

# Legal Identity for Refugees

Empowering Refugees and Facilitating Solutions

# Setting the Stage:

## *Who is a refugee*

- A **refugee** is someone who has been forced to **flee** their home country because of **persecution**, **war**, or **violence**. They fear serious harm due to factors **like race, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group**. Because their own countries can't or won't protect them, refugees often **seek safety in other countries**.

# Refugees have a right to legal identity

- **Article 6, UDHR:** Right to be recognized as a person before the law
- **SDG 16.9:** "provide legal identity for **ALL**, including birth registration, by 2030"
- **Article 27 of the Refugee Convention:** Right of a refugee to be issued identity papers

# Why does it matter?

## *Refugees without a legal identity face multiple challenges*

- Increased risk of **refoulement, arbitrary arrest, restricted freedom of movement**
- Lack of **access to national services**
- Significantly **reduced opportunities for socio-economic inclusion**
- Continued **dependence on humanitarian assistance**
- Danger of being **excluded** from **planning processes**
- Increased risk of **statelessness**
- **Obstacles in accessing durable solutions**

# Refugees may face hurdles in establishing legal identity

- **Weak civil registration** systems in **countries of origin**
- **Loss of documents**
- Issues with access especially for **persons with specific needs**
- **Limited knowledge** of inclusion policies
- Inability to meet **mandatory requirements**
- **Protection concerns**

# Why is inclusion important?

- **Increased protection** value of documentation
- **Access to national services**
- **Inclusion into national safety nets**
- **Included in development planning**
- Strengthened opportunities for **self-reliance**
- **Increased contributions** to host communities



Launch of the exercise in February 2025 to register refugees in Chad's Integrated Population and Secure Documents Management System (SIGPTS). © UNHCR/ Aristophane Ngargoune

# Strengthening inclusion from the start

- **Multi-stakeholder Engagement**
  - Multiple government agencies
  - Other stakeholders including RECs and development actors
- **Key enablers**
  - Collective advocacy
  - Capacity building
  - Technical support



Ibtisam Khaled Al-Barti, a Yemeni refugee living in Ethiopia, holds up her new digital ID card and business licence for her coffee shop in Addis Ababa. © UNHCR/Sona Dadi



Ibtisam serves food on Injera, a traditional Ethiopian flatbread she makes in her coffee shop. © UNHCR/Sona Dadi

# Way forward

- **Review legislative processes and development plans to support inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in national ID and civil registration systems** from the beginning
- Establish **streamlined** documentation **processes** for refugees and nationals
- **Strengthen national asylum frameworks**, including ensuring **sustainability** of such frameworks
- **Support interoperability between refugee management systems and national ID systems in line with data protection principles**

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