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## RESETTLEMENT MANAGEMENT IN FIELD OFFICES

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### 8.1 Resettlement Management

As stated in IOM/25/2002 – FOM/24/2002, “Management of Protection Activities – Responsibilities of UNHCR Staff”, signed by the High Commissioner on 15 March 2002, all UNHCR staff, irrespective of grade or function, have the responsibility of ensuring that protection activities, including resettlement, are carried out to the highest standards possible, and to prevent fraud and malfeasance in all activities.

With limited resources and increasing demand for resettlement, managers have been facing increasing challenges in ensuring the effective management of resettlement activities in Field Offices. The purpose of this Chapter is to provide guidelines and standards for the effective management of resettlement activities in Field Offices. This Chapter also includes a number of practical management tools and reporting requirements.

While resettlement activities are currently undertaken in a diverse range of circumstances, the standards and guidelines contained in this Chapter are of a universal nature so as to be applicable to **all** resettlement activities. The Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters, and Regional Resettlement Officers (where applicable), will be able to provide additional guidance to individual Field Offices on further issues of particular concern.

#### **8.1.1 Overall management and accountability framework**

It is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that a clear management and accountability framework is in place for all resettlement activities in their respective offices.

As stated in IOM/25/2002 – FOM/24/2002, all UNHCR staff has “a shared responsibility to ensure that protection activities are carried out to the highest standards possible, and to prevent fraud and malfeasance in all activities.”

At the Field Level, overall management and accountability for resettlement activities lie with the UNHCR Representative and the Senior Staff in charge of Protection, but continue through all staff with specified resettlement functions.

### **8.1.2 Designation of officer accountable for resettlement activities**

In relation to the decentralized nature of resettlement operations, there are few UNHCR Resettlement Officers. In the absence of a Resettlement Officer, the UNHCR Representative and Senior Staff in charge of Protection must designate an officer accountable for resettlement activities within the Field Office. The officer accountable for resettlement activities should be a member of UNHCR’s protection staff.

In field locations where UNHCR is represented by non-UNHCR staff, UNHCR Headquarters shall assume the responsibility of developing appropriate mechanisms and procedures 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. This officer must exercise adequate supervision over the integrity of resettlement activities, including resettlement identification, case preparation and submission.

The accountability designation of this officer should be in writing to ensure transparency. The name, title, and contact details of the officer accountable for resettlement should be shared with the relevant Bureau, the Resettlement Section of UNHCR Headquarters and Regional Resettlement Officers (where applicable) to facilitate effective communication on matters relating to resettlement.

A sample accountability designation for resettlement officers has been included in Section 1 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit.

Given the role of the officer accountable for resettlement activities in the process of approving cases throughout the resettlement process, it is important that a designated officer be specified in the accountability framework to ensure that resettlement work in the Office may continue in the absence of the officer accountable for resettlement activities.

### **8.1.3 Staff responsibilities**

Within the overall accountability framework, each staff with resettlement responsibilities should be provided with a written description of their particular responsibilities and reporting responsibilities.

Individual staff work plans should also specify how staff members exercise oversight of internal control requirements.

Resettlement has, in recent years, come to involve an increasing number of temporary staff, often deployees, and project staff. Such staff should receive written guidance regarding control requirements, including the limits of their functions.

#### **8.1.4 *Minimum Standards and Standard Operating Procedures***

The officer accountable for resettlement activities is responsible for ensuring that basic provisions of effective resettlement procedures are established and followed in the Field Office. These procedures must be in accordance with the standards contained in the Resettlement Handbook, and must be prepared as a written set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing the resettlement activities of the given Field Office.

#### **8.1.5 *Drafting and Maintaining Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)***

Given the diversity of resettlement and field contexts, it is neither possible nor desirable to have a single, universal set of SOPs to be followed by all Field Offices. Instead, each Field Office is required to review their current resettlement activities and needs in light of the standards outlined in the Resettlement Handbook before drafting country-specific resettlement SOPs.

To facilitate this task, Section 1 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit contains a “Resettlement self-assessment check-list”. The assessment has also been provided as a Microsoft Word document, and Field Offices may find the document easier to complete in electronic format than by hand.

This assessment should be initially conducted by the officer accountable for resettlement, and serve as the basis of a discussion with the UNHCR Representative and Senior Staff in charge of Protection on the effectiveness of the Office’s resettlement procedures.

The purpose of the assessment is to assist the Field Office in the task of reviewing their resettlement activities and identifying areas of potential improvement. If the assessment indicates that the standard listed in the first column is not implemented in the Field Office, follow-up action should be proposed according to the referenced section of the Handbook, a focal point for follow-up identified, and a deadline set for follow-up activities.

Further to this discussion, the completed assessment should be authorized by the UNHCR Representative or Senior Staff in charge of Protection. The original assessment should be kept in the Field Office, and a copy should be sent to the relevant Bureau and the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

Particular areas of concern and additional support required for the implementation of the standards should be also conveyed to UNHCR Headquarters.

In light of the findings of the initial assessment, the officer accountable for resettlement activities should draft resettlement SOPs, which must include the following elements:

1. **Resettlement Procedures:** Narrative description of how the Field Office implements the stages of the resettlement process presented in Chapter 6 of the Resettlement Handbook, including:
  - how resettlement cases are identification and referred
  - how internal and external referrals and received and treated
  - how unsolicited requests for resettlement are received and treated
  - how resettlement referrals are assessed
  - how resettlement submissions are prepared
  - how resettlement submission decisions are made
  - how resettlement submissions are made
  - how resettlement selection missions are supported
  - how oversight is maintained through the departure process
2. Specified responsibilities, accountabilities, required authorization and oversight required for each stage of the resettlement process;
3. **Resettlement Management:** Narrative description of how the Field Office implements the resettlement management standards presented in Chapter 8 of the Resettlement Handbook, including:
  - how annual self-assessment reviews of resettlement activities are conducted, including the assessment of the Field Office's SOPs and accountability framework
  - how UNHCR's guidelines on refugee women and children are met in the resettlement process
  - how an overall management and accountability framework is maintained in the resettlement process
  - how resettlement files are managed
  - how resettlement files are stored
  - how resettlement files are tracked
  - how resettlement activities in the Field Office are prioritized
  - how Populations in Need of Resettlement are identified as part of the annual mapping exercise
  - how annual resettlement needs are determined and reported
  - how resettlement needs are included in the Country Operations Plan and reported in the Annual Protection Report
  - how fair access to the resettlement process is ensured
  - how co-ordination is ensured between Registration, Status Determination and Resettlement
  - how fraud and corruption in the resettlement process is addressed on an on-going basis

- how allegations of fraud and corruption in the resettlement process are reported and addressed
  - how resettlement expectations within the refugee population are managed
  - what steps are taken to ensure staff safety, security and development
4. Specified responsibilities, accountabilities, required authorization and oversight required for management of the resettlement process;
  5. Appendix of sample country-specific documents and forms used in the resettlement process

These SOPs should be discussed with and authorized by the UNHCR Representative and the Senior Staff in charge of Protection, and a copy should be sent to relevant Bureau, the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters and, where applicable, to the Regional Resettlement Officer.

Subsequent to the drafting and full implementation of the resettlement SOPs, an annual review of the resettlement practices and procedures of the Field Office should be conducted by repeating the process of the Resettlement Self-Assessment.

In the process of drafting and maintaining resettlement SOPs, it is important that Field Offices pay particular attention to UNHCR's guidelines on refugee women and children. In particular, special provisions should be included in the resettlement procedures to reflect the special needs of refugee women and children.

A growing number of Field Offices have already undertaken the task of drafting resettlement SOPs, and there has been a consistently positive response to the benefits of drafting and maintaining SOPs. Field Offices with well-developed and detailed SOPs have been able to increase the efficiency and credibility of their resettlement activities. Clear divisions of responsibility and transparent procedures in the resettlement process have also addressed increased concerns relating to fraud and corruption in the resettlement process.

In accordance with IOM/25/2002 – FOM/24/2002, all Field Offices should undertake the process of conducting initial resettlement self-assessments and drafting resettlement SOPs with the aim of increasing the effectiveness, efficiency and credibility of their resettlement activities.

### **8.1.6 Registration of refugees and Resettlement**

The Executive Committee of UNHCR, in its Conclusion no. 91 (LII – 2001) on Registration of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers of October 2001 reiterated the importance of registration as a tool of protection, including protection against refoulement, arbitrary arrest and detention by making people known to UNHCR and the host government as persons of concern. Registration helps individuals, families and other groups of refugees get basic access to the rights, services and assistance they need. Accurately registering children is also an important means to prevent military recruitment, to ensure family unity, and, in the case of separated children, to reunite families.

Registration also helps to ensure that decisions about durable solutions are voluntary by recording an individual's agreement to a particular solution. Accurate registration is also essential for identifying cases for which resettlement and local integration are the most appropriate solutions.

The importance of a reliable refugee registration process with respect to resettlement cannot be overstated. Early and effective registration coupled, where possible, with individual status determination procedures provides the most effective means of identifying refugees in need of resettlement consideration on a pro-active and ongoing basis. An accurate and comprehensive registration of refugees should be done as soon as possible after flight, and, more importantly, outside of the context of resettlement. This is a fundamental safeguard for the integrity of resettlement activities.

In implementation of EXCOM Conclusions 91, (LII) -2001, UNHCR launched a global registration project called PROFILE. This effort is UNHCR's long-term strategy towards enhancing field registration and operations management. The aim of PROFILE is to strengthen UNHCR's field capacity to establish the size and nature of the refugee population more accurately, as well as to collect, analyze and use population data, including biometric features, more effectively for protection, implementation and planning purposes. One of the expected benefits of PROFILE is enhanced identification of refugees for durable solutions considerations, including resettlement.

PROFILE will also facilitate resettlement of specific categories of refugees with special needs, including Women-at-Risk. It is essential that each family member is independently recognized and registered. This has importance for refugee women, particularly for refugee status determination and resettlement. For instance, a refugee woman or spouse may have independent grounds to claim asylum. Claims may need to be separated following divorce or separation of the spouses. The woman may be the Principal Applicant of a resettlement submission. Further, PROFILE will help maintaining effective records management at UNHCR Country Offices (for further details, see below).

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## 8.2 File Management and Tracking

### 8.2.1 UNHCR Records Management

UNHCR records, including paper files and electronic material, are the property of UNHCR. Proper maintenance is crucial to accountability. In addition, individual case (IC) files, plus any database or card file that serves as a guide, are identified as permanent records and must be properly maintained and archived according to schedules issued by the UNHCR Archives and Records section in the Division of Communication and Information. This includes protection correspondence, together with any records on status determination, resettlement and voluntary repatriation.

This guidance is intended to help field staff understand how to manage protection records. Official procedures are issued in relevant IOM-FOM, including IOM/72/99-FOM/72/99: Introducing Records Schedules, and subsequent guidance, which have effect until the records chapter in the UNHCR Manual is revised. For further information or guidance, contact [archives@unhcr.org](mailto:archives@unhcr.org)

Protection and resettlement files include both individual case files and subject files. Subject files include country information, policy documents and procedural guidelines. Individual case (IC) files contain all information pertaining to a particular refugee or asylum seeker and his or her dependents.

### 8.2.2 Establishing Individual Case Files

Field Offices with protection staff should establish a system of individual case files for correspondence on individual cases, including correspondence to and from individual refugees on protection issues. Other documentation relating to problems faced by individual refugees who have consulted with protection staff should also be retained in their file under the IC filing system.

Field Offices working in *prima facie* refugee situations may not have an established IC file system given the nature of their day-to-day contact with refugees. In the context of resettlement work in *prima facie* situations, an IC file should be created for refugees when an initial referral is received.

IC files must be centralized, and each IC should only have one file in a Field Office. The IC's file must be the central repository for all information about the refugee produced by UNHCR and its partners, in addition to all correspondence between the refugee and UNHCR.

A centralized IC file system facilitates the identification of an appropriate durable solution by providing a 'snap-shot' of the refugee's life in a single file.

All elements of the file may eventually be useful when considering possible durable solutions, and a holistic understanding of the refugee's needs will be greatly complicated with the absence of such a centralized system.

Each contact with an IC, including date, nature of contact, action, and recommended follow-up should be recorded on a log sheet, usually on the left-hand side or first page of the folder, as well as any other documentation developed in the course of the contact.

Recordkeeping on individual cases is essential to ensure continuity when UNHCR staff changes occur, and to develop a picture over time of events and circumstances that might affect durable solutions for individual refugees. Standardization of recordkeeping between and among UNHCR field offices is essential so that senior management can be assured the adequacy of records and that procedures exist for accountability.

The protection clerk or other person responsible for filing must assign a case number and record the name, date and place of birth of the IC on a file card index, logbook, or database. This information must be maintained and eventually archived with the files. Guidance on numbering is provided below.

File folders should be stored in fire-resistant file cabinets that can be locked, in addition to locating filing cabinets in a room that can be locked. The files should then be filed according to case number, from lowest to highest number, front to back (or left to right if using horizontal shelves). New files are then added to the back of the drawer.

UNHCR guidelines recommend that IC files be maintained numerically with a cross-index to names because of the number of different naming systems in different countries. The usual sequence is to assign numbers in sequence, based on the calendar year in which the file is initially opened. The first file opened in the year 2001 in Ethiopia, therefore, could be assigned ETH2001-0001 (or 2001-00001, if a large volume of cases is expected in a single calendar year), the second would be 2001-0002, the third, 2001-0003.

If refugees from more than one country of origin are present in the country of asylum, the file series may include a code representing the country of origin. In that case, a Sudanese refugee in Ethiopia might be assigned the case number ETH2001-SUD0001.

If a decision is made to use registration numbers (which are often associated with ration card numbers), the office must be very careful that any changes in registration (or ration) number because of revalidation exercises are captured, and that any new number associated with the same IC are recorded in the files and on existing indices, as well as databases. It is essential to maintain cross-referenced lists of numbers associated with a single IC.

### **8.2.3 Contents of Individual Case (IC) Files**

Correspondence and documentation appropriate to IC files include, *inter alia*:

1. Letters to and from an individual refugee regarding protection, including resettlement.
2. Copies of refugee's personal identification documents, such as passport and refugee registration, which may be used in making a status determination.
3. Copies of asylum government identity documents related to an individual protection case.
4. Correspondence to/from Headquarters or other UNHCR offices or implementing partners related to individual protection cases.
5. Documentation related to resettlement consideration or assessments.
6. Photographs of IC and family members.
7. Where appropriate, medical information related to the case.

Field Offices should specify which staff members have the authority to certify copies of original documents added to a refugee's file, such as birth certificates and adoption documents.

### **8.2.4 File Security**

Individual case (IC) files must be maintained in accordance with guidance on confidentiality of information on refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, in order to provide adequate internal control from misuse or fraud, one officer must be accountable for ensuring that procedures are in place to control and record access to IC files.

The UNHCR Representative and the Senior Staff in charge of Protection should delegate in writing the accountability for supervision and internal controls to a specific protection officer. This officer in turn has the responsibility to determine what personnel will have access to IC files and confidential documentation on individual refugees.

In Field Offices where no international protection officer is regularly present, the Head of Office will have to determine whether he or she retains the accountability for ensuring procedures are in place, or whether another supervisory officer is designated as responsible. If no international staff is available, it is the responsibility of the supervising office head to determine local procedure and ensure and monitor that confidentiality and security are adequately maintained given the local vulnerabilities to compromise.

When individual files are needed during the course of the workday, the file should be charged out through the use of out cards and folders. Out cards can be ordered from the Archives and Records Section at Headquarters, or an electronic version can be requested by sending an e-mail to [Archives@unhcr.org](mailto:Archives@unhcr.org). This procedure establishes a record of who has had access to files in case of compromise and to monitor that only authorized individuals work on the files. Failure to follow this procedure is a weakness in internal controls and in anti-fraud measures.

The storage of electronic records relating to individual refugees, such as registration files and protection files including information on status determination and resettlement referral require additional security measures because of the increased risk of compromise to large volumes of information. Internal control procedures in each office must reflect this in the accountability assigned to records managers and systems administrators.

Paper files must be stored in a locked cabinet and only authorized persons should have access. These files should be kept locked unless the responsible person is physically present. The key or combination should not be shared and should not be left with any individual who is not permitted unrestricted access to the files (such as a colleague, security guard, or even other officers). In addition, the filing cabinets should be kept in a room which can be locked; access to the key to that room should also be restricted.

The senior security officer, in liaison with the Field and Staff Security Advisor in UNHCR Headquarters, should review these arrangements and recommend additional measures if warranted by local circumstances. One of the best means to enhance security is to keep only active, current files in field offices. Older, non-current records should be shipped to Headquarters.

For advice, see FOM/67/00. Offices may also consult the Records and Archives section at Headquarters.

### **8.2.5 File Tracking and Database**

As explained above, UNHCR Field Offices are gradually being equipped with registration capacity within the PROFILE project. This will enable them to perform accurate refugee registration, early identification of resettlement needs and implement transparent and reliable resettlement programmes.

Field Offices that do not yet have access to PROFILE should nevertheless develop and maintain a tracking system and database of resettlement cases to facilitate the essential task of follow-up and monitoring of resettlement cases. There is a danger in many field contexts that individual cases may get stalled at any stage in the resettlement process if there is a lack of tracking and oversight of pending cases.

The first step in addressing this concern is to have an active and secure database of all active resettlement cases. Ideally, this database would be part of the general database maintained by the office. If a central database is maintained (i.e. RICS), all updates on resettlement activities should be entered into the database when decisions are made.

If a central database is maintained, a separate resettlement tracking system may still be useful to facilitate monitoring of individual cases and identifying what action is required and who is responsible for follow-up.

File tracking and database systems for active resettlement cases should, at minimum, include the following searchable fields:

- Principal Applicant's (PA's) name
- PA's date and place of birth
- PA's nationality
- PA's family composition
- Source of resettlement referral
- Current stage in the resettlement process
- Most recent decision
- Date of most recent decision
- Pending action
- Caseworker responsible for case

### **8.2.6 Storage of Travel and Identity Documents**

On various occasions, and for a range of reasons, UNHCR offices are required to receive travel and identity documents, and hold such documents on behalf of refugees. This practice should be avoided, but may be necessary in the absence of a local IOM office. In such circumstances, special procedures must be established for the safe storage and transmission of travel documents.

In some instances, travel documents and visas are sent to UNHCR by resettlement countries, and requests UNHCR to transmit these documents to the refugee. An identity check should be performed to ensure that the correct person is receiving the correct document. The travel document should be photocopied, and the refugee should sign the photocopy to confirm receipt of the original. This copy should be counter-signed by the relevant UNHCR staff. The signed copy should be kept in the refugee's file as proof of delivery.

In any circumstance, all travel documents and identity documents received by UNHCR must be stored in a safe with limited access. A central registry should be kept to record who has access to the safe and which documents have been deposited or withdrawn.

Field Offices should ensure that a clear designation is kept of which staff members have access to such documents, and that the procedures for depositing, withdrawing and transmitting travel and identity documents are clearly defined and recorded. Embassies and missions sending travel and identity documents to UNHCR for transmission to a refugee should be advised of the procedures in place for the depositing, withdrawing and transmitting of travel and identity documents.

## **8.3 Co-ordinating and planning resettlement activities**

Resettlement is a global undertaking, involving co-operative efforts between resettlement countries, UNHCR, NGOs and IOM. Co-operation and co-ordination is essential to ensure that resettlement efforts are effective and efficient.

This section focuses on the importance of co-ordinating and planning resettlement activities at various levels within UNHCR. Effective co-ordination and advance planning will provide the basis for more efficient resettlement activities, as efforts are not duplicated within the organization, and more effective resettlement, as resettlement needs are promoted on an on-going basis.

Individual Field Offices play an essential role in the co-ordination and planning of resettlement activities. It is through Field Offices that refugees in need of resettlement are identified and submissions are prepared. Field Offices also play an invaluable role in communicating resettlement needs to the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

### **8.3.1 Planning for resettlement need**

#### **Mainstreaming resettlement in the COP**

The High Commissioner's IOM/25/2002 – FOM/24/2002 on the management of Protection activities highlights the importance of accurate and advanced resettlement planning. The High Commissioner stresses that resettlement is “a critical and essential element of UNHCR's protection mandate and offices are asked to approach it with this in understanding. Head of Offices should ensure that durable solutions strategies, including resettlement, are incorporated in their Country Operation Plan”. Subsequently, a specific form was created to facilitate the UNHCR Country Offices' analysis of resettlement caseloads, their needs and inclusion in the COP documentation. (form Proactive Planning for Resettlement, (Annex 6), see Annex 2, the Tool Kit). The inclusion of resettlement planning in the annual COP exercise is a fundamental advance in the process of mainstreaming resettlement into the comprehensive protection strategies of Regional Bureaux.

Not only the officer accountable for resettlement activities should be directly involved in the formulation of the Country Operation Plan, but also relevant staff with programming and financial responsibilities should participate in the resettlement planning in order to ensure that the human and material resources required to meet the resettlement needs identified through the annual mapping exercise are included in the exercise. As explained in the form in Annex 2, the Tool Kit, Country Offices are requested to identify possible gaps existing between resettlement needs in the countries of asylum under their responsibility and the real capacity of Country Offices to process resettlement cases. If a gap is identified, this should be clearly explained and, if necessary, a request for additional support in terms of resources and staffing should be submitted to HQs.

### **Identifying Populations in Need of Resettlement**

To begin the process of proactive resettlement planning within the COP exercise, Country Offices should engage in the task of “mapping resettlement need”. This exercise is intended to facilitate the identification of potential populations in need of resettlement consideration.

Identifying populations in need of resettlement on a regular basis will help plan resettlement activities and mobilize the necessary resources to undertake resettlement.

The first step in the mapping exercise involves sub-dividing the refugee population under the care of the Country Office into groups of refugees sharing basic common characteristics, such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, religion. Subsequent steps are undertaken which involve the analysis of their possible common claim or experiences related to their status of refugees, their specific protection problems in the country of asylum and finally the analysis of the prospects for durable solutions, including resettlement of individual refugees and of refugee groups. The last step of the analysis relates to the actual resettlement needs versus the UNHCR Country Office’s capacity to identify and refer individuals/groups for resettlement. Detailed and self-explanatory guidelines on how to conduct the proactive planning for resettlement are provided together with the related form in Annex 2, the Tool Kit.

Such advanced and detailed planning within the annual COP exercise will allow the Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters, in cooperation with the Regional Bureaux, to prepare an annual report: *UNHCR: Projected Global Resettlement Needs*. This report will then be shared with resettlement countries and partner NGOs in advance of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement and will form the basic reference document for the Indications Conference, the annual meeting organized by UNHCR and the Resettlement countries in June, initiating the planning of resettlement programmes for the following year.

### **8.3.2 Resettlement meetings**

Many Field Offices have adopted the practice of holding regular resettlement meetings to prioritize resettlement activities and discuss particular and problematic individual cases. Resettlement meetings are most useful when they are held on a regular basis and involve not only protection, community services and resettlement staff, but also representatives from NGOs actively engaged with vulnerable refugees.

Chaired by the Senior Staff in charge of Protection or the officer accountable for resettlement at the national level, the meetings also serve to ensure that transparency and consistency is maintained in the resettlement process. The resettlement meetings could:

- Discuss and evaluate resettlement policies as they apply to the country context;
- Discuss and evaluate the Office's resettlement procedures with a view to improvement and development;
- Discuss allocation of responsibilities to manage the balance between backlog of cases and quality control; and
- Discuss and approve difficult individual cases

#### **Co-ordination between Registration, Refugee Status Determination and Resettlement**

As explained above, effective resettlement does not take place in a vacuum, but builds on successful registration and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) activities. To this end, the officer accountable for resettlement activities should be strongly encouraged to co-ordinate resettlement activities with registration and RSD activities to ensure that their activities are mutually reinforcing.

From a resettlement perspective, it is important that key resettlement information is captured at the registration and RSD stages. This is particularly relevant in resettlement operations which do not yet benefit from the PROFILE registration system. Such elements should include, at minimum, for the Principal Applicants (PA) and all dependants:

- Full name
- DOB
- POB
- Gender
- Date of arrival
- Relation to PA
- Region and country of origin
- Vulnerability
- Education
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Occupation in country of origin

It is also important from the resettlement perspective that registration information be kept up-to-date. Family compositions in refugee files must be updated further to births, deaths, family reunifications and other changes in family composition.

### **Co-ordination with external resettlement partners**

The officer accountable for resettlement activities and international protection staff should also meet with colleagues from community services, the field and partners working with vulnerable refugees on a regular basis to ensure that protection and resettlement activities are responding to the needs of refugees, and to ensure that these programs and priorities are understood by colleagues.

Meetings should be held as necessary to discuss relevant protection issues identified by community services, field and implementing partners, and to allow protection and resettlement staff to brief colleagues on relevant protection and resettlement activities.

The officer accountable for resettlement activities should also hold operations meetings with all resettlement partners, including local representatives from resettlement countries, as necessary to discuss resettlement priorities, constraints and planning.

### **8.3.3 Resettlement co-ordination at the Regional level**

In 2002, the Africa Bureau and DIP revised the structures and procedures for resettlement management in Africa. In particular, co-ordination, support and monitoring functions were centralized at the regional level, through the creation of ‘Regional Resettlement Hubs’ in Nairobi and Accra, to strengthen the management of resettlement activities in Africa, provide field managers with a service to ensure optimum use of resettlement and guarantee more equitable access to resettlement among the various African regions. The regional resettlement hubs in Nairobi and Accra carry out co-ordination, support and monitoring functions related to country offices in their respective regions, in order to ensure consistent application of UNHCR resettlement criteria and policies. It is foreseen that regional resettlement hubs will also be established in Southern Africa and other regions of the world.

In other regions, Regional Resettlement Officers play an important role in co-ordinating resettlement activities, providing support to resettlement activities in Field Offices and working with resettlement countries to ensure a harmonized and diversified approach to resettlement activities within the region.

Such activities are especially essential in regions where refugee populations from a given nationality are located in a number of neighboring countries.

In such circumstances, it is essential that resettlement criteria be applied consistently throughout the region to avoid pull-factors and imbalances. This is especially true with the application of the criteria of resettlement on the basis of a lack of local integration prospect.

Field Offices should consult with the Regional Resettlement Officer before they apply the criteria of resettlement on the basis of a lack of local integration prospect to a refugee population. In the absence of a Regional Resettlement Officer, Field Offices should consult with the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

### **8.3.4 *The Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters***

The Resettlement Section of the Department of International Protection in UNHCR Headquarters is responsible for:

- to develop policy, standards and guidelines for resettlement, ensuring i.a. that they reflect the relevant goals of the Agenda for Protection and ensuring its adequate and extensive dissemination;
- ensuring that resettlement is used in a strategic manner and that its function as a durable solution is enhanced;
- diversifying and expanding resettlement opportunities and programmes, including enlarging the number of emerging resettlement countries and enhancing the role of NGOs in the resettlement process;
- improving systems and methods for monitoring and ensuring consistent application of resettlement standards, including the compilation of world-wide statistics, and minimising the potential for malfeasance and fraud in the resettlement process;
- assessing the global resettlement needs of refugees and negotiating the overall levels and allocations of resettlement admissions for each region with Governments;
- managing resettlement submissions of emergency and medical cases for selected countries of resettlement in accordance to established Standard Operating Procedures;
- providing supervision and guidance to the Regional Resettlement Hubs
- co-ordinating the schedules for some resettlement selection missions to Field Offices;
- obtaining necessary resources for UNHCR's efforts to effectively implement resettlement operations, in close collaboration with Regional Bureaux in Headquarters and in the field;

- assess resettlement training needs and implement training programmes in resettlement policies and procedures to UNHCR staff as well as to NGOs and Government partners; and
- facilitating family reunification cases requiring specific Headquarters action.

The Resettlement Section is responsible for channeling dossier submissions received from Field Offices to certain countries and for processing some emergency submissions and family reunification cases. In addition, the Section plays a lead role in co-ordinating and supporting the resettlement of difficult protection and special needs cases.

The Resettlement Section at UNHCR Headquarters maintains regular liaison with NGOs working in the area of resettlement, and consultations have taken place at the regional level. The Section works with Governments through their Permanent Missions in Geneva and also directly with the capitals of key resettlement countries in connection with individual case management as well as refugee admission policies and quotas.

A regular mechanism for consultations with Governments on resettlement issues has been established in the form of a Working Group which meets every two months, or as required, in Geneva. The broad objectives of the Working Group on Resettlement are to:

- raise awareness of resettlement issues in order to build consensus in the Executive Committee in favor of resettlement and to promote the establishment of new resettlement programs;
- address operational issues and problems in order to improve implementation;
- regularly share information about needs and opportunities for planning purposes and to share analyses of resettlement issues; and
- focus attention on UNHCR activities, given its key responsibility for case identification and referral.

The Resettlement Section serves as Secretariat for the Working Group, while the chairmanship rotates among the Government members. The Resettlement Section also contributes to the organization of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATC) to which Governments and NGOs are invited and which are convened by the Chair of the Working Group. This meeting is scheduled to coincide with the meeting of the Standing Committee which focuses on protection policy.

The timely exchange of information which takes place throughout the consultative process ensures that both the Executive Committee, resettlement countries and NGOs work to enhance the responsiveness and appropriateness of resettlement admissions levels. The quarterly resettlement statistics constitute an important resource for the regular assessment of resettlement needs and priorities.

The Resettlement Section is structured on a regional basis to facilitate support and monitoring of resettlement work in most of UNHCR's more than 100 Field Offices, as well as according to functions (training and reporting, travel, project control and individual case registry). There is also specialized staff responsible for monitoring resettlement policies and making submissions of refugees with special needs.

## **8.4 Combating fraud and corruption in the resettlement process**

Allegations and instances of resettlement fraud and corruption have been a growing concern on the part of resettlement countries, NGOs and UNHCR, given that resettlement activities are particularly vulnerable to fraud because of the benefits they offer. Corruption and fraud in the resettlement process hurts all those involved, in particular the refugees who fall victim to such fraud. It is in the common interest of all actors in the resettlement process to find ways of cooperating more closely at all levels to investigate and eliminate fraud and corruption in the resettlement process.

UNHCR has clearly stated its commitment to combat fraud and corruption in order to preserve the integrity of resettlement programs. In 2004, UNHCR developed - in co-operation with its resettlement partners - a Resettlement Anti-Fraud Plan of Action, which outlines the significant measures that UNHCR has taken to date related to the prevention of fraud and corruption and recommends further actions by UNHCR and its resettlement partners to address fraud specifically related to resettlement which will be implemented in the course of 2004 and 2005.

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.

Declining resources, including shortages of staff, and increasing demands create challenges for managers. These challenges should not mean, however, that a lower priority is given to addressing the vulnerability of allegations about, much less instances of, fraud and corruption in the resettlement process.

Traffickers, corrupt officials, ‘visa fixers’ and desperate people, including refugees, are sometimes willing to exploit the resettlement process. Even humanitarian workers could become involved and seek to profit from others’ misfortune.

Exploiting refugees for gain is both illegal and immoral. All necessary steps must be taken in all Field Offices to combat, and to investigate allegations of, fraud and corruption.

It must, however, be re-emphasized that 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.

The purpose of this section is to highlight a number of possible instances of fraud and corruption in the resettlement process, and identify activities that could be undertaken to combat each type of fraud.

#### **8.4.1 *Types of fraud and corruption in the resettlement process***

While it would be problematic to be definitive on the possible types of resettlement fraud, four types of resettlement corruption and fraud can be imagined:

Preferential access to the UNHCR resettlement process by individuals internal to UNHCR or its partners, often involving the solicitation of funds.

Most disturbing, and damaging to both refugees and global resettlement efforts, are allegations of UNHCR staff or representatives of UNHCR’s partners, soliciting funds from refugees in exchange for preferential access to the UNHCR resettlement process. This access may be at the level of preferential access to UNHCR premises or appointments, altering details in resettlement files, or actively referring and promoting fraudulent resettlement cases in the resettlement process.

The procedures and standards presented in the Resettlement Handbook are all designed to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, such disturbing and heinous acts.

United Nations Staff Regulations 1.2 and 1.3 state that all United Nations Staff Members are bound to “uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity” and are all ultimately accountable to the United Nations Secretary General for the “proper discharge” of their respective functions.

Protecting refugees and identifying durable solutions are the core functions of UNHCR. All UNHCR staff have an individual and collective responsibility to ensure that these functions are carried-out according to the highest possible standards.

Any allegation of a UNHCR Staff member's involvement in corruption and fraud should be addressed as a matter of urgency and immediately reported according to the steps outlined in Chapter 8.4.3 of the Resettlement Handbook.

The fraudulent misrepresentation of family composition during the resettlement process.

In the absence of early and effective registration, capturing a credible family composition, it is extremely difficult to establish the credibility of family compositions in a resettlement context. For a variety of reasons, some benign, some not, the credibility of family compositions have been found to be questionable in a number of resettlement cases.

Cases have been reported where a refugee family, found to be eligible for resettlement, have been coerced through various means into adding dependents to their family, either by UNHCR, NGO or Government staff. Other cases have been reported where the head of family has solicited funds from other individuals to include fraudulent dependents in their resettlement case.

The best way to combat this type of fraud is to be more vigilant in recording and verifying case composition at an early stage, and preferably in a non-resettlement context (See: Chapters 6.5.2 and 6.7.6).

Photographing each dependent at the registration stage, or at least prior to discussing resettlement with the head of family, would prevent future substitutions in family composition. Photographs should be attached both to the refugee's file and to the RRF in a tamper-proof manner (See Chapters 6.7.3)

Allegations of the fraudulent misrepresentation of family composition should be conveyed, in writing, to the officer accountable for resettlement activities who is responsible for deciding on an appropriate course of action.

If there is reason to doubt the relationship claimed by the head of family, dependents should be interviewed independently using the techniques outlined on Chapter 6.7.6. If doubts persist about the credibility of the family composition, the case should be kept on hold by the Field Office until such time as these doubts can be effectively addressed and resolved.

The furnishing of resettlement or travel documents, fraudulent or otherwise, information, documents and coaching, sometimes involving the solicitation of funds.

This type of fraud may or may not involve direct contact with UNHCR and may consequently be difficult to detect. Examples of such activities include the selling of travel documents (fraudulent or otherwise), resettlement information and coaching prior to resettlement interviews. These activities may or may not involve the solicitation of funds, and both parties may or may not be complicit in the fraud.

This is often the most difficult type of fraud to detect, and consequently the most difficult to address. This type of fraud can often only be detected if reported to UNHCR, an NGO or national authorities. Once reported, a full investigation should be carried-out. The national authorities in the country of asylum may be involved, and those responsible for the fraud may be dealt with according to the prevailing national criminal code.

When this type of fraud is detected, it is essential that the officer accountable for resettlement activities and the Senior Staff in charge of Protection discuss the allegations and determine the most appropriate response.

It is also believed that sensitizing refugees and the general public about the consequences of this type of fraud and the fact that all resettlement services are free, while not leading to its complete elimination, may lead to its reduction.

To this end, the sample text of a press release on resettlement and fraud is included in Section 1 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit.

Instances have also been reported in some countries where Convention Travel Documents (CTDs) have been fraudulently issued to non-refugees by Government officials. In countries where UNHCR is responsible for issuing CTDs to Governments, strict controls must be developed to ensure that these documents are issued only to eligible refugees.

The running of fraudulent resettlement scams external to UNHCR, involving the solicitation of funds for participation in fraudulent resettlement schemes, and sometimes involving the misrepresentation of UNHCR, NGO or Government officials.

This type of fraud seeks to defraud both refugees, and potentially nationals of the country of asylum, through the solicitation of funds for subscription in fraudulent resettlement schemes and services. In such cases, individuals or groups may develop fraudulent programs designed to be perceived as legitimate resettlement options and soliciting funds in exchange for resettlement promises.

Once again, public information and sensitization seem to be the best ways to combat this type of fraud. Mass information on resettlement, including brochures and press releases, should emphasize the fact that all resettlement services, information and documents are free.

Refugees should know that if they are asked to pay for resettlement, they have encountered fraud. Refugees should know how to report such incidents, and measures should be taken to protect refugees that come forward with information relating to allegations of fraud.

These scams typically play on the vulnerability and desperation of refugees. The amount solicited for participation in these schemes is typically low enough that many refugees may consider it to be 'worth the gamble'. These schemes do, however, have one feature that makes them easier to address: they involve advertisement of their alleged services.

Through on-going, transparent and open contact with the refugee community, UNHCR should be sensitive to any allegations of the existence of such schemes. At the same time, due consideration must be given for the need to respect a refugees right to confidentiality.

When information of the existence of such schemes come to light, the officer accountable for resettlement activities and the Senior Staff in charge of Protection should discuss the allegations and determine the most appropriate response, possibly involving the local authorities.

#### **8.4.2 General activities to combat fraud**

All actors in the resettlement process, including refugees, resettlement countries, countries of asylum, NGOs and UNHCR, must do everything in their powers to ensure that the resettlement process is transparent, objective, unbiased, and representative of the standards presented in the Resettlement Handbook.

Particular attention should be paid to the safeguards presented in Chapters 6 and 8 of the Resettlement Handbook relating to treatment of resettlement referrals, verification of registration details in a non-resettlement context, storage of resettlement documents and files, and the taking of resettlement decisions in a transparent and accountable way.

In addition to the specific activities to address fraud in the resettlement process outlined above, a number of general activities could contribute to reducing instances of resettlement fraud. These include:

- Ensure that the standards of the Resettlement Handbook are fully implemented to ensure that resettlement activities are undertaken in an objective, transparent and accountable manner.
- Counsel refugees on the implication of fraud before signing the RRF.
- Conduct identity checks at key stages in the resettlement process.

- Ensure that the refugee community understands the potential implications of fraud on the overall availability of resettlement activities in the country.
- Ensure that the general public in the country of asylum is aware of the fact that UNHCR's resettlement services are available only to refugees, and that nationals of that country, residing in that country, cannot be under the Mandate of UNHCR, and consequently cannot be resettled.
- Ensure that there is a proper refugee information system in place, in addition to a clear and accessible complaints system.

### **8.4.3 Responding to allegations of fraud**

All UHCR Staff Members have an obligation to respond to allegations of fraud that come to their attention. Any staff member, regardless of grade or function, who has knowledge of allegations of fraud and does not take appropriate action may be subject to disciplinary measures.

Any staff member, regardless of grade or function, who has knowledge of allegations of resettlement fraud, corruption or wrong-doing, should document all allegations, including names, dates, and particular details related to the allegations.

As detailed in IOM/65/2003 – FOM/65/2003, dated 9 October 2003, which describes the role of the UNHCR Inspector General's Office (IGO) in receiving and investigating allegations of fraud and mismanagement, any staff member who becomes aware of misconduct should first report these allegations to their supervisor or Head of Office in writing.

If no action is taken within a reasonable period of time, the allegations, including details of local options pursued, should be forwarded to the IGO and copied to the relevant Bureau and the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters.

Managers who receive credible information regarding misconduct must report to the IGO for an assessment of the allegation and a decision on immediate action to be taken.

Any staff member can contact the IGO directly and confidentially if the need arises:

Hotline: +41-22-739-8844

Confidential fax: +41-22-739-7380

E-mail: [inspector@unhcr.org](mailto:inspector@unhcr.org)

Finally, all appropriate measures must be taken to protect individuals, whether refugees or staff members, reporting substantiated allegations of fraud. The name of the individual bringing forward the allegations of fraud must always be kept confidential. The details of allegations of fraud must remain confidential until a full investigation has been completed.

## **8.5 Managing Resettlement Expectations within the Refugee Population**

With limited information about the nature and limitations of resettlement as a durable solution, refugees may develop unrealistic expectations about resettlement. Such expectations could potentially result in increased desperation on the part of refugees and excessive pressures on an Office, and eventually undermine the resettlement process as a whole.

Other UNHCR staff may also have unrealistic expectations about the nature and limitations of resettlement. As a result, they may forward unfounded cases to the resettlement officer, and may be frustrated when such cases are found to be ineligible.

**Effective management of resettlement expectations is an essential foundation for a successful resettlement program.**

### **8.5.1 *The Resettlement Message***

The most important aspect of any effort to manage resettlement expectations is to provide refugees, others working with refugees and, in some cases, the general public, with clear and consistent information on the limits and possibilities of resettlement. In the interest of ensuring that the resettlement message remains consistent, it is also important that a limited number of people are authorized to discuss resettlement with refugees.

This message should emphasize that:

- Resettlement is only one of the three possible durable solutions
- Resettlement involves the transfer of a refugee from the country where they currently reside to another country that has previously agreed to admit them
- Resettlement is a challenging process
- UNHCR does not have the authority to resettle refugees
- No refugee has the *right* to resettlement

- Resettlement is not *automatic*
- Resettlement is conducted according to precise criteria established by resettlement countries and UNHCR
- The decision to accept a refugee for resettlement remains with the resettlement country, not UNHCR
- All resettlement documents, information and services are *FREE*
- Committing fraud in the resettlement process is breaking the law and may result not only in the closure of a refugee's resettlement file, but may also result in criminal prosecution
- That misrepresenting family composition is a form of fraud

### **8.5.2 Ways of managing expectations**

Expectations are most effectively managed through counseling in individual cases and the dissemination of clear information on resettlement. The appropriate means of disseminating this information will depend on the particular office context, but may include:

- Public meetings on resettlement
- Meetings with refugee leaders on resettlement
- Consulting with refugee women through refugee women representatives
- Public information on resettlement
- Information on resettlement to be used during individual counseling

Sample text for a resettlement brochure is included in Section 1 of the Resettlement Tool-Kit.

As part of managing resettlement expectations, it is important to establish and maintain a dialogue with refugee leaders and individual refugees on the issue of their return home and other protection activities, not just resettlement. In some cases, factions or political organizations among the refugee population or in the host country are directly or indirectly taking a position about the risk of remaining in the country of asylum or dangers related to returning home. If so, work with public information to strengthen UNHCR's capacity to conduct reliable information campaigns.

**It is imperative to be as transparent as possible about UNHCR's aims and objectives as well as resettlement mechanisms when dealing with refugees.**

*Listen actively.* When refugees focus on resettlement, they may actually be expressing problems with assistance, lack of hope regarding returns, need for employment and income generation, desire for education, fears and insecurity stemming from refugee situation or need for mental health or medical services.

Information on resettlement should also be extended to NGOs, helping them to understand UNHCR's protection activities, including the uses and limitations of resettlement. NGOs should also be made aware of the need to manage refugee expectations regarding resettlement.

## 8.6 Coping with Stress

Persons involved in humanitarian work have to adopt a calm, efficient and methodical approach to their work in order to perform effectively. Refugees suffer from stress, having faced persecution, war or gross human rights abuses and having been forced to leave behind their family members, homes and country.

Many undergo a grieving process as they struggle to cope with their losses. Resettlement is in itself stress-creating. It is a very public activity which invites both media and public interest. It is also, by definition, focused on the individual, and is thus highly labor-intensive and must be responsive to personal needs. It can also subject resettlement staff to security problems.

Conducting interviews for resettlement can therefore be extremely demanding. The nature of the work is such that interviewers and interpreters may experience what is referred to as *vicarious trauma and burnout*. All persons involved in the interview process should be aware of the symptoms, contributing factors, and prevention and treatment which can be offered to persons in this situation.

Being informed and aware of what can be done in such circumstances is an important consideration for the health and well-being of all staff working with refugees. It also helps ensure that the work is conducted effectively, efficiently, and in safety. Feeling tired, weak, and depressed will not only have a negative impact on one's ability to perform the work, but it could make staff more vulnerable to security incidents through being less attentive and unable to respond quickly to a situation.

### **Recognizing stress symptoms**

It is important to recognize the symptoms of stress and to be aware of simple techniques for dealing with them. Symptoms may be:

- *physical:* headaches, increased heartbeat, intense fatigue, difficulty in concentrating.
- *psychological and emotional:* anxiety, fear, over-preoccupation and identification with victims, sadness, anger, helplessness.

- *behavioral*: hyperactivity, inability to rest or let go, periods of crying, social withdrawal, limiting contacts with others, use of drugs/alcohol.

### **Techniques for dealing with stress**

Individuals have many ways of getting themselves through difficult periods and events. Self-encouragement techniques can help avoid panic and assist a person to carry out a difficult task.

Some examples of self-encouragement are as follows:

- Making positive helpful statements to take you through difficult moments, e.g. *“I don’t feel like dealing with this angry person right now, but I’ve done it before and I can do it again”*.
- Re-defining a distressing task to make it more manageable, by removing the emotional element, e.g. *“In spite of what has happened to this woman, her first need is for a calm, sympathetic support person. I am good at that”*.
- Rationalizing the event, or your reaction to it, e.g. *“Hunger strikers upset everyone. I’m no exception”*.
- Talking oneself into a helpful response, e.g. *“I don’t feel calm, but I can look that way by taking a deep breath, relaxing my shoulders and speaking more slowly”*.






Other techniques for managing chronic stress include the following guidelines:

- Get the sleep you require
- Exercise for endurance and strength
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol, caffeine and nicotine
- Manage your time well and set priorities

An eye should be kept on one’s colleagues’ stress and fatigue levels, and staff should be encouraged to be aware of the effects of stress on themselves. Stress-defusing sessions provide an opportunity to modify stress reactions and to reduce personal and group tension. This may involve a friendly chat at the end of the day or informal after-work gatherings so that all staff may have an opportunity to speak and to listen. Feelings of anger should be recognized as a normal response to a violent and distressing event, and lead to a more healthy recovery, rather than suffering in silence or keeping a “stiff upper lip”.

More formal psychological debriefings, conducted by qualified and trained counselors, can and should be organized in offices where staff have suffered a loss or have been exposed to events with a strong emotional impact.

**FURTHER REFERENCE:**

-  *Coping with Stress in Crisis Situations (OMS 3)*. UNHCR Geneva, 1992.
-  *Mental Health of Refugees*. World Health Organization, 1996 (published in collaboration with UNHCR) (especially Unit 2: Stress and relaxation).
-  *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies*. UNHCR Geneva (especially Chapter 22: Coping with Stress).
-  *Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, 17 April 2003
-  *Guidelines for Handling Protests, Demonstrations and other Group Disturbances*, 12 May 2004.