UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | EMERGENCY HANDBOOK

Emergency registration in refugee operations

28 March 2023

Key points

- UNHCR should develop a registration strategy, deploy qualified registration staff as soon as possible to assist assessment, and support the operational response.
- Registration is costly. Make sure that adequate human and financial resources are allocated for registration activities.
- Identify and prioritize persons with specific needs at all stages of registration.
- Set the objectives of registration and develop plans to achieve them and to meet operational requirements.
- Involve and coordinate with Government, UN sister agencies (WFP, UNICEF, etc.), NGOs and the refugee community.
- Inform persons of concern about registration procedures, using a variety of formats and channels.

1. Overview

The purpose of this Entry is to provide a practical overview of methodologies, practices and tools relevant to the registration of asylum-seekers and refugees in an emergency context.

Registration of refugees and asylum-seekers is one of UNHCR's primary activities at the onset of an emergency. It includes the identification and referral of persons with specific needs who require targeted interventions.

An emergency is a situation in which the lives, rights and well-being of refugees and other persons of concern are or will be threatened unless immediate and appropriate action is taken on a scale that UNHCR's existing capacity at country and regional level cannot provide.

Emergency registration may differ from non-emergency registration in the amount of data collected and because the initial response is conditioned by the need for speed, the infrastructure available, and capacity on the ground. Regardless of the operational context, individual registration is recommended in emergencies, as described below. Minimum data should be collected on each individual and each household.

While most of the approaches to registration described in this Entry are cross-cutting, actions and activities are likely to vary in most operational contexts. Registration programmes need to take into account the objectives of the operation and where and how refugees arrive and reside in the country of asylum. More detailed information on how to conduct registration activities, and on helpful tools, can be found in the Emergency module of UNHCR's Guidance on Registration and Identity Management and the **Registration Checklist in Refugee Emergencies**, referenced at the end of this Entry.

2. Main guidance

Protection objectives

Registration in emergencies helps to ensure that:

- Persons of concern receive initial basic protection against arbitrary arrest, forcible recruitment, detention, and refoulement.
- Persons at risk and with specific needs are identified and referred to appropriate protection services.
- Protection, assistance interventions, and programmes to provide durable and effective solutions are planned, coordinated and implemented.
- Ensure that persons of concern to UNHCR, and/or to the Government of the territory of asylum, are individually known and that men and women are issued documentation on equal terms.

Underlying principles and standards

While States are primarily responsible for registration, UNHCR may help to plan or carry out registration, jointly with the Government or on its behalf. UNHCR may also conduct registration independently in accordance with its mandate.

In emergency situations, UNHCR Registration Standards should be used to identify gaps in registration systems, plan emergency registration processes, assess the protection implications of decisions, and prioritize registration resources appropriately.

Persons of concern do not need to be registered before they can receive food or other forms of assistance. This is also the case in situations where the MoU between UNHCR and WFP applies.

However, early registration strengthens accountability and facilitates implementation of protection and assistance activities.

Protection Risks

Emergency registration activities that are initiated without adequate planning, resources or expertise on the ground may result in under-registration or multiple registrations. This may cause outcomes that fail to assist or that hinder population planning and management and effective protection responses.

Protection risks associated with non-registration:

- Persons of concern who are not registered may be unable to access services or assistance effectively.
- Persons of concern may be arrested and detained or face **refoulement**.

Protection risks associated with registration:

- Visibility. Asylum-seekers and refugees may not wish to register because they are afraid they will be identified by a government or local communities.
- Security. Registration programmes that are poorly planned and implemented may put refugees, asylum- seekers and staff at physical risk. For example, if registration is organized too close to a border, armed elements may be present or may interfere.
- Prioritization. Registration should never be prioritized over saving life; lack of registration should never prevent the provision of life-saving assistance. When urgent activities are required, registration activities may need to be delayed.
- Flight. If refugees have not yet reached a final destination, registration formalities may compromise their journey to safety. Refugees may also be obliged to register multiple times.
- Inclusion and exclusion errors. Exclusion errors occur when persons of concern, who should be registered, are not able to register or are unwilling to do so. Inclusion errors occur when programmes register individuals, such as nationals or combatants, who should not be registered.

Other risks

Poorly conducted emergency registration will establish an inaccurate population baseline. This may harm:

- The effectiveness and timeliness of the protection and assistance response of UNHCR, the government or partners.
- The operation's credibility, which in turn may jeopardize advocacy efforts with governments and donors.

To mitigate the risks described above, please refer to the ‘Key steps' section below.

Key decision points

Why is registration being conducted? Set emergency registration objectives in conjunction with protection objectives, in consultation with other protection colleagues and senior managers responsible for the emergency response phase. The crucial questions to ask are: What is the purpose of the registration? Who is being registered? How will the information be used? What data do I have and what information is needed? These questions will help you: to decide what data need to be collected; to focus data collection on the most important elements; and to design a solid registration methodology. When you set emergency registration objectives, keep in mind that registration activities conducted during emergencies will build the foundation for subsequent registration activities. The objectives should foresee possible longer-term needs.

Who will participate in registration? Many stakeholders are involved in registration activities, including governments, operational partners, and the displaced community. For successful registration, it is essential to identify key stakeholders and ensure that their roles and responsibilities during registration are understood and articulated. At minimum, the roles of national authorities and those who are to be registered must be entirely clear; they should participate fully in both the design and delivery of registration activities. Registration activities serve the needs of many assistance and service providers. Arrangements for data sharing will determine what information needs to be collected and how it will be protected and managed. Partners can also bring valuable resources and expertise to registration activities.

How will the registration be done? Determining the right registration methodology and associated resources (sites, interview methods, timing, equipment, staffing, equipment, training, information requirements, complaint procedures, data capture, documentation issuance, budgets) requires time and understanding of protection, programming, administration, information technology, and registration. It takes a team to design and deliver a successful registration result.

Key steps

1) Registration should begin as soon as possible after the population in question has stopped moving. In an emergency, efforts should be made to commence registration, or at least pre-registration, activities, **within seven days** of an initial influx.
Registration is costly in terms of material and human resources and requires good planning by well trained professionals. Registration activities should be conducted by qualified Registration Officers.

2) Conduct an initial assessment. What is the current state of population data

management?
Registration is part of an overall approach to population data management in an operation, and closely associated with other types of population data management. It includes estimation, needs assessment, movement tracking, and statistical reporting. Registration exercises cannot be planned without core information on the approximate size of the affected population, the dynamics of population movement, and contextual information on where and how refugees have settled and are accommodated in the country of asylum.
It is essential to consolidate and assess existing baseline data. Triangulation of available data, and proper border monitoring activities, help to identify and assess possible gaps. Create lists of formal and informal entry points, estimate the number of arrivals per day at each entry point, confirm patterns and means of arrival, identify likely destinations, and anticipate the profile of persons of concern.
The size and profile of a population may need to be estimated if no other records or sources of information are available. See the Entry on population estimation techniques.
Registration strategies should be designed to register persons of concern wherever they live in the country of asylum. New arrivals may settle in rural villages, in camp-based settlements, or in urban areas. When persons of concern are living in camps or camp-like settlements, registration is normally conducted on site. When refugees are dispersed in rural or urban areas, it is essential to map the locations or villages where refugees have settled. Identify central locations that can support registration activities and assign roving mobile registration teams to visit local villages.
There are limits to mobile registration. It is impossible to conduct door-to-door or village-to-village registration when locations are unknown, resources are limited, or a rapid response is required.

3) Develop a registration strategy. Why is registration being undertaken?
Registration is a complex multi-disciplinary activity. From the start, prepare and implement registration activities in collaboration with protection and programme colleagues and with administration and supply colleagues.
A registration response may be initiated before a fully-fledged, detailed and complete registration strategy has been finalized. **A strategy is nonetheless necessary.** For guidance, please refer to **Module 6** of the Guidance on Registration and Identity Management.
In consultation with other protection colleagues, set criteria for determining which individuals are eligible to be registered, and establish mechanisms for referring ineligible persons to an appropriate body. Agree what data should be collected in consultation with refugee status determination staff. Make sure these criteria and decisions are communicated in an information campaign (see below) and documented in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Contact the Senior Regional Registration officer or the Identity Management and Registration Section (IMRS) for advice.
Analyse and confirm the data needs of key partners, including WFP, implementing partners and other relevant actors in the response, to ensure that necessary protection and assistance interventions can be undertaken without duplicating data collection. In addition, consult nutrition, health, child protection and other specialized partners; ensure they can be present at registration activities when appropriate. Adopting an inclusive approach will make the humanitarian response more effective, use resources more efficiently, and help to avoid duplication of effort.
The **Registration Officer** is responsible for the design and delivery of an emergency

registration strategy, which should build on emergency contingency planning (where available). The registration strategy is a document (or group of documents) that: sets out the objectives of registration from a protection and an operational perspective; analyses the risks faced by persons of concern and staff (see above); describes the data to be collected, the registration methods to be used, and the locations where registration will take place; and lists staffing and technical support needs, stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and financial and equipment requirements. The Registration Officer should consult and cooperate closely with members of the refugee community, and with Protection, Community Services, Field, Programme and Supply colleagues. Initial emergency registration activities should reflect the priorities and needs of the operation.

4) Select sites and prepare registration facilities. Where will registration take place?
Registration should not take place at border crossings. Registration sites should be located away from areas affected by armed conflict, insecurity and violence (see protection risks above). Registration usually occurs at sites or in initial reception facilities established a short distance from the border, or at final destinations in the county of asylum. Issuing tokens to families at the border may help refugees to access transportation and other assistance and reach their destinations safely. If possible, registration should take place after refugees have arrived at their destination.
Reception facilities must always protect the safety and dignity of persons of concern and the safety and security of staff.
When selecting a reception or registration location, keep the following in mind:

- Their accessibility for both refugees and personnel.
- Options for immediate medical referral needs.
- Their distance from the border and from UNHCR offices.
- Security requirements (liaise with Administration and Field Safety Advisors).
- Environmental conditions (risk of floods, storms, etc.).

Assign registration team members to conduct home visits to ensure that individuals who cannot access the registration site will be included.
Ensure the site has sufficient space to accommodate the number of persons who need to be registered. Allocate waiting areas between the different processing zones. Allow for the possibility that demand for registration may increase.
Design the site layout so that people can move rapidly through the registration process.
Ensure that the registration site includes:

- Separate queues for different processing requirements (one queue for individuals who are called back, one for those scheduled that day, etc.).
- Security screening to ensure that reception and registration areas are weapon-free.
- Proper space for dedicated staff to identify and prioritize persons with specific needs (for example, a protection desk permanently staffed by qualified protection staff).
- Separate entrances and exits to ensure a one-way process flow.
- Shade or heating, protection from the elements, and waiting areas with sufficient seating.
- Separate sanitation facilities for men and women, and adequate supply of water, electricity and lighting.
- A private space for lactating mothers, and a monitored child-friendly space (if possible).

- Interview spaces that provide confidentiality.
- Secure storage areas for registration equipment and files.
- A separate area for medical screening and vaccinations, in association with health partners, as appropriate.
- Well planned crowd control, using hired security companies, host country security personnel, or the help of community leaders or NGOs.
- Simple fencing or barriers to reduce crowd pressure.
- Adequate communication systems, such as megaphones or loudspeakers at large sites.

5) Determine household and individual data needs. What information needs to be verified or collected?

Group pre-registration is the collection of core data on a group. Group pre-registration is primarily used to organize movements of population, facilitate initial assistance distribution, and schedule individual registration. It is **not accepted as formal registration** because information collected at group level does not show whether an individual is inadmissible for registration. A group pre-registration interview with a family of five is estimated to take approximately 3 minutes.

Group information that should be collected (on households, families or cases)

- The group's size.
- Its age and sex breakdown.
- The name of the group's focal point.
- The country of origin of the group's focal point.
- Specific needs within the group.
- A unique group identifier.
- Pre-registration date.

Recording of GPS coordinates is optional and only occurs where pre-registration is mobile and not in a registration centre

At the final destination, **register all persons of concern individually** if this has not been possible before.

For **Individual Emergency Registration (IER)** The minimum data set is:

Data taken from registration of the group focal point:

- Date of arrival.
- Registration date.
- Group unique identifier.
- Legal status.
- Current Country of Asylum address (if available).
- Phone number (if available).
- Consent/prohibition to share information.

Data taken from every individual in the group:

- Full name.
- Sex.
- Date of birth.

- Relationship to group focal point.
- Marital status.
- Country of origin.
- Specific needs.
- Photo.
- Biometrics.

IER enables UNHCR and partners to create distribution lists, identify and refer persons with specific needs, and issue individual identity documents as well as ration cards, enabling refugees to access assistance and services. IER should be conducted using RApp or progress. On average it takes 15 minutes to register a family of five. Collection of biometrics (irises only) for a family of five takes an additional 4 minutes, while collection of both irises and fingerprints takes an additional 10 minutes. Additional data elements may be built into the standard data set depending on the data needs of the emergency operation. The Registration Officer should define the IER data set with protection colleagues, considering:

- Context specific data requirements. These include data on specific needs, to enable assessment and referral to available or planned services.
- Individual admissibility criteria. These are necessary for emergency registration and generate the data required to identify persons who are not covered by the exercise or are not eligible.

It is important to bear in mind that, if additional data fields are added to the minimum IER dataset, they will increase the time and resources required for registration. Additional data should be determined by the purposes of the registration, how programmes will use the data to provide services and protection, and the availability of human and other resources.
Individual Basic Registration (IBR, formerly known as Level 2) and Individual Comprehensive Registration (ICR, formerly Level 3) should take place, where appropriate, in the course of verification or registration activities after the emergency phase. See UNHCR Guidance on Registration and identity management for further guidance on data sets for registration.
The registration form template should be adapted as required, and forms should be tested before using them on a large scale. This will save time during registration by ensuring that forms, questions, code tables and interviewer aids are appropriate and can be used effectively.
Once the dataset is established, adopt standard UNHCR codes to create a reference document for use by registration and interview staff.
Make sure that information on both country of asylum and country of origin locations is consistent and at the right level of disaggregation. A basic camp address system may need to be established if none exists.

6) Prepare Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to document how things will be done

SOPs describe each step of the registration process and the actions that need be completed at each step before moving to the next. They serve as a ‘user guide' for staff and ensure that processes are comprehensive, predictable and less prone to error.
SOPs should:

- Set out briefly the objectives of registration.

- Exhaustively define admissibility criteria for registration.
- Clearly describe the key steps of the registration process from reception (access) to exit. Include a process flow chart to visualise the registration process.
- Describe the roles, authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities of each actor involved in registration. Include a staff organigram if available.
- Describe the scheduling procedure for registration, including the methodology that should be used to prioritize individuals with specific needs.
- Describe the steps of a registration interview, including counselling, grouping, data collection; referral and documentation.
- List the data elements to be recorded during registration (such as biodata, and protection-related specific needs). The SOP should describe each data element and indicate how to enter data in proGres correctly.
- State which biometrics are to be enrolled. Related tasks should be described, including how to explain or counsel individuals on the purpose of biometric enrolment.
- Describe referral mechanisms in the registration process, including the presence of protection and litigation desks.
- Describe arrangements for continuous registration.
- Describe the arrangements for issuing each type of documentation.
- Annex relevant standard forms, documents and templates.

7) Establish fraud management and complaint mechanisms

Registration planning should include procedures to prevent fraud. Responsibilities should be separated clearly in the SOPs. Strong supervision and an effective complaint mechanism are also important components of procedures to identify and prevent fraud.

- Inventory registration materials and keep them securely locked.
- Strictly control materials and processes for issuing and renewing documents.
- Use biometrics to anchor and verify identity.
- Ensure that interview techniques and data collection standards are consistent.
- Establish a well-staffed litigation desk, with the capacity to investigate inconsistencies or fraud allegations.
- Install audit checks and establish clear lines of staff accountability and oversight.
- Train staff.
- Run information campaigns to make it known that UNHCR does not tolerate fraud or corruption.

Create confidential complaint mechanisms to enable people to file complaints, identify individuals who claim to have missed registration, and report misconduct by registration staff. Complaint mechanisms must incorporate appropriate procedures for effective follow-up. Procedures should:

- Include a standard complaint form.
- Ensure that every complaint received, in whatever form, is reviewed and followed up appropriately.
- Give persons who submit a complaint an opportunity to identify themselves to management (if they choose), while respecting their right to anonymity, should they fear retaliation.

- Entitle a complainant to submit his or her complaint through a member of staff who is not the subject of the complaint.
- Encourage everyone to report misconduct that occurs during registration-related activities.

8) Prepare data sharing agreements and define the conditions and terms of data sharing

Host governments and partners often need access to certain registration data for planning purposes and to implement their activities. Before concluding a data sharing agreement (DSA), UNHCR must assess the level of data protection afforded by the government or other third party concerned. It may do this by means of a data protection impact assessment (DPIA), to ensure that the systems and tools of the government or other third party provide a level of data protection that is comparable to that provided by UNHCR's Data Protection Policy. Part 6 of the Data Protection Policy and Part 9 of the Data Protection Guidance provide specific guidance on the requirements of a DSA, and the key provisions it must contain. **Sample data sharing agreements** have been developed at headquarters and are available in the Data Protection Toolkit. Headquarters will share DSA templates with operations on request, and will provide guidance and support. The Data Protection Officer and LAS are required to review and clear all DSAs before they are finalized.
It should be recalled that:

- DSAs are normally not necessary for implementing partners because Project Partnership Agreements (PPAs) cover data sharing and transfer issues. However, for joint use of the Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem (PRIMES), an Addendum to the PPA template is available in the Data Protection toolkit.
- The September 2018 WFP-UNHCR Global Data Sharing Addendum to the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aims to simplify data sharing between the two agencies at operation level. Where more than the standard data covered by the addendum is requested, staff should refer to the general principles for data sharing in UNHCR's Data Protection Policy and Guidance.

Data sharing arrangements with partners and other offices must:

- Avoid duplication, contradiction and confusion.
- Reduce risk of fraud.
- Reflect the purpose-specific objectives of data collection.
- Be necessary and proportionate in relation to the specified purpose.
- Be proportionate in relation to expected benefits.
- Maximize the respective strengths and opportunities of each party.
- Comply with international principles of data protection.

All data processing, including data sharing with partners, should follow the principles set out in 2.1 of UNHCR's policy on data protection. Data sharing should have a legitimate basis and a specified and legitimate purpose, be necessary and proportional, and should abide by the principles of accuracy, confidentiality and respect for the rights of individuals about whom information is shared. See part 2 of UNHCR's Data Protection Policy for interpretation of these principles, and the related Guidance on data protection for further explanation and discussion.

During registration, it is important that all persons of concern are made aware of their rights with respect to collection, access, and transfer of their personal data, and about relevant data sharing agreements with partners. Individuals should provide free and informed consent to UNHCR before UNHCR shares their data with partners. In an emergency, circumstances may arise in which it is not feasible to seek advance consent; when this is so, an alternative legitimate basis is required. UNHCR may argue that it is in the 'vital or best interests' of persons of concern to share data (for example, in order to distribute live-saving assistance using pre-registration data) or that certain data must be shared 'to enable UNHCR to carry out its mandate' (for example, if a host government requires UNHCR to provide basic biodata).

9) Design and conduct an information campaign to explain the benefits and risks of registration

Registration may be the first official procedure that new arrivals experience in the country of asylum. Many people may be unfamiliar with UNHCR and its mandate, and the reasons for registration may not be well understood. To provide this information, organize an information campaign. Adopt a participatory approach in order to reach everyone, including marginalized groups and individuals at risk. Asking different groups about their information needs and how they receive information will make the campaign more effective, and will increase participation in and acceptance of registration. Information products should be tested before they are deployed, to make sure that messages are easily understood and do not require clarification or extra knowledge. The information campaign should be responsive to the diversity of information needs identified by different groups, while ensuring that everyone has access to the same essential information about the registration procedure and its implications. Accurate information improves access to registration, reduces anxiety, avoids misunderstanding, and promotes voluntary participation. Ensure language and formats are culturally appropriate, take account of overall literacy levels and the diversity of languages spoken, and use images that portray underlying messages accurately. Ensure that translations are precise and reflect the information needs of different communities. The information channels selected in a given emergency context must:

- Be acceptable to the target population.
- Use multiple formats, including written, oral and pictorial forms.
- Meet different information needs.
- Communicate credible messages.
- Take steps to ensure that information is not manipulated.

If possible, the majority of the target audience should receive the same (or similar) information through at least two sources (for example, focus group discussions, UNHCR noticeboards, UNHCR social media pages, public announcements). This reduces the risk that messages will be unheard or misunderstood. Information may be disseminated via radio, meetings, leaflets or posters, at mass gatherings, at entry points, etc., and by partners, health, social and community workers, and local, religious or traditional leaders, etc.

Information to the community should always make clear:

- Why registration is taking place.
- With whom the information gathered will be shared, for what purposes.

- What general conditions and criteria will be used to determine who can be registered.
- That registration is open to all who meet the criteria, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, religion and other characteristics.
- That registration is free of charge.
- That (unless stated otherwise) registration does not imply entitlement to material assistance.
- That information provided during registration interviews should be truthful.
- The specific procedures are available for persons with specific needs.
- The time, venue and process of registration. This information should cover methods and materials, opening hours, procedures for requesting a registration appointment, and interview schedules.
- The link between registration and protection, in order to address fears and concerns.
- How complaint procedures work. This information should cover procedures for reporting misconduct by staff and any difficulties in accessing UNHCR or registration premises.
- UNHCR's commitment to prevent and address fraud.

See module 4 of the Guidance on Registration and Identity Management for more information on planning and implementing information campaigns.

Train registration staff. Provide guidance on protection principles and registration procedures

In emergency situations, it may be difficult to set time aside to train registration staff adequately. Nevertheless, good training is an essential precondition of effective registration and protection. Formal training should be followed by on-the-job coaching when registration activities commence.

The following trainings should be organised jointly with protection and community-based protection colleagues, and offered to all staff and partners:

- The overall emergency operational response; planned registration activities; the links between different registration-related activities (border monitoring, organized movement and pre-registration, reception and individual emergency registration, etc.); subsequent protection and assistance activities.
- UNHCR's Code of Conduct.
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Process flow.
- Referral mechanisms.
- Complaints procedures.
- Protection induction programme (if available and if time allows).

Training by specialized protection staff may be necessary (in child protection, for example) to enable registration staff to identify and interview individuals at risk. Engage partners with expertise to help train staff and support the registration process in such areas, if appropriate.

Before undertaking a registration activity, all staff, partner staff and security personnel must receive training in the UNHCR Code of Conduct and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy and must sign the Code of Conduct. Security personnel hired by UNHCR should also receive appropriate sensitization training.

See:
https://intranet.unhcr.org/intranet/unhcr/en/home/staff_resources/Code_of_conduct_ethics/Standards_of_Conduct.
https://intranet.unhcr.org/intranet/unhcr/en/home/staff_resources/administrative_forms/code_of_conduct.html.

10) Undertake registration interviews and meet every individual
Together with protection colleagues, specify the content of registration interviews. Include appropriate guidance on questioning. Guidance must be specific to the operational context of the emergency operation.
Interviewers and registration staff should:

- Introduce themselves and briefly explain the purpose of the interview.
- Check whether interviewees have been registered before (for example, by searching the database in advance).
- Seek the interviewee's consent to share his or her data with other humanitarian actors (for example, by means of disclaimers), and inform interviewees that their biodata will be shared with the host government.
- Apply the SOPs to flag suspected combatants, members of the local population, and other persons who are not eligible. Refer ineligible persons to the appropriate desk or focal point.
- Where possible, interview teams should include people who can identify interviewees' countries or areas of origin by language.
- Include questions designed to verify interviewees' knowledge of their stated area of origin. Resource persons with knowledge of those areas should be consulted. To facilitate cross-checking, registration teams should assemble maps and lists of events in coordination with other protection colleagues.
- Consult populations of concern, who will often help to identify techniques for verifying origin (based on knowledge of areas or languages).
- Refer individuals with specific needs who are identified during the registration interview to appropriately qualified staff or partners.

11) Ensure data quality
Data quality must be monitored throughout the registration process. Data capture should be reviewed by dedicated staff. Daily quality control checks should be made, both when hardcopy data is collected and after data has been entered into the database.
Include referral mechanisms. Identify and prioritize persons with specific needs
Emergency registration processes should always include procedures for recording, referring and tracking persons with specific needs. This is a key protection objective of registration.

Individuals with specific needs should be prioritized. Teams should physically invite them to come to the front of registration queues, and should collect additional information from them (for example, on the urgency and character of their medical needs) to ensure that they are able to receive targeted assistance.

Persons who must be prioritized for emergency registration include**:**

- Unaccompanied and separated children.
- Child-headed households.
- Older persons, particularly if they are unaccompanied.
- Persons with disabilities and their families.
- Persons with specific protection concerns and their families.
- Single women in certain circumstances.
- Persons with specific medical needs.

Where time or staff capacity is limited, data collection during an emergency registration may be restricted to certain specific needs, based on agreements reached internally in the office.

Unaccompanied and separated children
Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) are particularly vulnerable. They must be registered as soon as they are identified, and cases should be reported immediately to the UNHCR Protection Officer.

12) Provide documentation. Fulfil both identity and entitlement documentation needs
Depending on the circumstances, documentation may take the form of an entitlement card (such as a ration card) or a proof of registration card. Agree with other protection colleagues and senior management what type of documentation will be issued and by whom. Determine the period of validity of documents taking into account the operation's capacity to process document renewals (ration cards for assistance purposes, proof of registration, certificates, attestations with or without government logo, and other documents).

In the first few months of an emergency, it is generally not feasible to issue refugee identity (ID) cards, since it is time-consuming to issue individual documentation; extensive discussions with national authorities are usually required, and multiple meetings with persons of concern. After registration, however, the head(s) of household should be issued proof of registration containing information on all members of the group, and, if feasible, proof of registration should be issued to each individual. UNHCR or partners can subsequently use this documentation to identify households and individuals. ID cards should be issued during verification or continuous registration where it is feasible and appropriate to do so.

If tokens or wristbands were issued before registration, exchange them for ration cards (for assistance distribution) and/or a proof of registration certificate or attestation. Always record the unique identifier (ration card number, attestation serial number, etc.) in the database.

Whenever possible, issue entitlement documents, especially ration cards, to female heads of household. In situations where it is culturally not acceptable to issue entitlement documents to women, ration cards should indicate the names of both a female and male head of household.

Documents should bear only the information required to meet their specified purpose and should not indicate any information that could result in discrimination, such as an individual's ethnicity or other sensitive data.

For more guidance please see the follow Entries:

- Identifying persons with specific needs (PWSN).
- Nutrition in camps.
- Commodity distribution.
- Population estimation techniques.
- Refugee status determination (RSD).

Key management considerations

Managers of field operations, including Representatives and Heads of Office, are responsible for ensuring that registration and population data management activities are undertaken, that the highest possible standards are maintained, and that operational requirements are respected and continue to be met.

Registration activities directly affect the overall protection response as well as population planning and management. Technical registration expertise is required from the start of an emergency to provide appropriate oversight.

Given that it has overall accountability for the international protection of refugees, UNHCR should deploy qualified registration staff as soon as possible to support assessment, develop a registration strategy, and support the operational response.

Resources and partnerships

External Partners
Key stakeholders include the host government, the population of concern, other UN agencies, and NGOs, whether or not they are implementing activities or contributing resources. From the outset of the emergency response, UNHCR should **engage all relevant stakeholders** and strive to build and sustain **collaboration** and a **sense of ownership of shared goals**. In that spirit, UNHCR and its partners should cooperate to reduce duplication and increase transparency and communication. Relevant coordination forums include the Protection Working Group and the Refugee Information Management Working Group. **UNHCR also needs to support its implementing partners under project partnership agreements (PPAs)**, through training and performance management, for example. For more information, refer to the Entry on working with partners.

Internal resources
Registration staff may need to **coordinate with many** internal partners **in UNHCR**, including PI/Communications, Information Management and ICT colleagues, Field Protection, SGBV and other specific protection work units, Supply/logistics, and Administration. They may also need to obtain support and advice from the regional office or headquarters. The Identity Management and Registration Officer may establish coordination and communication mechanisms to ensure

registration activities achieve their purpose and have their intended impact on protection and assistance.

Budgets
Prepare a detailed budget. A sample budget template is attached. Liaise with programme colleagues to confirm that funds are available.

The budget should cover (as applicable):

- All the equipment required to support registration activities.
- Personnel, staff meals, DSA, and incentives for government and security personnel.
- Personnel accommodation and infrastructure.
- Rental fees for registration locations (community halls, schools, other premises).
- Staff transport, including vehicle rental and fuel.

Database
In emergencies, staff are advised to use **RApp** to gather reception and registration data, which should be synchronized to **proGres**. Use of biometrics (**BIMS)** is recommended. Where registration must be rapid, the operation may can collect one indicator (instead of 10 fingers and 2 irises). In doing so, it should continue to ensure accountability.

Standard forms and material
Use standard forms as much as possible. When an operation needs to collect household level data (for example, to manage organized movements), use the standard control sheet or RApp, which allows this information to be collected and analysed. Tokens may be used as transport tickets. If necessary, wristbands may be used to identify a targeted population.

Registration supplies
Prepare a list of all the items required (including specifications). IMRS maintains a stockpile of registration materials for rapid deployment to the field. Requests to IMRS for registration materials should be limited to materials that cannot be purchased locally (for example, standard ration cards, other documents with a centralized serial number, and certain IT equipment that must comply with UNHCR standards). Requests should be copied to regional registration support staff.

Staffing
If expertise is not available locally, experienced and qualified staff should be requested to join the operation on mission or short assignments. Contact DESS for requests to deploy registration officers to plan and oversee registration staff. Always assess your existing staff capacities first.

Staffing requirements may be calculated by estimating the size of the population concerned, the planned throughput at each registration site, and the anticipated registration approach, including datasets, tools and process. Take account of the scale and type of the emergency response. In large operations, for instance, team leaders should be assigned to each step in the registration process to coordinate staff; mobile or shelter-to-shelter registration may require more staffing than registration at a fixed location. Where the host government leads emergency registration, UNHCR may need to allocate fewer and different staff. It may need to focus more on training, for example.

To determine what additional skills and staff are required, assess the capacity of the staff in place. The roles and responsibilities of additional staff, and urgency, determine what type of contractual arrangement is suitable:

o **International staff** to meet needs that cannot be met by the country operation or region should initially be sourced from the **Emergency Response Team** (ERT) roster. ERT deployments have a maximum duration of three months. Plans should be made to replace ERT deployees at the end of this period (unless their replacement is unnecessary). International staff may also be recruited via **missions** (from regional offices, other operations, or IMRS), via **temporary assignments, or via appointments** and **affiliate workforce** contracts (including UNOPS, IUNV and standby partner schemes).
o Depending on the magnitude of the emergency, registration and operation data management staff will often be needed for a prolonged period. Where this is the case, operations are advised to create and advertise post through **Fast Track procedures** (instead of, or to succeed emergency deployment).

o **Local staff** can be recruited initially on **individual contractor agreements**. All staffing arrangements will need to be regularly reassessed as the emergency evolves. Longer term contracts include **TA, UNOPS, and UNV contracts as well as contracts for new or upgraded local staff positions**. **Implementing partners** can also conduct registration, if they are appropriately trained, provided experienced UNHCR staff are available to provide oversight.

Determine total staffing needs before compiling a final budget. Put in place sufficient human resources to handle the volume of arrivals and collect the required registration information. Reassess staffing needs regularly.

Calculate the functions, number and grades of staff that must be recruited, taking account of the following roles:

- Entry and security.
- Reception and admission.
- Data collection and interview.
- Assessment by protection or community services staff.
- Data entry and data quality control (if a database is used and data entry is separate from interview).
- Photo/biometrics' capture, if applicable.
- Document issuance.
- Supervisory (Registration Officer, operations data management, team lead).
- Refugee helpers, crowd control personnel, interpreters, administrative and filing clerks, drivers.

Consider staff numbers at each step of registration, to ensure that refugees can move through the process smoothly. Be prepared to reassign staff to new roles and take steps to resolve bottlenecks. Identify and recruit registration staff who can communicate in a language the refugees understand and who speak the official UN language of the country operation.

Hire male and female staff in equal numbers, where feasible. Ensure that registration and data entry assistants are computer-literate. Additional staff may be needed to conduct mobile emergency registration in informal settlements.

Consider provision for staff welfare. Foresee a variety of scenarios for working conditions (from poor to good) and plan shifts, breaks, staff areas, accommodation and food accordingly. Hold regular staff meetings and establish mechanisms for feedback and complaints; listen to your staff's suggestions.

Annexes

Checklist for Registration in Emergencies (updated 2017)

Registration Stockpile Procedures 2019

Registration Material Order Form 2019

Registration Form for Individual Registration

Control Sheet for Household Level Registration

Budget Template 2018

UNHCR, Guidance on the Use of Standardized Specific Needs Codes, IOM FOM 030 2009

Standardized Specific Needs Codes June 2009

Standardized Specific Needs Codes - French

Data Protection Policy

Other registration related documents and templates

Registration Form for Individuals (French)

Risk Management Tool _ Fraud Prevention

3. Links

UNHCR Guidance on Registration and Identity Management Fraud Prevention UNHCR Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern

4. Main contacts

Contact DPSM/IMRS. At: HQIMRS@unhcr.org.