

**UNHCR policy on  
refugee protection and  
solutions in urban areas**

**September 2009**



**UNHCR**

**The UN  
Refugee Agency**

## Table of contents

<b>I. Introduction: securing the rights of urban refugees</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II. Expanding protection space</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III. Respecting key principles</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IV. Implementing comprehensive protection strategies</b>	<b>8</b>
a) Providing reception facilities	9
b) Undertaking registration and data collection	10
c) Ensuring that refugees are documented	11
d) Determining refugee status	12
e) Reaching out to the community	13
f) Fostering constructive relations with refugees	15
g) Maintaining security	16
h) Promoting livelihoods and self-reliance	17
i) Ensuring access to health, education and other services	18
j) Meeting material needs	19
k) Finding durable solutions	20
l) Addressing the issue of movement	23
<b>V. Conclusion: pursuing a positive and proactive approach</b>	<b>25</b>
Annex: Relevant guidance materials and ExCom Conclusions	27

## **I. Introduction: securing the rights of urban refugees**

1. The world is undergoing a process of rapid urbanization. In 1950, less than 30 per cent of the world's population lived in cities and towns. That figure has now increased to over 50 per cent and is expected to reach 60 per cent by 2030.
2. In terms of population numbers, the statistics are equally striking. While some 730 million people lived in urban areas in 1950, that figure has more than quadrupled in the past 60 years and now stands at over 3.3 billion.
3. In view of these developments, it is no surprise to find that a growing number and proportion of the world's refugees are also to be found in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> According to UNHCR's most recent statistics, almost half of the world's 10.5 million refugees now reside in cities and towns, compared to one third who live in camps.
4. As well as increasing in size, the world's urban refugee population is also changing in composition. In the past, a significant proportion of the urban refugees registered with UNHCR in developing and middle-income countries were young men who possessed the capacity and determination needed to survive in the city.
5. Today, however, large numbers of refugee women, children and older people are also to be found in urban areas, particularly in those countries where there are no camps. They are often confronted with a range of protection risks: the threat of arrest and detention, *refoulement*, harassment, exploitation, discrimination, inadequate and overcrowded shelter, as well as vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), HIV-AIDS, human smuggling and trafficking.
6. Until recently, the Office continued to give primary attention to those refugees who are accommodated in camps. This approach was encouraged by the organization's 1997 policy statement on refugees in urban areas, a document that was based on the assumption that such refugees were more the exception and less the norm, as is now increasingly the case.
7. Experience with the 1997 policy statement revealed a number of other difficulties. It was preoccupied with the growing cost of providing assistance to refugees in urban areas, which limited its scope of application. So too did its focus on the issue of refugees who take up residence in an urban area after moving in an irregular manner from their country of first asylum. In addition, the 1997 paper did not establish a sufficient balance between UNHCR's security concerns in urban settings and the need to deal with the underlying causes of the refugees' frustration.
8. Recognizing the need to address the issue of urban refugees in a more comprehensive manner, UNHCR is now replacing the 1997 policy statement with the current document.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is very difficult to establish a global definition of the 'urban area' concept. For the purposes of this paper, it will be taken to mean a built-up area that accommodates large numbers of people living in close proximity to each other, and where the majority of people sustain themselves by means of formal and informal employment and the provision of goods and services. While refugee camps share some of the characteristics of an urban area, they are excluded from this definition.

9. Firmly based on UNHCR's mandate to protect the rights of refugees and to find solutions to their plight, this paper marks the beginning of a new approach with regard to the way that UNHCR addresses the issue of refugees in urban areas. Its implementation will take full account of the experience that the Office has gained in urban contexts, drawing upon the many effective practices already formulated by UNHCR and its partners.

10. The new policy has a number of significant features. First, it is a relatively concise document, setting out the broad contours and underlying principles of UNHCR's engagement with urban refugees. It does not endeavour to provide detailed operational guidelines, nor does it relate to UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons or returnees in urban areas.<sup>2</sup>

11. Second, this document fully recognizes the need for the policy to be adapted to the specific circumstances of different countries and cities.<sup>3</sup> It is, moreover, primarily related to the situation of urban refugees in developing and middle-income countries where UNHCR has a presence and an operational role. Thus the paper does not examine the challenge of refugee integration or the issue of subsidiary protection standards in the industrialized states.

12. Third, UNHCR also recognizes that the policy objectives set out in this paper will not be attained by the Office alone. If those goals are to be achieved, an appropriate resource base will be required, coupled with effective cooperation and support from a wide range of other actors, especially those host governments and city authorities in the developing world that so generously host the growing number of urban refugees. In this respect, UNHCR encourages states to respect and give practical meaning to the principle of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing.

13. Finally, the policy presented in this document is intended to apply to refugees in all urban areas, and not only those in capital cities. It must be recognized, however, that UNHCR will be constrained in its ability to attain this objective in countries where refugees are scattered across a large number of urban locations.

## **II. Expanding protection space**

14. This policy statement is based on the principle that the rights of refugees and UNHCR's mandated responsibilities towards them are not affected by their location, the means whereby they arrived in an urban area or their status (or lack thereof) in national legislation. The Office considers urban areas to be a legitimate place for

---

<sup>2</sup> Many existing guidance materials are of relevance to UNHCR's work in urban areas. A list of such documents is annexed to this paper.

<sup>3</sup> In some countries, for example, refugees have the option of living in a camp or organized settlement, whereas in others they do not. Some countries with urban refugee populations have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and provide refugees with a legal status, residence rights and the right to work. In other countries such conditions do not prevail. In some countries where camps exist, refugees are officially obliged to stay there. In other countries, the movement of refugees from camps to urban areas is either permitted or tolerated.

refugees to enjoy their rights, including those stemming from their status as refugees as well as those that they hold in common with all other human beings.

15. At the same time, UNHCR recognizes the difficulties that can arise in situations where significant numbers of refugees take up residence in urban areas. Such movements can place considerable pressure on resources and services that are already unable to meet the needs of the urban poor. Refugees who move to a city often expose themselves to protection risks such as detention and deportation, especially in situations where they are officially excluded from urban areas and the labour market.

16. Protection must be provided to refugees in a complementary and mutually supportive manner, irrespective of where they are located. Thus in addition to addressing the needs of those refugees who live in cities and towns, UNHCR considers it essential for host states and the international community to continue with their efforts to ensure that other refugees, including those in camps, are able to exercise all the rights to which they are entitled and are able to live in acceptable conditions.

17. These rights include, but are not limited to, the right to life; the right not to be subjected to cruel or degrading treatment or punishment; the right not to be tortured or arbitrarily detained; the right to family unity; the right to adequate food, shelter, health and education, as well as livelihoods opportunities.

18. If they are unable to pursue secure and productive lives elsewhere, some refugees will inevitably feel compelled to move to an urban area, even if they are not formally allowed to do so. This will increase the number of urban refugees seeking support from UNHCR and other actors, place additional pressures on scarce services and resources, and may generate tensions between refugees and the resident population.

19. When refugees take up residence in an urban area, whether or not this is approved by the authorities, UNHCR's primary objective will be to preserve and expand the amount of protection space available to them and to the humanitarian organizations that are providing such refugees with access to protection, solutions and assistance.

20. While the notion of protection space does not have a legal definition, it is a concept employed by the Office to denote the extent to which a conducive environment exists for the internationally recognized rights of refugees to be respected and their needs to be met.

21. In most refugee situations, protection space is not static, but expands and contracts periodically according to changes in the political, economic, social and security environments. This process cannot be measured with any degree of scientific precision, but can be assessed in a qualitative manner on the basis of certain indicators. These include the extent to which refugees:

- are threatened (or not) by refoulement, eviction, arbitrary detention, deportation, harassment or extortion by the security services and other actors;
- enjoy freedom of movement and association and expression, and protection of their family unity;
- have access to livelihoods and the labour market and are protected from exploitative treatment by employers, landlords and traders;
- enjoy adequate shelter and living conditions;
- are able to gain legal and secure residency rights and are provided with documentation;
- have access to public and private services such as healthcare and education;
- enjoy harmonious relationships with the host population, other refugees and migrant communities; and,
- are able to benefit from the solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.

22. The extent to which ‘protection space’ exists in a refugee situation can also be assessed in terms of the circumstances in which UNHCR and its humanitarian partners are able to work. In simple terms, the protection space can be regarded as relatively broad in situations where the Office has few restrictions placed upon its movements and activities, is able to make direct contact with refugees, has the freedom to choose its own implementing partners and enjoys a constructive dialogue with both national or municipal authorities. In situations where these conditions do not pertain, however, the protection space can be considered to be relatively narrow.

### **III. Respecting key principles**

23. UNHCR’s policy on refugees in urban areas thus has two principal objectives:

- to ensure that cities are recognized as legitimate places for refugees to reside and exercise the rights to which they are entitled; and,
- to maximize the protection space available to urban refugees and the humanitarian organizations that support them.

24. The following sections of this document identify the principal ways in which UNHCR will strive to attain those objectives. The paper is predicated on the understanding that UNHCR’s work with refugees in urban areas is underpinned by the same set of principles and approaches that apply to all other aspects of the organization’s work.

### *Refugee rights*

25. Like all refugees, those who live in cities are entitled to protection and solutions and must be able to exercise the human rights to which they are entitled under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, other refugee instruments and international human rights law. In its efforts to realize those entitlements, UNHCR will encourage host governments to accede to and respect the international refugee and human rights instruments and to adopt and implement appropriate domestic legislation.

26. UNHCR will also strive to ensure that refugees have access to justice systems, are treated as equals before the law and are not subjected to any form of discrimination by law enforcement agencies and other representatives of the state.

### *State responsibility*

27. Another cornerstone of this document is the principle of state responsibility. In urban as in other contexts, national and local authorities have a primary role to play in providing refugees with protection, solutions and assistance. UNHCR will encourage all states to exercise this responsibility through its advocacy efforts.

28. At the same time, the Office stands ready to support states in undertaking the tasks of refugee protection, solutions and assistance by means of capacity-building and operational activities, especially in countries where the authorities lack the means and expertise required to achieve these objectives.

29. Such support will ideally be provided for a limited period, pending the time when the state is able to assume responsibility for key functions, including refugee status determination and the provision of services and assistance to refugees in urban areas. Indeed, and as explained in a later section of this paper, a primary UNHCR objective is to ensure that refugees in urban areas enjoy access to the social welfare systems that are available to nationals.

### *Partnerships*

30. A key component of UNHCR's work in urban areas is that of partnership, requiring the Office to establish effective working relationships with a wide range of different stakeholders.

31. In urban contexts, municipal authorities and mayors have a particularly important role to play in the objective of expanding protection space, and UNHCR will consequently place particular emphasis on its relationship with these actors. At the same time, and in pursuit of the same objective, the Office will work closely with the national authorities, the police and judiciary, the private sector, NGOs, legal networks, other civil society institutions and development agencies.

32. UNHCR will make particular efforts to engage UN Country Teams in the task of expanding the protection space available to refugees. More specifically, the Office will endeavour to ensure that refugee-related issues are addressed in initiatives such as Common Country Assessments, Consolidated Appeal Processes, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the UN Development Assistance Framework.

### *Needs assessment*

33. UNHCR has rolled out a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) process aimed at determining the real needs of persons of concern to the Office, the cost of meeting those needs and the consequences of any funding gaps. The CNA is now an integral part of the way in which UNHCR plans its operations around the globe.

34. The Office will ensure that refugees in urban areas are fully incorporated into its needs assessment activities, while recognizing that funding shortfalls may prevent the needs of those people from being fully met. UNHCR will also ensure that the situation of refugees in urban areas is mapped and monitored by the organization's new *Focus* software, which is intended to facilitate the task of matching needs, programme objectives and budgets.

### *Age, gender and diversity*

35. The work of the Office in urban areas will be based on the principles of Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM). This approach recognizes that the different groups to be found within any refugee population have varying interests, needs, capacities and vulnerabilities, and seeks to ensure that these are taken into full account in the design of UNHCR programmes. The Office will consequently strive to map and respond to the specific situation of groups such as women, children, older persons, unaccompanied and separated minors, as well as ethnic minorities.

36. In urban settings, the AGDM approach may have some specific characteristics and implications. For example, while young refugee men are not normally considered to be particularly vulnerable, those who work illegally and in the informal sector of cities and towns may be at particular risk of detention, deportation, exploitative and hazardous employment. Refugee women and girls may also be threatened if steps are not taken to address the diminished role and self-esteem of men when they lose their role as family breadwinner.

### *Equity*

37. UNHCR's activities in urban areas are based on the notion of equity. In accordance with this principle, the Office will take action to ensure that all of the refugees living in an urban area can benefit from the available protection space and that they are treated in a consistent manner by UNHCR.

38. This is not to suggest that the Office will necessarily adopt a uniform approach in relation to those refugees who are to be found in a given city or town. Indeed, the protection, solutions and assistance strategies pursued by UNHCR will be tailored to the specific circumstances, capabilities and vulnerabilities of different groups, households and individuals within the refugee population.

### *Community orientation*

39. UNHCR's approach in urban settings will be community-based. In accordance with this principle, the Office will strive to mobilize and capacitate the refugee population, so as to preserve and promote their dignity, self-esteem, productive and

creative potential. Participatory assessments, undertaken in accordance with current UNHCR guidelines on this matter, will be employed on a routine and regular basis to underpin this approach.

40. UNHCR will foster the development of harmonious relationships amongst the different refugee groups residing in the same city. Similarly, the Office will encourage refugees and their local hosts to interact in a positive manner. To attain this objective, UNHCR will endeavour to combat discrimination and xenophobia and will ensure that the services it provides to urban refugees bring benefits to other city-dwellers, especially the neediest sections of the population and those who live in closest proximity to refugees.

#### *Interaction with refugees*

41. UNHCR recognizes that the establishment of partnerships with other actors in no way limits the responsibility of the Office to interact regularly and directly with refugees in urban areas. UNHCR is thus fully committed to the establishment of mechanisms that enable the organization to reach out to urban refugees in their communities and to ensure that they are aware of their rights and obligations, as well as the opportunities and services available to them.

42. UNHCR staff, especially those who have worked for many years with camp-based refugees, may lack the skills required to undertake effective outreach activities in urban areas. They may also be unfamiliar with the task of working with municipal authorities and local government institutions. To address these issues, UNHCR will review and revise as necessary the training and tools provided to its personnel.

#### *Self-reliance*

43. Finally, UNHCR's work in urban (as in other) is based on a commitment to upholding the social and economic standing of refugees, particularly by means of education, vocational training, livelihoods promotion and self-reliance initiatives.

44. While these can be difficult tasks in situations where refugees are formally barred from the labour market and are not permitted to engage in income-generating activities, UNHCR will make every effort, in cooperation with the authorities, to ensure that urban refugees have access to such opportunities, all of which play a vital role in preparing them for durable solutions.

### **IV. Implementing comprehensive protection strategies**

45. Having outlined the key principles on which UNHCR's new urban refugee policy is based, this section of the paper identifies the key objectives that the policy is intended to attain and sets out the protection strategies that the Office will employ in its efforts to achieve those goals.

### **a) Providing reception facilities**

46. Asylum seekers and refugees living in urban areas frequently seek direct access to UNHCR's offices in order to register with the organization, apply for refugee status, report on protection problems and request help in the form of assistance and solutions. It is therefore essential for UNHCR to establish reception arrangements that are both accessible and convenient for refugees and which facilitate the work of the organization's staff.

47. UNHCR will respect a number of basic principles with regard to reception arrangements in urban areas. First, no refugee or asylum seeker will be prevented from having direct access to UNHCR offices and staff members, although such access will, of course, have to be carefully regulated and supervised and take full account of security considerations.

48. Second, UNHCR will provide appropriate facilities in the waiting rooms and reception areas that are established in urban areas. Such facilities will include access to clean drinking water and bathrooms, adequate shade or heat, and special facilities for people with disabilities and women, especially pregnant and lactating mothers. UNHCR will engage with UNICEF in the establishment of child-friendly spaces in reception areas.

49. Efficient appointments and referral systems will be established, so as to minimize the length of time that refugees are kept waiting at UNHCR's offices and to limit the number of people gathering there. Such systems will provide for the priority reception of people who wish to report urgent protection problems, security threats, specific and serious vulnerabilities. These systems will also keep persons of concern informed about their situation in relation to refugee status determination, resettlement and assistance possibilities.

50. Refugees and asylum seekers will be provided with relevant information when they approach a UNHCR office, translated into their own language whenever possible. Such information may be transmitted by means of leaflets, posters or video films, and will cover issues such as the rights and responsibilities of asylum seekers and refugees; registration and refugee status determination processes; the procedures to follow in the event of a protection threat or urgent medical problem; the services provided by UNHCR and other agencies; and durable solutions options, with a particular focus on presenting resettlement opportunities in a realistic manner.

51. In addition, persons of concern to the Office will be informed that UNHCR services are provided free of charge, and that UNHCR staff members are bound by a Code of Conduct which bars them from engaging in abusive, exploitative or corrupt behaviour. Those persons will also be enabled to present their complaints, concerns and suggestions to UNHCR by means of confidential, freely accessible and clearly publicized mechanisms.

## **b) Undertaking registration and data collection**

52. The importance of registering refugees and asylum seekers residing in urban areas cannot be overstated. It is a vital tool of protection, as it provides protection against refoulement, access to basic rights, the identification of refugees with urgent and specific needs, the reunification of refugee families and the pursuit of durable solutions. Registration is an essential component of status determination, enables UNHCR to collect accurate statistics on urban refugee populations and facilitates the task of needs assessment, programme planning and budgeting.

53. Registration is primarily a state responsibility but in many instances has been left to UNHCR. It has not proved easy for the Office to undertake the systematic registration and enumeration of city-based refugees, as they are often dispersed throughout sprawling slums, unlike those who have congregated in highly visible camps.

54. In some situations, moreover, people who are of concern to UNHCR prefer for various reasons not to make themselves known to the organization. As a result, UNHCR's efforts to collect information on urban refugee populations have sometimes been confined to those people who have approached the Office at their own initiative and who are receiving different forms of support from the organization.

55. Non-assisted refugees remain of concern to UNHCR, and may well encounter difficulties in relation to their protection and solutions. In view of this fact, the Office will support the registration and collection of data on all urban refugees, and strive to disaggregate that data in accordance with AGDM principles. Legal and social counselling and the services of trained interpreters will to the extent possible be available to refugees and asylum seekers at the point of registration.

56. Individual case files will be stored in a secure manner and in full respect for the confidentiality of those who have registered. *ProGres*, UNHCR's registration and individual case management software, will be used to document special needs and to review and prioritize the provision of assistance.

57. Registration and data collection will not be confined to capital cities, but will whenever possible be extended to provincial centres where refugee populations are to be found. To ensure comprehensive coverage, mobile registration teams may be employed to engage with refugees in their homes, neighbourhoods and community centres. In addition, information on the registration process will be made widely available, disseminated as appropriate by means of posters in community centres and other places where refugees gather, as well as by radio, TV, internet and SMS messages.

58. In urban areas where refugees and asylum seekers are arriving alongside other people who are on the move, UNHCR's '10 Point Plan of Action on Mixed Migratory Movements' provides a valuable framework for action. Those parts of the Plan dealing with data collection and analysis, reception arrangements, profiling and channelling mechanisms are of particular relevance in this respect and will be utilized by UNHCR's offices, working closely with partner organizations such as the International Organization for Migration and UNICEF.

59. UNHCR recognizes that registration can in some respects make refugees more visible and thereby provoke negative reactions from host governments and communities. Mindful of this issue, the Office will take all action to minimize the risks associated with such situations and promote a proper understanding of the advantages of registration, both for refugees and for host states, who have a legitimate interest in knowing who is on their territory, as well as how and why they arrived there.

60. UNHCR will record the special needs of individual refugees in *ProGres*, a tool which is used in all urban settings. While it has mainly been employed in relation to status determination and resettlement, births, deaths and other life events, *ProGres* has been insufficiently employed to determine those in need of different types of assistance.

61. UNHCR's registration and documentation activities will form part of a broader strategy to undertake the systematic mapping and profiling of urban refugee populations. Particular efforts will be made to identify the location of urban refugees and to collect information with respect to their age, gender, education, skills and livelihoods, so as to ensure that the organization's programmes are appropriately designed.

### **c) Ensuring that refugees are documented**

62. Refugees and asylum seekers in urban areas are likely to come into regular contact with a variety of official actors, including police and security personnel, local government officials, workplace and marketplace inspectors, as well as service-providers in areas such as healthcare and education.

63. In this context, the provision of documents to persons of concern to UNHCR, attesting to their identity and status, can play an important role in the prevention and resolution of protection problems. It is the primary responsibility of the state to provide these documents, but in situations where the authorities are unable to do so, UNHCR will issue its own documents to refugees.

64. Such documents should be provided to each person within a household and should be issued for sufficiently long periods to reduce the administrative burdens associated with renewal. When they are renewed, UNHCR will use the opportunity to collect updated information about persons of concern and will thereby assist UNHCR in its efforts to develop a better understanding of the urban refugee population.

65. To maximize their effectiveness as a protection tool, UNHCR will endeavour to ensure that such documents are formally recognized by the authorities. Such documents will ideally be presented in the national language and stipulate the rights to which the document holder is entitled.

66. Children born to refugees and asylum seekers will be registered and provided with individual identity documents, either by the authorities or by the Office. UNHCR will also strive to ensure that persons of concern are issued with marriage and death certificates, as well as documentary proof of any qualifications they gain.

67. UNHCR's efforts in the area of documentation will be supported by sensitization and advocacy campaigns, targeted at both refugees and at representatives of the host state, so as to ensure that there is a mutual understanding with regard to the rights and responsibilities of refugees.

#### **d) Determining refugee status**

68. In many countries, national refugee status determination (RSD) systems are either non-existent or dysfunctional, requiring UNHCR to exercise its mandate in relation to the examination of asylum applications and the recognition of refugees.

69. The difficulties associated with such situations are well known, and include the limited capacity of UNHCR to undertake RSD in a thorough and efficient manner; the dispersal of asylum seekers throughout a city and the consequent difficulty of maintaining contact with them while their claim is assessed; the frequent absence of legal advice and material support for refugee claimants; and the risk that UNHCR will be drawn into a long-term engagement with RSD procedures and therefore substitute for the principle of state responsibility.

70. Such problems are compounded by the fact that asylum seekers often have to wait long periods of time for their applications to be processed, and yet in many instances are officially prohibited from working or gaining an income while they wait for a decision to be made on their case.

71. While there are no simple solutions to such difficulties, UNHCR will strive to address them in a number of ways. In situations where RSD is not undertaken by states and where RSD is deemed materially to enhance the protection of refugees and the provision of solutions, UNHCR will:

- establish transparent and consistent RSD procedures;
- provide secure and private RSD interview facilities;
- introduce staffing arrangements that enable timely and quality assessments to be made (including short-term deployments when backlogs threaten to build up);
- maintain harmonized RSD procedures and criteria at the level of the city, country and region;
- establish independent appeals procedures; and,
- encourage the authorities to provide alternatives to detention (through regular registration, for example) so that RSD does not have to be undertaken in detention centres or prisons.

72. With regard to legal and social counselling, UNHCR will encourage NGOs, legal networks and human rights organizations to play an active role in such activities.

73. In appropriate situations, UNHCR may recognize refugees on a prima facie basis and thereby avert the need for the individual assessment of asylum applications, while taking action to identify individuals who may be excludable from refugee status.

74. The Office is fully aware that staff who undertake RSD in cities where there are a large number of asylum seekers often suffer from 'burn out' as a result of the intense and repetitive schedule of interviews they are expected to conduct. The Office will endeavour to address this problem by enabling RSD staff to appreciate how their work fits into UNHCR's broader country programmes. This approach will require those personnel to leave their offices on a regular basis and to visit the neighbourhoods in which refugees and asylum seekers are to be found.

#### **e) Reaching out to the community**

75. It is often assumed that persons of concern who reside in urban areas enjoy easy access to UNHCR. That is not necessarily the case. Refugees are often confined to slum areas, shanty towns or suburbs, a long and expensive journey away from the UNHCR office.

76. In situations where refugees are not welcomed by the local authorities and population, they may also feel obliged to limit the extent to which they venture outside their place of residence. Some refugees might not even know of UNHCR, while others may be confined to their homes as a result of disability or sickness.

77. Further complications arise from the fact that urban refugees are often scattered throughout a city, making it difficult to make contact with them, to determine their needs and identify the most vulnerable amongst them. In refugee camps, UNHCR and its partners have easier access to persons of concern, who are concentrated in spaces which are in some respects designed to facilitate the provision of protection, solutions and assistance. That is not the case with regard to urban areas.

78. UNHCR's responsibility is to reach as many of those persons who are concern to the organization as possible, an approach that requires the Office to adopt a proactive approach to protection planning and implementation. These are admittedly challenging tasks in those situations where UNHCR has constraints placed upon its freedom to operate and where the authorities are eager to ensure that refugees keep as low a profile as possible.

79. In recognition of these difficulties, and with full consideration of government concerns, UNHCR's programmes for refugees in urban areas will adopt a variety of different outreach methods, tailored to the national context. These may include:

- building the capacity of local and national authorities to engage in a positive manner with urban refugee populations;
- the engagement of trained refugee outreach volunteers who are able to keep in daily contact with all segments of the refugee community and to liaise with UNHCR;

- the establishment of local community centres, where refugees and other members of the urban population can socialize and gain access to information, services, counselling and recreational facilities;
- an active programme of community communications (replacing the former UNHCR notion of ‘mass information’) that enables UNHCR to keep in touch with refugees by means of activities such as cultural events, neighbourhood meetings, and, when it is technologically viable, through SMS messages, telephone hotlines and interactive websites;
- professionally designed surveys and opinion polls, undertaken or commissioned by UNHCR with the intention of gaining a better knowledge of the living conditions, attitudes, intentions and aspirations of urban refugees; and,
- the establishment of Field Units and Field Offices in cities and countries with particularly large and dispersed urban refugee populations.

80. In addition to such activities, UNHCR staff will make periodic visits to the neighbourhoods where refugees have congregated and to facilities used by refugees, such as schools and health centres. Opportunities for visits to local police stations, immigration detention centres and prisons, as well as human rights and civil society organizations will also be pursued with the authorities. .

81. UNHCR will make particular efforts to reach out and respond to the needs of refugee women and girls, especially those who are destitute and who may resort to survival sex and other negative coping mechanisms. Programmes that are designed to offer women and girls constructive and productive alternatives to such mechanisms will be formulated, drawing on effective practices in past and current operations.

82. The Office will also take steps to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and human trafficking. Action will be taken to ensure that victims and potential victims of such crimes can report on them in full confidentiality and safeguard their identity. Those people will be protected from reprisals and receive appropriate clinical and counselling support.

83. In the urban context, special efforts are also required to identify unaccompanied and separated minors, who run the risk of becoming ‘street children’ and subjected to exploitation and abuse. In order to locate and protect these children, UNHCR will work closely with national child protection agencies, as well as UN agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations that work in the area of child protection. All of UNHCR’s work in this area will be guided by the principle of the ‘best interest’ of the child.

#### **f) Fostering constructive relations with urban refugees**

84. UNHCR’s relationship with refugees in urban areas has on occasions been a tense one, characterized by a degree of mutual suspicion. This has been to some extent inevitable, given the unrealistic expectations that urban refugees sometimes

have of what UNHCR can provide to them in terms of protection, solutions and assistance. It has also been reinforced by the negative attitude of some UNHCR staff, especially those confronted by resource constraints and security concerns.

85. To counter such difficulties, UNHCR's community outreach and communications efforts will form part of a broader strategy to establish a constructive dialogue and positive partnership with refugees in urban areas. Again, this can be a challenging task, especially in cities where refugees are frustrated by the absence of solutions or their exclusion from the labour market, and where exiled populations are fragmented along national, ethnic, religious or ideological lines.

86. In its efforts to work with these communities, UNHCR will apply AGDM principles and adopt a participatory approach. The Office will hold regular meetings with groups of urban refugees and their representatives, whenever possible in the areas where they reside.

87. UNHCR will also support (and encourage other actors to support) the cultural, social, recreational, sporting and community activities of refugees in urban areas. The Office will also facilitate the establishment of urban refugee associations, especially those which promote self-reliance and community support.

88. In refugee camps, UNHCR has recognized that such activities can play an important part in maintaining the individual self-esteem and social fabric of communities which find themselves in very difficult circumstances. The same recognition will guide the organization's work in urban areas.

89. One means to such ends will be the establishment of specialized 'refugee support groups', which enable appropriately qualified refugee volunteers to advise their compatriots and fellow exiles in relation to issues such as health, education and SGBV.

90. UNHCR acknowledges that the tasks of reaching out to the urban refugee community and fostering good relations with its members will require a strengthening of the Community Services function. With urban refugee numbers predicted to grow in the years to come, this function will also have to be reoriented to address the specific challenges entailed when working in cities.

91. The 2008 publication 'A Community-Based Approach to UNHCR Operations' will be consequently be reviewed and revised as necessary. UNHCR staff who work in the community services function will have the necessary professional qualifications and training.

92. Additional steps will also be taken to promote the development of closer field level links between the community services, protection and programme functions. As a recent UNHCR report has observed, "community services play a major role in the identification of protection problems and have an equally important role to play in the formulation of appropriate programmatic responses to those problems."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Surviving in the city: a review of UNHCR's operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria', 2009.

93. UNHCR will establish multifunctional teams in cities with large refugee populations, comprised of staff from the community services, protection and programme functions. As well as developing a common strategy for community outreach and communications, such teams will monitor and assess the impact of implementing partner activities, ensure that such partners have established beneficiary complaints and accountability mechanisms, that they engage refugees in programme design and work in accordance with AGDM principles.

94. UNHCR will use its Heightened Risk Identification Tool as a means of assisting urban refugee communities to agree on who is most vulnerable and in need of assistance. This tool also encourages refugees to prioritize their needs and to develop realistic expectations of UNHCR's assistance capacity.

#### **g) Maintaining security**

95. Even when UNHCR makes every effort to establish constructive relations with refugees in urban areas, security incidents can occur. Refugees may be frustrated with regard to their inability to access protection, solutions and assistance and hold individual UNHCR staff members responsible. UNHCR will seek to avert such scenarios by working with refugees and their community representatives in a spirit of understanding and cooperation.

96. In order to prepare for situations where such approaches prove to be ineffective, every UNHCR office in an urban area will establish contingency plans to address the different types of security incident that are liable to occur, based on existing UNHCR and UN safety and security guidelines. Protection and security staff will endeavour to coordinate all responses to such incidents so as to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, and to ensure that staff members are not put at risk.

97. When security incidents occur, it may be necessary for UNHCR to request the deployment of the police or other security forces. The Office will endeavour to provide those forces with training in human rights and refugee protection principles so as to ensure that their actions do not violate refugee rights and create the potential for further unrest. That said, UNHCR will submit a report to the police if an offence is committed against a UNHCR staff member, service contractor or visitor, or if damage is done to UNHCR property.

98. Many UNHCR offices, especially those in developing countries, employ security guards to ensure that good order is maintained when refugees and asylum seekers approach the organization's premises. UNHCR will ensure that such guards are easily identifiable by refugees and that they are provided with training on UNHCR's mandate and Code of Conduct.

99. A zero-tolerance policy will be applied by the Office in situations where security guards are found to be engaging in improper behaviour, including corruption, exploitation, physical and verbal abuse.

## **h) Promoting livelihoods and self-reliance**

100. Urban refugees are often confronted with a wide range of legal, financial, cultural and linguistic barriers in their efforts to establish sustainable livelihoods. In many cases, they have little alternative but to join the informal economy, where they find themselves competing with large numbers of poor local people for jobs that are hazardous and poorly paid. In some cases, employers may actually choose to engage refugees rather than nationals, but only because they are less likely to complain or seek redress if they are treated unfairly.

101. To the extent possible, in respect of national laws and in close cooperation with the authorities, UNHCR will support the efforts of urban refugees to become self-reliant, both by means of employment or self-employment. In pursuit of that objective, the Office will work in close partnership with the authorities, development agencies, microfinance organizations, banks, the private sector and civil society institutions, especially those that have experience in the area of livelihoods and have a good knowledge of local market constraints and opportunities.

102. Such activities will be based on AGDM principles, will be complemented by advocacy efforts that are designed to remove any legal barriers to self-reliance, and will be supported by vocational training, skills development and language programmes that will assist refugees in their efforts to become self-reliant. Livelihoods programmes will also be developed on the basis of comprehensive assessments of local challenges and opportunities.

103. In terms of its advocacy activities with host governments and municipal authorities, UNHCR will place a high priority on establishing an environment which is amenable for urban refugees to establish sustainable livelihoods. The Office will place particular emphasis on the fact that self-reliance acts as an important path to durable solutions, whether in the country of origin, a resettlement country or the country of asylum.

104. One of the most difficult questions confronting UNHCR in urban contexts is whether to promote refugee livelihoods and self-reliance in countries where they are denied the right to gain an income under national law and practice. The Office will in the first instance explore every opportunity to encourage the authorities to be more flexible in their legislation and practice so as to facilitate the economic activities of urban refugees.

105. In such situations, UNHCR's will explore the opportunities that exist to support the efforts of refugees to become self-reliant in an unobtrusive manner, focusing on activities such as the establishment of small-scale and home-based enterprises. UNHCR's advocacy efforts will draw attention to the fact that providing refugees with skills is a valuable way of retaining their dignity, maintaining their social capital, preparing them for durable solutions and alleviating any pressure they might place on national services and welfare systems.

106. UNHCR's expectations about the potential for self-reliance amongst urban refugees will be realistic. People who, for example, have no opportunity to establishing livelihoods, who are subjected to legal, social, economic and racial

discrimination, who have limited access to public services and few systems of social support, cannot realistically be expected to become self-reliant in a short period of time.

107. The Office will thus make a clear distinction between self-reliance and a refugee's ability to survive without assistance. Unassisted refugees cannot be regarded as self-reliant if they are living in abject poverty, or if they are obliged to survive by means or illicit or degrading activities.

108. UNHCR also recognizes that some urban refugees may be disinclined to engage in economic activities, especially those who are active in exile politics and who are able to live on the remittances they receive. The Office will seriously consider the rationale for providing material support to urban refugees who are unwilling to take up the livelihoods opportunities that are appropriate and available to them.

### **i) Ensuring access to healthcare, education and other services**

109. Refugees in urban areas are faced with a number of disadvantages in comparison with other low-income city-dwellers. In addition to the protection problems with which they are confronted, they often lack the community support systems that help poor nationals to survive. They may also find it difficult to access or afford the often overstretched healthcare, education and other services on which the local population relies.

110. To address this issue, UNHCR will adopt a three-pronged strategy. First, the Office will advocate on behalf of refugees with the objective of ensuring that the authorities make public services such as healthcare and education available to refugees at a limited or no cost.

111. Second, UNHCR and its partners will monitor the health, nutritional status, living conditions and general welfare of urban refugees, so as to ensure that these do not fall below acceptable standards. Particular attention will be given to those with specific needs. The information collected in this way will also be used to support UNHCR's advocacy efforts and to target the organization's resources on the most vulnerable individuals and most critical welfare gaps.

112. The third component of UNHCR's strategy will be to augment the capacity of existing public and private services, both directly (when funding is available) and by encouraging the engagement of bilateral donors, development agencies and other actors. To attain this objective, UNHCR will work closely with UN Country Teams, the NGO community and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, encouraging them to include refugees in municipal development and poverty-reduction programmes.

113. As a general rule, when working in urban areas, UNHCR will avoid the establishment of separate and parallel services for its beneficiaries, and will instead seek to reinforce existing fully authorized delivery systems, whether they are public, private or community-based.

114. As well as being a more efficient use of limited resources, this approach has the added benefit of encouraging the authorities and the local population to recognize the additional resources that urban refugees can bring to the cities in which they have settled. At the same time, UNHCR recognizes that special assistance arrangements will be required for refugees in situations where they are excluded from national welfare programmes, such as the provision of subsidized food.

115. Given the need to prioritize its efforts and allocation of resources, UNHCR will focus on the provision of services to those refugees and asylum seekers whose needs are most acute. While these priorities will vary from city to city, they will usually include:

- safeguarding the well-being of pregnant and lactating women, children under five, unaccompanied and separated children, older people and those who are seriously ill, including those with HIV and TB;
- providing care and counselling to people with specific needs, especially people with disabilities, those who are traumatized or mentally ill, victims of torture and SGBV, as well as those with complex diseases requiring specialized care; and,
- ensuring that children receive primary school education, as well as identifying and supporting those who are unaccompanied, separated or otherwise at risk.

#### **j) Meeting material needs**

116. UNHCR recognizes that a variety of different protection and social welfare problems are likely to arise in situations where refugees are unable to become self-reliant and to meet their basic needs. Higher levels of physical and mental illness, as well as an increased incidence of delinquency and domestic violence may well occur in such scenarios.

117. If they cannot support themselves by legitimate means, some refugees may become involved in illicit and degrading activities. They may also seek to move on to other countries, often by irregular means, or return prematurely to their country of origin. Recognizing the negative consequences of such survival strategies, UNHCR and its partners will monitor the situation of urban refugees closely, so as to identify and address such problems as soon as they occur.

118. In situations where self-reliance is not a viable objective, UNHCR and its partners will seek to meet the needs of urban refugees by other means. These might include the establishment of collective accommodation centres (as long as they meet acceptable standards), the provision of subsidized housing, as well as the distribution of free or subsidized foodstuffs and other basic necessities. In situations where the state provides subsidized goods and services to its citizens, UNHCR will encourage the authorities to incorporate refugees in such welfare programmes.

119. While it is usually taken for granted that camp-based refugees will receive indefinite assistance if they are unable to engage in agriculture and other economic activities, it is sometimes assumed that refugees in urban areas are able to cope in the absence of such support.

120. That is not necessarily the case, especially in countries where refugees have no legal status or residency rights, are not allowed to engage in income-generating activities, where they are deprived of access to public services on the same terms as nationals, and where the option of being assisted in a camp does not exist. Refugees may also be severely hampered in their efforts to support themselves by discrimination on the basis of their nationality, ethnic origin or religion.

121. In circumstances such as these, particular care will be taken by UNHCR to identify those refugees who need support and to determine and provide the level of assistance they require. At the same time, host governments will be encouraged to remove any legal obstacles which prevent refugees from becoming self-reliant.

122. In many cities where refugees are unable to establish livelihoods and meet their own needs, UNHCR has provided them with regular sums of money, usually by means of cash payments and sometimes through the distribution of ATM cards. In situations where it is viable, UNHCR will establish ATM card systems, both in view of their efficiency and because they enable refugees to maintain a greater degree of dignity.

123. When cash payments are made to refugees, the amount of money provided to them will be assessed by UNHCR and its partners, with appropriate advice from agencies that deal with the issue of urban poverty reduction. Such calculations will take full account of the fact that refugees may be disadvantaged in relation to other low-income city-dwellers, especially when they lack supportive social networks and do not have free access to local services.

124. The provision of cash payments will always be accompanied by efforts to find livelihoods for those who are in receipt of such benefits, except for those who are unable to work by virtue of their age, physical or mental capacity or any other limitations they experience.

125. In many countries, UNHCR has engaged in periodic means-testing so as to determine the assistance needs of refugees living in urban areas. Experience has shown, however, that means-testing often creates considerable resentment and prompts refugees to conceal their assets and level of income.

126. As a result, UNHCR and implementing partner staff, ostensibly employed as social workers, become progressively involved in the tasks of inspection, spot-checking, interrogating and generally 'policing' the refugee population, a tendency which has done further damage to UNHCR's relationship with refugees in urban areas.

127. To minimize such difficulties, means-testing exercises will be undertaken by properly trained UNHCR and implementing agency staff, and will be combined with other and more positive initiatives relating to the well-being of refugees. Home visits,

for example, provide a good opportunity for the identification of protection-related issues as well as the collection of information about refugees' aspirations, intentions, education and skills - data that has an evidently useful role in the development of self-reliance and durable solutions strategies.

128. UNHCR will adopt a transparent and candid approach with urban refugees in situations where it is unable to meet their material needs and expectations. The Office will also seek to augment its own resources by means of collaborative action with other actors, including UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector.

129. The World Food Programme may be asked to participate in food security assessments, while advice and support could be sought from UN-HABITAT in relation to urban planning, housing and land issues. Banks and other financial institutions should as appropriate be encouraged to provide loans to refugees on the same conditions that are granted to nationals.

130. UNHCR is fully aware that the minimization and premature termination of the assistance it provides to urban refugees may be contrary to the organization's commitment to the principles of AGDM. As one UNHCR report has pointed out, "ensuring the healthy development of children and assisting refugee women engaged in building the future of their family must mean a level of engagement which goes some way beyond providing the minimum level of support for the shortest possible time."<sup>5</sup> This observation will be taken into full account in the implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy, drawing on the specialized expertise of

131. In countries where camps have been established, refugees who have moved to an urban area will normally receive financial assistance from UNHCR only if they have a demonstrable need to be in that location. They will, of course, continue to benefit from the protection and solutions activities of the Office.

132. Refugees who are unable to survive in the city will be offered the opportunity and means of transport to take up residence in a camp if one is available to them. It will be made clear that this is not an obligation and that those who choose to remain in an urban area will not forfeit the protection of UNHCR.

133. With respect to asylum seekers in urban areas, UNHCR will make every effort to ensure that such people are assisted by the municipal authorities, NGOs, community-based and civil society organizations pending an assessment of their claim.

134. If other sources of support are not available and if the well-being of an asylum seeker would otherwise be at serious risk, UNHCR will provide that person with necessary forms of assistance. UNHCR will also endeavour to meet any specialized needs that have arisen from the circumstances of an asylum seeker's flight. Those who have injuries or who are seriously disturbed, for example, will be assessed for specialized healthcare and counselling needs.

---

<sup>5</sup> Stefan Sperl, 'Evaluation of UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas: a case study review of Cairo, 2002.

## **k) Promoting durable solutions**

135. As in any other context, UNHCR's activities in urban areas will be oriented towards the early attainment of durable solutions for all refugees. A comprehensive approach will be adopted, recognizing that different refugees may benefit from different solutions.

136. Openness and transparency on the part of UNHCR are of particular importance. Refugees will consequently be provided with full and accurate information about the durable solutions options available (and not available) to them.

137. To limit the difficulties that can ensue when refugees move from camps to urban areas and from one country of asylum to another, UNHCR will strive to ensure that all refugees within a given country and region enjoy similar standards of treatment and have equal access to durable solutions opportunities.

138. On the basis of the latter principle, the procedures employed by UNHCR to facilitate voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement will not differ significantly in the case of urban and camp-based refugees. At the same time, some specificities of the urban context will be taken into account.

139. With regard to voluntary repatriation, refugees will not be disadvantaged because they live in an urban area. UNHCR will provide potential returnees with information and guidance and will be assisted to repatriate to their country of origin when they choose to do so, whether by means of transport, a cash grant, a repatriation package or a combination of these resources. Urban refugees will also benefit on an equal basis from any reception and reintegration support provided by UNHCR in the country of origin.

140. As far as the solution of local integration is concerned, UNHCR has an important role to play in assisting the authorities to identify those individuals and groups of urban refugees who are best placed to, who wish to and are permitted to settle on an indefinite basis in their country of asylum.

141. Earlier sections of this paper have referred to some of the ways in which UNHCR can promote the socio-economic dimensions of this process, by, for example, supporting refugee livelihoods, encouraging them to become self-reliant and enabling them to access public services. UNHCR will also play a role in relation to the legal and political dimensions of local integration. Relevant activities might include:

- public information and media campaigns that combat xenophobia and racism and thereby create an environment that is conducive to local integration;
- advocacy and technical assistance efforts that facilitate decisions on the part of the authorities to provide for naturalization legislation and procedures; and,

- information, training and integration programmes for refugees that enable them to learn the local language, to develop a better knowledge of the society in which they intend to settle and to understand the naturalization process.

142. It is a global priority for UNHCR to ensure that refugees who are in need of resettlement have fair and transparent access to resettlement processes, irrespective of their location. The effective and equitable management of resettlement can be a particular challenge in urban settings, not least because refugees can be difficult to identify in general and more specifically because the most vulnerable amongst them are sometimes the least visible and vocal.

143. Effective outreach combined with the accurate and continuous registration of refugees is therefore an essential foundation for any resettlement process. Appropriate mechanisms will also be established to assess the veracity of reported security incidents, to identify individuals who are at risk and to make appropriate interventions, including resettlement, on their behalf.

144. In accordance with the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, resettlement programmes will be prioritised for the most vulnerable refugees and will be non-discriminatory in nature. Identification and referral mechanisms will be established to promote access to resettlement for those most in need. The involvement of NGOs and other partners, especially those involved in the provision of medical assistance, social and legal counselling will be central in this respect.

145. UNHCR's resettlement activities will be tailored to the specific characteristics of each urban area and will be managed in a way that mitigates the risks associated with resettlement. Refugees who are already in the resettlement process will, for example, be encouraged to remain actively engaged in self-reliance and educational activities pending the outcome of that process, and will also be urged to explore other solutions options when they exist. To avoid unrealistic expectations and the security problems that they can generate, UNHCR will keep refugees fully informed about resettlement prospects and procedures.

146. In this respect, resettlement can only ever be one component of a comprehensive protection and solutions strategy, involving whenever possible the cooperation of the host state. Efforts will also be made to use resettlement in a strategic manner so as to increase the protection space available to all refugees in a given country.

## **D) Addressing the issue of movement**

147. Freedom of movement is a principle enshrined in international human rights law, and UNHCR encourages all states to respect it. While recognizing the difficulties that can arise for the Office and the authorities when large numbers of refugees leave their camp or another designated place of residence and move to a city, there may also be good reasons for them to do so.

148. Any mobility restrictions placed on camp-based refugees should take account of those reasons, such as a need to reunite with family members or to seek medical treatment. There is also considerable evidence to suggest that many refugees move to

urban areas because their physical and material security are at risk in their camps, because secondary and tertiary education opportunities are non-existent there, because they do not have access to livelihoods and because they have no immediate prospect of finding a solution to their plight.

149. Working in close association with its partners, UNHCR will endeavour to ensure that acceptable standards of protection and assistance are available in camps, as well as educational, recreational, wage-earning and other income-generating opportunities. As indicated previously, camp-based refugees will also have the same access to durable solutions opportunities, including resettlement, as refugees living in urban centres.

150. The Office will strive to ensure that refugees who travel to urban areas are provided with adequate documents and will advocate with the authorities and security services to ensure that they are not penalized for travelling and that they are allowed to remain in an urban area for as long as necessary.

151. Some of the individuals who seek to register with and receive support from UNHCR in urban areas have arrived from other countries where they either have lived for a period of time or through which they have transited. It is not always easy to ascertain whether they have sought asylum in that country and found effective protection there.

152. Executive Committee Conclusion 58 stipulates that refugees who have found effective protection in a given country should normally not move on to another state in an irregular manner. The Conclusion also provides for the return of such individuals to the country where they enjoyed “effective protection”, with UNHCR’s potential involvement in their readmission and reception arrangements.

153. The issue of ‘secondary’ or ‘onward’ movements has proven to be very complex and controversial one, and cannot be explored at length in this paper, which is focused on the issue of providing protection and solutions to refugees in urban areas.

154. On one hand, attempts to identify refugees who have engaged in ‘unnecessary’ onward movements and to return them to their country of first asylum are fraught with numerous practical problems and ethical dilemmas. On the other hand, there remains an unresolved debate on the meaning and measurement of ‘effective protection’ and the circumstances under which it is legitimate for a refugee or asylum seeker to move from one country to another. While this concept is still evolving and is prone to different interpretations, UNHCR understands it to mean that a person has found effective protection in a country of asylum when:

- there is no likelihood of persecution, of refoulement or of torture or other cruel and degrading treatment;
- there is no other real risk to the life of the person concerned;
- there is a genuine prospect of an accessible durable solution in or from the asylum country, within a reasonable timeframe;

- pending a durable solution, stay is permitted under conditions which protect against arbitrary expulsion and deprivation of liberty and which provide for adequate and dignified means of subsistence; and,
- the unity and integrity of the family is ensured, and the specific protection needs of the affected persons, including those deriving from age and gender, are identified and respected.

155. A refugee who is unable to live in decent and dignified conditions and who has no real prospect of finding a durable solution in or from their country of asylum within a reasonable timeframe cannot be considered to have found effective protection. When a refugee moves to seek reunification with immediate family members who are not in a position to reunite in that person's country of first asylum, and when a refugee moves as a result of other strong linkages with the country of destination, the onward movement may also be justified.

156. UNHCR offices will be encouraged to collect and analyze data on secondary movements so as to understand and respond effectively to their causes. UNHCR and its partners will also formulate and implement information strategies to advise refugees about the protection risks associated with secondary movements. In order to avert secondary movements, UNHCR will also endeavour to harmonize the protection, solutions and assistance available to refugees within each region where it operates.

## **V. Conclusion: pursuing a positive and proactive approach**

157. Rapid urbanization is one the most significant 'mega-trends' confronting our planet today. It is also an issue that interacts with and reinforces many other global developments, including climate change, environmental degradation, volatile commodity prices, financial and economic instability, and the absence of decent work for growing numbers of young people.

158. In this context, UNHCR has considered it essential to reconsider the organization's position on the issue of refugees in urban areas and to adopt an approach to this matter that is more positive, constructive and proactive than has been the case in the past.

159. UNHCR wishes to thank the many people who have contributed to the formulation of this policy statement, especially staff members in the field and the NGO community. Their contribution has been invaluable.

160. The implementation and impact of the new UNHCR policy will be reviewed and revised as appropriate, in close collaboration with other actors who have a substantive role to play in expanding the protection space available to refugees in urban areas.

## ANNEX

### Relevant guidance materials and ExCom Conclusions

This annex provides a select list of web-accessible UNHCR guidance materials and ExCom Conclusions that are relevant to the implementation of the organization's policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas. Both are presented in chronological order.

#### Guidance materials

*Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1992  
<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3d58e13b4.pdf>

*Handbook on Voluntary Repatriation*, 1996  
<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3bfe68d32.pdf>

*Information Package on Accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1999  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/3ae6b32710.pdf>

*Revised Guidelines on Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers*, 1999  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3bd036a74.pdf>

*Global Consultations on International Protection: Fair and Efficient Asylum Procedures*, 2001  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b389254a.pdf>

*Global Consultations on International Protection: Local Integration*, 2002  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3ccd64536.pdf>

*Safety Guidelines for Sensitive Individual Refugee Cases in an Urban Context*, 2002  
<http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3dca8ead4.html>

*Summary Conclusions on the Concept of Effective Protection in the Context of Secondary Movements of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers*, 2002  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3e5f323d7.pdf>

*UNHCR's Involvement with National Courts*, 2002  
<http://www.intranet.hcrnet.ch/SUPPORT/POLICY/IOMFOM/2002/iom4902.htm>

*Education Field Guidelines*, 2003  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/40586bd34.pdf>

*Handbook for Registration: Procedures and Standards for Registration, Population Data Management and Documentation*, 2003  
<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3f8e93e9a.pdf>

*Safety Guidelines for Handling Threats, Verbal Abuse and Intimidation from Refugees*, 2003  
<http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/3ea6c2104.html>

*Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response*, 2003  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3f696bcc4.pdf>

*Code of Conduct and Explanatory Notes*, 2004  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/405ac6d27.pdf>

*Guidelines for Handling Protests, Demonstrations and other Group Disturbances among Refugees*, 2004  
<http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/48b2c8112.html>

*Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, 2004  
<http://www.unhcr.org/partners/PARTNERS/411786694.pdf>

*Resettlement Handbook*, 2004  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/46f7c0ee2.pdf>

*Handbook for Self-Reliance*, 2005  
[http://www.unhcr.org/pubs/self\\_reliance/handbook\\_for\\_self\\_reliance.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/pubs/self_reliance/handbook_for_self_reliance.pdf)

*Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate*, 2005  
<http://www.unhcr.org/4317223c9.html>

*Alternatives to the Detention of Asylum Seekers and Refugees*, 2006  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4472e8b84.html>

*Note on HIV/AIDS and the Protection of Refugees, IDPs and Other Persons of Concern*, 2006  
<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/444e20892.pdf>

*Practical Guide to the Systematic Use of Standards and Indicators in UNHCR Operations*, 2006  
<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/40eaa9804.pdf>

*Rights of Refugees in the Context of Integration: Legal Standards and Recommendations*, 2006  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/44bb9b684.html>

*Standard Operating Procedures for the Prevention of and Response to SGBV*, 2006  
<http://www.intranet.hcrnet.ch/SUPPORT/POLICY/IOMFOM/2006/iom6206.htm>

*When to Undertake Individual Refugee Status Determination (RSD) in UNHCR's Protection Activities and Operations: Some Guiding Considerations*, 2006  
<http://www.intranet.hcrnet.ch/SUPPORT/POLICY/IOMFOM/2006/iom3906.htm>

*Accountability Framework for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming*, 2007  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/47a707950.pdf>

*Anti-retroviral Medication Policy for Refugees*, 2007  
<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/45b479642.pdf>

*Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: A 10-Point Plan of Action*, 2007  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/4742a30b4.pdf>

*The Nairobi Refugee Programme 2005-2007: Working with Partner Agencies and Refugee Communities to Strengthen Urban Refugee Protection*, 2007  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48abd53c3.html>

*Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees*, 2008  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47d7d7372.html>

*A Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations*, 2008  
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/47da54722.pdf>

*Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child*, 2008  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/4566b16b2.pdf>

*Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, 2008  
<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/47cfa9fe2.pdf>

*The Heightened Risk Identification Tool and User Guide*, 2008  
<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=46f7c0cd2>

*UNHCR Guidelines for Reviewing and Commenting on National Legislation*, 2009  
<http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/cgi-bin/texis.exe/refworld/intranet/rwmain?page=search&docid=49d1d1592&skip=0&query=guidelines%20for%20reviewing%20national%20legislation>

*Guidance on the Use of Standardized Specific Needs Codes*, 2009  
<http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/4a5336e02.html>

## **Executive Committee Conclusions**

*ExCom Conclusion No. 8 on the Determination of Refugee Status*, 1977  
<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68c6e4.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No.15 on Refugees without an Asylum Country*, 1979  
<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68c960.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 22 on the Protection of Asylum-Seekers in Situations of Large-Scale Influx*, 1981

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68c6e10.html>,

*ExCom Conclusion No.30 on the Problem of Manifestly Unfounded or Abusive Applications for Refugee Status or Asylum*, 1983

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68c6118.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 44 on the Detention of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers*, 1986

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68c43c0.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 58 on the Problem of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers Who Move in an Irregular Manner from a Country in Which They Had Already Found Protection*, 1989

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68c4380.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 82 on Safeguarding Asylum*, 1997

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68c958.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 91 on the Registration of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers*, 2001

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3bd3e1d44.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 93 on the Reception of Asylum-Seekers in the Context of Individual Asylum Systems*, 2002

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3dafdd344.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 104 on Local Integration*, 2005

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/4357a91b2.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 105 on Women and Girls at Risk*, 2006

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/45339d922.html>

*ExCom Conclusion No. 107 on Children at Risk*, 2007

<http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/4717625c2.html>