— Introduction —

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been registering the persons under its mandate since its inception in 1951. Gathering reliable data on populations of concern to the Office has been approached in a variety of ways through the years, often depending on the prevailing conditions, resources and ultimate use of the information collected. Although some registration policies, standards, procedures and systems have shared common elements, there has not been a comprehensive and unified approach to registration, documentation and data management in refugee situations – until now.

Purpose and scope

Registration is an essential tool for protection, for the management of operations, and for the achievement of durable solutions. This Handbook presents UNHCR's core methodology for refugee registration. The system is applicable to asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons of concern to the Office and can be used in the diverse environments in which UNHCR operates:

- emergencies and mass movements;
- urban areas, where refugee status determination (RSD) may be the norm;
- camps for new populations and stable camp situations; and
- when implementing durable solutions, including voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.

This unified approach to registration is based on several key policy decisions:

- UNHCR's registration system and processes will adhere to the minimum registration standards enumerated by UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom) in its Conclusion No. 91 of October 2001;[1]
- basic registration, meeting minimum standards, will be undertaken in the same way for asylum-seekers and refugees everywhere, and these approaches should also govern the registration of other persons of concern, such as internally displaced persons and stateless persons;
- an individual record, consisting of a prescribed minimum amount of core bio-data, will be established for each person of concern, from arrival through to solution; and
- minor variations are possible in registration procedures and in the information collected, depending on the operational context or the focus population.

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[1]   See Annex 1(a) for full text, and Section 1.3 – *Executive committee conclusions* – for more information.

Target audience

The Handbook is intended for use by UNHCR managers and their international and national staff involved in registration, and by government and non-governmental partners whose responsibilities include registration and documentation of asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons of concern, such as internally displaced persons.

Some registration practitioners may find that the registration system in use in their area of responsibility already corresponds to the standards set out in this Handbook. Others will identify gaps and can use the Handbook to find the most effective methods and tools to attain the desired minimum standards in registration and population data management.

Structure of the Handbook

The Handbook is divided into two parts:

Part I – *Chapter 1 through Chapter 7* – contains fundamental concepts of registration and population data management, including:

- basic definitions and policy considerations for registration;
- operational standards for registration and related activities;
- overview of the standard process for registration and population data management; and
- levels of registration and standards for information in different circumstances.

Part II – *Chapter 8 through Chapter 25* – contains specific "how-to" guidance for registration and related activities in different situations, including mass influxes, camp situations, urban contexts and durable solutions. It is organized according to the generic process described in Chapter 4 – *Generic Process,* and is designed to lead managers and other registration practitioners through all stages of registration, documentation, and population data management.

The Annexes at the end of the Handbook provide examples of the concrete tools needed to conduct registration activities and facilitate population data management. Included are the standard forms, categories and codes to be used in registration, standard registration forms, standard objectives and indicators for registration and related activities, and examples of the standard documentation to be provided to refugees and others of concern.

The Handbook is one of the main instruments of UNHCR's effort to standardize registration, population data management and documentation. Managers who find that their needs cannot be met by the standard procedures and tools it contains should contact the Population and Geographic Data Section (DOS) or the Desk to determine the appropriate course to take.

This provisional release of the Handbook does not provide definitive answers to all questions regarding registration. Some practices and techniques described in the following

chapters will be more fully tested and then modified or re-formulated in future to improve their effectiveness.

Registration practitioners should regard this Handbook as work-in-progress that will be updated to reflect developments in the area of registration strategy design, methodologies, techniques and tools.

A final edition of the Handbook for Registration will be issued in the summer of 2004.

**Recommendations for use
of this Handbook:**

- Understand the principles and standards for refugee registration (Part I) for an overview of registration needed to set objectives, monitor activities, and supervise registration practitionners.

- Refer to Part II – the "how-to section" – for detailed guidance and instruction on how to undertake registration, documentation and population-data management activities.

- Use the generic process (Chapter 4) to navigate your way through Part II of the Handbook.

- Use the measures in Section 5.3 to improve your registration, documentation and population data management activities.

- Share your plans for registration with managers and experienced staff in your operation. Consult with the relevant units at Headquarters to clarify the use of the tools and techniques described in this Handbook.

- Ask for support (expert staff, coaching, training, or materials) as you need it.

Part One:
— Principles and Standards —

1. The Basics

Asylum-seekers and refugees have participated in registration processes even before UNHCR was founded. Until the late 1970s, those systems kept pace, to a greater or lesser degree, with the evolution of refugee situations. In Southeast Asia, for example, registration of Vietnamese boat people and Cambodians living in holding centers was, on the whole, comprehensive and effective.

During the 1980s, however, registration became more difficult in some of the larger refugee operations, notably in Pakistan, Iran, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia. During these operations, the purposes and benefits of "enumeration" were understood differently by the various governments and refugee populations involved. As a result, registration was inconsistent, at best. With no reliable information about the refugee population, local residents became mixed in with the refugees and ration-distribution systems became unmanageable.

A package of guidelines and registration tools issued by UNHCR in 1994, titled *"Registration: A Practical Guide for Field Staff"*, drew on further experiences in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. In 2001, the Executive Committee of UNHCR issued its first conclusion dedicated to registration, reiterating the importance of registration as a tool for protection and, under a programme entitled "Project Profile", standards and tools for registration were to be incorporated into a comprehensive system.

This Handbook takes the evolution of registration a step further than the 1994 guide: it offers a core methodology applicable in most of the situations in which UNHCR assists refugees and other persons of concern. In place of large scale head-counts for enumeration purposes, it describes how to achieve a continuous process in which the individual record of a manageable number of people is updated and improved on a regular basis. In places where different approaches to registration are adopted for camp and urban situations, it describes a common set of standards and data which varies only in its level of detail from one scenario to another. In place of static population information, this Handbook describes how to achieve a living profile of the population that remains an effective tool for protection and in the search for durable solutions. This unified approach to registration will help ensure that refugees are better protected and that appropriate durable solutions are found.

Registration of refugees and asylum-seekers remains the responsibility of States. UNHCR assumes an operational role for registration only if needed. In all such cases, this role should be assumed jointly with the authorities of the host country, and/or the capacity of the host country should be developed to enable it to take on this responsibility at a later stage.

1.1 Definition of registration

For the purposes of this Handbook, registration is defined as follows:

> Refugee registration is the recording, verifying, and updating of information on persons of concern to UNHCR with the aim of protecting and documenting them and of implementing durable solutions.

While this Handbook uses the term "refugees" on some occasions, all persons of concern to UNHCR are covered by the standards and procedures detailed in the Handbook unless indicated otherwise. This includes asylum-seekers, returning refugees, resettled refugees, stateless and internally displaced persons who are of concern to the High Commissioner.

1.2 Registration and refugee protection

Registration is a fundamental component of international protection and it is the right of persons who may be of concern to UNHCR to be registered. Registration recognizes an individual to be someone of concern, or potentially of concern, to the High Commissioner and their continued need for protection. It is a first step in formalizing the protection relationship between the government and/or UNHCR and the refugee by allowing the refugee or asylum-seeker to avail themselves of the protection and assistance they need and permitting the government and UNHCR to provide protection and assistance.

> ➢ *At all times, registration should be undertaken with full respect for the confidential nature of the relationship between the protecting agent – government or UNHCR – and the person concerned.*

Registration helps **protect against refoulement,** arbitrary arrest and detention by making people known to UNHCR and the host government as persons of concern. It helps individuals, families and other groups of refugees get basic access to the rights, services, and assistance they need. Accurately registering children helps to **prevent military recruitment and to ensure family unity,** and, in the case of separated children, to **reunite families.** Registration also helps to ensure that decisions about **durable solutions are voluntary** by recording an individual's agreement to a particular solution**.** Accurate registration is also essential for **identifying cases** for which resettlement and local integration are the most appropriate solutions.

Registration can **foster freedom of movement** and minimize dependence. Registration should not mean that persons are confined to the place in which they registered. Nomads, for example, should not be forced to stay where they are registered or they will lose their livelihoods.

Registration is crucial for identifying **those who are at risk** and **those who have special needs.** These people are often the least likely to come forward and make their needs known. While UNHCR has clear guidelines on protecting refugee women and children, they cannot be fully implemented unless the groups covered by the guidelines are identified.

Reliable population information is needed at an early stage, regardless of the length of time people will remain in a country of asylum, in order to identify and implement appropriate **durable solutions.** Lack of information or collection of information for too narrow a purpose or too short a planning horizon can hinder future decision-making and slow the search for durable solutions.

The **number of people requiring protection and assistance** determines the amount of food, water and non-food items needed and the extent of shelter, health and sanitation facilities that should be made available. Planning figures must both closely reflect the true size of the population and be sensitive to changing circumstances. Donors increasingly call on UNHCR to justify its fund raising requests with details about the people involved. The information UNHCR provides to donors should include both an overview of the affected population and details of groups of particular concern within the population.

Information on where people come from helps to **prepare voluntary repatriation programmes** and to assess whether an area can absorb large numbers of returnees. Registration in countries of asylum can help to rebuild national civil registries in the event of return when the data can be made available to local and central authorities in the country of origin.

Deregistration ensures that registers are updated with information about progress towards the achievement of solutions, as well as the current status of persons of concern to UNHCR.

1.3   Executive Committee conclusions

In October 2001, UNHCR's **Executive Committee** issued **Conclusion No. 91**(LII) on refugee registration (see Annex 1(a) for the full text of the Conclusion). The Conclusion reaffirms the importance of registration as a protection tool and sets certain basic guidelines for all registration processes:

- Registration should be a continuing process that records essential information both at the time of initial displacement and changes in the refugee population, such as births, deaths, new arrivals, and departures occur.
- Registration processes should adhere to the fundamental principles of confidentiality.
- Registration should be easily accessible and take place in a safe and secure location.

- Registration should be conducted in a non-threatening and impartial manner, with respect for the safety and dignity of refugees.
- Personnel conducting the registration should be adequately trained and registration teams should include an adequate number of female staff.
- Whenever possible, refugees should be registered individually and the following information should be recorded: identity document and number, photograph, name, sex, date of birth (or age), marital status, special protection and assistance needs, level of education, occupation (skills), household (family) size and composition, date of arrival, current location and place of origin.

ExCom Conclusion No. 91 is important in that it represents an agreement between UNHCR and governments on how to conduct registration activities and the operational standards that apply. ExCom members expect UNHCR to make every effort to follow the standards and to monitor their implementation by States.

Other conclusions of the Executive Committee are pertinent to registration and documentation, covering issues such as documentation for all persons of concern including women, and the role of registration as a tool of protection. A list of the important conclusions and the paragraphs relevant to registration appear in Annex 1(b).

1.4   Relevant international instruments for registration and documentation

Requirements and standards for refugee registration are defined, albeit not uniformly, in numerous international and regional instruments, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR's Statute, the 1969 OAU Convention, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, and UNHCR's Agenda for Protection, among others.

The 1951 Convention stipulates that contracting states will provide the High Commissioner with information and statistical data on the condition of refugees (Article 35), will provide refugees with identity papers and travel documents when refugees do not have any of their own (Articles 27 and 28), and will ensure the issuance of documents and certificates as would normally be issued to aliens on their territory (Article 25).

The Agenda for Protection, adopted at the 53rd Session of the Executive Committee in June 2002, makes specific reference to enhancing the registration and documentation of refugees and asylum-seekers under Goal 1, Objective 11. See Annex 1(b) for relevant text.

The table in Annex 1(b) provides a brief overview of the relevant articles and provisions related to registration and documentation in the international instruments and other legal texts concerning refugees and displaced persons. For the actual text, please refer to the instruments themselves.

1.5 Registration and protection of refugee children

The needs and rights of refugee children, including adolescents, are often overlooked in policy-making and operations, although their needs, and their legal and social status, can be significantly different from those of adults. Refugee boys and girls are first and foremost children. Their need and right to a family, to education, and to protection against exploitation, abuse, and violence require special attention.[2]

> **Refugee children** are those persons who are refugees or others of concern under the age of 18.

The registration of refugee boys and girls is an important step in ensuring their protection. More than with any other group, the protection of children can be linked to their registration. Unregistered children are often "invisible" to UNHCR, operational partners, the host government and the international community, making it difficult if not impossible to provide them international protection.

Specific risks faced by unregistered boys and girls in refugee or refugee-like situations include military recruitment, sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, early and forced marriage, slavery, trafficking, permanent separation from families, and unauthorized and illicit adoption.

Registration of children should always be a priority.

The registration of children should always be a priority when registering persons of concern to UNHCR. At each stage of an operation – emergency through reintegration– registering children helps UNHCR better meet its goals and objectives. When planning registration, staff should examine the context in which they are working to understand what difficulties may arise in ensuring that all children are registered.

Refugee girls, whether young children or adolescents, are particularly at risk of being excluded from or abused during the registration process. Parents or caretakers may not want to register girls to avoid interference when marrying them for dowries at a young age. They may not want

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[2]   Progress Report on Refugee Children and Adolescents, including UNHCR's Strategy for Follow-Up to the Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (EC/47/SC/CRP.19 – 2001 October).

to declare separated girls living with them and who are working as unpaid servants. Registration may be organized so that it is impossible for parents to bring all their children to the registration location and parents are forced to leave girls at home. Humanitarian workers may extort bribes or sexual favors from teenage girls in exchange for access to registration formalities. These and other barriers to registration can be overcome with well conceived registration plans.

Throughout the Handbook, and particularly in Part II, specific guidance is provided for setting up and maintaining registration systems and procedures that meet the needs of children. Given its relevance to protection and registration, **birth registration,** which is not the same as registration of persons of concern to UNHCR, is addressed in Chapter 6 – *Registration of Birth, Death, and Marriage.*

Key references related to children and registration:

> *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care,*. UNHCR (1994).

> *Working with Children: ARC Training Module,*. Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC), UNHCR and Save the Children (2001).

1.6   Unaccompanied and separated children

In armed conflict, mass population displacements and other crises, children become separated from their families or from other adults responsible for them. These children are at particular risk, as they are often deprived of care and protection.

> **Separated children** are those boys and girls separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. Separated children may therefore include boys and girls accompanied by other adult family members.

> **Unaccompanied children** are children who have been separated from both parents and or other relatives and who are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Unaccompanied and separated children must be quickly identified, registered and documented – no matter who is conducting the registration. This will help in tracing their families and in providing protection and assistance to them. The registration of unaccompanied and separated children is an essential part of the humanitarian response in any refugee context.

The *identification* of unaccompanied and separated children must be approached carefully to ensure that all genuine cases are found while not attracting false cases. False cases are those in which parents or caretakers intentionally separate themselves from children in order to gain access to additional entitlements or because they believe that their children will be better cared for in

institutions or under special programmes. There is also a danger that separated children could become "commodities" themselves, if they are linked to additional entitlements or preferential treatment. These problems are more directly related to the management of entitlements, such as rations, than to registration itself. However, registration provides a good opportunity to prevent such problems from occurring. Clear information about the identification, registration, and documentation of separated children must be provided to the population concerned through information campaigns, counselling and adequate training of registration staff.

Separated children should be registered and documented as soon as possible after they have been identified. Vital information should be collected from the children and from anyone who knows them at the initial registration. There may be only one opportunity to find information about very young children as children's memories fade and clues to their identity, such as clothes and other possessions, may get lost.

The agreed, inter-agency standard form for the ***registration*** and ***documentation***[3] of unaccompanied and separated children should be used in all cases. The form is shown here in Annex 6(d).[4] The child's identity, current living situation, separation history, and opinions and wishes should be documented. Registration forms should always be kept by or with the child and any changes in location should be recorded immediately. A variety of photographs should be taken as soon as possible after identification, particularly in the case of younger children.

Registration interviews should be conducted in a quiet place and by qualified staff. Registration sites need to be prepared to accommodate this activity. It is also useful to have food and drink available and some pencils and paper for drawing.

Family tracing must be carried out for unaccompanied and separated children at the earliest possible time. All those engaged in tracing should use the same approach, with standardized forms and mutually compatible systems. Both UNHCR and ICRC have a mandate for undertaking cross-border tracing activities.

Sharing information within and between countries is essential for tracing, but protection and the best interests of the child govern both the type of information and the extent to which it is shared. The basic principle is to share the maximum amount of information necessary for family tracing, but at minimal risk to the child and the family. It is important to know who will have access to the information collected.

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[3] The terms 'registration' and 'documentation' have specific meanings when working with unaccompanied and separated children. These meanings are slightly different than when used in refugee registration in general and in this Handbook.

[4] As of July 2003, the standard form for registering and documenting unaccompanied and separated children has been accepted by UNHCR and ICRC. Other agencies and bodies working with unaccompanied and separated children are considering adopting the form and its standards.

Care arrangements and guardianships for unaccompanied and separated children must also be carefully documented and recorded. Organizations must ensure the permanent preservation of records on unaccompanied and separated children. Later in life, the children may wish to obtain information on their origins.

There is a wealth of guidance, policy and training materials dealing with unaccompanied and separated children that complement this Handbook, including:

> *Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children.* ICRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, IRC, Save the Children UK, World Vision International (2003).

> *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care*. UNHCR (1994).

> *Separated Children: ARC Training Module*. Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC), UNHCR and Save the Children (2001).

1.7 Registration and protection of refugee women

The complete and accurate registration of women enhances the protection of women refugees and other women of concern. When UNHCR and others know who the women of concern are, where they are, their family and household composition, and other personal data related to registration, their individual protection and assistance needs can be assessed, they can be targeted with appropriate interventions, and their situation can be monitored over time.

In 2001 the High Commissioner committed the Office to *individual registration and documentation of all refugee men and women,* long recognized as a key means of advancing the rights of refugee women.

Accessing assistance and services and enjoying basic rights, including freedom of movement and family reunification, is often dependent on proof of identity. Refugee women who lack adequate registration and personal documentation, including identity cards, marriage certificates, divorce certificates, and birth certificates for their children have sometimes been denied freedom of movement and access to basic rights. Refugee woman have been unable to claim or inherit property upon return, to seek support for children from estranged husbands or partners, or have been arrested and detained by police because they do not have proper documents. Unfortunately, refugee registration cards and identity documents are often issued only to husbands and male relatives. Refugee women should be individually registered and documented to ensure that they are not dependent on male family members for access to food and essential services.

Women's access to and equal treatment in registration processes may be compromised by direct or indirect forms of gender-based discrimination. If women cannot access the registration process, or if they are unfairly or unequally treated during it, the international community's ability to protect these women is severely diminished.

*Excom 91 and other Executive Committee conclusions require that
refugee woman should be registered individually.*

In some locations sexual exploitation has been linked to registration processes. Special care must be taken to ensure that single women are not put at risk during registration and that women are encouraged and permitted to fully represent themselves during registration interviews.

The new guidelines and standards for registration reflected in this Handbook are designed to ensure that registration systems and procedures protect women's access to protection, assistance and livelihoods.

Refugee women and men must participate equally in and benefit from the registration process. This means that:

✔   women and men are consulted in registration-planning processes, and woman leaders monitor the registration process and access to registration points;

✔   equal number of women officers, interviewers and interpreters work in registration activities;

✔   personnel carrying out registration activities are trained in gender-sensitive issues;

✔   the registration process is used as a mechanism to identify women with any special protection concerns and to ensure proper follow-up;

✔ women and girls are individually registered and receive individual documentation to the same standards as men and boys; and

✔ registration activities are designed to facilitate women's access to registration procedures – physically, socially, economically and culturally.

Throughout the Handbook, and particularly in Part II, specific guidance is provided for setting up and maintaining registration systems and procedures that meet the needs of women refugees and other women of concern.

1.8 Confidentiality and sharing identity information

Guidelines for sharing information about individual cases collected and kept by UNHCR are contained in the "Confidentiality Guidelines", IOM/71/2001 – FOM/68/2001 of 24 August 2001, which discuss the terms under which UNHCR may share information about persons of concern with requesting parties, including the individuals themselves.

UNHCR may be asked to or may have to share information about individuals of concern with non-UNHCR parties. Information about persons of concern may be shared when there is a legitimate reason to do so, and then only the minimum necessary information should be shared. Key points regarding confidentiality and the sharing of information are:

✔ In general, an individual's personal information should be kept strictly confidential and measures taken to prevent the unauthorized dissemination of the information.

✔ UNHCR should take proper precautions to ensure that the physical safety and protection of the individual and his or her family members are not compromised.

✔ International humanitarian law guarantees an individual's right to privacy. In principle, the consent of the individual is necessary before information can be shared with other parties, including the country of asylum, an implementing partner or a commercial entity.

✔ When information is shared, effective measures must be taken to ensure that information concerning a particular person does not reach third parties that might use the information for purposes incompatible with human rights law and principles.

✔ Governments of asylum have a legitimate interest in obtaining basic bio-data about the persons on their territory.

There are instances when the sharing of information may be useful or necessary for the purposes of international protection or durable solutions. For example, registration information may be shared with the country of asylum and with other partners when producing and managing identity documents.

UNHCR may also need to share information with host governments or with potential resettlement countries even at the earliest stages of an operation. For this reason permission to share information for such purposes, while in keeping with the Confidentiality Guidelines, is collected during registration (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1.2 – *Level 2 registration)*.

Staff should be familiar with the Confidentially Guidelines and refer to them for more information.

➢ *The confidentiality of the relationship between the refugee and UNHCR, or between the refugee and the government offering international protection, must not be breached.*

2. The Unified Approach

This Handbook describes a unified approach to the registration of asylum-seekers, refugees and others of concern to UNHCR.

The unified approach recognizes registration as a core UNHCR protection activity and encompasses the registration process, the documentation of refugees and others of concern, and the management and use of population data. The three "cornerstones" of this approach are (shown in the figure on page 19):

- **Operational standards** for registration, documentation and population data management activities.

- **Standard data set** to be gathered and verified about individuals of concern as part of registration and data management activities;

- **Standard generic process** for undertaking registration and population data management activities; and

These three mutually reinforcing components are described in Chapter 3 – *Operational Standards for Registration and Documentation,* in Chapter 4 – *Overview of the Generic Process,* and in Chapter 5 – *Standard Data Set and Registration Levels*.

This unified approach is also is based on three principles that ensure that the minimum standards for registration, documentation, and population data management are achieved while allowing managers to tailor their approach to the particular operational context in which they are working.

➢ *The first principle of the unified approach is that teams engaged in all aspects of refugee protection and assistance will work with a common set of core registration data, gathered through a common process and adhering to common standards.*

Staff involved in status determination, resettlement, voluntary repatriation and camp-based protection and assistance will follow a coherent and standardized registration strategy so that any one team that begins registration anticipates the needs of other teams at later stages. Even when the initial information collected must be limited, such as during a mass influx, it will still be sound and can be validated and improved over time. In this way, the same registration record can eventually be used to issue identity documents or to process the individual or family for status determination, voluntary repatriation or resettlement as soon as the need or opportunity arises.

➢ *The second principle of the unified approach is that a sustainable registration process will focus on the continuous updating, validation, and use of existing information about individuals of concern.*

The unified approach takes existing data and available information as its starting point and uses complementary information to verify, validate and improve levels of confidence in the accuracy of the existing records. This continuous updating of the same record of information continues until the individual is no longer of concern and is deregistered.

Under the unified approach, continuous verification and validation of registration records allows teams to interview or review any individual or family **at any time,** and to focus on the person's continuing protection and solutions needs. The registration team can easily progress from a headcount-type registration procedure, often used during emergencies and mass influxes, to an orderly routine in which a manageable number of people is processed in a dignified manner each day.

Some operations, particularly offices working in refugee status determination in urban settings, have always used and updated a single and continuous record for each individual. For other operations, this approach may require a complete revision of the way in which registration is conducted.

Authorities, operational partners, other UNHCR offices, team members and the refugees themselves will become more confident in the accuracy of the records and the integrity of the documentation issued. As a result, the population will feel better protected from arbitrary decisions and mistaken identity, will have fairer access to assistance entitlements and solutions opportunities, and will thus have stronger incentives to provide truthful and comprehensive information.

➢   *The third principle of the unified approach is that procedures used are flexible enough to adapt to different situations and to evolve over time.*

The unified approach aims to improve registration information for camp-based populations while at the same time ensuring the quality of information necessary for individual status determination and resettlement. The approach is flexible enough to be applicable within the wide variety of environments in which registration takes place.

Three different levels of registration are established by the unified approach corresponding to different operational objectives and constraints. Managers must determine the level of registration appropriate to their situation in terms of their priorities, their operational goals and objectives and the resources available. With additional resources, including time, and in response to changed operational requirements, managers should improve the level of registration for any given population until, at the earliest opportunity, the full set of standards, processes, and data is achieved.

Tips and an overview of the progression for improving registration over time is provided in Chapter 5 – *Standard Data Set and Registration Levels,* while Part II of the Handbook offers specific guidance for registration in different operational contexts.
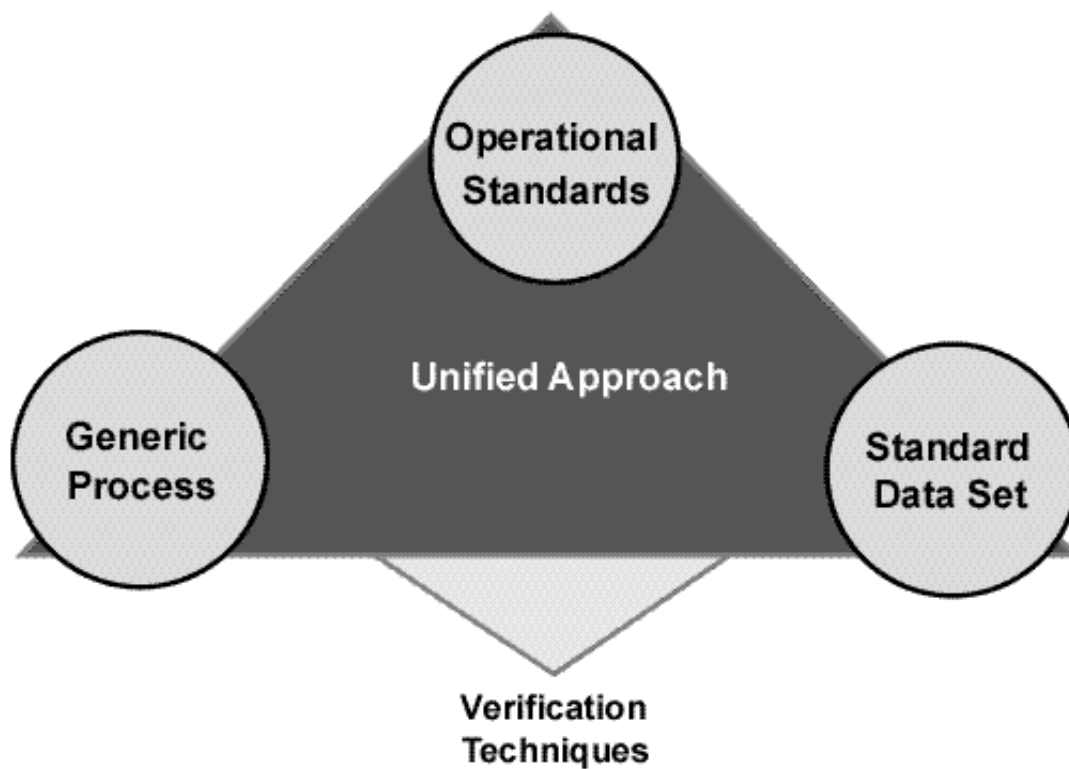
3. Operational Standards for Registration and Documentation

The standards defined below are based on principles and considerations agreed to by UNHCR and its Executive Committee. They provide specific guidance on how registration operations should be conducted to achieve legal and physical protection goals. ExCom Conclusion no. 91 (2001) is the principal framework used to select and set standards. As with other aspects of the unified approach, the standards take into account many of the operational constraints under which UNHCR routinely works, while recognizing the importance of maintaining a consistent approach to registration.

3.1 How to use the standards

These standards **apply to all persons of concern** to UNHCR, namely asylum-seekers (regardless of the outcome of their application for asylum), refugees, returnees and, under certain circumstances, internally displaced persons. States and other partners conducting registration activities should also be guided by these standards.

They are **specific measures** for assessing current registration, documentation and population-management activities (see Chapter 8 – *Assess Current Situation).* Evaluation and reporting on registration activities are also conducted according to these standards (see Section 7.6 – *Monitoring and reporting on registration activities).*

The degree of past compliance with the standards will **determine the future objectives** for registration in any given operation and for any given population. Registration strategies should state which of the standards the operation will achieve and which it will not (see Chapter 10 – *Determine Registration Strategy).*

Managers must evaluate each situation and decide the best registration system for a given context. The standards allow operations to **measure protection implications** and **prioritize resources** accordingly when the standards cannot be met. Compliance with each of the standards can be assessed using the matrix Annex 2 (Assessment Matrix). See Chapter 8 – *Assess Current Situation – for more on using this matrix.*

These standards may not cover registration and population data requirements for every situation. Many field offices already seek additional information for specific needs, such as for processing resettlement cases or determining the status of individual refugees. Alternatively, conditions may be such that it is difficult to adhere fully or immediately to the standards. There may be a lack of security, of operational capacity, and/or of access to the refugees. These constraints should be monitored closely so that the full set of standards can be applied as soon as possible.

3.2 Table of standards (next page)

Table 1: Table of Operational Standards for Registration, Documentation, and Population Data Management

Standards	Relevant Sources (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments)
1. Access to registration	
1.a Persons of concern are registered within a period of three months after their arrival in the territory of asylum. Registration records are verified and updated continuously – at a minimum every 12 months. Changes in global population figures are updated once a month with population increases and decreases.	Registration should be done as soon as possible after arrival in territory of asylum. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (g)]* Registration should be a continuing process to record essential information at the time of initial displacement as well as any subsequent demographic and other changes in the population. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (i)]*
1.b Registration is free of charge at all times, and no fee may be taken at any time for any services offered or provided. Registration is a voluntary process open to all persons of concern regardless of sex, age, race, religion, nationality, or basis for application for international protection. Registration takes place where and when: a) there is no active conflict in proximity of hosting locations; b) participation in registration does not expose persons of concern to physical risk, intimidation, or other threats; and c) the process of registration itself will not directly or indirectly contribute to the legitimization of an unsafe and insecure situation for the persons of concern. Registration takes place in locations physically, economically and socially accessible to the majority of persons of concern. Provisions are made to accommodate the registration requirements and concerns of women, children, and those with special needs.	Registration process should be easily accessible. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iii)]* Registration should be conducted in a non-intimidating, non-threatening, and impartial manner. Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iv)] Registration should take place in a safe and secure location. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iii)]*

Arrangements are made to register those persons physically, economically, or socially unable to access registration, including those in hospitals and in detention.

Registration is done in a protected location with minimal waiting, sufficient access to water and sanitation, protection from the elements, and adequate privacy.

2. Process of Registration

2.a	Persons of concern are informed of the purpose, intended outcome, their rights and their obligations before registration takes place. Persons of concern are consulted when preparing the registration process and their views and concerns are reflected in the design of the registration system. Registration is conducted with due regard for the dignity and culture of the persons to be registered.	Registration should be conducted in a non-intimidating, non-threatening, and impartial manner. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iv)]* Registration should be conducted with due respect for safety and dignity of the refugees. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iv)]*
2.b	Registration is conducted through an individual interview of the person of concern. Information is always solicited directly from the individual concerned to the extent possible. This includes adults – both male and female – as well as girls and boys. All family members are present for registration, unless unable to be for valid reasons.	Registration should be done on an individual basis. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (vi)]*
2.c	Women being registered have the opportunity to be assisted by women at any stage of the registration process, particularly during the interview stage.	Personnel conducting registration should include a sufficient number of female staff. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v)]*
2.d	At least one member of the UNHCR team has prior experience in organizing and managing a registration activity of an equivalent nature and size.	Personnel conducting registration should be adequately trained. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v)]*

For each operation, an individual is designated by the senior manager to perform the role of manager or coordinator of registration and related activities.

All registration staff should participate in prior training about the principles of international protection, the purpose of the current registration activity, the specific tasks that will be required from them, the UNHCR code of conduct, and age and gender concerns.

Registration plans are shared with and advice is sought from technical experts in the region or at Headquarters.

Registration, documentation, and population-data management instructions and procedures are written down and are shared with all registration staff.

Personnel conducting registration should have clear instructions on requirements and procedures.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v)]

2.e   A 'complaints desk' function for covering registration-related activities exists within each office.

Registration records (paper forms, electronic records or other) are never discarded. (this standard is under review).

Access to registration data is by authorization only; authority and sources of authorization are kept on record.

Audit trails of the location and status of registration records and of any additions, modifications, or deletions in the registration data are maintained.

Registration records are stored in standard formats and according to standard methodologies for filing and record keeping.

Registration materials (forms, cards, tokens, etc.) are inventoried and kept securely locked.

Special measures should be taken to preserve integrity of registration process.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v)]

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3.   Data to be Gathered and Recorded

3.a   The following information is recorded and verified for each person of concern individually:

Basic information should be recorded about each person of concern.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (vi)]

1. Name
2. Unique identifying registration number
3. Date and place of birth
4. Sex
5. Existing identity documents
6. Marital status
7. Special protection and assistance needs
8. Level of education
9. Occupational skills
10. Ethnic origins*
11. Religion*
12. Language*
13. Household and family composition, including parents' names
14. Date of arrival
15. Current location and address
16. Place of origin
17. Photograph

Each individual registered is assigned a unique numerical identifier that is maintained throughout the life of the individual's record.

A unique numeric identifier does not contain any information that might directly or indirectly put the individual at risk at the present or any later time.

Basic information elements not specified in Conclusion no. 91 but agreed in subsequent discussions as essential basic information elements.

3.b   The following information is collected for every family and/or household:
  1. Family/household number
  2. Family/household size
  3. Family/household composition, including relationships and roles
  4. Family/household members' names, sex, and age cohorts (age groupings)
  5. Family/household location (present address)

  Each family and/or household is assigned a unique identifying number.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Article 23

Recommends that Governments take appropriate measures to ensure that the unity of the family is maintained…

[Executive Committee Conclusion 85 – 1998, (v), (u), (w)]

3.c   Registration records – family, household, and individual – are updated with the following categories of information whenever such events occur and are reported:

  –   Births
  –   New arrivals

Registration should be a continuing process to record essential information at the time of initial displacement as well as any subsequent demographic and other changes in the population.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (i)]

– Departures
– Deaths
– Divorce/Marriage
– Current location
– Current protection, assistance and solutions status
– Changes in family/household composition (size, members, location)
– Updating of any personal data when changed or corrected

3.d	The established categories and codes are used when gathering and recording data of the following types: – Age cohorts (age groupings) – Refugee status – Educational level – Occupational skills – Place of origin – Current location – Special protection and assistance needs	Guidelines should ensure the quality and comparability of registered data, especially regarding special needs, occupational skills, and level of education. *[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (c)]*

4. Documentation

4.a	Identity documents and entitlement documents should be separate documents. All adults within the family or household sign statements or declarations regarding protection and durable solutions on behalf of the household. All persons of concern are issued individual identity documents with a photograph and a unique number. All refugees and asylum-seekers are issued with documents testifying to their status as a person of concern to UNHCR Names of all adult women and men in a household appear on household or family entitlement documents, or the name of the other person most likely to be collecting entitlements on behalf of the household or family	Contracting states shall issue identity papers to any refugee in their territory who does not posses a valid travel document. *[Articles 27 and 28 of 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees]* Global Consultations, 3rd Track, Refugee Women (EC/GC/02/8 of 25 April 2002) Refugees should be issued documentation certifying their refugee status. *(28th session Excom, A/32/12/Add.1, para. 53)* Asylum applicants should be provided with provisional documentation to ensure protection against expulsion or *refoulement* until a decision is taken by the competent authorities in regard to

concerned.

Where needed, individual entitlement documents are issued to all persons of concern.[

Identity and entitlement documents contain the design and security features necessary to prevent wear and tear, forgery, illicit destruction, and manipulation.

Materials and process for issuing and renewing identity documents are strictly controlled.

their application
Executive Committee Conclusion No 35 – 1984]

Issue individual identification and/or registration documents to all refugee women.
[Executive Committee Conclusion No 64 – 1990]

Ensure equal access of women and men refugees to all forms of personal documentation relevant to refugees' freedom of movement, welfare, and civil status.
[Executive Committee Conclusion No 73 – 1993]

5. Verification and Identification

5.a Registration is not complete until UNHCR or a government partner has accepted the registration record and registration information.

Uses of registration data, including documentation, are made on the basis of verified and accepted data.

A report on the quality of the registration, applicable to any registration activity, is kept, indicating how closely the standards for the registration process, the information set, and the documentation were adhered to.

Language and knowledge about the place of origin is verified during individual interviews.

Actual place of residence and family/household composition is verified by on-site checks and home visits.

All dependency relations within a family and/or household – in particular those needed to protect family unity – are established and verified.

Family relationships are to be counter-checked with both parties to the extent possible, and verified through documentation where feasible.

Registration should be a continuing process to record essential information at the time of initial displacement as well as any subsequent demographic and other changes in the population.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (i)]

Special measures should be taken to preserve integrity of registration process.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v)]

| 5.b | Persons arriving as part of new influxes receive individual fixing tokens or wristbands or the population is fixed by other means.

The personal identifiers used are sufficient for an individual to be uniquely identified and verified on a one-to-many basis.

A biometric is considered whenever a photograph is not sufficient for one-to-many identification, or is required for operational reasons. | Tools to enhance the identification and documentation of persons of concern.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (d)] |

6. Working with partners

| 6.a | UNHCR's Confidentiality Guidelines (IOM/71/2001-FOM/68/2001 of 24 August 2001 refers) are respected with regard to registration and population data.

UNHCR offices and host government exchange, in a secure manner only, such personal data as is needed to establish that an individual has previously been registered and enjoyed effective protection.

Personal data needed for the implementation of durable solutions such as resettlement or repatriation is shared with concerned States in accordance with the Confidentiality Guidelines and in a secure manner.

Consolidated statistics, dis-aggregated for sex and age, based on registration data are available for sharing with States, UNHCR offices, and other relevant organizations. | The confidential nature of personal data should be respected.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (f)]

Appropriate sharing of some personal data in line with data protection principles to combat fraud, to address irregular movements, and identify those not entitled to international protection.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (f)] |
| 6.b | Protocol or similar agreement is signed with government setting out agreed methodology and standards for registration and ID documents.

UNHCR provides governments with necessary material, financial, technical and human resource support. | UNHCR supports the critical role of material, financial, technical and human resources in assisting host countries in registering and documenting refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly developing countries confronted with large-scale influxes and protracted refugee situations.
[Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (h)] |

4. Overview of the Generic Process

The recommended generic process presented here is applicable in nearly all registration situations and covers nearly all populations of concern. It represents best practice in regard to registration, population data management and documentation of persons of concern, and is the sequence of steps necessary for achieving the standards described in Chapter 3 – *Operational Standard for Registration and Documentation.*

The recommended registration process comprises a sequence of steps, grouped together into five higher-level processes.
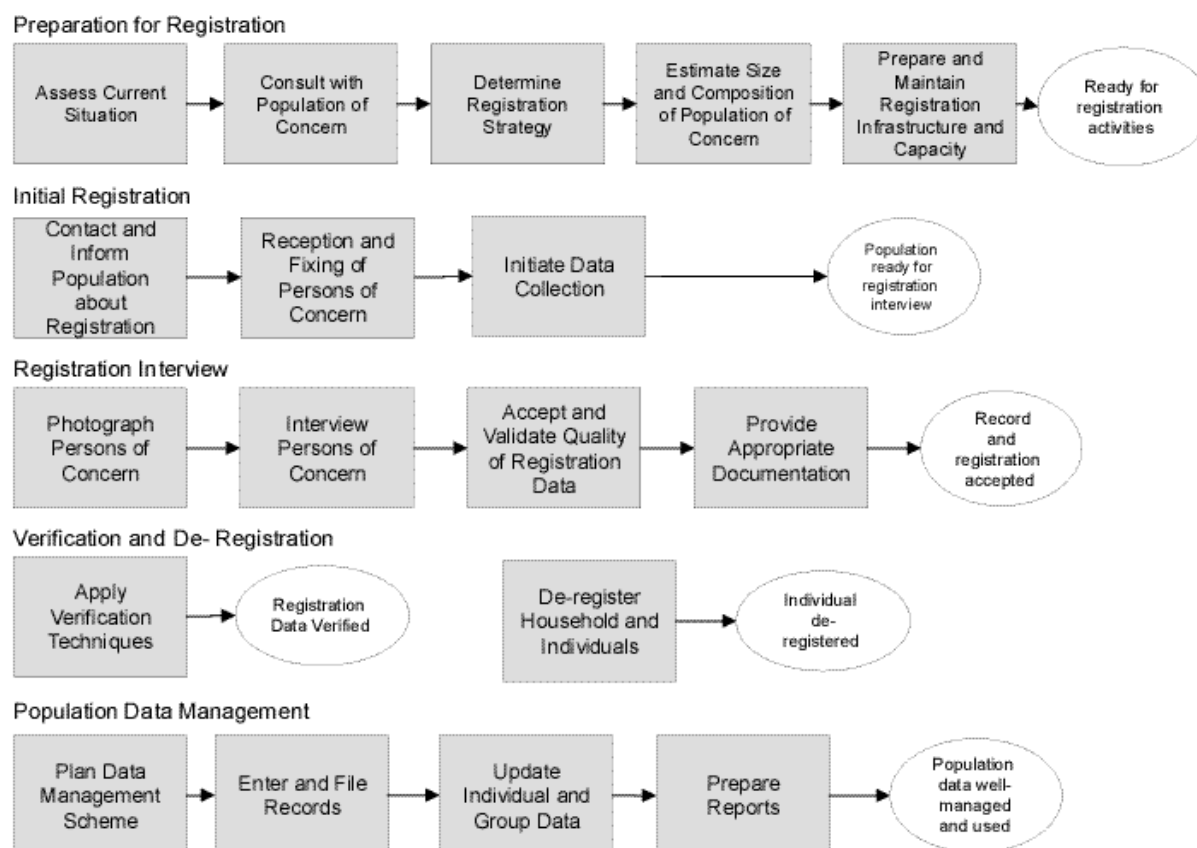
These are:

- Preparation for Registration
- Initial Registration
- Registration Interview
- Verification and Deregistration
- Population Data Management

Each process is composed of several steps of varying complexity and "weight". Some steps will take longer than others. Some steps will show great variation in the way they are implemented from one situation to another, while others will vary little. Each step, however, represents an essential aspect of registration and population data management and has concrete and measurable results.

The sequence of steps as presented here is applicable to most situations; it should be followed to the greatest extent possible. Nevertheless, as with other aspects of the unified approach described in Chapter 2, there may be some variations according to the given protection objectives and operating environment. Some frequent variations, along with the details on how to undertake each step, appear in Part II.

➢ *The standard registration steps are briefly covered below. Details on how to do each step are found in Part II.*

The following chart shows the different process steps.

Preparation for Registration

```
Assess Current    →   Consult with       →   Determine         →   Estimate Size        →   Prepare and         →   ( Ready for )
Situation             Population of           Registration          and Composition          Maintain                ( registration )
                      Concern                 Strategy              of Population of         Registration            ( activities )
                                                                    Concern                  Infrastructure and
                                                                                             Capacity
```

Initial Registration

```
Contact and       →   Reception and      →   Initiate Data     →   ( Population )
Inform                Fixing of              Collection            ( ready for )
Population             Persons of                                   ( registration )
about                 Concern                                       ( interview )
Registration
```

Registration Interview

```
Photograph        →   Interview          →   Accept and        →   Provide           →   ( Record )
Persons of            Persons of             Validate Quality      Appropriate           ( and )
Concern               Concern                of Registration       Documentation         ( registration )
                                             Data                                         ( accepted )
```

Verification and De- Registration

```
Apply             →   ( Registration )       De-register       →   ( Individual )
Verification          ( Data Verified )      Household and         ( de- )
Techniques                                   Individuals           ( registered )
```

Population Data Management

```
Plan Data         →   Enter and File     →   Update            →   Prepare           →   ( Population )
Management            Records                Individual and        Reports               ( data well- )
Scheme                                       Group Data                                  ( managed )
                                                                                         ( and used )
```

4.1   Preparation for registration

Preparing for registration involves evaluating current registration systems against standards and operational requirements with the aim of designing a registration strategy, preparing and setting up the relevant infrastructure, ordering registration materials, and negotiating roles and responsibilities with concerned governments and other partners.

4.1.1 Assess current situation

The assessment should consist of a thorough analysis of existing registration, documentation and population data management systems as they compare to UNHCR technical and protection standards in these areas. Current resources that can be dedicated to registration and related activities should also be evaluated. Factors that can affect registration, such as access, locations, security, and particular groups within the population, should also be assessed. Registration is often a high-risk activity and the prevailing security situation must always be carefully analyzed. The protection context and history of the population as well as prospects for the future should also be considered. In addition, data-processing requirements and capacity are assessed.
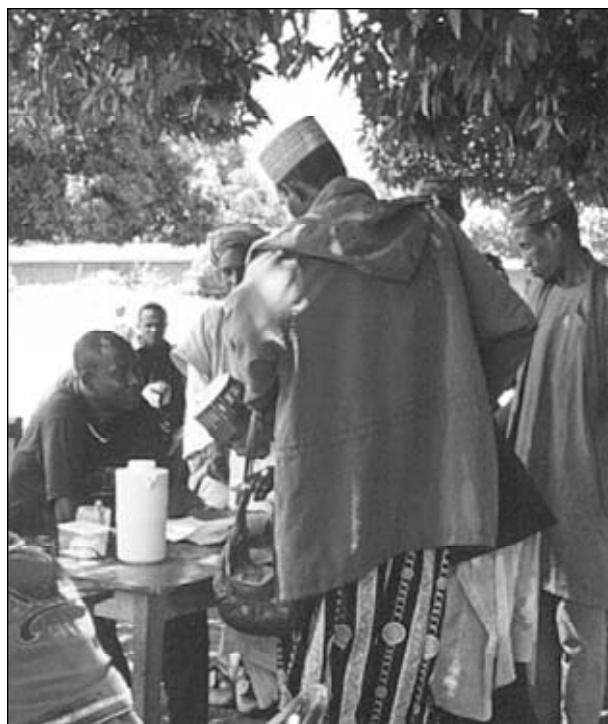
Registration – a unified approach.

As with any assessment, the point is to identify key problem areas and challenges. The assessment allows an operation to determine how effective its registration and documentation system will be in supporting larger operational goals and objectives. It also reveals gaps between the current situation and UNHCR standards.

The results of a proper assessment can be used in annual reporting exercises, such as the Annual Protection Report or Country Report, and in any interim reports requested by donors or host governments. Assessment results are used as the basis for designing a registration strategy.

4.1.2 Consult with population of concern

The way registration is conducted directly affects the quality of the lives of refugees. The design and implementation of registration activities should therefore reflect the needs and concerns of the refugees. UNHCR has an obligation to consult with refugee men and women about the process of registration.

No registration plan or procedure should be set up without consulting the persons of concern about their needs and concerns regarding registration and documentation. Persons of concern, particularly refugees and asylum-seekers, usually have an excellent understanding of registration and its consequences. They can provide guidance and direction for the registration strategy and suggestions on organization and communication methods. They often point out needs, advantages, and pitfalls that may otherwise go unrecognized or unheeded. The population should also be consulted as to the types of information to be gathered to meet protection challenges and secure solutions.

There are major risks in not consulting the population of concern, including the complete failure of the activities and a deterioration in relations amongst UNHCR, the government, and the refugee community.

4.1.3 Determine registration strategy

Once the gaps between current practice and the standards are known, a plan for addressing those gaps within the context of a particular operation can be designed. This plan becomes the registration strategy for a particular population and for a particular period of time. The registration strategy is a description of how an operation will improve its registration and population data management activities to better meet the registration standards and its own specific requirements.

A registration strategy consists of the agreed objectives, methodology and resources for registration, documentation and population data management. It describes what information will be gathered on the persons of concern (the data set), the roles of the different stakeholders, the ordering of the registration activities, how the operational standards will be achieved, and over what time frame, and how data will be managed and updated.

WPF, ICRC and UNICEF should be involved when formulating registration strategies. WFP provides food and related non-food items to actual and potential beneficiaries. ICRC and UNHCR coordinate their activities, including sharing of information, to trace families and work with unaccompanied and separated children. UNICEF is an essential partner for all aspects of work with child refugees and asylum-seekers, including health, education, and birth registration.

4.1.4 Estimate the size and composition of the population of concern

A good working estimate of the population's size and composition is needed before the infrastructure and tools for registration can be prepared. Estimates can be made from existing or partial registration data, extrapolating, where necessary, from known information or supplementing with the results from surveys. Information on the size and composition of the population can be gathered in consultation with the host government, the persons of concern themselves, and entities such as ICRC, UN agencies, and NGOs. Estimates are most useful when agreed to amongst the key stakeholders.

Where registration is not possible, estimated population figures will be the only information available. In these situations, estimates may replace actual registration as a means of enumerating the population and gathering basic information, such as age and gender, about the composition of the population.

4.1.5 Prepare and maintain registration infrastructure and capacity

Preparing and maintaining registration-related infrastructure and capacity includes:

- negotiating agreements with the government and other partners for registration and documentation;
- establishing and maintaining the actual registration sites;

> – training partners and staff in how to conduct registration and how to make appropriate use of registration data;
> – determining and ordering the appropriate tools, such as forms, IT support and computers;
> – negotiating agreements for the production and delivery of documentation; and
> – reaching consensus on how data, such as personal names, place names, hierarchy of locations, and personal documents, will be collected and recorded.

Implementation and results will vary significantly, depending on both the specific setting and on the registration strategy to be followed.

4.2 Initial registration

These are the first steps of registration: contacting and informing the population of concern about the registration process, receiving and fixing the population, and collecting the first data. Depending on the particular situation, these steps may also include reviewing existing data, filling in pre-populated registration forms[5], and, where appropriate and feasible, having persons of concern fill in forms themselves.

These steps make up the necessary preparation for the registration interview. Registration is complete only when information has been exchanged directly between the person of concern and registration staff.

4.2.1 Contact and inform population about registration

Persons of concern to UNHCR, whether asylum-seekers or refugees, should always be made aware of the purpose and expected outcome of registration. They should also be made aware of their rights and obligations before being registered and should be informed, in clear and simple terms, about the practical steps that UNHCR or others will undertake to collect information about them.

Offices must actively solicit and obtain feedback from refugees and others of concern. Registration systems must include procedures that allow refugees to ask questions, file complaints, and make suggestions for improvement.

An important step is to contact individuals or groups of the population of concern that may not come forward to register and to make them aware of their rights and obligations. Women, girls, or minorities, may have trouble accessing registration, or be prevented from doing so. Some groups, such as spontaneously settled refugees living outside of camps or in operations where there is no assistance component, may also stay away from registration because they may not perceive any benefits.

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[5] Pre-populating forms consists of extracting existing data from database or paper records and filling in the registration forms with this information prior to the actual registration and verification interviews.

Persons of concern who are not registered may face protection problems either at the time or in future. For example, refugees may be refused the right to return by the country of origin, or may be *refouled* or persecuted when there is a change in the host government's policies and practices concerning refugees. Men and women may be prosecuted for not being registered and may face detention or expulsion by the host government.

4.2.2 Reception and fixing of persons of concern

Reception is the process by which individuals are accepted into the registration process and their specific registration concerns are identified. Those with special needs, such as unaccompanied and separated children, are identified and directed to the appropriate registration procedures. Individual or group counselling on the rights and obligations associated with registration and related activities can take place where appropriate.

Fixing defines the target group and scope of the registration and is an essential component of any well-functioning registration system. There are a number of different fixing methods, corresponding to different needs and environments. Fixing the population is critical to managing many other registration-related steps and to ensuring confidence and reliability of the data.

➢ *The goal of fixing is to ensure that only persons of concern are registered, that all persons of concern are registered, and that each person is registered only once.*

The reception of asylum-seekers and refugees provides a unique moment to make an initial assessment of those with special needs amongst the population of concern. While reception cannot replace more systematic and expert assessments of the well being of a population, it is likely to be the first contact between UNHCR, or one of its partners, and an individual of concern. It is important that reception and registration staff be aware of the types of problems that may require special attention, make note of those who may be in particular need, and refer those persons to appropriate care and expertise according to established procedures.

At some point in the reception and fixing process, it is important to assess whether an individual needs to be registered. Since not all persons presenting themselves for registration should be registered, screening of individuals is sometimes required. This initial screening may be combined with the fixing process or completed in the registration interview.

When an individual is registered, he or she should be assigned a registration number that will remain with the individual throughout their time as a person of concern. This number will serve as the reference number for recording data at the initial registration and in all subsequent registration activities. The registration number, because it have to may be shared with other parties, should not contain information that might directly or indirectly put the individual at risk at any time.

Regardless of the size and nature of the population of concern, registration interviews must be scheduled at this time. In most cases, the registration interview will not take place simultaneously

with fixing and reception. Prioritizing urgent cases and addressing crowd control and security issues can be accomplished by using a good scheduling system. Scheduling can be done on a group basis, such as by block-group, population-type, or on an individual basis, as is often done for refugee status determination in urban environments.

4.2.3 Initiate data collection

This step involves reviewing existing data prior to interviews, resolving uncertainties in that data, highlighting inconsistencies or information to be clarified during the interview, and making sure interviewing staff are well prepared for the interviews. Data scattered in different locations and amongst different stakeholders is gathered together, consolidated and checked for errors, including duplications.

"Pre-populating" registration forms are also handled at this time. In circumstances such as refugee status determination, forms may be completed by persons of concern themselves. The "control sheet", which records family/household name, size, age cohorts[6], and special needs details, or an appointment log, may also be completed.

4.3 Registration interview

During the interview with a person of concern, photographs are taken, information is gathered and verified, and appropriate documentation for entitlements and identification is issued.

4.3.1 Photograph persons of concern

Excom Conclusion No. 91 states that photographs should be taken of all refugees when they are registered. The task of photographing refugees, and maintaining their photographic records over time, should not be underestimated. In all registration systems, photographing refugees will consume a significant portion of the registration or photo clerk's daily workload. As a general rule, offices should use digital equipment when photographing refugees. However, there are cases when traditional paper and film-based photography is more appropriate and should be used. Photos can be scanned later for inclusion in the registration database if necessary.

Standards dictate that when a photograph is not sufficient, in itself, to identify and distinguish members of a population of concern, then an additional identifier, such as a biometric, may be needed.

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[6] 'Age cohorts' are standard age groupings. UNHCR uses for standard groups for registration and statistical purposes; these are 0-4 years, 5-17 years, 18-59 years, and 60 years and greater.

4.3.2 Interview household/family and individuals

UNHCR needs registration data about families and households, as well as about individuals. Persons of concern should be registered individually. However, registration should begin with family or household units to establish whether an individual is accompanied or unaccompanied, and to record the details of accompanying family members first-hand.

The household or family interview is required to determine and record the relationships amongst the members of the household or family. Information collected at this stage may include the ages, sex, and names of persons in the household and family.

Once the information on the household and family has been recorded, each member of the family should be interviewed individually, to the greatest extent possible.

➢ *Offices should ensure that all persons who specifically request individual interviews be given individual interviews.*

Data collected should include date and place of birth, current address, names of the individual's mother, father, and spouse (if relevant), any special needs, place of origin, level of education, and occupational skills. Details on the data to be collected are contained in the description of the standard information set (Annex 8) and in Chapter 5 – *Standard Data Set and Registration Levels.*

4.3.3 Accept or qualify registration data

Once data has been collected, it must be accepted by UNHCR and/or the host government. To ensure that data meets the standards required for protection and assistance, the information collected is reviewed and appraised. Depending on the situation, this review and assessment can be done on an individual basis or for a group of records. If the data has been collected by an operating partner, the individuals of concern will not be "officially registered" until the host government or UNHCR accepts and validates the record.

4.3.4 Provide appropriate documentation

Once registration data has been accepted, documentation can be issued to persons of concern. Documentation can take the form of identification documents and/or entitlement documents. At a minimum, the documentation functions as proof that a person has registered with UNHCR and is considered to be of concern.

➢ *In every registration environment, persons who have registered with UNHCR are to be provided with some form of documentation.*

It is advisable to separate identity documents from entitlement documents. This helps to ensure that an identity card has value only to the person to whom it was issued, making it less subject to fraud and misuse, such as re-selling, trading and forgery.

The documentation issued should reflect the protection needs of the population concerned. The type and format of documentation provided may vary from country to country or from population to population; but all documentation should meet UNHCR's standards for documentation (see Chapter 19 – *Provide Appropriate Documentation*).

4.4 Verification and deregistration

The accuracy and authority of registration data is established and maintained through systematic and continuous verification and eventual deregistration. Verification of one form or another takes place in many of the registration steps. It is not a specific step conducted at any one specific point, but rather a recurrent activity performed throughout the registration process.

When individuals or groups are of continued concern, their registration records should be updated with any relevant changes and any new information. The registration steps are repeated, starting with informing and contacting persons of concern and applying different verification techniques to enhance the quality of the data.

4.4.1 Apply verification techniques

Verification is an activity that can take place at any point in the registration process. It is performed using different techniques or tools depending on the specifics of the situation or the stage of registration. Part II of this Handbook provides a series of techniques for operations to use wherever appropriate, instructions on how to perform the techniques, and advice on the best techniques for each level and stage of registration.

4.4.2 Deregister individuals and households

Deregistration is as important to the accuracy and reliability of registration records as registration itself. Individuals and their records should be regularly 'reviewed' to determine whether they should remain registered as persons of concern and whether they are candidates for deregistration. Factors such as reintegration, resettlement, and naturalization could indicate that a segment or all of the registered population should be deregistered.

This activity should not be confused with a review of an individual's or group's refugee status through a determination process, although some review processes linked to registration are nearly as detailed and as complex as status determination.

When a person is no longer of concern to UNHCR, any documentation previously issued should be recalled and invalidated and the persons informed accordingly. The documentation should be collected, examined and cancelled, and any electronic and paper records of the document should be updated accordingly.

4.5   Population data management

Data management processes accompany all other steps in support of the standard registration process. The sequence described is only indicative; the steps can be completed in a different order without affecting the results.

The data management components of registration are significant both in terms of the resources required and their importance in ensuring a reliable and credible registration system. Data collection, entry, and update routines should be precisely documented as part of the standard operating procedures for registration, and should be periodically reviewed and revised. These procedures should be used for staff training and for evaluating the performance of data management steps.

4.5.1 Plan a data management scheme

When planning a data-management scheme, it is important to know where the "inputs" are coming from (who has what data, how is the data collected and handled) and where the "outputs" are going (who will use the query results, when are the formatted reports generated, to whom are the reports submitted, to whom the data will be provided, and which fields will go to which user). A business process map indicates the time line of each data-processing step and will therefore help in assessing the required data management staffing level.

4.5.2 Enter and file records

All registration records should be entered and stored in a standardized format and managed according to standard filing and storage procedures. Standard formats facilitate the exchange of data and ensure that the information captured can be retrieved and analyzed. Filing and storing records properly not only ensures they can be used at a later date, but also maintains the integrity of the registration process and the registration data.

No data collection and entry process is free of errors or bugs, and data will always need to be "cleaned" before it can be used. Inconsistencies in recording, group composition, spelling, coding, and other elements have to be checked and corrected.

Procedures for storing and managing files are described in Section 23.3 – *File records.*

4.5.3 Update individual/household/group data

There are a number of ***static elements*** (such as name, sex, date of birth, country of origin, ethnic group, and names of father and mother) collected from an individual that should not change during the individual's registration life span. While static elements should normally not be changed during the updating stages, errors made in the initial or subsequent data-collection processes will have to be corrected.

Any errors made during the collection or entry of static-element data should be corrected as soon as they are detected. This should be done through formal and documented steps to ensure data integrity and prevent tampering.

Variable elements of the individual's record (such as current address, education level, some types of special protection and assistance needs, and photo) are expected to change or evolve over the registration life span and should be updated accordingly. Some household, family and case information will also change over time and will require updating. For example, the membership and composition of a particular group is likely to change with time. Standard events for individuals and groups must be recorded and updated as well. Events are those activities or actions concerning a group or an individual that UNHCR wishes to track as part of its registration system.

Often, non-registration UNHCR and partner staff will be aware of these changes as part of their regular programme of work. Regular verification and updating of this information is critical to ensuring high-quality registration data that can be used by UNHCR and its partners to provide protection, durable solutions, assistance and services.

4.5.4 Prepare reports

Statistics represent an important tool both in the field and at Headquarters. Accurate and up-to-date statistics on the populations of concern to UNHCR are required for planning, monitoring, and evaluation purposes, for reporting to UNHCR's Executive Committee and ECOSOC, and for UN common-system information needs. When consistently recorded and developed, they provide an important yardstick for tracking progress against objectives and for identifying changes in numbers, practices and behaviors. Donors and other external parties use UNHCR statistics to build and maintain support for continued funding and for advocacy.

It is therefore important that population trends and patterns, major changes and significant discrepancies are reported in the appropriate statistical formats, and that every effort is made to gather and complete the standard statistical reports. This information should be analyzed and, where possible, explained. When completing these reports, special attention should be paid to the proper use of standard concepts and terminology.

Reports and analysis must be prepared to assist in operational planning and management. While it

will not be possible to anticipate all reporting needs for an operation, certain standard practices ensure the availability of basic information for reporting, planning and monitoring.

In addition to reports, sets of data may be shared with operational partners, including the host government. Shared data sets will be different for each recipient, and specifications describing the data to be shared and the uses to be made of the data must be agreed with the different partners.

5. Standard Data Set and Registration Levels

5.1 Standard levels of registration – processes and data

The unified approach defines three broad levels of registration, distinguishable by the amount of data collected, the degree to which the generic process is respected, and the measure of compliance with the operational standards. The levels are not mutually exclusive or rigid categories, but rather suggest the progression that an operation's registration strategy should go through over time. In some operations, the highest standard of registration will be achieved in the first encounter between the registering party and the refugees. In others, that level of knowledge and confidence about personal data of individuals of concern will be achieved only after many months.

The level, and therefore quality, of registration is determined by the operational objectives and constraints laid out in the registration strategy. Managers in the field decide the level of registration that is appropriate and feasible within a particular context. Time pressure, the physical and legal protection environment, security, and level of co-operation with the government and those of concern determine the level of registration achievable within a given situation.

Improving population data with time

Time after arrival on territory of asylum
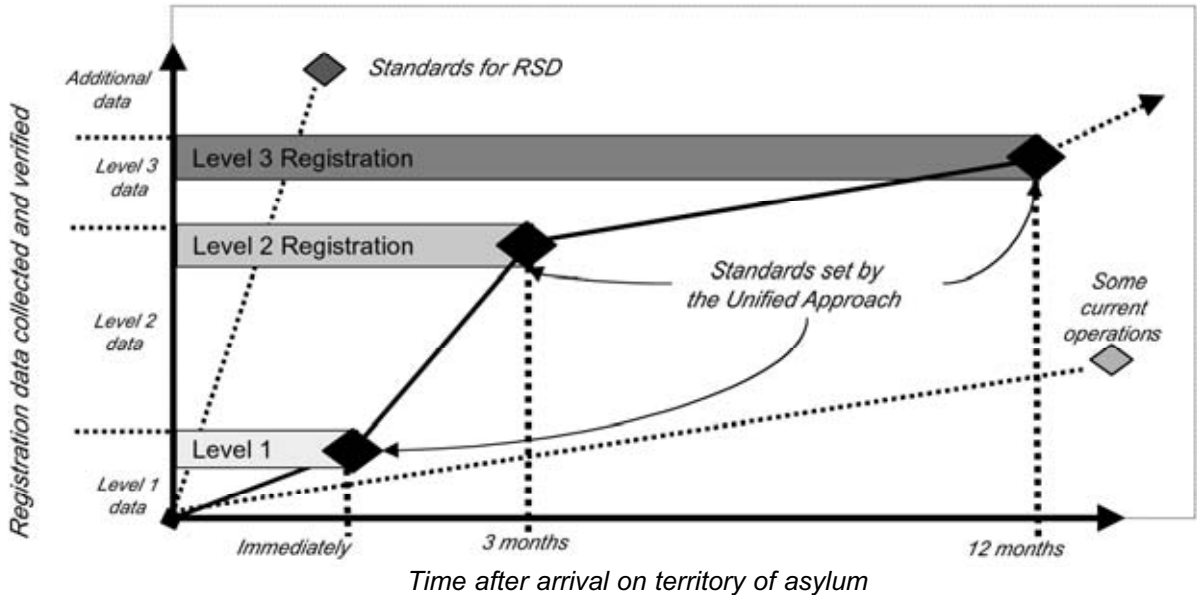
The matrix below provides an overview of how certain factors determine registration levels. The different levels are described in more detail in the following sections.

Table 2: Levels of Registration

	LEVEL OF REGISTRATION		
Criteria	*Level 1*	*Level 2*	*Level 3*
Type of Operation	Emergency	*Prima facie,* camp management, voluntary repatriation	Individual status determination, local integration, resettlement
Prior Registration System in Place	None	Basic, functioning	Well established, functioning
Time Interval After Arrival on Territory of Asylum	Immediate	Within 3 months	Within 12 months
Resources/Capacity	Very limited	Some	Adequate
Security Risks	High	Medium	Low
Co-operation of population and host government	Could be good	Good	Very good

5.1.1 Level 1 registration

This level of registration is often referred to as "Household Registration" or "Control Sheet Registration" because of the simplified form used for collecting data. It is often associated with the earliest stages of a mass influx or emergency situation. Although a minimum of information is gathered, this level is a necessary first step in all registration processes. For this level, information is gathered from the household or family. Some information may also be collected from individuals within the household or family.

Information collected at this level includes:

Level 1 Data

- Household or family size
- Age cohorts broken down by sex for household or family (see note 6, page 35)
- Location and physical address of household or family
- Names of household or family representatives (male and female "heads of household")
- Country of origin of household or family
- Special needs within household or family

The generic processes of ***preparing for registration*** and ***initial registration*** (as described in Chapter 4 and in more detail in Part II of this Handbook) apply to this level of registration. Level 1 registration should be completed before any interviews are conducted or photographs taken. Documentation such as family registration cards or ration cards may be issued to refugees or asylum-seekers at this time, depending on the particular situation.

This level of registration can be used for:

✔ replacing fixing tokens with family registration cards in order to deliver individual assistance, pending a full registration;
✔ scheduling registration interviews, particularly in mandate RSD operations when it is not possible to conduct registration interviews immediately;
✔ recording arrivals at a transit centre pending transfer to main refugee sites where more complete registration will take place; and
✔ producing passenger manifests for the movement of persons of concern, usually prior to a full registration.

Level 1 provides some elementary information about the population. It is sufficient to establish a basic distribution system, to tentatively identify persons with special needs, and to estimate the demographics of a population. However, Level 1 is not individual registration and does not meet UNHCR standards for individual registration.

5.1.2 Level 2 registration

This is the level of individual registration required for the most basic planning and monitoring activities. Level 2 is the start of continuous registration and can support many activities, including:

✔ protecting against *refoulement*, arbitrary arrest and detention, military recruitment and trafficking, and certain forms of abuse and violence;

✔   identifying and monitoring protection concerns, special needs, and special groups amongst the population;

✔   planning assistance and service interventions in large and small operations;

✔   identifying potential durable solutions, such as voluntary repatriation and resettlement cases; and

✔   managing refugee camps, including monitoring service and assistance delivery and use.

➢   ***In most circumstances, level 2 registration should be achieved within three months after arrival.***

Whenever resettlement is expected to be one of the likely durable solutions, as much information as possible should be collected and at an early stage. This is true even in *prima facie* operations where it may not be immediately apparent that resettlement will become the preferred durable solution for all or a segment of the population.

The information collected at this stage focuses on the individual. In addition to the information collected at level 1, the standard data set for this level is:

Level 2 Data *(in addition to the level 1 information)*

- Name
- Sex
- Date of birth
- Current location
- Place of origin (address)
- Date of arrival
- Special protection and assistance needs
- Marital status
- Citizenship
- Education level
- Occupation/skills
- Religion
- Ethnic origin (tribes/clans/sub-clans)
- Photograph
- Biometric (if needed)
- Permission to share information

This level of registration meets many of the UNHCR standards for registration. The agreement to share information for protection and solutions purposes is integrated into the standard form for this level of registration.

Level 2 registration corresponds to the commitments contained in the revised MOU with the World Food Programme (WFP) regarding registration within three months after an initial influx. The specific responsibilities of UNHCR and WFP in joint refugee operations are set out in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Heads of the two agencies on 9 July 2002.

5.1.3 Level 3 registration

This is the standard for individual registration required for protection planning and monitoring, for targeting of assistance and services, for performing individual status determinations, and for identifying and delivering durable solutions.

This level of information is required in most situations, **including *prima facie* situations,** to ensure adequate protection and appropriate solutions. It brings together information about individuals, about the households, families and cases of which they are part, and about critical events that happen to them during their lifecycle as a refugee or person of concern. This information set is the data required to form a "profile" of a person of concern that can then be used and updated by the various entities working with population data.

Level 3 Registration is needed for:

✔   issuing individual identity documents to all persons and individual entitlement documents as necessary;
✔   targeting of assistance and service in operations;
✔   identification of appropriate durable solutions;
✔   refugee status determination;
✔   implementation of resettlement as a durable solution;
✔   implementation of voluntary repatriation and reintegration as a durable solution; and
✔   implementation of local integration as a durable solution;

Whenever, possible level 3 registration should be achieved within 12 months after arrival. The essential data collected and maintained at this level includes:

Level 3 Essential Data *(in addition to the level 2 information)*

- Names of spouse(s)
- Name of father, mother, and spouse
- Additional personal names
- Names of all children
- Place of birth
- Existing personal documents

- ISCO[7] occupational categories
- Languages
- Documentation issued locally
- Voluntary repatriation status
- Resettlement case status
- Local settlement status
- Specific events related to individuals and to the groups to which they belong (household/ family/case)

Additional information that may be collected as part of the local office's protection and durable solutions strategy includes:

Level 3 Additional Data

- RSD case status
- Means of arrival
- Family members in other locations
- Employment history
- Educational history
- Reasons for flight
- Voluntary repatriation intentions
- Local settlement intentions
- Place and date of return
- Place and date of resettlement
- Property status in country of origin

At this level, information initially gathered from persons of concern is regularly updated and verified and is used for protection and solutions. In addition, the standards in Chapter 3 of this Handbook can be fully met.

5.2   Basic bio-data and core registration data

In order to standardize the use of terms, UNHCR has defined basic bio-data and core registration data. These terms are used in different circumstances when referring to registration, particularly in discussions with external parties. The exact elements of personal data that constitute basic bio- and core registration data may vary slightly in some contexts due to specific requirements of partners, primarily governmental. However, the definitions in the next sections should serve as references.

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[7]   International Standard Classification of Occupations, maintained by the International Labor Organization.

5.2.1 Basic bio-data elements

The Confidentiality Guidelines (see Section 1.8 – *Confidentiality and sharing of identity information)* refer to sharing basic bio-data about refugees and asylum-seekers with host governments (paragraph 40 of the Guidelines). In general, data-sharing should be kept to a minimum and based on necessity. Basic bio-data, which is essential for maintaining long-term and accurate identification of the individuals of concern to the organization, include:

Basic Bio-data

- Name
- Sex
- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Citizenship (nationality)
- Current location/address
- Photograph

5.2.2 Core registration data elements

Core registration has been defined on the basis of ExCom Conclusion no. 91, paragraph (b)(vi), which describes the basic information UNHCR or States will record for individuals of concern.

Core Registration Data

- Personal identity documents
- Photograph
- Names
- Sex
- Date and place of birth
- Date of death (if relevant)
- Marital status
- Special protection and assistance needs
- Level of education
- Occupation/Skills
- Household size and composition
- Date of arrival
- Current location/address
- Place of origin/address

- Citizenship
- Legal status (as a person of concern)
- Religion, ethnicity, language
- Name of father, mother, and spouse
- Documentation provided (entitlements and identity)
- Permission to share information

5.2.3 Supplementary registration data elements

In addition to the basic personal data referred to in Excom Conclusion no. 91, other information is needed to ensure adequate protection and to pursue appropriate durable solutions. Depending on the particular scenario, this data can include:

Supplementary Data

- Other names (alias, maiden)
- Family property
- Means of arrival
- Biometric
- Name, date of birth, current location/address of non-accompanying family members
- Reasons for flight
- Intentions for return
- Place and date of return
- Place of local integration
- Resettlement opportunity
- Place and date of resettlement
- Other documentation provided
- Specific events for global statistical reporting purposes

5.3 Improving registration and related activities

The following checklist provides a few simple steps that offices can take to improve the quality of their registration, documentation and population data management activities. The relevant Chapters, Sections and Annexes of the Handbook are provided in the right column for reference.

Table 3:
Measures to improve registration, documentation, and population data management

DESCRIPTION	WHERE TO LOOK IN HANDBOOK FOR DETAILS
Compare current situation with new standards	Chapter 3 – *Operational Standards* Chapter 8 – *Assess Current Situation* Annex 2 – *Assessment Matrix*
Compare data available with upcoming needs	Chapter 8 – *Assess Current Situation* §10.2 – *Decide on data to collect and verify*
Define own strategy for improving registration	Chapter 10 – *Determine Registration Strategy* Annex 3 – *Checklist for Preparing Registration Strategy*
Check/improve quality of data in database	§15.1 – *Retrieve existing information* Verification techniques: §20.1.2 and §20.1.3
Verify that persons registered are of concern	§14.3 – *Determine if a person need to be registered* Verification techniques: §20.1.4; §20.1.10; §20.1.11
Ensure that all those of concern are registered	Chapter 13 – *Inform and Contact Population of Concern* §17.3 – *Register unaccompanied and separated children* §10.3.3 – *Role of refugees*
Ensure each individual is registered only once	Chapter 14 – *Receiving and Fixing Persons of Concern* Verification techniques: §20.1.1; §20.1.2; §20.1.3
Adopt all possible aspects of new standards	Chapter 3 – *Operational Standards for Registration and Documentation* Chapter 8 – *Assess Current Situation* Chapter 10 – *Determine Registration Strategy*
Add any missing information on individuals	§8.1.1 – *Using the standards* §5.1 – *Levels of registration* §10.2 – *Decide on data to collect and verify* Chapter 20 – *Apply Verification Techniques* Annex 2 – *Assessment Matrix*
Build a lasting record for each individual	Chapter 2 – *Unified Approach* Chapter 5 – *Standard Data Set and Registration Levels* Part II – all sections
Take a digital photograph of each individual	Chapter 16 – *Photograph Persons of Concern*
Systematically link data to physical addresses	§12.3.2 – *Standardizing the information set* §12.3.3 – *Country-of-origin place names*
Verify actual presence at physical address	Verification techniques: §20.1.1
Validate data once it meets required standards	§18.2 – *Assess quality of registration data* Verification techniques: §20.1.12
Issue identity documents on the basis of verified data	§19.1 – *Issue identity documents*
Issue ration cards on the basis of verified data and verified physical presence	§19.2 – *Issue entitlement documents* Verification techniques: §20.1.1
Update changes: births, deaths, marriages	Chapter 20 – *Apply Verification Techniques* Part II – *all sections*
Fully implement deregistration measures	Chapter 21 – *Deregister households and individuals*
Continuously verify and improve records	Chapter 2 – *Unified Approach* Chapter 20 – *Apply Verification Techniques*
Use data for protection, assistance, solutions	Chapter 3 – *Operational Standards for Registration and Documentation* §8.1 – *Assess current registration system* Chapter 25 – *Prepare Reports*
Establish a user feedback loop on data quality	§7.6 – *Monitoring and reporting on registration activities*
Establish standard operating procedures for registration and documentation activities	§12.2 – *Establish standard operating procedures*
Discontinue periodic one-off head counts	Chapter 2 – *Unified Approach* Chapter 20 – *Apply Verification Techniques*

5.4 Families, households and cases

Providing protection or solutions, such as in status determination or resettlement, is often predicated on grouping individuals in special and context-specific ways, or "cases". Information relevant to UNHCR is thus both about the group(s) to which an individual belongs and about the individuals themselves.

5.4.1 Groups in registration

The grouping of individuals is one of the most important acts of registration. Grouping has implications for:

✔ **Assistance:** Food, non-food items and a variety of services are distributed mainly to families. Registration staff should be aware that some refugees may believe that splitting up into smaller families gives them access to more assistance and greater benefits.

✔ **Voluntary repatriation:** When processing persons for voluntary repatriation, family unity should be respected and involuntary separation of families during repatriation should be avoided.

✔ **Resettlement:** Family unification based on dependency relationships is strongly promoted by UNHCR. Resettlement countries do not always view the family in the terms as UNHCR, often using the concept of the strict nuclear family (mother, father and minor offspring) when making resettlement decisions. Also, refugees and others may have strong motivations for altering the composition of families, particularly in resettlement, such as adding persons to their family unit with whom there is no blood or true dependency link. UNHCR is expected to provide accurate and verified information on family relationships when making resettlement submissions.

Grouping individuals is one of the most important acts of registration.

For registration purposes, UNHCR defines three main types of groupings about which it collects and maintains information: the household, the family, and the case. These groupings are useful for describing how people are related to each other and for managing activities that are shared amongst the members. The groupings also allow UNHCR to know if one or more persons can legitimately represent the group to receive assistance and to make declarations and decisions on behalf of the group.

Most persons of concern will be members of all three types of groupings at some point in their registration life span, and for the vast majority, the individual members within a particular group will remain the same. However, registration life spans can be long and the natural complexity and changing nature of human relationships means that households and families evolve over time. It is essential to reflect this evolution in the registration system.

5.4.2 Households

For the purpose of conducting a census[8], the UN definition of a ***household*** is:

> *A group of persons (one or more) living together who make common provisions*
> *for food or other essentials of living.[9]*

For UNHCR and for registration purposes, a **household** is comprised of those persons of concern who normally reside together or are living together in the territory of asylum. It may include blood relatives, in-laws, and people who may not have a specific blood relation to the other members of the group. The common identifying factor is a shared physical address and presence in the territory of asylum.

5.4.3 Families

UNHCR recognizes the special role of the family and has a responsibility to maintain and to respect family unity in accordance with international human rights law. A family can be more difficult to define, not least because families vary from one place and time to another. For the purpose of conducting a *census*, the UN defines a ***family*** as:

> *Those members of a household who are related to a specific degree through blood,*
> *adoption or marriage. The degree of relationship used in determining the*
> *limits of the family is dependent on the uses to which the data is put,*
> *and cannot be defined on a worldwide basis.[10]*

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[8] Registration is not the same as a census. In registration individual names are recorded and linked to other demographic data. In a census, names are not associated with demographic data.

[9] Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Census, Revision 1; Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division (1997), page 65.

[10] Ibid.

A refugee status determination interview in Malaysia:
registration at this stage must be done on an individual level.

For the purposes of *registration*, UNHCR considers a **family** to consist of those persons who are related through blood, adoption, custom, or marriage **and** who should be considered as members of the same family for durable solutions purposes, for protection purposes, or for other reasons related to the fulfillment of UNHCR's mandate. Not all the members of a family will necessarily be registered with UNHCR at a given time.

For example family members who remain in the country of origin are not (yet) of concern to UNHCR. Not all the members of a particular family may be present on the territory of asylum (some may be living in another country of asylum) or living at the same address within the country of asylum. This is why a family and a household are two different groupings; members of the same family may not be members of the same household and vice-versa. For the purposes of family unity and international protection, including derivative status, UNHCR uses the concept of 'dependency' – economic, physical, or emotional dependency – to determine those family members who should not be separated or who should be reunited.

5.4.4 Cases

A **case** is a grouping of people considered together for a specific purpose, usually in relation to a decision or action, such as in status determinations or resettlement. As a rule, actions taken affect all members of the grouping, and membership within the grouping is set according to specific criteria or rules. For example, resettlement cases often consist of those persons who have relationship of dependency amongst them – physical, emotional, or economic. Families and cases may not always be the same. A case for refugee status determination may not consist of all members of a family; dependent family members not currently on the territory of asylum will not be eligible for derivative status and, therefore, are not part of the current RSD case.

Most of the time, the family, household and cases that an individual belongs to will all be composed of the same persons. However, it is important to recognize that this is not always true and to ensure that registration information correctly reflects any differences.

5.5 Registration in context

Quality registration is required to support the following activities, among others:

- issuance of identity documents;
- refugee status determination;
- planning and targeting of assistance and services;
- issuance of entitlement documents giving access to assistance and services (ration cards, health cards, etc.);
- identification of beneficiaries, including persons with special needs;
- voluntary repatriation;
- resettlement; and
- local integration.

➢ *The same set of core registration data is used for each of these purposes. However, most purposes also require specific additional information and variations in the registration steps.*

### 5.5.1 Refugee status determination

While UNHCR registration and mandate refugee status determination (RSD) are two distinct processes, procedures for receiving applications for RSD are generally carried out concurrently with procedures for collecting or updating UNHCR registration information for these persons. The registration process must promote the standards and objectives of both mandate RSD and UNHCR registration.

The purpose of procedures to apply for RSD is to formally initiate mandate RSD. For this reason, additional and more detailed information is gathered than is collected in standard UNHCR registration. This information includes the reasons and circumstances of the flight from the country of origin and other facts that are relevant to determining refugee status.

The *Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate* provide detailed and comprehensive guidance on the level of registration required to support refugee status determination. Please refer to them when designing registration systems to support RSD operations.

5.5.2 Emergency situations

Inter-agency coordination, a concern of governments and donors alike, is essential in complex emergencies, and accurate and respected statistics on affected populations is an essential component of any coordinated response.
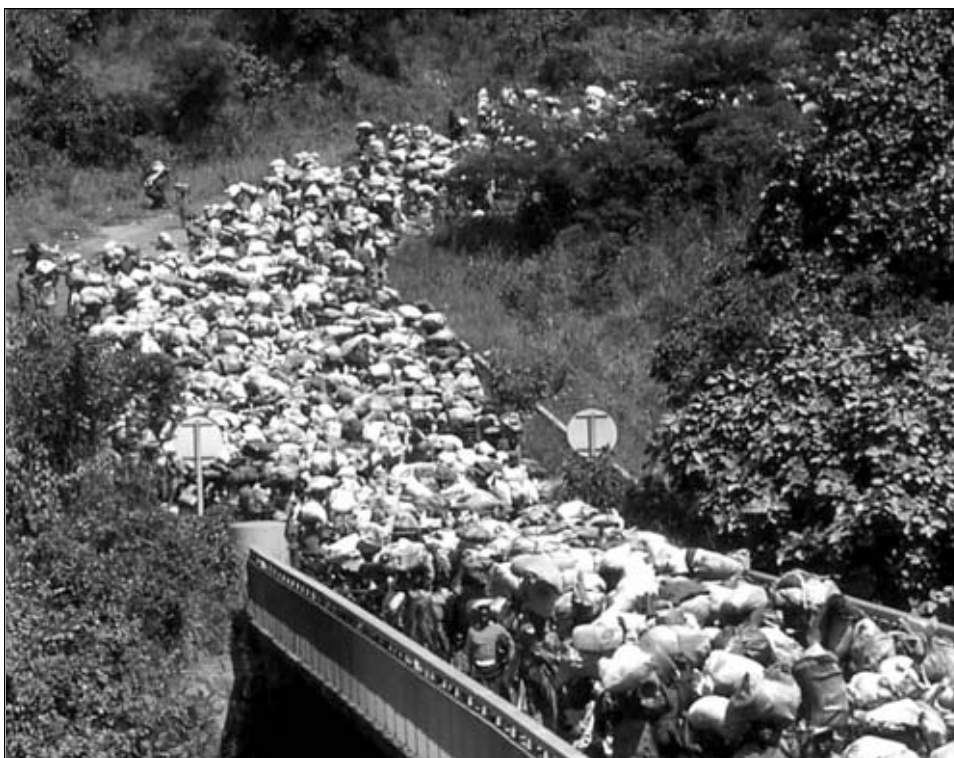
Exodus. How can UNHCR register refugees during a mass influx?

Steps for registering refugees during an emergency:
(see Section 5.1.1, Annex 6(c); and Section 14.1 – Fix persons of concern – for more details).

✔ **Step 1** – *Simple enumeration and estimation*:
Counting should be done as part of border monitoring. The number of arriving refugees can also be estimated based on counting conducted by others, episodic evidence, local witnesses, and other sources.

✔ **Step 2** – *Fixing the arriving populations with the standard UNHCR token or an equivalent*:
This should be done in conjunction with border monitoring or as part of the relocation from the border. Fixing may not be possible for the entire caseload, especially when the border is porous and difficult to monitor in its entirety. It will however fulfill its function for a part of the arriving refugees. Tokens are to be given to each individual refugee as well as any other persons who crossed the border – even if they may later be found not to be in need of international protection. The token facilitates counting (pre-printed numbers) and identification of new arrivals as opposed to persons who are already in-country.

✔ **Step 3** – *Create address system*:
Efforts should be made to design and implement as soon as possible a shelter address system. The camp area should be divided into sections and blocks and, where feasible, numbers assigned to each shelter (tent). This will enable better camp management. In cases where camps are prepared in advance, such systems may already be created as part of the preparedness phase.

✔ **Step 4** – *Control sheet registration in combination with family cards:*
The tokens given to the new arrivals at the border will be exchanged at the reception site for a family card (temporary card). If time permits, a pre-screening should take place at this stage to identify those who may not be of concern to UNHCR. The number of tokens per family will be punched on the card (family size). Then, most basic information (including the names of adults in the family) will be filled in the card and on the control sheet. If refugees are assigned space in a demarcated camp or a room in a collective shelter, the location should be indicated on the card and control sheet.

✔ **Step 5** – *Distribution of assistance and services:* Design and implement a simple system to administer the distribution of assistance and provision of service to refugees, including emergency health care, using the address system as the basis. Use one copy of the control sheet as provisional food lists. Ask refugees to present their temporary family cards to ensure integrity of distribution of food and non-food items and to record provision of services.

✔ **Step 6** – *Identification of persons with special needs*:
With the help of one refugee community, identify individuals and groups with special needs, especially unaccompanied and separated children. This will allow special assistance and protection measures to be implemented. Refer these persons to appropriate care (see Section 14.2 – *Identify and refer persons with special needs,* and Section 17.3 – *Register unaccompanied and separated children).*

➢ ***Separated children and other persons with special protection needs should be identified and fully registered at the beginning of an emergency so that their needs can be addressed properly and solutions to their specific problems identified and implemented without delay.***

5.5.3 Register new arrivals

It is essential to have a functioning system through which new arrivals can be registered quickly. Be sure to register only those persons who have not been registered before and who meet the registration criteria. In the event of a sudden mass influx of refugees that cannot be absorbed by existing registration procedures and arrangements, use alternative means of counting and

estimating the size of the population (see Chapter 11 – *Estimate Size and Composition of Population of Concern* for details).

Arrival at the border

Border guards or border monitors may fix new arrivals by providing them with tokens (see Section 14.1.2 – *Using tokens)* or wristbands before, during or right after relocation from the border to the immediate destination in the country of asylum, i.e., a camp or settlement. In some cases, entry stamps or immigration cards may be provided or border guards may register the arrivals.

Depending on the circumstances of flight/arrival, other activities, such as health screening, providing emergency food rations, water and blankets, may take priority over fixing and the initial steps of registration.

Arrival at the camp, settlement or urban area

Refugees should report to the appropriate registration office, whether it be a government agency or UNHCR. If refugees were not fixed and do not hold any proof that they are newly arrived and not yet registered, protection staff should interview them to determine if their claim is genuine. Verification to prevent multiple registration can involve a routine check of the registration database (looking for the same name, same age, etc.) and, if possible/available, photographs or biometrics data.

Refugees with a legitimate claim should then be registered and provided with the appropriate documents (identity cards, entitlements, etc.) as foreseen in the registration strategy. Check to see if other immediate family members are already in the country of asylum. If so, link the newly arrived refugee to his or her family in the records/database. If necessary, adjust existing registration documents, especially family/ration cards, to reflect the new size of the family.

5.5.4 Voluntary repatriation

Through registration information and activities, intentions for return are recorded, potential returnees are verified and screened, the logistics for return travel are organized, and immigration and customs formalities are handled. In addition, assistance upon return is often linked to registration.

It may be necessary to transfer the registration database and procedures from the country of asylum to the country of origin, particularly when cash assistance, food allowances and shelter assistance are part of the return operation. Creating new registration systems for return and reintegration should be avoided. However, doing so may be necessary in some cases, such as when national administrative structures, including civil registry, have collapsed and a new or revived national civil registry is required. Enabling access to political, economic and social life may require initial registration information from UNHCR; but this activity should be

undertaken only in close consultation with the government concerned and, where applicable, other agencies.

➢ *Whenever possible, existing registration data should be used in preparing for voluntary repatriation.*

Registration is an important component of planning and implementing repatriation operations.

In voluntary repatriation operations, the following elements should be reflected in the registration strategy:

- Personal information and procedural requirements in the country of return.
- Information and procedures for the 'co-recognition' and transmission of civil registration data, such as birth, marriage and death.
- Procedures and documentation requirements for border crossings.
- Plans for delivery of return packages and other forms of assistance to returnees, including measure to address forms of abuse to obtain additional benefits.
- Deregistration procedures and recall or cancellation of identity and entitlement documents issued in the country of asylum.
- Initial registration of populations who may never have registered but who seek or require protection and assistance for return.
- Validation and registration of residual populations, i.e., those who choose not to repatriate.

The *Voluntary Repatriation Handbook* remains UNHCR's primary reference for guidance in planning and implementing voluntary repatriation.

5.5.5 Resettlement

Somali Bantus in Kenya. Registration data from years earlier helped identify this population for resettlement.

The importance of reliable registration processes with respect to resettlement cannot be overstated. Early and accurate registration provides the most effective means of identifying refugees in need of resettlement consideration on a pro-active and on-going basis.

The accurate and comprehensive registration of refugees should be done as soon as possible after flight and, more importantly, outside the context of resettlement. This is a fundamental safeguard to the integrity of resettlement activities and sets the basis for initiating transparent and efficient resettlement programmes.

Good and early registration information at level 2, for example, can be of great service to resettlement operations. Increasingly, additional registration information, such as level 3, is useful for the profiling of individuals and groups to be identified for resettlement. Information such as ethnicity, vulnerability and family composition is particularly useful and should be collected and verified during registration activities.

Securing the identity of and correct information on individuals considered for resettlement is important in order to prevent fraud and abuse of the resettlement process.

5.5.6 Situation in which registration may be optional

Since registration needs will depend on the specific situation and the needs of the population concerned, it is not possible to provide firm guidelines. However, registration in the following situations could be optional:

Reintegration

Registration needs in return situations may depend on the level of intervention planned. If only micro-projects at the communal or district level are planned, detailed information on the individuals may not be needed. Good statistical breakdowns about the locations, numbers and demographics of returnees, ideally based on registration and documentation done in the country of asylum, paired with information on the state of infrastructure and socio-economic development indicators may be sufficient. This is true only if the conditions of voluntary repatriation have been favorable, the areas of return are secure, and UNHCR does not have any significant monitoring

concerns. However, to the extent that good registration information has been gathered in countries of asylum, it should be made available for use by UNHCR in the country of origin.

In the past, some non-assisted populations, including spontaneously settled refugees and "old" caseloads in the country of asylum, were not registered. However, as long as people remain of concern to UNHCR, efforts should be made to register them. Experience has demonstrated that a change in the political environment in the country of asylum may dramatically change the protection environment, and previously unregistered persons of concern may suddenly find themselves insufficiently protected.

Internal displacement

Internally displaced persons are nationals in their country of origin and remain under the jurisdiction of that country. Their protection needs are generally different from those of refugees. National identity documents and registration procedures and facilities may remain intact even during displacement. Nevertheless, if UNHCR operates an assistance programme or has a role in planning and facilitating durable solutions, national documentation may have to be supplemented by registration.

5.5.7 Circumstances in which registration is inadvisable

Although every effort should be made to create the conditions in which registration can be achieved, there may be situations in which registration activities may be inappropriate or not feasible. Situations in which registration should be avoided or delayed include:

✔ **Populations that are still moving:** If refugees have not yet reached a destination, whether temporary or final, registration can be difficult to organize and manage. In addition, registration formalities might compromise the flight to safety, part of the population may be missed in the registration activities, and there is a risk of multiple enrollments.

✔ **Proximity to borders:** Registration may have to be avoided for security reasons or to avoid mixing the refugee population with armed elements moving back and forth across the border. There may also be mixing with the local population living on both sides of the borders.

✔ **Security problems:** Under no circumstances should registration activities be carried out if they are deemed to be or become detrimental to the safety and security of refugees or to the security of staff.

✔ **Saving lives is a higher priority:** Saving lives is more important than registering people. In circumstances where staff must concentrate on other priorities, registration may not be carried out. This is often the case in the first few weeks of an emergency when the level of trauma amongst arriving refugees is high, or where the response by UNHCR or its partners is not fully implemented.

When registration is not possible but numbers and basic data must be obtained to carry out relief efforts, alternatives and intermediate steps (incomplete registration) may be used, depending on the situation.

UNHCR and its partners have acquired substantial experience in various alternative techniques and methodologies which, though not substitutes for complete formal registration, can help field offices estimate the size of the refugee population and gather baseline data and provisional refugee lists. See Section 11.1 – *Estimate population demographics* for details on the techniques to use.

6. Registration of Birth, Death and Marriage

As do all individuals, persons of concern have the right to have their births, marriages and deaths recorded in a civil registration system and to be provided with the appropriate documentation and certification. This is a fundamental responsibility of the government in the territory of asylum and is described in international human rights law and conventions.

Birth registration is crucial for international and legal recognition of the existence of an individual. Death registration and certification is nearly always required for inheritance of immovable and movable property, and is particularly important for property claims and property restitution when people return home from asylum and displacement. Marriage registration and certification ensures that family unity is legally respected and preserved and that property and other rights are properly transferred.

➢   *States must provide necessary documents relating to civil status (e.g., birth, marriage, divorce, death) with the support and co-operation of UNHCR, where appropriate.*[11]

Birth registration helps confers basic rights to refugee children.

UNHCR should advocate and, when necessary, provide assistance to ensure that these important events in the lives of refugees, known as 'vital events', are registered and documented by the government in the territory of asylum. Where it is not possible for these vital events to be recognized and recorded in the normal national registers, UNHCR should maintain a record of them, and provide people with documents attesting to the events.

The country of origin should recognize civil registration documents, including birth certificates, death certificates, marriage licenses, divorce agreements and matriculation documents, issued in territories of asylum. This recognition should be included in tripartite and other relevant agreements.

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[11]   *Agenda for Protection*, Goal 1, Objective 11 : "Better registration and documentation of refugees".

For more information please refer to the guidance provided by the UN Statistics Division regarding vital statistics:

Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2; UN Statistics Division, Series M, No.19/Rev. 2: (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/19/Rev. 2).

Handbooks on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems – Five-volume Series; UN Statistics Division.

6.1 Birth registration

Birth registration is defined as the official recording of the birth of a child by some administrative level of the State and co-ordinated by a particular branch of government. It is the permanent and official record of a child's existence.

Birth registration is an essential form of child protection, as it gives a child a name, an age, and an existence that is recognized and acknowledged by the civil authorities. It also confers rights and privileges that apply while a person is of concern to UNHCR and long after. These include rights based on nationality and personal status, such as access to education, food, and health care; and, eventually, the rights to marry, vote, obtain a passport, be allowed to trade, open a bank account, and own property.

If refugee boys and girls are unable to provide proof of their age and identity, they become "invisible" to the authorities and are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, such as trafficking, slavery, forced recruitment, early marriages, child Labor, and detention and prosecution as an adult.

Birth registration and certification are often essential for citizenship[12] and a lack of proper birth registration can lead to statelessness. A stateless person is a person who is not recognized as a citizen according to the law of any state, and therefore rights flowing from citizenship cannot be accessed. Her or his basic rights, legal status, security in the country of residence and travel outside that country are subject to state discretion. Statelessness is often the result of policies that deliberately do not confer nationality to children born of refugees.

Refugee children and those who are internally displaced are particularly likely to miss out on birth registration. Some asylum countries are unwilling to facilitate birth registration of the new-born children of refugees and asylum-seekers. They may consider them as illegal aliens, they may not wish to grant them nationality, or they may have political motivation for excluding certain

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[12] Dow, Unity, "Birth Registration, the first right", The Progress of Nations, UNICEF, New York, 1998, in "Aticket to citizenship; Practices for Improving Birth Registration", Plan International, 2001.

minorities within the refugee population. Others may not have a working birth registration system within the country or in those areas where refugees are hosted. Parents may not be aware of the rights and benefits associated with birth registration or cannot fulfill their responsibilities for registering their children. Physical access to civil registration offices, lack of pre-requisite documentation, language barriers, and local mis-interpretations of the law are often deterrents to those refugee parents who wish to register the births of their children.

UNHCR is tasked with overseeing that the births of all refugee children are registered, while UNICEF is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes promoting a child's right to an identity, to a name and to a nationality. The Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies describes their respective responsibilities regarding the rights of children and the implementation of the Convention. It is essential to work closely with UNICEF to promote birth registration.

It is always preferable if refugee births are registered in the normal national civil registers. Office should work closely with the authorities to ensure that refugee births are registered and certificates are issued according to the procedures applicable to nationals whenever possible. Because birth registration is an individual-based right, this option should be pursued even when only a segment of the refugee population is permitted access to the national procedures.

When the State refuses to register refugees' births within the national civil registration system, UNHCR should encourage the national authorities to establish similar and parallel systems for registering refugee and asylum-seeker births. If this is not feasible, UNHCR, working with UNICEF and other partners, should organize a local system to ensure that a minimum amount of information is recorded so that official civil registration can be accomplished at a later time. Information on the child's name, date of birth, place of birth, witnesses to the birth, and the names and nationalities of both parents and their addresses should be recorded, and legally validated. The birth should be recorded in the refugee's family record and in other documentation kept by the refugee family.

Whatever the system in place, parents must be given a validated birth notification or attestation for each birth that contains the facts of the birth. Local officials should be encouraged to issue the certificates for all refugee births or, when not possible, to validate written attestations issued by UNHCR. In case of voluntary repatriation, a set of legally validated copies should be handed to the competent authorities of the country of origin.

Raise awareness of the importance of birth registration among partners, government officials, and refugees. Nurses and birth attendants should know of the right to birth registration and the applicable procedures.

In addition to the UN reference documents on vital statistics and civil registration systems, for more information on birth registration see:

Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care. UNHCR (1994). Chapter 8.

Birth Registration – Right from the Start. UNICEF, Innocenti Digest No. 9, March 2002.

7. Management of Registration Activities

7.1 Responsibilities of managers for registration

➢ *Managers of field operations, including representatives and heads-of-offices, are responsible for ensuring that registration and population data management activities are undertaken, that the highest possible standards are attained, and that operational standards are respected and continue to be.*

7.1.1 Representatives and heads of offices

Senior staff, whether from the government involved and/or from UNHCR, are responsible for monitoring registration. In a typical UNHCR branch office, the Representative or Deputy Representative (Protection) should be responsible for overseeing and managing registration activities.

Representatives and heads of offices should:

- be familiar with the standards for registration and the contents of this Handbook;
- ensure that registration and population data management activities are supported by adequate human and financial resources;
- monitor the design, planning and implementation of registration processes;
- ensure full participation of refugees in the planning and implementation of registration activities;
- ensure continuity and consistency; and
- ensure staff are trained so they can perform registration related tasks.

The country representative should ensure that one appropriately experienced professional staff member within the country office has responsibility for conducting and managing registration activities. Persons responsible for registration must be posted within the country or region concerned. It is not possible to manage and implement registration operations at long distance or by staff sporadically present on mission.

7.1.2 Registration-specific roles and responsibilities

For every operation, senior managers must identify and appoint an individual within the operation to perform the role of **Registration Manager or Co-ordinator.** A full-time, managerial-level co-ordinator may be needed for large-scale operations and mass-registration processing, regional registration projects, when introducing new methodologies or when adding substantial new elements to the registration procedure, such as issuing ID cards. In small and stable operations, where registration has been going on for some time and does not require daily monitoring, a

permanent focal point – preferably a senior protection officer – should be designated to oversee registration.

The more thoroughly a registration activity has been designed and planned, the easier it will be to implement. Managers should monitor the implementation to ensure that it is consistent, adheres to standards, captures quality data, and is run in close cooperation with all partners.

The main responsibilities of the Registration Manager include, but are not limited to:[13]

- coordinating the planning, designing and implementation of a comprehensive registration plan in close collaboration with local, regional and national authorities, NGOs and other concerned entities;

- performing the day-to-day supervision of the registration unit (registration centre) including policy, programming, administration (of staff and other resources) and organizational issues;

- supervising the establishment and functioning of registration systems as appropriate;

- co-ordinating and overseeing the issuance of identity and entitlement documents;

- coordinating between the UN agency representatives, and between UN, international and national NGOs, and local authorities on registration and related issues;

- keeping abreast of refugee-related developments with particular view to changing needs for registration, deregistration and verification;

- monitoring the implementation of registration and verification exercises carried out on behalf of the government or UNHCR by implementing agencies;

- managing registration resources and ensuring integrity of fraud-proof materials such as wristbands, cards, and forms;

- paying particular attention to the registration needs of different groups (women, girls, boys, elderly, adolescents, etc.) ensuring that special protection and assistance needs of individuals and groups are addressed through registration mechanisms;

- monitoring data entry and processing and adjusting, whenever necessary and appropriate, code tables, data entry forms, modules;

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[13] Generic terms of reference for registration staff in the field. This is not a UNHCR standard job description.

● compiling, analyzing, and forwarding population information to other offices and partners, and providing inputs for regular situation reports;

● advising the head of office and senior protection officer on necessary interventions with regard to registration and population data management.

Other staff to be designated, where applicable:

✔ UNHCR officer(s) responsible for co-ordinating registration at the field level
✔ UNHCR officer(s) responsible for managing registration and population data
✔ Staff member(s) responsible for administering the registration database
✔ Staff member(s) responsible for stocks of registration materials and supplies

Core functions and responsibilities should be clearly defined for everybody. An organigramme showing all staff and basic functions should be updated regularly.

7.2 Managing registration in an RSD context

The *Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate* identify the primary functions associated with RSD, including registration and reception, and specify the core responsibilities associated with these functions. An essential feature of these procedural standards is the designation of the role of **RSD Supervisor.** This person is also responsible for overseeing registration and reception activities in support of RSD.

Responsibilities for supervising registration activities in the RSD context include:

● ensuring that all registration staff have appropriate training and support to carry out their responsibilities effectively;

● supervising registration staff as they fulfill their assigned duties, including by randomly monitoring registration interviews and counselling sessions conducted by registration staff to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information provided to applicants;

● reviewing all complaints received about procedures to register applicants for RSD, co-ordinating appropriate follow-up, and reporting on action taken;

● supervising the preparation and issuance of documents by UNHCR to registered applicants for RSD.

For more details, see the *Procedural Standards*.

7.3   Managing assets and materials

Since many of the forms, cards, and other materials can be used to gain access to entitlements, they must be stored and managed securely. Balance sheets, inventories and storage logs will help managers to control the flow of registration materials. Items should only be released against the signature of an authorized staff member.

The use of released materials should be monitored closely. Used items should be documented through control sheets, recording total numbers and pre-printed serial numbers. Damaged or cancelled tokens, wristbands, forms, cards and other materials should be also be accounted for in detail. Unused items (the balance) should be returned to storage.

Registration staff members, particularly field-level registration managers and coordinators, are responsible for receiving and storing registration materials. They check the quality and quantity of materials received and report on the safe and complete arrival of the materials (this information must be also shared with Headquarters). The storage area should be securely locked and access should be strictly limited to authorized personnel.

UNHCR stamps and ink pads should be kept by senior staff (head of sub-office, senior protection officer, deputy representative, etc.) or by authorized administrative personnel.

7.4   Advice and support

➢ *Do not reinvent the wheel in formulating a registration plan.*

Field offices should make use of the knowledge and experience UNHCR and its partners have accumulated over the years. Registration activities require expertise that is not necessarily available in every field location. Field offices are encouraged to seek advice and support from the services that are specialized in registration and population data management.

7.4.1 Registration support and technical expertise

There is a variety of support resources that managers and registration staff can use when planning and implementing registration activities. Some of these resources are listed below; others are referred to in the relevant sections in Part II.

The Handbook for Registration: This Handbook is designed to be a primary registration support resource. The standards and procedures described herein should be followed by all office unless circumstances are truly exceptional.

Training: Specific training materials have been developed for registration. Training can be conducted on a regular or ad hoc basis, depending on the operational needs. Whenever possible,

training should be combined with hands-on registration work, either in the country itself or in a neighboring operation.

Guidance and coaching on planning and implementing registration activities can be done, albeit to a limited extent, by e-mail, telephone and in short- to medium-term missions.

Technical advice (assessment, adaptation of methodology, planning, implementation, evaluation, IT support) can be provided by registration experts.

Best practices and experiences should be shared. Offices should not hesitate to make use of the knowledge and experience acquired by others, and managers should take advantage of these opportunities through missions, sharing reports and sharing staff, when possible. The Population and Geographical Data Section (PGDS) is a good source of information on past experiences.

The Division of Operational Support (DOS) at UNHCR headquarters maintains an extensive support capacity in technical areas, including the support to registration and population data management provided through PGDS and Project Profile. There are also regional support hubs for West and Central Africa, East and the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, as well as for the CASWANAME region. Substantial expertise and experience also exist in the various regions.

7.4.2 How to request support

Field requests for technical support should be submitted to the respective Desk, which will co-ordinate with the Division of Operational Support, Population and Geographical Data Section and other relevant Headquarters sections about upcoming needs and planned registration activities.

Requests for support should be sent well in advance, whether they are for registration equipment and materials, expert support or other support elements. The request should clearly state what is needed. Technical support should be part of the overall operational budget for registration activities (project and/or administrative budgets).

Ad-hoc advice and guidance by e-mail or telephone can always be provided at short notice.

7.5   Managing corruption and fraud

Corruption and fraud in registration activities are problems that managers must recognize and confront. Recurrent reports and scandals show that registration, documentation, and population data management activities are vulnerable to both internal and external efforts to abuse and manipulate the system. UNHCR's credibility with donors, host governments, resettlement countries, country of origin governments and the refugees themselves is linked to the viability and credibility of its registration systems and the information they contain.

7.5.1 Operator fraud

The great majority of personnel employed for refugee registration are guided by the principles of humanitarianism. Nevertheless, some may be tempted to make extra money unethically by allowing non-refugees to register or by letting refugees register several times.

Make personnel aware of the consequences of fraud during their training. Train newly hired staff in the UNHCR Code of Conduct. Require them to read it and encourage them to sign it.

Take action swiftly when fraud occurs. Try to determine the reasons behind the fraud and the magnitude of the problem when responding. Ask for professional advice and support in cases where fraud is suspected to be well organized and widespread.

Some common forms of operator fraud are:

- allowing non-eligible persons to register;
- allowing registered refugees to register again;
- recording ghost refugees to increase family size.

Possible remedial actions managers should take include:

✔ Tighten systems and procedures, including controls on physical and electronic files and records.

✔ Institute discussions on the implications and importance of the UNHCR Code of Conduct.

✔ Institute and routinely check audit logs.

✔ Issue passwords to access electronic data management systems.

✔ Change supervision and monitoring procedures.

✔ Conduct on-site spot-checks during registration activities.

✔ Rotate staff to avoid extended exposure to benefit-related work.

✔ Change composition of registration teams.

✔ Create safe mechanisms and incentives for reporting cases of abuse of power and fraud.

✔ Act swiftly on detected cases and impose immediate disciplinary measures, such as written warnings and dismissals.

✔ Conduct criminal investigations, in consultation with the Investigation Unit of the Inspector-General's Office.

➢ ***Be sure to differentiate between dishonesty, fraud and human error. Staff work hard and are exposed to high levels of stress and pressure. Mistakes do not necessarily indicate cheating. Give people the benefit of the doubt unless there is clear and irrefutable evidence.***

7.5.2 System abuse by refugees and others

The manipulation and abuse of registration systems can be a problem for UNHCR, host governments, donor governments, WFP, and other partners. In understanding and mitigating abuses keep in mind that some types of abuse are "insurance" against injustices linked to old approaches to registration and distribution systems. Some of the most common forms are:

● "recycling": registering more than once, at the same place or in several locations. Also associated with multiple applications or attempts to receive one-time-only assistance packages, such as those often given in voluntary repatriation operations;

● mixing populations: locals and non-refugees, and refugees from different locations register;

● "borrowing": using other people's children to inflate family numbers;

● forging registration documents, such as ration cards, registration forms, and voluntary repatriation forms;

● trading or selling ration cards or other entitlement documents.

Part II of the Handbook provides guidance for dealing with the most common forms of fraud and opportunism; in particular Section 20.1 – *Choose verification techniques.*

7.6 Monitoring and reporting on registration activities

Monitoring a registration activity will ensure the integrity of the process and adherence to standards and help to identify improvements to registration procedures. In large-scale registration efforts or for innovative projects, evaluations will be useful in assessing the impact of registration on refugee protection.

Monitoring and evaluating registration activities should be concrete, providing a clear statement on the quality of the activities, and making precise recommendations. Any follow-up should be with the intention of improving the process. Monitor the registration from different perspectives – from that of a manager to that of a refugee.

Set up a 'feed-back loop' that allows users to comment on the quality of population data, the uses they make of it, and any problems they encounter when using the data. Ensure that corrective action is taken to improve the data accordingly.

Reporting on registration activities is important for keeping managers, colleagues and partners informed, for monitoring progress over a certain period of time, and for securing continued support from various parties.

Problems, particularly security incidents, should be reported immediately so that concerned colleagues and partners can take action.

7.6.1 What to report

- ✔ Results of registration activities.
- ✔ Exceptional events and valuable lessons, including security incidents or particularly encouraging or disruptive moves by any of the stakeholders.
- ✔ Basic statistics, breakdowns and basic analysis of changes in refugee population figures (see Part II, Chapter 20 for details about standard statistical reports).
- ✔ Extent to which the populations are now registered, to what level, and the standards with which the registration complies.

7.6.2 Where to report

- ✔ **Monthly Situation Reports:** Section C: Statistics and Registration
- ✔ **Country Report:** Part 3: Achievements and Impact by Population or Theme
- ✔ **Mid-Year Country Report:** Progress as measured against indicators
- ✔ **Annual Protection Report:** Chapter 3 – Standard of Treatment of Refugees; Chapter 5 – Refugee Children; Chapter 12 – Supervisory Responsibility (Article 35 of the Convention)
- ✔ **Annual Statistical Report:** UNHCR Manual, Chapter 4, Section 6.8), and Annual Programming and Reporting Instructions
- ✔ *Ad-hoc* basis in the case of important events, changes, problems
- ✔ Periodic surveys on registration