



Country: Ecuador

Best Practice: *Improving Electronic Case Management through the implementation of ProGres v4 system*

General information:

Entities sharing this good practice: Directorate of International Protection (DPIN) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility

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Timeframe: 2020 - Ongoing

Description:

Ecuador is one of the Latin American countries that is home to one of the largest recognized refugee population in the region. In order to establish efficient procedures and improve its decision-making process, the Directorate of International Protection (DPIN) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility together with UNHCR developed a project "Strengthening Administrative Processes for refugee status determination (RSD) in Ecuador". One of the immediate aspects to be strengthened as part of this project was Ecuador's electronic case registration and case management system.

In December 2019, at the Global Refugee Forum, Ecuador, with the technical assistance of UNHCR, undertook to substantially improve its registration process in RSD procedure (see Ecuador's pledge here). The purpose of this commitment was to improve Ecuador's registration standards, reduce errors, and carry out the identification of people using a biometric system. Some essential actions part of this initiative stand out, such as the adoption of UNHCR's ProGres v4 system (most recent version of ProGres/case management software application), the preparation of the procedures manual for the standardization of its use, the generation of training for personnel regarding the proper management of this system, as well as the monitoring its implementation.

Until then, by virtue of a prior agreement with UNHCR, Ecuador had been using UNHCR's electronic case management system known as 'ProGres v2' to manage cases of people in need of international protection. However, ProGres v2 being an offline tool had become obsolete to cover the needs within the procedure. It is worth mentioning that it was within this context that, Ecuador utilized the ProGres v4 system, which is integrated into UNHCR's Population Registry Identity Management Ecosystem (PRIMES) and adapted to the specific Ecuadorian needs.

In this way, Ecuador markedly improved the process of registering and managing cases, because ProGres v4 enabled working in both offline and online environments, in such a way that the authorities access it from different geographical locations in the country, and a single database of information. In turn, it uses a biometric identity management system



through the capture of fingerprints and eye irises as identification mechanisms that provide security regarding the treatment of cases of people in need of international protection. In turn, ProGres v4 system allowed for the effective management within the RSD procedure in Ecuador since it provided real-time information on the procedural status of each case and identification of specific protection needs.

It should be noted that both the Ecuador Government, through the DPIN, as well as UNHCR and its partner agencies, access the ProGres v4 system. However, there is a differentiation of users through two completely independent operations units. While the Government makes use of the registration and RSD modules, UNHCR and its partner agency, HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), access the modules of assistance, protection and resettlement. The operations unit used by the Ecuador government was adapted according to the specific procedures of Ecuador, to respond to the specific needs already established.

Activities:

- Negotiation of the Agreement (Data Sharing Agreement).
- Determination of the users of national institutions and the level of access according to their functions.
- Migration of information from DPIN and HIAS databases.
- Training activities to use the system and equipment for biometric data collection.
- Training and monitoring missions to different locations in the country.
- Development of telematic communication channels (emails, calls, messages, WhatsApp) for technical support to users.

Impact of the good practice:

- By having a central repository accessible online, the ProGres v4 system facilitated the decentralization of the registry and the RSD procedure throughout the country.
- The ProGres V4 system allowed national authorities to make timely decisions on refugee issues.
- Likewise, with the database updated in real time, it enabled the generation of essential statistics for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies on the matter, which contribute to the transparency and access of public information.

Challenges:

Among the implementation challenges, it is highlighted that the ProGres v4 required the monitoring of the information load in order to harmonize criteria and avoid errors.

Likewise, working in an online technological system requires quality internet, at all times, it can generate delays in the processes within some DPIN operational locations, especially in actions on downloading reports or extracting large amounts of data. To this is added that, for the stability of the system, error reports are extracted that imply a download of additional information.

Lessons learned:

The use of ProGres v4 has demonstrated the importance for the asylum system of having a centralized computer tool that can be used online, through which the population can be registered, and their cases managed according to the corresponding procedure.



It has ensured the production of detailed statistics on the registered population, required by the different government agencies, civil society, for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, plans, programs and projects.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic:

- During the pandemic, the DPIN enabled an online pre-registration form. This information is loaded into the computer system to follow the course of the procedure.
- The collection of biometric data was discontinued, except in certain offices that continued providing face-to-face services and where refugee applicants could come in person. It should be noted that for the purpose of this activity, these offices were equipped with contactless biometric equipment and tripods for iris scanning devices (as a health measure).