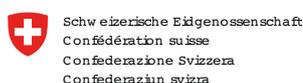


# Practical Guide for Planning and Implementing Selection Missions

EU-FRANK Tool 2

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# Introduction to this tool

This tool has been developed within the framework of the EU-FRANK project in 2018-2019 with funding from the European Asylum Migration and Integration Fund. Information presented in this tool is by no means exhaustive, but represents a compilation of guidance and practical tips. The objective has been to support EU Member States in their operational work with resettlement. For more information about this project, visit [www.eu-frank.eu](http://www.eu-frank.eu).

## What is the purpose of this tool?

This tool is intended as a brief guide to accompany resettlement officials when preparing and implementing a resettlement selection mission. In order to prepare adequately for such a mission, this guide provides an overview of aspects that are considered important to attend to in order to deliver a successful mission. It describes a number of activities/key elements to consider through the process of preparation (prior), implementation (during), and completion (after) a selection mission.

## Why was it created?

Preparing and conducting a mission abroad can be challenging from a number of perspectives. By highlighting and describing some key aspects that connect to mission work, this practical guide can support resettlement country officials with their operational planning and help them to address central elements in a timely manner.

## Who should use this guide?

The practical guide is primarily intended to support officials who are planning an interview mission in a field location or third country, such as mission leaders or coordinators. It can be applied as a quality tool for any practitioners who could benefit from additional guidance or information related to the set-up of missions. It may be considered useful for officials who have never been involved with resettlement and who could benefit from additional guidance, as well as for officials with years of resettlement experience who could use it as a reminder in their work.

## Which other training tools and sources to use?

Some national examples are available in the EU-FRANK Tool3 [Checklist: for Implementation of Selection Missions](#) as well as on the [EU-FRANK website](#). The checklist follows the same structure as this practical guide.

# Planning and implementing a selection mission

Selection missions to the field are an important opportunity for States to consider a large number of resettlement cases at the same time through face-to-face interviews with refugees, while gaining familiarity with the asylum and protection context of the refugee population. Once each resettlement state has determined the size and composition of its resettlement program, and as part of its collaboration with the UNHCR and IOM, the timing of selection missions is negotiated. Planning and follow-up of a resettlement selection missions can generally be divided into three phases, namely pre-mission, during the mission, and post-mission. Considerations to keep in mind linked to each of these phases are described more in depth throughout this practical guide.

## PART I. PRIOR TO A SELECTION MISSION

### Identify key actors (stakeholders) in resettlement

Resettlement builds on collaboration between a variety of actors and requires much logistical preparation from all involved. Global resettlement activities most commonly include governmental agencies in resettlement countries, their embassies abroad (where they exist), the UNHCR, the IOM, and, sometimes, NGOs. Each of these actors has a role to play in the planning and support of resettlement selection missions. Missions are most commonly planned jointly between some of these actors in order to reach the most suitable logistical approach and scope of the selection and to attend to various practical details such as accommodation, transport, security, meeting schedule, how to obtain biometric data, etc. The involvement of each stakeholder varies at different stages of the resettlement process. Depending on which resettlement country is carrying out the resettlement mission, and where the mission will take place, the main actors can also vary but will mostly consist of the following key actors that are described in this chapter.

#### *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*

The UNHCR was established on December 14, 1950, by the United Nations General Assembly and has been

entrusted with the mandate to support governments in their responsibility of providing protection and durable solutions for refugees. The agency is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally, or resettle in a third country.

Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from the country of asylum to a third State that has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status and a pathway to eventual citizenship.

Securing international protection and seeking durable solutions for refugees remain the UNHCR's core objectives. Although these tasks are frequently referred to as distinct functions, in reality they are interdependent, and resettlement plays a vital role in achieving both of these objectives. Resettlement serves as a tool to provide international protection and to meet the specific needs of individual refugees at particular risk. It is also one of the three durable solutions alongside voluntary repatriation and local integration.

The UNHCR identifies and refers the most vulnerable of refugees for resettlement. To have their case submitted to a resettlement country, refugees must meet the requirements for submission under one or more of the UNHCR resettlement submission categories. Resettlement submission categories relate to specific individual protection needs, and the use of resettlement as a tool for international protection generally requires the identification of particularly vulnerable people within a much larger group of refugees. Resettlement submissions are prioritized according to the urgency of the case and are listed in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook.

The Resettlement Service (at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva) leads the bilateral discussions and collaboration with States on the size and composition of their programs and coordinates the distribution, monitoring, and oversight of delivery against targets set by the UNHCR field operations. It has a role in determining the resourcing for the field and it oversees certain qualitative aspects of the process. In addition, the Processing Unit at the UNHCR headquarters coordinates and monitors the distribution and use of specific quotas for urgent and emergency cases on dossier submission, and it liaises between the field offices, resettlement country, and IOM for rapid coordination of travel.

Individual UNHCR field offices play an essential role in the coordination, planning, and implementation of resettlement activities. Field offices identify refugees, undertake all required processing, and prepare resettlement submissions. They often liaise with States on the detailed characteristics of a refugee population and arrangements for missions. Field offices are supported by a comprehensive deployment scheme of resettlement experts provided by the UNHCR's key NGO partners under specific agreements and funding arrangements.

Regional Support Centers coordinate and oversee the delivery of resettlement submissions from operations within their region, including close oversight of dossier submissions for emergency/urgent protection and medical cases. They play an important role in quality control, distribution of resources across the region, and maintaining regional resettlement statistics.

### *Governmental organizations*

In European Union Member States (EU MS), several authorities are involved with resettlement programs. Most commonly, programs are run by a governmental agency such as the national immigration and reception authorities or a ministry. They are implemented together with actors such as the police, security services, municipalities, etc.

### *The International Organization for Migration (IOM)*

The IOM was established in 1951 to ensure the safe and dignified movements of vulnerable migrants and refugees. In the aftermath of World War II, no government alone could help the many displaced survivors to resume their lives, and the IOM was created to assist with the resettlement of Europeans displaced by the war. To this day, moving people to safety to start a new life remains a core function of the organization. The IOM has since grown into the UN Migration Agency with 169 Member States, and its global presence has expanded to around 400 field locations.

The IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. The IOM is the leading international organization working with migrants and governments alike to address migration challenges, while also recognizing the enormous potential benefits of migration for countries of destination, for migrants themselves, and for their countries of origin.

The IOM works in four broad areas: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration, and addressing forced migration.

### *National embassies or consulates*

The national representation in the country where the mission takes place (or that of another EU Member State if there is no national one), is a permanent link in the resettlement process. Considering this, cooperation with and involvement of the embassy is important.

### *Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)*

A NGO can be involved in resettlement at both the international and national level. NGO activities range

from policy work to advocacy and the provision of practical support and services to resettled refugees.

At the national level, NGOs can be involved in many aspects of the resettlement process – from providing social and community support to assisting refugees in finding employment and learning new languages. NGO involvement can be on a voluntary basis, whereby NGOs offer their services to resettled refugees on the same basis as other beneficiaries. In some countries, NGOs are specifically contracted or commissioned by the State to provide services to resettled refugees.

Examples of NGOs involved in resettlement processes may include:

- Refugee councils
- Caritas
- HIAS
- Diaspora associations.

In some countries the International Federation of the Red Cross/Crescent Movement and the National Red Cross Societies (not NGOs) are also active in the resettlement process.

### *European Union*

While the decision to take part in resettlement lies with national EU Member States, the European Commission provides a joint framework and financial support through funding from the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). A European resettlement scheme has been in place since July 2015 to provide legal and safe pathways to enter the EU and increase the collective resettlement efforts of the EU Member States.

### **Pre-Mission Questionnaire (PMQ)**

In order to facilitate and coordinate preparations for missions, the UNHCR has developed a Pre-Mission Questionnaire for Resettlement Interview Missions<sup>1</sup> (PMQ) and a Pre-Mission Checklist for Resettlement Interview Missions<sup>2</sup>. The PMQ contains

basic information regarding the dates of the mission, the intended caseload, and contact details of the mission team members as well as information on travel arrangements and facilities for the interviews and briefings with the UNHCR. Early planning with the UNHCR can be facilitated by using the PMQ, which helps with the exchange of details and confirms that the necessary preparations are in place. This form is usually sent back and forth via email until final arrangements are made. The purpose of the questionnaire is to assist with the planning and coordination of resettlement interview missions. It is not mandatory to complete. Rather, it is a tool that can be used to facilitate preparations and its use is encouraged in situations where the mission requires support from the UNHCR. Some countries also conduct preparatory missions (pre-missions) before the actual selection mission in order to meet with partners on site and to discuss timelines, risks, and objectives concerning the selection.

In the PMQ the resettlement country indicates how many cases can be submitted. The UNHCR standard practice is to over-submit by some 10%. This makes it possible to compensate for possible withdrawals and rejected cases, while still ensuring that the quota can be filled. UNHCR data show that acceptance rates globally were above 90% in the past two years.

### **Resettlement selection criteria**

Apart from the refugee definition, as enshrined in the 1951 Geneva Convention, resettlement countries may have their own additional criteria for whom to accept for resettlement, depending on their national legislation and individual preconditions. The following are examples of criteria that resettlement countries may want to prioritize: medical cases, persons at serious risk of encountering violence and/or torture, survivors of violence and/or torture, vulnerable groups such as female-headed households, families/family groups, or singles. Selection criteria are used to guide both the pre-selection phase and the selection in the context of the selection mission.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/49631d782.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/49631d2e2.pdf>

While governments decide on whether to use specific selection criteria, the following should not be overlooked:

- ensure that selection criteria are needs-based and non-discriminatory
- attend to the refugee's vulnerability and need for protection
- select a balanced group of people, such as persons with both low and high levels of literacy and language skills in the hope that persons with more advanced skills and capabilities might act as support and resource persons for other members of the group.

Notwithstanding this desire for balance, it should be noted that the primary criterion for the selection of refugees should always remain the refugees' background in terms of protection and resettlement needs.

## **Mission Preparations**

The preparations of a mission are diverse. One part is covered in the PMQ. In addition, the IOM is able to support States with the facilitation and logistical arrangements related to the implementation of selection missions and/or visa processing, including accommodation, transportation, security arrangements, access to a pool of interpreters and child minders, in-country ground transportation, equipment, and so on. The IOM works closely with the UNHCR and States, for instance, in designing interview schedules that fit the specific context of a certain host country.

This chapter highlights some of the tasks that need attending to in the preparatory phase.

### *The caseload*

Once resettlement cases are submitted to your agency, register them in your national registration system. Some countries also feel the need to keep a complementary tool such as an overview sheet or log book. For an example of such a complementary tool, please refer to the EU-FRANK Tool 1 [Template for Annual Overview of Submitted Resettlement Cases](#). If necessary, a compilation or overview of submitted cases may be shared with key actors in the mission.

In order for the selection mission to proceed smoothly, it is important that the data set is confirmed by all key actors. If your national standard operating procedures (SOP) require it, screen the UNHCR files (RRFs and other supportive documentation) on security issues, possibly also including social media checks.

At the close of the pre-selection phase, a final list of the persons to interview is drawn up in an interview schedule. This list is usually compiled by the UNHCR or the resettlement country, and sometimes also by the IOM. The resettlement country generally forwards the interview schedule to the local UNHCR office in the country of asylum where the selection mission will take place. For an example of how an interview schedule might look, please refer to the EU-FRANK Tool 4 [Template for Scheduling of Resettlement Selection Interviews](#).

### *Security risk assessment*

A security risk assessment of the destination and/or refugee camp in the country of asylum can be carried out by the resettlement country, or can be provided by the UNHCR.

### *Mission program*

The mission program gives an overview of the crucial aspects of the mission. It generally contains a contact list, the mission plan that includes travel details (hours, flight number, etc.), the interview time slots, and other activities such as briefings and debriefings with the UNHCR, IOM, national embassy, or local authorities. After the mission program is ready, share this document with the key actors.

### *Delegation of the mission*

The mission teams can be composed of representatives from a number of different government departments and/or outside agencies. Select the members of the delegation in accordance with national agreements and/or established SOPs. It is important that the respective roles and responsibilities of all members of the selection team are clearly defined and well thought through.

The delegation members have to be instructed on time regarding the travel documents (to keep a

valid passport and possibly visa), and on any needs for vaccinations or other medical requirements or recommendations.

The delegation member has to take into consideration the time needed to apply for a passport if he or she does not hold one already. If advised by your embassy or by the UNHCR, apply for an official or diplomatic passport. Always check the validity of your passport, as sometimes it needs to be valid for up to six months after you plan to return home.

In most countries where selection takes place, an entry visa is mandatory. In view of this, the following points are important:

- check the applicable visa regulation
- fill in the necessary application form
- check with the embassy involved if an official approval letter is needed
- apply in time, depending on the instructions on the website of the embassy
- check the validity of the passports of the delegation members

It is important to check the health situation in the country concerned. The delegation member has to take into consideration what is needed regarding vaccinations and other preventive measures. When applicable, get vaccinated in time (4–6 weeks prior to the mission) and purchase recommended medication. For information about recommended vaccinations and medication, check the internet or website of the responsible health authority, or liaise with your national embassy.

To prepare the delegation members for their tasks in a selection mission, it is advisable to organize a briefing prior the selection mission. During such a briefing, the following aspects may be wise to include and discuss:

- basic knowledge about the national resettlement program
- the mission planning, including the travel details and the interview schedule
- information on the country where the mission will take place, including the refugee situation and the security situation
- the mission process

- the working hours
- budgetary aspects

Mission leaders or coordinators may want to refer the mission participants to any relevant logistical information packages or background reading.

Information concerning the situation in the country of origin and country of asylum of the refugees concerned should be provided in the context of pre-selection meetings and discussions. Country of origin information (COI) as well as information on the country of asylum can be provided by your own organization, your national embassy, the UNHCR field office, and/or other agencies, including NGOs working in the refugee field. Relevant information can also be obtained from a variety of sources on COI portals and other sources on the Internet.

A decision may need to be taken as to what information concerning the mission should be treated as public and what information should be restricted in nature.

In addition, decisions on how to handle and transport sensitive documentation may also need to be taken in order to attend to security and confidentiality matters.

Flights and accommodation for the selection mission team should be booked and confirmed by your travel agency as early as possible.

### *Informing key actors*

The local UNHCR and IOM offices should be provided with all relevant administrative and logistical information concerning the selection mission, including the list of persons to be interviewed by the mission team, the names of the members of the mission team, travel itineraries, the number of interviewing teams, the number of interview rooms needed, and any needs for interpretation services needs. All visas, vaccinations, and other documentation required for the members of the selection team should be procured.

If the interviews will be conducted in a refugee camp, arrangements regarding the interview facility, interpreters, transportation, and accommodation should be clearly indicated in the PMQ and be confirmed by the UNHCR. It is not excluded that an official clearance for entering the refugee camp must be requested in time with the local authorities. Wherever possible, selection missions are asked to rely on their own resources for interview space, transport, and

equipment in order to minimize disruption to UNHCR field operations in the country concerned. In remote and/or camp locations, the UNHCR might provide assistance with accommodation, although this might not be the case in every context.

The embassy or consulate (should there be one) should be informed of the mission. An embassy or consulate may have an important role at a later stage in granting residence permits and/or preparing temporary travel documents if needed. For further advice on what preparations to attend to, go to the EU-FRANK Tool 3 [Checklist for Implementation of Selection Mission](#).

### Mission budget

A selection mission in the field means travelling to and staying in a foreign country. The costs of a selection mission usually fall within the framework of the national regulation for governmental missions or visits abroad. In that case, it is advisable to familiarize yourself with this regulation.

It is recommended to make a financial overview that includes what has to be paid (in advance, on site, or later on) and what will not be charged. The following possible costs should be taken into account:

- the use of the interview facility
- the use of interpreters (in some cases it is required to pay interpreters directly in cash)
- the transport to and from the interview facility for staff and refugees
- local accommodation of the mission team and eventually the refugees
- child care (baby sitters)
- the daily catering for refugees, mission members, and interpreters

- the per diem for the mission members
- the flights of the mission members
- costs for visas of the mission members
- if possible, any others costs.

Furthermore, it is advised to clarify in advance to whom such costs should be paid, for instance, the UNHCR or IOM. The IOM usually has framework agreements on resettlement cooperation with EU Member States in which the logistical and operational support for selection missions are covered. Depending on the agreement it holds with the EU Member states, the IOM will settle the costs through a financial report or invoice that will be shared with the entity holding the framework agreement with the IOM upon determined intervals as per the agreement.

It is important to know in advance what payment options are available in the country where the mission takes place. Your embassy, the UNHCR, or the IOM can inform you about:

- the exchange rate to the local currency
- the use of cash money
- the use of credit cards
- the use of ATMs.

In the case any (official) visits or meetings are planned in the mission program, you should inform yourself in advance whether it is appropriate to give or to offer something, for example, in the context of a courtesy visit to local authorities, a meeting with the embassy or international organization, or in the debriefing at the end of the mission. These events are suitable to show your courtesy or gratitude for the mediation or facilitation of the mission. These costs can also be included in the financial overview of the mission.

## PART II. DURING A SELECTION MISSION

### Meetings with stakeholders in the field

The work of the selection mission usually starts with briefings and meetings with the UNHCR and IOM, either jointly or separately. It is up to each mission to decide whether the entire mission should attend such meetings or only the Head of Mission or some other appointed person. The first option is common and

may be recommended because it involves everyone and gives a first direct contact with the staff in the field.

If nothing else is particularly requested, the UNHCR will typically brief the team on the refugee situation in the country of origin and country of asylum, on the UNHCR's resettlement procedures, and on the security situation (including possible medical risks).

The briefing is also an opportunity for the mission participants to discuss logistical matters (e.g. possible changes to the interview schedule) and/or necessary case-related issues. The UNHCR will usually also brief the team on the profiles of cases submitted for consideration, including any specific cases that they want to highlight. Sometimes, if a resettlement state has indicated in the PMQ that they are willing to accept submissions during the mission, the UNHCR may wish to discuss the possibility of adding cases. They may also organize a field visit to enhance the contextual understanding of the situation in the country of asylum. If other partners also attend the part of the briefing during which specific cases are discussed, make sure to keep in mind the principle of privacy and confidentiality.

During initial briefings with the IOM, practical/logistical issues can be discussed such as, if provided by the IOM, interview rooms, interpreters, refugee transportation to and from the interview location, accommodation and catering for the refugees, security measures, technical equipment (copy machine, scanner, Wi-Fi, etc.), child-care services, and so on. The IOM will highlight possible operational challenges that need to be taken into consideration in a given country's context. Visa processing for the beneficiaries and other travel arrangements will also be discussed. Details of possible field trips to refugee accommodations or facilities where components of the resettlement process take place (such as medical facilities) can also be discussed with the IOM.

If possible, it could also be helpful to arrange a separate meeting with the embassy of the resettlement country at some point during the mission. Embassy officials can, for example, provide the selection mission team with additional information about the country of first asylum and information on the security situation in the country. They may also be interested in obtaining a briefing by the team on the resettlement program.

## **On the interview day(s)**

### *Briefings with interpreters*

In case interpreters for interviews are provided by the UNHCR or IOM, make sure these are properly briefed

before the start of the interviews. Take some time to meet with them and introduce yourselves to each other. This is a good opportunity to address whatever code of conduct your team and the interpreters are expected to abide by, any sensitive cases or topics that may come up during your work together, and any logistical issues (working hours, payment, etc.).

Because different resettlement countries have different ways of working, you may want to discuss with the interpreters certain topics that are important to your team. You may also want to team up one case officer with one interpreter. Some countries inform interpreters of the standards of confidentiality and professionalism that are expected during a briefing session at the beginning of the selection mission. The Head of Mission could normally provide this information, and suggested content for such an information session is provided in the EU-FRANK Tool 5 [\*Guiding Note for Communication via Interpreters\*](#).

In addition to the briefing sessions, some countries also provide the interpreters with a document called the Deontology Code. If possible, this document should be sent to the interpreters through the IOM or UNHCR prior to the selection mission. The content of the Deontology Code is described in the tool mentioned in the paragraph above. During the initial brief by the Head of Mission, the interpreters may be asked if they have read the document and the Head of Mission may ask them to sign a declaration in which they confirm they have read this Code and are ready to work according to the principles described in it. It is important for the resettlement case officer to brief the interpreter in advance of the interview to make sure that he or she understands what to do.

### *Recognizing quality interpretation standards*

If the delegation uses local interpreters, some resettlement countries provide those whose services are considered satisfactory with a letter of appreciation or a certificate. Some national examples are available on the EU-FRANK website: [www.eu-frank.eu/resources/tools](http://www.eu-frank.eu/resources/tools).

### *Briefings with refugees*

It is a common practice by resettlement states to brief refugees and explain to them what to expect

from the resettlement process before the start of the interviews, ideally in the morning before the first interviews start. It is however important to keep in mind that at this stage the refugees are often focused on the interview and may have difficulty in retrieving and remembering what has been communicated to them. Thus, it is important to limit the information and to focus on the most imminent, i.e. the interview itself and the process of selection. This is probably not the best time to provide detailed information on the country of resettlement. It could however be useful to highlight some key messages on the procedure or on the consequences of resettlement (e.g. right to family reunification, etc.).

The information should be communicated verbally and could possibly be supported by information brochures submitted to each family or individual. To make this briefing as efficient as possible, try to organize it in a quiet setting (if possible without small children) and make sure the interpreter is well understood. It may be recommended to limit the duration of such a briefing to maximum of 30 minutes. During these sessions, refugees should be encouraged to ask questions so that they can come prepared to the interviews.

As regards the content of such a session, the most important areas are summarized in the EU-FRANK Tool 6 [Guiding Note for Preparatory Briefings of Refugees](#). Please note that the content of this tool is compiled of examples from different resettlement countries and should be adapted to fit national regulations or contexts.

### *Selection interview*

The principal component of any selection mission is the selection interview. Interviews are generally carried out on an individual basis, and the aim is often to supplement the information provided in the RRF. The purpose of a selection interview is to examine factors related to the need for international protection and the need for resettlement. However, selection interviews are not always limited to this topic, and some countries may have additional, or other, criteria framed by their national context. For further information on what measures could be taken to prepare for a selection interview and how to conduct a selection interview in the field, please refer to the

EU-FRANK Tool 7 [Practical guide for Planning and Conducting Resettlement interviews](#).

### **After the selection interview (Results of the mission)**

At the end of each interview day, the mission team is recommended to make preliminary decisions for all cases examined during the day. Complex cases or other cases where it has not been possible to come to a decision ('pending cases') may be referred back to the resettlement country for consultation. It is useful to identify such cases as early as possible in the process in order to avoid wasting time.

It is also useful to arrange debriefings among mission members at regular intervals in order to go through the accepted, pending, and rejected cases. This is especially valued during long selection missions when a large number of cases are assessed on a daily basis.

After all interviews have been carried out, additional attention/review should be given to all pending cases. Subsequently, it is time to draw up the "under consideration list" or the list of "final decisions" if the national regulations allow/require decisions to be made before returning from the mission.

A debriefing with the UNHCR at the end of the selection mission is a standard practice for many resettlement countries and is considered useful. It will allow the selection mission team to give feedback on both logistical aspects and on the cases they interviewed. If the IOM or another organization (e.g. an embassy) was involved in the organization of the mission, they may also be invited for the part of the debriefing concerning logistics. Before the final debriefing with the UNHCR, an internal debriefing with the members of the mission team can take place. This will allow the Head of Mission to identify topics to be discussed with partners. Topics for discussion during a debriefing on the logistical aspects include:

- **Working conditions**

Quality of the interview rooms, office furniture, sufficient privacy for interviewing, setting of the waiting area, catering, copy/scanning facilities, Wi-Fi connection or other technological issues, quality of security measures, possibility to work according to the schedule (e.g. did the refugees arrive on time in the morning),

collaboration with staff of the UNHCR or IOM in charge of logistics, transport arrangements for refugees and/ or the delegation, quality of the accommodation for the refugees and/ or the delegation, quality of other services (e.g. babysitters, facilities in the waiting area for children) or other arrangements in line with what was asked in the PMQ.

- **Counseling of the refugees**

Were they well informed on the need to bring necessary documents? Were the refugees counseled according to what was agreed?

- **Quality of the interpretation if the UNHCR or IOM provided the interpreters**

Were the language skills and professionalism of the interpreters of a high standard? Were the interpreters on time and sufficiently flexible?

In a second part of the debriefing, the submissions can be discussed. For this part of the debriefing, it is advisable that only the UNHCR is present, given the principle of privacy and confidentiality. Topics that can be addressed in this session include:

- **Profiles, sizes, and compositions of the submissions**

Were the profiles, sizes, and compositions of the submissions in line with what was asked before the mission and the selection criteria (in most cases this information was communicated to the UNHCR in the PMQ)? Were the cases submitted within the

timeframe agreed?

During this session, the UNHCR can also provide the selection mission members with feedback on the agreed requirements on their side.

The debriefing also allows precise feedback to be given on the quality of the submissions. This feedback might be limited to general remarks on the quality of the RRFs, but concrete cases can also be discussed. Topics to be discussed in this sense can include:

- Is the content of the RRF in line with the content of the interview done by the selection mission (e.g., contradictions, discrepancies, the accuracy of the material facts of the refugee claim, the listing of the available documents, the family composition)?
- Did the interview delegation notice any signals or attend to any cases of exclusion, credibility, or fraud?

Concrete cases could also be discussed, and some cases might need a specific follow-up by the UNHCR (additional documents to be submitted). If no final decisions are communicated to the UNHCR at the end of a selection mission, it might be useful to inform the UNHCR on the probable outcome, especially in the cases for which it is already clear that they will be rejected.

It can be recommended to formalize the results of the debriefing in the UNHCR's Post-Mission Questionnaire for Resettlement Interview Missions.<sup>3</sup>

## PART III. AFTER A SELECTION MISSION

### Post-interview processing

This section outlines different procedures that take place after the interview and prior to making a final decision.

#### *Selection decision*

Practices for decision making differ between different resettlement states. For example, decisions can be communicated to the UNHCR at the end of the selection mission before the mission returns home or after the mission has returned to the resettlement country. It

is recommended, if possible, to make preliminary decisions during the selection mission and preferably at the end of each interview day. Some states consider it good practice to organize daily meetings with the interview team to discuss the different cases and to come to a (preliminary) decision. This not only allows for in-depth discussions on the cases between senior case officers and less experienced case officers, but also to exchange more general experiences. Cases might be clear acceptances or rejections or might need further consideration. The cases that need

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.refworld.org/>

further consideration can be discussed at the end of the selection mission or after return to the resettlement country if this is foreseen in your national procedure.

More and more countries obtain biometric data (e.g. fingerprints) during selection missions in order to perform security checks. The majority of the countries do not receive the results of these screenings during the actual mission. Even if it would be possible for these countries to make decisions on eligibility during the selection mission, they will not be able to do so because they have to wait for the results of the security screenings.

It could be that after the selection interview, the resettlement country might need additional information to be able to make a final decision (e.g. specific documents that were not presented during the selection interview). Ideally, this information should be asked of the UNHCR during the selection mission, but it could also be that additional information needs to be obtained after the selection mission is completed. The UNHCR will then, taking into account their policy related to data protection, try to respond to this extra query either by consulting the information in the file or by reaching out to the refugee again if needed. The UNHCR can also be requested to do some additional counseling with a specific family, for instance, when families do not all agree on being resettled.

### *Process of communicating decisions*

The decision can be communicated to the UNHCR during or after the mission. Some resettlement states make decisions during selection missions. This practice has some advantages because it allows the decisions to be presented and explained to the UNHCR at the end of the mission during a debriefing session. Also, refugees will be informed on their decision soon after the end of the selection mission, which avoids a long period of uncertainty.

The communication of the decisions can be done in different ways, for example, a formal decision in the form of a letter for each individual case (accepted/rejected) or a list with all the cases and/or persons accepted and rejected based on the UNHCR case number can be sent, or a combination of both can be used. Ideally, all decisions should be sent in one batch. Separate communication for each individual

case, though email or through other communication channels, should be avoided. The decisions should be sent to the agreed contact persons in the UNHCR, for example, the focal point(s) of the UNHCR for the selection missions in the Field Office, Regional Offices, UNHCR Headquarters (e.g. for emergency/urgent or other complex cases), UNHCR in the capital, etc.

When informing the UNHCR on the decisions, it might also be advisable to agree on a deadline for when refugees will be informed about the outcome of their interview. After this deadline, and once the refugees know, other organizations (such as the IOM, embassies, etc.) can be informed as well. If these organizations need to be informed on the decisions before the deadline agreed with the UNHCR, it should be made clear that the refugees cannot be contacted yet. It should in any case be avoided that refugees are informed of their decision by any other organization than the UNHCR unless national practice obliges you to do so.

When a case is rejected, it is advisable to inform the UNHCR on the reasons for this rejection. If detailed reasons cannot be provided, it might be possible to give more general information, for example, that the case is rejected for security reasons, reasons linked to the eligibility/exclusion criteria (prejudicial decisions), or integration or medical reasons (non-prejudicial decisions). This will allow the UNHCR to conduct a review of the case to evaluate whether a re-submission to another resettlement State might be warranted. In this process, it is helpful if the UNHCR is informed of the reasons for rejections by the State because it will help in making a decision on the case's resettlement prospects after the rejection and in counseling the refugees. In addition, if a case is re-submitted, it also enables the UNHCR to inform the new resettlement state on the reasons for rejection. If the country to which the case is resubmitted is not aware of the reasons the case was rejected before, the risk is much higher that it will be rejected again.

The reasons for rejection can be communicated in a letter accompanying the list of rejections or through a fixed format developed by the UNHCR. Practices whereby resettlement states return submissions after interviewing without a decision should be avoided.

### *Timing of communications*

As a rule, decisions should be communicated to the UNHCR as soon as possible. Leaving the refugees for a longer period in uncertainty can have negative psychological effects. It is suggested to discuss the timing of the communications of the decisions during the debriefing with the UNHCR. Of course, submission priorities (emergency cases, urgent cases, or normal priority cases) should be taken into account. If possible, it should be avoided to communicate decisions for the same group at different moments in time, as this might create confusion with the refugees concerned. In general, the longer it takes for a refugee to be able to depart, the greater the risk to the refugee.

### **Pre-arrival measures**

Before refugees depart to the resettlement country, several aspects need to be attended to. Many states specifically address preparations before arrival in terms of trainings or orientation sessions. For more guidance on such pre-arrival measures, please refer to the *EU-FRANK tools*.

### **Evaluation of the mission and feedback to the stakeholders**

After the mission, a mission report can be compiled and shared with national stakeholders. This will allow them to build on lessons learned when planning for future missions in the same country. The mission report could include evaluation of the following topics:

- Preparation of the mission
- Selection of the caseworkers
- Logistical aspects (travel, hotel, etc.)
- Budget: was the final budget in line with the forecast?
- Interview location
- Interpreters
- Interviews
- Evaluation of RRFs:
  - Timing of submissions
  - Content of submissions
- Profiles and vulnerabilities of the cases submitted
- Selection results
- Security screenings
- Collaboration with the UNHCR
- Collaboration with other partners: the IOM, embassy, others
- Lessons learned and recommendations for improvements for future missions.