasized in the *Step-by-Step User Guide*, Section 2 of the RRF may prove to be a difficult section to complete, especially when working with refugee populations containing complex family relationships. Particular care should be taken when completing this Section as it is on this basis that the composition of the resettlement case will be determined by the resettlement country.

The fraudulent representation of family compositions has also been found to be among the most common forms of fraud in the resettlement process (Please see Chapter 8.4). While this misrepresentation may be unintentional, the resettlement case may be rejected by the resettlement country if the family relations presented in Section 2 are found to be lacking in credibility.

Following is a list of interview techniques developed to facilitate the process of “figuring out families” for Section 2 of the RRF. The questions below should be asked in a sensitive, non-threatening, conversational way. The goal of this process should be to ensure that all individuals who are legitimately a part of a family structure, **whether by blood or custom**, are considered together for resettlement. If relationships are not part of the nuclear family, the nature of the dependency, both economic and emotional, should be documented in Section 15 of the RRF.

- Confirm that all persons to be included on a case are physically present for interview. Sometimes people are included in the submission but are not at the same location. As a general rule, unless the case has urgent needs, postpone interviewing for submission until the entire family can be seen.

- Check available identity documents and record information for each family member who has identification.

- Ask the family relationship for each individual on the case.

- Verify the full name, date and place of birth for all family, present and not present.

- Confirm what family members are living and deceased, left in the country of origin, physically present in the country of asylum, as well as in the same location.

- Record the parents for Principal Applicant and spouse and verify that both father and mother are birth parents, not stepparents.

- Take care to confirm whether the Principal Applicant and spouse have any prior marriages or polygamous relationships. If father and/or mother have more than one partner, record the names of all partners, as well as whether the marriage is legal or informal.

- For siblings, confirm that both father and mother are the same. If the sibling has a separate father or mother, record the names and note the relationship.

- For children, confirm that these are the children of both husband and wife. If the children are the children of only the husband or the wife, record the names of the other natural parent, note the relationship to the person on the case, and ensure that the location of the other parent is recorded.

- If the child is not the natural child of either the father or mother, determine the names of the natural mother and father, and ask what the relationship is to the family and how long the child has been with them and how the child came to live with them. (Verify this against community service and registration records.)

- Ensure that you ask whether "family" members are blood relatives, neighbors, members of the same clan or tribe. (That is, define "brother," "sister," "cousin," "aunt," "uncle," etc. by asking if the mother of the aunt is the same as the mother of their mother.)

- Be sure to go back at least to the name of the grandfather for each person, since in many naming systems that will establish the family structure.

- Establish whether others were living in the same household in the country of origin, noting whether that means under the same roof, in the same compound, or as part of the household economic unit.

- Establish whether persons who were living in the same household in the country of origin are part of the same household in the asylum country, and if not, where they are.

For additional information on addressing complex family compositions or addressing concerns relating to the fraudulent representation of family compositions, contact the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

6.6.7 Guidelines for signing the RRF

The signing of the RRF is a significant stage in the overall resettlement process. If handled incorrectly, the signing of the RRF may result in unrealistic expectations on the part of refugees. If handles correctly, the signing of the RRF can be a useful occasion to manage resettlement expectations, address concerns about fraud and counsel refugees on the meaning of resettlement.

It is important to ensure that the RRF is signed at the correct time, in the correct way, and that the correct information is conveyed during the signing of the RRF. The RRF Declaration should only be signed once the entire RRF has been completed, and should be according to the following ten steps:

- The information contained in the completed RRF should be read by the refugee, or interpreted to her/him, and any errors corrected.
- The refugee should be counseled that they are responsible for the information contained in the RRF, and that their case will be rejected and likely closed if that information is later found to be fraudulent.
- The refugee should be given the opportunity to change any information in the RRF they know to incorrect, including family composition.
- The refugee should be counseled that signing the RRF does not guarantee that they will be resettlement, that UNHCR does not resettle refugees, and that the final decision remains with the resettlement country.
- The refugee should be counseled that the signing of the declaration authorizes UNHCR to share the information contained in the RRF with resettlement countries and that UNHCR is authorized to receive information and documents from the resettlement country relating to the refugee's resettlement.
- The refugee should be given the opportunity to ask questions and consider these implications before signing the RRF.
- If the refugee is in agreement, the refugee, the UNHCR interviewer and the interpreter (where applicable) should all sign the RRF.
- All parties should sign the declaration at the same time.
- The refugee should be counseled on the next steps in the resettlement process.

Refugees are entitled to copies of some section of their completed RRF. According to UNHCR's Guidelines on the Sharing of Information of Individual Cases, "the IC is in principle entitled to obtain information s/he has provided. The same applies to the duly authorized representative of the IC. Other individuals must have legitimate reasons. Staff safety considerations are often an important factor in this context." (Part 2(I), page 7). In the context of the RRF, this is taken to mean that a refugee may have a copy of the information they provided for the preparation of the RRF, but is not necessarily entitled to a copy of UNHCR's analysis of refugee status (final element of Section 12 of the RRF) nor UNHCR's analysis of resettlement need (Section 13 of the RRF).

Please contact the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters for additional guidance.

6.7 Step 4: UNHCR Submission Decision

In Field Offices, the decision to resettle an individual should be taken in full consultation among professional staff and be cleared by the UNHCR Representative or the delegated responsible officer. It is for this reason that all resettlement submissions must normally pass through the Branch Office for final approval.

The decision to submit a refugee for the consideration of a resettlement country should be taken according to objective criteria and is a decision that should be taken in a transparent way.

6.7.1 Threshold for submission decisions

Two questions must be asked before the decision is taken to submit a refugee for the consideration of a resettlement country:

- Should this case be submitted for resettlement?
- To which resettlement country should this case be submitted?

These two questions should be taken in order, and the second question should not, strictly speaking, influence the outcome of the first question.

When determining **if the case in question should be submitted for resettlement**, five conditions must be met:

1. The case in question must, at minimum, have been recognized as a refugee under the Mandate of UNHCR, according to Chapter 3 of the Resettlement Handbook.

2. The case in question must have been found to be eligible for resettlement according to the criteria outlined in Chapter 4 of the Resettlement Handbook.

3. The prospects of other durable solutions must have been given full consideration and resettlement identified as the most appropriate durable solution.

4. The refugee's file must contain evidence that the resettlement process was followed in accordance with the standards contained in this Chapter, including:

- A documented initial referral
- A completed and authorized Resettlement-Needs Assessment
- Verified registration and refugee status
- A completed and signed RRF
- All necessary supporting documentation

5. The ***universal imperative*** must be applied: If the Field Office submits this case for resettlement, it should, as a general rule, be willing to submit all cases with a similar profile.

If the case is found not to meet any of these five requirements, the officer accountable for resettlement activities must suspend the case and address the requirements that were not met.

If, after careful consideration, it is concluded that resettlement referral appears **unfounded** and that the refugee in question is not eligible for resettlement, the referral source should be notified in writing that the refugee will not be considered for resettlement at this time. This notification should contain a justification for this decision, and a copy of this notification should be kept in the refugee's file.

The referral source may request UNHCR to **reconsider this assessment**. Such requests must be made in writing, and should be considered by the Field Office in light of the priorities of other pending resettlement cases.

If the case is found to meet all five of these requirements, then the case should be submitted for resettlement.

6.7.2 Transparency and the submission decision

As with the approval of Resettlement-Needs Assessments, the submission decision must be taken with the authorization of the officer accountable for resettlement activities. The decision and justification for submission must be documented, and included in the refugee's file.

The transparency of the submission decision is also reinforced by the fourth requirement: that all necessary documentation is included in the refugee's file, and that it has been confirmed that the resettlement process was correctly followed before a resettlement submission can be made.

As concerns about resettlement submissions do not end once a particular case has been submitted, or even accepted, for resettlement, it is important that the documented justification for submitting a case for resettlement remains in the Field Office long after the individuals involved in the case have left. In the event of secondary review, or in the event of future family reunification, documentation must be contained in the refugee's file to justify the decisions taken at every stage of the resettlement process.

Given the responsibility associated with a resettlement submission, it is essential that submissions are made only with the authorization of the officer accountable for resettlement activities at the Branch Office level.

When making a resettlement submission, RRFs and supporting documentation should be accompanied by a covering memo from the officer accountable for resettlement activities authorizing the resettlement submission. The memo should specify, *inter alia*:

- the recognition date of the refugee
- the composition of the case
- the submission criteria
- the prioritization of the submission
- any particular vulnerabilities of the case
- any recommendations of resettlement country

A copy of this submission memo should be kept in the refugee's file, along with the original signed RRF. A photocopy of the signed RRF should be included in the physical submission, in addition to photographs of all individuals included in sections 1 and 2 of the RRF.

When multiple RRFs are submitted at the same time, a single memo should be prepared with a submission table listing the above details for each case.

6.7.3 Identification of a possible Resettlement Country

Once it has been decided that a particular case should be submitted for resettlement, it will be necessary to ask **to which resettlement country** should the case be submitted.

Major considerations on the basis of which a suitable resettlement country should be identified include:

- selection criteria of countries
- admissibility priorities of countries
- family links
- health requirements/ availability of treatment
- language
- culture
- nationality
- education background
- skills
- family configuration
- proximity to the home country
- status of country (regional) annual quota

Cases of individuals in need of resettlement are usually referred to one of the principal resettlement countries. These countries have established refugee resettlement quotas or ceilings which allow for referral of such cases.

Other countries accept resettlement cases on an *ad hoc* basis and some maintain special programs benefiting refugees with special needs. Efforts are underway to increase the number of countries which may consider candidates for resettlement.

All Field Offices should avail themselves of every opportunity in their dialogue with officials from resettlement countries to promote understanding of UNHCR goals and flexibility on selection decisions. Resettlement selection missions of specific countries also offer an opportunity to represent the interests of cases meeting UNHCR criteria, even if they do not meet the standard admission criteria of the country concerned.

Field Offices should also ensure that refugees are counseled on the resettlement country to which their case has been referred. This is an important aspect of managing resettlement expectations (see below).

Efforts should be made to preserve the integrity of family groups in the course of resettlement operations and to promote the admission of refugees who should be resettled to a country where they have relatives or other personal ties.

While family links or other links to prospective resettlement countries may clearly indicate where submissions should be made, the issue of where to direct submissions may not be clear for many cases. When in doubt, Field Offices should consult with the Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters.

6.7.4 Routing of resettlement submissions

All resettlement submission routes should be confirmed by consulting the updated Country Chapters contained in this Handbook.

Field Offices should file submissions for *Australia, Canada and the United States of America* directly through local embassies, provided that there is an immigration representation with a designated procedural role. The same applies to submissions for countries without annual resettlement programs.

In regions with Regional Resettlement Hubs, all resettlement submissions must be routed through the Regional Resettlement Officer to ensure the quality and integrity of the resettlement process.

For decisions regarding the resettlement of emergency cases, a recommendation should be forwarded by the Field Office to UNHCR Headquarters, again in full consultation with other professional staff and cleared by the officer accountable for resettlement. Action will then be taken by UNHCR Headquarters and communicated to the Field Office.

Similarly, in case of submissions for *Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerlan*d, the dossiers have to be forwarded by Field Offices to UNHCR Headquarters, which will take the final decision and make arrangements for the submission of the case to a Government. Submissions for *New Zealand* should be routed through the UNHCR Regional Office in Canberra.

For all cases in which Field Offices anticipate problems with local submissions, UNHCR Headquarters should be requested for guidance and assistance.

All selection missions from capitals should be coordinated through UNHCR Headquarters.

Regular Submission

With regard to direct submissions, UNHCR Headquarters does not require copies of the case files that are submitted or accepted locally. It is, however, the responsibility of the Field Office to ensure that statistical data concerning submitted, pending, accepted and departed cases is accurately recorded and reported (See Chapter 9).

Multiple submissions

Cases should not be submitted to more than one country at a time owing to the self-evident risk to the credibility of the Office if a case is accepted by more than one country. If, however, owing to unique protection problems, a Representative feels obliged to exceptionally submit a case to a second country while the case remains under consideration by another country, the Field Office must inform both countries as well as the Resettlement Section of the dual submission and immediately advise all parties of an acceptance.

Countries with annual resettlement programs

Field Offices should file local submissions for *Australia, Canada and the United States of America* directly through local embassies, provided that there is a regular immigration representation with a designated procedural role. Where this is not the case, offices with designated regional resettlement functions may be requested to facilitate submissions.

In the case of submissions for *Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerlan*d, files must be forwarded by Field Offices to UNHCR Headquarters. Headquarters will in turn submit them to the relevant authorities in the capitals either directly or via the Permanent Missions to the UN in Geneva. It is advisable for the Field Office to inform the local embassy of submissions, as an embassy may be requested by the capital to follow up.

Where exceptional circumstances/procedures prevail due to special resettlement operations, Field Offices may, in consultation with the Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters, submit cases directly to local embassies or capitals. Submissions for *New Zealand* should be routed through the UNHCR Regional Office in Canberra.

Countries without annual resettlement programs

Submissions should be made by the Field Office through the local embassy or UNHCR Headquarters. The UNHCR Office responsible for the resettlement country should be advised of the submission and be provided with a copy of the submission letter.

Urgent and Emergency Submissions

All those countries offering a specific number of emergency resettlement places draw them from existing quotas. However, some have introduced accelerated procedures for emergency needs. Other countries, while not specifying emergency sub-quotas, will consider emergency resettlement submissions and can and do respond rapidly when circumstances warrant. Others announce no quotas for resettlement but can and do respond rapidly to emergency cases if so called upon.

UNHCR Headquarters must be kept informed of any emergency submissions made locally.

Strict categorizations of resettlement priority

Emergency resettlement must be used selectively and on the basis of a thorough and objective assessment of both refugee status and urgency of removal, in order to preserve credibility.

Resettlement needs under the emergency category are defined as those in which the immediacy of security and/or medical threat faced by the refugee necessitates his or her removal from the threatening conditions within a very few days, if not within hours. For the sake of clarity a notional limit of a maximum of five days is understood.

Refugees who face conditions requiring their expeditious resettlement but within a less limited time-frame than indicated above, are categorized as **urgent** cases. Urgent cases as such require close and early follow-up with resettlement Governments to ensure their consideration before regular cases, which can sometimes remain pending many months. Field Offices may request Headquarters' support, if it is not already involved in the original submission. Staff are reminded to consider carefully the appropriate categorization and to proceed accordingly. Clearly, abuse of the emergency category will erode the credibility of UNHCR's judgment concerning such submissions, thereby reducing the effectiveness of these channels.

Emergency resettlement procedures

With the limited number of emergency places available and the consequent need to avoid overburdening certain resettlement countries with emergency submissions, it is necessary for UNHCR Headquarters to coordinate submissions within this category. Nevertheless, in some circumstances, submissions may have to be made by Field Offices, though in prior consultation with UNHCR Headquarters. The majority of resettlement Governments' emergency resettlement procedures require submission through UNHCR Headquarters.

When faced with an emergency resettlement requirement, time available for investigation of a refugee's statement may be severely limited. Nevertheless, such time as may be available before departure must be used to the maximum with a view to checking the veracity of the story and its consistency.

The following information should be conveyed to Headquarters immediately:

- full name, date of birth, place of birth, sex, nationality and ethnic origin;
- details on status determination (Convention or mandate);
- whether accompanied by family (if so, size);
- details of each dependent to accompany the candidate;
- brief explanation of need(s) for resettlement;
- brief justification for emergency categorization, and required time-frame for departure;
- whether valid travel documents held by all refugees concerned;
- in case of medical emergency: diagnosis, prognosis, current condition of refugee (family members), whether escort needed;
- recommendation on countries of resettlement and reasons, including third country links.

A full submission, including the RRF and supporting documentation, must follow by the fastest means available.

Once a resettlement submission has been made, a **focal-point** should be designated to follow-up on the particular case, thereby ensuring that the case proceeds in a timely manner and that all unnecessary delays are avoided.

6.8 Step 5: State Decisions

Resettlement depends on the willingness of the resettlement country to accept a refugee for legal stay in its territory, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the resettlement country. It is the resettlement country, therefore, that makes the decision on whether a refugee will be accepted for resettlement. Each resettlement country has its own regulations and procedures in respect to the resettlement of refugees, as detailed in the Country Chapters of the Resettlement Handbook.

UNHCR has no decision-making authority on resettlement cases. While UNHCR may recommend cases for resettlement, it cannot guarantee that the recommendation will be accepted.

According to its regulations and procedures, resettlement countries may consider resettlement requests in a dossier basis in their capital, and not require a direct interview with the refugee. In such cases, the importance of the UNHCR resettlement submission cannot be overstated.

In other cases, resettlement countries, by either discretion or law, conduct individual resettlement interviews with refugees under resettlement consideration. Such interviews are typically undertaken as part of a resettlement selection mission.

6.8.1 Selection missions

UNHCR is a partner in global resettlement activities, along with resettlement countries, their missions abroad, NGOs and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Each of these actors has a potential role to play in the planning and support of resettlement selection missions to the field to adjudicate on submitted cases.

UNHCR Field Offices capacities vary, and not all Offices will be able to support resettlement mission in the same way. What is possible, however, is an early evaluation of what the Field Office can and cannot provide in support of a resettlement mission.

Field Offices are encouraged to conduct an early assessment of the support they can provide to selection missions, and to communicate these capacities either directly to the resettlement country or through the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters as early as possible, and preferably more than two weeks prior to the start of the selection mission.

An early statement of possibilities and limitations will enable resettlement countries to make alternate arrangement to ensure that they have the support they require during their resettlement selection missions.

Early planning will inevitably result in more successful missions, and Field Offices should be proactive in identifying what support they can and cannot provide.

The requirements of selection missions to the field may include, *inter alia*:

- Entry visas
- Airport reception
- Ground transportation
- Accommodation
- Interview space
- Interpreters
- Clerical support
- Access to a photocopier
- Notification of refugees to be interviewed
- Briefing papers on conditions on the country of origin and asylum
- Typical case profiles

Where selection missions are co-ordinated by capitals through UNHCR Headquarters, the Resettlement Section will:

- liaise with the relevant Field Office and the capital to clarify dates for the mission, which may cover more than one country in the region;

- request the Field Office to identify relevant case files and advise the Field Office of the selection mission's interests in terms of refugee group composition and numbers;

- advise whether copies of the case files or information concerning details of the processing are required;

- send, where required, the case files selected by the Field Office for the selection mission for pre-screening directly to the capital of the country concerned after identifying cases with special needs;

- advise the Field Office of the cases pre-screened and selected for an interview by the country capital.

Where selection missions are organized directly between authorities of a resettlement country and a Field Office, the Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters and Field Offices in the region should be kept informed. This will help to better co-ordinate missions and avoid overlaps or delays of missions to countries in the region.

In most cases, it is useful to hold an initial briefing with the selection mission shortly after their arrival and prior to their interviews to discuss the mission schedule and logistics, current conditions in the country of refuge and country of origin, and common profiles of UNHCR-referred cases under consideration. A debriefing may also be useful at the end of the selection mission. Field Offices should offer an initial briefing and a debriefing to selection missions.

6.8.2 Requests for additional information

During both selection missions and dossier considerations, representatives from the resettlement country may ask for additional information contained in the refugee's file. In such circumstances, the officer accountable for resettlement should consult UNHCR's *Guidelines on the Sharing of Information on Individual Cases* to determine which elements of the refugee's file may be shared with the resettlement country. The officer accountable for resettlement should also be mindful of the terms of the waiver contained in the text of the RRF Declaration, which authorizes UNHCR to share information or documents pertaining to the refugee with resettlement countries in the context of a resettlement submission.

According to UNHCR's *Guidelines on the Sharing of Information on Individual Cases*, "IC information may be shared with countries of resettlement for specific purposes providing the IC has given her or his consent." (Part 2(IV), page 11) The Guidelines state that, as a general rule, no further documentation on the IC, other than the RRF and the Medical or Social Assessment Forms, needs to be shared with countries of resettlement, and that internal UNHCR assessments should not be shared with external parties.

If additional guidance is required, the officer accountable for resettlement should consult with the Senior Staff responsible for Protection in the Field Office or with the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

6.8.3 Rejection

If a case which was submitted locally is rejected, the local Field Office should follow up to establish:

- the reason for the denial; and
- if reconsideration by the country is feasible.

At the same time, the case should be reviewed in order to ascertain if the Field Office's initial assessment of the case was correct or if resettlement remains the most appropriate durable solution, particularly if the case has been pending for a long time. If a case is continually rejected after submission to a number of countries, the originating UNHCR Office may consider suspending the case pending developments in the case.

The advice of UNHCR Headquarters should be sought in this regard. Prior to the re-submission of a case, all relevant information should be checked in order to verify whether the dossier needs updating or amendments.

6.8.4 Acceptance

In the case of submissions through UNHCR Headquarters, the Resettlement Section will notify the Field Office of the acceptance of a submission and request liaison with the relevant embassy for collection of visas and travel documents.

6.8.5 The importance of counseling throughout the process

Counseling is of utmost importance from the beginning of UNHCR's contact with a refugee and should take the form of an open dialogue between the refugee and UNHCR, in close collaboration with Government and NGO staff involved in the process.

Owing to the traumas connected with departure from the country of origin and/or problems in the country of asylum, refugees may harbor unrealistic expectations in terms of both the ease of obtaining a resettlement place and the opportunities awaiting them in the country of resettlement. In fairness to the refugees, staff involved in resettlement should explain as realistically as possible the challenges of resettlement.

If more than one actor is involved in counseling, the information to be provided should be clearly agreed upon prior to counseling the individual. As appropriate, counseling on the other durable solutions, namely voluntary repatriation and local integration, should precede any discussion with the refugee on resettlement.

Once resettlement has been identified as the appropriate solution, utmost transparency as to criteria, procedures and prospects of acceptance as well as what is to be expected in the resettlement country are called for.

As in voluntary repatriation operations, only an informed decision based on full knowledge of all relevant facts will do justice to the individual refugee's needs and circumstances. During the counseling process, it needs to be pointed out that resettlement takes place based on set criteria and follows defined procedures. Realistic expectations on the part of refugees will avoid undue frustration, and in the worst case, aggression or violence on the part of those whose expectations are not met.

All family members (with the exception of small children) should receive appropriate counseling. It is not enough to counsel the head of the family since the perceptions, expectations and needs of refugee women and girls may differ substantially from those of their male family members.

Their concerns and needs have to be addressed in a gender- and age-sensitive manner.

Particular effort should be made to avoid the perception on the part of the refugee that a choice exists in terms of prospective resettlement countries (the “travel agency” syndrome). Refugees must understand that there is a very limited choice of resettlement countries owing to several factors, including quota availability, admission criteria as well as the refugee’s own background including family, cultural, linguistic, education and work experience. It must also be noted that distant family links or friends already resettled in certain countries may not be taken into consideration by resettlement countries.

Moreover, accommodation in countries of resettlement for those newly arrived may be modest and employment opportunities limited. The same may be said with regard to prospects for education, especially higher education. Failure to communicate the foregoing may result in false expectations and unnecessary frustrations for persons designated for resettlement. Gender- and age-sensitive counseling is important in order to facilitate cultural adaptation of refugees once resettled.

Counseling Refugees in Preparation for Resettlement

When counseling individual refugees in preparation for resettlement, it is important to explain clearly the process involved in the preparation and submission of the applicant’s case file. Information may be provided in various forms: by pamphlets, poster, by letter or by a personal interview. Refugees often believe that the process of resettlement will be more rapid than it usually is, and that obtaining a resettlement place is automatic, once the case has been submitted. It is, therefore, important to explain that the process takes time due to the processing procedures of resettlement countries. It should be made clear that acceptance is not automatic. Refugees should be counseled regarding the resettlement process, anticipated processing times of resettlement countries and UNHCR’s involvement in follow-up.

Refugees should also be informed of how and when the outcome of the case will be communicated to them. Care should be taken not to build up the refugees’ hopes and/or expectations and not to make promises that UNHCR cannot fulfill.

A refugee may clearly state a preference for a particular resettlement country. There may be valid reasons for expressing a country of choice; for example, family members may already be settled there. Close family links should always be considered for the purpose of family reunion. Distant family links, friends or even political allies in the country of resettlement are not necessarily deemed to be reasons for resettlement by resettlement countries.

It is important to explain to refugees that while family links may be given priority by UNHCR for submission, they do not guarantee acceptance by the resettlement country.

In preparation for interviews by Government representatives, the procedure should be explained to the refugees. It is particularly important to advise refugees that they must be prepared to articulate their refugee claim. Case files should be up-to-date and information clarified if necessary.

In some instances, refugees may refuse to go to a country despite an offer of resettlement. It is important to explain to them that they cannot have a choice and "shop around" for the country of their preference. The constraints which accompany the processing of resettlement places should be explained carefully. A deadline for reflection should be given, but it must be made clear that refusal to go will, depending on the particular circumstances, either result in no further processing for resettlement or a deferment of the case. Cases of this nature should usually be re-assessed.

Many refugees have unrealistic expectations about resettlement. They may associate the resettlement country with a "get rich quick" lifestyle. The reality may be in stark contrast. On arrival, for example, they may find themselves in modest reception facilities along with other refugees and with no immediate prospects for employment or higher education. Learning a new language may be the starting point in their new life. It is also important to realize that refugees who have remained in a camp for a prolonged period may be unable to cope with a new life which will require them to return to everyday decisions, and very often in a different culture and surroundings. It is also important to explain that the integration process may be difficult and that its success will very much depend upon the individual refugee's personal motivation and willingness to succeed.

Refugees should have as much information as possible of what awaits them upon arrival in the resettlement country. Their active participation will be indispensable. If possible, refugees should be given information concerning the language, culture, climate and population of the country. Some countries provide information or even orientation courses for refugees prior to departure. It is strongly recommended that, where feasible, counseling be done in close collaboration with the Government which has accepted the refugees for resettlement.

Many Country Chapters of this Handbook provide details of counseling material available from resettlement countries. Additional information may be requested from the Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters. Special reference should also be made to the forthcoming *UNHCR Handbook on Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*.

Counseling Refugees whose Application for Resettlement has been Rejected

A refugee whose case has been rejected, sometimes on several occasions, is often depressed or angry. It is important to inform a refugee promptly and if possible directly once a case is rejected. If possible, the reasons for the rejection should be explained. Whatever the behavior, the refugee is probably feeling very dejected and should be informed of any further action proposed. Cases which have continually been rejected should always be reassessed to see if resettlement is the most appropriate solution. If voluntary repatriation has become a realistic option in the meantime, the refugee should be counseled accordingly.

Refugees may undergo a range of feelings and behaviors depending on their experiences. Anger, aggression, denial, depression and loss of interest are common behavioral traits. Social counseling can assist refugees in coming to terms with their situation and to address their future.

6.9 Step 6: Departure Arrangements and Monitoring

6.9.1 *Supporting departure arrangements and the importance of oversight*

Once a refugee is accepted for resettlement, a number of formalities will have to be undertaken prior to departure. Departure formalities differ from country to country. The length of time taken to complete these formalities will differ considerably according to where the refugee is located. Cases which have been submitted and accepted under the emergency procedures should have travel arrangements expedited.

Regardless of the particular field contexts, refugees remain under the Mandate of UNHCR until they benefit from the effective protection of another State. In real terms, this means that UNHCR must maintain its responsibility for refugees during departure arrangements and processing.

Depending on the presence of other resettlement partners in a given country, especially an office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR may have greater or fewer specific responsibilities in arranging the departure requirements for refugees accepted for resettlement.

To ensure that this oversight function is effectively carried-out, a **focal-point** should be identified in all Field Offices to assume the responsibility of monitoring the departure arrangements and processing.

This focal-point would be specifically responsible for ensuring that post-acceptance and pre-departure identity checks are conducted, that pre-departure formalities are conducted as expeditiously as possible, and that refugees benefit from UNHCR's protection until they travel under the protection of the resettlement country.

6.9.2 Follow-up with Governments

The follow-up on cases is essentially the responsibility of the UNHCR Office which made the submission. Local submissions are therefore the responsibility of the Field Office, and follow up should be effected directly through the local embassy. UNHCR Headquarters or the relevant Field Office in the resettlement country may be asked to assist. The time required for processing varies from country to country, depending on the procedures.

6.9.3 Withdrawal or suspension of resettlement cases

In certain circumstances, UNHCR may withdraw or suspend cases; for example, if the refugee disappears and can no longer be contacted in the country of refuge, if urgent protection problems suddenly arise requiring an urgent resolution to a case which remains pending with a country, or if there are allegations of fraud relating to a specific case. A case may also have to be withdrawn when the reasons for the submission substantially change or cease to exist. This could, for example, be the case when, during the often long processing periods, the situation in the country of origin changes and voluntary repatriation becomes a viable option or when a woman submitted under a Women-at-Risk program changes her family status or situation and she is no longer considered at-risk.

In all such circumstances, a written explanation should be provided to the resettlement country explaining the withdrawal or suspension of the case. Where the priority of a case has to be upgraded, it should be clarified whether the country could accommodate the submission under the new terms. If a case has been suspended due to allegations of fraud or corruption, the resettlement country should be specifically advised on the expected duration of the investigation and the date by which a decision may be reached on either proceeding with or withdrawing the case.

Cases may only be suspended or withdrawn with the authorization of the officer accountable for resettlement, the UNHCR Representative, the Regional Resettlement Officer, or the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

6.9.4 Updating of information

Information on changed circumstances, including changes in the family composition (e.g. through births, deaths, divorces, etc.), should immediately be brought to the attention of the resettlement country to which a submission was made. Refugees should also be advised that they are responsible for advising UNHCR of any change in their circumstances so that UNHCR may inform the resettlement country.

6.9.5 Mandatory medical screening

Some resettlement countries insist on mandatory medical screening of candidates for resettlement. In many countries, IOM is responsible for medical screening, processing and treatment of refugees prior to resettlement. The protocols for these activities are defined by the resettlement country. In general, the intention of medical screening is to identify disease at an early stage, and should therefore ideally always be followed by treatment or cure. Resettlement countries may use medical screening to exclude refugees, for fear that their health problems will pose a financial burden, create excessive demands on existing national health services, or to prevent the introduction of communicable diseases and protect public health.

Mandatory HIV testing for resettlement has created very sensitive ethical problems, particularly as most refugees might not receive any form of counseling and a cure for HIV/AIDS is still not available. For this reason, UNHCR and IOM formulated guidelines for pre- and post-test counseling which provides refugees with information on HIV, including means of prevention as well as personal and family concerns.

Throughout its experience in medical screening world-wide, IOM has developed technical expertise in a number of areas, including diagnosis and management of TB and leprosy, psychiatric services and the implementation of effective immunization programs. Field Offices may therefore liaise with local IOM offices if such health issues become relevant to the resettlement processing.

6.9.6 Language training and cultural orientation

In order to facilitate resettlement, language and cultural orientation courses may be considered, to provide refugees with basic skills in the language and customs of the receiving country. These can range from pre-departure training and employment readiness to post-traumatic stress counseling with an aim to prepare refugees for integration in the host country.

6.9.7 Travel documents

As refugees should not use passports issued by their country of origin, some other form of travel documentation will be necessary. In some cases, depending on the itinerary, the mode of travel and the administrative requirements of the countries involved, a letter in lieu of visa from the authorities of the destination country may suffice. Often, however, a more formal travel document is needed. Certain countries of refuge may be willing to issue aliens passports.

In States party to the Convention and/or the Protocol, a Convention Travel Document may be a possibility for persons who have been granted refugee status. When no other travel document is available, an ICRC Travel Document may be obtained locally or by ICRC Geneva via UNHCR Headquarters upon completion/receipt of an application form and photographs, signed by the applicant. UNHCR Headquarters should be consulted if assistance is needed.

6.9.8 Visas

Entry visa

Some receiving countries will inform the Field Office directly or through UNHCR Headquarters of the consular post to which the visa authorization will be forwarded. If there is no local consular representation, UNHCR Headquarters will request the receiving country to send visa instructions either to a suitable consular post nearby or alternatively to their United Nations Mission at Geneva to be forwarded to UNHCR Headquarters for onward transmission to the Field Office.

Transit visa

Transit visas, if required, should be obtained from the appropriate local embassy. IOM has special agreements with a number of Governments and airlines to waive transit requirements.

Exit visa

In some countries, residents including recognized refugees are required to make a formal application to the competent authorities for an exit visa. In such cases, UNHCR intervention with the authorities of that country may be necessary.

6.9.9 Travel expenses

Unless travel is arranged within the framework of an ongoing resettlement operation, the organization and financing of the travel is in principle the responsibility of the refugee, with UNHCR providing assistance only if needed. Travel costs for most resettlement cases are met by the receiving country either in total or under a Government loan scheme. Other sources of funding may come from NGOs or loan schemes administered by IOM.

When a refugee is not able to meet travel expenses and when no other source of funding is available, UNHCR will normally provide funding and authorize IOM to make the necessary arrangements by charging costs to a UNHCR project. Where, in such cases, the UNHCR Field Office does not itself administer a project for resettlement travel, prior authorization must be obtained from UNHCR Headquarters. IOM benefits from reduced air fares and, with financing from UNHCR, Governments and other sources, administers a variety of travel projects, sometimes involving travel loan programs.

Travel arrangements should be made only after the necessary exit and entry visas have been obtained.

6.9.10 Transportation

In many countries, IOM makes transportation arrangements on behalf of UNHCR or the resettlement country concerned. If there is a local IOM office, the UNHCR Field Office should arrange travel directly through them, once the refugee is ready for travel and final destination and suitable date of reception are confirmed by the receiving country.

The special IOM fares benefit all categories of persons assisted under the auspices of the Organization and allow for considerable reductions in air fares and provide also an increased free baggage allowance. Transport is normally provided on scheduled airline services on an individual basis or on group flights. If so required, and in particular for massive population movements, transportation may be arranged on charter flights. In case of need, IOM may also provide transport by bus, truck, rail or ship.

Note should be taken that during peek periods, usually holiday seasons, the booking of air tickets at special IOM tariffs may not be possible or at least not without considerable advance notice. For special cases, in particular when medical needs of refugees have to be accommodated during air travel, an advance notice of at least 2-3 weeks is required. If there are "no shows", i.e. persons booked who do not show up for departure, the Field Office should inform the responsible IOM office immediately in order to effect re-bookings or cancellations. In this respect, any unused ticket must be forwarded to IOM to enable them to obtain a refund from the air carrier.

Where IOM is not present or where agreements with IOM are limited to certain functions, the UNHCR Field Office may have to cover the following tasks:

- Field Offices may be required to arrange the movement of refugees from camps or other areas to points of departure. If this necessitates transfer to another country, the Field Offices involved should liaise to obtain entry permission from the Governments concerned and if required with UNHCR Headquarters so that travel may be arranged for minimum stopover period.

- Field Offices should advise the Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters when the individuals are in possession of the necessary travel documents and visas and are ready to travel, so that IOM Geneva may book appropriate flights. UNHCR Headquarters will then confirm flight details to the Field Office and the receiving country. In cases processed via UNHCR Headquarters:

- The Field Office should confirm flight arrangements to UNHCR Headquarters, in order to advise the receiving country accordingly, enabling them to arrange the reception. IOM, when involved, will usually also advise the receiving country.

- Field Offices should confirm a refugee's departure to UNHCR Headquarters. It is important that a confirmation of the departure is also forwarded to the responsible IOM office.

- If for some reason a person is unable to travel as scheduled, the Field Office should inform UNHCR Headquarters immediately, so that IOM may be requested to make re-bookings and keep the receiving country informed in good time in order to arrange reception.

6.9.11 Medical preparations and escorts

In order to secure safe travel for refugees with medical conditions and to ensure that airline requirements are met, IOM can perform pre-embarkation checks and, when needed, provide medical escorts. The necessity for medical escorts and the medical judgment as to refugees' fitness to fly is based on IATA regulations.