

Definitions and Frequently Asked Questions

- ✚ ***What is the difference between identification, referral and the submission of refugees for resettlement?***
- ✚ ***Why should UNHCR and NGOs partner on the referral and/or submission of refugees in need of resettlement?***
- ✚ ***What are the different ways NGOs can engage with UNHCR in the referral and/or submission of refugees in need of resettlement?***
- ✚ ***What are the key elements / considerations in partnerships on identification, referral and submission of refugees for resettlement?***

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Ensuring that refugees most in need of protection and resettlement have access to those services is a fundamental aspect of UNHCR's mandate responsibility. Given their expertise and knowledge of the refugee population, NGOs are particularly well-suited to make important contributions to the identification of such vulnerable refugees facing protection problems and are in need of resettlement.

It is essential for UNHCR to have effective referral systems in place that involve internal and external partners who bridge gaps in protection and resettlement delivery. Referrals are sourced internally, externally, and directly from the concerned refugee (e.g. self referral). The most effective and responsive resettlement procedures will consider referrals from all three sources and will encourage proactive identification.

While internal referrals occur through UNHCR staff, external referrals are usually made by NGO partners assisting UNHCR with implementation, NGOs who are otherwise involved in refugee work and other external partners such as governmental agencies. External referrals are important means of expanding access to resettlement and increasing capacity for identification. Some NGOs make resettlement submissions directly to resettlement States and/or referrals to UNHCR for its assessment and submission to the resettlement country.

Upon receipt of internal or external referrals of cases potentially in need of resettlement, UNHCR assesses resettlement needs of the referred cases in line with UNHCR resettlement criteria, guidelines, priorities and policy considerations. Once the decision has been made to submit the case for resettlement, UNHCR prepares a resettlement submission. This process includes preparing the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) and appropriate documentation, depending on the applicable resettlement criterion. Upon reaching a final decision based on a thorough review of documentation, UNHCR submits the case to a resettlement State.

Excerpt from the UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement

referrals and submissions for resettlement

✚ Why should UNHCR and NGOs partner on the referral and/or submission of refugees in need of resettlement?

In the absence of effective State protection, UNHCR is instrumental in providing protection and solutions for refugees in countries of asylum. Resettlement efforts, including partnerships between UNHCR and NGOs, must fit within this protection and solution framework in order to be effective.

NGOs can help expand the reach of resettlement to remote and less-known populations of refugees with whom they have contact and whom may not have easy access to UNHCR processes. Through their grassroots networks, NGOs can identify and refer refugees for resettlement.

NGOs often have contact with refugee individuals and groups in the course of their regular activities and are in a position to learn about their needs outside of the resettlement context. So too, NGOs can oftentimes bring their own resources, including specific expertise (e.g. Best Interest Determinations for children and psycho-social assessments), to bear on resettlement identification efforts and related assessments, increasing the overall resettlement capacity.

✚ What are the different ways NGOs can engage with UNHCR in the referral and/or submission of refugees in need of resettlement?

NGOs have engaged in the referral and/or submission of refugees in need of resettlement in a wide variety of ways over the years. It should be noted that, with the exception of rare one-off referrals, the various forms of partnership normally require prior agreements among the NGOs, UNHCR and resettlement States, in order to ensure effective information sharing, compliance with protection and solutions strategies and to ensure operational integrity and efficiencies. This is particularly true of large-scale, multi-year resettlement projects. In some operations, the agreement of the host country may be required as well.

Some of the ways that NGOs can engage in resettlement referrals are as follows:

- Having identified an individual who may be in need of resettlement, an NGO might complete a resettlement referral, which includes conducting a resettlement-related interview with the refugee(s), documenting their experiences in the country of origin, flight history, experiences in the country of asylum, opportunities for other durable solutions such as local integration or voluntary repatriation, and any immediate protection concerns and/or specific profile for resettlement consideration (e.g. women-at-risk), and then referring the case to UNHCR for review, approval and onward submission to a resettlement country.
- Following a similar process as noted above, an NGO might refer the individual case directly to a resettlement country. Normally this should only occur in cases where the NGO has been trained and approved either by the resettlement country and/or UNHCR, and coordination channels are clearly established. Some resettlement countries require formal memoranda of understanding to establish a referral relationship. In some countries of operation, NGOs may require formal registration and/or approval by the host Government.
- NGO staff might be recruited by, or seconded to, UNHCR to undertake specific resettlement projects, assigning them specific aspects of resettlement work, for example: (i) assist with the verification of refugee groups and/or conduct assessments of family composition, (ii) assist with Best Interests Determinations and/or psycho-social evaluations, (iii) complete UNHCR's Medical Assessment Forms (MAFs) to assist with the resettlement of refugees with medical needs, (iv) conduct casework for individual and groups of refugees.

Excerpt from the UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement

referrals and submissions for resettlement

- NGOs partner with other NGOs to organize an identification and referral system that serves to identify refugees in need of resettlement who might otherwise be overlooked. The coordinating NGO might then follow a referral procedure mentioned above, either to UNHCR or a directly to a resettlement country where appropriate agreements are in place. The advantage of such a partnership is that the NGO which makes the initial identification is able to transfer the work and responsibility associated with making the referral to the coordinating NGO, and is therefore able to identify refugees in need of resettlement without diverting resources and attention from its mission and/or primary responsibilities.
- NGOs can assist with identifying groups of refugees with similar backgrounds and protection needs and who might qualify for resettlement. In these cases, NGOs can document the situation of the group and their need for resettlement according to UNHCR's guidelines, and then forward information to UNHCR and/or a resettlement country for consideration.

✚ What are the key elements / considerations in partnerships on identification, referral and submission of refugees for resettlement?

It is important to document the process well and to develop and implement transparent identification / referral / submission procedures. To ensure accountability and oversight, all arrangements should specify in writing the roles and responsibilities of the NGO and UNHCR.

NGO and UNHCR representatives should meet regularly to discuss activities and concerns and should conduct regular spot-checks (i.e. inspection of casework) to ensure compliance. Such liaison and status reports / updates throughout the resettlement process need to be conducted in accordance with confidentiality considerations.

The identification / referral / submission system should endeavour to respect the concept of universality, which means if cases of a certain profile are identified and subsequently considered for resettlement; steps should be taken to identify all cases of the same profile and to submit those for resettlement to the extent possible. The absence of sufficient capacity to identify all cases of the same profile should not, however, pose a barrier in principle to moving forward with the case already identified.

Safeguards should also need to be introduced into any identification / referral / submission mechanisms to mitigate the risk of fraud, abuse and threats to refugees' and staff safety. Where there is a formal partnership arrangement in place, all parties should comply with UNHCR's Code of Conduct and work in accordance with the ethical standards of the United Nations.