



UNIT 8

UNHCR Refugee Certificate

UNHCR REFUGEE CERTIFICATE

8.1 General Principles

- UNHCR Offices should issue a **UNHCR Refugee Certificate** to every individual who is determined in UNHCR mandate RSD procedures to meet the criteria for refugee status, including family members/dependants who are determined to be eligible for derivative refugee status.
- The UNHCR Refugee Certificate should attest to the fact the individual named in the document is a refugee, and as such, is a person who should be protected from forcible return to a country in which he/she would face persecution.
- UNHCR Offices should undertake any necessary **demarches with the relevant authorities in the host country** to explain the form and significance of the UNHCR Refugee Certificate and to promote recognition and acceptance of the document in the host country.

8.2 Procedures for Issuing UNHCR Refugee Certificate

8.2.1 Form of UNHCR Refugee Certificate

- UNHCR Refugee Certificates should be issued in the standard format (**Annex 8-1**). In addition to the attestation referred to in § 8.1 above, the document should contain the following information:

UNHCR Refugee Certificates

- The name by which the refugee is registered with UNHCR and other core bio-data including the date and place of birth, and nationality
 - The UNHCR registration number of the refugee
 - A photograph of the refugee to whom the UNHCR Refugee Certificate is issued
 - The reference number under which the document was issued by UNHCR
 - The date of issuance of the UNHCR Refugee Certificate;
 - The signature of a UNHCR staff member who is authorized to sign UNHCR Refugee Certificate
 - The address and contact information for the UNHCR Office that issued the document
- UNHCR Refugee Certificate should be issued in the language of the host country and the main working language of the UNHCR Office.

8.2.2 Oversight and Controls

- UNHCR Refugee Certificates should be prepared by **designated UNHCR staff** who should work under the **direct supervision** of the RSD Supervisor or another designated Protection staff member.
- Access to **templates for UNHCR Refugee Certificates** and circulation of UNHCR Refugee Certificates during preparation and review procedures should be strictly controlled (i.e. through numbering and logging procedures).
- Procedures for preparing and issuing UNHCR Refugee Certificates should include **effective review mechanisms** to ensure that the information they contain is accurate, and that they are issued only to individuals who have been found to meet the criteria for refugee status under UNHCR's mandate. Each UNHCR Refugee Certificate should be reviewed for accuracy by the RSD Supervisor or another designated Protection staff supervisor before it is signed and issued. Where responsibility for review is delegated, the RSD Supervisor should conduct regular and random reviews of UNHCR Refugee Certificates to monitor the effectiveness of supervision and controls.
- UNHCR Refugee Certificates should be signed by the Head of Office or a Protection staff member designated by the Head of Office.
- Each UNHCR Office, in consultation with UNHCR Headquarters as necessary, should employ the most effective techniques available to **prevent fraudulent production or tampering** of UNHCR Refugee Certificate, including using carefully controlled security paper, embossing, dry seals or a special photo pack.



8.2.3 Replacement of Lost or Stolen UNHCR Refugee Certificates

- **Replacement of lost or stolen UNHCR Refugee Certificates** should be carried out pursuant to established procedures. As a general rule, refugees who are seeking replacement of a lost or stolen UNHCR Refugee Certificate should be required to attend in person at the UNHCR Office and should be asked to provide a written and signed explanation of the circumstances of the loss, as well as an undertaking to return the original document to UNHCR if it is recovered.
- Before issuing a replacement UNHCR Refugee Certificate UNHCR staff should take necessary measures to confirm the identity of the individual making the request and their status as persons who have been determined by UNHCR to be eligible for refugee status. Standard procedures should require the retrieval of the registration record of the individual making the request, including the individual's photograph, as well as the Office record of the original UNHCR

Refugee Certificate (see § 8.3 - *Maintaining Office Records of UNHCR Refugee Certificates*). The individual making the request should also be asked to present any identity documents in his or her possession.

- Replacement of UNHCR Refugee Certificates should be subject to **effective review and approval procedures** by Protection staff who are designated to supervise the issuance of UNHCR documents.
- In any case where the identity of the individual making the request, or their status with UNHCR, cannot be confirmed by the UNHCR Office, or where there are reasons to doubt the legitimacy of the purpose for which the replacement UNHCR Refugee Certificate is sought, the request should be referred to the Protection staff member who is responsible to supervise the issuance of UNHCR Refugee Certificates.

8.3 Maintaining Office Records of UNHCR Refugee Certificates

- A copy of each UNHCR Refugee Certificate issued to an Applicant and any accompanying family member/dependant should be **retained on the appropriate individual file**.
- Each UNHCR Office should maintain a **central record of all UNHCR Refugee Certificates** issued by the Office, including replacements of lost or stolen UNHCR Refugee Certificates.