CITING RECORDS IN THE ARCHIVES OF UNHCR
A Guideline for Researchers
19 November 1999

A good citation is essential to permit both the Archives and other researchers to locate and identify the item you used. We offer the guidelines that follow, although we are aware that different national traditions may require a different style of citation. The example below shows a citation from the item to the repository level; it is equally effective to reverse the order and go from the repository citation to the item.

General guidelines

Citations should identity the item, the file unit, the series, the subfonds (if any), the fonds, and the repository. Each of these citation elements contains unique information that describes the context and source of the record. Additional elements may be appropriate for nontextual records such as photographs, sound and video recordings, and electronic records.

The following hypothetical example illustrates the various elements in a citation:

Elihu Plunkett to the High Commissioner, 22 November 1968; 4/0 BECH/BOT Voluntary agencies – General – Bechuanaland/Botswana; Series 1, Classified Subject Files; Fonds 11, Records of the Central Registry; Archives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereafter Series 1, Fonds UNHCR 11).

Item: *Elihu Plunkett to the High Commissioner, 22 November 1968.*
This is the specific document to which the citation refers. It could be a letter, report, photograph, map, poster, motion picture, electronic database, or any other format.

File Unit: *4/0 BECH/BOT Voluntary agencies – General – Bechuanaland/Botswana.*
The file unit is the physical unit that encompasses a record item. For paper records, the file unit may be a file folder, a dossier, a binder.

Series: *Series 1, Classified Subject Files.*
The series is a set of record items or file units arranged according to a filing system or kept together because they relate to a particular subject or function; result from the same activity; documents a specific kind of transaction; take a particular physical form; or have some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, or use. Series are numbered within the fonds (or subfonds, if it exists).

Subgroup:
The subgroup is a set of series, related by their common origin within an administrative unit or by their connection to a common function or activity.

Subgroups may sometimes be formed on the basis of date or geography. In The Archives of UNHCR, for example, there is a fonds for the records of the Regional Bureaux at UNHCR Headquarters; within that fonds are subfonds for Asia and the Pacific, Americas, and so forth. As another example, in the fonds for the field office records from the Balkans during the wars of the 1990s, there are subfonds for records from Zagreb, Pale, Belgrade, and so forth. Subfonds are numbered within the fonds.

Fonds: *Fonds 11, Records of the Central Registry.*
The fonds is the principal unit of archival control. A fonds comprises the records of a large organization; alternatively, a fonds may group a large number of small but related activities. A few fonds contain personal papers of former UNHCR staff members.

Repository: *Archives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.*
The international standard for archival description requires each repository to have an identification code. The citation code for the Archives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is very simple: UNHCR.

Nontextual records

Nontextual records consist of all records that are not in the format of text on paper. They include, among others, sound and video recordings, photographs, posters, maps, and oral history tapes.

Some nontextual records, such as the occasional map or photograph, may be found among the textual records. In such cases, the standard citation above can be used, but noting the physical form of the record. For example, *Plan for housing of refugees in Macau* (architectural drawing), will clearly indicate that this is a drawing and not a textual description.

Sometimes entire series are nontextual records. In such cases, the series title will usually identify the physical type, so the item identification can simply provide the caption, number, or description of the item. For example, *Hohenfels Bakery Shop, Team 71, "C" series and miscellaneous prints.*

UNHCR has a small quantity of oral history interviews. Usually the researcher will use the transcript of the interview; citations to the transcripts should follow the basic guidelines, adding the page of the transcript in the citation. If the researcher uses the audiotape, the citation should include the physical form to ensure that it is clear that the information comes from the tape not the transcript. For example, *Interview of Auguste R. Lindt, 24 January 1998, Sound Recording, UNHCR Oral History Project, Fonds 36, Records of the Archives.*

For suggestions on citations for other physical types, please consult with the staff of the Archives.