

**Inter-Office Memorandum No. 030/2009**  
**Field Office Memorandum No. 030/2009**

**To/à:** All Staff Members at Headquarters and in the Field

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**Title/titre:** **Guidance on the Use of Standardized Specific Needs Codes**

1. As part of its protection delivery functions, UNHCR is committed to identifying and addressing the specific needs of persons of concern to it. The Specific Needs Codes (also referred to herein as “SNC”) are UNHCR’s primary standardized tool for carrying out this task.
2. The purpose of this IOM/FOM and its two Annexes is to introduce the latest version of the Specific Needs Codes and provide guidance on their appropriate utilisation by country operations globally. The IOM/FOM and the Specific Needs Codes the subject of the Annexes, wholly supersede UNHCR IOM/028/2007 FOM/030/2007, dated 3 April 2007.<sup>1</sup>
3. Annex One provides the background to the Specific Needs Codes and guidance on their purposes and the manner in which offices should make use of them. Annex Two provides an updated and complete list of the Specific Needs Codes and their respective definitions. Both Annexes may be shared externally with implementing and operational partners, as well as appropriate government counterparts. Such dissemination will assist to raise awareness of the range of potential specific needs of persons of concern, as well as promote the better identification of persons with such specific needs. A French version of the IOM/FOM and its attachments is forthcoming shortly.
4. Questions, suggestions and comments regarding the implementation or any other aspects of the Specific Needs Codes should be addressed to the Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS) of the Division of Operational Support (DOS), (email: HQPROSUP@unhcr.org ), which shall consult with the appropriate unit(s) of that Division as well as the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS) to provide a consolidated reply.
5. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> IOM/028/2007 FOM/030/2007, *Guidance on the Use of Standardized Specific Needs Codes*, dated 3 April 2007.

## Annex One

### Background Guidance on Use of Specific Needs Codes

#### Which UNHCR operations should use Specific Needs Codes (“SNCs”)?

The Specific Needs Codes provide a standardized and exhaustive list of an individual’s particular characteristics, background, or risks that may provoke protection exigencies. The SNCs are relevant to all types of UNHCR operations, whether related to asylum-seeker, refugee, IDP, stateless or returnee populations.

- In operations where proGres is used<sup>2</sup> -- likely related only to asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless persons -- the SNCs should be the sole mechanism for recording specific needs of individuals into proGres.
- In operations where proGres is not used, and regardless of whether related to asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and/or returnees, the SNCs provide a valuable, coherent tool with the potential to categorize specific needs in a systematised fashion, regardless of which format the operation records such accumulated data (eg., Word, Excel, Access or other formats)

Operations not having direct contact with individuals of concern (e.g., representational and advocacy presences) likely need not utilise the SNCs, but should nevertheless be familiar with them.

#### Accountability (in operations using the Specific Needs Codes)

Senior management and programme staff should review this IOM/FOM and its Annexes to be generally aware of the content and usage of SNCs.

Protection staff, including Registration, Eligibility, Resettlement and Community Services, should read this IOM/FOM and its Annexes with care and be able to apply them in daily work as appropriate to their operation.

#### When are Specific Needs Codes utilised?

UNHCR has a global commitment to the good practice of “continuous registration”. In other words, individual registration and other documentation of protection relevant data is not a one-time event, but should be periodically updated to accurately reflect significant events in the timeline of an individual case.

SNCs are not utilised *only* by registration staff. Identifying and ensuring appropriate recording of specific needs amongst individuals of concern to UNHCR should be a task for all other protection staff as well.

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<sup>2</sup> UNHCR’s standard registration and case management software, “proGres”, is now operational in 72 countries. ProGres aims to improve registration, documentation and population data management. It allows the recording of biodata as well as events that happen in the life cycle of those who are registered, such as where a person is in the RSD or resettlement process. It is estimated that 4.9 million individual records are today being held in proGres systems globally. As a result, aggregated data extracted from proGres provides baseline data for operational planning purposes.

Similarly, there is no expectation that all SNCs would be utilised and entered at initial registration. Indeed, for protection reasons, there are certain SNCs that are appropriate only after interview and analysis by UNHCR specialist staff (e.g., many of those relating to specific legal and physical protection needs, or to SGBV) and should not be determined by personnel without proper training.

### **Use of Specific Needs Codes by implementing partners and other external partners**

UNHCR staff should familiarize external partners, including but not limited to implementing partners and government counterpart agencies with the SNCs scheme, principles and purpose.

As with other aspects of proGres case file generation and update, recording SNCs into UNHCR proGres database is to be undertaken only by designated UNHCR staff with applicable security role.

### **Sensitive Specific Needs Codes**

We remind operations that certain SNCs are protection sensitive. Access to enter and view these SNCs should be appropriately sequestered by appropriate access rights within each operation. Of the 71 SNCs, only those 11 that are noted with tick marks in the first column of Annex Two are SNCs that can be identified with minimal training at the initial registration stage. All 60 other SNCs should be utilised only by appropriate protection staff or other staff with relevant training. For more guidance on this, protection and registration managers are advised to contact their regional registration officers or FICSS.

### **How the Specific Needs Codes should be used**

The SNCs are not a checklist to be completed when registering persons of concern. Instead, they are a tool providing an exhaustive menu of needs.

- Using only some of the SNCs: At the discretion of protection managers within each operation, an office may wish to select a *smaller set* of SNCs from the complete list. This may provide a more efficient use of registration and protection (including community services) efforts.
- Creating new SNCs: Almost all specific needs can be accurately captured by the current version SNCs. Should offices wish to propose additional specific needs and definitions, they should contact the Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS) at HQ.

### **How proGres databases in the field are updated with the new codes**

The update is done automatically. The new version SNCs are included within the latest “code-checker” update provided electronically to all proGres compliant operations. Once loaded by the proGres database administrator at each proGres location, all proGres users will automatically see the new version SNCs when they open any existing or new proGres record.

### **How introduction of the new SNCs will impact existing proGres records**

Existing records files in proGres need not be individually reviewed, updated and re-coded. Where the SNC code name has now changed, existing individual records will be automatically updated by proGres with the new version title or code name, as soon as the new “code-checker” is run. Any new recordation of specific needs, whether for existing or new

individual case records, and whether in proGres or other format, should however utilise the new version of the SNCs.

### **How the SNCs link to the Heightened Risk Identification Tool (HRIT)**

The new SNCs will allow field offices to record HRIT results into proGres. The SNC(s) that correspond to a likelihood of resettlement eligibility can provide an indication of possible resettlement needs within a given population and can assist in making targeted interventions and making resettlement projections for country operations planning purposes.<sup>3</sup>

### **How the SNCs link to protection monitoring systems.**

Offices utilising protection monitoring systems at the individual case level are encouraged to examine their systems and develop coherency with the SNCs, so that specific needs recorded within these systems can be easily captured by relevant SNCs in proGres records.

### **How the SNCs link to FOCUS**

Because FOCUS does not currently capture individual case data, there is no direct link to FOCUS. The current global FOCUS roll-out neither impacts nor is impacted by this new version SNC. The analysis of aggregated individual SNCs data -- particularly the scope and scale of specific needs in populations of concern -- may however provide field operations with valuable information for their use in the protection assessment, planning, and impact/performance indicator components of FOCUS.

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<sup>3</sup> Further guidance on this is provided in UNHCR/IOM/092/2008 | UNHCR/FOM/094/2008, *Instructions and Guidelines to UNHCR Field Offices and Headquarters Units on Reporting in 2008, Implementation in 2009 and Planning for 2010-2011*, 23 December 2008.