

Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (22-23 June 2006)

UNHCR Resettlement Anti-Fraud Plan of Action Update on Activities: August 2005 - Present

Preventing fraud in the resettlement process is vitally important for UNHCR to ensure the integrity of its operations. This is particularly relevant in the current context when resettlement activities are expanding as a result of the Organisation's commitment to enhance this solution for refugees. So too, governments of resettlement countries are increasingly focusing on ways to combat fraud and abuse in the resettlement process and rely on UNHCR to have effective mechanisms in place to mitigate risks.

In recognition of this important area of activity, a dedicated staff position to implement the UNHCR Resettlement Anti-Fraud Plan of Action was filled in August 2005, and a regular post was established within the Resettlement Service as from 1 January 2006.

An important function of this position within the Resettlement Service is to coordinate the organisation-wide effort to implement the Resettlement Anti-Fraud Plan of Action as well as develop institutional linkages to steer activities and strengthen interface between UNHCR and key operational partners. This will be done through the mobilisation of resources with the support of Field Offices and relevant working units at Headquarters. These efforts will galvanise linkages and coordination within the Organisation – such as with the Office of the Inspector General – to strengthen anti-fraud mechanisms as well as develop tools to strengthen compliance and raise awareness within UNHCR in terms of assessing and managing fraud-related risks.

The key strategic approach to the role-out of the anti-fraud activities has been “practicality” and “visibility”; that is, to articulate a realistic goal for the implementation of anti-fraud activities and transmit key messages internally and with external interlocutors. The regional bureaux and support units at Headquarters are engaged to assist as “gateways to the field” and as key actors in the implementation of the Anti-Fraud Plan of Action.

A number of priority activities have been implemented. Some of these activities are on-going and include:

- (i)** An anti-fraud briefing has been developed as part of the induction and training requirements for JPOs and deployees under the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme.
- (ii)** A regular reporting mechanism from Field Offices has been developed making it obligatory for offices with resettlement programmes to report on fraud related issues in their Annual Protection Reports; in particular, preventive measures implemented. This reporting tool will assist in shaping future activities and targeted anti-fraud interventions.

- (iii)** At present all major field operations (48 countries) have been equipped with the new proGres registration system. The application of biometric measures has been on-going and 6-8 country operations will be equipped with the biometric fingerprint module during the course of 2006. This module is currently in place in the Kenya operation. The proGres database has the following anti-fraud features:
- Handbook recommendations on techniques for interviews and data verification;
 - proGres contains audit logs;
 - Use of digital photographs to ascertain identity – not photograph is ever deleted;
 - Data consolidation supports data sharing between sites with irregular movers;
 - Version 2 – biometrics, enhanced audit controls and audit reports.
- (iv)** A mass information campaign was initiated on 15 November 2005, whereby UNHCR issued a strong warning against internet resettlement fraud at a press briefing in Geneva. UNHCR website also carried as a top story an article on the subject. The story made it to all the major international news agencies and was distributed widely. Reaction from field offices combating fraud was quite positive. Some field offices developed their own message based on the above announcement, or use it as a useful reference point. The warning against internet fraud is now displayed in UNHCR's website permanently. Cooperation with Media Relations and Public Information Service is ongoing. In this connection, UNHCR has taken steps to purchase internet "domain names" that are similar to UNHCR's domain name to mitigate the risk of internet scams.
- (v)** The Officer responsible for Anti-Fraud issues undertook a mission to Nairobi in December 2005, which provided significant insights on resettlement fraud and related issues, such as institutional perspectives and management practices. A number of consultations took place with both internal and external entities including diplomatic missions. The mission observed the need to further strengthen a unified / coordinated approach among key stakeholders to manage resettlement fraud, to ensure the interface of our respective activities do not expose gaps or opportunities for fraud and corruption.

The following activities are ongoing and considered to be a priority for 2006:

- (vi)** The proposed development of training modules and a "train-the-trainers" initiative (using the Canadian Consultant Management Funds) has the objective to provide UNHCR managers who supervise resettlement activities in the field with the knowledge and skills on fraud prevention and detection. The beneficiaries of the training will further facilitate the learning of UNHCR colleagues as well as those in partner agencies. At the end of the process, it is anticipated that up to 500 individuals will be trained. In addition, three regional workshops are planned during the course of 2006.

- (vii) A process of establishing policy guidelines on fraud consequences has begun and several discussion sessions have taken place at Headquarters during which real fraud cases were analysed. At the end of each session, principles and standards are identified as a tool to determine the consequences of fraud. At the end of the entire process, all conclusions will be reviewed and a set of comprehensive policy recommendations on fraud consequences will be compiled. Resettlement countries will be consulted at the appropriate and strategic stages, as their involvement is imperative for the effectiveness of the resettlement anti-fraud measures to be implemented.

*Resettlement Service
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