



## Country: Mexico

### Good Practice: Creation of Country-of-Origin Information Unit.

**Implementation Dates: July 2020 - present**

#### **General Description:**

In July 2020, the Country-of-Origin Information Unit (hereinafter the U-COI) was created as part of the Directorate of Protection and Return of the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) with the aim of supporting Protection Officers with the refugee status determination (RSD) procedure and contributing to decisions about applications. The U-COI was created with support from the Quality Asylum Initiative (QAI).

The Unit is based on international best practices from other States within the framework of the Regional Asylum Capacity-Building Initiative (RACBI). It seeks to institutionalize research to obtain country of origin information (COI), achieve uniform eligibility criteria and design tools for refugee status determination.

Specific functions assigned to the Unit include: a) researching and compiling COI information; b) designing RSD toolkits for countries with the highest number of applications in Mexico; c) standardize eligibility criteria for both interviews and decision-making processes; and d) conducting, coordinating and delivering training on COI and RSD, with an emphasis on country packages.

The Unit's quality standards are based on the Methodological Manual developed by COMAR, the Government of Canada and UNHCR in 2018.

#### **Activities:**

In accordance with its specific objectives, the U-COI carries out the following activities:

- *Updating and compiling COI.* Update COI for the implementation of differentiated procedures and the application of the expanded refugee definition.
- *Individual consultations.* Respond to specific enquiries from Protection Officers. While the primary responsibility for seeking information remains with the Protection Officer, the U-COI supports the expansion of enquiries to obtain specific information that has not been easily accessed and, when necessary, the translation of documents that are in other languages.
- *Training.* This includes:
  - *On the job training* including weekly case discussions
  - *Other COI and RSD training.* The U-COI is the focal point for all new staff inductions and RSD trainings at the national level (COI, information



packages, inclusion analysis, exclusion analysis, interview techniques and others).

- *Trainer of trainers (ToT)*: supports the training of trainers within the representative offices in conjunction with RACBI, UNHCR and QAI. Participants will be able to deliver training in the future.
- *Design and updating of RSD documents and tools.*
- *Monitoring of tools.* Follow-up, monitoring, support and revision of the material.
- *Interview shadowing and resolution quality analysis.* The objective is to monitor the quality of the interviews, through shadowing, as well as to analyze the quality of the decisions made. The shadowing focuses on the work carried out by Protection Officers and Interpreters. In addition, *on the job training* sessions will be provided, specifically Protection Officers and Interpreters and their working relationship during interviews.
- *Creation of communication channels and the exchange of good practices with other organizations linked to COI:* Ministry of Foreign Affairs, universities (to support students with COI research) and other countries.
- *Other activities:* These include a Support Plan for COMAR Representative Offices; the COI Storage Platform Project; Protection Officers' mailing list; and a monthly summary of updated IOC information.

### Results / Impact:

Since its creation and until the end of 2020, the U-COI began to achieve its first results in collaboration with the QAI Initiative. These include:

- Delivery of 14 *on-the-job training* sessions (every Friday from July to October) for 56 protection officers
- Delivery of toolkits with risk profiles, model resolutions and interview scripts.
- Presentation of a remote interviewing manual for the standardization of this procedure at the national level.
- Responses to regular COI queries and questions about individual cases from Protection Officers.

### Implementation challenges:

- Strengthen U-COI staff to expand outreach services (e.g., respond to individual inquiries more effectively).
- Focus the Unit's operations on the prioritization of research.
- Monitor the use of tools and COI to ensure that they are applied homogeneously.

### Partner(s):

- COMAR / UNHCR (QAI initiative) / RACBI

### Lessons learned:



- The U-COI was created thanks to technical support from the RACBI Group and QAI.
- Its initial products were very important for the design of other initiatives and tools to strengthen the RSD process, including the implementation of differentiated procedures.

**Impact of the COVID pandemic on implementation:**

- The pandemic did not impact this practice.

**Use of the Asylum Capacity Support Group mechanism:**

No.

**Additional information:**

Presentation Work Plan COI Unit 2021 (ppt)

**Subject area: Country of origin information**