



# UNIT 3

Reception & Registration  
in RSD Operations

# RECEPTION AND REGISTRATION IN RSD OPERATIONS

## 3.1 Reception of Asylum Seekers

### 3.1.1 Supervision and Oversight in Reception

- Each UNHCR Office should establish detailed procedures for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees who approach the Office. Reception procedures should include **clearly defined responsibilities and staff assignments** and should incorporate effective oversight mechanisms.
- In every UNHCR Office, the RSD Supervisor, or other experienced Protection staff members designated by the RSD Supervisor, should supervise all activities and procedures relating to the reception of asylum seekers and refugees. The **designated Protection staff member should carry out clearly defined supervisory responsibilities in reception at all times when asylum seekers are received** in the UNHCR Office.
- Whether or not responsibility for direct supervision is delegated, the **RSD Supervisor has overall responsibility to oversee the implementation of reception procedures** to ensure that appropriate standards for the reception and treatment of asylum seekers are met.

### 3.1.2 Reception Procedures

- In each UNHCR Office, a designated **Receptionist**, assisted by trained **Reception staff** and **UNHCR interpreters** as required, should coordinate the orderly entry and appropriate reception of asylum seekers and refugees in the Office.
- The Receptionist, or another designated Reception staff member, should meet with all individuals **as soon as possible after their arrival at the gate**, to assess the type of assistance they are seeking and to coordinate referral to the appropriate UNHCR procedures. Individuals who require RSD should be referred without delay to procedures to apply for RSD (see § 3.2 - *Registration Procedures for Applicants for RSD*).
- **Applicants who have a scheduled RSD Interview or appointment** should be asked to present their Appointment Slip (see § 3.5.1 - *General Scheduling Procedures*). Once the appointment is confirmed, the appropriate staff member should be notified and the Applicant should be directed to the reception waiting area until the staff member is able to receive the Applicant.



- **When long waiting periods are anticipated in reception**, UNHCR Offices should develop a system for orderly processing (i.e. assigning numbers or recording names on a list used by Reception staff). Reception staff should be available to respond to inquiries and to keep individuals informed of the status of their processing.
- Reception procedures should include measures to **identify promptly asylum seekers who may have special protection or assistance needs**, and to refer them for appropriate support in the RSD procedures or other available assistance as required (see § 3.4 - *Applicants with Special Needs*).



### 3.1.3 Dissemination of Information to Asylum Seekers

- Asylum seekers who approach UNHCR Offices should be provided with necessary information to permit them to understand and exercise their right to apply for refugee status. Each UNHCR Office should develop materials and procedures to disseminate relevant information to all asylum seekers.
- **Information regarding access to the UNHCR Office should be posted** in a visible location outside each UNHCR Office. The following information must be posted in this manner:

#### Posted Information on Access to UNHCR

- Reception hours and procedures
- Directions on how to contact UNHCR after hours of operation in an emergency
- Access to UNHCR premises and all UNHCR services are free of charge
- Procedures for reporting misconduct by UNHCR staff, security guards or implementing partners, or other difficulties relating to access to the UNHCR Office

**General Information on UNHCR RSD Procedures:**

**The following information should be provided to asylum seekers as early as possible in the RSD process, and before the RSD Interview:**

- The refugee criteria, and eligibility criteria for refugee status under UNHCR's broader protection mandate;
- The criteria for derivative status;
- The rights and responsibilities of asylum-seekers and refugees;
- Procedures to apply for RSD and the various stages of the RSD process, including the appeal procedures and available assistance for Applicants in these procedures;
- Procedures for registering accompanying family members/dependants, including the requirement that they all attend in person for registration and that each accompanying adult family member or other adult dependant be interviewed individually by a UNHCR staff member (See § 3.2.6 - *Registration Interview of Family Members/Dependants*);
- The right of accompanying family members/dependants who may have independent grounds for seeking refugee protection to make an independent claim, and to obtain information and assistance in this regard from a UNHCR staff member;
- The supporting documentation that should be presented at the time of registration (see § 3.2.8 - *Supporting Documents*);
- Confidentiality in the UNHCR RSD process, and any applicable limits on the right to confidentiality (see § 2.1.1 - *The Applicant's Right to Confidentiality*);
- The right of Applicants to request that Registration and RSD Interviews be conducted by UNHCR staff and interpreters of sex preferred by the Applicant, where available;
- The consequences of recognition, including limitations regarding the availability of durable solutions;
- Any information about the host country laws and procedures that may affect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers;
- Information on how to report improper conduct (including requests for money or other favours) by UNHCR staff, security guards or implementing partners in UNHCR Offices (see § 2.6 - *Complaint Procedures*).

- Each UNHCR Office should determine the **most effective and feasible methods of disseminating the information** described above, taking into account the principal languages and varying degrees of literacy and education of the asylum seekers who are received in the Office. Methods of dissemination of information should include a combination of written text and illustrations on posters or notices displayed outside the UNHCR Office and in information leaflets, as well as counselling by qualified UNHCR staff where available.
- Procedures to disseminate information to asylum seekers should take into account the needs of populations who may be in **remote locations**, including **refugee camps** and **detention centres**.
- Where, as a result of cultural or social factors, females are more likely to be excluded from involvement in public and administrative matters affecting the family unit, UNHCR Offices should take any additional measures required to ensure that **female asylum seekers**, including female asylum seekers who are accompanied by male family members, receive the general information regarding the RSD process, their rights and responsibilities as asylum seekers, and their right to make an independent refugee claim should they have individual protection needs.

### 3.1.4 Counselling on UNHCR RSD Procedures

- Asylum seekers should have the **opportunity to meet with a UNHCR staff member** before the RSD Interview, to receive information on the RSD process and procedures.



- While UNHCR Offices should take reasonable steps to accommodate requests for individual counselling, where counselling relates to general procedures applicable to all, it can be conducted on a group basis.
- Counselling to asylum seekers should be provided by persons who are **trained and knowledgeable** about UNHCR and the procedures for RSD in the relevant UNHCR Office.

### 3.1.5 Confidentiality in Reception

- All UNHCR staff should take **appropriate measures in reception to preserve the confidentiality** of UNHCR RSD procedures. UNHCR staff should avoid calling the names of asylum seekers in the presence of other asylum seekers. Alternative methods (including assigning numbers, distributing cards etc.) should be used when communicating with or about asylum seekers in these areas.
- The facilities and procedures in UNHCR Offices should permit individuals to provide identifying bio-data or other personal information to UNHCR staff under conditions that do not undermine the right to privacy and confidentiality.
- UNHCR staff should not request the assistance of other asylum seekers or refugees in reception to provide interpretation, unless no qualified interpreters are available and there is no other means to communicate with an asylum seeker in reception. Where the services of another asylum seeker or refugee must be used, the directions set out in § 2.5.2 - *Interpretation by Persons other than UNHCR Interpreters should be followed*.

## 3.2 Registration Procedures for Applicants for RSD

### 3.2.1 UNHCR Registration and Applying for Mandate RSD

- While **UNHCR registration** and **mandate RSD** are **two distinct UNHCR processes**, in UNHCR mandate RSD operations, procedures for receiving applications for RSD are generally carried out concurrently with procedures for collecting or updating UNHCR registration information for these Applicants. In each UNHCR Office, the relevant procedures must promote the standards and objectives of UNHCR registration as well as mandate RSD.
- **UNHCR registration** is intended to gather standard information about all persons of concern to UNHCR, including Applicants for mandate RSD and other asylum seekers, refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons, and stateless persons. The registration information permits UNHCR to make more informed assessments of the number and profile of persons of concern, and to design programmes for protection and assistance. The registration information also permits UNHCR staff to identify and assist persons with special needs, and to make decisions about whether the individuals should be referred to further UNHCR procedures. As Applicants for mandate RSD are persons of concern to UNHCR, UNHCR must maintain current standard registration information for each individual Applicant, including Applicants for derivative status.
- The purpose of **procedures to apply for RSD** is to formally initiate procedures for mandate RSD, and to gather additional and more detailed information than is collected in standard UNHCR registration, including the reasons and circumstances of the Applicant's flight from the country of origin and other facts that are relevant to the determination of the Applicant's eligibility for refugee status.
- The **RSD Application Form (Annex 3-1)** has been developed to gather standard UNHCR registration information as well as the additional information required for mandate RSD procedures, including information relating to the reasons and circumstances of departure from the home country.
- Standard UNHCR registration information is gathered in the **Registration Information Sheet**, which is the first part of the RSD Application Form.
- While the standard UNHCR registration information will be recorded on the RSD Application Form for use in RSD procedures, in each UNHCR Office procedures for **management of the information recorded on the Registration Information Sheet** should also ensure that the information is available for verification and updating in subsequent registration procedures, and for use in other procedures (i.e. resettlement, voluntary repatriation etc.).

RSD Application Form (Annex 3-1)

### 3.2.2 Supervision and Oversight of Registration Procedures

- The RSD Supervisor should be responsible for oversight of procedures to register Applicants for RSD. In each UNHCR Office, the registration procedures should include clearly defined responsibilities for supervision and support of Registration staff. Where appropriate, the RSD Supervisor may delegate specific responsibilities for supervision of registration activities to a qualified and experienced Protection staff member, who should report directly to the RSD Supervisor.

#### Responsibilities for Supervision of Registration Activities:

- Ensuring that all Registration staff have appropriate training and support to carry out their responsibilities effectively;
- Supervising Registration staff in the exercise of their assigned duties, including random monitoring of 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, coordinating appropriate follow up, and reporting on action taken (see § 2.6 - *Complaint Procedures*);
- Supervising the preparation and issuance of documents issued by UNHCR to registered Applicants for RSD (see § 3.3 - *UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate*).

### 3.2.3 Registration Staff

- Registration procedures for Applicants for RSD should be carried out by **qualified Registration staff**, who should receive the necessary training for the responsibilities assigned to them.

#### Training for UNHCR Registration Staff

training

- The mandate of the UNHCR Office
- Refugee protection principles and the rights of asylum seekers and refugees
- UNHCR registration standards
- The specific procedures in the UNHCR Office for the registration and processing of Applicants for RSD
- Identifying and assisting individuals who may have special assistance or protection needs
- Age, gender and cultural sensitivity when working with asylum seekers
- Interview techniques, including conducting interviews with children, mentally ill or traumatized individuals, and other vulnerable Applicants, and working with interpreters

- Every effort should be made to ensure that there are **sufficient numbers of male and female Registration staff members** to accommodate requests by Applicants to have a Registration Interview with a Registration staff member of the sex preferred by the Applicant.



### 3.2.4 Distribution and Completion of the RSD Application Form

- Registration staff should distribute RSD Application Forms to Principal Applicants and accompanying family members/dependants, and should ensure that they are able to read and understand the document.
- UNHCR registration standards require that the **Registration Information Sheet** at the front of the RSD Application Form should be completed for Principal Applicants and every accompanying family member/dependant, including children. The Registration Information Sheet for young children who are applying for derivative status may be completed by the Principal Applicant or another accompanying adult, or by UNHCR Registration staff as appropriate.
- **Principal Applicants and all accompanying adult family members/dependants must complete all parts of the RSD Application Form.** The requirement that all accompanying **adult** family members/dependants complete the RSD Application Form is intended to give all adult Applicants the opportunity to inform UNHCR of any individual protection needs they may have. The information on the RSD Application Form permits UNHCR to more systematically identify, at an early stage in the process, accompanying family members/dependants who may have independent grounds for seeking refugee protection, and whose eligibility for refugee status should be examined as Principal Applicants in the RSD procedures.
- Unless accompanying family members/dependants of a Principal Applicant request to have their claim determined independently, or there are other indications (at registration or later in the procedures) that this would be appropriate, accompanying family members/dependants should be processed as **Applicants for derivative status** (see § 5 - *Processing Claims based on the Right to Family Unity*).
- As a general rule, **members of the Principal Applicant's household who are under 18** years need not complete the entire RSD Application Form, unless they are applying to have their eligibility for refugee status determined independently of the claim of accompanying adults, or there are other indications that this would be appropriate.
- **Children who are applying for RSD as Principal Applicants** should complete all sections of the RSD Application Form, and should be referred for an Individual Registration Interview to receive any assistance they require from UNHCR Registration staff in making their application.
- **All unaccompanied or separated children** should complete the full RSD Application Form (see § 3.4.5 - *Child Applicants (under 18) / Unaccompanied & Separated Children*). In addition to the **RSD Application Form**, all separated and unaccompanied children must also complete the **Registration Form for Unaccompanied and Separated Children (Annex 3-2)**.



- The *Registration Form for Unaccompanied and Separated Children* has been developed by UNHCR with ICRC and other interested partners to promote a harmonized and comprehensive approach to the gathering of registration information for unaccompanied and separated children. In particular, this form is designed to collect more detailed information regarding the circumstances of separation from parents or other primary caregivers and their last known location, the current care arrangements in the host country, and the wishes of the child. This information is necessary to permit UNHCR and other partners to provide effective protection and assistance to separated and unaccompanied children and to carry out appropriate tracing measures. UNHCR Registration staff should ensure that both the RSD Application Form and the *Registration Form for Unaccompanied and Separated Children* are completed.
- Given the importance of the factual information gathered on the RSD Application Form for the determination of the refugee claim, every effort should be made to ensure that Applicants have the **opportunity to complete the RSD Application Form under appropriate conditions**. Applicants should have sufficient time to receive and read information on the RSD process, to consider the evidence that may be relevant to their claim, and to complete all sections of the RSD Application Form. Every effort should be made to ensure that Applicants who complete the RSD Application Form at the UNHCR Office have adequate space and privacy.



- As a general rule, Applicants who do not require assistance in completing the RSD Application Form should be permitted to take the RSD Application Form away to **complete independently** and return it to UNHCR on the day of the Registration Interview.

- Applicants who are not able to read the RSD Application Form in the language provided, or who otherwise require assistance in completing the Form, should receive **necessary assistance**, including the use of a UNHCR interpreter.
- Where UNHCR Staff members complete the RSD Application Form for the Applicant, they should take particular care to **accurately and completely record** the statements and responses of the Applicant, and should indicate on the RSD Application Form the assistance they have provided.



### 3.2.5 The Registration Interview

- **Registration Interviews should take place as soon as possible after asylum seekers approach the UNHCR Office.** Early recording of the registration information, including the family composition, as well as the basis for the refugee claim promotes greater accuracy and reliability of this information.
- Registration Interviews should be conducted in a **non-intimidating, non-threatening, and impartial manner**, with due respect for the safety and dignity of refugees.
- Registration Interviews should be conducted by **Registration staff members who are qualified and trained** to perform this role. Where an Applicant has expressed a preference to be interviewed by UNHCR staff members and/or interpreters of a particular sex, the request should be noted in the appropriate section of the RSD Application Form. Every effort should be made to accommodate this request in the Registration Interview and subsequent RSD procedures.
- As a standard procedure, every **Principal Applicant and each accompanying adult family member/dependent should have an individual and confidential Registration Interview** (see § 3.2.6 - *Registration Interview of Family Members/Dependants*). As a general rule, child Applicants who are applying for derivative status need not be referred for an individual Registration Interview unless they so request, or there are other factors indicating that this would be appropriate.
- **Children who are applying for RSD as Principal Applicants and all unaccompanied and separated children** should be referred for an individual Registration Interview. The information gathered at the Registration Interview should inform decisions regarding the appropriate procedures for processing the child's claim and necessary follow up measures for the care and protection of the child (see 3.4.5 - *Child Applicants (Under 18) / Separated & Unaccompanied Children*).
- **Registration Interviews for child Applicants** should be conducted in an age-appropriate manner, taking into consideration the age and maturity of the child as well as any special needs or vulnerabilities of the child. Wherever possible, staff members who conduct Registration Interviews and provide assistance and counselling to child Applicants should have experience in interviewing and assisting asylum seeking and refugee children.



### Responsibilities of Registration Staff at the Registration Interview:

- ▶ **Review the RSD Application Form** to ensure that all Applicants have completed the appropriate sections of the form (see § 3.2.4 - *Distribution and Completion of the RSD Application Form*).
  - ▶ **Verify information provided on the Registration Information Sheet** of the Applicant and of children in the household who are applying for derivative status. Missing information should be requested and added to the RSD Application Form where available.
  - ▶ Confirm that Principal Applicants have identified **all family members/dependants** on the RSD Application Form, including those who have not yet arrived in the host country, and note the nature of each of the family/dependency relationships. Early recording of this information will assist any subsequent determination of eligibility for derivative status (see § 5 - *Processing for Claims based on the Right to Family Unity*).
  - ▶ **Request and copy personal documentation** and any other documents that are relevant to the refugee claim, including birth and marriage certificates, and any other documents that support existence of the dependency relationship with the Principal Applicant (see § 3.2.8 - *Supporting Documents*).
  - ▶ Confirm that all accompanying family members/dependants who are **applying for derivative status are present on the day of the Registration Interview**, and take appropriate steps to arrange for attendance of missing individuals.
  - ▶ **Identify and assist Applicants with special protection or assistance needs** and, where appropriate, initiate referral to Accelerated RSD Processing (see § 3.4 - *Applicants with Special Needs*).
- Where an Applicant indicates that he/she has been **previously registered with UNHCR**, Registration staff should obtain as much information as the Applicant is able to provide regarding the date and place of the registration, the purpose of the registration, the entity who was responsible for the registration, and the documentation that was provided. Where previous registration information is available, Registration staff should **verify and update the registration information, in particular information** regarding births, deaths, marriages, or other developments affecting the composition of the household or dependency relationships, or any changes in the status of a member of the household with UNHCR. Current registration information should be recorded in the appropriate sections of the RSD Application Form.
  - Information and advice to Applicants relating to the **substantive elements of the refugee claim** may only be provided by **UNHCR Protection staff members** who are responsible for RSD. Where Registration Interviews or counselling sessions are conducted by Registration staff who are not responsible for RSD, the Registration staff should receive precise instructions on the content and scope of the information they should provide to Applicants.

### 3.2.6 Registration Interview of Family Members/Dependants

- As a standard procedure, all accompanying **adult** family members/dependants of the Principal Applicant should have an **individual and confidential Registration Interview**.
- Registration Staff should ensure that persons claiming derivative status as family members/dependants of a Principal Applicant are aware of the refugee criteria and the **right to make an independent refugee claim** where they have individual grounds to seek refugee protection.
- **UNHCR standards for the protection of refugee women** require that UNHCR staff take all possible measures to ensure that women have access to UNHCR registration and RSD procedures and receive any necessary assistance and support in these procedures. In certain cultures or family units, women who have grounds to make a refugee claim may be reluctant to make an independent claim, or may be discouraged from doing so. All Registration staff should be sensitized to this issue and should use gender and culturally sensitive interviewing techniques to create an atmosphere of confidence in which women who may have individual protection needs feel comfortable to discuss this with UNHCR staff.
- As some individuals who have experienced persecution may not have disclosed the details of the persecution to family members, they may be reluctant to initiate an independent refugee claim out of concern that the information they provide will be shared with their family members. This may be particularly relevant for individuals who have experienced gender-related persecution or sexual violence. Registration staff should therefore **emphasize the confidentiality of UNHCR interviews and counselling** and the fact that the RSD Interview will be conducted without any other family member present.



### 3.2.7 Photographs

- An **individual photograph** of each Applicant, including each family member/dependant, should be taken by a UNHCR staff member at the Registration Interview.
- Photographs of the Principal Applicant and each family member/dependant should be **attached to the front of the RSD Application Form** of the Applicant who is photographed. UNHCR Offices should use the most effective methods available to minimize tampering or removal of photographs on RSD Application Forms.
- Wherever possible, individual photographs should be taken digitally and electronically attached to the RSD Application Form. Offices that are using **digital photographs** in registration procedures should take necessary steps to ensure that photographs are promptly and accurately linked to the appropriate electronic file.
- Where photographs are taken using conventional cameras, the actual photographs should be securely attached to the individual RSD Application Form. At the time that photographs are taken, the name and registration number of the individual photographed should be immediately written on the back of each physical photograph.



### 3.2.8 Supporting Documents

- All Applicants should be asked to present **originals, where available, or best available copies** of all identity documents or other documents that support their refugee claim.
- Applicants should be asked to provide an **explanation for any missing documents**, or documents for which only copies are presented. The explanation should be recorded in the appropriate section of the RSD Application Form. Where Applicants are able to obtain missing documents that are relevant to the claim, without personal risk or risk to others, they should be asked to do so, and the request should be noted on the RSD Application Form. Where feasible, a **Document Appointment** should be scheduled and an Appointment Slip should be issued to the Applicant.
- Under no circumstances should Applicants be asked to approach the authorities in **the country of origin** to obtain documents, or to take any other steps that could place family members or associates who remain in the country of origin at risk.
- Copies should be made of all original documents provided by Applicants. A **description of each document**, including whether an original or copy was provided and the date it was received in the Office, should be noted in the appropriate section of the RSD Application Form.
- UNHCR staff should take the utmost care in **handling original documents** of Applicants. When examining or copying original documents UNHCR staff should ensure that the documents remain intact and are not damaged or lost. Original documents presented by an Applicant should be returned to the Applicant promptly after copying, and should not be retained on the Applicant's file.

### 3.2.9 Assigning Registration Numbers

- A **unique registration number** should be assigned to every individual who is registered with UNHCR. Principal Applicants and each accompanying family member/dependant who is applying for derivative status should have an individual registration number. The registration number should remain static and should be **used to identify the individual for all purposes and through all stages of the RSD process and subsequent UNHCR procedures**, even if the status of the individual within the household unit, or with UNHCR, changes during the procedures.

### 3.2.10 Opening the RSD File

- During or as soon as possible after the Registration Interview, an individual RSD file should be opened for each Principal Applicant pursuant to established file management procedures (see § 2.2.2 - *Procedures for Opening RSD Files*).



### 3.2.11 Alternative Procedures for Registration of Applicants for RSD

- Where known conditions in the host country make it difficult for asylum seekers to reach UNHCR Offices to apply for RSD, UNHCR Offices should take all feasible steps to register Applicants for RSD in locations outside of the UNHCR Office (i.e. detention centres, medical facilities, refugee camps, home visits etc.).



- Principal Applicants and all accompanying family members/dependants should be required to **register with UNHCR and apply for RSD in person**. Where necessary, these procedures may be conducted through approved implementing partners. Alternative measures for registration of applicants for RSD should only be adopted where it is possible to incorporate effective measures for UNHCR monitoring and supervision to ensure the reliability of the information collected and the integrity of the registration and RSD procedures, and the measures are approved by the RSD Supervisor.
- The use of alternative registration methods does not affect the requirement that each accompanying family member/dependant **complete a separate RSD Application Form** and that each adult be individually interviewed by UNHCR staff. The Principal Applicant should be clearly informed that all named family members/dependants who were not present for registration will be required to be present to meet with a UNHCR staff member on the date of the Principal Applicant's RSD Interview, or on another date specified by the Office.

## 3.3 UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate

### 3.3.1 General Principles

- UNHCR Offices should issue time-limited UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates to all registered Applicants for RSD, including registered family members/dependants, **attesting to their status as asylum seekers** whose eligibility for refugee status is being examined by UNHCR, and requesting that the host country authorities provide necessary protection and assistance until UNHCR has had the opportunity to make a final determination of the claim.
- UNHCR Offices should undertake any necessary **demarches with the relevant authorities in the host country** to explain the form and significance of the UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate and to promote recognition and acceptance of documents issued by UNHCR to asylum seekers and refugees in the host country.
- The uniformity of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates and the harmonization of related procedures are intended to enhance the integrity, recognition and acceptance of documents issued by UNHCR to registered Applicants for mandate RSD. However, **there may be exceptional contexts in which additional or alternative approaches to the issuance of the standard UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate may be required** to respond to the particular protection environment, to permit Applicants to access available assistance in the host country, and/or to avoid any unintended adverse consequences that could dilute the protection value of the UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate. Where the issuance of the UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate is not considered to be appropriate, the UNHCR Office concerned should adopt alternative measures only in consultation with the relevant Bureau and DIP.

### 3.3.2 Form of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate

- **UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates** should be issued in the standard format (**Annex 3-3**). UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates should be issued in the language of the host country and the main working language of the UNHCR Office. In addition to the attestation referred to above, the document should contain the following information:

#### UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate

- The name by which the Applicant is registered with UNHCR and other core bio-data including the date and place of birth, and nationality
- The UNHCR registration number of the Applicant
- A photograph of the individual to whom the Asylum Seeker Certificate is issued
- The place and date of arrival in the host country
- The reference number under which the document was issued by UNHCR
- The date of issuance of the UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate and the period of validity
- The signature of a UNHCR staff member who is authorized to sign UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates
- The address and contact information for the UNHCR Office that issued the document

### 3.3.3 Oversight and Controls

- UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates should be prepared by **designated Registration** staff, who should work under the **direct supervision** of the RSD Supervisor or another designated Protection staff member (ideally a Protection staff member who has supervisory responsibility in registration procedures).
- Access to templates for UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates and circulation of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates during preparation and review procedures should be strictly controlled (i.e. through numbering and logging procedures).
- Procedures for preparing and issuing UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates should include effective review mechanisms to ensure that the information they contain is **accurate**, and that they are **issued only to asylum seekers who were duly registered** by UNHCR. **Each UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate should be reviewed** by the RSD Supervisor or another designated Protection staff supervisor before it is issued. Where responsibility for review is delegated, the RSD Supervisor should conduct regular and random reviews of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates to monitor the effectiveness of supervision and controls.
- Each UNHCR Office, in consultation with UNHCR Headquarters as necessary, should employ the most effective techniques available to **prevent fraudulent production or tampering** of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates, including using carefully controlled security paper, embossing, dry seals or a special photo pack.

### 3.3.4 Recipients of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate

- A UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate should be issued to each Principal Applicant who registers with UNHCR, and to each registered family member/dependant who is applying for derivative status, including children.
- UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates should only be issued to **Applicants who register with UNHCR in person.**



### 3.3.5 Period of Validity of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate

- The period of the validity of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates should be **based upon the average processing times for first instance decisions in the UNHCR Office**, but which, in any event, **should not exceed one year**. The period of validity should be the same for all Applicants in any given UNHCR Office unless a Protection staff member who is responsible for supervising the issuance of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates determines that a shorter or longer period of validity, not to exceed one year, is appropriate.
- At the time that the UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate is issued, the Applicant should be informed of the procedures for renewal should it expire before the final RSD decision is issued.

### 3.3.6 Renewal of Expired or Lost UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates

- Applicants should be required to attend the UNHCR Office to apply in person for renewal of a UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate.
- The Principal Applicant should ordinarily be able to apply for renewal of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates that were duly issued to accompanying family members/dependants. UNHCR staff should exercise discretion in requiring the attendance of any family member/dependant who is seeking renewal, and should require attendance where there is reason to doubt the legitimacy of the renewal request.
- When applying for renewal, Applicants should **relinquish the original** of the most recent UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate issued to the Applicant and each accompanying family member/dependant, and should present any other personal identification in the possession of the Applicant.
- Renewal of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate should be subject to **effective review and approval procedures** by Protection staff who are designated to supervise the issuance of UNHCR documents.
- Renewals should be granted for **a period of 6 months**, unless the Protection staff member who authorizes renewal is satisfied that a shorter period is appropriate. A new UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate should be issued to the Applicant and each accompanying family member/dependant.
- The **date of issuance and expiry** should be written on the renewed UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate and should be duly noted in a central Office record (see § 3.3.7 - *Maintaining Office Records of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates*).
- **Replacement of lost UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates** should be carried out pursuant to the procedures outlined above for renewal of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates. Applicants who report lost or stolen UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates should be asked to provide a written and signed explanation of the circumstances of the loss and an undertaking to return the original document to UNHCR if it is recovered.

### 3.3.7 Maintaining Office Records of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates

- A copy of each UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate issued to an Applicant and any accompanying family member/dependant should be **retained on the appropriate individual file**.
- Each UNHCR Office should maintain a **central record of all UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates** issued by the Office, including renewals and lost UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates.

### 3.3.8 Fraudulent Use of UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates

- Procedures relating to UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates should include measures to confiscate UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates that are used by persons who are not entitled to hold them, or the misuse of the documents by Applicants to whom they were legitimately issued.
- A UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate should not be confiscated from a person to whom it has been legitimately issued, unless there is clear and reliable evidence that the Applicant has made improper use of the document, and confiscation is authorized by the RSD Supervisor.

## 3.4 Applicants with Special Needs

### 3.4.1 General Procedures

- Reception and registration procedures should include **measures to identify asylum seekers who may have special needs** as early as possible in the RSD process. The vulnerability or special needs of asylum seekers may be evident at reception, but more commonly, do not become known to UNHCR staff until the Registration Interview or at a later stage in the RSD process. The procedures proposed below are intended to guide UNHCR staff in assisting and processing asylum seekers who are identified in reception and registration, but are applicable to vulnerable Applicants who are identified at any stage of the RSD Process.

#### Applicants who May be Vulnerable or Have Special Needs

- ▶ Persons Manifestly in Need of Protection Intervention
- ▶ Victims of Torture and Persons Suffering from Trauma
- ▶ Women with Special Needs
- ▶ Certain Child Applicants (under 18 years) / Unaccompanied & Separated Children
- ▶ Elderly Asylum Seekers
- ▶ Disabled Asylum Seekers
- ▶ Asylum Seekers who Require Medical Assistance

- When the vulnerability or special needs of Applicants is identified in reception, they should have priority in reception and registration procedures.
- Each UNHCR Office should designate and train staff to counsel and assist vulnerable Applicants.

#### Counselling of Vulnerable Applicants

- ▶ Assess the Applicant's need for assistance in RSD procedures.
- ▶ Identify other immediate protection needs and referral to available resources for assistance in the host community.
- ▶ Identify and recommend cases for priority processing pursuant to the procedures set out in § 4.6 - *Accelerated RSD Processing*.

- The recommendations that follow set out basic standards for the reception and RSD processing of vulnerable Applicants. UNHCR staff who provide counselling and assistance to Applicants with special needs should be familiar with **relevant guidelines from UNHCR Headquarters**, which provide more detailed direction on appropriate standards for treatment of specific categories of vulnerable asylum seekers.

### 3.4.2 Persons Manifestly in Need of Protection Intervention

- Applicants who should be considered to be "manifestly in need of protection intervention" are persons who **may be subject to immediate refoulement or arbitrary arrest or detention in the host country**, or who may have **other serious legal or protection needs**.
- Applicants who are identified as being manifestly in need of protection intervention should be referred without delay to the RSD Supervisor, or another designated Protection staff member who has supervisory responsibilities in RSD. The designated Protection staff member should meet with the Applicant to assess immediate protection needs, provide appropriate protection counselling, and determine whether the Applicant should be referred to Accelerated RSD Processing (see § 4.6.5 - *Procedures for Accelerated RSD Processing*).

### 3.4.3 Victims of Torture and Persons Suffering from Trauma

- Victims of torture and persons who are suffering from trauma, including victims of sexual violence, should have access to RSD counselling and should receive any necessary assistance in RSD procedures. Wherever possible, RSD counselling should be provided by a UNHCR staff member or implementing partner who has training and expertise in assisting victims of torture or trauma.
- When victims of torture or trauma are **suffering from ongoing mental and/or physical health problems**, they should be referred to appropriate facilities for treatment of immediate medical needs, and for specialized counselling and support services, where available. Where relevant medical expertise is available, UNHCR should seek an assessment of the nature and possible causes of the physical and psychological harm suffered, as well as long-term treatment requirements.



### 3.4.4 Women with Special Needs

- Women who are **victims of sexual or domestic violence**, and **women who maybe at risk in the host country because of cultural, domestic, social, or economic conditions**, should be promptly referred to counselling with a qualified female UNHCR staff member or implementing partner. UNHCR staff or implementing partners who provide counselling to women should have knowledge of UNHCR RSD procedures and should be trained in interviewing and assisting women with special needs. Counsellors should also be knowledgeable about available resources in the host community for appropriate medical treatment, psychological counselling, and social and legal supports to which women may be referred.



### 3.4.5 Child Applicants (under 18) / Unaccompanied & Separated Children

- Children have the **right to make an independent refugee claim**, regardless of their age, and should receive all necessary assistance and support in making their claim. Whether a child is making an individual refugee claim as a Principal Applicant or is applying for derivative refugee status as a refugee dependant, all aspects of the RSD procedures for child Applicants should be conducted in an **age-appropriate manner**, taking into consideration the age and maturity of the child. Wherever possible, RSD procedures involving child Applicants should be carried out by **staff who have knowledge and experience** in interviewing and assisting child asylum seekers.
- In all decisions and actions taken with respect to child Applicants for RSD the **best interests of the child** should be a primary consideration. The views of a child Applicant should be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
- UNHCR registration standards require that registration information be collected for every child Applicant for RSD, including children who are applying for derivative status as dependants of Principal Applicants. Detailed **directions regarding the completion of the RSD Application Form by child Applicants**, and the additional registration information gathering requirements for separated and unaccompanied children, are set out in § 3.2.4 - *Distribution and Completion of the RSD Application Form*.
- Child Applicants who are unaccompanied by any adult caregiver in the host country ("**unaccompanied children**") or children who, while accompanied in the host country have been separated from their parents or their previous legal or customary primary caregiver ("**separated children**") should be identified early as possible in the RSD process.
- **All unaccompanied and separated children must have an individual Registration Interview** (see § 3.2.5 - *The Registration Interview*). Registration procedures for unaccompanied and separated children should permit UNHCR to gather sufficient information to assess the child's specific assistance and protection needs, including the need to initiate tracing or family unity measures and the appropriateness of care arrangements in the host country, and should inform decisions regarding the appropriate procedures for processing the child's claim. In addition to the **RSD Application Form, the Registration Form for Unaccompanied and Separated Children (Annex 3-2)** has been designed for use by UNHCR and implementing partners who are assisting unaccompanied and separated children. Registration Staff must therefore ensure that both of these forms have been completed for unaccompanied or separated children who are registered by UNHCR (see § 3.2.4 - *Distribution and Completion of the RSD Application Form*).





- Wherever possible, **staff members who provide assistance and counselling to unaccompanied and separated children** should have experience with child asylum seekers as well as knowledge of the laws in the host community regarding children's rights and the available resources for the care and guardianship of children.
- **A guardian should be designated for all unaccompanied and separated children** to assist the child in all stages of the process and to ensure that the child is properly represented, that his/her views are expressed, and that any decisions taken are in his/her best interests. In some cases, an adult may already have assumed the role of providing care to an unaccompanied or separated child. In such cases, it might be appropriate that the adult be designated as the child's guardian. The decision to designate an adult guardian should take into consideration the nature of any existing relationship between the adult and the child (including any indications that the child may be at risk of abuse or exploitation) as well as the adequacy of the care the adult is able and willing to provide for the child. The child's views and wishes should be taken into account in the appointment of a guardian.
- As a general rule, the claims of child Applicants should be **processed on a priority basis**. Unaccompanied and separated children should be referred to the procedures to examine the appropriateness of Accelerated RSD Processing set out in § 4.6. As a general rule, where the claim of a child Applicant is directly related to the claims of accompanying family members, or the child is applying for derivative status, it will not be necessary or appropriate to process the child's application on an accelerated basis, absent other factors suggesting that priority processing would be appropriate. Decisions about referral of such cases for priority processing should be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the individual vulnerability or special needs of the child.
- If a child Applicant is **unable to provide identity documents**, the age provided should be accepted. Where there are reasons to believe the Applicant may be an adult, UNHCR Offices should make reasonable efforts to assess the age. In principle, any doubt regarding the age provided by the child should be resolved in favour of the child.

### 3.4.6 Elderly Asylum Seekers

- Elderly asylum seekers may have been **separated from the traditional support network** that was available in the country of origin and may be at **higher risk of neglect and abandonment** in the host country. Elderly asylum seekers who appear to be without support in the host country should receive counselling by UNHCR staff or a designated implementing partner at the earliest stages in the RSD procedures, so that any social, medical and psychological needs can be identified and they can receive necessary assistance in accessing any available services and supports in the host community. Elderly asylum seekers should receive any assistance they require in RSD procedures.



### 3.4.7 Disabled Asylum Seekers

- Disabled asylum seekers may be separated from sources of support as a result of their displacement and **may face greater hardship** in the host country. They **may also require medical treatment or other assistance**. Disabled Applicants should receive counselling at the earliest stages in the procedure, so that special health and psychological needs can be identified and they can receive necessary assistance in accessing any available services and supports in the host community. Disabled Applicants should receive any assistance they require in the RSD procedures.



- Before proceeding with adjudication of refugee claims of Applicants who appear to be suffering from **mental illness or disability**, UNHCR staff should take all available measures to assess the capacity of the Applicant to understand the RSD process and to present the evidence necessary to determine their eligibility for refugee status. In making this assessment, and other decisions related to the processing of the refugee claim, UNHCR should consult with medical or other specialized resources in the host community, where available.
- Where the Applicant is considered to be suffering from mental illness or disability that is sufficiently serious to affect the legal capacity of the Applicant, UNHCR Offices should take appropriate steps to identify a **designated representative** to assist the Applicant in all stages of the RSD process, and to ensure that the social and legal rights of the Applicant are respected. This role should not be assumed by UNHCR staff.

### 3.4.8 Asylum Seekers who Require Medical Assistance

- Applicants who appear to be suffering from serious physical or mental illness should be referred for medical examination and treatment. If access to medical assistance is dependant upon the status of the individual, and where Applicants have serious medical needs requiring immediate medical attention, referral to the Accelerated RSD Processing procedures set out in § 4.6 should be considered.

### 3.4.9 Recording Information on Applicants with Special Needs

- Special needs or vulnerabilities of Asylum seekers should be noted in the appropriate section of the **RSD Application Form**.
- UNHCR staff who provide individual counselling to vulnerable Applicants or any other Applicant at any stage in the RSD process, should maintain a note of the counselling provided which should include the following information:

#### Note of Counselling Session

- Date and time counselling began and ended
  - Type of counselling that was provided
  - Summary of the information provided by the Applicant regarding his/her refugee claim, background, and any other relevant information about the Applicant's personal circumstances in the host country
  - Summary of the information or advice that was provided to the Applicant by the UNHCR staff member
  - Recommendations for appropriate follow up
- Records of any action taken by UNHCR staff or designated implementing partners to assist Applicants with special needs and any other relevant reports or documents should be retained on the individual file.

## 3.5 Scheduling of RSD Interviews and Appointments

### 3.5.1 General Scheduling Procedures

- Scheduling of RSD Interviews and appointments in UNHCR Offices should be conducted according to established procedures and in an **orderly, fair and transparent** manner.
- With the exception of cases referred to the Accelerated RSD Processing procedures (see § 4.6.3 - *Appropriate Cases for Accelerated RSD Processing*), Applicants should be scheduled for RSD Interviews in the order that the RSD Application Form has been received by UNHCR.
- Scheduling procedures in UNHCR Offices should **promote the most efficient use of staff time and minimize inconvenience to Applicants**. To avoid unduly long waits for Applicants, and crowding in the Reception area, scheduling of the time of interviews and appointments relating to RSD should be as precise as possible. Scheduling should be based on a **realistic assessment of the processing capacity** of the UNHCR Office, taking into account potential emergency scheduling requirements.
- Each UNHCR Office should establish a **central scheduling system** to coordinate and record the scheduling details of all interviews and appointments. The central schedule, and all activities relating to scheduling of interviews and appointments, should be managed by a **designated Scheduling Coordinator**. All interviews and appointments should be scheduled in consultation with the designated Scheduling Coordinator and according to established procedures.
- At the time that any interview or appointment is assigned, Applicants should receive an **Appointment Slip** confirming the details of the interview or appointment, which they should be asked to present at reception when they attend the UNHCR Office for the interview or appointment.

#### The Appointment Slip

- Name of the Applicant
- Applicant's UNHCR file number
- Date and time of the appointment
- The complete address of the UNHCR Office or other appointment site
- Directions on how to contact the UNHCR Office in the event of an emergency, or should the Applicant have valid reasons to reschedule the appointment
- Instructions to bring all relevant documents

- UNHCR staff should observe scheduled RSD Interviews and appointments and **avoid rescheduling**. When rescheduling is necessary, UNHCR staff should make every effort to minimize uncertainty or inconvenience for the Applicant. Wherever possible, the staff member concerned, or a member of the Reception staff, should contact the Applicant before the interview or appointment to reschedule.

### 3.5.2 Oversight of RSD Scheduling Systems and Procedures

- The **Scheduling Coordinator** should be **supervised by and report to the RSD Supervisor** or another designated Protection staff member who has supervisory responsibilities in reception or registration procedures.
- Where responsibility for supervision of scheduling systems and procedures is delegated, the responsible Protection staff member should report directly to the RSD Supervisor.
- Any problems with scheduling procedures that could affect the fairness or efficiency of RSD procedures must be reported to the RSD Supervisor, who is responsible to direct and monitor the effectiveness of measures to address the problem.

### 3.5.3 Scheduling of RSD Interviews

- Every Principal Applicant for RSD should be assigned an RSD Interview date in accordance with the general scheduling principles set out above.
- Scheduling of RSD Interviews should be based on an average number of interviews per week per Eligibility Officer, as established by the RSD Supervisor pursuant to the criteria set out in § 4.1.2 - *Determining Case Processing Capacity of Eligibility Officers*.
- With the exception of cases referred to the Accelerated RSD Processing procedures (see § 4.6.3 - *Appropriate Cases for Accelerated RSD Processing*), Applicants should be scheduled for RSD Interviews in the order that the RSD Application Form has been received by UNHCR.
- Scheduling of RSD Interviews should ensure that Applicants are afforded a reasonable period of time to receive and consider information on the RSD process and procedures and to adequately prepare and present their claim. However, scheduling of RSD Interviews should also promote the right to prompt processing of RSD Applications and the timely and efficient determination of refugee claims by UNHCR Offices. **RSD Interviews should therefore be scheduled as soon as possible after the Applicant has been registered by UNHCR.**
- The **length of time between the date of registration and the scheduled RSD Interview** will vary depending on the number of registered cases and the number of Eligibility Officers in each UNHCR Office, but should not exceed six months. When the scheduling of RSD Interviews exceeds this period, the UNHCR Office should notify the relevant Bureau at UNHCR Headquarters and DIP.
- Where the RSD Interview is conducted on the same day as Registration Interview, the Eligibility Officer should ensure that the Applicant has been adequately informed about the RSD process, and should provide any necessary procedural counselling before beginning the RSD interview. The Eligibility Officer should ensure that the Applicant has had the **opportunity to consider and present all evidence** that may be relevant to the determination of the claim.

### 3.5.4 Priority Scheduling of RSD Interviews

- Applicants who are referred to Accelerated RSD Processing procedures pursuant to § 4.6 should be scheduled for an RSD Interview on the first available date before the time limit recommended by the Protection staff member who approved the referral to Accelerated RSD Processing (see § 4.6.5 - *Procedures for Accelerated RSD Processing*).
- If it is not possible to schedule the RSD Interview within the recommended time limit, the Scheduling Coordinator should consult with the Protection staff member who approved the referral, or another designated Protection Staff member, to make appropriate arrangements for priority scheduling.

### 3.5.5 Rescheduling RSD Interviews

- **Request by Applicant for an Earlier RSD Interview**

Requests by an Applicant to reschedule the RSD Interview to an earlier date should be considered in light of the criteria for access to Accelerated RSD Processing set out in § 4.6.3 - *Appropriate cases for Accelerated RSD Processing*. Where the reasons presented by the Applicant relate to immediate and compelling protection concerns, or factors relating to the vulnerability of the Applicant, the request should be referred to the Protection staff member who is authorized to approve referral to Accelerated RSD Processing.

Requests by Applicants who are not eligible for Accelerated RSD Processing should be denied. UNHCR staff should be consistent and clear in the explanation that the RSD Interview has been scheduled on the basis of the UNHCR Office's processing capacity and the need to maintain fair and orderly scheduling procedures for all Applicants.

- **Request by Applicant to Postpone RSD Interview**

Requests to re-schedule an RSD Interview to a later date should generally be considered by the Eligibility Officer to whom the Applicant's file has been assigned. The request for a postponement should be granted when the Applicant presents legitimate personal or procedural reasons (i.e. illness, delay in the arrival of dependants, the need to obtain supporting evidence). If postponement is granted, the Applicant's request for postponement should be documented on the Applicant's file, and the RSD Interview should be rescheduled according to established scheduling procedures (see § 3.5.1 - *General Scheduling Procedures*).

- **Missed RSD Interviews**

Requests for rescheduling of a missed RSD Interview should generally be granted unless an Applicant has missed several scheduled RSD Interviews without a valid explanation, and there is good reason to believe the Applicant is not acting in good faith. If the request for a new RSD Interview occurs after the RSD file has been closed, the request to reschedule should be made pursuant to re-opening procedures (see § 9.1 - *Re-opening RSD Files*.)

Given the potential protection implications of denying an RSD Interview to an Applicant who has registered with the UNHCR Office, decisions not to reassign an RSD Interview to an Applicant should only be made in exceptional cases and only with the express authorization of RSD Supervisor. The reasons for the decision not to reassign an RSD Interview should be clearly noted on the Applicant's file.

- **Rescheduling of RSD Interview by UNHCR**

- ▶ **Advancing the Date of the RSD Interview**

At any stage in the RSD process, an Applicant who is believed to be manifestly in need of protection intervention or to have special needs or vulnerabilities, may be scheduled for an RSD Interview on a priority basis pursuant to the procedures for Accelerated RSD processing set out in § 4.6.

- ▶ **Postponing the RSD Interview**

In light of the potential protection implications for the Applicant of delayed RSD, scheduled RSD Interviews should only be postponed by UNHCR in exceptional cases, and in consultation with the RSD Supervisor or another designated Protection staff member.

As a general rule, cases determined to be eligible for Accelerated RSD Processing pursuant to § 4.6 - *Accelerated RSD Processing* should not be rescheduled by UNHCR. Where rescheduling is unavoidable, it should be done only in consultation with the Protection staff member who approved the referral to Accelerated RSD Processing, or another designated Protection Staff member.

When the number of scheduled interviews exceeds UNHCR processing capacity, decisions regarding which RSD Interviews can appropriately be rescheduled, and any necessary file assignments should be made by a Protection staff member who has supervisory responsibility over scheduling or other RSD procedures.