
UN/POP/MIG/2002/4

4 June 2002

ENGLISH ONLY

COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

New York, 11-12 July 2002

**INFORMATION COLLECTION ACTIVITIES
IN THE AREA OF REFUGEES ***

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees **

* This document was reproduced without formal editing.

** UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland. The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

**AD HOC COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION
POPULATION DIVISION, UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
11-12 JULY 2002**

*Report submitted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
(UNHCR)*

The below is the report submitted by UNHCR as requested by the UN Secretariat, reflecting the various data and information collection activities undertaken by the Office.

Type of data or information relating to international migration that your organization routinely collects and/or compiles

UNHCR routinely collects, compiles and analyzes information and statistics pertaining to asylum, refugees and persons of concern to UNHCR, much of which is available through the UNHCR webpage (see <http://www.unhcr.ch>, sections on Statistics and on Research/Evaluation). Broadly speaking, there are two types of information regularly being collected and compiled: statistical data (Population Data Unit) and country and legal information (Protection Information Section).

Research, including on aspects of international migration (“the asylum-migration nexus”), is conducted by the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, the Regional Bureaux and the Department of International Protection.

a. Statistics

The following data is collected on a routine basis and is maintained in the form of electronic databases.

- Asylum application data by detailed nationality covering 29 industrialized countries (monthly, quarterly, annual)
- Data on asylum applications, refugee status determination and refugee populations, new arrivals and durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, resettlement) covering some 100 asylum countries by detailed origin (quarterly data)
- Data on asylum applications, refugee status determination, refugee populations, new arrivals and durable solutions and persons of concern to UNHCR covering more than 150 countries by origin (annual)
- Demographic data (sex and age) on asylum-seekers, refugees and persons of concern to UNHCR by country of asylum and origin (annual)
- Demographic profile by main refugee locations (major camps, centers, etc.) by country of asylum and origin (annual).
- Refugee stocks and flows (annual, since early 1960s)
- Asylum applications and decisions (annual, since 1980s)

When necessary, additional data is collected on an ad hoc basis.

In addition to UNHCR, the primary users of the data are other international organizations, regional bodies, Governments (immigration authorities, etc.), non-governmental organizations, research institutions, etc.

b. Legal and country information

UNHCR maintains a number of textual databases containing information on countries of origin and of asylum. The information is focused on the needs of UNHCR staff (protection officers, field officers, legal officers), non-governmental organizations, government asylum officers involved in the status determination process, judges, lawyers and academics. It includes documents on country human rights situations, which are carefully selected from a diversified range of sources in order to provide different perspectives – those of non-governmental organizations, governments and intergovernmental organizations – for purposes of comparison and/or corroboration. Information also includes national legislation on issues concerning the implementation of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. For example, the databases contain national constitutional provisions and legislation on, *inter alia*, refugees and asylum, citizenship, nationality, statelessness, human rights, amnesty and states of emergency. Other legal information will be available in the near future, including a selection of refugee policy documents, refugee-related jurisprudence and international instruments.

Purpose of gathering such information

The purpose of data collection and compilation is closely related to the mandate of UNHCR, as spelled out by its Statute and the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. These documents establish a clear link between collection of data and information on laws and regulations and protection of refugees. “*The High Commissioner shall provide for the protection of refugees falling under the competence of his Office by (...) obtaining from Governments information concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories and the laws and regulations concerning them*” (UNHCR statute, Chapter II, paragraph 8). “*In order to enable the Office of the High Commissioner (...) to make reports to the competent organs of the United Nations, the Contracting States undertake to provide them in the appropriate form with information and statistical data requested (...)*” (1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, article 35). In addition to having a mandate with respect to refugees, UNHCR has also been requested by the UN General Assembly to promote the avoidance and reduction of statelessness, and to provide technical and advisory services to States to assist them in efforts towards this end.

To implement the work of the Office, legal information and statistics on asylum-seekers, refugees and others of concern must be collected on a regular basis. Legal information and statistics form an important indicator for monitoring the implementation of the 1951 Convention. As UNHCR is also charged with implementing durable solutions, such information is also required as a planning tool towards, and to measure progress in achieving durable solutions for refugees. Statistics are a necessary tool for implementing assistance programmes, tracking expenditure and measuring the quality of interventions.

The use made of this information by your organization

The use of the information is closely linked to the purpose (see above). Information and data are used, *inter alia*, for official reporting purposes to ECOSOC and the UNHCR Executive Committee, other reports, general protection and assistance related monitoring purposes, and in support of UNHCR field operations.

The way to disseminate the information gathered

Much of the compiled and analyzed information is available through the various UNHCR reports as well as from the UNHCR website, mailing lists, etc.

Difficulties encountered in gathering the information

a. Statistics

Despite its statutory responsibilities, UNHCR is not always able to collect all data it deems required to execute its work. Often, difficulties are related to the unavailability of certain types of data, the inability of states to report in a timely fashion and difficulties in comparing data based on national practices.

b. Legal and country information

Obtaining comprehensive, accurate, reliable and up-to date country information relevant to UNHCR's protection responsibilities is always a challenge, and no single agency has the capacity or resources to collect and disseminate all the information required. In seeking to enhance the international protection of refugees and the prevention and solution of refugee problems, UNHCR, as part of its information strategy, is endeavouring to fill the gaps which result from the lack of any integrated international mechanism for the collection and exchange of information needed to promote these goals. In UNHCR's view, the general issue of standardization of criteria relating to the collection, accuracy and credibility of information might also usefully be the subject of further debate.

Areas where the data collection efforts need to be strengthened

a. Statistics

Recently, various international recommendations pertaining to asylum and migration statistics have been published. Implementing these recommendations would go a long way in enhancing data collection by UNHCR. Considering the sheer magnitude for states to implement these recommendations, it might be useful to identify a priority programme.

b. Legal and country information

UNHCR is in principle committed to the use of publicly available information which, if gathered and used on the basis of coherent standards, has the advantage of being open to review and verification. The Office seeks actively to cooperate with other international agencies, Governments and NGOs in developing the capacity to collect, analyze, exchange and disseminate public-domain information which is relevant to its protection responsibilities.