

Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement Geneva, 28-30 June 2007

Agenda Item 3k

Information Note: Launch of UNHCR's Internet-based Refworld

This information note is to draw your attention to the new, Internet-based Refworld, launched by UNHCR on 14 June 2007. The new Refworld, available at www.refworld.org, is an advanced, state-of-the-art protection information and knowledge resource which facilitates quality, evidence-based and effective decision-making in refugee status determination procedures. Over approximately 15 years, UNHCR has built up a wide patronage among users, including UNHCR protection officers and other staff, government decision makers, non-governmental organizations, the judiciary, private practitioners and academics. The system has also proved vital for evidence-based advocacy for resettlement, internally displaced and stateless persons, migration, and various other protection concerns. The information in Refworld has been carefully selected and compiled in collaboration with UNHCR's global network of field offices, governments, international and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, judicial bodies, and others.

Website Features

The new website represents a unique and easily accessible system. It includes a professional and consistent design, vastly improved search functionality and navigation / browsing options, topic guides, and specifically developed "Special Features" on core protection issues. Refworld includes multiple and advanced possibilities for browsing the collection of documents, by region and/or country, by publisher, by topic, and by document type. In addition, it has a powerful search engine and advanced search facilities. The complete contents of Refworld – including country reports, national legislation and case law and all public-domain UNHCR protection policies and guidelines – are now, for the first time, freely accessible to all UNHCR staff, external partners and the public at large to use.

The new Refworld website has been developed by the Status Determination and Protection Information Section (SDPIS) in the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS), with the technical support of the Electronic Publishing Unit (EPU) in the Division of External Relations (DER). In a nutshell, Refworld features:

- More than 78,000 documents relating to countries of origin and asylum and to key protection issues;
- Daily document updates;
- Documents available in full-text, based on information-sharing agreements with strategic information partners;
- Documents such as UNHCR country and thematic positions, third-party country reports, case law from both international and national courts, national legislation, research papers, and training manuals;
- Excellent and user-friendly browsing and searching facilities.

Special Feature on Resettlement

A "Special Feature" relating to resettlement has been developed for the new Refworld. The page contains documents on UNHCR resettlement policy, including information on the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement and ExCom and Standing Committee meetings, and provides a repository for tools and best practices on resettlement including reception and integration of resettled refugees. The Special Feature on resettlement also

includes non-UNHCR policy documents on resettlement and related information, including links to key external (government and NGO) websites (see attached page preview).

Updates of Information

SDPIS depends to a large extent on UNHCR's network of field offices and Regional Bureaux to obtain up-to-date information for inclusion in Refworld. In addition, external partners and governments can provide UNHCR with necessary updates (e.g. national legislation) for Refworld, which should be sent to SDPIS at e-mail address refworld@unhcr.org, and the relevant Regional Bureau at Headquarters.

Forthcoming Developments

The launch of the new Refworld website is the first step in a phased approach by DIPS to making protection information more accessible. By the last quarter of 2007, the Refworld website will be enhanced with several new features, including options for personalization.

Furthermore, SDPIS will undertake a needs assessment vis-à-vis the provision of protection information to UNHCR staff and other users with no access to Internet, as to the possible issuance of a mobile version of Refworld. (As you may know, Refworld was until now published in CD-Rom and DVD-format.)

In the coming months, SDPIS will be liaising with several UNHCR offices, in order to establish a programme to accompany the launch of Refworld with their local counterparts, and will also be making available training and presentation materials relating to the new Refworld website.

Additional Information

Further information in relation to Refworld online can be found on the UNHCR website at www.unhcr.org/refworld.

Finally, SDPIS regularly sends out e-mail notifications of recently released papers of interest, in order to increase awareness of UNHCR recommendations, guidelines and related papers. Should you not already be on the SDPIS mailing list, please write an e-mail to refworld@unhcr.org with the request to be added. You will then be automatically notified whenever there is a new release.

It is hoped that you will find the new Refworld website a helpful tool in your daily work. SDPIS can be contacted at e-mail refworld@unhcr.org or fax +41-22-739-7396, in case you have any questions, comments or documents you feel should be included in the collection.

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June 2007