

# CHAPTER FOUR





## CHAPTER FOUR MANAGING RESETTLEMENT EFFECTIVELY

### Introduction

Refugees offered resettlement are provided an opportunity to rebuild their lives in safety. There are limited places available, however, and resettlement operations must be well-planned, and implemented with efficiency, integrity and transparency to make the most effective use of this invaluable durable solution.

Strengthening the role of resettlement in comprehensive solutions strategies, increasing its operational capacity to deliver resettlement and continued improvement in the management of global resettlement activities are key goals for UNHCR.

### Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- highlight the responsibility of each staff member to contribute to a well-managed resettlement operation;
- introduce UNHCR's overall guidelines and standards for the effective management of resettlement globally, as well as the management of activities in field offices;
- review standards, accountability and safeguards in the resettlement process, including standard operating procedures;
- explain how fraud can occur throughout the process; outline what preventive actions and post-fraud responses must be taken;
- highlight the critical importance of effectively managing refugees' resettlement expectations;
- explain the principle of transparency and outline important principles related to file management and maintenance of confidentiality of information;
- stress the importance of ongoing training for staff and partners;
- highlight the need for accurate statistics; and
- raise awareness of the support available for managing stress.

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## 4.1 RESETTLEMENT MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Resettlement offers invaluable benefits to refugees in need of protection and a durable solution. The limited availability of resettlement opportunities can, however, put intense pressure on the process, hampering effectiveness, challenging objectivity, and making resettlement operations vulnerable to fraud and malfeasance. UNHCR and resettlement partners are jointly committed to ensuring that resettlement is well-planned, assists refugees in need of this durable solution, and that resettlement operations are managed and implemented with integrity, accountability, efficiency, and transparency.

As resettlement operations have grown, UNHCR has focused on strengthening its operational capacity and the planning and management of global resettlement activities. Safeguards are incorporated into every step of the resettlement process, and basic standards have been established to ensure clear divisions of responsibility and transparency in resettlement processing. Other essential components of well-managed operations include: effective coordination with partners, fraud prevention strategies, targeted information campaigns, counselling to address refugees' expectations and ongoing training of staff and partners.

### 4.1.1 Shared responsibility

All UNHCR staff, irrespective of grade or function, have the responsibility of ensuring that protection activities, including resettlement, are carried out to the highest standards possible, and to prevent fraud and malfeasance in all activities.

A well-functioning resettlement operation is a shared responsibility, and it is incumbent upon all persons involved with resettlement to properly discharge his or her function. This is reflected in the *UN Staff Regulations* and the *UNHCR Code of Conduct*, and has also been recognized as part of official policy with respect to management of protection activities in general.<sup>1</sup>



Senior managers, in particular Representatives and Heads of Office, do of course have a clear role to play in ensuring that resettlement operations are well managed. This includes creating a supportive environment by:

- ensuring that all functions and operations – such as assistance, registration, RSD and resettlement – are carried out appropriately to the highest standards;
- ensuring that the office as a whole recognizes the links between resettlement and other functions and makes resettlement an integral part of the overall office strategy on protection, not only for the country operations planning but also in everyday teamwork;

<sup>1</sup> See Regulations 1.2 and 1.3 UN General Assembly, *Staff Regulations of the United Nations*, 2 February 1952, A/RES/590, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3boof47ao.html>, the *UNHCR Code of Conduct & Explanatory Notes*, June 2004, <http://www.unhcr.org/422dbc89a.html> as well as UNHCR, *Management of Protection Activities - Responsibilities of UNHCR Staff*, 15 March 2002, IOM/025/2002 - FOM/024/2002, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3d4524a52.html>

- providing a supportive environment that encourages close cooperation and communication between different units;
- providing a clear management and accountability framework;
- ensuring, to the extent possible, that appropriate resources are made available to maximize the efficiency of each activity, such as when more detailed registration or follow-up verification is required to support RSD and resettlement; this may include reliance on additional staff, such as under the deployment schemes introduced in [Chapter 2](#);
- ensuring appropriate reporting and transparency in all actions;
- supporting training opportunities to strengthen the skills and capacities of field staff;
- maintaining healthy staff relations and appropriate stress management;
- ensuring that measures to maintain security and safeguard against fraud and abuse are high on the agenda; and
- leading by example.

All staff involved in resettlement must, however, ensure that the actions they undertake are done conscientiously and in line with their responsibilities, the *UNHCR Code of Conduct*, and appropriate policy and procedural guidelines.

UNHCR resettlement activities take place in field operations varying considerably in terms of size, staff composition and level of operational engagements with refugees, host governments and NGOs. Increasing demand for resettlement and limited resources pose constant challenges to the effective management of resettlement activities.

Despite these challenges, and the diverse range of circumstances, the standards and guidelines contained in this Handbook are of a universal nature so as to be applicable to *all resettlement activities*. UNHCR seeks to deliver a coherent and predictable resettlement programme that addresses refugees' needs with diligence, integrity, transparency and accountability. The Resettlement Service in UNHCR Headquarters, and Regional Resettlement Officers (where applicable), will be able to provide additional guidance to individual field offices on further issues of particular concern.

#### 4.1.2 An integrated approach to resettlement

Resettlement is a global undertaking, involving cooperative efforts and coordination between resettlement countries, UNHCR, NGOs and IOM. Coordinating and planning resettlement activities at various levels *within* UNHCR is also critically important in ensuring that resettlement efforts are effective and well-targeted.

Resettlement activities cannot stand alone, but must be integrated in the overall protection strategy of the office as part of regional and country operational planning. Incorporating resettlement into the planning process and the protection strategy helps to ensure that all durable solutions are assessed comprehensively, and that both the potential positive and negative impacts of resettlement on other activities, or vice-versa, are assessed. Ideally, any positive

impact should be maximized by strategically using resettlement, and negative impacts mitigated through effective planning and risk management.

Individual field offices play an essential role in the coordination, planning and implementation of resettlement activities. Field offices identify individual and groups of refugees in need of resettlement, communicate resettlement needs to the Resettlement Service in UNHCR Headquarters, and prepare resettlement submissions. Successful resettlement is dependent on good cooperation with colleagues involved in other UNHCR activities (including registration, eligibility, protection, community services, livelihoods, and voluntary repatriation as applicable), and also relies on a number of important external partners.

The integrated approach to resettlement should also be in the daily work of the office. Regular meetings to coordinate resettlement activities should involve internal as well as external partners, and may at times include resettlement States and the host country, depending on the particular issues to be discussed. Protection colleagues and all relevant partners must be kept up to date on practical and operational aspects to ensure consistent delivery of resettlement and mitigate risks such as fraud and abuse. *Specific considerations related to Field Coordination are discussed further in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7.*

Appropriate coordination and cooperation with the Regional Resettlement Hub/ Regional Office, as applicable, and the Resettlement Service and the relevant Bureau in Headquarters, is equally important. This cooperation relates not only to general policy and practice, but often also includes operational follow-up in individual cases and sharing of good practices and lessons learned.

### 4.1.3 The role of UNHCR Headquarters

The essential functions of UNHCR Headquarters divisions and bureaux are to support field operations and exercise overall management of the Office, with a particular focus on policy, strategy, and global oversight.

Headquarters is responsible for the following core functions for the organization:

- doctrine and policy development;
- strategic direction articulation;
- fund raising and resource mobilization;
- prioritization and resource allocation;
- Executive Committee and other governance support;
- financial control in accordance with UN and UNHCR rules and regulations;
- monitoring, measuring and reporting (including results-based management);
- oversight;
- communications and external relations;
- inter-agency relations and strategic partnerships;
- central emergency preparedness and response management; and
- security management.

The **Resettlement Service** within the **Division of International Protection (DIP)**, and the **Regional Bureaux** are key contacts for field offices in regards to resettlement issues.

### The Resettlement Service

The Head of the Resettlement Service also serves as a Deputy Director of DIP, and is supported by a Senior Resettlement Coordinator, staff with responsibilities for either geographical issues or global themes and policy issues, processing unit staff managing dossier submissions, and administrative support staff. The designation of regional focal points facilitates the support and monitoring of resettlement operations in UNHCR's Field and Regional Offices, and the support of resettlement States. Focal points are also identified for key issues including anti-fraud.

The role of the Resettlement Service of the Division of International Protection in UNHCR Headquarters is to:

- be responsible for **developing resettlement policies**, setting standards and guidelines for resettlement work and disseminating them, and monitoring their consistent application;
- function as focal point for the resettlement strands of the initiatives linked to **comprehensive durable solutions** and to promote the strategic use of resettlement;
- function as focal point for the **prevention of fraud** in the resettlement process, including developing and implementing activities to prevent and mitigate fraud, monitoring and documenting occurrences of fraud, applying sanctions, and liaising with resettlement countries whose programmes might be affected by fraud;
- **assess and document the global resettlement needs** and negotiate the overall levels and allocations of resettlement submissions from each region with receiving governments;
- **advocate for additional resettlement places** for refugees whose emerging needs warrant urgent resettlement;
- **obtain necessary resources** for UNHCR's efforts to effectively implement and enhance resettlement operations, in close collaboration with Regional Bureaux in Headquarters and the field;
- **manage resettlement submissions of emergency/urgent medical cases** at the request of UNHCR field offices or due to requirements of receiving governments;
- **manage resettlement dossier submissions** to resettlement countries;
- **diversify and expand resettlement opportunities and programmes**, including enlarging the number of resettlement countries;
- **coordinate the establishment and implementation of resettlement programmes** in emerging resettlement countries and facilitate capacity-building programmes and linkages between these and established resettlement countries;



- **provide supervision and guidance** to the Regional Resettlement Hubs/ Regional Offices and field offices as applicable;
- **coordinate** with the relevant Bureau, the Regional Resettlement Hub/ Regional Office as applicable, and potential resettlement countries to assess and approve field proposals to apply the group methodology;
- **improve systems and methods** for monitoring, evaluating and oversight, including the compilation of resettlement statistics;
- **analyze** collected field statistics and other reports to ensure consistency and compliance with accepted policies, procedures, guidelines and performance standards as well as to identify global trends and gaps in resettlement delivery;
- **manage the UNHCR-ICMC resettlement deployment scheme** in cooperation with the International Catholic Migration Commission and manage resettlement deployments from other schemes;
- **serve as the Secretariat for the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR)** and the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR);
- **assess training needs and coordinate training** in resettlement policies and procedures for UNHCR staff as well as NGO and government partners in close coordination with the Global Learning Centre (GLC), relevant Bureau and the Regional Resettlement Hub/Regional Office;
- **liaise with relevant actors** within and outside UNHCR for follow-up actions related to the integration of resettled refugees, in particular in the emerging resettlement countries and promote the spirit of burden and responsibility sharing;
- **enhance resettlement partnership** by expanding areas of cooperation with relevant NGOs;
- coordinate the **schedules for resettlement selection missions** to field offices where applicable;
- **administer the Travel Assistance Project for Family Reunification** in coordination with field offices, IOM and NGOs as applicable; and
- **promote resettlement** within UNHCR and in all relevant international fora, advocating its use as a protection tool, a durable solution and a responsibility sharing mechanism.

Overall, the Resettlement Service also plays a lead role in liaising with governments on their resettlement admission policies, size and allocation of their quotas, processing issues, and on the promotion of emergency and specific needs cases.

## The Division of International Protection (DIP)

The Division of International Protection:

- develops global protection policy;
- contributes to standard-setting and progressive development of international law and standards in the area of forced displacement;
- provides guidance on complex international law and protection policy issues pertaining to all categories of populations of concern and UNHCR's operations;

- leads the age, gender and diversity sensitive approach;
- provides support to field operations and other Headquarters entities on policy and legal matters relating to forced displacement both from a protection and a durable solutions perspective, including in the area of RSD, asylum/migration, statelessness, education and community development/mobilization;
- leads and coordinates resettlement activities;
- assists in developing comprehensive approaches to durable solutions;
- leads and supports the global protection cluster; and
- coordinates human rights liaison activities.

## Regional Bureaux

UNHCR operations worldwide are implemented by five **regional bureaux**:

- Bureau for Africa;
- Bureau for Asia and the Pacific;
- Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA);
- Bureau for Europe; and
- Bureau for the Americas.

The Bureau has a crucial role in resettlement planning and implementation in their region. The Bureau provides strategic guidance and operational oversight to field operations, including the development of field and regional protection and comprehensive solutions strategies, the identification of individuals and groups to be processed for resettlement, the monitoring of field implementation, and the review of individual case decisions where required.

The Bureau also plays a key role in liaising with resettlement States, advocating the establishment of new resettlement programmes, enhancing partnerships with resettlement partners, promoting strategic use of resettlement, and keeping resettlement partners abreast of regional developments.

## Inspector General's Office

The mandate of the **Inspector General's Office** (IGO) comprises three functions:

- inspections of field offices and Headquarters' units;
- investigations of possible misconduct by UNHCR personnel; and
- *ad hoc* inquiries into incidents of attacks on UNHCR personnel and operations.<sup>2</sup>

As described in **Chapter 4.4.7**, the confidential email, fax and telephone numbers for the IGO should be widely publicized to encourage direct reporting of allegations of misconduct.

<sup>2</sup> See UNHCR, *The Role, Functions and Modus Operandi of the Inspector General's Office*, 3 November 2005; IOM/054/2005 - FOM/054/2005, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/43706e744.html>

#### 4.1.4 Resettlement coordination at the regional office level

The Regional Resettlement Hubs function to improve coordination and planning at a regional level, ensuring greater consistency and transparency in the processing of resettlement.<sup>3</sup>

The Regional Resettlement Hubs help coordinate and monitor the implementation of UNHCR resettlement criteria and policies on a regional level, and provide support to reinforce the capacities of resettlement operations where needed. The Regional Resettlement Hubs manage the resettlement submissions from operations within their region (including agreed numbers of dossier submissions for emergency/urgent medical cases), and also maintain regional resettlement statistics.

Regional Resettlement Officers functioning outside a Hub also play an important role in coordinating resettlement activities, providing support to resettlement operations in field offices and working with resettlement countries to ensure a harmonized and diversified approach to resettlement delivery within the region.

Regional coordination is particularly important where refugee populations from a given nationality are located in a number of neighbouring countries. In conjunction with the Resettlement Service and the relevant Bureau, the Regional Resettlement Officers serve to ensure the mainstreaming of resettlement into regional protection and solutions strategies.

#### 4.1.5 Consultations with resettlement partners

As introduced in [Chapter 2.1.3](#), the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) and the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) offer a forum to review progress on resettlement issues on a yearly basis, as well as to shape joint strategies and directions for the future.

The ATCR/WGR process has become the primary vehicle for UNHCR's resettlement cooperation with governments, NGOs and International Organizations, as it provides the opportunity for:

- regularly sharing information about needs and opportunities for planning purposes and to share analyses of resettlement issues;
- addressing operational issues and problems in order to improve implementation;
- raising awareness of resettlement issues in order to build consensus in the Executive Committee in favor of resettlement and to promote the establishment of new resettlement programmes; and
- focusing attention on UNHCR activities, given its key responsibility for case identification and referral.

The ATCR/WGR process has evolved to usually be comprised of two Working Group meetings and the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement

<sup>3</sup> As of 2011, there are two Regional Resettlement Hubs: Nairobi (Kenya) and Beirut (Lebanon). There are also regional resettlement officers in Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bangkok (Thailand), Dakar (Senegal), Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Pretoria (South Africa).

held each year in June/July. The Working Group meetings are smaller in size and participation (with limitations to full government members of the WGR and limited NGO presence), whereas the ATRC is a large meeting with full participation of all partners.

The Resettlement Service serves as Secretariat for the ATRC/WGR, while the chairmanship rotates among the government members. An NGO focal point, traditionally from the same State as the Chair, brings the NGO perspective into the Working Group meetings, and other NGO representatives are also invited according to the issues on the agenda.

Collectively the ATRC/WGR Chair, the NGO Focal Point, and the Resettlement Service coordinate the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. Participation at the ATRC is restricted to representatives of resettlement States, NGOs, International Organizations, UNHCR, and invited observers from prospective resettlement countries. In order to retain the focused and participatory nature of the ATRC, the meeting requires advance registration, and the size of each delegation is limited on the basis of the resettlement State's annual quota.

The consultative process allows UNHCR to direct resettlement States' attention to refugee populations in priority need of resettlement, and to coordinate the allocation of resettlement places and resources. The annual *Projected Global Resettlement Needs*<sup>4</sup> document is discussed in detail at the ATRC, and the timely exchange of information ensures that the Executive Committee, resettlement countries and NGOs collaborate to enhance the responsiveness and appropriateness of resettlement admissions levels.

The structure has also facilitated the organization of *ad hoc* thematic meetings, including resettlement anti-fraud, priority situations for the strategic use of resettlement, and the resettlement of refugees with medical needs.

Sub-sets of the WGR have also formed Core Groups in order to collaborate on developing comprehensive solutions for specific refugee populations, as well as operational issues. Examples include the Expert Group on Resettlement Fraud, the Core Working Group on Bhutanese Refugees, and the Refugee Resettlement Contact Group on Iran.

### Additional bilateral meetings

In addition to the ACTR and WGR, UNHCR holds numerous bilateral meetings with governments to strengthen joint planning efforts and to discuss needs and issues that arise with particular countries. Such meetings may take place at a headquarters, regional or national level throughout the year.

The Resettlement Service works with governments through their Permanent Missions in Geneva and also directly or through local UNHCR Representation with the capitals of resettlement countries in connection with individual case management, as well as refugee admission policies and quotas. Many

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<sup>4</sup> The *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs* reports are produced annually based on the information submitted by each country operation's proactive resettlement planning. These reports are generally for restricted distribution, though a public version is often made available following the ATRC.

resettlement States organize separate bilateral meetings with UNHCR to discuss their anticipated response to specific resettlement needs and the composition of the population and numbers to be resettled for the coming year.

With new resettlement countries or States accepting refugees on an *ad hoc* basis, UNHCR provides additional support to help them ensure that goals are met and that any challenges are overcome.

The Resettlement Service also maintains regular liaison with NGOs and International Organizations working in the area of resettlement. *Resettlement partnerships are addressed further in Chapter 8.*

## 4.2 SAFEGUARDS IN THE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

There are a number of safeguards that must be incorporated into each stage of the resettlement process to ensure its integrity and credibility. Regardless of the field context, all resettlement activities must conform to basic standards to ensure a level of global harmonization, transparency and predictability in resettlement delivery, and to mitigate the risk of fraud.

Resettlement activities are particularly vulnerable to fraud because of the benefits they offer. Safeguards are incorporated into every step of the resettlement process to minimize fraud possibilities, protect refugees from further victimization, protect innocent staff from false allegations, and to contribute to the overall credibility and effectiveness of UNHCR's resettlement activities.

These safeguards include:

### Standards

The development and implementation of accountable and transparent resettlement procedures are essential to preventing fraud and corruption in the resettlement process. Each field office must develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), in adherence with the *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*<sup>5</sup> and the guidelines contained in this Handbook. All resettlement submissions prepared in a field office must be processed according to these established and objective standards and procedures, as discussed further in **Chapter 7** of this Handbook.

### Transparency

All decisions related to resettlement decisions must be taken in a transparent manner. Transparency has both an internal and external dimension.

Internally, it requires probity at all levels and stages of the resettlement process; that each decision with respect to refugees and others is clearly documented; that *proGres* (or other database, as applicable) is conscientiously updated with the physical file; and that it is clear on what basis each step and decision was

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*, revised version 2011, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b6997d2.html>

taken. It should also be clear who authorized and undertook various actions and when they did so. Internal transparency requires clear rules and procedures as to what should be documented and included in an individual case file, such as outlined above with respect to enquiries, and how to ensure accountability.

External transparency means that refugees and other partners are properly informed about UNHCR's decisions and actions, subject to appropriate policies and confidentiality guidelines. In this regard, information meetings may be held to inform refugees and resettlement partners of the standards and procedures governing the resettlement process in a given field office. Such transparency will serve to enhance the credibility of resettlement, and is an important foundation for greater cooperation and confidence in the resettlement process.

This external transparency should not, however, lead to inappropriate disclosure of the contents of a refugee's file. Each person dealing with resettlement cases, including all international and national staff, interpreters, counsellors, medical personnel, and other staff of UNHCR's implementing partners, has an individual responsibility for ensuring that the concerned individual's right to confidentiality is not jeopardized. UNHCR's internal *Confidentiality Guidelines* provide further guidance on the sharing of information on individual cases.<sup>6</sup> *Confidentiality is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.2.4.*

The issue of confidentiality should be highlighted in the training of national and international staff, government personnel, and NGO staff.

### Authorization and accountability

In all field offices, the UNHCR Representative must designate an officer accountable for resettlement activities as an important first step in ensuring the effective management of resettlement activities within a field office. The decision to both process and submit a refugee's case to a resettlement country for their consideration must be authorized by the officer accountable for resettlement activities.

### Oversight and compliance monitoring

The designated officer must provide oversight of all resettlement activities within individual field offices to ensure compliance and quality control. As well as routine controls, periodic random checks help ensure compliance to standards, and confirm that individual submissions are prepared according to the guidelines contained in this Handbook. Regional Resettlement Officers also provide oversight of the resettlement processes in field offices under their responsibility.

Oversight of the resettlement process should result in an ongoing review and improvement of the procedures as resettlement needs and field office capacities change over time. Changes in procedures should be reflected in the office's Resettlement SOPs.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, *Confidentiality Guidelines*, 1 August 2001, IOM/071/2001 - FOM/068/2001, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3be17dfd4.html>

### 4.2.1 Overall management and accountability framework

It is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that a clear management and accountability framework is in place for all protection activities, including resettlement, in their respective offices. This is essential in order to ensure that resettlement activities are carried out with integrity, and successfully implemented. The management and accountability framework for resettlement activities must be detailed in the Resettlement SOPs.

At the field level, while overall management and accountability for resettlement activities lie with the UNHCR Representative and the Senior Staff in charge of Protection, *all staff* with specified resettlement functions shares responsibility to carry out these activities to the highest standards possible.



### 4.2.2 Designation of officer accountable for resettlement activities

The UNHCR Representative/Head of Office and Senior Staff in charge of Protection must designate an officer accountable for resettlement activities within the Field Office (hereafter the Accountable Officer). This designation is an important first step in ensuring the effective management of the Field Office's resettlement activities. In the absence of a Resettlement Officer, a member of UNHCR's protection staff should be designated.

The Accountable Officer must exercise supervision over the integrity of all resettlement activities, including resettlement identification, case preparation and submission. Given the critical role throughout the resettlement process, a temporary replacement in the case of the Accountable Officer's absence must also be designated.

In field locations where UNHCR is represented by non-UNHCR staff, UNHCR Headquarters shall assume the responsibility of developing appropriate mechanisms and procedures for resettlement activities.

The accountability designation of this officer should be in writing to ensure transparency.<sup>7</sup> The name, title, and contact details of the officer accountable for resettlement are detailed on the Resettlement SOPs and should be shared with the relevant Bureau, the Resettlement Service of UNHCR Headquarters and Regional Resettlement Officers (where applicable) in order to facilitate effective communication on matters relating to resettlement.

<sup>7</sup> A sample accountability designation is appended to the Baseline SOPs. UNHCR, *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*, revised version 2011, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b6997d2.html>

## Accountability Framework Responsibilities Related to Resettlement

### The Representative/Head of Office:

- ensures that resettlement activities meet the standards set forth in the Resettlement Handbook and relevant IOM/FOMs;
- integrates resettlement into the office's daily operation and ensures the effectiveness of resettlement procedures;
- ensures that the Accountable Officer is competent with respect to resettlement; and
- ensures that an accountability designation is signed by the Accountable Officer and his/her supervisor. (See the Annex of the Baseline SOPs.)

### The Accountable Officer:

- is responsible for all resettlement activities;
- develops appropriate mechanisms and procedures for resettlement activities;
- implements resettlement policies, strategies and SOPs in coordination with the relevant Regional Office and/or Regional Resettlement Hub, or Resettlement Service, DIP, and the responsible Bureau; and
- promotes and implements mechanisms for fraud prevention/mitigation, including scheduling and conducting routine checks of the resettlement-related work of the office and designating a resettlement fraud focal point in the office.

## 4.2.3 Staff responsibilities

The accountabilities, responsibilities and requisite authorities of all resettlement staff must be clearly defined within the overall accountability framework. Each staff with resettlement responsibilities should be provided with written Terms of Reference describing their functional responsibilities and the reporting and supervision structure. Individual staff work plans should also specify how staff members exercise oversight over internal control requirements.



Although the formal status of persons working with UNHCR in resettlement may differ, for the purposes of this Handbook the term “staff” includes regular staff members, persons on temporary contracts, consultants, secondees, employees and other affiliate workforce members, and staff of implementing partners specifically assigned to work with UNHCR on resettlement activities.

## 4.2.4 Confidentiality

In carrying out its mandate to provide international protection to refugees and other persons of concern and to seek permanent solutions to their problems, UNHCR collects and keeps diverse information on individual cases, including sensitive information regarding refugee claims, family members and medical and



psychosocial assessments. It is essential that UNHCR protects the confidentiality of this information at all times.

The need to respect confidentiality of information is rooted in the right to privacy and protection from unlawful interference in one's private life, as set out in international human rights law. In principle, when a person provides personal information, they only give authorization to use that information for a particular purpose. All persons have a right to know what personal information is being collected, on what basis and for what purpose, and what is being done with this information. They should have access to it, and be able to correct any inaccurate information.

UNHCR's *Confidentiality Guidelines*<sup>8</sup> set out the terms under which UNHCR may share individual case information either with the individual concerned, or with other requesting parties. The access to such information is based on UNHCR's mandate to provide international protection and find durable solutions for refugees. UNHCR staff must ensure that any such information is used for these purposes only, and must obtain specific consent from the refugee before sharing any such information with others.

UNHCR staff must also take strict measures to protect confidentiality. This means appropriate care must be taken when passing on such information, both internally within UNHCR and when sharing such information externally with third parties, including resettlement partners. All UNHCR staff – including interpreters, secondees and deployees, staff of UNHCR implementing partners, and other external experts working for UNHCR – are bound by the confidentiality guidelines, regardless of their formal status.

Each staff member is responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of refugees' personal information, and for adhering to the *Confidentiality Guidelines*.



Only authorized persons should have access to information such as individual case files or specific fields in *proGres*. Staff, including interpreters, who have no reason to access such information for work purposes should be prevented from gaining such access. Refugees must produce identification in order to request their own case information. Such measures are also an important safeguard against fraud and abuse.

## Sharing information with resettlement countries and NGOs

Refugees being processed for resettlement must consent to having the details of their case shared with prospective countries of resettlement and if relevant also with NGOs. All adults included in the case must therefore sign the declaration included in UNHCR's Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) which authorizes the release of information and copies of documents to government officials, and to settlement service agencies as appropriate. An unaccompanied child submitted as the principal applicant should also sign the declaration if

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, *Confidentiality Guidelines*, 1 August 2001, IOM/071/2001 - FOM/068/2001, (Internal)  
<http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3be17dfd4.html>

the Best Interests Determination suggests that they have the capacity to give consent. The information and the documentation included in the RRFs needs to be comprehensive and provide a satisfactory level of detail with regard to the refugee's background, family composition, refugee claim, any elements bearing on exclusion, and specific needs.

As a general rule, no further documentation other than the RRF and any attached documents (including Best Interest Determination Reports, custody documents, Medical Assessment Forms, etc.), needs to be shared with countries of resettlement. For instance, UNHCR's internal eligibility files should not be copied to an external party. However, upon a reasoned request by a resettlement country, UNHCR may share relevant information extracted from the eligibility files with the author of the request in the form of an *ad hoc* communication or briefing.<sup>9</sup>

### Sharing information with refugees

In principle, refugees are entitled to access information which they have provided, but have limited access to UNHCR-generated information or documentation from other sources. In such cases, UNHCR needs to weigh its own interests (such as staff safety considerations or protection of UNHCR's sources of information) against the refugee's legitimate interest, for instance, to know the reasons for any decision that affects her or him. A possible solution could be to share only abstract case summaries without mentioning the names of UNHCR staff members. In any case, UNHCR should not share interview records or credibility assessments as such. However, the key points from the refugees' own statements during interviews should always be read back to them before the conclusion of the interview.

## 4.3 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs)

Verifiable, standardized procedures ensure a level of global harmonization, transparency, and predictability in resettlement delivery, and are also a cornerstone of fraud prevention.

### 4.3.1 Baseline SOPs on Resettlement

The global *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*<sup>10</sup> were developed by the Resettlement Service to provide UNHCR field offices detailed guidance to develop and maintain their Field Office Resettlement SOPs through:

- establishing the baseline standard – minimum standards for all UNHCR operations in assessing and submitting individuals for resettlement; and
- detailing where offices must elaborate their specific procedures within the baseline SOPs.

<sup>9</sup> See para. 43-45, UNHCR, *Confidentiality Guidelines*, 1 August 2001, IOM/071/2001 - FOM/068/2001, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3be17dfd4.html>

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*, revised version 2011, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b6997d2.html>

**The Baseline SOPs outline responsibilities and minimum standards for required actions in each of the following areas:**

**1. Resettlement management and risk mitigation**

- integrity of the resettlement process
- dealing with resettlement needs and expectations
- administration
- handling enquiries

**2. Resettlement processing**

- case identification
- receiving referrals and preliminary assessment of resettlement needs
- resettlement interviews and assessment of resettlement needs
- group resettlement
- specific requirements for vulnerable refugees
- finalizing the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF)
- submission decision
- selection missions by resettlement countries
- follow-up after submission
- withdrawal/suspension of submissions
- resettlement country decision
- departure arrangements and monitoring

Also included is an appendix of sample documents and forms used in the resettlement process that can be adapted to suit field requirements.

The Baseline SOPs are continually updated and revised to reflect evolving resettlement policy. Field staff should consult the updated version on the Intranet when reviewing their Resettlement SOPs.

Given the diversity of field contexts, specific resettlement procedures will differ from field office to field office. Therefore, field offices drafting their Resettlement SOPs must review their capacities and resettlement needs, and determine a resettlement process appropriate to their context and in adherence with the baseline standard and the further guidance provided by this Handbook.

### **4.3.2 Drafting and maintaining field Resettlement SOPs**

Resettlement SOPs provide a narrative description of how the Field Office implements the baseline standards in **resettlement management and risk mitigation** and the stages of **resettlement processing**, as well as office-specific details for each stage of resettlement processing.

The SOPs should be detailed enough to provide staff with clear guidance on the specific responsibilities and steps that they should respect in all actions, as well as accountabilities, authorization and oversight required for each stage of the resettlement process.

As noted earlier, the Baseline SOPs only represent minimum standards, and need to be supplemented by office-specific procedures in a number of areas. The SOPs must specify all procedures and rules that deviate from the baseline standards, or have been added to them. It is recognized that the detail of an office's procedures will be a reflection of the scale of its ongoing resettlement activities.

Where possible, offices are encouraged to apply higher standards than the baseline standard to further enhance the effectiveness of their use of resettlement. For large or complex operations where the design of more elaborate or simplified procedures might be necessary, offices should seek to apply a higher standard than the baseline minimum.



In the process of drafting and maintaining resettlement SOPs, it is important that field offices pay particular attention to UNHCR's age, gender and diversity sensitive approach, and ensure that special provisions are included in the resettlement procedures to reflect the specific needs of refugees.

The drafting and maintenance of detailed SOPs underpin the efforts of UNHCR managers to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and credibility of their resettlement activities. Their introduction represents an important opportunity to review existing office procedures, and to clarify where shortcomings that should be addressed exist. SOPs should thus not be seen as a one-time effort prepared to fulfill a reporting requirement, but rather as an active working tool to be adapted to reflect office-specific procedures applied on a daily basis.

At the same time, reporting back to Headquarters on the Resettlement SOPs is an important means for exchanging good practices, improving the Baseline SOPs, as well as ensuring global oversight. In line with UNHCR guidelines, each operation's resettlement SOPs should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The Baseline Standards Checklist, which is an annex to the Baseline SOPs, helps to identify shortcomings, and procedures and rules that deviate from the standard.

Updated SOPs must be authorized by the UNHCR Representative and the Senior Staff in charge of Protection, and a current copy should be sent to the Resettlement Service in UNHCR Headquarters, the relevant Bureau and, where applicable, the Regional Resettlement Officer.



All offices must ensure that their respective SOPs are updated annually in concurrence with the annual planning process and shared with the Resettlement Service at email [HQRSGRND@unhcr.org](mailto:HQRSGRND@unhcr.org) as part of the annual planning process.

#### 4.4 COMBATING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION IN THE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

Ensuring the integrity of the resettlement process is critical to sustaining the global resettlement programme. Resettlement activities are particularly vulnerable to fraud because of the benefits they offer. Fraud may involve UNHCR directly or any of the resettlement partners, the host country, refugees, or the

local community. Corruption and fraud in the resettlement process hurts all those involved, and it is in the common interest of everyone involved to cooperate at all levels to detect, respond to, and prevent fraud.

Fraud should be understood in a broad or holistic manner rather than simply with a narrow focus on resettlement alone. Fraud can occur almost anywhere within the continuum of refugee processes or activities, including during registration, refugee status determination, and during assessments for durable solutions including resettlement.

Assessment of a case for resettlement often occurs at the end of a long series of contacts with a refugee, and any fraud that has entered the system at an earlier point and remained undetected may ultimately influence the resettlement assessment and decision.

All necessary steps must be taken in all field offices to combat fraud and corruption and to investigate all allegations of their occurrence. Identifying and helping to prevent fraud is not only the responsibility of management, but of all staff. Field offices must not wait until allegations emerge, but should take all measures to maintain the integrity of the resettlement processes so as to reduce the risk of fraud or corruption, and detect and combat fraudulent practices.

Incorporating safeguards into the resettlement process minimizes fraud possibilities, protects refugees from further victimization, protects innocent staff from false allegations, and contributes to the overall credibility and effectiveness of UNHCR's resettlement activities. UNHCR applies a "zero-tolerance" policy towards fraud and corruption and will pursue all allegations and apply appropriate sanctions where the allegations are substantiated.

#### 4.4.1 Types of fraud and corruption in the resettlement process

Broadly speaking, fraud is the misrepresentation of fact for personal gain. Corruption is the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting anything of value to improperly influence another party.

**Resettlement fraud** is fraud committed in the context of resettlement processing, and may include ongoing fraud that was initially committed at an earlier stage of refugee processing. This can be defined for operational purposes as *"the intentional misrepresentation or concealment of facts or evidence material to the resettlement process with the intent of obtaining a resettlement or other benefit for the refugee concerned or for another individual who otherwise would not be entitled to be resettled or to obtain such a benefit"*.<sup>11</sup>

It is useful for UNHCR to distinguish between internal resettlement fraud and external resettlement fraud, though a combination of the two may arise. The distinction relates to the status of the perpetrator of fraud.

<sup>11</sup> See page 3 of: UNHCR, *Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees*, March 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47d7d732.html>

## Internal resettlement fraud

Internal resettlement fraud refers to fraud perpetrated by staff or persons having a contractual relationship with UNHCR. Examples of internal resettlement fraud include when UNHCR staff:

- draft false refugee claims or false needs assessments for resettlement;
- add, alter, substitute, or delete or remove information/documents on file; or add or remove photographs on file;
- deliberately enter incorrect information or alter information or photos in *proGres*;
- facilitate preferential processing or access to the procedure;
- charge a fee or demand a favour to enter a UNHCR office, be put on an interview list or receive information;
- deliberately lose, destroy, or fail to process a case file;
- report a false or embellished claim based on known “successful” claims rather than reporting/interpreting what the refugee says;
- coach refugees and others of concern prior to or during the interview; or
- provide false medical attestations.

Although resettlement processing is always free of charge, such fraudulent actions are frequently undertaken for a fee, favour or gift, and thus constitute corruption.<sup>12</sup>

Giving undeserved preferential treatment even without the expectation of something in return is also fraud. For example, this can occur when there is a conflict of interest due to a personal relationship with the beneficiary.

## External resettlement fraud

External resettlement fraud relates to fraud perpetrated by persons other than those having a contractual relationship with UNHCR (and thus outside of the competence of the Inspector General).

External fraud may be perpetrated by refugees, asylum-seekers, criminals, host government officials, resettlement government officials, implementing partners, NGOs, IOM staff or others, and may take a variety of forms.

**Identity fraud** occurs when an identity is either invented, or the identity of another real person is assumed by an impostor. Supporting documents may be missing, or fraudulent documents provided. This may occur at any stage during the process, e.g. a refugee or non-refugee “purchases” an interview slot or a departure slot and takes the place of a refugee who has been identified as in need of resettlement. Identity fraud may also take the form of a substituted

<sup>12</sup> Personal relationships with refugees and other beneficiaries are problematic as they involve a relationship of unequal power and are thus easily subject to exploitation. The staff member will always be perceived as having power over the refugee, and the refugee may thus feel obliged to provide favours, including those of a sexual nature, in order to obtain certain benefits, or to avoid negative repercussions. See also the *UNHCR Code of Conduct & Explanatory Notes*, June 2004, <http://www.unhcr.org/422dbc89a.html>

medical assessment that is intended to hide certain conditions that are believed to delay resettlement. A more complex situation occurs when a refugee assumes multiple identities, and then sells the extra identities and places that s/he does not need. Identity fraud is always of concern, but is particularly so when it allows war criminals or other excludable and undeserving persons to benefit from resettlement.

**Family composition fraud** is one of the areas where misrepresentation or fraud is most likely to be committed. The definition of a family is culturally specific, and care must be taken to accurately record real relationships, as misrepresentation may not have a fraudulent intent.

However, family composition fraud may involve marriages of convenience; fictitious relationships, such as when distant relatives are claimed as sons and daughters; adding fictitious family members; substituting children, which may occur for money or under duress; or “losing” or hiding a family member to get an improved chance at resettlement (such as when a woman hopes to qualify for the Women and Girls at Risk category by claiming that her husband is dead or has disappeared). Family composition fraud may occur early in the process, in order to obtain increased rations of assistance; or it may occur at any later stage, to obtain recognition of refugee status or resettlement, or to take advantage of family reunification programmes outside of resettlement.

**Document fraud** occurs when either wholly fabricated documents or legitimate documents that have been altered are presented as genuine documents. At times the documents themselves may be legitimate but issued on a fraudulent basis. The purpose may be to falsify identity or family composition.<sup>13</sup>

**Material misrepresentation fraud** occurs when refugees deliberately exaggerate, invent or otherwise misrepresent the nature or details of their refugee claim or resettlement needs. Material misrepresentation may occur by:

- **omission** when refugees deliberately do not divulge information material to their refugee status or resettlement assessment; and
- **commission** when refugees deliberately exaggerate or invent the nature or details of their situation.

**Bribery** of UNHCR staff or others involved in the resettlement process with money, favours or gifts is also external fraud.

## Mixed or complex resettlement fraud

Mixed or complex resettlement fraud occurs when internal and external elements collude to commit fraud. It may also involve an entire criminal enterprise, which has the capacity to endanger the general safety of UNHCR staff.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> It is recognized that circumstances may compel a refugee or asylum-seeker to have recourse to fraudulent documentation when leaving a country in which his physical safety or freedom are endangered. Where no such compelling circumstances exist, the use of fraudulent documentation is unjustified. See para (j) *ExCom Conclusion No. 58 (XL) – 1989 UNHCR, Thematic Compilation of Executive Committee Conclusions*, August 2008, Third edition, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48b6c62f2.html>

<sup>14</sup> See for example: UN General Assembly, *Investigation into allegations of refugee smuggling at the Nairobi Branch Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*:

## Resettlement exploitation schemes

There may also be exploitation schemes where persons or groups of persons, referred to as “brokers” or “facilitators”, may falsely claim to have links to UNHCR and the ability to ensure that refugees or others obtain resettlement. Such scams may involve coaching refugees on false claims or promising false documents, interview spots, or a place in the group of next departures.

Such services are generally offered for considerable fees. To help convince potential victims, such persons may show photos of themselves with UNHCR staff; wear fraudulent ID tags and cards; drive vehicles with false UN plates; use false UNHCR signs and logos; or even set up false UNHCR offices or internet websites. They may also falsely claim to be NGOs working with UNHCR on resettlement referrals.

### 4.4.2 Fraud vulnerability

When seeking to prevent fraud, it helps to have an understanding of the situations in which fraud is most likely to occur. Three of the elements that contribute to fraud are:

- **Opportunity:** weak systems and procedures or limited management oversight allow people to obtain major benefits with little risk;
- **Motivation or situational pressures:** staff may face particular financial, personal or family pressures which may motivate them to make inappropriate choices; refugees may be motivated by the expectation of considerable benefits from being recognized as a refugee or from resettlement; and other external actors may expect considerable financial gain from fraud. People under pressure may take desperate means.
- **Rationalization:** for example, the belief that the system is unfair, or that the fraudulent action is not unethical or illegal; staff may also rationalize their actions through their discontent with their work, their supervisor, or with UNHCR.

### Types of behaviour which may be linked to fraud

All staff should be aware that they may be targeted by potential perpetrators of fraud or exploitative activities, including non-refugees, when they encounter:

- excessive flattery;
- name-dropping;
- subtle bribery such as offers to pay for meals or gifts;
- confusing background stories; evasiveness and accusing others of paranoia or mistrust;
- haste and urgent requests that allow no time to think;

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*note /by the Secretary-General, 21 December 2001, A/56/733, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3d58c61fo.html>*



- attempts to assert control;
- attempts to isolate one from other staff in the office;
- requests for physical access to the office for unneeded personal visits, preferential access to information, or favors; and
- requests for photographs together, particularly near spots identified with the office.

### 4.4.3 Safeguards and fraud prevention

The different elements outlined in this chapter to ensure a well-managed resettlement programme form the foundation of a strong anti-fraud plan.

Focal points for fraud, which have been established in the Resettlement Service at Headquarters as well as at the Regional Resettlement Hubs, should be kept apprised of any incidents of fraud. In addition, a focal point and/or an anti-fraud committee should be appointed by the Representative in each office. It is, however, the responsibility of *all* staff members to address fraud, uphold the integrity of UNHCR's activities, and report any suspected incidents of fraud.

The most effective measures to prevent fraud are to follow standardized procedures carefully, and to ensure transparency, proper authorization and accountability.



Efforts to reduce fraud work best when they focus on prevention. All actors in the resettlement process, including refugees, resettlement countries, countries of asylum, IOM, NGOs and UNHCR, must do everything in their powers to ensure that the resettlement process is transparent, objective, unbiased, and representative of the standards presented in Baselines SOPs and in this Handbook.

Particular attention should be paid to the safeguards relating to the treatment of resettlement referrals and enquiries, verification of registration details in a non-resettlement context, identity checks at key stages of the process, and the security of resettlement documents and files.

Important anti-fraud measures include:

- properly implementing the Baseline SOPs;
- ensuring transparent, objective resettlement procedures with appropriate accountability and authorization;
- efficient use of *proGres* as an identification and verification tool;
- clearly defining roles and responsibilities for all staff;
- implementing an active communications outreach programme, in addition to a clear and accessible complaints system;
- counselling refugees on the implications of committing or being complicit in fraud before signing the RRF;
- ensuring that the refugee community understands the potential implications of fraud on the overall availability of resettlement activities in the country;

- ensuring that there are file management and tracking systems that allow each step and action to be reconstructed, including ensuring that the action sheet is signed to indicate who took which action at what time, while still ensuring respect of confidentiality of information;
- following procedures specified in the Office's SOPs for file checks and audits;
- having proper leadership and oversight by senior management, including through spot checks; and
- investigating all instances of suspected fraud, and taking appropriate action.

An annual review of the practices and procedures and compliance with the different steps should be conducted in addition to periodic random checks. To conduct this review, the Accountable Officer is encouraged to consult *Resettlement Fraud: a Tool to Help Offices Assess their Exposure and Vulnerability*, which is an annex to the Baseline SOPs.

*proGres* also has significant anti-fraud capabilities, with its capacity for digital photographs and biometric information (e.g. fingerprints), as well as the ability to track who made which changes. Access to *proGres* and any other computer-based systems should be based on the use of passwords and, as an additional safeguard, the *proGres* Data Administrator should be instructed to submit a weekly report of files to the Accountable Officer if photos and/or other key data fields have been changed or updated. Key data fields include gender, date of birth, ethnicity and nationality. The Accountable Officer may then prioritize spot-checking of these files for tampering or fraud. The lack of active implementation of any of these factors may indicate an increased risk of fraud.

## Complaint mechanism

A confidential complaint mechanism must be established and widely publicized. Persons of concern can report problems in accessing UNHCR and protection, whether these complaints concern UNHCR staff, implementing partners or other actors.

Means to submit complaints need to be easily accessible to persons of concern. Complaint boxes should be placed in accessible locations, and paper, writing utensils and a writing platform should be made available.

The complaint boxes must be locked, and access to the keys should be limited. At least two officers designated by the Representative/Head of Office will have joint responsibility for going through the information that is posted in the complaint box. The boxes must be opened on a regularly-scheduled basis.

Telephone hotlines and confidential email addresses could also be established for queries and complaints.

The Resettlement SOPs and the SOPs of other units need to specify how information in the boxes is handled, as well as procedures for dealing with telephone and email queries and complaints. For example, the presence of an international staff member, often the Accountable Officer, may be required while complaints are registered and recorded. The register, with information on the handling of the complaint, is to be kept in a secure location with restricted access.

Refugees must also be notified how to communicate confidentially with the UNHCR Inspector General's Office (IGO). *Further details are provided in Chapter 4.4.7.*

#### 4.4.4 Further measures to prevent internal fraud

Most disturbing, and damaging to both refugees and global resettlement efforts, are allegations of UNHCR staff soliciting funds or sexual favours from refugees in exchange for preferential or fraudulent access to the UNHCR resettlement process.

Key elements of UNHCR's anti-fraud strategy are training and awareness-raising. Staff need to know which actions are unethical and illegal, and clearly understand the consequences of any fraudulent actions.<sup>15</sup> There must be oversight of all staff, and frequent random performance checks.

Good managers also focus on knowing their staff and providing them with guidance and support, including in difficult personal situations, to help counteract situational pressures which may lead staff to fraudulent activities.

#### Interpreters

Interpreters may be subject to particular pressures by the refugee community, since they often are of the same or similar origins, may themselves be refugees (although the hiring of refugee interpreters should normally be avoided) and are often paid low wages. Offices are encouraged to consult the UNHCR *Guidelines for the recruitment, training, supervision and conditions of service for interpreters*.<sup>16</sup>

*More guidance on working with interpreters is provided in Chapter 7.3.2.*

In general, to avoid fraud among interpreters, the following general measures should be adopted:

- requiring interpreters to sign the *UNHCR Code of Conduct*<sup>17</sup> and the *UNHCR Interpreter Undertaking of Confidentiality and Impartiality*<sup>18</sup> when they take up their duties;
- assigning interpreters to different officers when scheduling interviews (this also helps with quality assurance for each interpreter);
- preventing repeated involvement by one interpreter in the same applicant's case;

<sup>15</sup> See UNHCR, *Disciplinary Proceedings and Measures*, 30 May 2002; IOM/38/2002-FOM/36/2002 available from the UNHCR Intranet.

<sup>16</sup> See UNHCR, *Interpreting in a refugee context: Guidelines for the recruitment, training, supervision and conditions of service for interpreters*, 19 January 2009, IOM/005/2009-FOM/005/2009, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/497f147c2.html>

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Code of Conduct & Explanatory Notes*, June 2004, <http://www.unhcr.org/422dbc89a.html>

<sup>18</sup> See Annex 2, UNHCR, *Interpreting in a refugee context: Guidelines for the recruitment, training, supervision and conditions of service for interpreters in a refugee context*, 19 January 2009, IOM - FOM/005/2009, (Internal) <http://swigea57.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/497f147c2.html>

- establishing positive professional working relationships with all interpreters, including offering them training;
- discouraging staff from fraternizing with interpreters (inside and outside the office);
- discouraging interpreters from fraternizing with refugees (recognizing that they may be refugees themselves);
- advising interpreters that they should report all inappropriate approaches made to them;
- advising interpreters that they must report the existence of any potential conflict of interest with interviewees (e.g. relatives) prior to interviews;
- prohibiting interpreters' access to files and the file room as well as to *proGres*;
- restricting interpreters' access to and use of mobile telephones while on duty;
- recognizing the expertise of translators and interpreters, introducing effective and competitive recruitment policies and practices and “professionalizing” the service by ensuring appropriate salaries and benefits are provided;
- making appropriate checks prior to engagement, including police, reference and educational/professional qualification checks; and
- providing interpreters with orientation, training with respect to conduct and responsibilities, and monitoring.

Interpreters should be subject to the same monitoring and performance checks as other staff. Interviewers should be permitted to stop any interviews if they are concerned about suspicious behavior on the part of interpreters.

### Security personnel

Guards may similarly be subject to particular situational pressures. They are essential to accessing UNHCR premises but are generally paid relatively low salaries.

Guards have an obligation to uphold high standards of integrity and professionalism in the discharge of their duties, which includes a responsibility to protect the work of UNHCR by facilitating the safe and dignified access of refugees to the premises when they seek assistance from the office.

Possible best practices for safeguarding against corruption and fraud include requiring guards:

- not to fraternize with interpreters or refugees inside or outside the office;
- to report all advances made to them inside or outside the office;
- to undergo a police check prior to engagement.

As with staff, guards should be subject to regular monitoring, checks and observation, and security cameras may also be used. Complaints against guards can also be made through the Office's confidential complaints mechanism, and this should be included in public messaging about the complaints process.

Any allegation of a UNHCR Staff member's involvement in corruption and fraud should be addressed as a matter of urgency and immediately reported to the Inspector General's Office (IGO) according to the steps outlined in [Chapter 4.4.7](#) of this Handbook.



#### 4.4.5 Measures to prevent external fraud

Regular communications about resettlement-related activities, efforts to highlight the importance of fraud awareness, training external partners on resettlement processes and continuous and appropriate counselling of refugees are an important part of any anti-fraud plan.

As is covered further in [Chapter 5.6](#) and [Chapter 8](#), agreements with external resettlement partners such as NGOs should include specific measures to safeguard against fraud, as well as clear specifications of all actors' roles. It is also important for the local population to know that resettlement is only available to persons of concern to UNHCR.

Expectations management, a strong communications strategy and regular briefings and updates with all resettlement partners are key elements for preventing fraud.



#### Involving refugees in fraud avoidance

Implementing a communications strategy to pass key messages about resettlement to refugees is proven to help prevent fraud and manage expectations. It is important for the refugee community to understand the potential implications of fraud on the individual cases, as well as the overall availability of resettlement activities in the country. Resettlement programmes may be suspended indefinitely while allegations of fraud are investigated.

As outlined in [Chapter 4.5.2](#), key messages to refugees include information on fraud, what fraud entails (e.g. falsifying family composition), the duty to abstain from fraud, and the fact that all UNHCR services are free of charge. Refugees should also be warned against any fraudulent offers of assistance and notified of how to report fraud. Such messages should be accessible, clearly understandable, posted or transmitted in the language(s) understood by most refugees in the area, and disseminated through the various tools available for mass information campaigns.

UNHCR's *Policy and Procedural Guidelines on Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees* seek to harmonize procedures for handling instances of suspected refugee fraud, including in conducting investigations and imposing sanctions.<sup>19</sup> Consistently addressing resettlement fraud and imposing proportionate and consistent sanctions will bring about a deterrent and preventative effect to fraud, and will help ensure that persons who are not eligible for resettlement will not benefit from this durable solution.

<sup>19</sup> See: UNHCR, *Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees*, March 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47d7d7372.html>

It is also important to recognize that refugees can also be part of the solution as key partners in anti-fraud efforts and improving our understanding of the fraud triggers. Indeed, refugees have been among the best witnesses or informants in fraud investigations.<sup>20</sup>

### Additional measures pursued with resettlement partners

UNHCR is also pursuing additional measures with resettlement partners including:

- standardized reporting forms for NGOs based in resettlement States, including reporting on post-resettlement interviews with refugees;
- joint process mapping and analysis of fraud exposure, including common definitions and lists of fraud indicators;
- joint investigations;
- joint training and information campaigns;
- pre- and post-selection mission reports by resettlement States;
- the establishment of the WGR's Expert Group on Resettlement Fraud whose objectives include promoting and ensuring better communication, collaboration and partnership in anti-fraud efforts between members at field, regional and capital levels, and developing and disseminating tools, techniques and best practices on resettlement anti-fraud.



To encourage reporting, complaint boxes should be located in easily accessible locations such as UNHCR or partner offices, youth clubs, etc. The confidential contact details for the IGO should also be publicized widely to encourage direct reporting.

#### 4.4.6 Confidentiality in reporting fraud

An important part of anti-fraud vigilance is encouraging its reporting. While procedures may differ for internal and external fraud, appropriate measures should be taken to protect individuals reporting fraud in both cases. The names of individuals who report substantiated allegations of fraud must always be kept confidential, and the details of allegations must remain confidential until a full investigation has been completed.

Any staff member, regardless of grade or function, who has knowledge of allegations of resettlement fraud, corruption or wrongdoing, should document all allegations, including names, dates, and particular details related to the allegations. All staff have a duty to take appropriate action to report instances of misconduct as well as any information that relates to misconduct they have observed.

The fraud focal point must produce regular reports of incidents of fraud and measures taken by the office, for submission to the Regional Hub/Office or UNHCR headquarters.

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, *Remarks at the 2nd Meeting of the Expert Group on Resettlement Fraud* (10-11 September 2008, Amman, Jordan), 11 September 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/492a9c7a2.html>

## 4.4.7 Responding to indicators and allegations of internal fraud

Key indicators for which all staff should be alert include:

- files in which one staff member appears to be responsible for more than one stage of processing and decision making without respecting the regular requirements for authorization;
- staff members enquiring about or showing an interest in files to which they have no work connection;
- files that may be delayed for excessive periods (possibly suggesting the expectation of a bribe), as well as files that move too rapidly (suggesting preferential treatment);
- files in which key information is missing or signatures are missing or illegible;
- excessive or unusual documentation on file; and
- any other procedural abnormalities.

While these indicators alone do not confirm that fraud has been committed, they indicate that further follow-up may be warranted. Such incidents should be brought to the attention of the Accountable Officer.

The complaints mechanism may also result in allegations of fraud or misconduct by UNHCR staff. Complaints that are received directly or through the complaints mechanism are subject to a special procedure.<sup>21</sup>

### Role of the Inspector General's Office (IGO)

When allegations that UNHCR staff may be involved in fraud arise, they must be documented and reported appropriately. Details of the alleged fraud, including names and dates, are required. All staff members have an obligation to respond to allegations of fraud that come to their attention, regardless of their grade and function.

Possible misconduct may be reported either to their Director, Representative, Chief of Mission, or Accountable Officer, who should promptly inform the Inspector General's Office (IGO) at Headquarters, as well as Resettlement Service, with:

- an initial assessment as to the credibility of the source, including the reasons or evidence for that assessment;
- the extent to which the information is specific and can be dated;
- the existence of any supporting evidence; and
- whether and the extent to which the alleged fraud has resulted in damage – material, financial, or to the credibility and image of the office.

<sup>21</sup> See: UNHCR, *The Role, Functions and Modus Operandi of the Inspector General's Office*, 3 November 2005; IOM/054/2005 - FOM/054/2005, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/43706e744.html>

Such allegations may be reported directly and confidentially to the IGO at Headquarters.

**Confidential fax:** +41-22-739-7380  
**Confidential email:** [inspector@unhcr.org](mailto:inspector@unhcr.org)  
**Telephone hotline:** +41-22-739-8844

The IGO will then assess any information received to judge credibility and whether the complaint falls within the competence of the IGO. If the IGO decides to conduct an investigation into the matter, the staff member providing the information or the manager who reported it will be informed within 30 days. The manager may be asked to assist in the investigations.

Contact with the IGO can also be made to obtain preliminary advice. The name of the source will be kept confidential and may only be disclosed if it is required for administrative, disciplinary or judicial proceedings, with the approval of the source, and the approval of the Inspector General. If the source fears any reprisals for having reported fraud, this should also be recorded, because reprisal is misconduct in and of itself and the Inspector General can recommend immediate protective measures to the High Commissioner. If a report is made anonymously, the IGO will investigate whether the allegation is corroborated by independently established facts.

In addition to specific investigations to follow up on claims of misconduct including fraud, the IGO also carries out inspections to check how effectively established policies and guidelines are being implemented in an office. These inspections may also include specific terms of reference to address particular issues. Such investigations are an additional tool to help identify risk factors for fraud and measures to combat it.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4.4.8 Responding to allegations of external fraud

The same complaints mechanism introduced above should also serve as an important source of fraud allegations by persons external to UNHCR, such as refugees, local populations or partners. Enhanced cooperation with resettlement partners, including resettlement States, IOM, NGOs and other partners will be useful in examining the characteristics of fraud. Possible fraud, how to prevent it and how to deal with it once it has arisen should be discussed regularly at resettlement meetings.

The IGO will not normally be involved in allegations that only concern persons external to UNHCR. Such allegations should, however, be reported to the Representative or Head of Office who may seek further advice from the IGO. The Regional Resettlement Hub/Regional Office and Resettlement Service should also be notified. In specific instances, UNHCR may contact the local law enforcement authorities to investigate incidents of external fraud.

<sup>22</sup> See UNHCR, *The Role, Functions and Modus Operandi of the Inspector General's Office*, 3 November 2005; IOM/054/2005 - FOM/054/2005, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/43706e74.html>



## Allegations against refugees

Where fraud concerns specific refugees, case processing should be suspended. Staff should also refer to and follow UNHCR's *Policy and Procedural Guidelines on Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees*.<sup>23</sup>

Some key principles underlying the guidelines are:

- UNHCR's international protection mandate must be upheld and respect for fundamental human rights of individuals found to have been involved in resettlement fraud as well as of other refugees, individuals and persons of concern respected. These standards should provide guidance on the limits of actions which can be taken or sanctions which can be imposed;
- cases must be decided on an individual basis and in a holistic manner taking into account the definition of resettlement fraud as provided above, and also considering the responsibility of the individual concerned and the nature of the involvement;
- corrective actions and sanctions and their consequences must be proportional to the fraud committed and should take into account the motive of the person concerned; and
- where practicable, corrective actions and sanctions should have minimal impact on close relatives or other refugees who have clearly not conspired, connived or abetted the fraud.

Allegations of resettlement fraud by refugees should immediately be referred to the Representative/Head of Office who will assess the evidence and will appoint one or two experienced international staff members to conduct a formal investigation if warranted. The Resettlement Service, Regional Hub/Office and relevant Bureau should be notified if a formal investigation is launched, and may also be called on for assistance and specialized experience.

The refugees concerned should be interviewed, both for investigative purposes and to give them a reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegations. The interview should be recorded in full, either in writing or by audio or video tape recording; the consent of the refugee will be required. A full investigative report, including recommendations on any sanctions or corrective actions will also be required. This report should be reviewed by the Representative or his or her delegate, and should be subject to an automatic review by the Regional Resettlement Hub/Office or UNHCR Headquarters staff.

Sanctions are applied in a discretionary manner according to the nature of the fraud and may vary considerably due to a range of circumstances, including individual protection needs, country conditions, individual motives and mitigating/aggravating factors. Falsification of personal information may result in a warning, or a time-limited suspension of resettlement processing, whereas more serious fraud including attempted bribery or concealment of information that would lead to Article 1F exclusion may result not only in the termination of a resettlement case, but also in criminal prosecution.

<sup>23</sup> See UNHCR, *Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees*, March 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47d7d7372.html>

Where possible, the local refugee population should be notified of the decision to apply sanctions due to refugee fraud, but this should be done in a manner designed to protect the identity of the refugees subject to action or sanctions. This may include publication on a bulletin board accessible to refugees and NGO/resettlement partners. The goal of such publicity is to deter future fraud by informing the community about the occurrence of fraud, and the sanctions and other actions taken by UNHCR to address the situation.

In situations where an alleged fraud is likely to prejudice a UNHCR resettlement submission to a resettlement State, that State must be appropriately informed.

Addressing each and every instance of resettlement fraud in a consistent manner is critical to sending out the message that fraud will not be tolerated and that engaging in fraud carries consequences.

### Allegations of fraud against NGOs

Where fraud is suspected of implementing partners or NGOs, the Bureau and the Legal Affairs Section (LAS) may provide further advice or guidance. In some cases, the incidence of fraud may lead to criminal prosecution. In such cases, LAS should always be consulted, together with the Resettlement Service and the Bureau.



#### Essential reading

- UNHCR, *Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees*, March 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47d7d7372.html>
- UNHCR, *Management of Protection Activities - Responsibilities of UNHCR Staff*, 15 March 2002, IOM/025/2002 - FOM/024/2002, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3d4524a52.html>
- UNHCR, *IOM/054/2005 - FOM/054/2005 The Role, Functions and Modus Operandi of the Inspector General's Office*, 3 November 2005, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/43706e744.html>
- UNHCR, *Disciplinary Proceedings and Measures*, 30 May 2002, IOM/38/2002 - FOM/36/2002, (Internal) UNHCR Intranet
- UNHCR, *Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement*, revised version 2011, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b6997d2.html>
- UNHCR *Code of Conduct & Explanatory Notes*, June 2004, <http://www.unhcr.org/422dbc89a.html>

## 4.5 MANAGING RESETTLEMENT EXPECTATIONS WITHIN THE REFUGEE POPULATION

Effective management of resettlement expectations is an essential foundation for ensuring that resettlement processes are not undermined by tensions, anxieties, unrest and security threats.

Implementing an effective communications outreach programme is a key part of managing expectations. With limited information about the nature and limitations of resettlement as a durable solution, refugees and resettlement partners may develop unrealistic expectations about resettlement. The protracted nature of some refugee situations, where local integration and voluntary repatriation are not foreseeable options, makes resettlement opportunities highly sought after, which can escalate the risk of fraud, corruption, violence among refugees and concerns for staff security.

Problems can be minimized if resettlement is properly conceived and implemented within protection and durable solutions strategies. Poorly designed resettlement programmes may create enormous and often unrealisable expectations within the refugee community. Combined with frustration and possible trauma from prior experiences, these expectations can be a source of anxiety and tension that may ultimately lead refugees to extreme measures, such as organized protests or violence.

#### 4.5.1 Dialogue on durable solutions

As part of managing overall expectations, it is important to establish and maintain a dialogue with refugee leaders and individual refugees about protection activities and durable solutions, not only resettlement. Efforts should be made to ensure that refugees understand the scope and limitations of all possible durable solutions. Offices should also be careful to collect information on the protection context and the identification of specific needs without raising expectations with regard to resettlement. *Managing expectations during the process of identifying refugee needs is discussed further in Chapter 5.8.1.*

In some cases, factions or political organizations among the refugee population or in the host country are directly or indirectly taking a position about the risk of remaining in the country of asylum or dangers related to returning home. Public Information staff can strengthen UNHCR's capacity to conduct reliable information campaigns in these contexts.

#### 4.5.2 The resettlement message

The most important aspect of any effort to manage resettlement expectations is to provide refugees, others working with refugees and, in some cases, the general public, with clear and consistent information on the limits and possibilities of resettlement. In the interest of ensuring that the resettlement message remains consistent, it is also important that a limited number of people are authorized to discuss resettlement with refugees.

As set out in the Baseline SOPs, this message should emphasize the following points.

- Resettlement is only one of the three possible durable solutions.
- Resettlement involves the transfer of a refugee from the country where they currently reside to another country that has agreed to admit them.

- While it is UNHCR's obligation to ensure the protection of refugees where necessary by promoting their resettlement, resettlement is not *automatic*.
- No refugee has the *right* to resettlement.
- Resettlement is conducted according to precise criteria established by resettlement countries and UNHCR.
- The refugee's links and wishes are taken into account, but the refugee cannot choose the resettlement country.
- The decision to accept a refugee for resettlement remains with the resettlement country, not UNHCR.
- After being resettled, resettling to another country or returning to the previous country of asylum are not likely to be options.
- All resettlement documents, information and services are *FREE of charge*.
- Committing fraud in the resettlement process is breaking the law and may result not only in the closure of a refugee's resettlement file, but also in criminal prosecution.
- Misrepresenting family composition, or providing false information, is a form of fraud.
- If fraud is discovered after resettlement it can have serious consequences resulting in a cancellation of residence permit and possible deportation.

### Disseminating the resettlement message

Expectations are most effectively managed through the dissemination of clear information on resettlement, coupled with counselling and transparency on individual cases. 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), unrealistic expectations and misunderstandings can be reduced.

The appropriate means of disseminating information will depend on the particular office context, but may include:

- public meetings on resettlement;
- regular meetings between the Accountable Officer and refugees to discuss protection issues and durable solutions, and help them understand the use and limitations of resettlement;
- focused consultations with refugee leaders, refugee women, refugee youth, the disabled, or other sub-groups as appropriate to ensure dissemination of information to all segments of the population;
- provision of standardized information on resettlement to any refugees who approach the office (see the Annex of the Baseline SOPs for a Sample Resettlement Brochure);
- consistent information on resettlement to be used during individual counselling;
- a public information campaign to disseminate information on resettlement through various means, including radio broadcasts, newspapers, posters, pamphlets, text messages, and emails as appropriate; and

- meetings with staff and meetings with NGOs to ensure that everyone in contact with refugees is familiar with the resettlement process, and understands the importance of not raising unrealistic expectations in regard to resettlement.

Disseminating accurate information to refugee communities already in resettlement countries is also important to reducing unrealistic resettlement expectations.



### 4.5.3 The importance of counselling

Counselling is of utmost importance from the beginning of UNHCR's contact with a refugee and should take the form of an open dialogue between the refugee and UNHCR, in close collaboration with government and NGO staff involved in the process.

Owing to the traumas connected with departure from the country of origin and/or problems in the country of asylum, refugees may harbor unrealistic expectations in terms of both the ease of obtaining a resettlement place and the opportunities awaiting them in the country of resettlement. It is important to understand the individual's knowledge and expectations, and address them directly. Officers should remain focused on realistic options and not make any commitments that may not be kept.

#### Listen actively

When refugees focus on resettlement, they may actually be expressing problems with assistance, lack of hope regarding returns, need for employment and income generation, desire for education, fears and insecurity stemming from the refugee situation or need for medical or mental health services.



If more than one actor is involved in counselling, the information to be provided should be clearly agreed upon prior to counselling the individual. As appropriate, counselling on the availability of other durable solutions, namely voluntary repatriation and local integration should precede any discussion with the refugee on resettlement.

If resettlement is being considered as the appropriate solution, utmost transparency regarding resettlement processing and time frames is called for. During the counselling process, it must be pointed out that resettlement takes place based on set criteria and follows defined procedures. Refugees must be clearly informed of the uncertainties and problems that may arise during the resettlement process, and that the ultimate decision to accept a refugee for resettlement remains with the resettlement country, not UNHCR.

Only an informed decision based on full knowledge of all relevant facts will do justice to the individual refugee's needs and circumstances. Realistic expectations on the part of refugees will avoid undue frustration, and in the worst case, aggression or violence on the part of those whose expectations are not met.

All family members (with the exception of small children) should receive appropriate counselling. It is not enough to counsel the head of the family. The perceptions, expectations and needs of refugee women and girls may differ substantially from those of their male family members, and their concerns and needs have to be addressed in a gender-sensitive and age-appropriate manner.



It is imperative to be as transparent as possible about UNHCR's aims, objectives and resettlement activities when dealing with refugees.

Particular effort should be made to avoid the perception on the part of the refugee that a choice exists in terms of prospective resettlement countries (the “travel agency” syndrome). Refugees must understand that there is a very limited choice of resettlement countries owing to several factors, including quota availability, admission criteria as well as the refugee's own background, including family, cultural, linguistic, education and work experience. It must also be noted that distant family links or friends already resettled in certain countries may not be taken into consideration by resettlement countries.

Moreover, integration in a resettlement country can be very challenging – for example due to cultural and language differences and possible separation from family and friends. Accommodation in countries of resettlement for those newly arrived may be modest and employment and higher education opportunities limited. Failure to communicate the foregoing may result in false expectations and unnecessary frustrations for persons designated for resettlement. Gender-sensitive and age-appropriate counselling is crucial to ensuring that information is effectively conveyed.

### Counselling refugees in the resettlement process

When counselling individual refugees in preparation for resettlement, it is important to explain clearly the step-by-step process involved in the preparation and submission of the applicant's case file, the anticipated processing times of resettlement countries, and UNHCR's involvement in follow-up. Any significant changes to the anticipated processing times or procedures should also be communicated promptly.

Information may be provided in various forms: by pamphlets, posters, radio, newspapers, letter, email or by a personal interview. The message that all UNHCR services are free should be added to public information whenever possible.

Refugees often believe that the process of resettlement will be more rapid than it usually is, and that obtaining a resettlement place is automatic, once the case has been submitted. It is important to explain:

- that the process takes time due to the processing procedures of resettlement countries, which may include interviews and medical tests;
- that they must notify UNHCR immediately if there are any changes in their family composition or their protection situation;

- that the decision rests with the resettlement country and not UNHCR, that acceptance is not automatic, and that they must tell the truth and be prepared to articulate their refugee claim;
- that while family links may be given priority by UNHCR for submission, they do not guarantee acceptance by the resettlement country;
- that they cannot have a choice and “shop around” for the country of their preference;
- how and when the outcome of the case will be communicated to them.

Care should be taken not to build up the refugees’ hopes and/or expectations and not to make promises that UNHCR cannot fulfill.



#### 4.5.4 Ensuring access to UNHCR premises

While communications to refugees can take various forms – such as mass information campaigns, meetings with refugee leaders, communities and refugee women, as well as individual letters and notifications – it is important always to have a receptive environment to allow enquiries by refugees at UNHCR premises.

UNHCR reception, registration and security staff should be trained on how to respond to persons of concern seeking access to UNHCR colleagues, and how to identify individuals with priority needs. *Further details on the identification of protection needs are provided in Chapter 5.*

All persons of concern, especially vulnerable persons, should be able to access UNHCR premises.

Information on how and when to access UNHCR should be widely publicized. This should include details on contacting UNHCR after hours in an emergency.

Refugees should be informed at all opportunities that access to UNHCR premises and all services are free of charge. An easily accessible complaints mechanism should also be established and widely publicized.



Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should govern the access of persons of concern, including how enquiries and complaints are handled and to whom they should be referred.

To the extent possible, persons of concern should make appointments to see relevant UNHCR staff, but there should be fixed times for persons of concern to arrive without a prior appointment. Provisions should also be made outside of these time periods for drop-in visits of an urgent nature, or those which concern persons with specific vulnerabilities.

The SOPs should include effective and age, gender and diversity sensitive mechanisms that ensure that women, whether alone or accompanied by their families, receive information on UNHCR and the resettlement process and have the opportunity for a separate and confidential interview. Children who are

separated from parents or primary caregivers should receive priority in reception and should be referred without delay to the appropriate staff member.

## 4.6 SECURITY MEASURES

Resettlement operations must ensure that proper security measures are implemented to protect the safety of staff and refugees and to guard against fraud, while maintaining access and transparency in the system.

UNHCR is an active member of the common UN security system, complying with established UN country Minimum Operational Safety Standards (MOSS) guidelines. UNHCR's security policy emphasizes the responsibility and accountability of managers, at Headquarters, at the level of Country Representatives and of Heads of Field Offices, for the security of their staff. However, the policy also underlines the responsibility of each staff member to be aware of the environment and existing guidelines, and to recognize their responsibilities and capacity to influence the security environment. All UNHCR field staff receive security training from the UN's Department of Safety and Security, and briefings on their Office's Emergency and Security Procedures.

UNHCR's series of internal safety guidelines: *Safety Guidelines for Sensitive Individual Refugee Cases in an Urban Context*, *Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, and *Guidelines for Handling Protests, Demonstrations and other Group Disturbances among Refugees* also provide general advice on managing refugee expectations and avoiding and dealing with conflict.<sup>24</sup>

Coordination is necessary between UNHCR Protection staff and other staff or individuals who are responsible for security to ensure that:

- UNHCR security policies and guidelines are fully implemented in the resettlement procedures;
- protection concerns are taken into account in the development and implementation of security procedures in each office.

The following security provisions must be incorporated into UNHCR procedures:

- measures for crowd control and the orderly entry of individuals onto UNHCR premises;
- security guidelines for conducting individual counselling and interviews, including directions on the layout and furnishings of interview rooms;
- procedures regarding the movement of asylum-seekers and refugees in the UNHCR Office, and the areas and circumstances in which escorted access should be required;

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR, *Safety Guidelines for Sensitive Individual Refugee Cases in an Urban Context*, 4 September 2002, <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3dca8ead4.html> UNHCR, *Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, 17 April 2003, <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3ea6c2104.html> and UNHCR, *Guidelines for Handling Protests, Demonstrations and other Group Disturbances among Refugees*, 15 September 2004, <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b2c8112.html> (All Internal)



- effective measures for all UNHCR staff to alert security staff of potential security incidents and to obtain prompt assistance, including the installation of emergency call buttons at reception and in spaces used for counselling and interviews;
- procedures for reporting security incidents to the appropriate staff members in the Office, as well as any other requirements for reporting within the region and to UNHCR Headquarters.

A separate issue is the security of refugees after they have been selected for resettlement. In some contexts, refugees may be vulnerable to acts of violence caused by jealousy, or coercion to provide support or sponsorship after they have been resettled. UNHCR staff should be vigilant to such risks, and take preventative action as appropriate.

#### 4.6.1 Triggers for potential security risks

Since UNHCR is instrumental in determining resettlement interventions by States, it is understandable that refugees direct their resettlement-related concerns and frustrations toward the Office. However, the source of such concerns is not necessarily “resettlement” per se, but rather how refugee situations and solutions are managed, the extent to which refugees are able to participate in the process of making decisions that affect their lives, and their access to information about resettlement and other possible solutions. Whether or not resettlement is viewed favourably by refugees, the challenge for UNHCR and the international community is to manage its use in a way that can be understood and supported by the refugees without giving rise to conflict.

The presence of tension-inducing factors – such as when needs for resettlement exceed opportunities – may make refugees more susceptible to anxiety, frustration and violence, especially when catalyzed by certain “triggering factors”. Such factors, which often underlie aggressive behaviour in different operational contexts, are not the only ones associated with resettlement, but include:

- **Perceptions of abuse of power, corruption or unethical behaviour exist.** Research by UNHCR’s Emergency and Security Service (ESS) suggests that these perceptions exist in a high number of cases in which refugees have resorted to violent or aggressive behavior. UNHCR’s experience illustrates that it is not always just a matter of perception. The desperation of many refugees and the limited availability of resettlement opportunities can provide an environment for exploitation and unethical behavior by refugees and those who interact with them. This fact emphasizes the managerial responsibility to ensure regular oversight and timely proactive intervention where necessary.
- **Policies are not clear or fully understood or perceptions of uneven or unfair policy applications exist.** Problems often result from a mixture of these (e.g. lack of participatory assessment mechanisms or similar methods of identifying refugees for referral).

- **Refugees are treated with insensitivity or lack of respect.** This is a particular concern in offices where a small number of protection staff must interface with hundreds of refugees without opportunities for breaks, risking the onset of fatigue, indifference and burnout.
- **A refugee's case is associated too closely with one staff member.** This can invite the perception that a decision was based on personal factors rather than the impartial application of universal policies.
- **Refugees have been given reason to believe that violent or coercive behavior will be effective in obtaining a desired result from the other party (often UNHCR).** This is perhaps most commonly the trend in protracted group disturbances experienced by UNHCR, and it underscores the importance of avoiding sending mixed messages, and maintaining a position that does not tolerate violence and unlawful behavior.
- **A refugee expects that resettlement is “guaranteed” or “due” to him/her.** These perceptions may arise, for example, from seeing many others with similar protection problems in the country of asylum leave for resettlement, from undergoing a lengthy interview process or simply from misinterpreting statements or signals from officials.
- **Policies change abruptly or faster than refugees can understand or absorb them.** UNHCR is particularly vulnerable in the case of resettlement because sudden and far-reaching policy changes can come from the countries of asylum and/or resettlement, where UNHCR may have little control.
- **There is a sense that time is running out.** UNHCR might experience this phenomenon where a cessation clause is implemented or due to take effect, but conditions in the country of origin remain doubtful in refugees' eyes.
- **People are tired of waiting.** The actual impact of this factor on violence is debated, and strictly speaking, it is not a trigger because it is a lack of activity rather than a specific event. Nevertheless, many of UNHCR's experiences with violence from refugees have occurred among populations in protracted refugee situations where voluntary repatriation and local integration in the country of asylum remain untenable after some years.

#### 4.6.2 Security recommendations when conducting interviews

Hostile acts against persons conducting interviews sometimes occur. Given the tension factors outlined above, undertaking resettlement responsibilities adds urgency to the maintenance of appropriate safety standards.

The input of the Field Security Advisor should be sought concerning precautions and practices to be followed in the office and in each interview location.<sup>25</sup> Procedures should also be established to ensure that resettlement staff are alerted to any unrest or activities that could impact the safety of the interviewing process.

<sup>25</sup> For further information on security issues see Unit 2.4 of UNHCR, *Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination Under UNHCR's Mandate*, 20 November 2003, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/42d66dd84.html>

It is crucial that security measures are guaranteed prior to meeting or interviewing individuals or groups, and that all staff members likely to have contact with refugees are appropriately trained on security awareness. Staff should take special care in cases where a refugee has any record of violent behaviour. Wherever an individual shows signs of serious distress or threatening behaviour, appropriate security measures should be put in place and security staff alerted.

The following general recommendations are meant to enhance the safety of UNHCR and partner staff involved in the interview process:

- all interviews should, where possible, be by prior appointment;
- separate procedures should be in place to deal with emergency, urgent or sensitive cases;
- trained guards should control access to the building and the main entrance to the interview area. If deemed necessary, the guards should carry out searches of individuals seeking access to the building or use a metal detector;
- the interview area should not be exposed visually to the waiting room;
- only a limited number of people should be allowed into the waiting area at any one time; and those waiting should have access to bathrooms, drinking water, and adequate shelter and seating;
- any known record of violent behavior should be noted on the individual's file. This will alert the interviewer to take precautionary measures if deemed necessary;
- interviews should be held in an interview room (not in the interviewer's office);
- interview spaces must protect confidentiality and have sufficient space for family members and an interpreter;
- there should be a window in the door of the interview room;
- to the extent possible, clear interview rooms of breakable objects or any items that could be used as weapons;
- the interviewer and interpreter should be seated with free/unhindered access to the exit;
- procedures to evacuate an interview room should be established and a mechanism or procedure should be in place for summoning help; and
- staff must have proper means of communication at all times.

The following additional recommendations should be considered when conducting interviews in remote field locations:

- interviews should be conducted in a discreet location so as not to attract undue attention;
- ground transportation should remain on stand-by at all times;
- arrangements should be made to ensure proper communications at all times (radios or walkie-talkies); and
- several staff should travel together and arrangements should be made with local authorities for assistance to be provided if needed.

All security incidents must be noted. UNHCR's *Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, and *Guidelines for Handling Protests, Demonstrations and other Group Disturbances among Refugees* provide advice on appropriate responses to security incidents ranging from inappropriate behaviour, to threats and assault.<sup>26</sup> All personal threats must be reported immediately, and appropriate responses must be taken in a timely manner to protect staff and deter violence.



### Essential reading

- UNHCR, *Safety Guidelines for Sensitive Individual Refugee Cases in an Urban Context*, 4 September 2002, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3dca8ead4.html>
- UNHCR, *Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, 17 April 2003, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3ea6c2104.html>
- UNHCR, *Guidelines for Handling Protests, Demonstrations and other Group Disturbances among Refugees*, 15 September 2004, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b2c8112.html>

### Further reference

- UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies*, February 2007, Third edition, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46a9e29a2.html>

## 4.7 UNHCR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Fraud can potentially enter resettlement procedures at any stage of the refugee process. Proper maintenance of UNHCR records, including both individual case files and the *proGres* database, is crucial to good decision making and accountability and helps prevent fraud and breaches of confidentiality.

UNHCR records, including paper files and electronic material, are the property of UNHCR. *UNHCR Manual* chapter 11 on *Records Management and Archives* provides guidance on electronic and paper records, and instructs staff on:

- identifying the types of records held by UNHCR and determining how long they need to be kept, known as their retention period;
- disposing promptly and appropriately of records whose authorized retention periods have expired; and
- transferring permanent records to the UNHCR Archives for preservation and future research.

Protection records, including both subject files and individual case files, are permanent UNHCR records. Resettlement-related subject files detail the development, promotion, and planning of resettlement activities, including

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR, *Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, 17 April 2003, <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3ea6c2104.html> and UNHCR, *Guidelines for Handling Protests, Demonstrations and other Group Disturbances among Refugees*, 15 September 2004, <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b2c8112.html> (All Internal)

country information, policy documents, and procedural guidelines. Individual case (IC) files contain all information pertaining to a particular refugee or asylum-seeker and his or her dependents. These files, including any database that serves as an index, must be properly maintained and archived in accordance with UNHCR Archives and Records policy. For details contact the Records and Archives Section at [archives@unhcr.org](mailto:archives@unhcr.org).

### 4.7.1 Oversight and accountability in centralized filing systems

Each UNHCR office should implement detailed file management procedures for all aspects of the processing, organization and handling of protection files, including individual case files.

The filing system should be centralized and each refugee should have only *one* physical file in the office. Different functional units should avoid using multiple case files for the same individual, and protection, community services and resettlement should share the same filing system. This will ensure cohesion between units and make all relevant information to be considered in any action taken with respect to the refugee more accessible. All elements of the file may eventually be useful when considering possible durable solutions and a holistic understanding of the refugee's needs would be greatly enhanced with a centralized filing system.

File management procedures will vary depending on the scope of the field operations and the technical systems and resources available; however, in each operation files and filing systems must be organized and maintained in good order to:

- protect confidentiality;
- prevent loss or damage of files through secure physical storage;
- ensure the integrity of documents relied upon in the resettlement process through regulated access to the files; and
- maximize efficiency of the resettlement process at all stages by promoting accessibility, clarity and thoroughness of documentation.

The file organization system should be designed to facilitate the following:

- reflect the composition of the family unit and permit ready identification and cross-reference of linked files;
- permit designation and processing of more than one Principal Applicant in a family unit;
- reflect changes in the status of individuals who are in the family, including changes in an individual's status as a Principal Applicant or applicant for derivative status;
- reflect changes in the composition of the family unit, including marriages, births, deaths, or other developments;

- permit separate filing of the information provided by each member of the household so that the source of specific information is clear and the principle of confidentiality is not undermined; and
- establish a file registry, and procedures to track files.

The UNHCR Representative and the senior staff in charge of protection should delegate in writing the accountability for the implementation of file procedures to a specific protection officer. These file management procedures should clearly define which personnel will have access to individual case files and confidential documentation, and outline individual responsibilities related to oversight and accountability in the management of paper and electronic files.

### **Oversight responsibilities for file management**

- Providing training and support to UNHCR staff on implementing file management procedures;
- Supervising UNHCR Office practice with respect to access to physical and electronic individual case files, as well as the movement and storage of individual files to ensure their security and confidentiality; and
- Conducting random monitoring of physical and electronic files to ensure that staff members are complying with established procedures for maintaining and updating files and entering relevant data into central systems.

## **4.7.2 Individual case files**

Each UNHCR office should establish a system for the assignment of file numbers and file organization. Each refugee who is registered with UNHCR will be assigned a unique identification number by *proGres*. Offices can also issue separate file reference numbers, particularly those offices without *proGres*.

An individual file for a refugee should be opened as soon as possible after registration with UNHCR to ensure that all documents and developments relating to the individual are duly recorded and retained thereafter. This is often done in preparation for refugee status determination (RSD) procedures. Field offices working in *prima facie* refugee situations may not have established individual case files given the nature of their day-to-day contact with refugees. Therefore, in the context of resettlement work in *prima facie* situations, an individual case file should be created when an initial referral is received.

### **Contents of individual case files**

An individual case file is the central repository for all information relating to specific refugees. All UNHCR staff who handle files should ensure that the information contained is *complete and organized* so that other UNHCR staff who are required to take action on the file can quickly and accurately understand the history and status of the file. It is particularly important to ensure that emails pertinent to the case are filed promptly.

The file should contain all documents and correspondence relating to the refugee, including:

- an action sheet that provides a record of all actions taken in relation to the refugee and the case file;
- a fully-completed registration form, if registration has occurred;
- copies of any personal identification documents, such as passports, birth, death and marriage certificates, refugee registration, or asylum government identity documents (originals must be returned promptly);
- photographs of each family member, if they are not stored digitally;
- any supporting evidence or documents provided by the refugee;
- if the refugee has gone through RSD, a copy of the letter of recognition and of the actual claim, along with all supporting documentation, including interview notes;
- copies of all relevant correspondence related to the case, including referrals;
- any records of conversations and interviews with the refugee and others related to the case;
- notes for the file detailing relevant discussions within the office, including a summary of any discussion/agreement/action decided at a Resettlement/Durable Solutions Committee meeting;
- documentation related to resettlement consideration or assessment;
- any documents related to particular vulnerabilities, including medical information related to the case;
- copies of documents sent for referral to Regional Resettlement Hubs/Regional Offices or Headquarters;
- copies of documents sent for submission to resettlement countries, including the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF); and
- other notes for the file related to the refugee.

All notes should be dated, signed and paginated, with the name and title of the staff member involved clearly marked. All documents that are copies should be marked with “copy”, or “copy of copy” as applicable. Staff adding or removing documents from the file should also note this on the action sheet. Restricted information may be kept in a sealed and tamper-proof envelope within the physical file.

Field offices should specify which staff members have the authority to certify copies of original documents added to a refugee’s file, such as birth certificates and adoption documents. Originals should not be kept on file, but returned immediately after the photocopy is made.



All documents should be filed in *chronological order*, based on the date they were generated or received, with the most recent pages being added to the top of the file. The addition of any document should be recorded on the action sheet.

Where photographs of refugees and family members are not digital, they should be included in a tamper-proof fashion. This may involve dry or wet seal stamps, the use of which should also be restricted and subject to specific SOPs as a safeguard against misuse. The name and registration number of the individual and the date the photograph was taken should be written on the back of each photograph.

### 4.7.3 Electronic records: *proGres*, CORTS, Livelink

#### *proGres*

UNHCR's *proGres* database has been designed to support the registration of persons of concern to UNHCR in all UNHCR operations. As the needs and procedures of field offices differ, each Office drafts Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) to establish the *proGres* fields, events, and functions to be used in the Office, and the guidelines and procedures for entering and updating information. Relevant components of these SOPs should be incorporated into the thematic SOPs, such as the Resettlement SOPs.

The *proGres* database is based on individual registration, which means that each individual should be registered only once with his/her individual data. At the same time *proGres* is designed to keep track of groups, which can be households or cases or both (also called processing group). Each individual must belong to either a case or a household.

If there is a need in the operational context a person can also belong to both a household and a case. Most often the household or case will correspond to the closest family (e.g. husband, wife and minor children), but may consist of one single individual. Over time individuals might move from one group to another, e.g. if a minor becomes adult and form his/her own family. For cases there is a Principal Applicant (PA) and in household there is a Household Representative 1 (HR1). All other members within the processing group are defined in accordance to the relationship to the PA or the HR1.

The *proGres* record should be continuously updated to reflect changed or additional bio-data, and to capture events. Events refer to significant predefined occurrences logged to an individual, case, or household record. There are nine standard categories of event: registration, protection, assistance, document, physical file, refugee status determination, voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration. Standard *proGres* event codes related to resettlement processing are annexed to the Baseline SOPs.



*proGres* should be used proactively by all colleagues including protection, RSD, community services and resettlement staff, and records should be regularly updated with respect to all events including referrals, interviews, reviews, submissions and resubmissions, decisions and departures. To ensure consistency and completeness, records should also be regularly updated with information received from resettlement partners (e.g. resettlement countries/ IOM), Regional Resettlement Hubs/Regional Offices and Headquarters.



## Consolidated Online Resettlement Tracking System (CORTS)

CORTS is an online database designed to improve UNHCR's resettlement case management capacity and reporting at the regional and global level. Cases managed by the Regional Resettlement Hubs/Regional Offices and by the Processing Unit of the Resettlement Service at Headquarters can be tracked through CORTS. The database is hosted on a server at UNHCR Headquarters. Authorized UNHCR users access the information in the database through a web application available on the UNHCR intranet.

CORTS is designed to allow uploading of the relevant case and individual information directly from *proGres*. CORTS users are provided with a set of case management functionalities, allowing them to record processes relevant for resettlement submissions, to search records, and to generate reports. Users also have the option to record information manually in order to accommodate resettlement submissions from UNHCR offices without *proGres* software.

## Livelihood<sup>27</sup>

Livelihood is UNHCR's internet-based records management tool which serves as the central repository for the storage, maintenance and protection of UNHCR's records through their life cycle. Significant UNHCR email and other electronic records are placed in the Livelihood recordkeeping system for quick reference and secure preservation. An accessible and secure body of records is particularly essential at UNHCR since many staff frequently change assignments.

The system, which should be rolled out to all UNHCR offices by 2014, enables staff to:

- collaborate, share documents and encourage project teamwork without geographic boundaries;
- file email text and attachments directly into Livelihood;
- access UNHCR records 24 / 7 from any location;
- find records easily using a powerful search tool;
- track the lifecycle of records via audit trails and version control; and
- comply with U.N. record keeping requirements.

Electronic recordkeeping must be part of routine work processes and business procedures of UNHCR, around the following three general principles:

- records created, sent and received electronically should also be filed electronically according to UNHCR recordkeeping standards;
- managers are responsible for the compliance and completeness of the Unit filing to Livelihood; and
- all UNHCR staff, as creators and users of records, are responsible for record filing.

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Electronic Records Policy*, IOM/031-FOM/031/2005, 3 June 2005, (Internal), available on the UNHCR Intranet

#### 4.7.4 Biometric data

UNHCR's *Policy on Biometrics in refugee registration and verification*<sup>28</sup> released in December 2010 announced that the collection of biometrics will become a regular and routine feature of registration processes. The use of biometrics in support of identity verification exercises among refugee populations is encouraged, *except* where no protection or operational benefit is expected to be gained from doing so.

Various UNHCR operations have been using biometrics as a feature of registration or refugee population verification for some time, and the benefits to programme integrity are clear. For example, fingerprints records collected during registration and linked to *proGres* help to prevent multiple registrations or multiple applications for benefits, and help block identity substitution or fraudulent family composition.

There are, however, considerable implementation challenges, as UNHCR strives to identify the most suitable, reliable and cost-effective biometrics technologies available for use in UNHCR operations. UNHCR's *Confidentiality Guidelines*<sup>29</sup> apply to the sharing of biometric information, and safeguards must be implemented to ensure that the collection and processing of data is undertaken in a fair and transparent manner. UNHCR will also ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to protect the security of the data, and that sharing of the data is restricted to the purpose for which it was collected.

#### 4.7.5 File security and tracking

Ensuring file security is important, not only as a safeguard against fraud and abuse, but also to protect the physical integrity and confidentiality of the information in the files.

File security measures include controlling access to the electronic and paper files, safeguards related to the storage of the paper file, as well as a system to track the file to facilitate follow-up and monitoring of individual resettlement cases.

##### File security

The security of information held in electronic files is completely dependent upon the correct identification of users. Electronic files should be password-restricted<sup>30</sup> and maintained on *proGres* and/or network drives. Differentiated levels of access should be accorded to designated staff, depending on their functions. Internal control procedures in each office must reflect this in the accountability assigned to records managers and systems administrators. Information related to individual cases should not be stored on personal drives but only in the designated file on the network drive. Staff training should include

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR, *Policy on biometrics in refugee registration and verification processes*, 20 December 2010, IOM/o83/2010 - FOM/o83/2010, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/4dof593e2.html>

<sup>29</sup> UNHCR, *Confidentiality Guidelines*, 1 August 2001, IOM/o71/2001 - FOM/o68/2001, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3be17dfd4.html>

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR, *Use of Passwords in UNHCR's Computer-Based Systems*, IOM/o86-FOM/o86/2006, available on the UNHCR Intranet, (Internal)

information on electronic records, including the proper use of User ID and passwords, and the consequences of their misuse.

Paper files must be stored in secure, fire-resistant metal cabinets, which should be kept locked unless files are being checked in or out by the designated staff. The cabinets should be located in a lockable central filing room, and access to the file room should be restricted to authorized personnel. The key or combination to the file room and the cabinets should be shared only with authorized staff, and the keys should not be left with any unauthorized staff (such as a colleague, or security guard). Measures should be in place to ensure the security of the files and the filing room in case of an evacuation or disaster. Additional measures may be suggested by the Field Security Advisor or the Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS) who can be contacted at [HQCSoo@unhcr.org](mailto:HQCSoo@unhcr.org).

No files should be kept in staff offices in the absence of the staff member, but rather returned to the central repository when the task is completed. The only exception is if the office of the staff member is considered secure, and the file is locked into a cabinet.

No files may be kept in the interviewing room during an interview unless the officer is present. Files should not normally be removed from office premises. Only in special and strictly monitored circumstances where it cannot be avoided because of, for example an out-of-office interview or investigation, may a supervisor give written permission to remove files from the office.

One of the best ways to enhance security is to keep only active, current files in field offices. Older files, deemed to be closed should be inventoried, packed and forwarded to Headquarters for storage as permanent records in accordance with UNHCR Archives and Records policy. For details contact the Records and Archives Section at [archives@unhcr.org](mailto:archives@unhcr.org).

## File tracking

The file management system should include procedures to allow authorized individuals to check files in and out of the central registry. When files are needed, a designated filing clerk should be in charge of registering the file number, date and the name of the staff member requesting or returning the file in a file movement log. This procedure establishes a record of who has had access to files in case of compromise and to monitor that only authorized individuals work on the files. Failure to follow this procedure is a weakness in internal controls and in anti-fraud measures.

The file movement log should be stored electronically in *proGres*, or an alternative database if *proGres* is not available. Larger operations may also consider implementing an **Electronic Tracking System** by attaching barcodes to their files, and issuing identification with barcodes to staff. This system helps the operation track the movement of individual case files between staff members and between units, and provides information on the location of all files at any given time. Like all systems, however, the Electronic Tracking System works well only if staff members systematically scan loans, transfer and returns of physical files. (For more information and support contact the Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS) at UNHCR Headquarters [HQCSoo@unhcr.org](mailto:HQCSoo@unhcr.org).)

As well as monitoring the movement of case files, establishing a regular case tracking system is important to facilitate follow-up and monitoring of individual resettlement cases, and to ensure that deadlines are respected. Tracking should also help identify bottlenecks and highlight areas where further support or improvements are needed. It can also help ensure appropriate follow-up should the responsible person be absent for any reason.

To help with tracking, *proGres* permits searching by a wide range of data fields, such as the applicant's name, date and place of birth, nationality, family composition, source of resettlement referral, stage in the resettlement process, most recent decision and its date, any pending action and the caseworker responsible for it.

It is thus important that the accuracy of *proGres* is maintained by systematically and timely recording each step and action in a particular case. Ensuring that data in *proGres* is up-to-date also helps provide systematic feedback to refugees, colleagues in the region, Headquarters, and resettlement countries, and facilitates statistical reporting.

#### 4.7.6 Storage of travel and identity documents

In some cases, UNHCR may be requested to receive and store refugees' travel and identity documents as part of pre-departure preparations. This is normally the responsibility of the Resettlement State, or IOM where it has the capacity and has been given the authority.

If UNHCR takes on this responsibility, pre-departure procedures must be established with the country of asylum and the resettlement country regarding the issuing, depositing, withdrawing and transmitting of travel and identity documents. Field offices should ensure that a clear designation is kept of which staff members have access to such documents, and that the procedures for storing and transmitting them are clearly defined and recorded.

All travel and identity documents received by UNHCR must be stored in a safe with limited access. A designated staff member should maintain a central registry that records who has access to the safe and which documents have been deposited or withdrawn.

Before transmitting the documents to a refugee, her/his identity must be verified as the rightful holder of the document. The travel document should be photocopied, and the refugee should sign the photocopy to confirm receipt of the original. This copy should be countersigned by the UNHCR staff handing over the document. The signed copy should be kept in the refugee's file as proof of delivery.

#### 4.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF ONGOING RESETTLEMENT TRAINING

Training builds and strengthens resettlement capacity, enhances service excellence among staff and partners, and is an essential means to ensure the

effective and coherent implementation of UNHCR's resettlement policy. Training and continuous learning are important components of UNHCR's strategy to ensure that all staff are familiar with the Office's protection mandate and that they have a common understanding of the basic principles of international protection.

UNHCR's resettlement training activities are closely linked to protection training and are coordinated by the Resettlement Service in close consultation with the Global Learning Centre, and the Regional Bureaux, Regional Resettlement Hubs/Regional Offices and Field Offices concerned. Since resettlement operations require close collaboration at all levels, UNHCR also involves governments and NGOs in resettlement training activities where possible.

UNHCR training activities can take many forms, ranging from initial orientation and informal one-on-one support, to local or regional workshops, self-study modules, e-learning courses, and structured formal learning programmes implemented over several months. The Resettlement Handbook serves as the point of reference and as a key training tool for UNHCR staff and for resettlement partners.

#### **The main objectives of resettlement training are:**

- to strengthen the capacity of field staff to proactively identify refugees in need of resettlement and to effectively promote their cases; to give staff the skills to analyze resettlement and related protection problems encountered; to define an appropriate strategy and to develop a mechanism for resettlement delivery built on close cooperation with resettlement countries and other partners;
- to enhance resettlement operators' awareness on issues of fraud and malfeasance in the resettlement process and to strengthen their capacity to prevent and mitigate them, in order to deliver credible and transparent resettlement programmes;
- to build and strengthen capacity within UNHCR field offices to organize and deliver training on resettlement with a view to maximizing resources and coordinating training efforts; and
- to strengthen the overall management of the resettlement process related to individual cases and groups of refugees.

#### **4.8.1 Global Learning Centre**

UNHCR's Global Learning Centre (GLC) is responsible for coordinating internal learning activities agency-wide, with the goal of providing all staff who carry out UNHCR work with opportunities to learn new skills, acquire knowledge to improve their performance and better manage their individual career paths. Learning activities are designed with a heightened emphasis on web-learning, e-learning, and mobile learning to improve accessibility.

The GLC works closely with DIP, as well as with the Regional Bureaux and Offices in the field to identify needs, develop learning activities using a wide variety of methodologies, and evaluate the knowledge gained as well as its impact on participants' work.

UNHCR offers protection learning programmes on a regional basis for UNHCR staff and partners who are working on the respective thematic issues. These programmes consist of a self-study phase, a workshop and a post-workshop phase.

- **Protection Learning Programme (PLP):** An intermediate programme for UNHCR staff who wish to better understand protection-oriented operations. The PLP includes a unit on durable solutions including resettlement.
- **Thematic Protection Learning Programme on Statelessness:** A Thematic Programme for senior staff and partners on how to work towards identifying, preventing, responding to and protecting stateless persons in an operation.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Learning Programme:** An operation-specific training for staff members working extensively on RSD issues.
- **Resettlement Learning Programme (RLP):** An operation-specific training for staff members working extensively on resettlement issues. See *Chapter 4.8.3* for more details.

Further protection themes are addressed through workshops on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, the Community-Based Approach, and Best Interests Determinations, among other topics.

The GLC Protection team also works closely with field-based protection trainers to increase access to training opportunities at a regional level.

The *Facilitation Learning Programme for Protection*, which equips protection staff with training skills, helps ensure that protection training is widely accessible. The objective is to establish training capacity to support the delivery of learning programmes in the region as well as separate workshops, debriefings or other *ad hoc* training sessions tailored to specific needs as they arise. Once included on the trainer roster, trainers who relocate from one region to another will be asked to also act as trainers in their new duty station. This approach enables UNHCR to gradually build substantial training capacity on key protection areas including RSD and resettlement within the organization and to provide a platform for augmenting inter-regional coordination and sharing of experiences and good practices.

## 4.8.2 Core training for resettlement staff

A number of tools have been introduced by UNHCR to ensure that all staff have a basic understanding of international protection and durable solutions, including the mandatory **UNHCR and International Protection: A Protection Induction Programme**.<sup>31</sup> All UNHCR staff also complete training on the **Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority**, the **UNHCR Code of Conduct**, and on **Security in the Field** as applicable.

Additionally, all staff in a field office implementing resettlement activities should also be briefed on basic resettlement policy and practice in order to ensure good understanding of the rationale and objectives for resettlement activities, and effective collaboration between units for the resettlement of refugees in need.

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR and International Protection: A Protection Induction Programme*, 1 June 2006, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/466e71c32.html>

Staff directly involved with resettlement activities *must* become familiar with the Resettlement Handbook and the Office’s Resettlement SOPs, and should also receive training related to:

- fraud awareness and prevention;
- UNHCR’s *Confidentiality Guidelines* related to sharing information on individual cases;
- resettlement principles, and the resettlement submission categories;
- cultural sensitization related to the population(s) of concern;
- protection needs and referral mechanisms;
- gender and diversity sensitivity;

and, when relevant to their duties:

- interview skills;
- working with interpreters;
- interpersonal and communication skills;
- effective use of *proGres*; and
- RRF preparation.

### 4.8.3 Resettlement training opportunities

Resettlement Anti-Fraud workshops, and other situation-specific, or country- or region-specific training opportunities are offered in the field and at Headquarters. These training sessions are often organized in collaboration with government authorities and NGO partners, and present opportunities for information sharing on current knowledge, activities and experiences. Training, however, should not replace regular meetings with all partners.

Regional resettlement meetings organized on an annual basis are opportunities both to provide and refresh training with the aim of ensuring consistent application of resettlement policies and procedures across the region, as well as opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of training and assess training needs.

Training for the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme is also jointly organized. Overall, the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme offers an opportunity to bring skilled people from a variety of NGO and government backgrounds into the UNHCR organization on a temporary basis. All deployees receive induction and briefing sessions from both ICMC and UNHCR prior to their deployment. Wherever possible, ICMC deployees are invited to attend regional training workshops for which UNHCR and ICMC have developed focused training modules to help deployees prepare for their tasks.

The Resettlement Service also encourages reinforcing formal training with “action learning” opportunities such as registration, verification exercises and participatory assessments to enhance staff understanding of resettlement identification techniques and processing methodologies. Periodic “refresher” sessions help ensure continued awareness of the resettlement procedures and help resolve any questions or doubts that arise relating to the assessment of resettlement needs, and the resettlement submission categories.

The implementation of resettlement training activities must take into account that responsible UNHCR staff dedicates varying amounts of their time to resettlement, depending upon the situation in the country and the number of eligible cases.

## The Resettlement Learning Programme

Resettlement staff are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to apply for the Resettlement Learning Programme (RLP)<sup>32</sup> when it is offered in their region. The RLP is a six month thematic programme that complements the Protection Learning Programme (PLP) by offering distance self-study, coached modules and a workshop that deal specifically with resettlement. The RLP aims at enhancing the knowledge and skills of resettlement practitioners, contributing to a more coherent and predictable resettlement delivery that addresses refugees' needs with diligence, integrity, transparency and accountability.

The RLP is an important component of UNHCR's learning strategy towards harmonizing enhanced quality of resettlement activities and in ensuring the effective delivery of international protection in general. To this effect, it is envisaged for the RLP to become an essential, mandatory component of the training requirements for UNHCR staff with functional competencies related to resettlement.

In line with the principles of the *Agenda for Protection* and the *UNHCR Code of Conduct*, the Resettlement Learning Programme broadly aims at:

- fostering a common understanding on protection and international legal standards;
- enhancing protection knowledge and skills;
- promoting a team-based and partnership approach;
- soliciting feedback and opinions on operational concerns in the field and on how problems can be addressed collectively;
- examining ways in which resettlement capacities can be enhanced;
- enhancing the more strategic use of resettlement, including within regions affected by refugee movements;
- promoting the more efficient use of resettlement both as a protection tool and as a durable solution.

The methodology adopted for the RLP assists in enhancing a knowledge base and the development of skills, and reinforces good practices by combining a number of learning techniques including self-study, a workshop and the implementation of resettlement projects. The Resettlement Learning Programme also aims at encouraging participants to implement resettlement activities or strategies in their offices.

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<sup>32</sup> All staff and partners are encouraged to consult the self-study module available online: UNHCR, *Self-Study Module: Resettlement Learning Programme*, October 2010, Rev., <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ae6b9b92.html>



## Online training

- UNHCR, *UNHCR and International Protection: A Protection Induction Programme*, 1 June 2006, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/466e71c32.html>
- UNHCR, *Self-Study Module: Resettlement Learning Programme*, October 2010, Rev., <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ae6b9b92.html>
- UNHCR, *Self-Study Module 1: An Introduction to International Protection. Protecting Persons of Concern to UNHCR*, 1 August 2005, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4214cb4f2.html>
- UNHCR, *Self-Study Module 2: Refugee Status Determination. Identifying Who is a Refugee*, 1 September 2005, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/43141f5d4.html>
- UNHCR, *RLD4 - Interviewing Applicants for Refugee Status*, 1995, RLD4, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ccea3304.html>



## 4.9 RESETTLEMENT STATISTICS AND DATA

The regular reporting of precise and up-to-date resettlement statistics and relevant additional data is a crucial component of UNHCR's reporting to the Executive Committee (ExCom) and to other governmental and non-governmental bodies. Statistics assist the work of resettlement partners meeting as the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) and the Annual Tripartite Consultation on Resettlement (ATCR).

Resettlement statistics assist UNHCR and all concerned parties in:

- assessing resettlement needs and priorities;
- planning and developing policy directions for UNHCR;
- helping in planning and developing policy for governments, including setting quotas/admission targets of resettlement places;
- monitoring of progress and problems;
- analyzing quotas used by UNHCR and governments;
- programming and budgeting of resettlement projects;
- resettlement pledging and negotiations for required places;
- fund raising; and
- public information (improving awareness/understanding).

Resettlement issues generate much public interest as well as critical examination, especially among the donor governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In order to provide reliable, comprehensive and credible information on resettlement activities, UNHCR country offices must complete the Resettlement Statistical Report (RSR) accurately and submit it on a timely basis.

The RSR should be consistent with information recorded in the previous RSRs and Annual Statistical Reports (ASR) forms (which cover general statistics on overall populations, some of whom are in need of resettlement assistance). There may also be instances in which UNHCR Country Offices need to develop internal statistical reports for local use or for reporting on particular resettlement programmes which benefit from earmarked funding. In this case, it is essential that consistency exists among the various statistical reporting and between these, the RSR and the ASR.

#### 4.9.1 Guidelines for completion of the RSR forms

The Resettlement Statistical Report (RSR) forms are provided to country offices in the field in Excel file. In order to facilitate the completion of the RSR form, the Excel file which contains the form also includes explanatory notes related to each field of the form, guiding the user in the exercise. Country Offices should refer to the IOM/FOM “*Instructions and Guidelines on Reporting*” that is issued at the beginning of each year for the most current guidance on completion of the RSR.

In order to enhance accurate statistical reporting, field offices are encouraged to closely liaise with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) locally to cross-check departure figures. Regional Office (RO) Washington is in the process of enhancing statistical information verification with resettlement States on a global basis.

Accurate reporting on the resettlement submission categories, including women and girls at risk, and children at risk, as well as providing the breakdown of departure figures by age and sex, contributes to ensuring that the age, gender and diversity sensitive approach is applied to resettlement activities, and that relevant ExCom Conclusions (105 and 107) are implemented.

Should further clarification be needed for the accurate completion of the RSR, country offices are encouraged to contact the Resettlement Statistics Focal Point in Washington at [usawares@unhcr.org](mailto:usawares@unhcr.org).

#### Frequency and submission of the RSR forms

Country Offices are requested to forward the completed RSR forms directly to the Resettlement Statistics Focal Point in Regional Office (RO) Washington, D.C. by email to [usawares@unhcr.org](mailto:usawares@unhcr.org) and, where appropriate, copy the regional statistics focal point person. The Resettlement Statistics Focal Point in the RO Washington will review and correct the data in consultation with the Country Office. Country offices are requested to respect the following submission deadlines:

Quarter ending	Due at RO Washington
31 March	15 April
30 June	15 July
30 September	15 October
31 December	15 January

The Resettlement Service and the Resettlement Statistics Focal Point in RO Washington are responsible for the provision of correct and consistent global resettlement statistics. The Resettlement Statistics Focal Point will produce quarterly and annual *Global Resettlement Statistical Reports*. Besides sharing internally through posting on the UNHCR intranet, the Annual and Quarterly Global Resettlement Statistical Reports, where applicable, are shared with external resettlement partners at various multilateral and bilateral meetings including the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) and the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR). The Resettlement Service, with support from RO Washington, analyzes trends in UNHCR's global resettlement activities, identifies unmet needs and gaps in resettlement process, and draws strategies for enhanced resettlement delivery.

#### 4.10 MANAGING STRESS IN A RESETTLEMENT OPERATION

Stress tends to accumulate in any intense work environment, and may be triggered by factors that are external to the workplace. Individuals vary widely in how they react to stress, and how they cope with it. In general it helps to follow healthy routines – to eat well, to rest enough, to exercise, and spend time with friends. Cumulative stress can be responsible for numerous mental and physical health problems, and can also harm the quality of work and staff dynamics. For all of these reasons, it is important to look out for the signs and symptoms of cumulative stress and try to mitigate them at the individual and managerial levels. The reference materials provide guidance on what can be done to manage and respond to stress.

In the context of resettlement operations, it is also important to be aware of the possibility of experiencing vicarious trauma. **Vicarious trauma** or secondary traumatization refers to the stress and trauma reactions that can occur in response to witnessing or hearing about traumatic events that have happened to others. Conducting interviews for resettlement is very demanding, and listening to refugees recount the persecution, loss, human rights abuses, violence and even torture they have experienced can also be very traumatizing, especially over a long period of time. Contributing factors include:

- repeated exposure to traumatic experiences;
- acute pressure to process difficult cases quickly;
- lack of variation in the caseload;
- personal experience of trauma;
- lack of experience in similar jobs;
- over-identification with interviewees;
- failure to take regular rest or vacation breaks (causing burnout);
- lack of support or understanding from managers;
- short-term contracts and job insecurity; and
- self-imposed pressure to perform.

Care for staff well-being in the workplace is a joint responsibility of the individuals concerned, peers, managers and the organization as a whole. The organization has a duty of care to set the appropriate policies and provide resources for stress management, and managers contribute to it by setting team norms that include stress management and support their staff members to adhere to them.

Being informed and aware of what can be done in such circumstances is an important consideration for the health and well-being of all staff working with refugees. It also helps ensure that the work is conducted effectively, efficiently, and in safety. A tired, weak, and depressed workforce not only has a negative impact on the ability to perform the resettlement work, but it could also make staff more vulnerable to security incidents through being less attentive and unable to respond quickly to a situation.



Stress management strategies are the most effective when incorporated in the usual work routine and implemented regularly.

### Recognizing stress symptoms and seeking support

Since people respond very differently to emotional pressure and exhaustion, the symptoms of stress and vicarious trauma vary widely. Examples might include:

- **physical:** headaches, increased heartbeat, intense fatigue, difficulty in concentrating, hyper arousal and exaggerated startle reflex;
- **psychological and emotional:** anxiety, fear, over-preoccupation and identification with victims, sadness, anger, helplessness, mood swings;
- **behavioral:** inability to rest or let go, periods of crying, social withdrawal, limiting contacts with others, substance abuse;
- **cognitive:** hyper vigilance, safety concerns, intrusive images;
- **interpersonal:** suspicious and mistrustful, increased conflict, decreased empathy;
- **spiritual:** loss of meaning.

It is important to recognize the symptoms of stress and vicarious trauma and to take them seriously. Tired and depressed staff will perform badly, and are also more likely to make mistakes that put people at risk or expose themselves to danger, because they are inattentive or unable to respond quickly to sudden changes of situation. In addition, for understandable reasons, individuals may not want to admit to their state of mind when stressed, and may be in denial about it. When starting to feel the reactions described above, they may:

- feel insecure about what to do;
- feel ashamed for not being able to cope;
- worry about the stigma, and that they will be seen as weak and unable to do the job;
- worry about losing their job.

Individuals who recognize this pattern in themselves are strongly encouraged to reach out to trusted colleagues, or seek confidential advice and support from UNHCR's Staff Welfare Section, Peer Support Persons where they are identified, or counsellors of other UN organizations.

It is very natural and human to be emotionally affected by the tragic experiences of refugees, and no shame or blame should be attached to such a response. UNHCR has a duty of care to their staff as well as to the refugees they protect. Being informed and aware of what can be done in such circumstances is an important consideration for the health and well-being of all staff working with refugees. It also helps ensure that the work is conducted effectively, efficiently, and in safety.

Managers in resettlement operations should familiarize themselves with the characteristics of emotional exhaustion, stress, and vicarious trauma. They should talk about these risks with their staff, and put in place arrangements and rules that will ensure colleagues are in a position to share problems, seek support and give support to each other when it is needed. Occasional debriefings can be very important, especially around peak periods. In a range of ways, managers should create opportunities to demonstrate care, affirm relationships, and re-energize staff. Even an informal chat at the end of the day or an informal after-work gathering can be extraordinarily helpful in sharing and reducing stress. Bringing in experts from time to time to discuss stress and vicarious trauma is also recommended – not least because this will relieve the pressure on the managers or team leaders themselves.

## UNHCR Staff Welfare Section

UNHCR's Staff Welfare Section within the Division of Human Resource Management promotes the psychosocial well-being of UNHCR staff. Staff Welfare Officers are trained counsellors who provide individual support to staff who face personal or work-related problems, including stress and trauma. Consultations are conducted in person, by email or by phone (Skype), and they are confidential.

Staff Welfare Officers can also support managers in matters relating to staff morale, interpersonal relations, and other aspects of staff well-being. Managers, especially those in charge of large resettlement operations, are strongly recommended to consult Staff Welfare Officers about the work environment and involve them in designing programmes to mitigate stress and prevent vicarious trauma.

The Staff Welfare Section trains and coordinates the Peer Support Personnel Network, a network of UNHCR staff members who volunteer to offer support when colleagues are dealing with personal and work-related problems.

Guidance, tools and advice for dealing with various personal and work-related experiences, such as traumatic incidents; cumulative stress and fatigue; security evacuation of staff; team building; maintaining respectful relations; alcohol and other substance abuse, etc. are also available from the Staff Welfare Section under Staff Resources on the UNHCR Intranet.



### Essential reading

- UNHCR, *Managing the Stress of Humanitarian Emergencies*, August 2001, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4905f1752.html>
- UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies*, February 2007, Third edition, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46a9e29a2.html> (especially Chapter 25: *Coping with Stress*).
- UNHCR, *Traumatic Stress Reactions: An Informative and Educative Guide for the Survivors of Traumatic Events*, 2004, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/4905ef102.html>
- UNHCR, Staff Welfare Section's resources and links, including *Well-Being in the Workplace, Cumulative Stress and Fatigue* etc., under Staff Resources, UNHCR Intranet.