

UNHCR Workshops on the Identification of Refugees in Need of Resettlement

As part of UNHCR's ongoing efforts to develop and disseminate policy, standards and procedural guidelines on resettlement, two regional resettlement workshops on the *Identification of Refugees in Need of Resettlement* were held in 2005. These workshops equipped key staff with the tools to identify refugees for resettlement and ways to strengthen delivery in terms of processing methods, standards and systems to mitigate risks. The regional workshops were held in New Delhi, India (September), and Nairobi, Kenya (December), benefiting 55 staff members, including Protection, Resettlement and Community Services Officers in Asia and the Africa continent respectively.¹

The Identification Workshop initiative is part of a global strategy aimed at improving refugees' access to resettlement by promoting protection profiling and group resettlement methodologies, refugee participatory assessments and age, gender and diversity mainstreaming. The initiative recognises the challenges faced by UNHCR staff in the field to enhance resettlement delivery due to operational constraints such as limited resources and other mitigating factors. Hence, an important objective of the workshops was to brainstorm the need for - and possible ways of improving - the identification of refugees in need of resettlement in urban as well as camp situations in the countries represented. This was done by reviewing, for instance, the current mode and use of registration databases, implementing partners and other NGOs working with UNHCR, existing profiling methodologies and tools. Both workshops included a presentation, on the 'risk analysis framework', which has been developed by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of New South Wales (Australia), to assist with the mapping and identification of women-at-risk. This was complemented by an introduction to 'participatory assessments' and 'profiling methodologies' to improve refugee participation in case identification.

The second phase of the training strategy, which will be implemented in 2006-2007, is to ensure that key staff at different functional levels (e.g. national and international staff, including senior managers) and within inter-related work units (i.e. protection, community services and resettlement) have know-how to integrate their respective thematic activities to enhancing the comprehensive and strategic use of resettlement. Particular focus will be given to improving refugees' access to resettlement in countries hosting protracted refugee situations, including camp as well as urban settings. Identification and processing methodologies will remain an important theme in the delivery of these workshops. Overall, the Resettlement Service plans to use the information gathered during these workshops to support initiatives linked to the Country Operations Planning cycle and to assist with the development of policy and base-line Standard Operating Procedures and risk mitigation strategies.

The following is a summary of the main conclusions and recommendations of the workshops in New Delhi and Nairobi:

¹ *In addition, 3 workshops as part of the RSD-Resettlement Learning Program were held in 2005, providing training for a total of 71 UNHCR staff; four regional strategic planning meetings were held (two in Africa and one in Asia and the Middle East respectively) and an Anti-Fraud information session was conducted in Nairobi in conjunction with the Regional Workshop on Identification.*

1. Resettlement is part of the protection framework

- ✦ Resettlement must be part of a protection and durable solutions strategy. It should not be pursued to the detriment of other durable solutions, nor should it negatively affect the protection of refugees in countries of asylum.
- ✦ Effective interaction between different work units (e.g. protection, community services and resettlement) is a necessary part of a comprehensive approach to resettlement delivery. UNHCR country offices should consider establishing “panels” comprising officers from different inter-related work units to determine the appropriate protection and durable solution interventions for individuals and groups.
- ✦ Resettlement related objectives and performance indicators need to be shared by different inter-related work units (e.g. protection, community services and programme) at the field level.
- ✦ International staff involved in different aspects of protection delivery (including protection, resettlement and community services) must be actively engaged in assessing the refugees’ needs and providing resettlement-related interventions.
- ✦ Senior managers must take responsibility for effecting change within UNHCR to improve refugees’ access to protection and durable solutions, including the enhanced use of resettlement.
- ✦ Resettlement decisions should not be based primarily on the refugee claim, but rather on potential legal and physical protection needs and/or other risk factors in the country of asylum. This includes situations where large numbers of refugees, including groups (e.g. with similar reasons for flight and/or resettlement needs), have been identified for possible resettlement.
- ✦ The ‘universal imperative’ must be considered and applied in the identification of resettlement needs. In practice, this means that when UNHCR submits a refugee with a certain profile for resettlement, it should, as a general rule, be willing to submit for resettlement all refugees with the same profile.
- ✦ Different identification methods should be used simultaneously to bridge potential gaps and mitigate the risk of system abuse.
- ✦ Protection profiling normally requires resources which UNHCR offices often lack. This, however, should not prevent offices from developing a profiling proposal, which could be used to secure the required resources.
- ✦ Identification systems can be put in place even with limited resources. Creative ways of identifying refugees in need of resettlement can be linked to other activities of the office such as participatory assessments and gender, age and diversity mainstreaming.
- ✦ Resettlement planning must be thoroughly integrated into the yearly planning cycle for every office.

2. Registration improves access to protection and resettlement

- ✦ The proGres database needs to be proactively used by all relevant work units (e.g. protection, community services and resettlement) to maximise its

potential as a tool for the identification and processing of refugees in need of resettlement.

- ✦ Concerted efforts should be made to ensure regular, consistent and accurate data entry into the proGres database (e.g. as part of registration and verification activities, individual casework and surveys, etc.) and to take advantage of biometric data to protect data integrity and mitigate fraud.
- ✦ Data requirements to enhance resettlement identification and processing must be considered in determining the level of registration undertaken for asylum-seekers and refugees. Registration may therefore require more resources and time.
- ✦ Concerted efforts are required to register urban-based refugees and/or survey their needs to determine the level and scope of potential resettlement or other durable solutions intervention.

3. Referral systems bridge gaps in resettlement delivery

- ✦ The involvement of different functional units within UNHCR offices (e.g. Protection and Community Services) in the design and implementation of identification systems is necessary for an effective internal referral system.
- ✦ While approaches from refugees should be considered within a framework for the identification of resettlement needs, it is important to proactively engage refugees and work with partners, such as NGOs, to develop ways to bridge gaps and enhance access for refugees to resettlement as a durable solution. One way of achieving this would be to broaden the avenues for UNHCR to receive external referrals. However, it is essential that UNHCR maintain its coordination role to ensure transparent and consistent approaches to identification and that referrals by external partners are made in conformity with UNHCR policy and priorities.
- ✦ External identification and referral systems should not negate UNHCR's own efforts to proactively identify refugees in need of resettlement.
- ✦ Identification and referral systems should be designed and implemented to suit specific operational contexts as well as mitigate the risks associated with resettlement delivery, such as fraud, abuse, pull factors and inconsistent approaches to resettlement delivery.
- ✦ Fear of fraud must not prevent identification of refugees for resettlement.

4. Proactive information sharing improves identification

- ✦ All available sources of information should be used for identification purposes, including: standard reports and data from partners and refugees, registration data and reports from protection, community services and resettlement co-ordination and strategic planning meetings.
- ✦ Country of origin information (COI) can be a useful tool not only for refugee status determination (RSD) purposes, but also for the identification and assessment of resettlement needs.
- ✦ All data gathering activities (e.g. registration, social surveys, refugee status determination, participatory assessments etc.) should be construed as a

profiling exercise to facilitate identification of refugees' needs generally, and to facilitate identification of resettlement and other durable solutions options.

- ✦ Profiling needs to be seen from a multi-sectoral perspective and requires active involvement and close cooperation by UNHCR protection, community services and resettlement staff together with partners, including NGOs and refugees.
- ✦ Protection profiling can be a useful management tool regardless of any need or option for resettlement. UNHCR offices should seek to identify protection needs systematically so that relevant data is available to map the protection situation and develop durable solution strategies.
- ✦ In attempting to identify refugees at risk and in need of resettlement, profiling methodologies and risk assessments should not add to the risks faced by individuals and groups (e.g. refugee women), but should ensure confidentiality and accurate portrayal of their situations whilst being sensitive to cultural and community dynamics.

5. Understanding refugees' needs is fundamental to improving resettlement

- ✦ Protection profiling and participatory [needs] assessments and/or refugee clinics can compensate for a lack of information about refugees and bring UNHCR closer to understanding actual needs.
- ✦ It is important to focus on refugees' needs rather than on national or ethnic descriptors.
- ✦ Simple check-box surveys can be useful in understanding the challenges refugees face and identifying population profiles for resettlement intervention (e.g. women at risk). So too, simple techniques of this nature can assist in determining eligibility for group resettlement.
- ✦ There is a need to encourage and facilitate greater dialogue in general between UNHCR and key actors (refugees, host country governments, countries of origin, resettlement countries and civil society), in order to involve all parties concerned in finding comprehensive durable solutions for refugees and understanding respective roles and responsibilities.
- ✦ Durable solutions considerations should be attentive to short, medium and long-term protection, assistance and durable solution needs of refugees.
- ✦ Refugees should be encouraged to participate in developing vocational training programs or work placements, as a means of empowerment to achieve self-esteem and self-reliance and to improve their willingness and capacity to effectively embrace durable solutions, including resettlement.

6. Managing expectations improves protection delivery and empowers refugees

- ✦ It is important to enhance the access of refugees to UNHCR and ensure that refugees are provided with regular and systematic counselling (on group and/or individual basis) about protection needs and durable solutions.
- ✦ Engaging refugees in the assessment of their durable solutions needs (e.g. protection profiling and needs assessments) may raise unrealistic expectations about resettlement. Efforts should be made to ensure that refugees

understand the scope and limitations of all possible durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement).

- ✦ Expectations are most effectively managed through counseling and the dissemination of clear information on resettlement to individual cases and/or refugee groups. By improving ways UNHCR and its resettlement partners communicate with refugees, as well as understand and address their specific needs (e.g. through participatory assessments, focus group clinics or protection profiling), unreal expectations and misunderstandings can be reduced.
- ✦ Offices should explore ways to collect information on the protection context and profile of the population to assist with identification without raising expectations with regard to resettlement.

7. Training builds capacity and service excellence

- ✦ Both junior and senior staff (including management staff) should be trained on resettlement policy and practice to counter any negative or ill-informed views that may exist with regard to resettlement; which views run counter to UNHCR global positioning and vision to enhance resettlement delivery for refugees in need.
- ✦ It is important to make use of practical opportunities such as protection profiling and verification exercises, to enhance understanding of resettlement identification techniques and processing methodologies.
- ✦ Methodologies for registration, verification of registration data, or protection profiling and social surveys are tools that can assist resettlement identification. Staff should be provided with guidance on the various methodologies and techniques of data collection as well as receive formal training in these areas of activity. Such training should be made available to relevant staff globally and include information sharing on current knowledge, activities and experiences of various field offices as well as tools. A compilation of this information for all offices would be extremely useful in the development of office strategies.

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