

# The IAGCI invites tenders to evaluate the UK Home Office Country Information Products

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) is part of the Office of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. Its purpose is to review the content of all Country of Origin Information (COI) produced by the Home Office. Country of Origin Information is used in procedures that assess claims of individuals for refugee status or other forms of international and humanitarian protection. It is also used in policy formulation.

The IAGCI reviews products to provide assurance to the Independent Chief Inspector that the content is as accurate, balanced, impartial and as up to date as possible. COI is contained in:

- Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs)
- responses to information requests

CPINs are generated on an ongoing basis for the top 20 asylum intake countries, and commonly address a specific type of common asylum claim(s) or provide general information for several claim types. They are compiled from material produced by a range of recognised external information sources (news sources, academic literature, independent research reports, fact finding reports from UK government or from other governments, etc.). These documents also contain Home Office policy on the recommended position to be taken with respect to various types of claims, based on the available and accepted country information.

Information Request (IR) responses are made directly by case workers or others to the Home Office. These relate to information that is not covered in the CPINs. The IAGCI includes in its reviews a consideration of the COI included in a sample of (not more than ten) IR responses. Each IR response is typically a maximum of 2 pages in length.

## **Tender Details**

IAGCI commissions country experts or experienced researchers to evaluate and report upon the country of origin information contained in Home Office information products. At its next meeting, the IAGCI requires a country expert to review the use of country information used in the following CPINs (2 separate tenders, 1 for each country):

### **Tender 1: Afghanistan**

[Country policy and information note: fear of the Taliban, October 2021 \(55 pages\)](#)

[Country policy and information note: security and humanitarian situation, October 2021 \(56 Pages\)](#)

## **Tender 2: China**

[Country Information and guidance: Hong Kong protests, February 2020 \(49 pages\)](#)

[Country policy and information note: Hong Kong national security law, September 2021 \(35 pages\)](#)

[Country Information and guidance: Muslims \(including Uyghurs in Xinjiang\), July 2021 \(57 pages\)](#)

For each tender, the expert is also asked to consider a selection of approximately 10 Information Request Responses, which will be provided by the Chair of IAGCI, and are an average of 2 pages long.

## **Description of work**

Country Policy and Information Notes aim to provide an accurate, balanced and up to date summary of the key available source documents regarding the human rights situation, with respect to the issues selected for coverage, in the country covered. The purpose and scope of the reports are clearly set out in an introductory section of the document. Reviewers should evaluate the reports in this context and seek to identify any areas where they can be improved. Specifically the review should entail:

- assessing the extent to which information from source documents has been appropriately and accurately reflected in the CPIN Reports
- identifying additional sources detailing the current human rights situation in the country with respect to main grounds for asylum claims (which are noted in each CPIN Report)
- noting and correcting any specific errors or omissions of fact
- making recommendations for general improvements regarding, for example, the structure of the report, its coverage or its overall approach
- ensuring no reference is made to an individual source which could expose them to risk

## **Reviewers should follow these specific guidelines:**

- the review should focus exclusively on the country of origin information contained within the document, and not pass judgment on the policy guidance provided
- the CPIN should be reviewed in the context of its purpose as set out above. It should consider the situation in the country up to the stated 'cut off' date for inclusion of information
- when suggesting amendments, rather than 'tracking changes' on the original CPIN, a list of suggested changes should be provided as part of a stand-alone review paper, and each report should be reviewed separately. A reporting template will be provided to reviewers (for reference please refer to most recent reviews on the IAGCI webpage for

examples of the template)

- any suggestions for additional information (or corrections to information in the document) must be referenced to a source document for the Home Office to be able to use it (preferably Open Source). The Home Office may use foreign language source documents, but only if the information is considered essential and is not available in English language source

Previous reviews of COI products can be viewed on the [ICIBI website](#).

The selected reviewers will be requested to attend an IAGCI meeting, likely virtual, otherwise at the Office of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in London, when their review will be considered. This meeting is due to take place in March 2022. Alternative arrangements may be made if attendance is not possible.

Representatives from the Home Office will also attend the meeting to provide responses to comments and recommendations made in the review.

Reviews commissioned by IAGCI may be used as source documents for future CPIN reports or other Home Office information products.

## **How to Apply**

Researchers interested in conducting any of the reviews should submit:

- a one page letter demonstrating their expertise in human rights and/or asylum issues pertaining to the particular country or countries
- their c.v.

Payment for this work will be set at £2,000. Expressions of interest should be submitted to [IAGCI@icibi.gov.uk](mailto:IAGCI@icibi.gov.uk) by close of Monday 31 January 2022.

Unfortunately, we are only able to accept expressions of interest from individuals and not from institutions or consultancy groups.

Successful bids will be notified by 7 February 2022. Final reviews will be due by the close of Monday 7 March 2022 and will be discussed at the IAGCI meeting in March 2022.

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## **[New measures introduced to protect savers and boost pension guidance take-up](#)**

The “Stronger Nudge to pension guidance” measures, which come into force on 1

June 2022, will require occupational pension schemes to present guidance as a routine part of accessing pension savings. They must also offer to book a Pension Wise appointment for the individual, unless they wish to opt out of receiving guidance.

Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion Guy Opperman said:

We want guidance to be available to savers when making decisions about accessing their pension pots.

These new measures support savers and further this government's commitment to ensuring people across the country have the necessary support and information they need to make informed choices about their financial futures.

The new regulations follow successful trials and a consultation launched in July 2021 by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Pension Wise is a government service that provides free, impartial, guidance to help individuals aged 50 and over consider the options for accessing their defined contribution (DC) pension.

At a Pension Wise appointment, trained specialists talk savers through their options and help them understand what their overall financial situation will be when they retire, supporting them to make the decision that's right for them.

Increasing the take-up of guidance will also help protect consumers from pensions scams, increasingly driven by fake websites and online adverts. The measures build on ongoing government work with industry, regulators and law enforcement partners to pursue fraudsters, close down the vulnerabilities they exploit, and make sure people have the information they need to spot and report scams.

The latest data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show pension saving has remained resilient throughout the pandemic, with total membership of occupational pensions up 7% on pre-pandemic levels. This includes an increase of 13% in private sector defined contribution membership.

- The government response to the Stronger Nudge to pensions guidance [consultation](#) can be found on gov.uk.
- The new rules will come into force on 1 June 2022 and will apply to savers with occupational pension schemes aged 50 or above looking to access their defined contribution pension.

Media enquiries for this press release

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## [New \\$10m UK support to tackle impact of drought in Somalia](#)

The UK's Minister for Africa, Vicky Ford MP, today (17 January 2022) announced a \$10.7 million package of UK support for Somalis affected by extreme drought, during a visit to Kenya as part of a three-country East Africa visit.

The funding will provide vital assistance such as cash to buy urgent food supplies and water to help vulnerable families across Somalia that are desperately suffering from relentless drought. The support is part of the £16.5 million package of UK support to countries in East Africa affected by extreme drought and flooding.

The drought severity in Somalia continues to worsen, with over 90% of the country experiencing drought conditions. There are close to 5 million Somalis who are hungry, and a further 3.5 million in need of urgent humanitarian assistance this year due to successive poor rains and failed harvests. A further 2.6 million people have fled their homes due to conflict.

The funding is expected to support almost 500,000 people in Somalia to access clean water and afford food supplies. This kind of early preventative action is crucial, as was learned from the 2016/17 drought in Somalia when early action and funding led by the UK helped to narrowly avoid a famine.

Climate change is driving extreme weather events across the region, worsening pre-existing drought, while poor governance and ongoing conflicts in Somalia are displacing vulnerable communities and destroying livelihoods.

On a visit to East Africa, UK Minister for Africa, Vicky Ford MP, said:

For countries in East Africa, climate change is not a future problem – it is driving a humanitarian emergency right now. Catastrophic droughts and floods, paired with ongoing conflicts and poor governance in Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia, are creating a perfect storm in East Africa which risks pushing hundreds of thousands of people into famine.

The UK's commitment to supporting our partners in East Africa is unwavering and we know that early action now can prevent mass loss of life. This funding package will provide vital assistance to almost a million people across the region, helping those affected to access clean water and healthy food.

British Ambassador to Somalia, Kate Foster, said:

The situation is extremely worrying, with millions of people in desperate need of lifesaving food and clean water. The UK is moving quickly to provide support as experience has shown that early, preventative action is vital to avoiding mass loss of life.

So far, the UK has provided £32 million in humanitarian funding this year, reaching over 1 million people with a combination of emergency and longer-term assistance.

The UK is moving quickly to provide support with an additional \$10 million of funding as experience has shown that early, preventative action is vital to avoiding mass loss of life.

The UK prioritised supporting communities affected by extreme weather events such as droughts as host of COP26 in Glasgow. As part of the historic agreement reached at the summit, wealthy nations committed to double the overall climate finance available for adaptation programmes.

The UK is a long-standing supporter of Africa's adaptation to climate change, with around half of the UK's £2.7 billion adaptation budget between 2016 and 2020 spent in Africa.

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## [New UK support to tackle impact of droughts and flooding in East Africa](#)

- Almost a million people across East Africa will be supported by new UK funding in response to one of the worst droughts in the region for decades and unprecedented flooding.
- Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan will be aided by a £17 million support package from the UK.
- Funding announced by Minister for Africa Vicky Ford while she is in Kenya as part of a three-country East Africa visit.

Minister for Africa Vicky Ford has today announced a £17 million package of UK support to countries in East Africa affected by extreme drought and flooding.

Ford made the announcement while on a three-country visit to East Africa, starting in Kenya today. The package will provide vital assistance to almost

a million people in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia who are facing the worst drought in decades, and in South Sudan who are suffering widespread flooding for a third consecutive year.

Extreme weather events associated with climate change are worsening pre-existing drought and flood cycles and ruining harvests. Poor governance and ongoing conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia are exacerbating the impact of these events by displacing vulnerable communities, destroying livelihoods and limiting access to humanitarian assistance.

Minister for Africa Vicky Ford said:

For countries in East Africa, climate change is not a future problem – it is driving a humanitarian emergency right now.

Catastrophic droughts and floods, paired with ongoing conflicts and poor governance in Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia, are creating a perfect storm in East Africa which risks pushing hundreds of thousands of people into famine.

The UK's commitment to supporting our partners in East Africa is unwavering and we know that early action now can prevent mass loss of life. This funding package will provide vital assistance to almost a million people across the region, helping those affected to access clean water and healthy food.

The UK is moving quickly to provide support as experience has shown that early, preventative action is vital to avoiding mass loss of life.

In Somalia, approximately half the population require life-saving aid due to the ongoing drought. Drought on a similar scale in 2011 led to 260,000 deaths. In Kenya the number of people in dire need of food has risen to almost 3 million.

More than 6.4 million people are estimated to require food assistance this year in drought-affected regions of Ethiopia. In South Sudan, extreme flooding paired with ongoing violence has affected 835,000 people, including by pushing more than 350,000 people from their homes.

The funding is expected to support almost 500,000 people in Somalia to access clean water and afford food supplies, as well as providing 100,000 people in South Sudan and 26,000 children in Kenya with a combination of food assistance, water and hygiene supplies.

The UK prioritised supporting communities affected by extreme weather events such as droughts as host of COP26 in Glasgow. As part of the historic agreement reached at the summit, wealthy nations committed to double the overall climate finance available for adaptation programmes.

The UK also [announced](#) the 'Room to Run' guarantee with the African Development Bank, expected to unlock up to \$1 billion worth of new financing

for projects which will help countries adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The UK is a long-standing supporter of Africa's adaptation to climate change, with around half of the UK's £2.7 billion adaptation budget between 2016 and 2020 spent in Africa.

The breakdown of today's funding announcement is below:

- Somalia – £8 million for water and cash-based support to help improve health and food security conditions, and limit displacement linked to worsening drought conditions.
- South Sudan – £3 million for food assistance and hygiene supplies to 100,000 people who are exposed to water-borne diseases and severe nutritional challenges because of protracted flooding
- Kenya – £1 million for urgent, life-saving nutritional assistance to 26,000 children in those areas worst impacted by drought.
- Ethiopia – £5 million to provide nutrition assistance to over 200,000 children and pregnant and lactating women in drought affected regions of Southern and Eastern Ethiopia.

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## [New proposals for the future of UK clinical trial legislation](#)

Press release

People are encouraged to contribute their views on far-reaching proposed revisions to the clinical trial legislation in the UK



The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has today launched [a public consultation on a set of far-reaching proposals to improve and strengthen the UK clinical trials legislation](#) to make the UK the best place to research and develop safe and innovative medicines.



Clinical trials are vitally important for achieving advances in medical treatment. Clinical trials may be conducted for a range of purposes, for example to test whether a new treatment or combination of treatments is safe and effective, or to explore new ways to use existing medicines – as has been seen with the rapid introduction of new vaccines and therapeutics for COVID-19.

This eight-week consultation seeks your views on new proposals to improve regulation of clinical trials in the best interests of patients. In line with the ambitions of the Life Sciences Vision these proposals for UK legislation seeks to make the UK the leading global centre for innovative research design and delivery, across all types of trials. This consultation aims to develop a system which promotes patient and public involvement in clinical trials, improves the diversity of participants, streamlines clinical trial approvals, enables innovation and enhances clinical trials transparency.

### **June Raine, Chief Executive of the MHRA said:**

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to review and update the UK legislation for clinical trials in order to make the UK the go-to place to develop new and innovative healthcare products.

Through the proposals outlined in this consultation we aim to reframe the legislation that underpins our regulation of clinical trials to deliver a more streamlined, transparent and flexible regulatory regime whilst always protecting patients and trial participants.

We are seeking the views of the wider public, clinical trial participants, researchers, developers, manufacturers, sponsors, investigators, healthcare professionals to help shape improvements for the future of clinical trials. We encourage you to get involved and help shape this important future legislation, for the ultimate benefit of patients.

This consultation will run from 17 January until 14 March 2022. All responses will be carefully reviewed and will inform decisions to finalise the drafting of the secondary legislation.

### **Notes to editors**

1. The [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#) is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK.
2. The MHRA is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency which also includes the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). The MHRA is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
3. The current UK legislation, The Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004, as amended, transposed the EU Clinical Trials

Directive 2021/20/EC into national law.

4. This consultation will run from 17 January, 11:00 until 14 March 2022, 23:00.
5. Find the full list of [the consultation proposals and executive summary here](#).

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