

# UNHCR

## what we do in Italy



UNHCR/Francesco Malavolta



UNHCR ITALY  
[www.unhcr.it](http://www.unhcr.it)

# UNHCR

The UN Refugee Agency

# UNHCR in Italy<sup>1</sup>

In line with its mandate, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works with the Italian government and other organisations to ensure that refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons fully enjoy their rights.

## PROTECTION

UNHCR advises key governmental counterparts, as well as Parliament and other stakeholders (e.g. regional and local administrations), on policy and legislative developments. UNHCR also provides technical support to the authorities with a view to strengthening their capacity to ensure adequate responses to the needs of persons of concern to UNHCR in Italy, namely refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. Furthermore, through its staff and implementing partners, UNHCR is engaged in activities aimed at ensuring full and equal enjoyment of rights by all persons of concern, including persons with specific needs. Direct contact with persons of concern has been instrumental to inform UNHCR advocacy interventions.



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## Access to territory

UNHCR Legal Associates and Cultural Mediators are present in several locations in southern Italy and attend key phases of disembarkation procedures, providing new arrivals with information on international protection and other relevant procedures, through leaflets and group information sessions. UNHCR also supports the authorities in identifying persons with specific needs, including persons with medical conditions, pregnant women, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), victims of trauma, and survivors of torture or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). UNHCR participates in institutional working groups aimed at developing and enhancing standard procedures to ensure that access to the territory and to asylum is granted in accordance with national and international standards. UNHCR staff monitor the implementation of such procedures, promoting the adoption of adequate safeguards. UNHCR staff are present also in northern Italy, where they conduct capacity-building activities, in close coordination with civil society organisations, to assist the authorities in providing persons in transit with information on accessing asylum and other relevant procedures in Italy. In northern Italy, the team also monitors land border procedures as well as instances of readmission, and their potential impact on access to international protection, focusing in particular on people with specific needs, including UASC. UNHCR has been working in close cooperation with other European agencies, in particular the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), providing information to new arrivals and liaising to ensure their registration for relevant procedures, such as relocation or Dublin procedures.

<sup>1</sup> Version 1.2 (as of October 2017). For further information on relevant developments and activities in Italy, please visit the UNHCR Italy website at <https://www.unhcr.it/> or the UNHCR data portal at <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>.

## Refugee Status Determination (RSD)

UNHCR participates in first instance Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, with Eligibility Experts posted in the decentralized Territorial Eligibility Commissions. UNHCR provides advice on the use of eligibility criteria, procedural standards, and country of origin information. UNHCR also ensures identification of persons with specific needs, as well as case prioritization, sensitive procedures and referrals. Furthermore, UNHCR Quality Monitoring Experts, in close cooperation with the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, monitor the quality of RSD procedures, while an Asylum and Trafficking Expert supports the implementation of guidelines for the referral of potential victims of trafficking who seek asylum. UNHCR staff are also involved in capacity building activities, including training events for decision-makers, judges and police staff. UNHCR has been providing support to the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, including on the reform of the RSD procedure.



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## Protection of persons with specific needs

Through the systematic application of an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach, UNHCR works to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities. The protection and prompt identification of persons with specific needs and their access to adequate services are promoted and mainstreamed through all activities UNHCR carries out in Italy. Furthermore, since 2015, UNHCR Specific Needs experts have been working on mapping the main practices and stakeholders involved in the identification of persons with specific needs. UNHCR advocates for increased standardization of referral pathways and response mechanisms across the national territory. UNHCR also contributes to training events and awareness-raising initiatives.

## Reception

UNHCR has long been engaged in supporting the authorities with the establishment of monitoring and quality control mechanisms, to ensure harmonization of reception standards, build capacity and strengthen accountability. UNHCR staff have been conducting monitoring visits to reception facilities nationwide, jointly with representatives from the Prefectures, the Police and the Ministry of Interior. Facility types vary and include first assistance facilities (CPSAs and hotspots), first-line facilities, second-line facilities, and temporary reception centres where persons are accommodated in the event capacity is lacking in either first-line or second-line facilities. Since 2017, UNHCR Monitoring Associates have been participating in monitoring visits together with authorities and external auditors contracted by the Ministry of Interior to carry out monitoring activities. UNHCR provides technical support to external auditors, including through an AGD and participatory approach. UNHCR focuses also on SGBV related risks in reception and advocates for the implementation of relevant legislation ensuring that reception facilities are equipped with ad hoc services for persons with specific needs. UNHCR also conducts monitoring visits in pre-removal facilities, assessing the situation of persons of concern who are administratively detained.

## Resettlement

UNHCR collaborates with various stakeholders - including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Police, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the System for the Protection of Asylum-Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) - involved in implementing the Italian Resettlement Programme, which was launched in 2014. A UNHCR Resettlement Expert liaises with UNHCR offices in other countries and provides support to the Ministry of Interior, providing technical assistance and contributing to ensuring the adequate reception and integration of resettled refugees.



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## Statelessness

In the context of UNHCR's IBelong global campaign, UNHCR advocates to strengthen the protection of stateless persons in Italy, focusing on safeguards that could prevent statelessness at birth as well as on status determination procedures. UNHCR works also to raise awareness on statelessness, through dissemination of testimonies and public events. Furthermore, a UNHCR Statelessness Expert, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, contributes to training and capacity building events, and facilitates the setting up of networks of civil society organizations.

## Community-based protection

UNHCR has strengthened its community-based engagement in Italy, focusing on specific areas of work, such as SGBV prevention and response, child protection, and integration. Activities aim at enhancing partnerships, promoting governance and engaging communities. They also aim at promoting the interaction between refugees and host communities, through a number of initiatives focusing on arts, sports and food. In partnership with ARCI (*Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana*), UNHCR is supporting a Communication with Communities pilot project aimed at strengthening the provision of information on available services through a toll free number.

## Sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) prevention and response

UNHCR contributes to policy formulations, such as the National Extraordinary Plan against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, ensuring adequate inclusion and protection for persons of concern. In 2017, UNHCR established partnerships with AIDOS (*Associazione Internazionale Donne per lo Sviluppo*), D.i.Re (*Donne in Rete contro la violenza*), and LILA (*Lega Italiana Lotta Aids*) Catania, launching pilot projects aimed at enhancing front-line operators' and cultural mediators' capacity on SGBV issues and at promoting access to sexual and reproductive health and to services for SGBV survivors, also through the development of information materials for persons of concern.

## Child protection

UNHCR Child Protection experts work with the authorities to promote good practices on best interest assessment and determination. Training and capacity building activities, including with reception centre staff, are also carried out, with a focus on best interest of the child, international protection, and cooperation, and governance. Furthermore, UNHCR staff support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in reception facilities. Consultations with UASC, including through focus group discussions, are prioritised, with a view to inform UNHCR's approach and programming. UNHCR also works to develop child-friendly materials explaining international protection procedures in Italy. Furthermore, pilot projects have been launched in partnership with Defence for Children, to support the identification and training of volunteer guardians in Sicily, and with Save the Children, to develop a pre-identification and age determination procedure to be piloted in selected disembarkation sites. An additional partnership with NGO Sport senza Frontiere aims at promoting refugee youth integration through sports in selected Italian cities. UNHCR further works in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, to promote participation of refugee children. The Agency also liaises with other organisations, such as IOM, UNICEF, and Save the Children, promoting a coordinated child protection response.

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## Integration

UNHCR provided support to the government, most recently contributing to the drafting of the 2017 National Integration Plan, building on findings from prior consultations with refugees. UNHCR Integration Experts have been deployed to selected Italian Regions aiming to support the implementation of the National Integration Plan at local level and to promote the establishment of regional integration plans. Other UNHCR initiatives focus on raising awareness on asylum issues in schools ([Viaggi da Imparare](#) project) and on engaging private companies to promote refugees' employment ([Welcome](#) project). UNHCR also launched a pilot project, in partnership with Adecco, to facilitate the employment of refugees. Finally, UNHCR is supporting mobile outreach activities by implementing partner MEDU (*Medici per i Diritti Umani*), which provides health, social and psycho-social services to persons of concern in the Rome area. UNHCR offers a drop-in service in Rome, providing information persons of concern on asylum-related procedures and services available.



UNHCR/Marcello Pastonesi

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

UNHCR collects, handles, analyses and disseminates data pertaining to persons of concern, including statistical information. UNHCR brings together and analyses information on protection and other specific issues, facilitating information sharing across the operation and relevant country and regional offices. Information management assists managers in identifying gaps, priorities and target resources based on the analysis of needs. UNHCR Data Management and Reporting assistants also develop and disseminate information products, including through the UNHCR [data portal](#).

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

UNHCR engages in awareness raising initiatives, events and campaigns to disseminate information on persons of concern. UNHCR also maintains close contacts with the press and promotes trainings and guidelines for journalists. UNHCR also produces video, photographic and other contents regarding refugees for media and social media. UNHCR works with Goodwill Ambassadors and High Profile Supporters to broaden public support on refugee issues. UNHCR works in close coordination with key institutions, other UN agencies, universities, associations and other relevant stakeholders in the field of asylum.



UNHCR/Alessandro Penso

## **PROGRAMME/ADMIN/FINANCE/HUMAN RESOURCES**

UNHCR staff design and ensure the delivery of programming in line with the UNHCR protection mandate. Activities are implemented either directly through UNHCR staff, or indirectly through operational and implementing partners. UNHCR staff also support the management of human and financial resources, ICT and logistics administration. In doing so, it ensures compliance with rules and procedures applying to UNHCR and the UN system at large and it guarantees that donors funding materialise as planned.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS**

UNHCR works with individual and corporate donors as well as with foundations in order to generate funds to sustain UNHCR activities worldwide. Private Sector Partnerships staff engage with individuals through different channels of acquisition and develop fundraising campaigns that are broadcast through media and often involve high profile supporters and celebrities. Partnerships with corporate donors, foundations and philanthropists also contribute to raise awareness of persons of concern in Italy and worldwide.



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