UNHCR HANDBOOK FOR REGISTRATION

Procedures and Standards for Registration, Population Data Management and Documentation

Provisional Release (September 2003)
This UNHCR Handbook for Registration was prepared by Project Profile and the Population and Geographic Data Section of the Division of Operational Support in close co-operation with the Department of International Protection, UNHCR.

Photo Credits:

All photos  UNHCR / PGDS and Profile staff
Except:
Page 54  UNHCR / R. Chalasani
Page 57  UNHCR / N. Behring
Page 58  UNHCR / B. Press
Page 126 UNHCR / P. Smith
Page 142 UNHCR / R. Chalasani
Registration of refugees and asylum-seekers is, first and foremost, a key protection tool. It can help to protect refugees from refoulement and forcible recruitment. It can ensure access to basic rights and family reunification, help to identify persons in need of special assistance, and provide information crucial to finding appropriate durable solutions. Registration is also a primary source of information about persons of concern to UNHCR: who and where they are, their problems, needs and strengths.

UNHCR has been registering refugees and asylum-seekers since it began its work more than 50 years ago. The problem has been that registration efforts have often fallen short of their goals of making available the comprehensive information about persons of concern needed to guarantee their protection. There have also been difficulties in ensuring the integrity of that information. Registration activities have been hampered by prevailing dangerous conditions and limited resources. During large-scale population movements, understaffing and fluid environments have proved major obstacles to registration—and therefore to protection of persons deserving of international protection. Pressure to improve registration possibilities has come from many different sources in recent years. Female refugees have urged us to ensure that identity documents are issued to every individual. Our donors demand credible and reliable registration data from us on which they can base their funding decisions.

In 2001, UNHCR’s Executive Committee adopted Conclusion No. 91, which confirmed the fundamental principles on which all registration activities should be based. Translating that policy into practice, the Department of International Protection and the Division of Operational Support developed a “unified approach” to registration: a system for registering refugees and asylum-seekers and for maintaining and updating relevant information about populations of concern that can be adapted for use in virtually any setting.

In this Handbook, the Organization’s staff and its government and non-governmental partners can find detailed and accessible information on how to set up registration activities, what data should be collected, and how to manage and protect the information gathered. We commend it as a valuable resource and an important tool of protection.

Erika Feller
Director
Department of International Protection

Marjon Kamara
Director
Division of Operational Support

Provisional Release (September 2003)
# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION

1. **PART ONE: PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS**

   1. **The Basics**
      1.1 Definition of registration
      1.2 Registration and refugee protection
      1.3 Executive Committee conclusions
      1.4 Relevant international instruments for registration and documentation
      1.5 Registration and protection of refugee children
      1.6 Unaccompanied and separated children
      1.7 Registration and protection of refugee women
      1.8 Confidentiality and sharing identity information

   2. **The Unified Approach**

   3. **Operational Standards for Registration and Documentation**
      3.1 How to use the standards
      3.2 Table of standards

   4. **Overview of the Generic Process**
      4.1 Preparation for registration
      4.2 Initial registration
      4.3 Registration interview
      4.4 Verification and deregistration
      4.5 Population data management

   5. **Standard Data Set and Registration Levels**
      5.1 Standard levels of registration – processes and data
      5.2 Basic bio-data and core registration data
      5.3 Improving registration and related activities
      5.4 Families, households and cases
      5.5 Registration in context

   6. **Registration of Birth, Death and Marriage**
      6.1 Birth registration

   7. **Management of Registration Activities**
      7.1 Responsibilities of managers for registration
7.2 Managing registration in an RSD context ..................................................................... 67
7.3 Managing assets and materials .................................................................................. 68
7.4 Advice and support ..................................................................................................... 68
7.5 Managing corruption and fraud .................................................................................. 69
7.6 Monitoring and reporting on registration activities ..................................................... 71

PART TWO: HOW TO REGISTER, MANAGE POPULATION DATA,
AND ISSUE DOCUMENTATION ................................................................................. 73

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................... 73

PREPARATION FOR REGISTRATION .............................................................................. 75

8. Assess Current Situation ................................................................................................ 77
8.1 Assess current registration system ............................................................................. 77
8.2 Assess operational objectives and environment .......................................................... 79
8.3 Variations .................................................................................................................... 80

9. Consult with Population of Concern ............................................................................... 85
9.1 Engage persons of concern ......................................................................................... 86
9.2 Work with the local community .................................................................................. 87
9.3 Variations .................................................................................................................... 87

10. Determine Registration Strategy .................................................................................. 89
10.1 Determine registration objectives .............................................................................. 90
10.2 Decide on data to be collected and verified ............................................................... 92
10.3 Determine stakeholders and their roles ...................................................................... 93
10.4 Determine opportunities and constraints .................................................................. 97
10.5 Choose methodology and tools (including registration forms) .................................... 100
10.6 Determine resource and infrastructure needs ............................................................. 103
10.7 Variations .................................................................................................................... 106

11. Estimate Size and Composition of Population of Concern ........................................ 107
11.1 Estimate population demographics ........................................................................... 107
11.2 Use of surveys to supplement registration .............................................................. 110

12. Prepare and Maintain Registration Infrastructure and Capacity ................................. 113
12.1 Prepare operational framework .................................................................................. 113
12.2 Establish standard operating procedures ................................................................. 114
12.3 Standardize locations, names, and other categories .................................................. 115
12.4 Procure equipment and materials ............................................................................. 118
12.5 Hire and train partners and staff ............................................................................... 120
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>Set up registration locations</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>Establish security and evacuation plans</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>Test the methodology</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INITIAL REGISTRATION</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Contact and Inform Population about Registration</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>Inform the refugees</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>Disseminate information</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>Establish complaint procedures</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Reception and Fixing of Persons of Concern</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>Fix persons of concern</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>Identify and refer persons with special needs</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>Determine if a person needs to be registered</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>Provide each person with a unique identifier</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>Schedule registration interview</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Initiate Data Collection</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Retrieve existing information</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>&quot;Pre-populate&quot; registration forms</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>Gather additional data</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>Variations</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REGISTRATION INTERVIEW</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Photograph Persons of Concern</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>Take photographs</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>Variations</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Interview Persons of Concern</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>Use standard registration forms</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>Determine family and household relationships</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>Register unaccompanied and separated children</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>Interview each individual</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Accept and Validate the Quality of Registration Data</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>Complete registration form</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>Assess quality of registration data</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>Accept or qualify registration data</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Provide Appropriate Documentation</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>Identity documents</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>Entitlement cards and documents (ration cards)</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19.3 Manage expiration and renewal of documents.............................................................. 179
19.4 Variations................................................................................................................. 180

VERIFICATION AND DEREGISTRATION PROCESS....................................................... 185

20. Apply Verification Techniques.................................................................................. 187
20.1 Choose verification techniques................................................................................ 187

21. Deregister Households and Individuals ..................................................................... 193
21.1 Generic deregistration procedures.......................................................................... 195
21.2 Deregister due to rejection of asylum claim .............................................................. 196
21.3 Deregister due to cessation of refugee status............................................................. 196
21.4 Deregister due to cancellation of refugee status......................................................... 201
21.5 Deregister due to revocation of refugee status............................................................ 202
21.6 Deregister due to death............................................................................................... 202
21.7 Transfer registration due to resettlement, evacuation or secondary movements ....... 203
21.8 Recall entitlement documents.................................................................................... 204
21.9 Recall identity documents.......................................................................................... 204

POPULATION DATA MANAGEMENT ........................................................................... 205

22. Plan Data Management Scheme................................................................................. 207
22.1 Analyze data flows .................................................................................................... 207
22.2 Select data management tools .................................................................................. 208

23. Enter and File Records............................................................................................... 209
23.1 Plan data entry............................................................................................................ 209
23.2 Enter new records...................................................................................................... 210
23.3 File records .............................................................................................................. 211

24. Update Individual and Group Data............................................................................ 213
24.1 Update existing registration data................................................................................ 213
24.2 Delete an existing record............................................................................................ 214
24.3 Back up data ............................................................................................................. 214
24.4 Consolidate data........................................................................................................ 214
24.5 Keep records secure.................................................................................................. 215

25. Prepare Reports......................................................................................................... 217
25.1 Prepare standard statistical reports............................................................................ 217
25.2 Prepare operational reports....................................................................................... 218
TABLES

Table 1: Table of Operational Standards for Registration, Documentation, and Population Data Management ................................................................. 22
Table 2: Levels of Registration .................................................................................................................................................................................. 42
Table 3: Measures to improve registration, documentation, and population data management ........................................................................................................... 49
Table 4: Sources of operational goals, objectives and outputs related to registration ................................................................................................................. 80
Table 5: Activities of UNHCR in Registration ....................................................................................................................................................... 94
Table 6: Factors Influencing Registration Strategy .............................................................................................................................................. 98
Table 7: Resources needed for each step of registration process .................................................................................................................................. 104
Table 8: Handling incomplete family or households .............................................................................................................................................. 159
Table 9: Relationships – Standard UNHCR categories ............................................................................................................................................. 161
Table 10: Martial Status – Standard UNHCR categories ........................................................................................................................................ 166
Table 11: Educational Level – Standard UNHCR categories .............................................................................................................................. 167
Table 12: Special Protection and Assistance Needs – Standard UNHCR categories ........................................................................................................... 169
Table 13: Standard Data for Identity Documentation.............................................................................................................................................. 177

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Relevant Legal Instruments
Annex 2: Assessment Matrix for Using Standards
Annex 3: Checklist for Preparing a Registration Strategy
Annex 4: Sample Objectives, Outputs, and Indicators for Registration Activities
Annex 5: Sample Registration Strategy and Budget
Annex 6: Standard UNHCR Registration Forms
Annex 7: Standard UNHCR Categories and Codes for Registration Information
Annex 8: Standard UNHCR Data Set for Registration
Annex 9: Sample Protocol between Government and UNHCR for Registration Activities
Annex 10: Sample Standard Operating Procedures for Reception and Registration
Annex 11: Sample Announcements for Registration Activities
Annex 12: Sample Referral Form for Special Protection and Assistance Needs
Annex 13: Standard Identity Documents (Cards and Letters)
Annex 14: Standard Entitlement Documents
Annex 15: Standard Registration Materials
Annex 16: Formats for Annual and Quarterly Statistical Reports