

Ethiopia begins civil registration for refugees – UN agencies

27 October 2017 – In an historic first, starting today all refugees in Ethiopia will be able to register their vital life events, including birth, death, marriage and divorce, directly with national authorities, the United Nations refugee agency announced on Friday.

“This is a historic first and a [ground-breaking development for refugee protection](#) in Ethiopia, not previously realized over decades,” Babar Baloch, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), said at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

Civil registration for refugees has been made possible following an amendment to an existing legislation. UNHCR and the UN’s Children Agency ([UNICEF](#)) collaborated with the Government of Ethiopia in the preparation of the amendment.

“It is one of the nine pledges made at the Leaders’ Summit held in New York in September 2016,” continued Mr. Baloch. “Other commitments included to grant work permits to refugees, strengthen access to education, to allow a significant number of refugees to reside outside of refugee camps and to locally integrate long-staying refugees.”

At the launch today, 11 refugees were issued with certificates in the capital of Addis Ababa. Civil registration offices have also been established in each of the 26 refugee camps, as well as in the seven locations with a high concentration of refugees.

More than 70,000 refugee children born in Ethiopia over the last decade have not had their births registered and will soon be issued with birth certificates. Children born before the new law came into force can also now obtain a birth certificate retroactively.

“Birth registration is an important protection tool – ensuring basic human rights, particularly in situations of displacement. It establishes a child’s legal identity and can help prevent statelessness,” underscored Mr. Baloch.

Civil registration is also important for policy development and planning in Ethiopia’s Development Agenda – in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which aims to enhance refugee self-reliance and inclusion; provide refugees with better possibilities to solve their plights; and ease pressure on host countries.

Ethiopia, which is among the first countries to roll out CRRF, Ethiopia currently hosts more than 883,000 refugees – mainly from South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

[Linking past and present, audiovisual heritage is 'part of our common history,' UNESCO says on World Day](#)

27 October 2017 – Through sound recordings and moving images, audiovisual heritage provides priceless insight to the past while preserving unique documentation for future generations, the United Nations cultural agency said on the day set aside to raise global awareness about the importance of the fragility of this heritage.

“This [heritage carries memories and testimonies](#), knowledge and ideas, in ways that are vivid and moving and that lay the foundations for better understanding and dialogue between and within generations, as well as between and within societies,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) in her message the [World Day for Audiovisual Heritage](#).

“Linking the past to the present, this heritage is part of our common history, and must be safeguarded and shared as a wellspring of identity and belonging, innovation and creativity,” she added.

Ms. Bokova pointed out that archives of films, recorded sound materials, radio and television programmes are essential for preserving this heritage, “offering us a chance to look to our history and that of others as threads in the great mosaic story of all humanity, on the basis of respect and tolerance.”

Threats to these archives come from many directions, starting with neglect and chemical decay and include technological obsolescence.

“This is why UNESCO is working with Governments across the world to safeguard audiovisual heritage as a source of strength for all to share – to allow women and men today and tomorrow to continue discovering, remembering and sharing the heritage that makes us who we are,” she underscored.

UN digital archiving project

Since its creation in 1946, the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) has played a crucial role in the accessibility and preservation of the Organization’s historic and unique audiovisual archives.

DPI maintains photographs, films, videos and audio recordings of major meetings and events, including the General Assembly, Security Council, press conferences and concerts. It also acts as a repository for UNTV and Radio productions, as well as raw footage covering UN work in field operations globally – in a wide variety of formats, topics and languages.

After more than 70 years, this audiovisual heritage is being threatened by the natural decay of original analogue media, obsolescence of media formats and playback equipment as well as inadequate temperature and humidity storage, among other factors.

Acute challenges include a lack of funding, disaster preparedness measures and a long-term strategic digitization programme. Additionally, there is a need to mitigate the obsolescence, deterioration and natural decay of existing media formats and increase DPI's capacity to maintain and preserve AV records and archives for the long-term.

Digitization is the only way to preserve these collections, to make them available well into the future.

In 2015, Oman stepped in with a voluntary contribution of \$4.5 million to assist UN efforts in digitizing old video footage and audio archives.

Over the course of five years, DPI's AV Digitization Project aims to digitize selectively 70 per cent of the UN historical collections; facilitate collection access via the Audiovisual Library web platform and preserve the UN audiovisual heritage for future generations; and to apply international standards, procedures and best practices for long-term preservation and sustainable management.

"Preserving the audiovisual heritage of the United Nations is a key task of the Department of Public Information," said Alison Smale, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, adding, however, that DPI "knew we could not do it alone, and Oman has been an incredible partner."

"With their contribution, we have now started a major digitization project. Today we are sharing with Oman the first copies of recordings that are now available in a digital format on this special day. The public also will now have access to the UN's historical films and meetings, which is a major benefit of this effort," Ms. Smale underscored.

[UN chief pays tribute to courage, resilience of people of Central African Republic](#)

27 October 2017 – Addressing lawmakers in the Central African Republic, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Friday stressed the international community's commitment to helping tackle the myriad challenges plaguing the conflict-torn country, and strongly defended the role of the UN peacekeeping force there.

I wish to pay tribute to the people's courage, resilience and determination to overcome great adversity," Mr. Guterres told the National Assembly in the capital, Bangui, on the final day of his visit to the country.

The task of solving this crisis lies first and foremost in the hands of the people of the Central African Republic. Nobody is in a better position to help the country than its own citizens," he added.

The UN chief noted that the country's enormous difficulties include insecurity, a humanitarian crisis and slow progress towards development.

Armed groups are fragmenting and multiplying. One in four Central Africans is displaced. Development programmes are needed for neglected rural areas. Religion and ethnic origin have been manipulated to create division among communities, severely polarizing a fragile country.

The Central African Republic is at risk of sliding back into open inter-communal violence," Mr. Guterres said.

The UN integrated peacekeeping mission there, known by its French acronym, MINUSCA, will use force when the State's stability is threatened, and each time civilians need protection, but does not favour any religious or ethnic group, he said, adding that their actions can assist in creating a space to build peace through dialogue.

However, he said: "Nowhere in the world has the use of force alone resolved a conflict. We therefore need not only more peacekeepers, but more political initiatives for peace."

Calling on donors to fulfil their commitments to provide humanitarian aid, he stressed the importance of supporting the country's recovery and peacebuilding plan.

The National Assembly has a vital role to play in ensuring the efficient delivery of government services, not just in the capital, but at the local level, he said.

"We are all committed to the return to peace," he said, noting that a cessation of hostilities is undoubtedly important, but there is also a need to bring peace to people's hearts.

"The Central African Republic has suffered for far too long. As representatives of the people, you have a central part to play in turning the situation around," he told the lawmakers.

Noting the historical generosity of the Central Africans who, over the years, have opened their borders to refugees from neighboring countries, the Secretary-General pledged that the UN would continue to accompany and support Central Africans.

According to his spokesman, Mr. Guterres then travelled to the PK5 area, a traditionally Muslim part of Bangui that has been the site of violence

against the community.

He listened to the concerns of community leaders, including issues regarding safety and discrimination, as well as the lack of economic opportunities for young people. He also heard from local Christian leaders who spoke of reconciliation.

The Secretary-General underscored his deep belief that religious conflicts are often the result of political manipulation and not religious differences, noting that for years, Christians and Muslims had coexisted peacefully in the country.

The Secretary-General then held a roundtable with youth leaders and a separate session with women leaders.

On his way to Paris, during a stopover in Yaoundé, the Secretary-General is expected to meet with the President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, to discuss a number of regional and national issues, the spokesman said.

Rohingya crisis: UN agencies focus on improving access as overcrowded camps hampers response

27 October 2017 – As the number of Rohingya refugees sheltering in southern Bangladesh crosses 800,000, United Nations agencies responding to the crisis are working hard to ensure access in the difficult to reach area so that much needed assistance can be delivered in a timely manner.

“With so many people having settled in such a small area, site planning and management is vital for the protection of Rohingya refugees,” noted the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) in a [news release](#).

“We are working with [humanitarian] partners and the Government to ensure access to displacement sites, all of which developed on hilly terrain, which is extremely difficult to reach with services,” it added.

There are now 817,000 refugees in Cox’s Bazar (the southern-most district of Bangladesh) including 200,000 who had been seeking refuge there prior to the exodus that began in late August. All but 46,000 among them are living in makeshift shelters or displacement sites, set up on hilly terrain, making access extremely challenging.

For instance, IOM has been trucking in over 740,000 litres of water into the settlements, where often it has to be hand-carried up steep hills to bring it close to the elderly and children, who might not otherwise get access to it.

Building roads and basic infrastructure such as drains and stairways, is therefore critical to ensure that all refugees and in particular the most vulnerable can receive services as quickly as possible as well as to prevent spread of disease.

IOM has also dispatched health teams to provide emergency and primary health services to over 53,000 patients. It has also distributed personal hygiene kits to thousands.

The UN migration agency has also constructed 660 emergency pit latrines and 100 mobile toilets; dug twelve deep-bore tube wells to provide settlements with clean drinking water; and set up child delivery facilities and a patient stabilization unit in Kutupalong one of the largest settlements.

It has also constructed safe spaces in settlements, where women and girls can come together, talk and spend time together in a protected environment giving them much needed psychosocial support as opposed to staying alone in a tiny shelter all day.

At the same time, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) [has relocated](#) some 1,700 new refugees from Kutupalong to a Government-allocated site in south-eastern Bangladesh, decongesting existing facilities in the overcrowded camp.

Since Tuesday, volunteers have been helping vulnerable refugees to carry their belongings to the new site.

UNHCR is also distributed household items and shelter kits containing plastic sheets, bamboo poles and ropes.

According to Babar Baloch, a spokesperson for the UN refugee agency, a total of 5,000 refugees will be moved to the newly-opened site, which is part of a larger 3,000-acre piece of land known as Kutupalong Extension.

[Winter may be 'harsh blow' to vulnerable children in Middle East, UNICEF warns amid funding gap](#)

27 October 2017 – Freezing temperatures, storms and heavy snowfall will add to the misery afflicting hundreds of thousands of families affected by conflict across the Middle East unless assistance including cold weather clothing and supplies is urgently provided, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has warned.

Without help, the cold could be [yet another harsh blow to vulnerable](#)

[children](#) in the region who have already been through so much,” said Geert Cappelaere, the UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in a news release Friday.

“Children's health is weak from undernutrition, poor healthcare and displacement. Hypothermia and respiratory infections are a serious threat – if left untreated, children will die.”

Conflict, displacement and unemployment for years have already depleted families' resources, leaving them unable to purchase of warm clothing or heating fuel.

Furthermore, if schools are not kept warm, dropout rates are expected to rise, leaving children more vulnerable to early marriage, sexual violence or forced recruitment into fighting.

Staff at the UN agency are working against time to provide warm clothing, winter supplies and blankets before the cold sets in, but the agency is staring at a \$60 million (more than 80 per cent) funding shortfall for its \$73 million appeal.

The lack of resources could leave up to 1.5 million children across Iraq, Syria, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and neighbouring refugee host countries, exposed to the elements.

With sufficient funding, UNICEF aims to provide winter clothing kits to over 800,000 children across the region, including to families that have been displaced by recent fighting; thermal blankets for almost 240,000 children; child friendly spaces and school heating for 105,000 children; and cash assistance to the families of more than 320,000 vulnerable children.