

FINAL REPORT

UNHCR-NGO COLLABORATION AROUND RESETTLEMENT IDENTIFICATION

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I. Background

While resettlement is often the only viable durable solution for the majority of the world's refugees, each year less than 1% of the current refugee population worldwide is submitted to resettlement countries for resettlement consideration.¹ With new refugee crises continually emerging around the globe, the number of refugees and the need for resettlement will only continue to rise. As the need for resettlement grows, effective identification of refugees for resettlement consideration becomes more and more critical to ensure that resettlement is appropriately and equitably used as a protection tool.

Fortunately, UNHCR does not operate alone in the field of refugee protection - governments (host and resettlement) as well as civil society are instrumental in providing assistance to refugees. Every day, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the globe are offering direct interventions for refugees in urban and camp environments. As a result, NGOs are especially well-situated to help UNHCR identify vulnerable refugees who may be in need of resettlement consideration. And, since resettlement is by definition a partnership activity, effective collaboration between NGOs and UNHCR is essential to ensure that refugees are identified and referred for resettlement consideration in a transparent and dignified manner.

II. Project Overview

While there has long been agreement around the importance of, and support for, NGO involvement in the identification of refugees for resettlement consideration, an actual mapping of NGO contributions to this process has never been done.

To understand the impact NGOs are having on the resettlement process, as well as to continue to improve and expand NGO involvement in resettlement, a more evidence-based awareness of NGO engagement was needed. To this end, UNHCR and RefugePoint partnered to map the existing engagement of NGOs and UNHCR around resettlement, specifically as it relates to the identification and referral of refugees to UNHCR for further resettlement consideration.

The project had two main goals:

1. To map the global engagement between NGOs and UNHCR around the identification of individuals for resettlement consideration; and
2. To collect best practices from UNHCR and NGOs around this collaboration.

Examples of these best practices as well as other tools, trainings and additional information related to the referral process can be found in the updated UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement.²

III. Survey Results

The mapping project was the first data-driven documentation of NGO engagement in the identification of refugees for resettlement consideration by UNHCR. The data was collected through the use of four online surveys completed by UNHCR and NGO staff around the world.³

¹ See: <http://www.unhcr.org/559ce97f9.html>

² See: <http://www.unhcr.org/4ce54a949.html>

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UNHCR staff from 81 operations in 61 countries participated in the surveys.⁴ Geographically, staff based in Africa made up slightly more than 50% of the respondents (Fig. 1).

Thereafter, NGOs that had been identified by UNHCR as either actively making referrals for UNHCR consideration or well-placed to do so in the future were contacted to complete a separate survey.⁵ NGO staff from 51 different NGOs located in 22 countries responded to the survey, with NGOs in Africa once again making up slightly more than 50% of the respondents (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

Figure 1 - Regional breakdown of UNHCR respondents

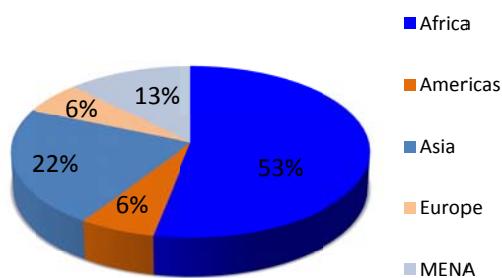


Figure 2 - Regional breakdown of NGO respondents

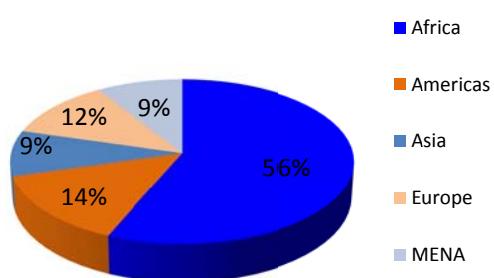
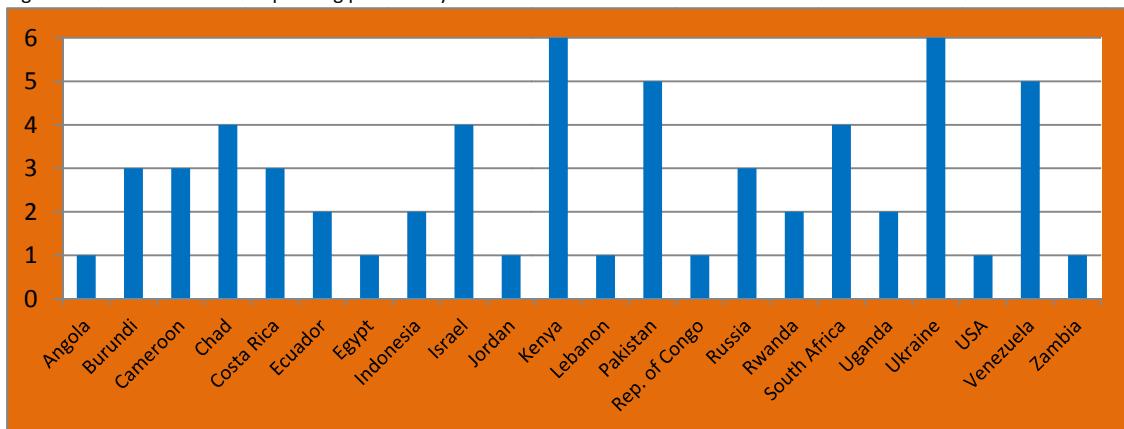


Figure 3 - Number of NGOs responding per country⁶



i. NGO Identification of Refugees for Resettlement

a. By the numbers

Approximately two-thirds of UNHCR operations responding to the surveys indicated that their 2014 resettlement submissions included individuals initially identified and referred by NGOs (Fig. 4) of which almost 60% of those responding “yes” came from the Africa region (Fig. 5).

³ Three surveys were targeted at UNHCR staff and one survey was directed at NGO staff. All surveys are attached as Annexes.

⁴ Though the initial survey was sent to more than 100 UNHCR operations around the world, this report does not purport to be wholly-inclusive or wholly-representative. It is meant to provide a general picture of global activity around UNHCR-NGO collaboration.

⁵ The NGO results may be slightly skewed as NGOs were only contacted once permission and contact information had been provided by the relevant local UNHCR operation.

⁶ The graph takes into account multiple responses from the same NGO when staff based in different countries separately responded.

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Figure 4 - UNHCR operations responding “yes”

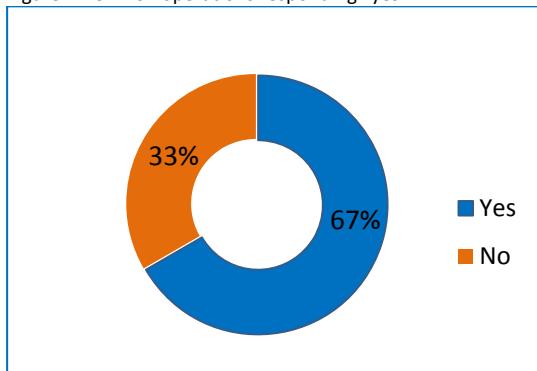
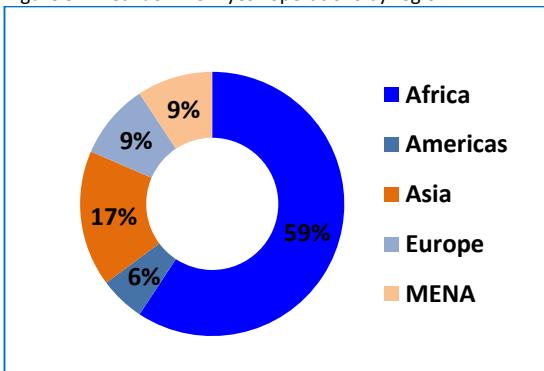
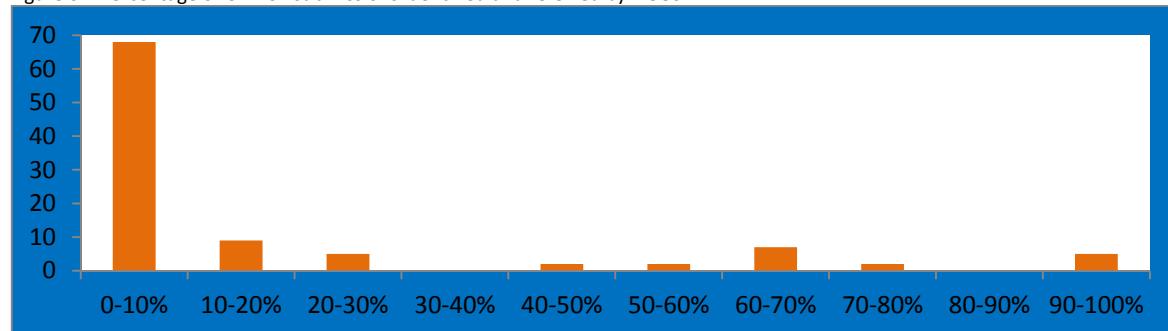


Figure 5 - Breakdown of “yes” operations by region



Of those responding “yes”, approximately 70% indicated that NGO-identified refugees made up 10% or less of their 2014 submissions (Fig. 6).⁷ However, there were a number of operations where NGO referrals were significantly higher (2014 submissions) and even a few instances where NGO-identified refugees accounted for all of an operation’s resettlement submissions in 2014.

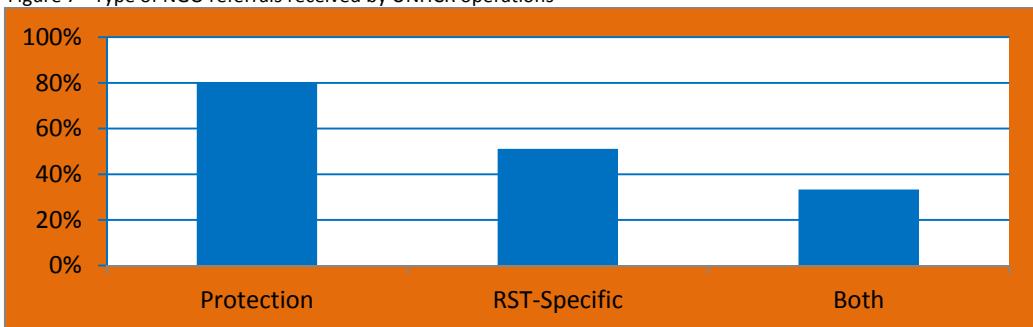
Figure 6 – Percentage of UNHCR submissions identified and referred by NGOs



b. Referral Type - Protection or Resettlement-Specific

The majority of UNHCR survey respondents noted that their operations receive general protection referrals from NGOs, which may then be further referred internally for resettlement consideration. Half of the UNHCR respondents indicated that their operations receive resettlement-specific referrals from NGOs. And, approximately one-third reported receiving both resettlement-specific and protection referrals (Fig. 7).

Figure 7 - Type of NGO referrals received by UNHCR operations



⁷ Approximately half of the operations reported tracking the actual number of individuals referred. An estimated percentage was provided by the remainder (in 10% increments). In order to compare all operations (actual figures and percentages), numbers were converted into percentages based on either actual end of year submission statistics or estimated submission numbers from the 2014 UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs.

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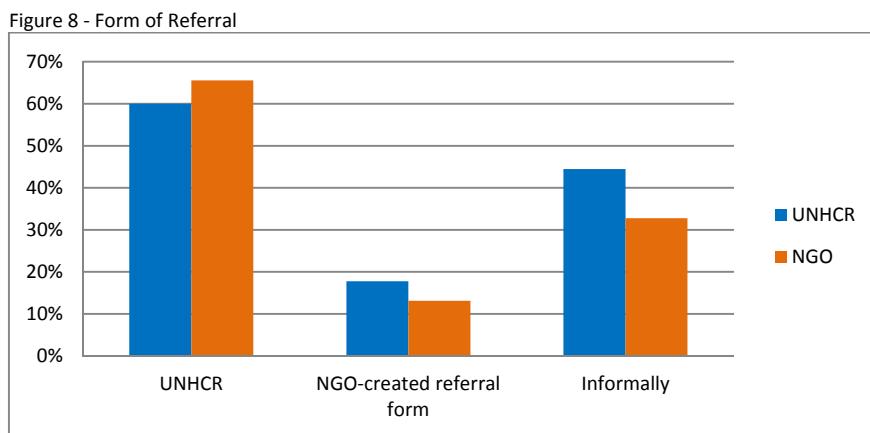
Some UNHCR respondents explained that their operations did not receive or actively seek out resettlement-specific referrals, and thus only received protection referrals, mostly due to concerns related to potential fraud, lack of procedures in place to receive external referrals, or complexity of the refugee caseload.

On the other end of the spectrum, a handful of UNHCR operations have entered into different types of agreements with NGOs specifying a quota for the number of resettlement-related referrals an NGO has agreed to submit to the local UNHCR operation in a given year. Although most UNHCR operations do not have such specific quota agreements with NGOs, many UNHCR respondents noted that the referral of vulnerable refugees to UNHCR is implied in NGO partner agreements as an ancillary obligation (i.e. if, through the NGO's main protection activities, individuals in need of protection follow-up or possible resettlement are identified, these individuals should then be referred to UNHCR).

c. Form of the Referral

The majority of UNHCR operations whose 2014 submissions included NGO-identified refugees indicated that NGO referrals were made via UNHCR-created referral forms, as opposed to NGO-created referral forms or informal means (e-mail, telephone, at a meeting, etc.). The least used method was by way of an NGO-created referral form. Approximately 20% of UNHCR respondents noted receiving referrals in more than one of the three ways.

Approximately two-thirds of NGO respondents indicated that they made referrals via UNHCR referral forms, one-third used informal means, and approximately 10% noted using their own forms (such as psycho-social assessments or Best Interest Determination forms) (Fig. 8).



d. Referral Feedback

An important part of the referral process is providing feedback to NGOs on the status of referred cases. Case status updates not only help NGOs manage expectations of their clients but it can lead to a better understanding of UNHCR's resettlement criteria. Furthermore, regular feedback sends a positive message to NGOs that their efforts in making referrals are recognized, which will encourage NGOs to continue referring vulnerable individuals to UNHCR.

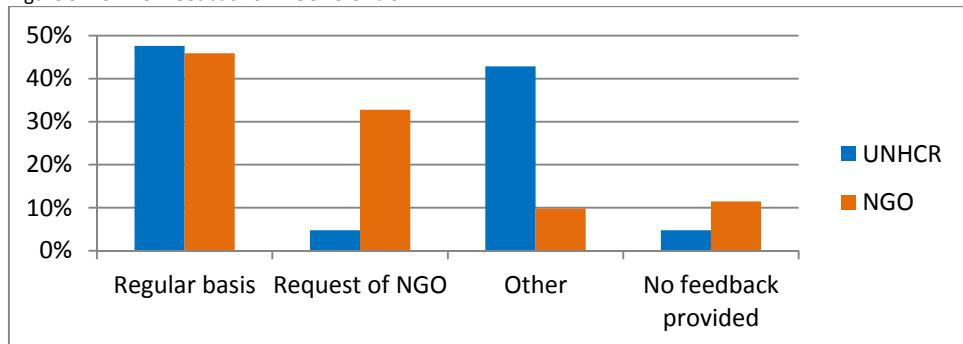
Approximately half of UNHCR respondents indicated that feedback on NGO referrals is given on a regular basis, which was slightly higher than reported by NGO respondents (Fig. 9). About 40% of

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UNHCR respondents noted providing feedback on an ad hoc, case by case or as-needed basis⁸. However, a much greater percentage of NGO respondents reported that UNHCR provides feedback only upon request from the NGO. Both UNHCR and NGO respondents noted a few instances in which no feedback is given, regardless of whether it was requested by the NGO. According to UNHCR colleagues, this is generally due to lack of capacity or referral systems at the UNHCR operation.

A number of UNHCR operations indicated that they update the UNHCR database (proGres) upon receipt of a NGO referral and with the actions taken; however, only a few operations specified using spreadsheets to assist in tracking and providing feedback on NGO referrals. Such referral spreadsheets, where they are used, typically record the receipt of and actions taken on a referral, which is then shared directly with the referring NGO. Operations using referral spreadsheets indicated that they provide NGOs with systematic and regular feedback on referrals via the spreadsheet. Not surprisingly, the majority of NGOs making referrals to these operations also indicated that UNHCR provides regular case status updates on the referrals made.

Figure 9 – UNHCR feedback on NGO referrals

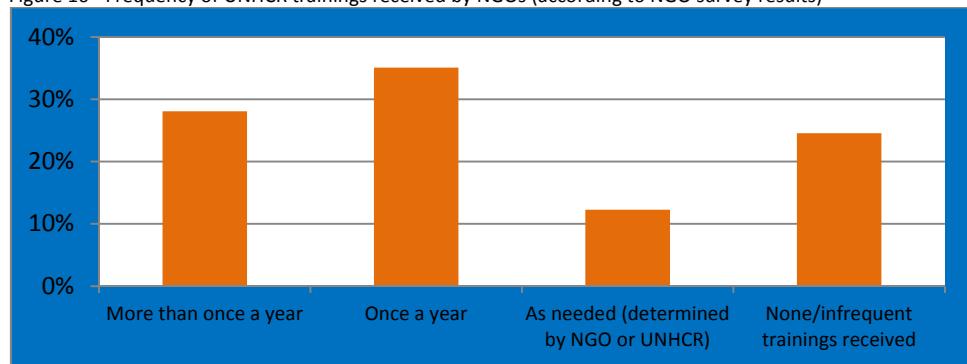


ii. Resettlement Trainings

Approximately half of UNHCR respondents from operations whose 2014 resettlement submissions included NGO-identified refugees noted that their operations provide resettlement trainings to NGOs at least once a year (Fig. 10).

The majority of NGO respondents indicated that their staff receive UNHCR resettlement training at least once a year, with about one quarter of respondents indicating NGO staff receive training multiple times a year.

Figure 10 - Frequency of UNHCR trainings received by NGOs (according to NGO survey results)



⁸ “Other” response includes the following: on a case-by-case basis; general feedback given only; only when additional information is needed; etc.

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The main resettlement training topics provided by UNHCR to NGOs include the UNHCR resettlement criteria, identification of vulnerable refugees, UNHCR referral mechanisms and fraud prevention. Fraud prevention and referral mechanisms were offered less frequently than UNHCR resettlement criteria and identification methodologies in 2014.

iii. Limitations or Concerns with NGO Referrals

UNHCR and NGOs were also asked to note any limitations or concerns with receiving or making NGO referrals for resettlement consideration.

UNHCR operations whose 2014 submissions included refugees referred by NGOs noted the following concerns or limitations⁹:

- Some NGOs may not fully understand the resettlement system, including the criteria used to identify refugees for resettlement.
- There can be inconsistency in referrals (sometimes there is a lack of relevant details, sometimes there is too much information, other times no refugee claim is provided, etc.).
- There can be fraud risks when NGO staff are also refugees or when an NGO's identification system is not transparent or clear to UNHCR.
- When an NGO is known by refugees to be engaged in identification for resettlement consideration, challenges often arise in managing refugee expectations.

UNHCR operations whose 2014 resettlement submissions did **not** include individuals referred by NGOs identified four main reasons as to why this was the case:

- When a host country has a restricted or limited civil society, the presence of NGOs and their ability to work with UNHCR is directly impacted.
- NGOs may not have sufficient staffing or desire to include resettlement identification among their services (i.e., a fear of mission drift).
- The local refugee context (e.g. small caseload, all refugees meet the resettlement criteria, etc.) limits the need or perceived need by UNHCR for assistance in identifying vulnerable refugees.
- A concern about the potential for fraud in the resettlement referral process has resulted in some operations limiting engagement with NGOs in resettlement identification.

NGOs shared the following concerns regarding the referral process:

- Once a referral is made, the processing time is very lengthy and often delayed by UNHCR and/or the resettlement country, which is concerning given the vulnerabilities of the referred refugees. More than one-third of NGO respondents voiced this concern.
- The lack of regular UNHCR feedback on NGO referrals as well as the lengthy processing times creates challenges in managing refugee expectations and can discourage new referrals.
- NGO capacity can be limited due to lack of resettlement knowledge (usually due to lack of training from UNHCR).
- The risk that fraud may be committed by refugees in order to access resettlement and the lack of knowledge on how to prevent fraud can be a deterrent to NGOs making referrals.

It should also be noted that approximately 30% of NGOs responding to the survey expressed no concern with making referrals of vulnerable refugees to UNHCR for resettlement consideration.

⁹ Over 10% UNHCR operations indicated no concern with NGO referrals.

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Of the approximately 20% of NGO respondents who said their organizations are not currently making referrals to UNHCR, the majority indicated that resettlement was not part of their mission and believed it was the sole responsibility of UNHCR.

iv. Summary of Responses from Top Locations

Of the UNHCR operations noting a higher percentage of NGO-identified and referred individuals in their 2014 submission, more than two-thirds indicated that their operations track these referrals, that they provide regular resettlement trainings to NGO staff, and that they provide regular feedback to NGOs on their referrals. The common concern expressed by these operations related to the consistency of NGO referrals.

Of the top referring NGOs, the majority indicated that they make referrals on UNHCR-created referral forms and receive regular training from UNHCR. These NGOs also indicated they either had no concerns with making referrals or were most concerned with the long processing times for referrals (from both UNHCR and resettlement countries). However, only half of this group reported receiving feedback from UNHCR on a regular basis.

IV. Outcomes

This project marked the first global mapping of NGO contributions to UNHCR resettlement submissions. Based on the responses from over 80 UNHCR staff and 60 NGO staff around the globe, there is now a clearer landscape of NGO involvement in the identification and referral of vulnerable refugees to UNHCR for resettlement consideration. From here, further work can be done to continue to improve upon existing engagement as well as to encourage further collaboration with new NGO partners.

i. Toolkit & Best Practices

Through the collection of survey responses, best practices were identified from UNHCR and NGO colleagues. These best practices (including referral forms, feedback forms, and training materials) provided key inputs for the recent update to the “UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement: A Repository for Exchanging Ideas on Resettlement Partnerships”.¹⁰ The aim of the UNHCR-NGO Toolkit is to provide user-friendly and up-to-date materials and trainings for UNHCR and NGO staff undertaking or looking to start a referral relationship.

ii. Next Steps

The mapping project provides baseline data around the engagement between NGOs and UNHCR in the identification and referral of vulnerable refugees for resettlement consideration in all regions of the globe. While NGO contributions to UNHCR resettlement submissions are generally 10% or less in most locations responding to the survey, a handful of operations rely considerably or even wholly on NGO identification of refugees for resettlement consideration. Regardless of the level of engagement, there are clear benefits to UNHCR, NGOs and refugees when this partnership exists. Below are some suggestions for next steps to build upon the good work already being done globally and to increase the collaboration between UNHCR and NGOs on this important activity.

¹⁰ <http://www.unhcr.org/4ce54a949.html>

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For UNHCR at the field-level:

- **Trainings:** When possible, UNHCR should provide regular trainings on resettlement and fraud prevention to NGO staff. This will ensure that NGO staff are equipped to properly identify vulnerable refugees and prepare referrals that contain the information needed by UNHCR to assess the referral, which will save time for both NGO and UNHCR staff.
- **Referral documentation:** UNHCR-approved referral forms should be provided to NGOs in order to ensure that all referrals contain the necessary information for UNHCR to properly make assessments.
- **Track NGO referrals:** UNHCR should ensure careful tracking of NGO referrals for the purposes of taking action on the referrals, providing feedback and measuring the impact of NGO engagement in the identification and referral process. Tracking of referrals should include updating proGres and using a referral tracking spreadsheet that can be shared with NGOs.
- **Feedback:** UNHCR should provide regular feedback to NGOs on all referrals made. This will enable NGOs to properly inform clients of the status of their cases and will help in the management of expectations. It will also provide encouragement to NGOs that their efforts are worthwhile. The use of referral tracking sheets, which has been shown to be beneficial in responding to NGO referrals and providing feedback, can help operations with this task.

For NGOs at the field-level:

- **Notify UNHCR of vulnerable refugees whenever protection needs arise:** While an NGO may not have a specific agreement with UNHCR to refer vulnerable refugees for resettlement consideration, there is often an implied obligation in UNHCR partnership agreements to make protection referrals of vulnerable refugees. This action should also be viewed as an ethical obligation on the part of the NGO.
- **Request trainings from local UNHCR office:** If NGOs are unsure of the referral process, it is important to communicate this with UNHCR so that needed trainings and documentation can be provided. Understanding UNHCR processes and possible durable solutions will allow NGOs to better serve their clients, even if resources are limited.
- **Track NGO referrals:** As suggested above for UNHCR, NGOs should also track their own referrals to ensure that action is taken and status updates are received from UNHCR. This will in turn help NGOs manage client expectations.

For UNHCR Headquarters and, where appropriate, NGO headquarters:

- **Encourage and support collaboration between UNHCR and NGOs.** NGO and UNHCR staff benefit from the support of their respective headquarters to continue as well as increase this important collaboration, which benefits refugees, UNHCR and NGOs. To this end it is recommended that both UNHCR Headquarters and NGO Headquarters:
 - **Make available standardized trainings to field operations:** To ensure that UNHCR field offices are properly equipped to provide the necessary trainings to NGOs at the field-level, UNHCR Resettlement Service should prepare and make available standardized trainings on resettlement and referral mechanisms to colleagues in the field.

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- **Provide standardized referral documentation to field operations:** To ensure that NGO referrals are properly and consistently documented and acted upon, and that regular case updates and feedback is given to the referring NGO, standardized referral forms and tracking spreadsheets should be created by the Resettlement Service and provided to field colleagues. Regional/field offices may then adapt these forms as needed for their operations.

Resettlement is a partnership activity, and NGOs can and should play an integral part of the process. Appropriate and equitable identification of vulnerable refugees for resettlement consideration relies on the involvement of actors, such as NGOs, who have direct contact with the persons of concern. Thus, effective collaboration between UNHCR and NGOs in the identification of refugees for resettlement consideration is crucial.

V. Annexes

- i. Initial global mapping survey sent to UNHCR operations
- ii. Follow-up global mapping survey sent to UNHCR operations who indicated in the initial survey that their 2014 resettlement submissions included refugees identified and referred by NGOs.
- iii. Follow-up global mapping survey sent to UNHCR operations who indicated in the initial survey that their 2014 resettlement submissions did not include refugees identified and referred by NGOs.
- iv. Survey sent to NGOs identified by UNHCR operations as currently making referrals or well-placed to make referrals of vulnerable refugees for resettlement consideration in the future.

ANNEX 1 - NGO Contributions to UNHCR's Resettlement Submissions

This is a brief survey to find out how UNHCR offices around the globe are working with NGOs in the identification of refugees for resettlement consideration. The survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is important.

* 1. Please indicate the duty station and country in which you work.

Duty station

Country

* 2. Please provide your name, job title and email address.

Name

Title

Email address

* 3. Do the resettlement submissions from your duty station include any individuals who were referred (formally or informally) to UNHCR by NGOs?

Yes

No

* 4. Do you track which individuals among your resettlement submissions were referred to UNHCR by NGOs?

Yes

No

* 5. How many individuals among your submissions in 2014 were referred to UNHCR by NGOs?

* 6. Approximately what percentage of your submissions in 2014 were referred to UNHCR by NGOs?

- 0-10%
- 10-20%
- 20-30%
- 30-40%
- 40-50%
- 50-60%
- 60-70%
- 70-80%
- 80-90%
- 90-100%

* 7. What type of NGOs provide referrals to your office for resettlement consideration? Feel free to include the name and contact details.

* 8. Are you aware of other NGOs that may be well-placed to help you identify refugees for resettlement consideration?

- Yes
- No

* 9. Please provide the type of NGO that may be well-placed to help you identify refugees for resettlement. Feel free to include the name and contacts details.

* 10. Do you provide training to NGOs on how to make referrals to UNHCR for resettlement consideration?

- Yes, on a regular basis
- Yes, on an ad hoc basis/whenever requested by NGOs
- Not yet, but planning to do so in 2015
- No, but would consider it if resources/time allow
- Other

Other (please specify)

* 11. Please describe the type of training[s] the office provides or plans to provide with respect to resettlement.

* 12. What type of challenges, if any, do you face with referrals received from NGOs?

* 13. What are some of the reasons why your resettlement submissions not include any individuals referred by NGOs?

* 14. Are you aware of any NGOs that may be well-placed to help you identify refugees for resettlement consideration?

- Yes
- No

* 15. Please provide the type of NGOs that may be well-placed to help you identify refugees for resettlement consideration. Feel free to include the name and contacts details.

Annex 2 - Follow-up survey regarding NGO referrals and processing

* 1. Please indicate the duty station and country in which you work.

Duty station

Country

* 2. Which of the following most closely reflects the type of duty station where you work?

- Camp
- Urban

* 3. Please provide your name, job title and email address.

Name

Job Title

Email Address

* 4. How are NGO referrals (either formal or informal) submitted to your operation? Please check all of the following that apply:

- UNHCR-created referral form
- NGO-created referral forms
- On an informal basis, by email, phone call, etc.
- Other (please specify)

* 5. What type of NGO referrals are received by your operation and considered for resettlement?

- Protection referrals, which are then forwarded to resettlement
- Resettlement-specific referrals
- Other (please specify)

* 6. Does your operation have a formal process in place to receive, assess and process NGO referrals?

- Yes
- No

* 7. Please briefly describe the referral process in your operation, starting from the time a referral is received. Please note if there is a referral focal point, if the referrals are recorded and where, who assesses the referrals, etc.

* 8. If your operation does not have a formal process in place for receiving NGO referrals, please briefly describe what happens once an NGO referral is received in your operation.

* 9. Does your operation have any formal arrangements or agreements with NGOs to make resettlement referrals?

- Yes
- No

* 10. Please briefly explain the type of arrangement(s) or agreement(s) your operation has with NGOs for making referrals (such as LOU, quotas, etc).

* 11. Does your operation provide feedback to NGOs on the referrals they make?

- Yes
- No

* 12. How often and in what manner is the feedback provided?

* 13. What are the reasons that feedback is not provided to NGOs making referrals?

* 14. Do you provide trainings to NGOs on how to identify vulnerable refugees and make referrals to UNHCR?

- Yes
- No

* 15. Briefly describe the types of trainings you provide and the training tools you use.

* 16. What have been the results of NGO trainings, if any? (ie. increased referrals, improved quality of referrals, etc.)

* 17. Why do you not provide trainings to NGOs on how to make resettlement referrals to UNHCR?

* 18. Please list the reasons, if any, preventing your operation from receiving more referrals from NGOs.

Annex 3 - Follow-up survey regarding engagement of NGOs

* 1. Please indicate the duty station and country in which you work.

Duty station

Country

* 2. Which most closely reflects the type of duty station where you work?

- Camp
- Urban

* 3. Please provide your name, job title and email address.

Name

Job Title

Email Address

* 4. You mentioned in the previous survey that none of the resettlement submissions from your operation included individuals who were referred (formally or informally) to UNHCR by NGOs. Can you please elaborate why? Also, please indicate if you have a process in place to receive and assess referrals but are not receiving NGO referrals.

* 5. Do other units in your operation make referrals for resettlement consideration?

- Yes
- No

* 6. Which units make referrals for resettlement consideration?

Community Services

Protection

Registration

RSD

Other (please specify)

* 7. Please check the box that best reflects the trainings conducted in your operation in 2014. Only one box may be checked.

Trainings on how to make referrals for resettlement were provided to UNHCR colleagues only.

Trainings on how to make referrals for resettlement were provided to NGOs only.

Trainings on how to make referrals for resettlement were provided to other units at UNHCR as well as NGOs.

There were no trainings on how to make resettlement referrals in 2014.

* 8. Why were there no trainings for NGOs related to resettlement referrals in 2014?

* 9. What training tools did you use?

Annex 4 - NGO Engagement in Referrals to UNHCR

* 1. Please provide the following information:

Name of organization

Your name

Your title

Your email address

Location (city/camp and country)

* 2. Please briefly describe how your organization identifies refugees/persons it assists.

* 3. Do you or does someone in your office make referrals (formally or informally) of vulnerable refugees to UNHCR for possible resettlement consideration?

Yes

No

* 4. How do you/does your organization make referrals to UNHCR?

On UNHCR-created referrals form.

With a referral form created by my organization.

Informally, no form is used.

Other (please specify)

* 5. Do you track how many referrals your organization makes to UNHCR each year?

Yes

No

* 6. How many individuals did you refer to UNHCR for resettlement consideration last year?

* 7. Do you/does someone at your organization receive feedback on the referrals made to UNHCR?

- Yes, on a regular/routine basis.
- Yes, but only when we request feedback.
- No, and we don't request feedback.
- No, even though we do request feedback.
- Other (please specify)

* 8. Have you or has someone in your office received training from UNHCR on the following topics in 2014?

Check all that apply.

- UNHCR resettlement criteria
- How to make referrals to UNHCR for resettlement consideration
- Fraud awareness/anti-fraud measures
- Identifying vulnerable refugees
- None of the above

* 9. How often are such trainings offered to you/your colleagues?

* 10. What concerns, if any, do you have with making referrals of vulnerable refugees to UNHCR for possible resettlement consideration?

* 11. What are the reasons why your office does not make referrals of vulnerable refugees to UNHCR for possible resettlement consideration?