Concept Note
First Regional Quality Assurance Initiative Roundtable for the Americas
“Challenges and Good Practices in RSD Case Management”

Introduction
The Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI), a joint review program of refugee status determination (RSD) processes represents a valuable approach to ensure fairness and efficiency. The QAI initiative, which has contributed to the development of guidance for continuously improving RSD processes, was officially launched in the Americas in 2012. Since its inception, several countries in Latina America and the Caribbean progressively joined the program, which also features in the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action. All QAI countries made significant progress in the past five years as a result of the identification of improvement areas through a diagnostics process and recommendations made for such improvements in the various areas of focus, namely registration, interviewing, decision-making and appeal.

Despite the commitment and dedication of asylum authorities in the region, challenges remain in terms of RSD case management with increasing backlogs. This is primarily due to an exponential increase in asylum applications that goes beyond the available RSD processing capacity. In many instances, the number of asylum applications have increased three to five-fold, and in some occasion ten-fold in recent years. Multiple factors contribute to this trend, including increased mobility coupled with increased insecurity, violence, human rights violations and conflict, resulting in the movement of thousands in a context of mixed migration. In response, countries in the Americas have consolidated their long standing tradition of welcoming people in need of international protection, upholding their international obligations and generous commitments.

The Roundtable
Adopting or introducing strategic responses to the increasing number of asylum applications has become imperative, to maximize efficiencies in the asylum procedure while maintaining due process standards.

Given the common recognition of the importance of RSD case management by various actors in the region, and as part of UNHCR regional support to QAI programs, the Office proposes, in coordination with the Government of Brazil, a two days Roundtable on the theme “Challenges and Good Practices in RSD Case Management”.

The main points of discussion will be:

- Access to procedures – Addressing legal and practical barriers to ensure effective access to RSD or Referral mechanisms at the border, including at airports

How do we ensure adequate identification of persons in need of international protection and consequent access to procedures in mixed migratory flows, especially in border areas? Can legal counseling and representation of persons of concern help improving case referral and management? How can we guarantee that administrative and other legal or policy requirements do not result in barriers to the right to seek asylum?
Registration – Registration forms and procedures | Systems Interoperability | The potential of UNHCR’s ProGres version4

_Can registration and referral mechanisms be strengthened to improve efficiencies of the overall case management system? Are there best practices in the use of dedicated registration tools and referral mechanisms that can be shared? How do registration systems within an administration talk to each other in order to strengthen protection and ensure the prompt issuance of documentation, while ensuring data protection requirements are met? How can we make best use of technology and new case management tools?_

Case Management tactics and backlog prevention and reduction tools – Case prioritization, scheduling techniques and caseload specialization | Differentiated case-processing modalities | Use of technology to reduce processing time

_Can differentiated case processing modalities contribute to the prevention or reduction of backlogs? Are there good practices in case management approaches that could contribute to the acceleration of case processing while maintaining due process standards, such as ‘frontloading’ through improved triage and scheduling of cases, specialization of case workers per caseload or theme (e.g. exclusion, children, victims of trauma, victims of gang violence, etc.), or accelerated procedures? Can strengthened country of origin research contribute to more efficient case processing? Can technological tools support the recording and transcription of interviews and/or, the drafting of assessments and recommendations?_

Three discussion papers on these main themes and sub-topics will guide the exchanges. A detailed report will be drafted with good practices highlighted in the discussions.

Participants

Competent decision/making authorities and institutions of the current nine QAI countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago), as well as other States interested in either joining the QAI at a later stage as part of the Quality of Asylum program of the BPA (e.g. Belize, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela) as well as countries in the region that are well-positioned to contribute to and benefit from the discussion as active observes (Canada, the United States of America).

Dates

28-29 August 2017

Venue

Sao Paolo, Brazil

Contacts

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