

Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate

2.5 Interpretation in UNHCR RSD Procedures

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2.5 Interpretation in UNHCR RSD Procedures¹

2.5.1 Access to Interpreters

All communications between an Applicant and UNHCR must take place in a language that the Applicant understands and in which he/she is able to communicate clearly. In many cases, this will be the native language of the Applicant, but in many others that will not be possible. Applicants should, have access to the services of **trained and qualified Interpreters** at all stages of the RSD process, including during registration, first instance RSD, appeal, cancellation, revocation, cessation and re-opening procedures (for information regarding qualifications of UNHCR interpreters, see § 2.5.2 – *Qualifications and Training of UNHCR Interpreters*).

Interpretation services for UNHCR RSD procedures² should be provided by **UNHCR Interpreters** unless otherwise specified in this chapter. UNHCR Interpreters should be understood as persons recruited by UNHCR to work as interpreters when communicating with persons of concern, regardless of whether they work full or part-time or whether they may or may not be required also to do translations, as well as interpreters contracted through professional interpretation services or provided through regular arrangements with designated implementing partners (see § 2.5.2 – *Qualifications and Training of UNHCR Interpreters*). Exceptionally, where no qualified UNHCR Interpreters are available, it may be necessary to conduct an interview with the services of a non-UNHCR Interpreter, including the Applicant's own interpreter (see § 2.5.3 – *Interpretation by Persons other than UNHCR Interpreters*).

Wherever possible, Applicants should be given the option to communicate with Interpreters of the **sex** they prefer. Each UNHCR Office should make every effort to ensure that an adequate number of competent Interpreters, of both sexes, is available to meet the RSD processing requirements. Where gaps in the Interpreter resources exist, priority must be given to requests for Interpreters by Applicants with specific needs or vulnerabilities, including children, survivors of torture, persons with physical and mental disabilities, and individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

All UNHCR staff who conduct interviews in mandate RSD procedures must receive training and direction on communicating effectively with Applicants through Interpreters.

¹ This section updates and replaces Section 2.5 – *Interpretation in UNHCR RSD Procedures of the Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate*, 23 November 2003, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/42d66dd84.html>.

² For the purposes of this section and unless otherwise specified, the term "UNHCR RSD procedures" includes RSD (first instance and appeal), as well as cancellation, revocation, cessation and re-opening procedures carried out under UNHCR's mandate.

2.5.2 Qualifications and Training of UNHCR Interpreters

Interpreters who are engaged to provide services in UNHCR RSD procedures need to have **adequate language and interpreting skills** and the **necessary training**. Whenever possible, UNHCR should engage certified interpreters. For guidance on recruitment procedures for UNHCR Interpreters, please refer to the *Guidelines for the field on recruitment procedures, conditions of service, training and supervision of interpreters* annexed to the IOM-FOM 005/2009.

As a general rule, refugees, asylum-seekers and asylum-seekers whose claims have been rejected should not be hired to provide interpretation services in UNHCR RSD procedures. Where a UNHCR Office does not have an adequate number of interpreters who speak the languages required, UNHCR Offices may use the interpretation services of **recognized refugees**, provided that they have the **necessary training and skills**. In such situations, UNHCR Offices should make every effort to employ refugees who have a legal status in the host country/country of asylum allowing them to work, or refugees who have been accepted for resettlement to a third country and are awaiting travel. If UNHCR has no other viable option than to select as an interpreter an individual who has no right to work in the host country, all possible efforts should be made by the Office to negotiate the issuance of a work permit to the person concerned on exceptional grounds on the basis of existing national law provisions. Interpretation by refugees who do not have a right to work in the host country/country of asylum may be used only as an exceptional and temporary arrangement until UNHCR interpreter staff shortages can be addressed.

UNHCR Offices may use the services of **interpreters provided by regular arrangement with designated implementing partners**, provided that such interpreters receive training on interpreting in UNHCR RSD procedures, as set out below, and the services provided are subject to effective monitoring and supervision by UNHCR Protection staff (see § 2.5.9 – *Supervision and Oversight of Interpreters*).

The Eligibility Officer must ascertain that the Interpreter is fluent in the language and dialect of the Applicant as well as the language of the Eligibility Officer. Where interpretation has to be carried out in a dialect other than that of the Applicant due to gaps in resources, this should be taken into account in assessing the credibility of the Applicant's account.

Every person engaged by UNHCR to provide interpretation services in mandate RSD procedures must sign the **UNHCR Interpreter Undertaking of Confidentiality and Impartiality (Annex 2-1)**, as well as the **UNHCR Code of Conduct for non-UN personnel**, before assuming their responsibilities.

All UNHCR Interpreters must receive induction training on UNHCR's mandate and the RSD process.

INDUCTION TRAINING FOR UNCHR INTERPRETERS

- ▶ UNHCR's refugee protection mandate and operations
- ▶ Registration and RSD procedures and relevant Standard Operating Procedures in the relevant UNHCR Office
- ▶ Essential refugee terminology that is likely to be used in Interviews
- ▶ Objectives of the Interview and responsibilities as an Interpreter, including the type of interpretation that will be required for Interviews, as well as the importance of fully and accurately interpreting what is said by the Applicant and the Eligibility Officer
- ▶ Impartial and neutral role of the UNHCR Interpreter, including not answering on behalf of the Applicant or the Eligibility Officer
- ▶ Obligation of confidentiality in all UNHCR procedures
- ▶ Gender, age, diversity and cultural sensitivity in carrying out interpretation responsibilities
- ▶ Possible indicators of trauma that could arise during an Interview and how to carry out interpretation responsibilities in such circumstances
- ▶ Security procedures and risks, such as familiarity with the physical environment, as well as other relevant issues in light of the particular operational context of the UNHCR Office

In addition to the induction training, UNHCR Offices must, to the extent possible, provide opportunities for Interpreters to improve their knowledge and skills, including by encouraging participation in **regular training** on relevant aspects of UNHCR's work. UNHCR Offices may explore with local institutions or organisations, in particular universities, the possibility of collaborating on training for UNHCR Interpreters, as well as the development of linguistic reference materials and glossaries.

2.5.3 Interpretation by Persons other than UNHCR Interpreters

Where UNHCR Interpreters are not available due to gaps in resources or do not have the required language skills and/or appropriate profiles, and where other means of interpretation, such as remote interpretation arrangements (see § 2.5.5 – *Remote Participation of Interpreters in Interviews*), are not feasible or would result in long processing delays for the Applicant, interpretation may exceptionally be conducted by persons other than UNHCR Interpreters. These may include the Applicant's own interpreter, asylum-seekers or refugees who are not UNHCR Interpreters, other UNHCR protection staff (including Eligibility Officers), as well as interpreters provided through *ad hoc* arrangements with implementing partners, non-governmental organizations, linguistic institutes, or other such means.

When interpretation by persons other than UNHCR Interpreters is necessary, UNHCR staff must take appropriate measures to **assess and promote the effectiveness of the interpretation** provided, and to **preserve the confidentiality and integrity of the RSD procedures**.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The UNHCR staff member who conducts the Interview should take the following steps in order to assess the ability of the interpreter and ensure the quality of the interpretation:

- ▶ Briefly question the Interpreter on his/her language background and interpreting experience;
- ▶ Ascertain the Interpreter's relationship with the Applicant;
- ▶ Explain to the Interpreter the character and purpose of the Interview and type of interpretation that will be expected, as well as the obligation to preserve the confidentiality of the procedures, and ask that he/she signs the *UNHCR Interpreter Undertaking of Confidentiality and Impartiality* (Annex 2.5-2);
- ▶ Include a written note in the file of any details that may be relevant to the quality or the reliability of the interpretation, including the Interpreter's language proficiency, and any potential conflict of interest or exploitative relationship between the Interpreter and Applicant;
- ▶ Ask the Applicant whether he/she consents to the interpretation arrangement, wherever possible not in the presence of the proposed Interpreter, and record the consent or any reasons for objecting to such arrangement on file.

Where the Applicant does not consent to interpretation being conducted by a non-UNHCR Interpreter, or where serious concerns arise regarding the skills and ability of the proposed Interpreter to provide effective, impartial, and accurate interpretation, including because of a conflict of interest or exploitative relationship between the Interpreter and the Applicant, the UNHCR staff member may refuse the participation of the non-UNHCR Interpreter in the Interview. The Applicant and the Interpreter should be informed of the reasons for the refusal and a note to this effect should be put on the Applicant's file.

As a general rule, asylum-seekers or refugees who are not qualified and trained UNHCR Interpreters should not be requested to provide interpretation in UNHCR RSD procedures unless there are no other means of communicating with an Applicant. Where the interpretation services of asylum-seekers or refugees who are not UNHCR Interpreters are used, the interpretation should be limited to communication at the initial reception stage, and every effort needs to be made to obtain the services of a qualified UNHCR Interpreter for any necessary counselling as well as the Registration and RSD Interviews. UNHCR staff who communicate with the Applicant under this arrangement must take all feasible steps to preserve the confidentiality of the Applicant's claim, including limiting the use of questions likely to elicit identifying bio-data or details of the refugee claim.

Exceptionally, where no qualified UNHCR Interpreter is available and it is necessary to conduct the interview, Applicants may be permitted to use the services of their **own interpreter**. However, given the reluctance some Applicants may have to disclose facts that are relevant to their claim in the presence of another family member, and the difficulty of assessing whether the Applicant truly consents to the attendance of family members in RSD procedures, every effort needs to be made to find **alternatives to interpretation by family members** of an Applicant in UNHCR RSD procedures.

Persons acting as **legal representative** to Applicants should not provide interpretation services in UNHCR RSD procedures.

Where interpretation is carried out by a non-UNHCR Interpreter, the Eligibility Officer must be particularly vigilant about the quality and accuracy of the interpretation. Any concerns regarding the quality of the interpretation or the conduct of the Interpreter should be addressed immediately (for further guidance see § 2.5.4 – *Concerns relating to the Participation of an Interpreter*) and be taken into account in assessing the credibility of the Applicant’s account.

2.5.4 Concerns relating to the Participation of an Interpreter

Applicants who have concerns about the participation of an Interpreter (whether a UNHCR Interpreter or not) in the Interview must be given the opportunity to raise and explain their concerns, in confidence, to the UNHCR staff member who conducts the Interview.

The Eligibility Officer should ensure, at the beginning of the Interview, that the Applicant fully understands the language or dialect in which the interpretation is provided, and inform the Applicant of his/her right to raise concerns relating to the quality of interpretation or the assigned Interpreter at any point during the Interview. All concerns raised by the Applicant and the measures taken to address them have to be noted on the Applicant’s file.

If the Applicant raises concerns after the start of an Interview, the Interview should be stopped and the Eligibility Officer should address such concerns immediately. Concerns unrelated to the language or dialect of interpretation should not be discussed in the presence of the Interpreter.

If an Applicant raises serious concerns regarding the participation of an Interpreter (such as a conflict of interest, the existence of an exploitative relationship, cultural, religious or ethnic biases or the sex of the Interpreter) which cannot be addressed by the Eligibility Officer and are likely to result in problems with disclosure during the Interview, the Interview should be stopped and an assessment should be made in consultation with the RSD Supervisor regarding the concerns raised, their impact on the process, and whether a different Interpreter should be used. Where a replacement of Interpreter is assessed to be appropriate in a particular case, the Interview may be resumed with a different qualified Interpreter, if available, or rescheduled as soon as possible. Every effort should be made to ensure that interpreter assignments in UNHCR RSD procedures anticipate and accommodate reasonable, or otherwise genuinely held, concerns of Applicants.

If the Applicant does not understand the language or dialect of the interpretation or if the Eligibility Officer has concerns regarding the quality of interpretation, the conduct/behaviour of the Interpreter, or any other factors that are likely to affect disclosure during the Interview, the Eligibility Officer should stop the Interview and address such concerns with the Interpreter and the Applicant immediately. If the concerns are serious including when they relate to the conduct/behaviour of the Interpreter, it may be appropriate to address such concerns outside the presence of the Applicant. The Eligibility Officer may, after consultation with the RSD Supervisor, request that a different Interpreter is assigned and reschedule the Interview if necessary. Any communications the Eligibility Officer may have with the Interpreter in the Applicant’s presence need to be interpreted for the benefit of the Applicant and recorded on the file. Where concerns are not discussed in the presence of the Applicant, such concerns should be summarized for him/her and recorded on the file. The break and reasons for interrupting the Interview, as well as the change of Interpreter, if applicable, will be noted on the Applicant’s file and the reasons for change of Interpreter explained to the Applicant.

The Eligibility Officer needs to **remain alert to any signs of potential problems with the quality of the interpretation** throughout the Interview and address any concerns immediately.

STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

SOME SIGNS OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH THE QUALITY OF THE INTERPRETATION

- ▶ The Applicant's response does not answer the question asked, or only partially answers it;
- ▶ The interpretation of a question or an answer is significantly longer or shorter than appears necessary;
- ▶ Words recognized without interpretation (for example, proper names or words in a language that the Eligibility Officer understands) are not interpreted;
- ▶ Exchanges between the Interpreter and the Applicant are not interpreted;
- ▶ There are non-verbal cues that the Applicant does not understand or is not comfortable answering a question in the presence of the Interpreter.

2.5.5 Remote Participation of Interpreters in Interviews

In cases where language requirements cannot be met by a UNHCR Office, **remote interpretation arrangements may be necessary to permit the participation of qualified interpreters in RSD or other protection Interviews** (for remote interviewing arrangements see § 4.3 – *The RSD Interview*). Remote interpretation arrangements can exceptionally be considered, for example, in instances where locally present Interpreters do not have the required language skills and/or appropriate profiles, or to avoid long processing delays and backlogs resulting from gaps in locally present interpreter resources. The factors set out in the following paragraphs should be taken into account when considering implementing remote interpretation arrangements.

Given the associated technical challenges and limitations, remote interpretation arrangements should, as a general rule, be relied upon as an exceptional measure when no qualified interpreter resources can be identified in the location where the Interview will take place.

The **technology used to support remote interpreter participation should permit clear, reliable and uninterrupted audio and, where applicable, video transmission**. The technology employed needs to be adequate to avoid gaps in the communication and/or unrecoverable speech in the audio and/or video transmission. If reliable technical arrangements cannot be achieved, remote interpretation will generally not be appropriate as it could seriously compromise the efficiency, effectiveness and accuracy of communication in the Interview.

The technology used in remote interpreter arrangements also needs to permit **confidential and secure communication**. The assessment of whether and how appropriate levels of confidentiality can be achieved will have to be informed by existing communications systems and other factors in the specific operational context. Technical advice should be sought as appropriate.

Wherever possible, the Interpreter should participate in the Interview from a location arranged by UNHCR, in order to ensure that the interpretation services are provided in a setting which preserves the confidentiality of the proceedings, and are free from background noise and interruptions. Where such

facilities cannot be arranged, the relevant guidelines and undertakings for Interpreters require that the Interpreter work from a space where he/she is free from interruption, noise and the presence of any other individual. Secure audio and/or video communications need to be arranged.

The Applicant must be informed of the conditions under which the remote Interpreter is working and receive an explanation of the confidentiality of the arrangement, including, where used, those related to the use and storage of electronic records of the Interview, as well as the role, obligations and undertakings of the Interpreter in the performance of his/her responsibilities. The Applicant should be given the opportunity, at the start of the Interview, to ask any questions or express any concerns regarding the remote interpretation arrangement. If an Applicant raises serious concerns about the use of a remote interpretation arrangement, which are likely to result in problems with disclosure during the Interview, and cannot be resolved by the Eligibility Officer, an assessment will need to be made in consultation with the RSD Supervisor regarding the concerns raised, their impact on the process, and the appropriateness of proceeding with a remote interpretation arrangement.

For remote interpretation arrangements, whether through audio or video transmission, the Applicant's consent should ideally be sought. Given the importance of establishing a relationship of trust and ensuring that the Applicant is comfortable with the Interview setting to encourage full and truthful disclosure, if the Applicant raises objections to video-conferencing, audio participation by the Interpreter, without video transmission, will generally be preferable.

The Eligibility Officer needs, as with an Interpreter physically present, to ensure that the Interpreter and Applicant understand each other's language and dialect and, additionally, that **the quality of the audio and/or video transmission is adequate throughout the Interview** for the Applicant as well as the Interpreter. The Eligibility Officer should ask both to signal any problems with the sound and/or video quality or transmission that may arise during the interview, and seek immediately to address them. Should technical problems persist which are compromising the quality and accuracy of the communication between the Interpreter and the Applicant, the Interview should generally be adjourned until appropriate interpretation can be achieved.

Given the specific challenges posed by remote interpreter arrangements, they will generally not be appropriate in Interviews with **Applicants in detention or Applicants who have specific needs or vulnerabilities**, in particular child Applicants, persons with hearing impairment and certain other mental or physical disabilities, and persons who are suffering the effects of trauma or torture.

2.5.6 Impartiality of UNHCR Interpreters

The **impartial and neutral role of the Interpreter** should be maintained throughout the RSD process. The following guidelines need to be observed by all UNHCR staff and Interpreters:

STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES TO PRESERVE THE IMPARTIALITY AND QUALITY OF INTERPRETATION

- ▶ Interpreters should interpret verbatim, fully and accurately all communications between the Eligibility Officer and the Applicant, and promptly inform the Eligibility Officer and Applicant where precise interpretation is not possible.
- ▶ Eligibility Officers should not call upon Interpreters to assess the credibility of an Applicant's account, or to investigate or comment on the reliability of evidence provided by an Applicant, except as it relates to the use of language and dialect by the Applicant. In this regard, the Interpreter's input should generally be limited to issues arising in the interpretation process, such as explaining the cultural meaning of a word or other nuances in the language, as well as indicating where a term or a phrase does not have an exact equivalent in the language of interpretation. Where information regarding the Applicant's language or dialect brings into question the Applicant's asserted nationality, ethnicity, place of origin, or other material fact, this should generally prompt further examination of the relevant aspect of the Applicant's account and the credibility of the particular fact should be assessed in light of all the available evidence.
- ▶ Interpreters should not allow personal biases or cultural factors to influence the quality of interpretation, and should at all times treat Applicants with dignity and respect and maintain a professional attitude.
- ▶ Interpreters should never engage in advocacy or intervene with UNHCR on behalf of Applicants nor should they seek to undermine Applicants' claims.
- ▶ UNHCR Interpreters should not accept requests to meet with asylum-seekers and refugees outside of UNHCR Office, or engage in any other exchange that could affect their impartiality in UNHCR RSD procedures. If there are urgent circumstances where the Interpreter's assistance is required outside the UNHCR office in connection with the Applicant's claim, the Interpreter must obtain prior written authorization from the appropriate UNHCR staff member.
- ▶ Interpreters should be instructed to promptly notify the UNHCR staff member to whom they provide services, or the RSD Supervisor if appropriate, of any factors which could be perceived to affect the Interpreter's impartiality, including previous personal knowledge of, or contact with, an asylum-seeker, or another potential conflict of interest, as well as threats or offers of bribery received by the Interpreter.
- ▶ Interpreters should not select Applicants for whom they provide interpreting services, and should not be informed of the identity of the Applicants before the day on which they provide the interpreting services. Exceptions can be made in cases where the Interpreter may need to prepare for specific types of technical language that is likely to be used during the Interview or where the Applicant presents security risks so that the Interpreter has the opportunity to decline from providing interpretation due to such risks.
- ▶ Wherever possible, Interpreters should be assigned to different Eligibility Officers and repeated involvement by an Interpreter in a particular case should be avoided when scheduling Interviews. For Applicants with specific needs or vulnerabilities, it may however be appropriate to use the same

Interpreter if more than one RSD Interview is conducted if this would be conducive to building a relationship of trust and encouraging full and truthful disclosure.

- ▶ Wherever possible, Interpreters should not be assigned to cases of Applicants of the same nationality, ethnicity or belonging to the same refugee community.
- ▶ Any contact between Interpreters and Applicants other than in the course of interpretation should be avoided. Interpreters should not be left alone with Applicants prior, during or after the RSD Interview.
- ▶ As a general rule, UNHCR Offices must avoid using Interpreters to provide counselling themselves to Applicants or assigning them other tasks unrelated to interpretation where this could undermine the impartiality of the Interpreter in the RSD process.

2.5.7 Duty of Confidentiality

Interpreters need to strictly maintain confidentiality regarding the information they receive when carrying out their responsibilities for UNHCR, and should not comment on or reveal this information to persons other than UNHCR staff who are involved in RSD. This obligation to maintain the confidentiality of information received during the course of their work with UNHCR extends beyond the length of their actual contract with UNHCR.

All interpreters must sign the **UNHCR Interpreter Undertaking of Confidentiality and Impartiality (Annex 2.5-2)** in which they confirm their understanding and acceptance of their obligations of confidentiality and impartiality.

2.5.8 Access by Interpreters to Individual Files of Applicants

Interpreters should not have access to general file storage areas or to electronic databases containing personal information related to persons of concerns. As a general rule, Interpreters should not handle individual files of persons of concern. Where interpreters have exceptionally been assigned additional tasks which require access to individual files, this access needs to be strictly limited to what is necessary to carry out authorized responsibilities, and should be closely supervised. Interpreters are not allowed to maintain records of their communications / interactions with Applicants and refugees, and should be asked to hand over to the Eligibility Officer their notes at the end of the Interview. The Interpreter's notes must be kept on file if they may be useful for review purposes in the future.

2.5.9 Supervision and Oversight of Interpreters

Each UNHCR Office should designate a Protection staff member to supervise the work of Interpreters in UNHCR procedures. The RSD Supervisor is generally responsible to oversee the quality of interpretation services in UNHCR RSD procedures. The **RSD Supervisor**, or a Protection staff member designated by the RSD Supervisor, has to be directly involved in the hiring, training and supervision of UNHCR Interpreters, and should ensure that UNHCR Interpreters have the necessary skills and training, as well as the appropriate attitude, to interpret effectively in RSD procedures.

UNHCR Offices conduct regular performance assessments for Interpreters (Annex 3 *Interpreter Evaluation Report* form may be used to this end) and should also conduct *ad hoc* checks, including where there are concerns about the integrity, confidentiality or quality of the work of one or more individual Interpreters. Such checks could consist of listening to the recording of selected communications or Interviews to ensure that the interpretation provided has been accurate and has been carried out in a professional and neutral manner.

The complaint procedures established in each UNHCR Office to provide persons of concern with the opportunity to report misconduct of UNHCR staff should also be used to channel **comments and complaints about the services of Interpreters**. These procedures need to be clearly communicated to all Applicants and UNHCR staff. All complaints regarding the quality of interpretation, the impartiality or confidentiality of Interpreters, or other matters relating to the conduct of Interpreters, should be referred to the Protection staff member who is responsible to oversee the quality of interpretation in RSD or other procedures. Complaints procedures regarding the services of Interpreters should specify responsibilities for follow-up on complaints received and reporting on action taken, in accordance with the principles set out in § 2.6 – *Complaint Procedures*.

UNHCR Offices always need to give due consideration to the Interpreters' **psychosocial and physical well-being** in order to prevent burnout and to help limit fraud and security risks. Given the high likelihood of exposure to trauma, Interpreters should at a minimum undergo security and trauma preparation including understanding the basics of the prevention of stress and trauma, and should be included in staff welfare trainings. Offices should facilitate their access to on-going psychosocial support available to the protection team in the operation. Stress management and coping mechanisms should be introduced in each Office to manage the level of the Interpreters' vicarious trauma. These can include alternating interpretation and translation work, and rotating Interpreters between RSD, resettlement and community services work whenever possible.

For further guidance on training and supervision of Interpreters, please refer to the *Guidelines for the field on recruitment procedures, conditions of service, training and supervision of interpreters* annexed to the IOM-FOM 005/2009.

Annexes

Annex 2.5-1: List of UNHCR Resources (December 2015)

Notice: The list below highlights the UNHCR policy resources and guidelines that are relevant to legal representation in UNHCR RSD procedures. All Protection staff members who are responsible for RSD should have access to and be familiar with these documents. Managers should ensure that documents are disseminated to staff who are responsible for their implementation, and that the directions in these documents are reflected in the RSD procedures and practice in the UNHCR Office concerned.

Guidelines for the field on recruitment procedures, conditions of service, training and supervision of interpreters, UNHCR, IOM-FOM 005/2009, 19 January 2009

Self-Study Module 3: Interpreting in a Refugee Context, UNHCR, 1 January 2009,
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/49b6314d2.html>

Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR, May 2015,
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/55643c1d4.html>

Annex 2.5-2: UNHCR Interpreter Undertaking of Confidentiality and Impartiality

UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES



NATIONS UNIES
HAUT COMMISSARIAT
POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS

UNHCR INTERPRETER UNDERTAKING OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

Name of Interpreter:

In addition to my agreement to abide by the principles set out in the UNHCR *Code of conduct*, I make the following undertakings in respect of performance of my role as UNHCR interpreter:

Obligation of Confidentiality

I undertake not to disclose or discuss any information about asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, stateless persons, (all these categories are hereinafter referred to as persons of concern to UNHCR), colleagues or other work related matters that come to my knowledge as a result of my role as an interpreter with UNHCR. I understand and accept that my obligation to maintain the confidentiality of information I have received in UNHCR continues beyond the termination of my assignment with UNHCR.

Obligation of Impartiality

I undertake to carry out my responsibilities and to conduct myself at all times, both in and outside of UNHCR premises, in a manner that is fully consistent with my obligation of impartiality as a UNHCR interpreter. In particular:

- ▶ I will, to the best of my abilities, provide accurate and complete interpretation;
- ▶ I will provide interpretation services in a neutral and non-judgemental manner;
- ▶ I will refrain from engaging in advocacy on behalf of persons of concern to UNHCR;

- ▶ I will not accept payment or favour from or on behalf of persons of concern to UNHCR;
- ▶ I will not engage in contact or exchanges with persons of concern to UNHCR or other third parties that could undermine, or be perceived to undermine, either my impartiality as an interpreter or the fairness and integrity of UNHCR procedures;
- ▶ I will carry out my responsibilities in a manner that is consistent with UNHCR standards for cultural, gender and age sensitivity in UNHCR procedures.

Duty Report

I undertake to inform the UNHCR staff member for whom I am providing interpretation services, and to report to my direct supervisor any facts or incidents that could undermine, or be perceived to undermine, my impartiality or effectiveness in the performance of my responsibilities. Specifically, I agree to report without delay:

- ▶ Any ties, professional or personal, I have with a person of concern to UNHCR in relation to whom I have been assigned to provide interpretation services;
- ▶ Any employment, association or private interest I have which could be inconsistent with, or perceived to be incompatible with, my role as a UNHCR interpreter;
- ▶ Any other factors that could adversely affect my competence to provide interpretation services that have been assigned to me.

Consequences of Breach of the Undertaking

I understand that this signed Undertaking of Confidentiality and Impartiality will be maintained on my personal file, and that failure to comply with the undertakings above, without reasonable excuse, will amount to misconduct and may result in disciplinary proceedings against me and/or legal action.

I have read, understand and accept each of the undertakings set out above.

Signature of Interpreter:

Date:

Place: