

# Operational Standards for Registration and Documentation



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*This document has been adapted from Handbook for Registration,  
(Provisional Release, September 2003) of UNHCR.*

*The purpose of this document is to provide a quick guidance to Governments and  
other partners who are conducting refugee registration. For full details and  
procedures, please refer to the above Handbook.*

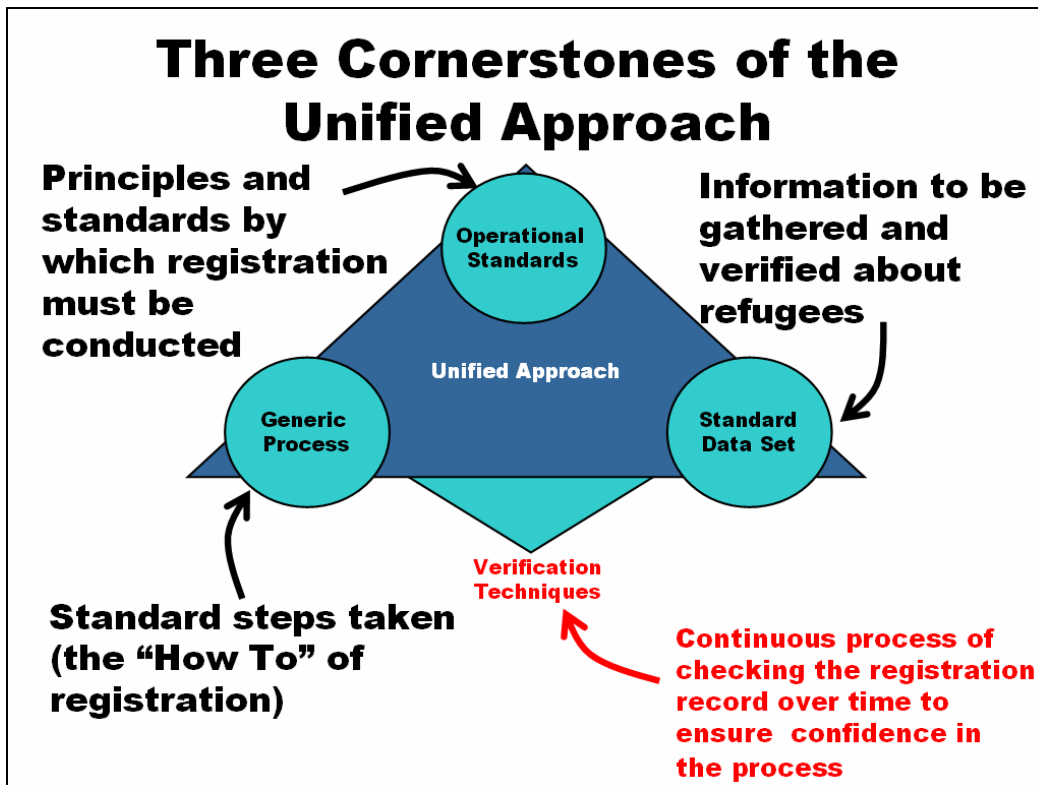
## Part One – Principles and Standards

### 1 The Basics

Asylum-seekers and refugees have participated in registration processes even before UNHCR was founded. Until the late 1970s, those systems kept pace, to a greater or lesser degree, with the evolution of refugee situations. In Southeast Asia, for example, registration of Vietnamese boat people and Cambodians living in holding centres was, on the whole, comprehensive and effective.

A package of guidelines and registration tools issued by UNHCR in 1994, titled *“Registration: A Practical Guide for Field Staff”*, drew on further experiences in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire. In 2001, the Executive Committee of UNHCR issued its first conclusion dedicated to registration, reiterating the importance of registration as a tool for protection and, under a programme entitled “Project Profile”, standards and tools for registration were to be incorporated into a comprehensive system.

Following the 2001 EXCOM Conclusion, a provisional release of the Handbook for Registration was issued in September 2003. This Handbook takes the evolution of registration a step further than the 1994 guide: it offers a core methodology applicable in most of the situations in which UNHCR assists refugees and other persons of concern. In place of large scale head-counts for enumeration purposes, it describes how to achieve a **continuous process** in which the individual record of a manageable number of people is updated and improved on a regular basis. In place of different approaches to registration adopted for camp and urban situations, it describes **common set of standards and data** which varies only its level of detail from one scenario to another. In place of static population information, this Handbook describes how to achieve a **living profile of the population** that remains an effective tool for protection and in the search for durable solutions. This **unified approach** to registration will help ensure that refugees are better protected and that appropriate durable solutions are found.



**Registration of refugees and asylum-seekers remains the responsibility of States.** UNHCR assumes an operational role for registration only if needed. In all such cases, this role should be assumed jointly with the authorities of the host country, and/or the capacity of the host country should be developed to enable it to take on this responsibility at a later stage.

### 1.1 Definition of registration

Registration can be defined as follows:

**Refugee registration is the recording, verifying, and updating of information on persons of concern with the aim of protecting and documenting them and of implementing durable solutions.**

While this document uses only the term "refugees" on some occasions, all persons of concern are covered by the standards and procedures detailed in the document, unless indicated otherwise. This includes asylum seekers, returning refugees, returnees, resettled refugees, stateless and internally displaced persons who are of concern.

### 1.2 Registration and refugee protection

Registration is a fundamental component of international protection and it is the right of persons who may be of concern to be registered. Registration recognizes an individual to be someone of concern, or potentially of concern, and their continued need for protection. It is a first step in formalizing the protection relationship between the government and/or UNHCR and the

refugee by allowing the refugee or asylum seeker to avail themselves of the protection and assistance they need and permitting the government and UNHCR to provide protection and assistance.

- ❖ ***At all times, registration should be undertaken with full respect for the confidential nature of the relationship between the protecting agent - government or UNHCR - and the person concerned.***

Registration helps **protect against refoulement**, arbitrary arrest and detention by making people known to UNHCR and the host government as persons of concern. It helps individuals, families and other groups of refugees get basic access to the rights, services, and assistance they need. Accurately registering children helps to **prevent military recruitment and to ensure family unity**, and, in the case of separated children, to **reunite families**. Registration also helps to ensure that decisions about **durable solutions are voluntary** by recording individual's agreement to a particular solution. Accurate registration is also essential for **identifying cases** for which resettlement and local integration are the most appropriate solutions.

Registration can **foster freedom of movement** and minimize dependence. Registration should not mean that persons are confined to the place in which they registered. Nomads, for example, should not be forced to stay where they are registered or they will lose their livelihoods.

Registration is crucial for identifying **those who are at risk** and **those who have special needs**. These people are often the least likely to come forward and make their needs known. While UNHCR has clear guidelines on protecting refugee women and children, they cannot be fully implemented unless the groups covered by the guidelines are identified.

Reliable population information is needed at an early stage, regardless of the length of time people will remain in a country of asylum, in order to identify and implement appropriate **durable solutions**. Lack of information or collection of information for too narrow a purpose or too short a planning horizon can hinder future decision-making and slow the search for durable solutions.

The **number of people requiring protection and assistance** determines the amount of food, water and non-food items needed and the extent of shelter, health and sanitation facilities that should be made available. Planning figures must both closely reflect the true size of the population and be sensitive to changing circumstances. Donors increasingly call on UNHCR to justify its fundraising requests with details about the people involved. The information UNHCR provides to donors should include both an overview of the affected population and details of groups of particular concern within the population.

Information on where people come from helps to **prepare voluntary repatriation programmes** and in assessing whether an area can absorb large numbers of returnees. Registration in countries of asylum can help to

rebuild national civil registries in the event of return when the data can be made available to local and central authorities in the country of origin.

**De-registration** ensures that registers are updated with information about progress towards the achievement of solutions, as well as current status of persons of concern.

### **1.3 Executive Committee (ExCom) conclusions**

In October 2001, UNHCR's **Executive Committee**<sup>1</sup> issued **Conclusion No. 91(LII)** on refugee registration (see Annex 1 for the full text of the Conclusion). The Conclusion reaffirms the importance of registration as a protection tool and sets certain basic guidelines for all registration processes:

- Registration should be a continuing process that records essential information both at the time of initial displacement and as changes in the refugee population, such as births, deaths, new arrivals, and departures occur.
- Registration processes should adhere to the fundamental principles of confidentiality.
- Registration should be easily accessible and take place in a safe and secure location.
- Registration should be conducted in a non-threatening and impartial manner, with respect for the safety and dignity of refugees.
- Personnel conducting the registration should be adequately trained and registration teams should include an adequate number of female staff.
- Whenever possible, refugees should be registered individually and the following information should be recorded: identity document and number, photograph, name, sex, date of birth (or age), marital status, special protection and assistance needs, level of education, occupation (skills), household (family) size and composition, date of arrival, current location and place of origin.

ExCom Conclusion No. 91 is important in that it represents an agreement between UNHCR and governments on how to conduct registration activities and what operational and the standards that apply. ExCom members expect UNHCR to make every effort to follow the standards and to monitor their implementation by states.

Other conclusions of the ExCom are pertinent to registration and documentation, covering issues such as documentation for all persons of concern including women, and the role of registration as a tool of protection. A list of the important conclusions and relevant paragraphs appears in Annex 2.

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with paragraph 4 of UNHCR's Statute, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in 1958. By its resolution 672 (XXV) of 1958, the Executive Committee came into existence as of 1 January 1959. The Executive Committee holds one annual session. This takes place in Geneva during the first half October each year. As of August 2006, there are 70 States who are members of the Executive Committee.

#### **1.4 Relevant international instruments for registration and documentation**

Requirements and standards for refugee registration are defined, albeit not uniformly, in numerous international and regional instruments, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR's Statute, the 1969 OAU Convention, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, and UNHCR's Agenda for Protection, among others.

The 1951 Convention stipulates that contracting states will provide the High Commissioner with information and statistical data on the condition of refugees (Article 35), will provide refugees with identity papers and travel documents when refugees do not have any of their own (Articles 27 and 28), and will ensure the issuance of documents and certificates as would normally be issued to aliens on their territory (Article 25).

The Agenda for Protection, adopted at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Executive Committee in June 2002, makes specific reference to enhancing the registration and documentation of refugees and asylum-seekers under Goal 1, Objective 11. See Annex 2 for relevant text.

The table in Annex 2 provides a brief overview of the relevant articles and provisions related to registration and documentation in the international instruments and other legal texts concerning refugees and displaced persons. For the actual text, please refer to the instruments themselves.

#### **1.5 Registration and protection of refugee children**

The needs and rights of refugee children, including adolescents, are often overlooked in policymaking and operations, although their needs, and their legal and social status, can be significantly different from those of adults. Refugee boys and girls are first and foremost children. Their need and right to a family, to education, and to protection against exploitation, abuse, and violence require special attention.<sup>2</sup>

**Refugee children** are those persons who are refugees or others of concern under the age of 18.

The registration of refugee boys and girls is an important step in ensuring their protection. More than with any other group, the protection of children can be linked to their registration. Unregistered children are often "invisible" to UNHCR, operational partners, the host government and the international community, making it difficult if not impossible to provide them international protection.

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<sup>2</sup> Progress Report on Refugee Children and Adolescents, including UNHCR's Strategy for Follow-Up to the Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (EC/47/SC/CRP.19 – 2001 October)

Specific risks faced by unregistered boys and girls in refugee or refugee-like situations include military recruitment, sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, early and forced marriage, slavery, trafficking, permanent separation from families, and unauthorized and illicit adoption.



**Registration of children should always be a priority.**

The registration of children should always be a priority when registering persons of concern. At each stage of an operation – emergency through reconstruction – registering children helps Government and UNHCR better meet its goals and objectives. When planning registration, staff should examine the context in which they are working to understand what difficulties

may arise in ensuring that all children are registered.

Refugee girls, whether young children or adolescents, are particularly at risk of being excluded from or abused during the registration process. Parents or caretakers may not want to register girls to avoid interference when marrying them for dowries at a young age. They may not want to declare separated girls living with them and who are working as unpaid servants. Registration may be organized so that it is impossible for parents to bring all their children to the registration location and parents are forced to leave girls at home. Humanitarian workers may extort bribes or sexual favours from teenage girls in exchange for access to registration formalities. These and other barriers to registration can be overcome with well conceived registration plans.

Key references related to children and registration:

*Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care.* UNHCR (1994).

*Working with Children: ARC Training Module.* Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC), UNHCR and Save the Children (2001).

### **1.6 Unaccompanied and separated children**

In armed conflict, mass population displacements and other crises, children become separated from their families or from other adults responsible for them. These children are at particular risk, as they are often deprived of care and protection.

**Separated children** are those boys and girls separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. Separated children may therefore include boys and girls accompanied by other adult family members.



**Unaccompanied children** are children who have been separated from both parents and or other relatives and who are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Unaccompanied and separated children must be quickly identified, registered and documented—no matter who is conducting the registration. This will help in tracing their families and in providing protection and assistance to them. The registration of unaccompanied and separated children is an essential part of the humanitarian response in any refugee context.

The **identification** of unaccompanied and separated children must be approached carefully to ensure that all genuine cases are found while not attracting false cases. False cases are those in which parents or caretakers intentionally separate themselves from children in order to gain access to additional entitlements or because they believe that their children will be better cared for in institutions or under special programmes. There is also a danger that separated children could become “commodities” themselves, if they are linked to additional entitlements or preferential treatment. These problems are more directly related to the management of entitlements, such as rations, than to registration itself. However, registration provides a good opportunity to prevent such problems from occurring. Clear information about the identification, registration, and documentation of separated children must be provided to the population concerned through information campaigns, counselling and adequate training of registration staff.

Separated children should be registered and documented as soon as possible after they have been identified. Vital information should be collected from the children and from anyone who knows them at the initial registration. There may be only one opportunity to find information about very young children as children’s memories fade and clues to their identity, such as clothes and other possessions, may get lost.

The agreed, inter-agency standard form for the **registration** and **documentation**<sup>3</sup> of unaccompanied and separated children should be used in all cases<sup>4</sup>. The child’s identity, current living situation, separation history, and opinions and wishes should be documented. Registration forms should always be kept by or with the child and any changes in location should be recorded immediately. A variety of photographs should be taken as soon as possible after identification, particularly in the case of younger children.

Registration interviews should be conducted in a quiet place and by qualified staff. Registration sites need to be prepared to accommodate this activity. It is also useful to have food and drink available and some pencils and paper for drawing.

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<sup>3</sup> The terms ‘registration’ and ‘documentation’ have specific meanings when working with unaccompanied and separated children. These meanings are slightly different than when used in refugee registration in general.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.savethechildren.net/arc/>. Revised Separated Children Resource Pack, Page 162 - 165

Family tracing must be carried out for unaccompanied and separated children at the earliest possible time. All those engaged in tracing should use the same approach, with standardized forms and mutually compatible systems. Both UNHCR and ICRC have a mandate for undertaking cross-border tracing activities.

Sharing information within and between countries is essential for tracing, but protection and the best interests of the child govern both the type of information and the extent to which it is shared. The basic principle is to share the maximum amount of information necessary for family tracing, but at minimal risk to the child and the family. It is important to know who will have access to the information collected.

Care arrangements and guardianships for unaccompanied and separated children must also be carefully documented and recorded. Organizations must ensure the permanent preservation of records on unaccompanied and separated children. Later in life, the children may wish to obtain information on their origins.

There is a wealth of guidance, policy and training materials dealing with unaccompanied and separated children that complement this document, including:

*Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children.* ICRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, IRC, Save the Children UK, World Vision International (2003).

*Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care.* UNHCR (1994).

*Separated Children: ARC Training Module.* Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC), UNHCR and Save the Children (2001).

### **1.7 Registration and protection of refugee women**



**Excom 91 and other Executive Committee conclusions require that refugee woman should be registered individually.**

The complete and accurate registration of women enhances the protection of women refugees and other women of concern. When UNHCR and others know who the women of concern are, where they are, their family and household composition, and other personal data related to registration, their individual protection and assistance needs can be

assessed, they can be targeted with appropriate interventions, and their situation can be monitored over time.

In 2001 the High Commissioner committed the Office to *individual registration and documentation of all refugee men and women*, long recognized as a key means of advancing the rights of refugee woman.

Accessing assistance and services and enjoying basic rights, including freedom of movement and family reunification, is often dependent on proof of identity. Refugee woman who lack adequate registration and personal documentation, including identity cards, marriage certificates, divorce certificates, and birth certificates for their children have sometimes been denied their freedom of movement and access to basic rights. Refugee woman have been unable to claim or inherent property upon return, to seek support for children from estranged husbands or partners, or have been arrested and detained by police because they do not have proper documents. Unfortunately, refugee registration cards and identity documents are often issued only to husbands and male relatives. Refugee women should be individually registered and documented to ensure that they are not dependant only on male family members for access to food and essential services.

Women's access to and equal treatment in registration processes may be compromised by direct or indirect forms of gender-based discrimination. If women cannot access the registration process, or if they are unfairly or unequally treated during it, the international community's ability to protect these women is severely diminished.

In some locations sexual exploitation has been linked to registration processes. Special care must be taken to ensure that single women are not put at risk during registration and that women are encouraged and permitted to fully represent themselves during registration interviews.

The new guidelines and standards for registration are designed to ensure that registration systems and procedures protect women's access to protection, assistance and livelihoods.

**Refugee women and men must participate equally in and benefit from the registration process.** This means that:

- women and men are consulted in registration-planning processes, and woman leaders monitor the registration process and access to registration points;
- equal number of women officers, interviewers and interpreters work in registration activities;
- personnel carrying out registration activities are trained in gender-sensitive issues;
- the registration process is used as a mechanism to identify women with any special protection concerns and to ensure their proper follow-up;

- ☑ women and girls are individually registered and receive individual documentation to the same standards as men and boys; and
- ☑ registration activities are designed to facilitate women's access to registration procedures – physically, socially, economically and culturally.

### **1.8 Confidentiality and sharing identity information**

The Government and/or UNHCR<sup>5</sup> may be asked to or may have to share information about individuals of concern. Information about persons of concern may be shared when there is a legitimate reason to do so, and then only the minimum necessary information should be shared. Key points regarding confidentiality and the sharing of information are:

- ☑ In general, an individual's personal information should be kept strictly confidential and measures taken to prevent the unauthorised dissemination of the information.
- ☑ Government and/or UNHCR should take proper precautions to ensure that the physical safety and protection of the individual and his or her family members is not compromised.
- ☑ International human rights law guarantees an individual's right to privacy. In principle, the consent of the individual is necessary before information can be shared with other parties, including other governmental offices in the country of asylum, an implementing partner or a commercial entity.
- ☑ When information is shared, effective measures must be taken to ensure that information concerning a particular person does not reach third parties that might use the information for purposes incompatible with human rights law and principles.
- ☑ Governments of asylum have a legitimate interest in obtaining basic bio-data about the persons on their territory. However, requests from other governmental offices who do not normally deal with refugee issues should be treated on a case by case basis.

There are instances when the sharing of information may be useful or necessary for the purposes of international protection or durable solutions. For example, registration information may be shared with the different governmental offices of the country of asylum and with other partners when producing and managing identity documents.

UNHCR may also need to share information with host governments or with potential resettlement countries even at the earliest stages of an operation.

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<sup>5</sup> Guidelines for sharing information about individual cases collected and kept by UNHCR are contained in the "Confidentiality Guidelines", IOM/71/2001 – FOM/68/2001 of 24 August 2001, which discuss the terms under which UNHCR may share information about persons of concern with requesting parties, including the individuals themselves.

For this reason permission to share information for such purposes, while in keeping with the Confidentiality Guidelines, is collected during registration.

Staff should be familiar with the Confidentially Guidelines and refer to them for more information.

- ❖ ***The confidentiality of the relationship between the refugee and UNHCR, or between the refugee and the government offering international protection, must not be breached.***

## Part Two – Operational Standards for Registration and Documentation

The standards defined below are based on principles and considerations agreed to by UNHCR and its Executive Committee. They provide specific guidance on how registration operations should be conducted to achieve legal and physical protection goals. ExCom Conclusion no. 91 (2001) is the principal framework used to select and set standards. As with other aspects of the unified approach, the standards take into account many of the operational constraints under which UNHCR routinely works, while recognizing the importance of maintaining a consistent approach to registration.

### How to use the standards

These standards **apply to all persons of concern**, namely asylum-seekers (regardless of the outcome of their application for asylum), refugees, returnees, and, under certain circumstances, internally displaced persons. States and other partners conducting registration activities should also be guided by these standards.

They are **specific measures** for assessing current registration, documentation and population-management activities. Evaluation and reporting on registration activities is also conducted according to these standards.

The degree of past compliance with the standards will **determine the future objectives** for registration in any given operation and for any given population. Registration strategies should state which of the standards the operation will achieve and which it will not.

Managers must evaluate each situation and decide the best registration system for a given context. The standards allow operations to **measure protection implications** and **prioritize resources** accordingly when the standards cannot be met. Compliance with each of the standards can be assessed using the below table of operational standards for registration, documentation and population data management.

These standards may not cover registration and population-data requirements for every situation. Many field offices already seek additional information for specific needs, such as for processing resettlement cases or determining the status of individual refugees. Alternatively, conditions may be such that it is difficult to adhere fully or immediately to the standards. There may be a lack of security, of operational capacity, and/or of access to the refugees. These constraints should be monitored closely so that the full set of standards can be applied as soon as possible.

## Table of Operational Standards for Registration, Documentation & Population Data Management

Standards	Relevant Sources (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<b>1. Access to registration</b>	
<p>1.a Persons of concern are registered within a period of three months after their arrival in the territory of asylum.</p> <p>Registration records are verified and updated continuously - at a minimum every 12 months.</p> <p>Changes in global population figures are updated once a month with population increases and decreases.</p>	<p>Registration should be done as soon as possible after arrival in territory of asylum. [ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (g) ]</p> <p>Registration should be a continuing process to record essential information at the time of initial displacement as well as any subsequent demographic and other changes in the population. [ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (i) ]</p>
<p>1.b Registration is free of charge at all times, and no fee may be taken at any time for any services offered or provided.</p> <p>Registration is a voluntary process open to all persons of concern regardless of sex, age, race, religion, nationality, or basis for application for international protection.</p> <p>Registration takes place where and when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) there is no active conflict in proximity of hosting locations;</li> <li>b) participation in registration does not expose persons of concern to physical risk, intimidation, or other threats; and</li> <li>c) the process of registration itself will not directly or indirectly contribute to the legitimization of an unsafe and insecure situation for the persons of concern.</li> </ul>	<p>Registration process should be easily accessible. [ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iii) ]</p> <p>Registration should be conducted in a non-intimidating, non-threatening, and impartial manner. [ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iv) ]</p> <p>Registration should take place in a safe and secure location. [ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iii) ]</p>

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Relevant Sources</b> (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<p>Registration takes place in locations physically, economically and socially accessible to the majority of persons of concern.</p> <p>Provisions are made to accommodate the registration requirements and concerns of women, children, and those with special needs.</p> <p>Arrangements are made to register those persons physically, economically, or socially unable to access registration, including those in hospitals and in detention.</p> <p>Registration is done in a protected location with minimal waiting, sufficient access to water and sanitation, protection from the elements, and adequate privacy.</p>	
<b>2. Process of Registration</b>	
<p>2.a Persons of concern are informed of the purpose, intended outcome, their rights and their obligations before registration takes place.</p> <p>Persons of concern are consulted when preparing the registration process and their views and concerns are reflected in the design of the registration system.</p> <p>Registration is conducted with due regard for the dignity and culture of the persons to be registered.</p>	<p>Registration should be conducted in a non-intimidating, non-threatening, and impartial manner. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iv) ]</i></p> <p>Registration should be conducted with due respect for safety and dignity of the refugees. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (iv) ]</i></p>
<p>2.b Registration is conducted through an individual interview of the person of concern.</p>	<p>Registration should be done on an individual basis. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (vi) ]</i></p>



<b>Standards</b>	<b>Relevant Sources</b> (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<p>Information is always solicited directly from the individual concerned to the extent possible. This includes adults - both male and female – as well as girls and boys.</p> <p>All family members are present for registration, unless unable to be for valid reasons.</p>	
<p>2.c Women being registered have the opportunity to be assisted by women at any stage of the registration process, particularly during the interview stage.</p>	<p>Personnel conducting registration should include a sufficient number of female staff. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v) ]</i></p>
<p>2.d At least one member of the UNHCR team has prior experience in organizing and managing a registration activity of an equivalent nature and size.</p> <p>For each operation, an individual is designated by the senior manager to perform the role of manager or coordinator of registration and related activities.</p> <p>All registration staff should participate in prior training about the principles of international protection, the purpose of the current registration activity, the specific tasks that will be required from them, the UNHCR code of conduct, and age and gender concerns.</p> <p>Registration plans are shared with and advice is sought from technical experts in the region or at Headquarters.</p> <p>Registration, documentation, and population-data management instructions and procedures are written down and are shared with all</p>	<p>Personnel conducting registration should be adequately trained. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v) ]</i></p> <p>Personnel conducting registration should have clear instructions on requirements and procedures. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v) ]</i></p>

Standards	Relevant Sources (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<p>registration staff.</p>	
<p>2.e A 'complaints desk' function for covering registration-related activities exists within each office.</p> <p>Registration records (paper forms, electronic records or other) are never discarded. (this standard is under review)</p> <p>Access to registration data is by authorization only; authority and sources of authorization are kept on record.</p> <p>Audit trails of the location and status of registration records and of any additions, modifications, or deletions in the registration data are maintained.</p> <p>Registration records are stored in standard formats and according to standard methodologies for filing and record keeping.</p> <p>Registration materials (forms, cards, tokens, etc) are inventoried and kept securely locked.</p>	<p>Special measures should be taken to preserve integrity of registration process. [ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v) ]</p>
<p><b>3. Data to be Gathered and Recorded</b></p>	
<p>3.a The following information is recorded and verified for each person of concern individually:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name</li> <li>2. Unique identifying registration number</li> <li>3. Date and place of birth</li> <li>4. Sex</li> </ol>	<p>Basic information should be recorded about each person of concern. [ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (vi) ]</p> <p>* Basic information elements not specified in Conclusion no. 91 but agreed in subsequent discussions as essential basic information elements.</p>

Standards	Relevant Sources (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Existing identity documents</li> <li>6. Marital status</li> <li>7. Special protection and assistance needs</li> <li>8. Level of education</li> <li>9. Occupational skills</li> <li>10. Ethnic origins*</li> <li>11. Religion*</li> <li>12. Language*</li> <li>13. Household and family composition, including parents' names</li> <li>14. Date of arrival</li> <li>15. Current location and address</li> <li>16. Place of origin</li> <li>17. Photograph</li> </ol> <p>Each individual registered is assigned a unique numerical identifier that is maintained throughout the life of the individual's record.</p> <p>A unique numeric identifier does not contain any information that might directly or indirectly put the individual at risk at the present or any later time.</p>	
<p>3.b The following information is collected for every family and/or household:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family/household number</li> <li>2. Family/household size</li> <li>3. Family/household composition, including relationships and roles</li> <li>4. Family/household members' names, sex, and age cohorts (age groupings)</li> <li>5. Family/household location (present address)</li> </ol>	<p>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Article 23</p> <p>Recommends that Governments take appropriate measures to ensure that the unity of the family is maintained...  <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 85 – 1998, (v), (u), (w) ]</i></p>

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Relevant Sources</b> (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
Each family and/or household is assigned a unique identifying number.	
<p>3c Registration records – family, household, and individual – are updated with the following categories of information whenever such events occur and are reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Births</li><li>- New arrivals</li><li>- Departures</li><li>- Deaths</li><li>- Divorce/Marriage</li><li>- Current location</li><li>- Current protection, assistance and solutions status</li><li>- Changes in family/household composition (size, members, location)</li><li>- Updating of any personal data when changed or corrected</li></ul>	<p>Registration should be a continuing process to record essential information at the time of initial displacement as well as any subsequent demographic and other changes in the population. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (i) ]</i></p>
<p>3.d The established categories and codes are used when gathering and recording data of the following types :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Age cohorts (age groupings)</li><li>• Refugee status</li><li>• Educational level</li><li>• Occupational skills</li><li>• Place of origin</li><li>• Current location</li><li>• Special protection and assistance needs</li></ul>	<p>Guidelines should ensure the quality and comparability of registered data, especially regarding special needs, occupational skills, and level of education. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (c) ]</i></p>

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Relevant Sources</b> (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<b>4. Documentation</b>	
<p>4.a Identity documents and entitlement documents should be separate documents.</p> <p>All adults within the family or household sign statements or declarations regarding protection and durable solutions on behalf of the household.</p> <p>All persons of concern are issued individual identity documents with a photograph and a unique number.</p> <p>All refugees and asylum-seekers are issued with documents testifying to their status as a person of concern to UNHCR.</p> <p>Names of all adult women and men in a household appear on household or family entitlement documents, or the name of the other person most likely to be collecting entitlements on behalf of the household or family concerned.</p> <p>Where needed, individual entitlement documents are issued to all persons of concern.</p> <p>Identity and entitlement documents contain the design and security features necessary to prevent wear and tear, forgery, illicit destruction, and manipulation.</p> <p>Materials and process for issuing and renewing identity documents are strictly controlled.</p>	<p>Contracting states shall issue identity papers to any refugee in their territory who does not possess a valid travel document. <i>[ Articles 27 and 28 of 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees ]</i></p> <p>Global Consultations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Track, Refugee Women (EC/GC/02/8 of 25 April 2002) Refugees should be issued documentation certifying their refugee status. <i>(28<sup>th</sup> session Excom, A/32/12/Add.1, para. 53)</i></p> <p>Asylum applicants should be provided with provisional documentation to ensure protection against expulsion or <i>refoulement</i> until a decision is taken by the competent authorities in regard to their application. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion No 35 – 1984 ]</i></p> <p>Issue individual identification and/or registration documents to all refugee women. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion No 64 - 1990 ]</i></p> <p>Ensure equal access of women and men refugees to all forms of personal documentation relevant to refugees' freedom of movement, welfare, and civil status. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion No 73 – 1993 ]</i></p>

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Relevant Sources</b> (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<b>5. Verification and Identification</b>	
<p>5.a Registration is not complete until UNHCR or a government partner has accepted the registration record and registration information.</p> <p>Uses of registration data, including documentation, are made on the basis of verified and accepted data.</p> <p>A report on the quality of the registration, applicable to any registration activity, is kept, indicating how closely the standards for the registration process, the information set, and the operation, itself, were adhered to.</p> <p>Language and knowledge about the place of origin is verified during individual interviews.</p> <p>Actual place of residence and family/household composition is verified by on-site checks and home visits.</p> <p>All dependency relations within a family and/or household – in particular those needed to protect family unity – are established and verified.</p> <p>Family relationships are to be counter-checked with both parties to the extent possible, and verified through documentation where feasible.</p>	<p>Registration should be a continuing process to record essential information at the time of initial displacement as well as any subsequent demographic and other changes in the population. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (i) ]</i></p> <p>Special measures should be taken to preserve integrity of registration process. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (b) (v) ]</i></p>
<p>5.b Persons arriving as part of new influxes receive individual fixing tokens or wristbands or the population is fixed by other means.</p> <p>The personal identifiers used are sufficient for an individual to be uniquely identified and verified on a one-to-many basis.</p>	<p>Tools to enhance the identification and documentation of persons of concern. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (d) ]</i></p>

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Relevant Sources</b> (1951 Convention, Executive Committee Conclusions, and other legal instruments.)
<p>A biometric is considered whenever a photograph is not sufficient for one-to-many identification, or is required for operational reasons.</p>	
<b>6. Working with partners</b>	
<p>6.a UNHCR's Confidentiality Guidelines (IOM/71/2001 - FOM/68/2001 of 24 August 2001 refers) are respected with regard to registration and population data.</p> <p>UNHCR offices and host government exchange, in a secure manner only, such personal data as is needed to establish that an individual has previously been registered and enjoyed effective protection.</p> <p>Personal data needed for the implementation of durable solutions such as resettlement or repatriation is shared with concerned States in accordance with the Confidentiality Guidelines and in a secure manner.</p> <p>Consolidated statistics, disaggregated for sex and age, based on registration data are available for sharing with States, UNHCR offices, and other relevant organizations.</p>	<p>The confidential nature of personal data should be respected. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (f) ]</i></p> <p>Appropriate sharing of some personal data in line with data protection principles to combat fraud, to address irregular movements, and identify those not entitled to international protection. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (f) ]</i></p>
<p>6.b Protocol or similar agreement is signed with government setting out agreed methodology and standards for registration and ID documents.</p> <p>UNHCR provides governments with necessary material, financial, technical and human resource support.</p>	<p>UNHCR supports the critical role of material, financial, technical and human resources in assisting host countries in registering and documenting refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly developing countries confronted with large-scale influxes and protracted refugee situations. <i>[ Executive Committee Conclusion 91 – 2001, (h) ]</i></p>

## Annex 1: Executive Committee Conclusion No. 91

### **2001 Executive Committee of the UNHCR Programme (52<sup>nd</sup> Session)**

#### *Conclusion No. 91 (LII)*

#### **REGISTRATION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS**

*The Executive Committee,*

*Recalling* its Conclusion No. 22 (XXXII) on the protection of asylum-seekers in situations of large-scale influx, Conclusion No. 35 (XXXV) on identity documents for refugees, Conclusion No. 39 (XXXVI) and Conclusion No. 64 (XLI) on refugee women and international protection, as well as Conclusion No. 73 (XLIV) on refugee protection and sexual violence;

*Noting* also that the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in article 27, calls on States Parties to issue identity papers to refugees;

*Mindful* of the importance accorded to registration in the independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response to the Kosovo crisis;

*Welcoming* the discussion which took place on registration in the context of the Global Consultations on International Protection;

- (a) *Acknowledges* the importance of registration as a tool of protection, including protection against *refoulement*, protection against forcible recruitment, protection of access to basic rights, family reunification of refugees and identification of those in need of special assistance, and as a means to enable the quantification and assessment of needs and to implement appropriate durable solutions;
- (b) *Recommends* that the registration of refugees and asylum-seekers should be guided by the following basic considerations:
  - (i) Registration should be a continuing process to record essential information at the time of initial displacement, as well as any subsequent demographic and other changes in the refugee population (such as births, deaths, new arrivals, departures, cessation, naturalization, etc.);
  - (ii) The registration process should abide by the fundamental principles of confidentiality;
  - (iii) The registration process should to the extent possible be easily accessible, and take place in a safe and secure location;



- (iv) Registration should be conducted in a non-intimidating, non-threatening and impartial manner, with due respect for the safety and dignity of refugees;
- (v) Personnel conducting the registration, including, where necessary, refugees and asylum-seekers, should be adequately trained, should include a sufficient number of female staff and should have clear instructions on the procedures and requirements for registration, including the need for confidentiality of information collected; special measures should be taken to ensure the integrity of the registration process;
- (vi) In principle, refugees should be registered on an individual basis with the following basic information being recorded: identity document and number, photograph, name, sex, date of birth (or age), marital status, special protection and assistance needs, level of education, occupation (skills), household (family) size and composition, date of arrival, current location and place of origin;
- (c) *Encourages* States and UNHCR, on the basis of existing expertise, to develop further and implement registration guidelines to ensure the quality and comparability of registered data, especially regarding special needs, occupational skills and level of education;
- (d) *Also encourages* States and UNHCR to introduce new techniques and tools to enhance the identification and documentation of refugees and asylum-seekers, including biometrics features, and to share these with a view towards developing a more standardized worldwide registration system;
- (e) *Acknowledges* the importance to the international community, particularly States, UNHCR and other relevant organizations, of sharing statistical data;
- (f) *Recognizes* the confidential nature of personal data and the need to continue to protect confidentiality; also recognizes that the appropriate sharing of some personal data in line with data protection principles can assist States to combat fraud, to address irregular movements of refugees and asylum-seekers, and to identify those not entitled to international protection under the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol;
- (g) *Requests* States, which have not yet done so, to take all necessary measures to register and document refugees and asylum-seekers on their territory as quickly as possible upon their arrival, bearing in mind the resources available, and where appropriate to seek the support and co-operation of UNHCR;
- (h) *Emphasizes* the critical role of material, financial, technical and human resources in assisting host countries in registering and documenting refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly developing countries confronted with large-scale influxes and protracted refugee situations.

## **Annex 2: Relevant Legal Instruments and Agreements Concerning Registration and Documentation of Persons of Concern**

### **Executive Committee Conclusions Pertinent to Registration and Documentation**

Conclusion no. 91 (LII) – 2002	Registration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Conclusion no. 85 (XLIX) – 1998	Conclusion on International Protection, paras (g) and (m)
Conclusion no. 74 (XLV) – 1994	General Conclusion on International Protection, para (gg)
Conclusion no. 73 (XLIV) – 1993	Refugee Protection and Sexual Violence, para (c)
Conclusion no. 72 (XLIV) – 1993	Personal Security of Refugees; para (b)
Conclusion no. 65 (XLII) – 1993	General Conclusion on International Protection, para (c)
Conclusion no. 64 (XLI) – 1990	Refugee Woman and International Protection, para (a)(viii)
Conclusion no. 49 (XXXVIII) – 1987	Travel Documents for Refugees
Conclusion no. 47 (XXXVIII) – 1987	Refugee Children; para (f)
Conclusion no. 39 (XXXVI) – 1985	Refugee Woman and International Protection
Conclusion no. 35 (XXXV) – 1984	Identity Documents for Refugees
Conclusion no. 24 (XXXII) – 1981	Family Reunification; para. 6
Conclusion no. 22 (XXXII) – 1981	Protection of Asylum Seekers in Situations of Large Scale Influx (m)
Conclusion no. 18 (XXXI) - 1980	Voluntary Repatriation; para (i)
Conclusion no. 15 (XXX) – 1979	Refugees without an Asylum Country; para (n)
Conclusion no. 13 (XXXIX) – 1978	Travel Documents for Refugees
Conclusion no. 12 (XXXIX) – 1978	Extraterritorial Effect of the Determination of Refugee Status (e)
Conclusion no. 8 (XXVIII) – 1977	Determination of Refugee Status; para (e)(v)

**Excerpt from Agenda for Protection (originally issued as A/AC/96/965/Add.1 of 25 June 2002, and endorsed by the 53rd session of the Executive Committee)**

**Goal 1, Objective 11: *Better registration and documentation of refugees***

- In keeping with the *Conclusion on Registration of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers* (No. 91) (LII) (2001), and bearing in mind confidentiality requirements regarding the use of data, States to register and document female and male refugees and asylum-seeker on their territory on an individual basis as quickly as possible upon their arrival, in a manner which contributes to improving their security, their access to essential services and their freedom of movement.
- UNHCR to work with States towards ensuring the provision of financial and technical support, including as regards training, equipment, and materials to enable, particularly, developing host States to undertake registration and issuance of documents to refugees, in recognition that this is primarily a State responsibility.
- States, UNHCR and relevant partners to ensure that those carrying out registration of camp populations and registration for voluntary repatriation are adequately trained, including gender and age-sensitive interviewing techniques.
- States and other relevant partners to consider how to make available and accessible their expertise, including through the provision of human resources, to assist UNHCR's on-going effort to improve its own systems for registration and documentation of refugees.
- UNHCR to issue operational standards and guidelines with regard to registration and population data management, revise its 1994 *Registration Guide* and develop registration and data management training modules. In addition, UNHCR to strengthen field registration support (methodologies, systems, materials, training and support missions), including by drawing on States' existing expertise and human resources.
- States and UNHCR to introduce new techniques and tools to enhance the identification and documentation of refugees and asylum-seekers, including centrally, biometric features, and to share these with a view towards developing a more standardized worldwide registration system.
- States to provide necessary documents relating to civil status (e.g. birth, marriage, divorce, death), benefiting from support and cooperation of UNHCR, where appropriate.
- States, UNHCR and other relevant partners to use registration data to identify and make specific assistance and protection arrangements, where appropriate for: women with any special protection concerns, unaccompanied and separated children, child- and single-headed households, as well as handicapped refugees and the elderly.

**Provisions related to registration and documentation contained in international instruments and humanitarian and human rights law**

<b>Legal Instrument</b>	<b>Articles and Provisions related to registration, personal data, and documentation</b>
1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	<i>Article 11: Refugee seamen</i> <i>Article 25: Administrative assistance (Article II of the 1967 Protocol)</i> <i>Article 27: Identity papers</i> <i>Article 28: Travel documents</i> <i>Article 35: Co-operation of national authorities</i>
Final Act of the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons (1951)	<i>Section IV, A: Travel documents</i> <i>Section IV, B: Family unity, unaccompanied minors and girls</i>
Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954)	<i>Article 12: Personal status</i> <i>Article 25: Administrative assistance</i> <i>Article 27: Identity papers</i> <i>Article 28: Travel documents</i>
Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949)	<i>Article 26: Dispersed families</i>
Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (Protocol I) (1977)	<i>Article 74: Reunion of dispersed families</i> <i>Article 78: Evacuation of children</i>
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)	<i>Article 6: Recognition before the law</i> <i>Article 16, para. 3: Family as natural group of society</i>
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)	<i>Article 12: Freedom of movement</i> <i>Article 13: Expulsion of aliens</i> <i>Article 16: Recognition before law</i> <i>Article 23: Regarding the protection of the family</i> <i>Article 24: Regarding nationality and birth registration</i>
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966)	<i>Article 10: Protection of family and children</i>
Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)	<i>Principle 2: Need for special protection</i> <i>Principle 3: Right to nationality</i> <i>Principle 6: Family unity</i>
Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1950)	<i>Para 2(f): Governments to provide refugees with travel documents</i> <i>Para 2 (h): Governments to provide UNHCR with information on number, conditions, laws and regulations concerning them.</i> <i>Annex, Chapter II, para 8 (f): same as above</i>
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	<i>Article 7: Birth registration, name, nationality, right to know parents</i> <i>Article 8: Preservation of identity</i> <i>Article 22: Refugee children</i>

<b>Legal Instrument</b>	<b>Articles and Provisions related to registration, personal data, and documentation</b>
Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961)	<i>Article 1: Granting of nationality to the otherwise stateless</i>
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)	<i>Article 6: Suppress trafficking and exploitation in prostitution Article 9: Right to acquire, to retain, and to change nationality Article 15: Equality of women before the law, equal freedom of movement, and equal legal capacity</i>
UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement	<i>Principle 20: Issuance of documents necessary for enjoyment and exercise of legal rights.</i>



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