



Annex A: Terms of Reference

Strengthening the Response Capacity to Country Information Needs

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on 14 December 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It also has a mandate for stateless persons, and is, when certain conditions are met, involved in the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons.

The Asylum Systems and Determination (ASD) Section in UNHCR's Division of International Protection (DIP) is, *inter alia*, responsible for providing support to UNHCR staff, governments and other relevant stakeholders by making available reliable country information and analysis, for the purposes of ensuring quality asylum decision-making and policy formulation. In order to strengthen its capacity to respond to information needs within UNHCR and in State asylum systems, the ASD Section complements existing in-house capacity with external country information services.

1.2 Statement of Purpose & Objectives

The service needs covered by these terms of reference are as follows:

1. Researching the conditions in specific countries, based on detailed terms of reference provided by UNHCR for each product.
2. Preparing country information products as specified by UNHCR:
 - a. Country of Origin Information (COI) Query Responses;
 - b. COI Thematic Reports;
 - c. COI Country Reports.

Purpose

Given its mandate, UNHCR has a vested interest in ensuring the highest possible standards in decision-making on claims for international protection. The quality of decision-making depends, *inter alia*, on the availability of timely, relevant and reliable information about conditions in countries of origin. The ASD Section in UNHCR's Division of International Protection monitors information needs in UNHCR's Refugee Status Determination (RSD) operations globally, as well as in State asylum systems, and seeks to respond to these information needs by providing high-quality country information in a timely manner.

Objective

UNHCR's ASD Section identifies on a continuous basis specific information needs arising from global patterns of refugee outflows and corresponding caseloads in countries of asylum. These information needs range from focused queries on specific aspects of the human rights or security situation in a given country of origin, to wider sets of thematic questions. To ensure that these identified information needs are met in a timely manner, UNHCR requires the expert services of a specialized agency that is capable of producing query responses, thematic reports or full country of origin reports within specific time frames while adhering to pre-agreed COI quality standards. Users of these products should have full confidence in the quality of the research and should be able to rely on the information provided as well as the references included in these products. These commissioned COI products are to be published on ecoi.net, a COI database run by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and

Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), a department of the Austrian Red Cross with which UNHCR maintains a partnership on COI.

2 Requirements

2.1 Review of implications and requirements for enhanced tracking and reporting of donor funding in UNHCR

Methodology

- Desk research based on information available in the public domain provided by sources that have been properly assessed in line with the relevant quality criteria.
- Where necessary, such information should be supplemented by information obtained from country experts, in accordance with established protocols.
- The final product should adhere to relevant quality standards for COI.
- All information should be sourced in accordance with relevant quality standards.
- The final product should provide a full list of sources consulted.

Deliverables

For the duration of the framework agreement it is expected that the following work will be delivered, at the request of UNHCR:

- Submit draft query responses, thematic reports and country reports within agreed timeframes, based on a detailed TOR for each product provided by UNHCR (planning figure / number of reports expected to be commissioned per year to be agreed annually);
- Respond to any requests from UNHCR for clarifications, corrections, or additions within two weeks, and make adjustments to the product as required;
- Undertake final editing and proofreading to prepare the product for publication.

Location

There are no constraints on the location, as long as availability for meetings (by telephone or skype) during working hours in Geneva (CH) can be guaranteed. No workspace within UNHCR premises will be made available.

2.2 Customer Responsibilities

UNHCR will:

- Discuss and tentatively agree on an annual basis with the contractor the total number of products and the corresponding number of required research days, in the context of the annual planning and budget cycle;
- Provide detailed TORs for each commissioned product;

3 Key Performance Indicators

3.1 Performance Evaluation

UNHCR expects to monitor the performance of the selected company.

Emphasis will be on the quality of the final products, including the extent to which all elements of the TOR for each product have been addressed, and the range and quality of the sources that have been consulted. Adherence to agreed timeframes will also be an important element of the performance review.