

# Strengthening of the Government of Costa Rica's Asylum System through Digitalization

Costa Rica's asylum system uses systems for case management, within and outside the database designed by the General Directorate for Migration and Foreigners (DGME), which was designed for the management of migrant issues, not those of refugee populations.

The significant increase of new asylum claims in the recent years, the lack of a dedicated database or tools specific to handle the refugee status determination process has hindered the efficiency of the current system,

primarily tools for pre-registration, case management, identification of certain profiles, and other requirements. The project to develop the asylum database and related tools will enhance the quality of the national system.

With technical and financial support from UNHCR, the DGME/Refugee Unit will develop an improved system for processing asylum claims that will accelerate the document issuance process, advancing appointments and reducing waiting times to obtain official documents.

This new system will allow the Refugee Unit to reduce the number of asylum claims pending formalization and speed up the eligibility interview process.

## Identified Gaps in the Current System:

- Systems are not stable
- Hand-filled Asylum Applications
- Records maintained in various databases
- Lengthy waiting periods
- No clear prioritization mechanism for applicants with specific needs
- No unified digital biometric system
- No automatic scheduling system for eligibility interviews
- No Standard Operating Procedures
- Insufficient information available to applicants about the process

## Expected Outcomes & Results:

- Creation of an improved management system for the DGME's Refugee Unit for Registration and Refugee Status Determination to improve current asylum processes and facilitate online pre-registration.
- Reduce the backlog of over 200,000 cases pending resolution and improve efficiency in processing registration, asylum claims and document issuance.
- File review and data entry of approximately 200,000 physical files held by the Refugee Unit into the Rapid Asylum Data Entry Tool (RADET). **As of April 2021, approx. 48,488 files had been reviewed and the data was included in RADET.**



Time Frame: Approx. 14 months (2022-2023)



Budget: USD 593,304.43

## Project Phases:

### Phase 0 - *Completed*

- Initial analysis to understand the Government's Asylum process.
- **Project proposal to Strengthen and Digitize the Registration and RSD Systems was finalized and shared with the Government of Costa Rica in January 2021 for its approval.**

### Phase 1 - Registration System - *began September 2022*

- Development of a complete automated information system to allow asylum seekers to self-register online, schedule interview appointments, and through which DGME/Refugee Unit staff can validate submitted data on the same day when the asylum application is formalized ("Registration interview").
- **6 months / USD 299,262**

### Phase 2 - RSD First Instance - *To be executed in 2023*

- Design the process for Refugee Status Determination (RSD) in the new system, including Interviews, Assessments, Decisions and Notifications.
- Complete automation of requests for First Instance Resolutions.
- **6 months / USD 174,242**

### Phase 3 - Biometrics - *To be executed in 2023*

- Develop its new biometric system for the asylum system that the DGME/Refugee Unit can use to ensure interoperability with other systems.
- **6-9 months / USD 65,900**

### Phase 4 - RSD Second Instance - *To be executed in 2023*

- Complete automation of appeals on decisions for Second Instance Resolutions.
- **9-12 months / USD 53,900**

## Challenges:

- Potential delays on the part of participating institutions that affect implementation schedules.
- Ability of the DGME/Refugee Unit to continue covering maintenance costs after project conclusion.

## Next Steps:

- A recently hired UNHCR Project Coordinator will liaise with the DGME/Refugee Unit to facilitate project implementation and address issues that arise.
- Phase 1 is underway. The chosen company will, in accordance with the terms of reference, develop the first product consisting of a platform that simplifies asylum seeker registration.

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