

Operational Guidance Note on Conducting Resettlement Interviews through Video Conferencing¹

I. Introduction and purpose	2
II. Basic considerations for determining the use of video conferencing	2
III. Technical requirements and set up for interviews	4
IV. Preparing for interviews	5
Annex 1 - Pre-interview Questionnaire for Resettlement Interviews through Video Conferencing.....	8
Annex 2 – Recommendations for Resettlement Countries	12
Annex 3 – Pre-Interview Set-up Checklist for UNHCR Offices	14
Annex 4 – Pre-Interview Briefing Checklist for Refugees and Interpreters.....	15
Annex 5 - Interview Consent Form:	16
Annex 6 - Post-interview Questionnaire for Resettlement Interviews through Video Conferencing	17

¹ This Operational Guidance Note has been developed by the Resettlement Service / Division of International Protection to establish procedural safeguards and ensure harmonization of their implementation in the context of resettlement interviews through video conferencing by States. The guidance included in this Note is specific to the resettlement selection context and should not be automatically applied to other contexts, such as Refugee Status Determination (RSD) or other asylum procedures.

I. Introduction and purpose

The use of video conferencing as a means of conducting resettlement interviews is a recent innovation, first introduced and tested by the Netherlands at Timisoara, Romania, linking to The Hague. There are technical challenges, and for some resettlement countries, also legal challenges in conducting resettlement interviews through video conferencing, and face-to-face interviews are more efficient. However, a number of resettlement countries have found it necessary to undertake interviews through video conferencing in order to enable resettlement processing to take place in circumstances which would otherwise have prevented it.

The need to make recourse to VCT as a means of conducting resettlement interviews arises due primarily to difficulties faced by resettlement countries to gain access to refugee populations being considered for resettlement in the countries of asylum, and where transfer to an Emergency Transit Facility (ETF) is not considered an option. Access challenges could arise, *inter alia*, due to security conditions in the countries of asylum concerned, difficulties in obtaining entry visas to the country of asylum by the resettlement country's processing team, or for logistical reasons. In situations where there are such access challenges, UNHCR considers that the use of video conferencing could be an appropriate way of enabling resettlement processing to take place, thus ensuring that protection and durable solutions through resettlement are made available to refugees in need.

This **Operational Guidance Note on Conducting Resettlement Interviews through Video Conferencing** has been developed to provide basic considerations as well as procedural safeguards and standards in utilizing this interview method. The Note is intended to provide guidance for UNHCR staff and resettlement country interviewers preparing for and conducting the interviews.

II. Basic considerations for determining the use of video conferencing

UNHCR makes recommendations to resettlement countries whether the use of video conferencing is appropriate for resettlement interviews based on the following three sets of considerations:

- Use of video conferencing as an alternative interview method is justified;
- Confidentiality of interviews could be ensured; and
- Cases are appropriate for video conferencing.

Based on UNHCR's recommendations, resettlement countries decide whether or not to proceed with the use of video conferencing for particular refugee groups.

Use of video conferencing as an alternative interview method is justified

Each resettlement country has its own regulations and procedures in place for the selection of refugees for resettlement. In accordance with their regulations and procedures, resettlement countries may consider submissions on a dossier basis,² and not require a direct interview with the refugee. In other cases, resettlement countries, by either administrative discretion or law, conduct individual resettlement interviews with refugees under resettlement consideration. Such interviews typically take place during a resettlement selection mission.³

² Selection on a dossier basis is a recurrent practice where resettlement consideration under emergency / urgent priority is required, where the number of resettlement cases in a country of asylum does not justify sending a selection mission, or where access to concerned refugee populations is a challenge due to security, administrative or logistical reasons.

³ Selection missions to the field offer an important opportunity for States to consider a large number of resettlement cases by means of direct interviews with refugees, and become familiar with the asylum context. They also provide an opportunity for UNHCR to engage in a dialogue with officials from resettlement countries in order to encourage flexibility in selection decisions.

In situations where face-to-face interviews or selection on a dossier basis are not feasible, but refugees' resettlement needs continue to exist, resettlement interviews through video conferencing offer a number of advantages.⁴ However, there are also obvious challenges in that interaction between interviewers and refugees takes place virtually, which may result in dynamics different from direct face-to-face interviews. A successful outcome of the resettlement interview can mean new hope and a new life for the refugee and his/her family, while a negative result may spell despair and danger. Refugees may be nervous about being interviewed by resettlement country officials, even before facing the unfamiliar video conferencing method.

UNHCR offices are therefore advised to take these factors into consideration when exploring whether to resort to interviews through video conferencing. Opting for video conferencing requires close consultation with relevant resettlement countries, concerned UNHCR operations in host countries, and if appropriate, also the Resettlement Service at UNHCR Headquarters.

Confidentiality of interviews could be ensured

One of the key requirements of any interview process is to ensure its confidentiality.⁵ This is crucial not only to help establishing a relationship of trust between the applicant and the interviewer, but also to provide protection and security for the applicant. Testimonies may cover information that the refugee has not even revealed to his or her spouse or family. Communication cannot be established if there exists a fear of being overheard by others or having information passed to others.

Resettlement interviews through video conferencing require extra care to ensure confidentiality, first by ensuring appropriate environments to safeguard privacy of interviews, and secondly by ensuring secure connection through encryption. Compliance with the technical standards provided in [Section III](#) of this Note is a prerequisite in order to ensure secure connection.⁶

Cases are appropriate for video conferencing

In exploring the use of video conferencing, UNHCR offices must properly assess whether cases are appropriate for interviews through video conferencing. The physical distance and the fact that refugees are not in the same room may affect interviewers' ability to quickly develop a rapport of trust with refugees and assess credibility and family dynamics. Unexpected and undesired interruptions may occur due to connection problems. Many of these constraints can be addressed by providing a thorough briefing to refugees / interpreters prior to interviews and through enhanced technology; yet there may be certain cases that are not appropriate to be interviewed through video conferencing. Such cases usually include highly sensitive or complex cases, which require extended and very detailed interviews. Refugees who are survivors of torture, violence or under great emotional stress may not feel comfortable in being interviewed other than in person.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of case profiles that require careful consideration and/or additional safeguards before conducting resettlement interviews through video conferencing:

- Refugees with highly sensitive and complex refugee claims
- Refugees with high profile or sensitive cases who face imminent or serious protection problems in the country of asylum

⁴ Certain resettlement countries' legislation requires interviews in person.

⁵ See also UNHCR, *Confidentiality Guidelines*, 1 August 2001, IOM/071/2001 – FOM/068/2001, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3be17dfd4.html>

⁶ With the technical standards described in Section III in place, encryption levels are sufficiently solid given today's technology; however, this does not guarantee that they cannot be decrypted. Although such risks may be minimal, should a given third party have interests in listening to the interviews and have means and expertise to decrypt, the sessions may be heard. Those involved in the video conferencing should be aware of these risks.

- Refugees who will be interviewed on sensitive issues including:
 - Survivors of violence and torture who have experienced rape or other sexual assault, physical violence, psychological abuse, trafficking, or other practices amounting to torture
 - Women and girls at risk and Children at risk who have survived sexual or gender-based violence
 - LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) refugees
- Refugees with disabilities / serious medical conditions that impact their ability to participate in an interview

UNHCR needs to carefully consider the appropriateness of cases through video conferencing on a case-by-case basis. There may be situations where an interview through video conferencing is the only available option for the concerned refugee with a complex or sensitive case to have her/his case processed for resettlement. In such situations, prior consultation with the resettlement country to which the case is being submitted, the refugees concerned, as well as the Resettlement Service at UNHCR Headquarters is required.

As standard procedure, UNHCR offices will identify and draw the attention of the resettlement country to such cases by providing:

- a) a brief explanation of the reason for the recommendation to process the case via video conferencing despite its complex nature, and
- b) suggestions to mitigate the challenges of conducting the interview through video conferencing (e.g. provision of additional information required by the resettlement countries prior to interviews, presence of a support UNHCR staff during interviews, selection of experienced interpreters where applicable).

Through this consultation process resettlement countries and UNHCR will agree on an approach to interviewing the cases in question.

III. Technical requirements and set up for interviews

Technical requirements

Installment of secure and encrypted connectivity which carries clear images and sounds is a prerequisite for the successful conduct of interviews through video conferencing. High-speed connectivity would contribute to efficiency of the interviews. Resettlement country interviewers may use UNHCR locations (Hubs or Capital), or their own facilities to connect refugees at field locations including in other countries. Proper technical set-up at each location (where interviewer is present) needs to be ensured prior to scheduling interviews. When using their own facilities, resettlement countries are encouraged to follow the UNHCR standard for technical requirements for video conferencing to the extent possible, since interviews are assisted by UNHCR at the organization's facilities.

The following equipment is the current UNHCR standard as recommended by the Division of Information Systems and Technology (DIST):

- Appropriate / Sufficient Bandwidth (BW)⁷ e.g. on VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal)
- Hard industry grade Codecs,⁸ preferably same on both sides, with 128K AES (Advanced Encryption Standards) encryption minimum built in
- 21 inch monitors (minimum)

⁷ Bandwidth refers to the amount of information that can be transmitted in an information channel. The higher the bandwidth is, the clearer the picture and the sound. While the benchmark value is 384 Kbps duplex dedicated, appropriate bandwidth is determined on a case-by-case basis.

⁸ Codec (Coder-Decoder) refers to video conferencing hardware that codes the outgoing video and audio signals and decodes the incoming signals.

- Conference Speakers
- Non-HD (Hard Disk) based DVD (Digital Versatile Disc) recorders (if recording of sessions will be required)
- Non re-Writable DVDs (if recording of sessions will be required)

IMPORTANT:

- Prior to any procurement of the hardware, UNHCR offices as well as resettlement country representatives should consult and seek advice on requirements of technical equipment from the ICT (Information Communication Technology) experts in DIST (e-mail contact: HQUSSD@unhcr.org) who will provide specific guidance applicable to the operational location including system compatibility.
- Given that system compatibility would differ from situation to situation, resettlement countries are requested to contact the Resettlement Service / relevant UNHCR offices for further information on the feasibility of interviews through video conferencing at a certain location.
- Always **conduct a test** prior to the actual interview session to verify connectivity, sound and images, and have a **back-up plan** in the event of connection failures or equipment problems.

Record of interviews and data security

In principle, recording of interview sessions is to be done by resettlement countries at their locations. Where the resettlement countries require UNHCR to record interview sessions, it is important to ensure proper storage of the data as well as its security. Resettlement countries holding the interview recordings are also requested to ensure safe storage, and to safely destroy the recordings when they are no longer required.

In exceptional instances where UNHCR offices are requested by resettlement countries to record the interview sessions, this should be done in read-only DVDs. The DVDs must be stored in secure, fire-resistant metal cabinets, which should be kept locked unless the designated staff need to remove the DVDs for the purpose of sending them to resettlement countries, or to safely destroy the data. Access to the DVDs should be limited to authorized staff, and the keys should be left with those staff only.

UNHCR offices should have a DVD storage log to record movement of DVDs with dates, name of staff handling the DVDs and what actions have been taken. Where it is required to send the DVDs by post, offices should use registered mailing system to ensure proper tracking of records and safe delivery to addressees.

In the event resettlement countries concerned request data to be destroyed by UNHCR, the authorized UNHCR staff should ensure that relevant DVDs are shredded and data safely destroyed. UNHCR staff should record these actions on a DVDs storage log and report back to resettlement countries concerned in writing including time, venue, and case number of DVDs being destroyed.

IV. Preparing for interviews

Planning for the interview (Annex 1)

As conducting interviews through video conferencing requires close collaboration between resettlement countries and UNHCR, resettlement countries are encouraged to complete [Annex 1](#), the *Pre-Interview Questionnaire For Resettlement Interviews Through Video Conferencing*, for better planning and coordination. The Pre-Interview Questionnaire helps clarify situation-specific preparations, including requirements related to facilities and services (e.g. whether interpreters are provided by resettlement countries or UNHCR and who covers costs) as detailed in Annex 1, Section 3, and resettlement country specific processing requirements (e.g. fast-track procedures and collection of biometrics / fingerprints) as detailed in [Annex 1, Section 6](#).

Suggested preparation for resettlement country interviewers (Annex 2)

Most of the resettlement country officials may already be aware of the specificities of resettlement interviewing through video conferencing. Collective experience shows, however, that it is prudent for resettlement countries and UNHCR offices to keep in mind key considerations detailed in [Annex 2](#).

Selecting an interpreter

UNHCR offices should follow the general guidance provided in the *Resettlement Handbook* Chapter 7.3.2 (www.unhcr.org/resettlementhandbook) to ensure that interpreters are selected for resettlement interviews through video conferencing according to agreed procedures. It is particularly important to verify the preferred language of the concerned refugees.

In addition, UNHCR offices need to address the following requirements:

- Back-up interpreter(s) is (are) available in case of need;
- Interpreters scheduled for resettlement interviews through video conferencing receive a thorough briefing similar to that provided to refugees;
- Where possible, it is preferable to use interpreters with previous experience / familiarity with conducting interviews through video conferencing.

Arranging for the interview set-up (Annex 3)

A non-exhaustive list outlining considerations specific to the set-up for resettlement interviews through video conferencing is included in [Annex 3](#). The set-up should ensure that interviewers and interviewees are in comfortable and secure surroundings so that both parties are able to engage fully in interviews through video conferencing. General guidance on interview preparations can also be found in the *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook* Chapters 4.6.2 and 7.3.

Briefing refugees and interpreters (Annex 4)

UNHCR offices need to provide a thorough briefing to refugees who will be interviewed by resettlement countries through video conferencing. Where applicable, interpreters must also be briefed. Annex 4 includes a non-exhaustive checklist of specific aspects of video conferencing that should be explained to refugees and interpreters prior to the interviews. Briefing will ensure that refugees and interpreters are fully aware of what the video conferencing entails and will help them be at ease during the interviews. These briefing sessions also provide an opportunity for refugees and interpreters to ask questions and address any concerns they may have in regard to the use of video conferencing.

Key points for refugees include the following:

- Inform the refugees of the date, venue, nature and purpose of the interviews.
- Collect additional information / clarifications before the interview as requested by the resettlement country to facilitate the interview process.
- Complete any documents to be filled in by the refugees prior to the interviews. The UNHCR office will send completed forms back to resettlement countries as agreed.
- Explain the technical aspects of the process, and provide practical advice as outlined in [Annex 4](#).
- Obtain written consent to conduct the interview by video conferencing from all interviewees over the age of 18. ([Annex 5](#)- Interview Consent Form)

Signing the interview consent form (Annex 5)

The agreement of refugees on the use of video conferencing should be obtained through the use of the Interview Consent Form included in Annex 5. All refugees over the age of 18 should sign the interview consent form prior to the resettlement interviews through video conferencing. Using an



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

interview consent form will reinforce the need to provide a thorough briefing by UNHCR staff and secure refugees' agreement to be interviewed through video conferencing, and when applicable, having these sessions recorded, stored and eventually destroyed.

Debriefing (Annex 6)

UNHCR offices are encouraged to conduct regular debriefing sessions with refugees interviewed by resettlement countries through the use of video conferencing as well as with interpreters where applicable, particularly at the early stages of the exercise in order to draw lessons from the experience. Resettlement countries are also encouraged to share their feedback through the post-interview questionnaire ([Annex 6](#)). This feedback will support further efforts jointly undertaken with resettlement countries to enhance the effective use of interviews by video conferencing.

Resettlement Service
Division of International Protection
February 2013

Annex 1 - Pre-interview Questionnaire for Resettlement Interviews through Video Conferencing

Instructions:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist with the planning and coordination of resettlement interviews through video conferencing. As conducting interviews through video conferencing requires UNHCR support, completion of this questionnaire is encouraged to facilitate preparations.

- Step 1: The resettlement country completes the questionnaire and sends it by email to the concerned UNHCR Office.
- Step 2: Upon receiving the questionnaire from the resettlement country, the UNHCR Office will update the questionnaire, specifically the “UNHCR remarks” fields, which will allow UNHCR to highlight, for example, operational limitations and return the updated questionnaire by email to the contact persons in the resettlement country.
- Step 3: The updated questionnaire can be sent back and forth between the UNHCR Office and the resettlement country until the requirements for the interviews through video conferencing are fully understood and reflected in the responses provided.

1. Principal contact persons

1.1 Resettlement Country []

Name	Title	Email / telephone / location / time zone etc.
<i>Note: Please note the main contact persons and interviewers. Where applicable, please record any note-taker or observer who will be in the same interview room as the interviewer.</i>		
<i>Remarks:</i>		

1.2 UNHCR Office in []

<i>The below listed UNHCR staff will be the main contact persons for the interviews through video conferencing and should be included in all relevant correspondence:</i>			
Name	Title	Email Address	Telephone / Mobile
<i>Please also copy all communications to the following staff in the UNHCR office(s) / Regional Resettlement Hubs / Regional Offices / Headquarters:</i>			
<i>Location:</i>			
Name	Title	Email Address	Telephone / Mobile



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

<i>Location:</i>			
<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>Telephone / Mobile</i>

2. Resettlement submissions

<p><i>Briefly describe the number and composition of cases for submission:</i></p> <p><i>Minimum time period (e.g. 3 weeks) before the scheduled interviews that UNHCR will send case submissions. (While UNHCR will do its best to ensure timely submission of cases, 3 weeks in advance of the interviews is a realistic target for most operations.)</i></p> <p><i>weeks</i></p>
<p><i>Remarks by resettlement country:</i></p>
<p><i>Remarks by UNHCR:</i></p>

3. Facilities and Services

<i>Facilities and Services Required</i>	<i>Who provides? Who covers costs?</i>
<p><i>Interpreters:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Remarks (e.g. number / languages):</i></p>	<p><i>Resettlement country comments:</i></p> <p><i>UNHCR comments:</i></p>
<p><i>Transport for UNHCR refugees to attend interview:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>Remarks:</i></p>	<p><i>Resettlement country comments:</i></p> <p><i>UNHCR comments:</i></p>
<p><i>Documents to be filled:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> prior to / <input type="checkbox"/> after interviews and</p> <p><i>sent back:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> electronically / <input type="checkbox"/> by post</p> <p><i>Remarks:</i></p>	<p><i>Resettlement country comments:</i></p> <p><i>UNHCR comments:</i></p>
<p><i>Documents to be printed:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> prior to / <input type="checkbox"/> after interviews</p> <p><i>Remarks:</i></p>	<p><i>Resettlement country comments:</i></p> <p><i>UNHCR comments:</i></p>
<p><i>Documents to be brought to the interviews by refugees:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><i>If 'Yes', please specify the type of document:</i></p>	<p><i>Resettlement country comments:</i></p> <p><i>UNHCR comments:</i></p>

<p>Is it necessary for UNHCR to send copies of the above documents prior to the interviews electronically or by post? If so, how long in advance? Please specify:</p> <p><i>*In principle, UNHCR is not able to send refugees' original documents to resettlement countries, however, it will send certified copies of these documents where required.</i></p>	
<p>Other facilities / services</p> <p>Specify:</p>	<p>Resettlement country comments:</p> <p>UNHCR comments:</p>
<p>Other facilities / services</p> <p>Specify:</p>	<p>Resettlement country comments:</p> <p>UNHCR comments:</p>
<p>Remarks by resettlement country:</p>	
<p>Remarks by UNHCR:</p>	

4. Interviews

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Period of interviews (dd/mm/yyyy): From To</i> ▪ <i>How many (total) interviews will be conducted each day? (approx.)</i> ▪ <i>How long will each interview take (hh:mm)? (approx.)</i> ▪ <i>The first interview each day will start at what time (hh:mm)? (approx.)</i> ▪ <i>The last interview each day will finish at what time (hh:mm)? (approx.)</i> ▪ <i>The lunch break each day will be at what time (hh:mm to hh:mm)? to (approx.)</i> ▪ <i>Is it mandatory for the entire family to be present for the interview?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>If 'No', please explain who should attend the interview and why not all family members:</i> ▪ <i>Who will prepare the interview schedules?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The interviewers will prepare the interview schedules [Note: interview schedules should be prepared at least 2 weeks in advance of the interviews to ensure proper notification and briefing to the refugees]</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>UNHCR is requested to prepare the interview schedules</i> ▪ <i>If UNHCR is requested to prepare the interview schedules, please provide further information and guidance to assist UNHCR in preparing the interview lists:</i>



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

- *Will the interviewers conduct an orientation / briefing for interpreter(s) prior to commencing interviews?*

Yes *If 'Yes', please specify when:*

No

Remarks by resettlement country:

Remarks by UNHCR:

5. Orientation, refugee medicals and travel

- *Briefly describe when and how country / cultural orientation will be provided to the refugees (e.g. materials, IOM's involvement) and specify whether UNHCR's assistance is required.*

- *Briefly describe when and how medical examinations will be conducted (if required) and specify whether UNHCR's assistance is required.*

- *Briefly describe specific information for visa processing.*

Remarks by resettlement country:

Remarks by UNHCR:

6. Fast-track procedures / Special requests

- *Briefly describe any fast-track procedures the resettlement country can offer to process urgent / emergency cases through video conferencing?*

- *Briefly describe any special requests the interviewers would like UNHCR to assist with (e.g. finger printing)?*

Remarks by resettlement country:

Remarks by UNHCR:

Annex 2 – Recommendations for Resettlement Countries

Pre-interview

- UNHCR encourages resettlement countries to complete the pre-interview questionnaire for resettlement interviews through video conferencing ([Annex 1](#)) to ensure coordination and better planning.
- Interviewers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with, or recall, specific aspects of conducting interviews through video conferencing, in particular:
 - Movements and actions can be interpreted differently due to limited view on the screen; for example, interviewers looking down to consult documents / files may be interpreted by refugees as a sign of disinterest on the part of interviewers;
 - Small noises such as flipping the documents may be transmitted as relatively large sound on the other end;
 - The room set-up needs to be adapted to the video conferencing, including lighting, removing objects in view to minimize distraction, and appropriate seating arrangements;
 - Interviews through video conferencing require a higher concentration level since both parties have to look at the camera rather than the image of the other part on the screen, and for this reason, appropriate breaks during the interview as well as sufficient intervals between the interviews need to be taken into consideration.
- Interviewers are requested to thoroughly examine the Resettlement Registration Forms (RRFs) prior to the interviews to ensure the completeness and effectiveness of the interviews.
- Copies of any documents / forms to be referred to in the interview could be sent electronically to the interviewing mission as agreed. Similarly, documents for refugees could be sent to the concerned UNHCR office in advance. Hard copies of such documents will be made available to refugees during the interviews and forms will be filled in by the refugees (UNHCR office will provide assistance to the extent possible and where resources are available) and sent back to the interviewers in time for the interviews. Some resettlement countries have used document reading equipment⁹ to facilitate document examination during the interview.
- In the context of resettlement selection mission, resettlement countries are in principle responsible for providing interpreters or bearing related costs if services are provided by UNHCR interpreters. In the context of interviews through video conferencing, experience has shown that it is more effective to have interpreters in the same locations as refugees, due to familiarity of accents. In situations where it has been decided that resettlement countries will use interpreter services in the same locations as refugees, UNHCR office will assist in verifying the preferred language of refugees and ensure that interpreters experienced in the video conferencing (if not who have received proper training) are assigned to the interviews. Further, UNHCR office will make back up interpreters available where required.
- UNHCR office will ensure that concerned refugees and interpreters receive briefing and counseling prior to the scheduled interviews on the specificities of the interviews through the video conferencing.
- Prior to commencing the actual interview sessions, it is strongly recommended that connectivity and sound tests are conducted to ensure the smooth conduct of the interviews.

⁹ For example, WolfVision's VZ-8 series Visualizers (details available at www.wolfvision.com)

- Where possible, it is recommended to conduct a brief “practice session” with interviewees prior to the commencement of the actual interview to familiarize them with the equipment and set up.

During the interviews

- The interviewers are requested to keep the speaker on throughout the interviews in order to ensure integrity. The UNHCR office will also ensure that this is the case on the side of interviewees.
- The UNHCR office will ensure that only persons involved in the interviews are allowed into the room. UNHCR staff members will remain on stand-by to provide necessary support to the interviews. In the majority of cases, selected interpreters are UNHCR staff and are able to provide such support throughout the interviews.
- The UNHCR office will ensure that the principal applicant and her/his family members included in the case are present during the interview unless separate interviews with certain individuals in the case are required.
- In order to provide additional assurance to refugees, the following points should be included in the interviewers’ introductory remarks:
 - Introduce all persons present in the room (such as note takers or observers) even if they will not be shown on the screen all the time. This will make refugees feel comfortable to learn the dynamics on the side of interviewers.
 - Reiterate the confidential nature of the interviews.
 - Explain the nature and purpose of the interviews.
 - Inform that refugees are allowed to request intervals and let the interviewers know if they are not able to hear properly the questions at any point of time.
- Interviewers are encouraged to ask concise questions and ensure regular manageable translation of the responses through interpreters.

Post-interviews

- UNHCR appreciates receiving feedback and suggestions for improvements from the interviewers regarding their experience utilizing the video conferencing through completion of the post-interview questionnaire ([Annex 6](#)). The UNHCR office will also conduct regular debriefing sessions with refugees interviewed to enhance the effective use of the video conferencing.

Annex 3 – Pre-Interview Set-up Checklist for UNHCR Offices

- Ensure encrypted and secure connection is installed.
- Minimize distracting glare and uneven lighting by pulling the shades on windows and doors and covering glass-framed wall hangings.
- Optimal combinations of natural day light with indoor lighting to prevent interference with the videoconference camera (e.g. direct sunlight into the camera or the monitor) and the quality of screen images.
- Make sure the room has adequate lighting, typically what would be used for standard office work. If it is too dark, persons at the other end will not be able to see the images clearly.
- Try to have a clean bare background with a neutral colour. If that is not possible, consider using a screen / curtain of a neutral colour.
- Keep all camera-visible areas neat and clean to avoid distraction.
- The camera is set up close to the screen (below or above) to help ensure that interviewees have the impression that the interviewers are looking at them (and not into space).
- The video conferencing microphone is tuned to work optimally in non-noisy environments, although noise suppression techniques are used.
- The video conferencing microphone is set up as close as possible to the interviewees and interpreters (where applicable) to ensure voices are clearly heard by interviewers.
- A test has been conducted prior to the actual interview sessions to verify connectivity, sound and images.
- A back-up plan is in place in the event of connection failures or equipment problems.
- UNHCR support staff and/or interpreters are familiarized with the use of the video conferencing equipment so that they can provide first-hand assistance to reconnect if communication links are disrupted.
- Ensure that video conferencing equipment is properly disconnected at the end of the interviews.

Annex 4 – Pre-Interview Briefing Checklist for Refugees and Interpreters

Following is a non-exhaustive list of specific aspects of video conferencing to explain to refugees and interpreters (as applicable):

- Given the limited view of the screen, refugees may not see all persons present on the other end of the line all the time. However, interviewers will be asked to introduce all persons present in the room (such as note takers or observers) at the beginning of the interview.
- UNHCR and the concerned resettlement country place utmost importance on ensuring the confidentiality of the interviews and are using highly reliable encrypted communication systems to secure the confidentiality of the interview sessions.
- Movements and actions can be interpreted differently due to limited view on the screen; for example, interviewers may need to look down to consult documents / files while refugees are responding to questions, but this does not mean that they are not paying attention to what is being said by refugees.
- Microphones pick up every noise including side conversations, rustling papers, moving chairs etc.
- The video conferencing microphone will be on throughout the interviews on both sites in order to ensure integrity.
- There is no need to worry if the screen freezes for a short while or there is a delay in sound transmission since this type of communication problems may happen. However, if such problem persists, inform the interviewers as well as UNHCR staff who is on stand-by.
- Interviewers will try to keep their questions clear and concise. Refugees also need to:
 - speak clearly, and directly into the microphone at a normal volume, and
 - allow time for the translation of the responses when interpreters are involved.
- Refugees are allowed to request intervals and let the interviewers know if they are not able to hear the questions properly at any point of time.
- UNHCR staff members will remain on stand-by to provide necessary support to the interviews; where required, UNHCR staff will remain in the same room as refugees to provide support during the interview session. In the majority of cases, selected interpreters are UNHCR staff and are able to provide such support throughout the interviews.
- Should resettlement countries request recording of the interview sessions through video conferencing, inform refugees and interpreters that the interviews will be recorded onto a read-only DVD. The DVD will be kept safely in a locked cabinet with limited access and will be destroyed (shredded) once the final decision by resettlement countries is issued.



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

Annex 5 - Interview Consent Form: Resettlement Interviews through Video Conferencing (template)

I, the undersigned, agree to be interviewed for the purpose of resettlement processing by _____ (name of resettlement country) through video conferencing. I have been fully briefed on specific aspects of resettlement interviews through video conferencing by _____ (name of UNHCR staff conducting briefing prior to video conferencing) and my attendance in the video conferencing is entirely voluntary.

[Where applicable] I agree that my interview session will be recorded upon request by _____ (name of resettlement country). I understand that the recorded data will be safely destroyed by UNHCR / resettlement country once a final decision on my resettlement case is taken by _____ (name of resettlement country).

Name of Principal Applicant

Registration Number

Case Number

Location

Signature of PRA

Date

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Name of Spouse

Signature of Spouse

Date

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Name of Dependant over age of 18

Signature

Date

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Name of Dependant over age of 18

Signature

Date

(dd/mm/yyyy)

[Where applicable]

Interpreter's Name

Location

Interpreter's Signature

Date

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Annex 6 - Post-interview Questionnaire for Resettlement Interviews through Video Conferencing

Resettlement country that conducted interviews through video conferencing:

Country where refugees reside:

Country where interviewers were located:

Period of interviews: from: to:

1. Information about the interviewers who conducted the interviews through video conferencing

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Email and Telephone</i>

2. Was a pre-interview questionnaire completed prior to the interviews through video conferencing? Yes No

3. The principal UNHCR contact person(s) in the country of refuge

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>Telephone / Mobile</i>

4. Please provide feedback from your experience utilizing the video conferencing as well as suggestions for improvements.

a) Technical Aspects (connectivity, sound and image quality, etc.)

Excellent Good Satisfactory Not Satisfactory

Comments / recommendations:

b) Interpretation Services (if applicable)

Excellent Good Satisfactory Not Satisfactory

Comments / recommendations:

c) Overall Satisfaction with Interview Method

Very Satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Unsatisfied

Comments / recommendations:

5. Please comment on your satisfaction with UNHCR's support provided to the interviewers and make any recommendations to improve the preparation for the interviews through video conferencing in the future.

Very Satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Unsatisfied

Comments / recommendations:

6. Please also make suggestions or recommendations for the resettlement country to adjust or further improve the effectiveness of the process.

Comments / recommendations:

7. Any other comments or recommendations regarding interviewing by video conferencing: