Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection

Investing in Asylum Action Package Committee (APC)

Summary of Mapping Exercise

Background

Under the *2022 Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection*, Canada assumed the leadership of the *Investing in Asylum* Action Package Committee (APC) and fellow members Costa Rica, the United States, and Haiti.
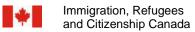
One of the commitments under the Asylum APC is to "*compile existing information on needs, current activities, and available resources into one consolidated mapping of needs and resources related to protection and asylum systems in the Hemisphere.*"

To meet this commitment, Canada has led a mapping exercise of existing nationally identified asylum system adjudication gaps and priorities in the Americas. The mapping exercise aimed to 1) identify, prioritize, and focus analysis of country priorities in terms of adjudication and 2) support the analysis of country priorities by adjudication component, allowing for more efficient assistance and support.

The APC complied information on asylum needs and gaps from publicly available sources. We then sought validation of this information from all L.A. Declaration signatory countries. As of October 31, 2023, we have received responses from thirteen countries.

The following three areas emerged as the top priorities:

1. **Adjudication tools such as digitization:** defined as a system, process, or reference document that assists a decision-maker in making quality decisions in an efficient manner.
   - Ten of the thirteen countries that provided information listed adjudication tools such as digitization as a top five priority for their country, with three countries listing it as their top priority.
   - The Most common type of support requested: Resources (Material/IT Tools)
   - Specific needs identified: computer programs to digitize documents, strengthening existing capacities, and general support for ongoing digitization work.

2. **Backlog Management:** defined as a strategy implemented to reduce the number of pending cases built up over time due to the number of cases exceeding processing capacity.
   - A close second, listed as a top five concern for seven out of the 12 countries, with another four countries listing it as their overall top priority.
   - Specific needs identified: (financial/resources/training) hiring additional personnel, strengthening the capacity of technical teams, and training.

3. **Case Management:** defined as the process of reviewing and categorizing cases to ensure that the processing as most appropriately and efficiently as possible.

- Nine countries listed it as a top five concern, including six countries that listed it as their second-highest priority.
- Most common type of support requested: recruiting staff, computer system, information exchange.
- Some countries have expressly noted they are looking for an exchange of experience with other countries in the region.

Other noteworthy results:
- The top priority for the two other countries who completed the exercise was **case processing modalities**. Under this category, countries seek to hire new staff and/or strengthen the capabilities of existing staff.
- **Contingency planning** was listed by one country as a top priority and by others as their second priority. Many countries in the region noted that they are looking for support in the case of surges or large influxes of people arriving at the border.
- **Language interpretation** was listed by one country as their top priority and the other two as two of their top five priorities.

TYPE OF RESOURCES IDENTIFIED BY AREAS OF ADJUDICATION

INFORMATION SHARING

Case Management	Sharing information (specific request for support from Mexico)
	Streamlining registration procedures
	Sharing information on case management system use
Case Processing Modalities	Sharing of best practices in case processing
	Applying differentiated case processing modalities
	Harmonizing refugee status determination (RSD) tools
	Simplifying procedures (within regulatory framework)
	Exchanging experience/sharing information on registration system/RSD procedure (specific request for support from Brazil or Mexico)
	Sharing information on case processing (specific request for support from a country with a complete COI database)
Country-of-Origin Information	Accessing relevant COI sources and databases
	Creating a regional or sub-regional COI Unit
	Training COI adjudicators
	Maintaining an updated database on country information (from nationalities requesting asylum)
Policies and procedures for decision making	Exchanging experiences/discussing lessons learned
	Simplifying decision models (within legislative framework)
	Training on determining right to asylum (including COI)
	Reviewing mechanism to guarantee quality decisions
Legislative Tools/Options	Exchanging experiences/discussing lessons learned
	Sharing experiences on processes in the region to allow for comparative studies/strengthen internal processes of RSD.
	Developing digital material for legal reference
	Modifying national regulations to adjust regulatory assumptions (given increasing umbers of applicants for refugee status)

Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

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TRAINING

Case Management	Improving the effectiveness of case management and RSD procedure
Case Processing Modalities	Identify/ set up systems required to process different types of cases
	Including expedited procedures in the RSD protocol
	Strengthening staff technical capacities including facilitating registration and accessing procedure
	Updating international standards
Country-of-Origin Information	Training adjudicators on COI
	Learning about processing modalities (specific request for support from Mexico)
	Strengthening COI knowledge and developing COI reports
	Training on research methodologies, alternative sources, continuous exchange of COI including a possible regional repository
	Drafting internal guidelines to guide eligibility officers on specific nationalities
	Learning about social reality/armed actors in specific countries
Policies and procedures for decision making	Training on processing/ decision-making of requests refugee status
	Guaranteeing effectiveness of processing of asylum applications, from registration to the final decision.
Legislative Tools/Options	Drafting a regulatory decree
Appeals	Training in legal procedures/establishing a legal framework
	Supporting appeal decision making (to reduce appeal backlog)
	Establishing application process to appeal asylum claims
	Strengthening performance and response capacity (theory and practice)
	Learning about international refugee law, intl protection & RSD
	Appealing a decision (for secretariat staff/civil society)
Interpretation	Facilitating language interpretation in Refugee Unit
	Training in English, French, Creole, Portuguese, Mandarin, Cantonese and Arabic
Backlog Management	Training in RSD; strengthening technical team/decision maker capabilities
	Holding a backlog management workshop
Contingency Planning	Educating staff on latest developments in contingency planning; identifying and dealing with influx

FUNDING

Case Management	Recruiting permanent staff to handle requests/applications for recognition of refugee status
	Opening regional offices for better access to low-income populations
Case Processing Modalities	Improving office infrastructure (e.g. confidential interview space; providing a safe environment for claimants)
Country-of-Origin Information	Staffing COI unit to generate country reports to support eligibility officers
Policies and procedures for decision making	Strengthening commissioner/technicians to review cases and improve decision-making process
	Hiring staff to process pending applications
Adjudication Tools	Setting up electronic filing, research database, case management etc.
	Financing further development of information management system for RSD
	Automating safe-conducts of stay for refugee claimants and temporary protection permit applications, improving interoperability of computer systems between agencies

	Strengthening development/implementation capabilities of digital system
	Exchanging experiences to apply and systematize case management
	Improving sustainability of the digitalization process and optimizing use of new database (including digital signature)
	Maintaining efficient digital and physical filing system that allows access to processed cases
Legislative Tools/Options	Reforming legislation; updating RSD protocol
Appeals	Hiring personnel to process appeals
	Training personnel to respond to revoked appeals
	Reducing delays to process appeals
Interpretation	Training officers in languages common to refugees
	Covering interpretation and translation expenses when required.
	Creating a training plan for staff and/or hiring of interpreters
	Accommodating online interpretation
	Hiring interpreters
Backlog Management	Hiring personnel to support processing backlog of cases
	Printing documentation for backlog of RSD applications
	Training for personnel to address backlog
	Develop case closure strategy (in accordance with procedural guarantees)
	Develop communication campaign for asylum seekers with pending files
	Supporting legal and administrative personnel in analyzing backlog of cases
Contingency Planning	Including contingency plans in RSD protocol.
	Facilitating asylum access at border points and airports
	Renovating existing infrastructure used to interview asylum seekers
	Establishing action plan through prima facie (also including training and exchange of experience),
	Hiring staff to carry out contingency plans

RESOURCES (MATERIALS/IT TOOLS)

Case Management	Developing a case management software/system (including confidentiality of information, generation of statistics)
	Providing IT equipment for admissibility officers (at HQ and in field)
	Streamlining registration procedures/ use of case management system
	Developing a timely response process for fair/efficiency identification of those with urgent needs (and those who do not meet requirements for international protection)
	Ensuring interoperability of databases
	Launching offices in areas with more presence of migrants; more work areas of registration/eligibility officers
	Launching a program for emotional and psychological support for registration and eligibility staff
	Purchasing desktop computers for staff
	Supporting staff in registration and administration of refugee database for more efficient case processing (including information exchange with other government entities)
	Computer system to allow cases to be recorded, edited, and shared between the CORE Permanent Secretariat
Case Processing Modalities	Applying refugee definition and simplified procedures effectively
	Hiring staff to support registration, interviews, renewals of documents for refugee status determination
	Developing a computer system similar to the one used for Case management
Country-of-Origin Information	Hiring specialized personnel to manage the COI database
Policies and procedures for	Accessing current best practices and training
	Supporting a consolidated database of decisions
	Facilitating access to asylum and information about the process for asylum seekers.

decision making	Developing technical applications
Adjudication Tools	Supporting and implementing digitization work and archiving documents (including computer programs and equipment to facilitate file review, free up office space, facilitate certificate preparation and authentication)
	Developing a more comprehensive registration system
	Ensuring greater sustainability in staff capacity building through training on key issues (refugee status determination, credibility, interview techniques, exclusion analysis, best practices)
Legislative Tools/Options	Ensuring revised legislation complies with 1951 convention principles
	Developing a legal provision for State protection for refugees/asylum-seekers
	Reviewing and adapting current legislation to address gaps
	Raising level of refugee office from national office to general directorate (larger budget, hiring more personnel and acquiring more resources)
Appeals	Analyzing necessity of including appeal to resolution of non-admission
Interpretation	Developing, hiring, and maintaining a national network of interpreters to facilitate interviews
Backlog Management	Providing tools to address backlogs
	Hiring database assistants/personnel to reduce backlog cases
	Developing and implementing a validation strategy for pending cases
	Efficiently processing files and reducing/managing delays
Contingency Planning	Developing telematic assistance tool with identification and geo-reference detector for applicants and recognized refugee status to grant documents, in case of difficulty of mobilization due to security and/or climatic phenomenon
	Developing tools/strategies for expedited procedures in case of surge in flows/sudden increase in claims

DEFINITIONS

Priority Needs

1. Case Management	The process of reviewing and categorising cases to ensure processing in the most appropriate and efficient manner possible.
2. Case Processing Modalities	Refers to the procedure resulting in a determination of whether the individual concerned is a refugee. Case-processing modalities are differentiated based on how refugee status is determined, not why or by whom. Case processing modalities use triage and case management to ensure that less complex cases, for example, are processed more efficiently and timely.
3. Country of Origin Information (COI)	Information used in procedures that assess claims to refugee status or other forms of international protection. COI supports legal advisors and persons making decisions on international protection in their evaluation of the socio-political situation in countries of origin.
4. Policies and Procedures for decision making	Non-statutory instruments which guide a decision-maker and support staff regarding the processing and adjudication of refugee claims.

5. **Adjudication (such as digitization)**	A system, process, or reference document which assists a decision-maker in making quality decisions in an efficient manner.
6. **Legislative tools/options**	The legislative and regulatory framework which governs the procedural and substantive processing of refugee claims.
7. **Appeals**	A mechanism by which a person can contest a decision of a lower-level decision maker to a higher-level decision maker.
8. **Interpretation (language)**	The act by which one person (the interpreter) helps another person (e.g., refugee claimant) understand what is being said and to communicate during the refugee determination process.
9. **Backlog Management**	A strategy implemented to reduce the number of pending cases built up over time due to the number of cases exceeding processing capacity.
10. **Contingency Planning**	A course of action or a strategic plan designed to help an organization respond effectively to a significant future situation or event that may or may not happen.

Type of Support

Financial Support	Refers to a funding or monetary need to address the identified priority
Information Sharing	Refers to a need to exchange information, best practices with another entity or country to address the identified priority
Resources (material/IT tools)	Refers to a need for materials (such as IT equipment, tools, offices, etc.) to address the identified priority
Training	Refers to an activity aimed at increasing knowledge in relation to the identified priority need (such as technical trainings, mentorship opportunities between countries, workshop, courses, etc.).