

RECEPTION OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS, INCLUDING STANDARDS OF TREATMENT,
IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIVIDUAL ASYLUM SYSTEMS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Asylum-seekers are persons who have applied for asylum and may be refugees. The fact of their possible or potential refugee status has meant that, in very many States, until status is finally determined, the individuals concerned have been accorded reception conditions somewhat different from those applied to other aliens. The conditions have tended to vary from country to country, influenced by a range of factors that include numbers of arrivals, socio-economic factors in the host State, demographic and security concerns at national and regional level, the degree of sophistication of the prevailing asylum systems, and even the mode of arrival.

2. The purpose of this Note is to explore the possibility of identifying a common framework for the reception of asylum-seekers in the context of individual asylum systems¹. These should be applicable globally, even given the inevitability of disparate approaches to asylum-seekers among countries and between regions. It is hoped that the discussion will also allow UNHCR to finalize a set of guidelines on core reception standards, which would then be offered to States to work with or adapt to their particular circumstances, albeit in a manner which respects international human rights and refugee protection imperatives. A compilation of relevant international standards and best practices of States is attached to this note as basis for such guidelines.

II. THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees² does not contain specific provisions on the treatment of asylum-seekers. It remains, nevertheless, an important point of departure for considering standards of treatment for the reception of asylum-seekers, not least because asylum-seekers may be refugees³. Important elements of the Convention – notably the *non-refoulement* provision in Article 33 and the prohibition on punishment for illegal entry in Article 31 – are applicable to refugees before a formal recognition of their status. Furthermore, the gradations of treatment allowed by the Convention depend on notions such as lawfully staying, or merely present in the territory, which in themselves serve as a useful yardstick in the context of defining reception standards for asylum-seekers. At a minimum, the 1951 Convention provisions that are not linked to lawful stay or residence would apply to asylum-seekers in so far as they relate to humane treatment and respect for basic rights⁴.

4. International human rights law is also relevant in the context of defining adequate reception standards for asylum-seekers⁵. The minimum core content of human rights applies to everyone in all situations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognize the right of all individuals to an adequate standard of living, which includes the provision of food, clothing and accommodation to those asylum-

¹ See ExCom Conclusion No. 22 (XXXII) of 1981 for standards of treatment for persons arriving as part of a large scale influx. See also *Protection of refugees in mass influx situations: overall protection framework*, (EC/GC/01/4), discussed at the 1st meeting of the Global Consultations in March 2001.

² References to the 1951 Convention in this paper are to be read as including its 1967 Protocol.

³ See UNHCR, *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status*, 1992, para. 28.

⁴ See Articles 3 (non-discrimination), 4 (religion), 5 (rights granted apart from this Convention), 7 (exemption from reciprocity), 8 (exemption from exceptional measures), 12 (personal status), 16 (access to courts), 20 (rationing), 22 (public education), 31 (refugees unlawfully in the country), and 33 (*non-refoulement* principle).

⁵ See also ExCom Conclusion No. 82 (XLVIII) on safeguarding asylum, 1997.

seekers who are unable to secure these⁶. The rights of the ICESCR are to be achieved progressively, taking into account available resources.

5. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides standards for the exercise of civil rights, including protection against arbitrary detention and torture, and the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law⁷. Both the ICESCR and the ICCPR prohibit discrimination on the grounds, *inter alia*, of national origin⁸. Additionally, any differential treatment between asylum-seekers with respect to the minimum core rights of the ICESCR is acceptable only when it is based on reasonable grounds. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) applies to discrimination against women and promotes gender equality in the context of the reception of asylum-seekers. As regards children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in particular the “best interest” principle, provides important guidance for the design and implementation of reception policies in this area.

6. The human rights of asylum-seekers may also be protected by regional human rights instruments which apply to all persons residing in the respective Contracting States, regardless of their legal status in the country of asylum. Regional instruments in force in Europe⁹, Africa¹⁰ and Latin America¹¹ therefore provide important standards of treatment applicable to asylum-seekers.

III. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE STATE AND FOR THE ASYLUM-SEEKER

A Challenges faced by States

7. The various costs associated with hosting asylum-seekers, often in large numbers, clearly constitute one of the most significant challenges for any State. They include the economic burden of offering asylum, especially when set against competing national priorities for limited resources; security concerns; inter-State tensions; irregular migration, social and political unrest; and environmental damage. In some States, the challenge extends to preventing a politicisation of the asylum issue and development of anti-refugee sentiment, which has often led to acts of racism and xenophobia against asylum-seekers¹².

8. An additional problem lies in striking a balance between receiving people in a safe and dignified way, while discouraging misuse of asylum possibilities by those not in need of international protection who are seeking to bypass migration restrictions. Related to this is the concern of some countries not to contribute further to the so-called phenomenon of “irregular movements” of asylum-seekers, or indeed refugees, from countries where they had found a measure of protection to a country of preferred destination¹³. A feature both of misuse of systems and onward irregular movements is trafficking and smuggling of persons which States have a pressing and legitimate interest in curbing.

9. Yet another challenge for States is to clarify the link that may exist between reception conditions, systems abuse and smuggling, and to structure reception arrangements in such a way that they respect core rights and responsibilities without compounding migration dilemmas. A number of States have

⁶ See ICESCR, Article 11(1).

⁷ See ICCPR, Articles 7, 9, 10 and 14.

⁸ See ICESCR, Article 2(2) and ICCPR Article 2(1).

⁹ 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), and Protocols 1,2,3,4 and 5 and the 1996 European Social Charter.

¹⁰ 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

¹¹ 1969 American Convention on Human Rights (“Pact of San Jose”), and the 1954 Conventions on Territorial Asylum and on Diplomatic Asylum.

¹² See also ICCPR, Article 20.

¹³ See ExCom Conclusion No. 58 (XL) on the problem of refugees and asylum-seekers who move in an irregular manner from a country where they had already found protection, 1989.

considered that reducing the length of time of the asylum procedures may represent the most effective way to address these concerns¹⁴.

10. A key challenge for many States, particularly those receiving large numbers of asylum-seekers, often under circumstances where they are ill-equipped or resourced to absorb them even for short periods, is to mobilize the necessary solidarity and burden-sharing response from the international community¹⁵. For example, where asylum-seekers rely on the solidarity of local communities through the host family system of refugee reception, there is a need to ensure that international financial support also benefits the host population. The absence of this support inevitably impacts negatively on the capacity of States, under such circumstances, to offer favourable reception conditions.

B Challenges faced by the asylum-seeker, and best State practice

(i) Assistance and related issues

11. Whether asylum-seekers submit their claims immediately upon arrival or after entering the country, they often encounter difficulties at the very early stage of the asylum process. They may lack basic information on the asylum procedure and be unable to state their claims formally or intelligibly, without adequate guidance on the practical arrangements for their reception, the asylum procedure and other useful information.

12. In many instances, asylum-seekers are without means upon arrival. Many depend on the solidarity of friends or relatives with whom they can be accommodated temporarily. In many cases, asylum-seekers are lodged in reception centres sponsored by the State or by UNHCR, or rely on the NGO community, often with UNHCR support. Best State practice addresses these concerns by providing asylum-seekers with adequate accommodation – be it in reception centres or with host families – until the end of the procedure, and financial assistance if their access to employment is restricted. Such financial assistance may be based on the minimum social welfare allowance granted to nationals so that essential living expenses, including food and clothing, are covered¹⁶.

13. Not only will the need for assistance be diminished if the asylum-seeker is permitted to engage in employment, but dignity and self-respect are enhanced. The concern of some States is that allowing asylum-seekers access to the labour market may diminish the possibility of an early return. Yet it is increasingly recognized that such access for a reasonable period may actually facilitate reintegration into the country of origin by making it possible for the asylum-seeker to return home with a degree of financial independence or even some acquired work skills. Measures which might be classified as best State practice are those allowing the asylum-seeker residing for some time in the country to obtain a temporary work permit.

14. Due to the trauma associated with refugee flight, asylum-seekers, in particular children, may suffer from physical health problems, and/or emotional or mental disorders that require prompt professional treatment¹⁷. In most cases, however, asylum-seekers only qualify for emergency health care, if available. Medical and psychological treatment should in principle be made available to those requiring it upon arrival and throughout the asylum procedure¹⁸. The free health care and medical

¹⁴ See also *Asylum processes (fair and efficient asylum procedures)* (EC/GC/01/12) discussed at the 2nd Global Consultations meeting in June 2001.

¹⁵ See also *Mechanisms of international cooperation to share responsibilities and burdens in mass influx situations* (EC/GC/01/7), discussed at the 1st Global Consultations meeting in March 2001.

¹⁶ See ICESCR, Article 11(1).

¹⁷ See the 1995 *UNHCR Guidelines on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence against Refugees*.

¹⁸ See UDHR Article 25, ICESCR Article 12(1), and CRC Article 24(1), which recognize a right to health. See in particular ICESCR General Comment No. 14 on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, which specifies that States are under an obligation to respect the right to health by refraining from denying or limiting equal access for asylum-seekers to preventive, curative and palliative health services (HRI/GEN/1/Rev.5, para. 34).

consultation already implemented in a number of asylum countries serves as a model for best State practice in this regard.

15. Another difficulty commonly faced by asylum-seekers is their separation from family members, some of whom may be residing for extensive periods in different locations or even countries, awaiting the outcome of asylum procedures. Best State practice ensures prompt tracing of family members so that they can be reunited. Where family members are together in the same country, accommodation arrangements should allow them to live together. Requirements that adequately take into account the need to preserve privacy and family unity generally qualify as best State practice in this area¹⁹.

(ii) Freedom of movement

16. In certain circumstances, asylum-seekers are subject to detention. In a few countries, persons arriving at borders may be routinely detained if, for example, they do not have the necessary travel documents. Detention that is automatic and prolonged and/or which takes place in conditions which are inadequate, as is particularly the case where the detention centre is a regular prison and where asylum-seekers are not segregated from common criminals, is not in line with international standards.

17. Pursuant to relevant provisions of international refugee law and human rights standards, the detention of asylum-seekers should normally be avoided. Where exceptionally necessary in an individual case, such a measure should be proportionate to the ends to be achieved; of the shortest possible duration; and in appropriate conditions, separate from common criminals²⁰. Best State practice takes account of and respects at least these limitations.

(iii) Registration, documentation and temporary stay permits

18. Pending the outcome of their asylum claims, asylum-seekers need to be assured of some basic form of legal status during their stay in the territory. Adequate registration, including the issuance of documentation, is thus a prerequisite for the legal and physical protection of asylum-seekers²¹. A number of States have also found this to be an important tool to address their security concerns. Apart from providing basic protection to the asylum-seekers against expulsion and *refoulement*, documentation – which may take the form of a temporary stay permit – is also often the pre-condition to being entitled to basic assistance and other benefits. ExCom Conclusion No. 35 (XXXV) (1984) recommends that asylum-seekers whose applications cannot be decided without delay be provided with provisional documentation sufficient to ensure that they are protected temporarily until a final decision has been taken by the competent authorities with regard to their application²².

19. As this represents an essential aspect of refugee protection, best State practice places registration and issuance of documentation to asylum-seekers as a priority. Best State practice therefore includes the issuance of temporary stay permits to asylum-seekers as soon as they are admitted to the asylum procedure.

(iv) Groups with special needs

20. Female asylum-seekers may experience particular problems as a result of their gender. Being outside their own social network, perhaps for the first time in their life, some may be vulnerable,

¹⁹ See Article 8 of the ECHR, the UDHR and the CRC, and see also Article 23 of the ICCPR; see also ExCom Conclusion No. 22 (XXXII) on protection of asylum-seekers in situations of large influx, 1981.

²⁰ See Article 31 of the 1951 Convention; ExCom Conclusion No. 44 (XXXVII) on detention of refugees and asylum-seekers (1986) and the 1999 UNHCR *Guidelines on Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers*. See also Articles 2,3,9,22 and 37 of the CRC, Article 9(1) of the ICCPR, and Article 5 of the ECHR.

²¹ See *Practical aspects of physical and legal protection with regard to registration* (EC/GC/01/6) discussed at 1st meeting of the Global Consultations in March 2001.

²² See also Article 27 of the 1951 Convention, which requires only presence in the territory.

particularly if they are not accompanied by family members²³. Problems faced by women range from those deriving from shortcomings in asylum procedures to those inherent in poor physical reception conditions. Without the assistance of trained staff or psychological, social or medical referral, they may be unable to overcome their inhibitions in describing the sexual violence or other forms of persecution that they may have suffered. Depending on their social and cultural background, special attention may be required when providing medical care. Gender-sensitive accommodation arrangements and counselling may also be necessary. A number of States have provided targeted training in this area and have adopted gender-sensitive reception policies. These include special legislative provisions to ensure that female asylum-seekers are interviewed by female staff or with the assistance of female interpreters.

21. Because of their dependence, their vulnerability and their developmental needs, particular attention needs also to be paid to the situation of asylum-seeking children. Taking into account the governing principles embodied in the CRC, relevant UNHCR Guidelines and ExCom Conclusions²⁴, reception standards should ideally address the special educational, medical, psychological, religious, cultural and recreational needs of asylum-seeking children. Special attention should be paid to the risk of child trafficking²⁵. Separated, underage female asylum-seekers are most vulnerable due to their juvenile situation. Special accommodation arrangements and counselling therefore often prove necessary.

22. States have long recognized that children must benefit from primary education and best State practice has effectively integrated this basic human right in their legislation²⁶. In general terms, reception policies which are consistent with the 1997 *UNHCR Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum*²⁷ represent best State practice to be encouraged.

23. Elderly asylum-seekers are a special group with a lower profile but with particular needs that may be equally pressing. They are frequently destitute and risk neglect and abandonment by family members if they are unable to provide care. In cases where elderly asylum-seekers are separated from their families, they cannot count on the traditional support network that was available in the country of origin. They frequently lack information about their rights and about facilities available to them. The elderly may not be mobile or feel confident enough to seek the help of UNHCR or other agencies. Important documentation may have been left behind in the country of origin. The vulnerability inherent in advanced age makes prompt access to medical and health care an essential condition for this group. Lack of mobility, a sense of isolation and abandonment, as well as chronic dependency are factors which best State practice takes into account in the design of adequate reception policies for this group²⁸.

IV. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

24. A basic framework for reception policies could usefully be agreed by the Executive Committee in the form of a conclusion on the reception of asylum-seekers in individual asylum systems. For its part, UNHCR will proceed to finalize its own guidelines, based on relevant, international standards and best practices of States set out in the annexed compilation.

²³ See ExCom Conclusions No. 64 (XLI) (1990) and No. 73 (XLIV) (1993) respectively on refugee women and international protection and on refugee protection and sexual violence. See also 1991 *UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women* and 1995 *UNHCR Guidelines on Sexual Violence*.

²⁴ See 1994 *UNHCR Guidelines on Protection and Care of Refugee Children*; ExCom Conclusion No. 47 (XXXVIII) on refugee children, 1987; Conclusion No. 49 (XL) travel documents for refugees, 1987; Conclusion No. 84 (XLVIII) on refugee children and adolescents, 1997.

²⁵ See the 2000 Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

²⁶ See Article 2 of Protocol No.1 to the ECHR which stipulates that "no person shall be denied the right to education"; See also Article 28 of the CRC; and 1994 *UNHCR Guidelines on Protection and Care of Refugee Children*.

²⁷ See also the Preamble to the 1997 Council of European Union Resolution concerning unaccompanied third-country minors, which refers to the CRC and the best interest of the child as a primary consideration.

²⁸ See UNHCR's Policy on Older Refugees (A/AC.96/929/Annex II). See also ICESCR General Comment No. 6 on the economic, social and cultural rights of older persons (E/1996/22).

25. For the purposes of an eventual ExCom conclusion, States may wish to draw on the foregoing paragraphs and best practice as identified with respect to (i) assistance to asylum-seekers; (ii) their freedom of movement; (iii) registration and necessary documentation; and (iv) the requirements of groups with special needs. In addition, States may wish to endorse a number of general considerations, such as those listed below, which are of relevance to reception policies:

- (i) While a margin of appreciation clearly affects the choice of reception arrangements to be put in place, it is important that the combined effects of the various reception measures allow for a stay in dignity and guarantee that rights are respected.
- (ii) Reception arrangements should take careful account of the length of asylum procedures. Asylum-seekers should be granted a range of social and economic rights and benefits commensurate with the anticipated length of the procedure.
- (iii) Reception arrangements are mutually beneficial where they are premised on the understanding that many asylum-seekers may be capable – if provided with the requisite opportunities – of realizing a significant degree of self-reliance, at a diminished cost to the State or the international community.
- (iv) Reception arrangements should seek to balance the rights and benefits granted to asylum-seekers and the obligations and contributions which may reasonably be expected of them.
- (v) Key to the effective operation of any reception arrangement is public opinion favourable to refugees and with confidence and trust in the asylum system. The promotion of both is an important responsibility to be pursued in tandem with the arrangements themselves.
- (vi) Burden-sharing to promote and strengthen the capacity of host States with limited resources to receive asylum-seekers is a crucial underpinning of adequate reception arrangements.
- (vii) Gender-sensitivity and gender-awareness should be guiding principles when crafting reception arrangements.

Some Recommended Measures for the Reception of Asylum-Seekers in Individual Asylum Systems

The following paragraphs bring together some recommended reception measures for asylum-seekers on the basis of relevant international legal standards and best State practice. Clearly, a reception regime can follow different models or combine flexibly various elements of these models. Factors influencing the viability of including all these recommended measures in any one system will include the socio-economic situation prevailing in the host country, as well as the characteristics of the asylum-seekers themselves, and the nature of their claims. In addition, the responsibility for ensuring that these measures are in place may not fall solely on the host State services but might legitimately become a shared responsibility bringing in other national and international partners.

a) Documentation and Temporary Residence Status

- Asylum-seekers should be issued temporary permits, which should be valid until the final decision is taken on the asylum application. Female asylum-seekers should have equal rights to obtain temporary permits, independently of their male relatives, and should have the right to have such documentation issued in their own names.

b) Assistance, including accommodation, means of subsistence - Employment

- Needy asylum-seekers should be given all necessary support covering the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing and basic accommodation, throughout the asylum procedure until a final decision is taken on their application. If necessary, this should also apply to asylum-seekers who are permitted to work but are unable to find adequate employment.
- Support should be granted either in kind (food, clothing, pocket money, etc.) or by giving access to the social welfare system, or through a combination of the two.
- Asylum-seekers should preferably be granted permission to work if the length of the asylum procedure is likely to exceed a certain period or where the "package" of support offered to asylum-seekers requires independent financial resources to maintain an adequate standard of living.
- Reception facilities at borders, including airports, should include all necessary assistance and the provision of basic necessities of life, including food, shelter and basic sanitary and health facilities. Even for a short stay, family unity and privacy should be respected. Single men and women should be accommodated separately, and families should have the possibility to live together in the same premises.
- Conditions in reception centres or in other types of collective accommodation for asylum-seekers should fulfil minimum standards, including the existence of basic facilities, as well as access to health care and education.
- Reception centres may constitute an acceptable solution for a limited period following arrival or in the case of accelerated procedures for "manifestly unfounded" applications. Asylum-seekers should, however, have access to and the means for alternative accommodation arrangements, if these centres do not provide sufficient privacy or negatively impact on family unity or health conditions in a serious way in the longer term, or if the procedure is protracted.
- With a view to preventing acts of racism and xenophobia against asylum-seekers, a reception policy should include appropriate measures to enhance harmonious relationships with the local communities, for instance, by creating awareness of the

problems of refugees, by promoting respect for them and by designing specifically targeted public information campaigns.

c) Health care

- Asylum-seekers should receive free basic medical care, in case of need, both upon arrival and throughout the asylum procedure.
- Medical examination and psychological counselling should be subject to strict confidentiality requirements, in particular with regard to HIV testing.
- Asylum-seekers in need of urgent treatment, including due to torture or other severe trauma, should receive special assistance, if appropriate at specialized institutions.

d) Education

- Child asylum-seekers have a right to education. Primary education should be compulsory, available and free to all. Given the importance of education, secondary education should preferably be made available to asylum-seekers.

e) Freedom of movement and detention

- As a general principle, asylum-seekers should not be detained. Detention of asylum-seekers may exceptionally be resorted to in an individual case for reasons of the sort set out in the UNHCR Guidelines on Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers, as long as this is clearly prescribed by a national law and is in conformity with general norms and principles of international human rights law. In such cases, it should only be resorted to for a minimal period, with full consideration being given to all possible alternatives (for example, reporting obligations or guarantor requirements).
- If detained, asylum-seekers should have the right to be informed of the reasons for their detention and of their corresponding rights in a language and in terms which they understand. They should have access to legal assistance. Conditions of detention should be humane, with respect shown for the inherent dignity of the person, and they should be prescribed by law. The standards related to conditions of detention, including minimum procedural guarantees, in particular the right to have detention reviewed by an independent body, are elaborated upon in detail in the aforementioned UNHCR Guidelines on Detention.
- UNHCR and non-governmental organizations with relevant expertise should have access to detained asylum-seekers so that they can be properly informed about the procedure and their related rights.
- In accordance with the aforementioned general principle, minors who are asylum-seekers should not be detained. This principle also applies to unaccompanied minors. Where possible, they should be released into the care of family members who already have residency within the asylum country. Where this is not possible, the competent authorities should make alternative care arrangements, such as residential homes or foster care placements. All appropriate alternatives to detention should be considered in the case of children accompanying their parents. Children and their primary caregivers should not be detained. If none of the alternatives can be applied and States do detain children, this should be as a measure of last resort, and for the shortest period of time. More detailed guidance is contained in the UNHCR Guidelines on Detention.

f) Family unity

- The authorities should take appropriate measures, including tracing activities, within the country of asylum to maintain the unity of the family, and process asylum requests expeditiously in order to ensure that separated families are reunited as quickly as possible once they are recognized as refugees.

g) Groups with special needs, including children, women, and the elderly

- In asylum procedures and reception arrangements, gender sensitivity and gender awareness should be guiding principles. All officials and staff involved in the initial reception and the determination process should be trained so that they are sensitive to gender issues.
- Single women with special security needs should be provided with separate and safe accommodation. When asylum-seekers are accommodated in so-called “international zones” at ports and airports, the physical safety and the privacy of women should be ensured.
- When detention is resorted to, privacy and the principle of family unity should be respected. Men and women should not be detained together, except in family situations. Special efforts should be made to avoid the detention of nursing mothers and women in the later stage of pregnancy.
- Medical help for asylum-seekers upon arrival and in reception centres should include counselling on reproductive health matters. Pregnant women should receive the same maternal and child clinic services as nationals.
- Reception standards should endeavour to address educational, medical, psychological, recreational and other special needs of children.
- When dealing with a separated or unaccompanied child, asylum authorities should endeavour to be guided by the 1997 UNHCR Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum. Unaccompanied and separated children should be placed in appropriate care-giving relationships, such as foster care or special reception centres, at the earliest stage of the procedure. Such care arrangements should be designed to address their special protection and assistance needs.
- Tracing activities for children should be undertaken at a very early stage. A legal representative should be designated for the handling of the social and legal rights of separated children throughout the asylum procedure, and otherwise to ensure that the child’s best interests are represented throughout the child’s stay in the country. Asylum requests of separated and unaccompanied children should receive priority treatment.
- Special attention should be paid to the risk of child trafficking, in particular separated and unaccompanied female asylum-seekers. Special accommodation arrangements, counselling and protection arrangements are necessary for them.
- As regards elderly asylum-seekers, at the earliest stage of the procedure, efforts should be made to identify older asylum-seekers in need of legal advice, interpretation services, social counselling or other assistance. Tracing activities should also be undertaken at an early stage in case of particular vulnerability.

- Elderly asylum-seekers may have special health and psychological needs. Care needs to be exercised to ensure that they are not unnecessarily segregated from the rest of the asylum-seeker community.