

GLOSSARY



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Age, Gender and Diversity ¹

Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) is UNHCR's human-rights and community-based approach. Through the systematic application of an AGD approach in its operations worldwide, UNHCR seeks to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities. Mainstreaming AGD means to plan, programme, implement, monitor and evaluate keeping in mind equality and full participation as guiding principles.

Agenda for Protection

A programme of action comprising six specific goals to improve the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers around the world, agreed by UNHCR and States as part of the Global Consultations on International Protection process. The Agenda was endorsed by the Executive Committee in October 2002, and welcomed by the General Assembly.

Assistance

Aid provided to address the physical, material and legal needs of persons of concern to UNHCR. This may include food items, medical supplies, clothing, shelter, seeds and tools, as well as the provision of infrastructure, such as schools and roads. In UNHCR's practice, assistance supports and complements the achievement of protection objectives.

Asylum

The grant, by a State, of protection on its territory to persons outside their country of nationality or habitual residence, who are fleeing persecution or serious harm or for other reasons. Asylum encompasses a variety of elements, including *non-refoulement*, permission to remain on the territory of the asylum country, humane standards of treatment and eventually a durable solution. [See also Asylum-Seeker]

Asylum-seeker

An asylum-seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee in such countries is initially an asylum-seeker. [See also Asylum]

Best Interests Assessment (BIA) and Best Interests Determination (BID)

A **BIA** is an assessment made by staff taking action with regard to individual children, except when a BID procedure is required, designed to ensure that such action gives a primary consideration to the child's best interests. The assessment can be done alone or in consultation with others by staff with the required expertise and requires the participation of the child. A **BID** is the formal process with strict procedural safeguards designed to determine the child's best interests for particularly important decisions affecting the child. It should facilitate adequate child participation without discrimination, involve decision makers with relevant areas of expertise, and balance all relevant factors in order to assess the best option.

¹The definitions in this glossary are drawn from a variety of sources and focus on terminology that is particularly relevant to resettlement. Further definitions can be found in: UNHCR, *UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms*, June 2006, Rev.1, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/42ce7d444.html>; UNHCR, *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, Glossary, January 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47cfc2962.html>; and UNHCR, *Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: The 10-Point Plan in action*, Glossary, February 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d9430ea2.html>

Best interests principle

As employed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the term “best interests” broadly describes the well-being of a child. Such well-being is determined by a variety of individual circumstances, such as the age, the level of maturity of the child, the presence or absence of parents, the child’s environment and experiences.

Cancellation

A decision to invalidate a refugee status recognition which should not have been granted in the first place. Cancellation affects determinations that have become final, that is, they are no longer subject to appeal or review. In principle, cancellation has the effect of rendering refugee status null and void from the date of the initial determination.

Cartagena Declaration on Refugees

A declaration adopted by the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America in November 1984. The Cartagena Declaration broadens the definition of refugee enshrined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to include “*persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order*”. Although not legally binding, the provisions of the Cartagena Declaration have been incorporated in the legislation of numerous Latin America countries.

Cessation clauses

Legal provisions setting out the conditions in which refugee status comes to an end because it is no longer needed or justified. Cessation clauses are found in Article 1(C) of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and in Article 1 (4) of the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

Child

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a child is any human being below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. The CRC equates “child” with “minor”; it defines a minor as a person who is below the legal age of majority and is therefore not legally independent.

Child marriage

The union of two persons at least one of whom is under 18 years of age.

Citizen [See National]

Code of Conduct

A common set of principles or standards that a group of agencies or organizations have agreed to abide by while providing assistance in response to complex emergencies or natural disasters. All UNHCR staff are required to sign the UNHCR Code of Conduct, committing them to uphold its ethical standards.

Complementary protection

Various mechanisms used by States to regularize the stay of persons falling outside the scope of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, but who are nevertheless in need of international protection.

Confidentiality

The obligation that information pertaining to a person disclosed in a relationship of trust will not be disclosed or otherwise made available to unauthorized persons or entities in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure or without prior permission.

Consent

Making an informed choice to agree freely and voluntarily to do something. Consent is not given if agreement is obtained through abuse of power, force or threat of force, and other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception or misrepresentation.

Convention grounds

The refugee definition in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees requires that the fear of persecution be linked to one or more of the following five grounds: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention)

A treaty that establishes the most widely applicable framework for the protection of refugees. The Convention was adopted in July 1951 and entered into force in April 1954. Article 1 of the Convention limits its scope to “events occurring before 1 January 1951”. This restriction was removed by the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Convention refugee

A person who is outside his or her former country of origin owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, who is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return to it for reasons of fear of persecution, and who is not otherwise excluded from the refugee definition. [See also Refugee and Mandate Refugee]

Country of asylum / Country of refuge

The country in which an asylum-seeker or refugee seeks protection. [See also Host country]

Customary international law

International legal norms that derive their authority from the constant and consistent practice of States, rather than from formal expression in a treaty or legal text. In order for State practice to contribute to the formation of customary international law, that practice should be conducted with a sense of legal obligation (*opinio juris*). Customary international law is binding on all States regardless of whether they have ratified any relevant treaty, save for States which are “persistent objectors”. [See also Treaty]

Derivative refugee status [See Family unity]**Detention**

Restriction on freedom of movement, usually through enforced confinement. Article 31 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees provides certain safeguards in relation to the restriction of freedom of movement for refugees who enter or reside in the country illegally. ExCom Conclusion No.44 sets out standards applicable in such situations.

Diversity

Diversity refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics.

Domestic violence

Violence that occurs within the private sphere, generally between individuals who are related through blood, intimacy or law. Domestic violence is nearly always a gender-specific crime, perpetrated by men against women, and can take various forms, including physical, psychological and sexual violence. It can include economic deprivation and isolation which may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of the victim.

Durable solutions

The means by which the situation of persons of concern to UNHCR can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved to enable them to live normal lives. In the refugee context, this generally involves voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration (including through naturalization) in the country of asylum, or resettlement to another country. [See also Local Integration, Resettlement and Voluntary Repatriation]

Exclusion clauses

Legal provisions which deny the benefits of international protection to persons who would otherwise satisfy the criteria for refugee status. In the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the exclusion clauses are found in Articles 1D, 1E and 1F. These clauses apply to the following categories: persons who are receiving protection or assistance from United Nations agencies other than UNHCR; persons who are recognized by the competent authorities of the country of residence as having the rights and obligations attached to the possession of nationality of that country; and persons in respect of whom there are serious reasons for considering that they have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, a crime against humanity, a serious non-political crime, or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom)

A committee charged with advising the High Commissioner for Refugees on the exercise of his/her functions. As of April 2011, ExCom was composed of representatives of 85 States with a demonstrated interest in refugee issues. A number of international, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organizations also have observer status on the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee Conclusions on International Protection

The consensus on international protection issues reached by UNHCR's Executive Committee in the course of its discussions is expressed in the form of Conclusions on International Protection (ExCom Conclusions). Although not formally binding, they are relevant to the interpretation of the international protection regime. ExCom Conclusions constitute expressions of opinion which are broadly representative of the view of the international community. The specialist knowledge of ExCom and the fact that its Conclusions are taken by consensus add further weight.

Expulsion

Removal of a lawful resident from the territory of a State by government authorities. Pursuant to Article 32 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, national security and public order are the only permissible grounds for the expulsion of a refugee. The procedures by which a decision for expulsion is reached should be fair and just, and the refugee should be allowed a reasonable time to seek legal admission into another country.

Family reunification

The process of bringing together families, particularly children and older dependants, with their family or previous care-provider for the purpose of establishing or re-establishing long-term care. [See also Family unity]

Family unity

The right to family unity and family life is inherent in the universal recognition of the family as the fundamental group unit of society. Respect for the right to family unity requires not only that States refrain from action which would result in family separations, but also that they take measures to maintain the unity of the family and reunite family members who have been separated. In order to uphold family unity in the refugee context, respecting family unity may include granting refugee status to the spouse and dependants of a person who is a refugee so that they are able to enjoy their right to family unity. When spouses and dependants acquire refugee status on this basis, they are said to enjoy “derivative refugee status”. [See also Family reunification]

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

A practice involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is classified into four types: (i) partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce (clitoridectomy); (ii) partial or total removal of the clitoris and the *labia minora*, with or without excision of the *labia majora* (excision); (iii) narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and appositioning the *labia minora* and/or the *labia majora*, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation); and (iv) all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, for example: pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterization. The term is sometimes also called “female genital cutting” and “female genital mutilation/cutting”.

Gender

Refers to the socially constructed roles for women and men, which are often central to the way in which people define themselves and are defined by others. (Sex refers, in basic terms, to the biological differences between females and males.) Gender roles are learned, changeable over time, and variable within and between cultures. Gender often defines the duties, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and privileges of women and men in any context.

Gender equality

The equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities and opportunities by women, men, girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of each gender are respected.

Gender identity

Gender identity refers to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

Gender-related persecution

A non-legal term encompassing the range of different claims in which gender is a relevant consideration in the determination of refugee status. Gender-related claims may be brought by either women or men, although due to particular types of persecution, they are more commonly brought by women. Typically, gender-related persecution encompasses, but is not limited to, acts of sexual violence, family/domestic violence, coerced family planning, female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices, punishment for transgression of social mores, and discrimination against homosexuals.

Host country

The country in which a non-national legally or irregularly stays or resides. [See also Country of asylum]

Human rights

Agreed international standards that recognize and protect the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of every individual, without any distinction as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origins, property, birth or other status. They may form part of customary international law and/or may be set out in various national, regional and international legal instruments.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to, avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

International protection

All actions aimed at ensuring the equal access and enjoyment of the rights of women, men, girls and boys of concern to UNHCR, in accordance with the relevant bodies of law (including international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law). It includes interventions by States or UNHCR on behalf of asylum-seekers and refugees to ensure that their rights, security, and welfare are recognized and safeguarded in accordance with international standards. Such interventions include: ensuring respect for the principle of *non-refoulement*; admission to safety; access to fair procedures for the determination of refugee status; humane standards of treatment; and the implementation of durable solutions. UNHCR is the only United Nations agency with a mandate for the protection of refugees at the global level.

International refugee law

The body of customary international law and international instruments establishing standards for refugee protection. The cornerstone of refugee law is the Convention and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Livelihoods

A combination of the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to live. The resources might consist of individual skills and abilities (human capital), land, savings and equipment (natural, financial and physical capital, respectively), and formal support groups or informal networks that assist in the activities being undertaken (social capital).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI)

An umbrella term used to describe a diverse group or community of people who do not conform to traditional notions of male and female gender roles existing in most societies. A lesbian is a woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Gay is often used to describe a man whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other men, although the term gay can be used to describe both gay men and lesbians. Bisexual describes an individual who is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to both men and women. Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Intersex is an umbrella term covering bodily variations in regard to culturally established standards of maleness and femaleness, including variations

at the level of chromosomes, gonads and genitals, and variations produced by medical interventions aimed to normalize intersex bodies. Homosexual refers to women or men who are attracted primarily to people of the same sex. The term is considered by many to be derogatory.

Local integration

A durable solution for refugees that involves their permanent settlement in a country of asylum. Local integration is a complex and gradual process, comprising three distinct but interrelated dimensions: legal, economic, and socio-cultural. The process is often concluded with the naturalization of the refugee.

Mandate refugee

A person who is determined to be a refugee by UNHCR acting under the authority of its Statute and relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Mandate refugee status is especially significant in States that are not parties to the Convention or its 1967 Protocol. [See also Convention refugee and Refugee]

Migrant

There is no universally accepted definition of the term “migrant”. It is usually understood to cover all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of “personal convenience” and without intervention of any coercive external factors.

Minority

A minority is broadly understood to be a group of people with a common identity, based on culture/ethnicity, language or religion, which is different from that of a majority group around them. The term *minority* as used in the United Nations human rights system usually refers to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, pursuant to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

National

A person enjoying the nationality of a given State.

Nationality

The legal bond between a person and a State. Generally, nationality can be established at birth by a person’s place of birth (*jus soli*) and/or bloodline (*jus sanguinis*) or can be acquired through naturalization. The concept is referred to as “citizenship” in some national jurisdictions.

Non-governmental organization (NGO)

An organization that is functionally independent of, and does not represent, a government or State. Use of the term derives from Article 71 of the UN Charter permitting ECOSOC to grant consultative status to international, regional, subregional and national NGOs, provided they have recognized standing within their particular field of competence, an established headquarters, a democratically adopted constitution, authority to speak for their members, a representative structure, appropriate mechanisms of accountability to their members, who must exercise effective control over policies and actions, and resources derived primarily from independent contributions.

Non-refoulement

A core principle of international human rights and refugee law that prohibits States from returning individuals in any manner whatsoever to territories where they may be at risk of persecution, torture, or other forms of serious or irreparable harm. *Refoulement* can result, for instance, following interception operations, rejection at the frontier, or return to third countries (“indirect *refoulement*”). The most prominent expression of the principle of *non-refoulement* in international refugee law is Article 33(1) of the 1951 Convention. The principle also is part of customary international law and is, therefore, binding on all States whether or not they are parties to the 1951 Convention or other relevant international refugee law or human rights instruments.

OAU (Organization of African Unity) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa

The regional instrument adopted in 1969 which complements the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The OAU Convention provides for a broader refugee definition than the 1951 Convention which also encompasses “those fleeing from external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of the country of origin”. The OAU is now called the African Union.

Participatory approach

An approach to development and/or government in which key stakeholders (and especially the proposed beneficiaries) of a policy or intervention are closely involved in the process of identifying problems and priorities and have considerable control over the analysis and the planning, implementation and monitoring of solutions.

Participatory assessment

A process of building partnerships with women and men of concern of all ages and backgrounds by promoting meaningful participation through structured dialogue.

Perpetrator

Any person, group, or institution that directly inflicts, supports or condones violence or other abuse against a person or a group of persons. Perpetrators are often in a position of real or perceived power, decision-making and/or authority and can thus exert control over the victims/survivors. [See also Survivor]

Persecution

The core concept of persecution was deliberately not defined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, suggesting that the drafters intended it to be interpreted in a sufficiently flexible manner so as to encompass ever-changing forms of persecution. It is understood to comprise human rights abuses or other serious harm, often, but not always, with a systematic or repetitive element.

Person with specific (special) needs

Any person who requires specific assistance in order to enjoy the full range of his/her human rights. Children (especially unaccompanied/separated children), trafficked persons, women at risk, elderly and disabled persons are among the groups that often have specific needs.

Persons of concern to UNHCR

A general term used to describe all persons for whom UNHCR is mandated to provide protection and assistance. They include refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless persons, and, in many situations, internally displaced persons (IDPs). UNHCR’s authority

to act on behalf of persons of concern other than refugees is based on various United Nations General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions.

Persons with disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines persons with disabilities as: “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

***Prima facie* refugee**

A person recognized as a refugee, by a State or UNHCR, on the basis of objective criteria related to the circumstances in his or her country of origin and his or her flight, which justify a presumption that he or she meets the criteria of the applicable refugee definition. A person recognized as a *prima facie* refugee enjoys the same status as a person who has been granted refugee status individually.

Protection

A concept that encompasses all activities aiming to achieve full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of human rights, refugee and international humanitarian law. Protection involves creating an environment conducive to preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring human dignity through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation.

Refoulement [See *non-refoulement*]

Refugee

A person who meets the eligibility criteria in the refugee definition provided by relevant international or regional refugee instruments, UNHCR’s mandate, and/or national legislation. According to many of these instruments, a refugee is a person who cannot return to his/her country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of persecution or serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom.

Refugee law [See International refugee law]

Refugee status determination (RSD)

The legal and/or administrative process undertaken by States and/or UNHCR to determine whether a person is a refugee in accordance with national, regional and international law.

Regional refugee instruments

International legal documents relating to refugees that are adopted by States or intergovernmental organizations within a geographical region or sub-region. Such instruments normally complement the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and reflect the peculiar character of refugee issues within the particular geographical area. Notable examples of regional instruments are the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.

Registration

The process of recording, verifying and updating information about persons of concern to UNHCR with the aims of protecting them, documenting them, and implementing durable solutions.

Reintegration

In the context of return, the process by which a migrant or a refugee re-establishes him/herself in the society of his/her country of origin or habitual residence. Reintegration has physical, social, legal and material security components.

Repatriation [See voluntary repatriation]

Resettlement

The selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against *refoulement* and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country.

Resettlement country or resettlement State

A country that offers opportunities for the transfer and permanent settlement of refugees. This would be a country other than the country of origin or the country in which refugee status was first recognized. [See also Resettlement]

Self-reliance

The social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet their own essential needs (including food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity.

Separated child

A child separated from both parents, or from his or her previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. This may, therefore, include a child accompanied by other adult family members.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

Any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to persons on the basis of their sex or gender, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. It encompasses, but it is not limited to: (i) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; (ii) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; (iii) physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Sexual orientation

Each person's capacity for emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate relations with, individuals of a different or the same gender or more than one gender.

Smuggling (of persons)

The procurement in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident (Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Article 3(a)).

Stateless person

A person who is not considered a national by any State, either because s/he never had a nationality or because s/he lost it without acquiring a new one.

Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR Statute)

The document, adopted by the General Assembly in 1950, that established UNHCR's mandate and structure, and provided the criteria under which persons would come within the competence of UNHCR. UNHCR's mandate was subsequently extended by the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions.

Survivor

Any person who has suffered acts of violence, including sexual and gender based violence and who self-identifies with having lived through this violence. This term is used to highlight the strength and resilience of victims of violence and to acknowledge that the term victim may imply powerlessness and stigmatization.

Torture

Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person or, for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

Trafficking in persons

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the treat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Such exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Tracing

In the displacement context, efforts to ascertain the whereabouts of family members or close associates of persons of concern to UNHCR. Tracing may be conducted for the purposes of family reunification, in the context of durable solutions, or simply to facilitate contacts between family members. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) runs a Central Tracing Agency that has special competence in this area.

Treaty

A binding international agreement concluded between States or international organizations with treaty-making power and governed by international law, whether embodied in a single instrument or in two or more related instruments and whatever its particular designation. Accordingly, conventions, agreements, protocols, and exchange of letters or notes may all constitute treaties. The fact that such agreement is not in written form does not affect its legal force.

Unaccompanied child

A child who has been separated from both parents and other relatives and is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Violence

An act that intentionally threatens, attempts, or actually inflicts harm on another person or group of others. It is a means of control and oppression including emotional, social or economic force, coercion or pressure, as well as physical harm. It can be overt, in the form of a physical assault or threatening someone with a weapon; it can also be covert, in the form of intimidation, threats, persecution, deception or other forms of psychological or social pressure. [See also Sexual and gender-based violence]

Voluntary repatriation

The free and informed return of refugees to their country of origin in safety and dignity. Voluntary repatriation may be organized (i.e. when it takes place under the auspices of the concerned States and/or UNHCR) or spontaneous (i.e. when refugees repatriate by their own means with little or no direct involvement from government authorities or UNHCR).