

Asylum Capacity Support Group Mechanism: Working Modalities

Purpose

1. Within the broader framework of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG) will act as mechanism for coherent and consistent support to increase the capacity of national asylum/Refugee Status Determination (RSD) systems with a view to ensuring that states have quality measures in place for the timely admission, reception, registration, documentation and identification of persons with international protection needs. It will also serve as a mechanism to build linkages between different stakeholders in the same country or between stakeholders in different countries, including through peer to peer support, that want to increase knowledge and expertise, develop approaches based on good practices and facilitate exchanges of experience and support in relevant areas.

Stakeholders

2. All states can make use of the ACSG mechanism to ask for and make offers of capacity development support, in line with the ways of working identified below, on a project or ongoing basis. Certain states may volunteer or be approached by UNHCR to be champions of certain ACSG initiatives or projects, thereby taking a more proactive role alongside UNHCR during the project/ initiative duration.
3. Other relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to regional organizations, foundations, NGOs, bar and other relevant associations or private sector, are encouraged to have a role in the ACSG mechanism. Other stakeholders can do this both by supporting states to make support requests for or give offers of support. Stakeholders may volunteer or be approached by UNHCR to be champions of certain ACSG initiatives or projects.

Working Arrangements

4. After its establishment, the ACSG may have periodic meetings on thematic or situational topics, whether globally or regionally. At these meetings, participants shall share their experiences in implementing ACSG projects, identify good practices and resources on asylum/RSD capacity development, including positive synergies, request or offer capacity support on specific topics and/or discuss ways of improving the ACSG mechanism.
5. The ACSG mechanism will be coordinated by UNHCR; states and other stakeholders may act as moderators/facilitators of specific meetings or topics. Moderators and/or facilitators will be selected in a manner that ensures regional diversity and expertise from a broad range of relevant subject areas. Advocacy and resource mobilisation, steering ACSG discussions and meetings, and external communication will be requested from all interested parties.

6. A small ACSG Secretariat will be set up in UNHCR, liaising closely with all stakeholders, also benefiting from the engagement of the Organization's decentralized bureaux. It will aim to facilitate planning and communication among all concerned.
7. Drawing on and complimenting existing rosters, the ACSG Secretariat may keep an active roster of technical support available and on offer, which will be a live document into which additional offers of support can be made. An ACSG fund may also be considered to enable prioritized resources to be made available, with the view of hiring experts as need be, including under the Quality Assurance Initiative, in support of requesting states.
8. The ACSG mechanism will be activated on the request of a concerned state for capacity support in accordance with the criteria below. Support requests will be prepared by the competent authorities of the requesting state, and as useful in consultation and coordination with other stakeholders in line with the spirit and arrangements of the Global Compact on Refugees. The competent authorities will submit their support requests to the ACSG Secretariat, through UNHCR country offices where feasible. The ACSG Secretariat will share its feedback in a timely manner and continue to communicate with the requesting state on behalf of the group, as necessary.
9. While support requests/offers may be of a short term nature, in particular, to respond to an urgent need, requests/offers that lead to longer and more sustainable engagement in national asylum/RSD capacity are particularly encouraged.
10. As the goal of the ACSG mechanism is to improve national asylum/RSD systems, the primary recipients of ACSG support will be states. However, other relevant stakeholders may also receive support under the ACSG mechanism if the stakeholder is involved in a project/initiative with the national authorities that is supporting the capacity of a national asylum/RSD system (e.g. on enhancing access to legal information and assistance, further developing and delivering relevant learning modules).
11. UNHCR's role will be to coordinate and match support requests and offers in close consultation with stakeholders, facilitate communication within the ACSG, as well as to support the development and sharing of good practices through technical advice and other means, including through pilot or targeted projects and through the ACSG meetings. Depending on the context, this will be done at central/Geneva level as well as at regional level.
12. In crisis situations, involving large-scale and quickly evolving emergency situations, the ACSG mechanism's efforts should be in addition to and at the same time complement the emergency response. Similarly, the ACSG will contribute to initiatives to enhance early warning and preparedness in relevant areas.

State Requests for Capacity Support

13. Except in situations where support is sought from the ACSG for conducting a capacity assessment, a requesting state should first have conducted an assessment of gaps/needs and existing capacity prior to making the request for external support. Additionally, prior to making a request for capacity support, a requesting state should have already made commitments to the project/initiative, including through the country level plan of action.
14. UNHCR will support states, either directly or through coordination of technical support through the ACSG, to develop, communicate and implement good practice methodologies for assessing capacity gaps, prioritizing project planning, articulating needs for support, and allowing a wider range of actors to come together.
15. Through their assessment and planning, states will be able to identify gaps in their asylum/RSD capacity where support is needed and bring them to the ACSG mechanism. Requests should be made with the following criteria in mind:
 - i. The request should be part of a national plan of action that aims to improve one or more of the fairness, efficiency, adaptability or integrity (as assessed against international standards) of the requesting state's asylum/RSD system.
 - ii. The request should aim to fill a concrete gap in the project/initiative that the requesting state or other involved stakeholders do not have the current capacity to fulfil. It should therefore establish objectives and quantitative and qualitative milestones.
 - iii. The request should be structured in a way that the results of the support will be sustainable over the long term, even after the project/initiative and related support has been completed, and feed into a comprehensive plan for a strengthened asylum system.
 - iv. The request may include assistance for stakeholders other than states, provided they are working on the projects/initiatives with the national asylum/RSD authorities.
 - v. The request could be made by one or more states acting jointly, especially in relation to a specific refugee situation (e.g. establishment of a regional platform/resource used by more than one state).
 - vi. Where applicable, the request should specify how existing or upcoming multi-stakeholder support will be coordinated and how risks of duplicating efforts would be mitigated. The ACSG Secretariat will specifically seek to address and support this aspect.
 - vii. The objectives/outputs of the capacity development support should allow for monitoring of impact and reporting on the use of the support provided through the ACSG.

Offers of Capacity Support

16. Once the ACSG receives a request for capacity development support that is in line with the above criteria, UNHCR will use the ACSG mechanism to seek offers of capacity development support to address the identified needs.
17. With the agreement of the requesting state, UNHCR may solicit offers of capacity development support from other states with particular expertise or solicit support from other stakeholders, including by drawing on and complimenting existing rosters. The offer of capacity support could be technical, material and/or financial support, depending on the request.
18. States or other relevant stakeholders with particular expertise in an area that enhances the fairness, efficiency, adaptability and/or integrity of the asylum/RSD system may proactively volunteer to provide capacity support in response to a request or in relation to future thematic projects that target one of more of the thematic areas. UNHCR encourages proactive offers of capacity support as it may act as a catalyst for states with capacity needs to initiate asylum/RSD capacity projects, knowing that capacity support is already available.

Channelling Offers of Support

19. Support can either be channelled through UNHCR or provided on a bilateral basis. In the latter situation, State and other stakeholders are nonetheless encouraged to provide the bilateral support under the ACSG mechanism to ensure coherence and consistency of support, with the view of achieving the greatest impact and use of resources.
20. UNHCR acting as the Secretariat of the ACSG mechanism may thus either coordinate and where applicable facilitate direct peer to peer support based on expertise, good practices and availability of resources, or receive and implement support directly or through its partners.

Review of Terms of Reference

21. The present terms of reference will be subject to general review on an annual basis or as requested by interested stakeholders, as necessary.