ASYLUM CAPACITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

HOW-TO GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement are fundamental to the international protection system. Implementing a fair and efficient asylum procedure is a crucial element of a State's full and inclusive application of the international protection regime. Rapid decision-making on asylum applications, including through group or other differentiated case processing modalities, allows those entitled to international protection to obtain firm legal status quickly, enabling them to move toward solutions, including self-reliance, and contribute to the local community. In addition, having fair and final decisions processed in a reasonable time makes it easier to return those applicants found not to be in need of international protection in compliance with their rights and dignity.

The increasing numbers of asylum applications seen in recent years have challenged States' ability to effectively to manage their borders and implement quality asylum procedures. In 2023, 3.6 million new individual asylum applications were registered in addition to nearly 2 million individuals who received protection through group or temporary protection mechanism.[1] At the end of the year, 6.9 million asylum-seekers were waiting on a decision.

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[1] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Global Trends Report 2023, chapter 4 "Asylum trends", pp. 30-38, www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023.

Many States globally have taken initiatives to strengthen their asylum systems, through activities aimed at improving asylum registration, refugee status determination (RSD) at first instance and appeal or the process of documentation of recognized refugees. Interventions have targeted the legal and policy framework, asylum institutions, the simplification and automation of procedures, capacitating the workforce as well as reinforcing the role of asylum-seekers to enhance fairness and efficiency. Such efforts are often supported by UNHCR and other stakeholders through different engagements depending on the scope and level of capacity targeted by the initiatives.[2] While such initiatives have led to improvements, there is a need to increase the impact of asylum strengthening work. An independent evaluation of UNHCR's support for Strengthening National Asylum Systems issued in 2022 recommended the systematic implementation of capacity development methodology be taken when strengthening national asylum systems. It also found that capacity development is most effective when conducted as a mid- to long-term initiative through a whole-of-society approach in order to better meet the protection needs of asylum-seekers and refugees.

To achieve greatest impact, initiatives to strengthen asylum capacity must also be grounded in an evidence-based assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the system. Creating this evidence base is reason for the creation of this Asylum Capacity Self-Assessment Tool. Using best practice methodologies, the Tool supports asylum authorities, in coordination with relevant stakeholders, to undertake an assessment of the capacities, strengths and weaknesses of the national asylum system. Such an assessment can serve as the foundation for the development of a capacity development response, which, in turn, leads to a stronger and more effective asylum system.

What is the Asylum Capacity Self-Assessment Tool?

The Tool is composed of this How-To Guide and of the Asylum Capacity Self-Assessment Questionnaire (Self-Assessment Questionnaire), which is an essential component of the asylum capacity assessment process. The How-To Guide provides step-by-step guidance on how to conduct a self-assessment and assists in developing an effective capacity development response and the Self-Assessment Questionnaire supports in data collection and analysis. The proposed process is designed to fit any type of national asylum system and context and provides for options for customization.

The Tool assists asylum authorities in assessing the capacities, strengths and weaknesses of their asylum system. It focuses on the core functions of an asylum system, relating to access to asylum and the determination of refugee status (including registration and RSD functions). The Tool particularly includes a review of capacities relating to:

- Organizational structures;
- Planning and resource management (including workforce);
- Case processing and management (including technology enablers);
- Material assets and infrastructure;
- Operational considerations;
- Oversight, feedback mechanisms and risk mitigation; and
- Stakeholder engagement.

The Tool is based on the capacity development methodology developed by the UN Sustainable Development Group, in which capacity development is defined as: "the

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[2] Capacity is defined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) as: "the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully". UN Sustainable Development Group, Capacity Development - UNDAF Companion Guidance, 2017, p.5.

process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time, in order to achieve development results".[3] Capacity is in this context defined as: "the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully".[4] The Tool takes these definitions, and the related methodology, and applies it to asylum systems at different levels of capacity (at the individual, organizational and at the level of the enabling environment). It aims to help national authorities prioritize strengthening their institutional capacity and develop evidence-based and cost-effective plans to strengthen asylum systems.

The Tool includes guidance on the analysis of the assessment results and the development of a response to facilitate the use of these findings in the development of a practical plan of high-impact, prioritized actions that can be taken to strengthen asylum capacities. Through this process, the quality of asylum systems – that is, the fairness, efficiency, adaptability, and integrity – improves.[5]

Who is the Tool designed for?

The Asylum Capacity Self-Assessment Tool is designed for use by State asylum authorities in charge of ensuring access and determining the entitlement to international protection. The Tool encourages using a whole-of-society approach through the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders and UNHCR.

The Tool promotes the inclusion of diverse actors who are directly involved in asylum procedures as well as those who make more "indirect" contributions to the capacities in an asylum system, such as line ministries and departments with cross-cutting competencies (the ministry responsible for civil service management and reform or the ministry of finance and planning for instance). Other stakeholders that should be considered include development actors, international financial institutions, United Nations (UN) agencies, regional organizations and platforms, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the judiciary, academia, ombudspersons, national human rights institutions as well as the private sector.

The Tool also promotes the meaningful participation of asylum-seekers and refugees, who, as users of asylum systems, have an important role to play in providing feedback and information to support the development of effective procedures.[6]

When should the Tool be used?

It is recommended that the Tool be used both periodically, at least every five years, as well as in response to ad hoc needs. As the Tool is adaptable to different situations, it could be used in response to a number of challenges facing an asylum system. For example, it could be used where there are indications that the legal framework is outdated, or if timelines in the asylum process are consistently not being met, or in case of complaints regarding the quality of procedures or excessive staff-turnover.

A capacity assessment of the asylum system is also relevant where wider institutional changes or realignments are implemented by government authorities to refocus or modify the mandate of the asylum institutions.

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[3] UN Sustainable Development Group, Capacity Development - UNDAF Companion Guidance, 2017, p.5.

[4] Ibid.

[5] The Global Compact on Refugees highlights the characteristics of **fairness**, **efficiency**, **adaptability**, and **integrity** to describe a quality asylum system. See ExCom Conclusions No. 8 (XXVIII) – 1977, No. 30 (XXXIV) – 1983) and No. 91 (LII) - 2001.

[6] Feedback of the communities seeking asylum on a state's territory is important to understand the "user" experience, which is critical in helping identify issues and lessons that can be used as part of the asylum capacity assessment.

REINFORCING ASYLUM SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF ONWARD AND MIXED MOVEMENT

A common challenge in recent years is a significant rise in the number of asylum applications, made in the context of onward and mixed movements of refugees and migrants. In such contexts, asylum systems may struggle to efficiently identify those with international protection needs from those that do not and who may be using the asylum channel to temporarily regularize their stay in the absence of migratory options. This task is made more difficult by the fact that refugees and migrants may use similar routes, means of transport and/or facilitators. Establishing or strengthening asylum systems in countries along key mixed movement routes is vital to provide refugees with rights and protection as soon as possible after displacement and to ensure that asylum systems can function effectively, even under pressure. Strengthened asylum systems is a central pillar of the route-based approach proposed by UNHCR, which aims to comprehensively address challenges caused by mixed movements.[7] In this context, the Tool can be used to develop evidence-based and costed plans to strengthen capacities of asylum systems so as to support in the effective management of onward and mixed movements.

What support can UNHCR provide during an asylum capacity assessment?

In line with its mandate and supervisory role provided for in the 1951 Convention, UNHCR supports States in improving their asylum systems to ensure they operate in the most effective way possible.[8] UNHCR has supported the creation and strengthening of national asylum systems through a range of activities and actions that aim to increase the State's capacity to implement and manage such procedures, to improve their quality and enhance their sustainability and ownership. These projects have ranged in scope, level of capacity targeted and engagement by UNCHR – from advice and technical assistance to more comprehensive capacity development support.

In addition to its direct support to strengthening asylum systems, UNHCR has been tasked in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) to establish the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG).[9] Launched during the 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the ACSG contributes to the objectives of the GCR by increasing the availability and effectiveness of asylum capacity support to States. While UNHCR continues to assist States in improving their asylum system to ensure they operate in the most effective way possible, there are situations where additional or new support is needed. The ACSG precisely serves this purpose by leveraging pledges and commitments made during GRFs, promoting collaboration among States and other stakeholders and facilitating exchange of knowledge and expertise in this field.

To support an asylum capacity assessment UNHCR may, depending on the circumstances and resources available:

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[7] For further information, see UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), A Route-Based Approach: Strengthening Protection and Solutions in the Context of Mixed Movements of Refugees and Migrants, June 2024.

[8] For further information, see UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), A Route-Based Approach: Strengthening Protection and Solutions in the Context of Mixed Movements of Refugees and Migrants, June 2024.

[9] For further information regarding the Global Compact on Refugees, see paragraph 62 of the booklet, p. 23.

- Provide technical advice during the process of the assessment;
- Provide resources to implement the asylum capacity assessment (with UNHCR personnel joining the assessment team);
- Support national authorities to set up a governance structure (including a reference group and assessment team);
- Support the mapping of different stakeholders to engage during the steps of the assessment;
- Facilitate opportunities to leverage partnerships for resource mobilization and collaboration on the asylum capacity assessment and future Asylum Capacity Development (ACD) initiatives; and,
- Mobilize support for the assessment process, including through the GCR and ACSG matches, to get technical, material, or financial resources.

FIVE STEPS OF AN ASYLUM CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The complexity and scope of asylum capacity assessments vary depending on context, available resources, and staff. However, any self-assessment should follow a systematic approach (summarized in the figure below) informed by key principles which include ownership, multi-stakeholder engagement, expertise of the relevant actors, participatory methods, evidence-based decision-making, sustainability and accountability.

For instance, engaging a wide range of stakeholders throughout the capacity assessment process ensures that the assessment has the requisite buy-in and is well adapted to the context and needs. It also promotes ownership, and allows for the creation of synergies with other areas of government, facilitates appropriate resourcing, as well as planning and programming processes.

1.	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**
Undertake an Initial Situation Analysis	Plan the Asylum Capacity Assessment	Conduct the Assessment	Analyze the Results and Conduct a Root Cause Analysis	Develop an Asylum Capacity Development Response
Timeframe: 2-4 weeks	Timeframe: 4-8 weeks	Timeframe: 4-8 weeks	Timeframe: 2-4 weeks	Timeframe: 2-4 weeks

I.
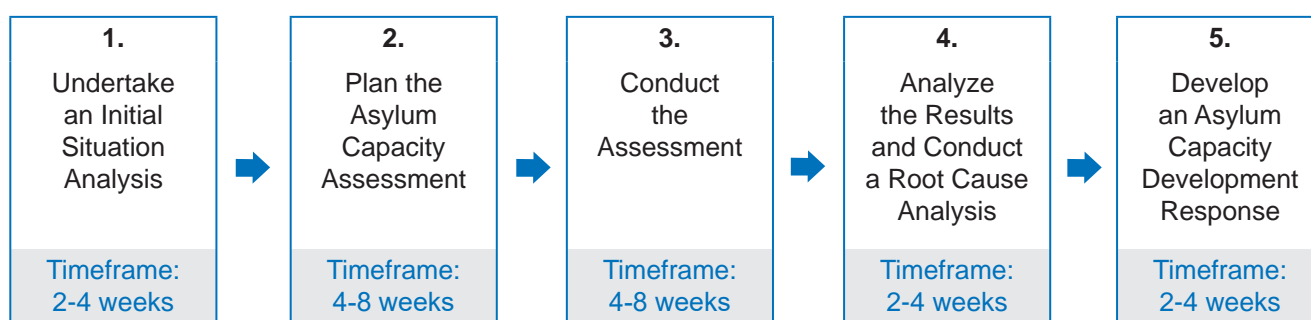
UNDERTAKE AN INITIAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

An asylum capacity assessment starts with a dialogue within the asylum authority or authorities to decide on the need for and focus of intended asylum capacity assessment. This initial discussion should be documented in a brief **initial situation analysis report**. This initial situation analysis should define the objectives of the assessment and the capacity areas to be assessed. The analysis would further include an initial indication regarding the necessary resources (human, financial and material) required to conduct the assessment. In order to ensure engagement with necessary stakeholders in a future assessment, this situation analysis should also include an initial stakeholder mapping.

The initial situation analysis is distinct from the second step of the process, the design of the assessment, in that it does not yet address questions related to the methodology, implementation modalities, data analysis and validation.

The outcomes of the situation analysis could suggest a wider or narrower scope for the assessment than initially contemplated. Sometimes, the conclusion to the initial situation analysis will be that a full assessment is not needed and that a partial process addressing specific areas of the asylum system is the most appropriate and effective approach. In

other cases, the initial situation analysis might conclude that it is not necessary to proceed with an assessment or that it is better to conduct it at a later date.

The approach to the initial situation analysis will depend on the country context and available resources. Usually, a senior manager in the ministry, department, or agency specifically in charge of refugee issues (i.e. the assessment owner) will take the initiative to explore the need for a capacity self-assessment. This person should mandate a small team of three to four individuals, consisting of key personnel from the asylum authorities, to conduct the initial analysis. UNHCR staff and other stakeholders could also be invited to join this team.[10] Depending on the scope of the planned capacity assessment, some individuals involved in the situation analysis may be included in the assessment team to be established in Step 2 (Plan the Asylum Capacity Assessment) to ensure continuity throughout the process.

In conducting the initial situation analysis, the team should:

1. IDENTIFY THE SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF AN ASSESSMENT

Whenever an asylum capacity assessment is conducted, it must be tailored to the actual capacities, weaknesses, and operational environment of the asylum system in question. This customization will ensure that results are relevant and strategic. A brief overview of the asylum processes facilitated by a SWOT analysis looking at the strengths, weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats for the asylum system will guide the scope of a capacity assessment.[11] The initial situation analysis should also help prevent duplication of initiatives by looking at any previous asylum capacity assessment findings.

> For example, where there is a significant backlog only at appeal, it might be initially agreed that the assessment will focus on appeal capacities. However, during the situation analysis it may be uncovered that weaknesses in first instance are leading to high rates of appeal, meaning that the first instance process should be included in the assessment.

To define the overall scope and objectives of an assessment and priority capacity areas to be addressed, the team should undertake a desk review. Relevant documents to be reviewed include those covering the functioning of the asylum process, legal and policy documents related to asylum, procedural guidelines of the asylum authority and its entities, organizational charts, organigrams, statistics (e.g. number of new and pending asylum applications, case processing statistics, and lengths of the first and appeal instances), as well as previous assessments and evaluations. The collection of information should focus on developing an understanding of the context and the main issues that need to be assessed. Further, the initial analysis should determine if the assessment will look at the entire asylum system, or focus on addressing specific, more defined challenges.

The team should employ a "light-touch" approach that is sufficient for determining the scope and objectives of an assessment, rather than doing "an assessment before the assessment".

An initial analysis report should document the need for a capacity assessment and the identification of its scope. The report should also include the objective and key areas of focus of the assessment. It will support planning a potential asylum capacity assessment by specifying the key steps of the process and their timing.

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[10] See page 13 below to have an overview of the various roles that stakeholders involved in an asylum capacity assessment may have. Further information on capacity assessment roles can be found in UNDP's capacity assessment methodology user guide: UNDP, Capacity Assessment Methodology: Users' Guide, 2008, pp. 8-9.
[11] A SWOT analysis is a strategic tool for use in a context analysis to outline the positives and negatives of a project.

2. MAP THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO BE ENGAGED

The team should then identify the key stakeholders to be part of the assessment. Some will have to be engaged throughout the process, while others will only participate at specific stages. Determining the relevant stakeholders to be engaged will depend on the focus of the assessment and on their capacities to effectively support the process (technical expertise, institutional knowledge, political influence, etc.). In addition to key individuals from the asylum authorities (e.g. the ministry in charge of asylum issues and the asylum bodies), other relevant government stakeholders (e.g. other line ministries, the judiciary, parliament, and national human rights institutions) and external actors (non-governmental organizations and regional/international stakeholders) may contribute to the initiative.[12] The inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees, as primary users of the asylum system, is critical regardless of the assessment scope.

It is good practice to include the stakeholder mapping (with names, functions, and ideally areas of potential influence) as an annex to the initial analysis report.

3. VALIDATE THE INITIAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

After delimiting the scope of the assessment and identifying the key stakeholders to be involved, the focus of the assessment should be validated. It is good practice to consult external stakeholders using existing coordination or consultation mechanisms to obtain feedback that can enhance the outcomes of the initial situation analysis.

Once the relevant feedback has been incorporated, the preliminary results of the analysis should be endorsed as per government practice and relevant institutional mechanisms. These results will consequently inform the first discussion(s) between the key stakeholders who will partake in the assessment (see Step 2. Plan the Asylum Capacity Assessment). It will also facilitate the identification of a budget for the assessment during the planning phase.

SUMMARY OF KEY STEPS:

At the end of this stage, the team should have:

1. Concluded on whether conducting an asylum capacity assessment is appropriate.

If a capacity assessment will proceed, the team should additionally have:

2. Decided the objective and key area(s) of focus of the assessment;
3. Identified the relevant stakeholders to be part of the assessment; and,
4. Developed a report that documents the outcomes of the initial situation analysis and confirms the discussions.

Expected Timeframe: 2-4 weeks.

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[12] Outside of government, external actors may include civil society and non-government organizations, regional organizations, international development and financial institutions, UN agencies, etc.

II.

PLAN THE ASYLUM CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Based on the initial situation analysis, the asylum capacity assessment should then be designed and planned. Agreement should be reached on the methods to be used for the assessment, the sequencing of the process, and the way in which the data analysis will be carried out. This step should also identify the relevant actors to be involved, both as assessment team members and respondents, cost the activities and confirm the budget for the assessment. It should be noted that the sequencing within this second step (design, plan and engage) can vary depending on the context.

An assessment team should be formed by the assessment owner, the person who originally initiated the capacity assessment. This team should be composed of an assessment coordinator and key individuals with relevant expertise for the implementation of the assessment. The team will be responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the assessment process, facilitate discussions around the assessment, and ensure reporting on progress of the assessment to stakeholders and to the assessment owner. UNHCR staff could also be invited to join the team.

Depending on the context, it could be relevant to establish a **"reference group"** composed of senior officials from various key national entities and other partners who can provide inputs and support to the assessment. This reference group, closely liaising with the assessment owner and coordinator, could ensure the prioritization of the process, resource mobilization and synergies with national planning, budgeting and programming processes. It may also advance the process with additional decision-making authority when difficulties arise. The UNHCR Representative or other UNHCR senior staff could be involved in this reference group.

For instance in the context of an assessment process supported by UNHCR, which targets the efficiency of the RSD first instance procedure, the assessment team could be composed of: the head of the asylum agency/department, the heads of the registration and eligibility units and a UNHCR Senior Protection Officer. These stakeholders will have the relevant expertise in relation with the asylum procedure and therefore are important for the implementation of the assessment.

The assessment team should have the possibility to engage ad hoc team members for specific activities in the assessment, including design, assessment implementation, interpretation of data and analysis. The assessment team should refer to the stakeholder mapping of the initial situation analysis and validate the actors who, depending on their expertise and influence, may provide support to this design phase. These individuals can be senior technical officers, such as heads of units with sufficient experience and knowledge to have a comprehensive understanding of the asylum system. It is important that the assessment plan is developed in consultation with the key stakeholders who have been mapped in the situation analysis and who will be involved throughout the assessment process. This will allow for discussion to clarify any outstanding questions at the outset and ensure a common understanding of the process among the different actors engaged in the initiative.

Depending on the context, if, for example, civil servants from the Ministry of Finance are omitted from discussions, a knowledge gap may be present in initial discussions around weaknesses and priority areas of focus related to the forecasting of budgets.

The outcome of this second step of the asylum capacity assessment should be an **assessment plan**. The assessment plan should provide details about the methodology to be used, the activities and tasks planned, the stakeholders responsible for each activity, the estimated timeframe for completion and the related costs. The assessment plan should be shared with the relevant stakeholders and be endorsed by the assessment owner before its implementation (see Step 3. Conduct the Assessment).

1. AGREE ON THE METHODOLOGY

Based on the objective and focus outlined in the situation analysis, the assessment methodology should be determined by the assessment team. The methods selected will depend on the scope and complexity of the initiative, resources, and the number of stakeholders involved. To agree on the methodology, the assessment team should look at the required data comprehensively but also reflect on its own capacity to collect, analyze and report on the data. For instance, collecting a large amount of data is only productive if the team has the capacity to analyze it. The budget and potential to mobilize partners to contribute are further important considerations.

For example, by only focusing on feedback from staff conducting registration, broader systemic issues affecting the efficiency of registration may be overlooked; or, by exclusively examining past statistical trends in the recognition rate of asylum-seekers, efficiencies in process or the quality of decisions will not be addressed.

It is recommended to use the Self-Assessment Questionnaire as the core data collection method for the capacity assessment. The Questionnaire is designed to fit any type of national asylum system and context and provide information about its strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. In order to complement the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, further data collection methods should be considered to allow for the collection of a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. Complementary methods, described below, also provide important additions depending on the context and focus of the assessment.[13]

a) The Self-Assessment Questionnaire: The modules of the Questionnaire are composed of statements to which respondent(s) answer on a scale indicating their level of agreement. The statements are organized into thematic modules, four of which are mandatory, with an additional five optional modules (including optional sub-modules). **The assessment team should customize the Questionnaire to suit their needs by selecting from the optional modules and sub-modules those that are relevant to the focus of the assessment.**

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[13] For further information, see UNDP, Capacity Assessment Methodology: Users' Guide, 2008. pp. 13-15; United Nations Development Group, UNDG Capacity Assessment Methodology User Guide: for national capacity development, 2008.

THE SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE IS COMPOSED OF 9 MODULES AND 20 SUB-MODULES:

MANDATORY MODULES:

1. Enabling Environment

2. Normative Framework
   2.1. General
   2.2. Registration
   2.3. RSD First Instance
   2.4. RSD Appeal Instance

3. Stakeholder Engagement

4. Planning and Resources Management
   4.1. General
   4.2. Budget of the Asylum Entities

OPTIONAL MODULES:

5. Operational Considerations
   5.1. Registration
   5.2. RSD First Instance
   5.3. RSD Appeal Instance

6. Processing of Personal Data and File Management System
   6.1. General considerations
   6.2. File Management system

7. Workforce
   7.1. Registration
   7.2. RSD First Instance
   7.3. RSD Appeal Instance

8. Material Assets and Infrastructure
   8.1. General
   8.2. Electronic Systems

9. Oversight, Feedback Mechanisms and Risk Mitigation
   9.1. General
   9.2. Registration
   9.3. RSD First Instance
   9.4. RSD Appeal Instance

A detailed description is available in the 'Structure and Content of the Asylum Capacity Self-Assessment Questionnaire' document.

For example, when the focus of the assessment is the RSD appeal instance, it is relevant to select the optional modules No. 5, 7, 9 and the related sub-modules No. 5.3, 7.3, 9.4.

To complete the Questionnaire, the assessment team should decide between the following two approaches:

i) A multi-stakeholder team, composed of the relevant actors, that goes through each question together and makes a reasoned estimation of the value to attribute to each answer; or,

ii) The different relevant stakeholders who individually fill out the Questionnaire or relevant parts. The final scores for each question will be determined based on an average of their respective scores.

The choice of the approach will depend on context. For example, if the scope of the assessment is complex, with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the process, the second option is more appropriate. If the first option is selected, it is important that the multi-stakeholder team is supported by technical personnel who can speak to questions in specific modules and sub-modules. With that, complementary information will be given to provide an accurate picture of the reality in the country.

b) Mapping of the asylum process: Mapping the asylum process from registration to final decision on refugee status is a useful way to visualize sequences and to study structures within the asylum institution. Based on available information, this mapping provides a detailed description of the overall asylum process flow from initial submission of the application to the receipt of a final decision by an applicant; providing a clear picture of the procedures, systems, and capacity in place. This could be done through a workshop with key players, or by one person who will monitor the processing of an asylum application, or through key informant interviews.

c) Analysis of statistical data: Analyzing and interpreting relevant statistical data is useful to identify trends to provide an insight into strengths and weaknesses in national asylum systems. Data to consider within the scope of the assessment include the number of asylum applications, RSD decisions in first and appeal instances, average processing time in days (from registration to first instance interview/and to first instance asylum decision, from appeal submission to appeal decision), divergent recognition rates across decision-makers, number of cases pending decision at first and appeal instances, etc. These data should be cross-checked with other information to assess if there are certain types of cases that experience delays over others (e.g. a regular versus a fast-track process) or if there are bottlenecks (e.g. some cases remain pending for lengthy periods due to lack of interpreters).

OTHER STANDARD METHODS

In addition to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire and the other recommended methods, the assessment team could consider the following :

- **Focus group discussions:** These are organized semi-structured discussions to gain detailed qualitative information about views and experiences from multi-stakeholder groups. It could be held with a diverse group of asylum-seekers and refugees across the age, gender, and diversity spectrum, civil servants working within the asylum system, civil society organizations, donors and other actors. The composition of the focus group would depend on the area on which additional data was necessary.

- **Key informant interviews:** These are qualitative in-depth interviews with individuals who have first-hand knowledge about a particular issue. Such interviews are helpful to better understand a topic or challenge in detail. For instance, it is useful to gather information from personnel involved in the registration and RSD processes (e.g. registration, RSD and appeal personnel, personnel responsible for scheduling cases) who may speak to the more symptomatic issues of capacity gaps. Supervisors and senior staff (e.g. heads of units, quality assurance/risk managers) may provide a broader outlook on the asylum system and potentially root causes. When conducting key informant interviews, it is important that there is no power dynamic that would inhibit the ability of people to share data. For instance, a supervisor should not interview his/her supervisees.

- **Analyzing feedback mechanisms from refugees and asylum-seekers:** Conducting an analysis of trends through feedback mechanisms may provide an indication as to where some of the weaknesses in an asylum system may lie. Concerns related to processing times, inability to understand or a lack of available communications from the asylum authority, integrity concerns or inability to effectively contact the asylum authority, may be symptoms of institutional gaps.

- **Observation of interviews and/or transect walk:** Observation of registration or RSD interviews allows assessors to gain first-hand experience by looking at key steps in asylum processing. A transect walk allows assessors to walk through asylum facilities to observe, discuss and listen to the experiences of people encountered.

- **Surveys of asylum staff, refugees, asylum-seekers, and other stakeholders:** These provide a systematic method of gathering data, such as user experience. The results of surveys can be quantified, analyzed, and provide information about perceptions and concerns.

In addition to the selection of data collection methods required for the purpose of the assessment, the assessment team should also agree on how the data will be analyzed, utilized, and reported. The findings of the Questionnaire will have to be reviewed while qualitative data from focus group discussions or key informant interviews will have to be compiled and summarized to draw out key conclusions. To maintain consultation throughout the process, joint analysis and validation of the results of the assessment is important. This is often most effectively accomplished through a validation meeting or workshop: a presentation of the key results to the stakeholders involved in the assessment and for other actors who will support the formulation of recommendations for a capacity development response (see Step 4. Analyze the Results and Conduct a Root Cause Analysis).

2. CONFIRM MODALITIES AND BUDGET

Once the assessment has been designed, the implementation modalities should be clearly set out. Based on the scope identified, the methodology and the outputs to be achieved, this section of the assessment plan should indicate in detail how, by whom and when the assessment will be undertaken. This should include the different activities, their locations, estimated timeframe for each task as well as the roles and responsibilities of key actors.

The assessment team should also finalize the budget for the assessment, considering cost effectiveness and possible in-kind contributions. In general, the assessment process may not need many additional resources as many of the resources may already be available in-house. Thus, the team should identify and cost only the necessary additional activities such as for example location rental for workshops, translation, stationery, reproduction of materials, etc. The assessment team could equally explore the potential of in-kind contributions from other stakeholders (e.g. secondment of technical personnel, equipment loans, facilitation of logistical arrangements, provision of refreshment for meetings, and workshops, etc.).

3. ASSIGN ROLES FOR THE ASSESSMENT

The assessment team members should assign roles for the assessment. Stakeholders can play different roles including providing technical advice about the implementation and validation, collaborating during the implementation, participating as respondents or key informants, or supporting other steps in the assessment. They can also contribute to disseminating results and defining recommendations for follow-up. Against this background, the following roles should be considered:

- **Assessment respondents and key informants:** Respondents provide data for the assessment through the assessment Questionnaire, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and other dialogues. By providing information on their understanding of the functioning of the asylum system, respondents provide the basis for the assessment of the level of existing capacity. Common assessment respondents are staff working in the asylum system, staff working for other relevant government ministries/departments, UNHCR, national human rights institutions and legal aid providers as well as refugees and asylum-seekers.

- **Other stakeholders:** Additional actors can be invited to the final joint analysis and validation of findings. The participation of a broader stakeholder group during the final stages of the assessment will ensure buy-in and agreement on conclusions and recommendations for planning the capacity development response. Depending on the context, these may include other UN agencies, civil society organizations contributing to the asylum process, development actors, donors and private sector organizations.

- **Sponsor(s):** Influential leaders or organizations who can provide political support for the initiative, including by their impact on the prioritization and resource mobilization or by generating synergies with national planning, budgeting and programming processes. When the assessment team encounters resistance during the assessment and requires additional decision-making authority to advance the process, they may refer to such leaders. Common sponsors are the Minister or senior management staff of the line ministry to which the asylum entity reports, and/or ambassadors. Where relevant, sponsors could also include heads of UN and other inter-governmental agencies, or the UNHCR Representative. Depending on context, some of these sponsors can be part of a reference group that provides support and inputs to the assessment process.[14]

Once the roles have been defined, the assessment team can start reaching out to the key stakeholders suggested to partake in the process. Discussions could take place at technical and institutional level during informal or formal consultations, briefings but also in multi-stakeholder meetings and bilateral engagements.

SUMMARY OF KEY STEPS:

At the end of this stage, the assessment team should have:

1. Developed a plan for the assessment which:

   a. Indicates the methodology to be used during the assessment including the modules and sub-modules of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, additional data collection methods and the scheme for analysis and validation;

   b. Confirms the details of the different activities of the exercise, the estimated timeframe for each task, the roles, and responsibilities of the assessment team members and key stakeholders as well as the budget of the assessment;

2. Contacted the relevant stakeholders to explain the scope of the assessment process and consulted with them about the main components of the plan.

Expected Timeframe: 4-8 weeks.

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[14] See on page 8.

III.

CONDUCT THE ASSESSMENT

With the planning of the asylum capacity assessment completed, the assessment can move ahead. The assessment team, where applicable supported by ad hoc team members and other stakeholders who were assigned specific roles and responsibilities, should implement the activities as per the assessment plan. These activities can vary substantively depending on the scope of the assessment but could include the training of ad hoc assessment team members responsible for data collection, communicating with respondents to organize and assist the implementation of the different assessment methods (e.g. the Self-Assessment Questionnaire and other data collection methodologies). Particularly when the assessment has a broad scope, the assessment team should facilitate administrative and logistical arrangements, ensure that the planned activities are implemented according to schedule, with required quality control, and that all materials are shared back with the team to enable the data collected to be interpreted and used for the analysis of results (see Step 4. Analyze the Results and Conduct a Root Cause Analysis).

When implementing the assessment, unexpected constraints such as gaps in data may arise. It is therefore important to review and adapt the assessment plan to address these challenges which may require engaging additional stakeholders for specific parts

of the assessment activities. In such cases, the assessment team should report this to the assessment owner for transparency and integrity of the process. In addressing the challenges, the team should keep the scope and objectives of the assessment in mind and ensure the budget is not exceeded.

The implementation of the assessment is specific to the context. It depends on the methodology selected and the decisions made in the assessment plan, however, some key elements will remain consistent:

1. FACILITATE THE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

The assessment team should facilitate all administrative and logistical arrangements for the activities foreseen in the assessment plan to ensure the smooth implementation of the assessment methodology. For example, interviews should be scheduled with key informants in advance. When engaging with refugees and asylum-seekers, interpreters for the requisite languages should be scheduled, where required, and interview venues booked.

All assessment participants should be provided with an overview of the purpose of the assessment. It is good practice to equally explain the use, storage, and interpretation of the data they provide.

2. SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the assessment, the Self-Assessment Questionnaire should be completed (see detailed instructions in the 'Guidance and instructions for asylum authorities in using the Kobo tool' document). Depending on the approach chosen for the implementation of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire in Step 2 (Plan the Asylum Capacity Assessment), the role of the assessment team will be different. In situations where the Questionnaire is implemented through a multi-stakeholder team approach, the assessment team should support the implementation of the Questionnaire. In case the Questionnaire is used for a survey of different relevant stakeholders who individually fill it out, the assessment team will need to organize the sharing and administration of the Questionnaire. When filling in the Questionnaire, each statement should be given an answer option ranging

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ESTIMATED TIMEFRAMES FOR A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER TEAM TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE:

MANDATORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES
1. Enabling Environment – 25 minutes	5. Operational Considerations – 2.30 hours
2. Normative Framework – 1.15 hours	6. Processing of Personal Data and File Management System – 1.15 hours
3. Stakeholder Engagement – 25 min.	7. Workforce – 2 hours
4. Planning & Resources Management – 50 min.	8. Material Assets & Infrastructure – 50 min.
	9. Oversight, Feedback Mechanisms & Risk Mitigation – 2 hours

from "not at all" to "very large extent". If a multi-stakeholder team approach is taken, one Questionnaire should be completed amongst all participants, after discussion and agreement. Implementation of the Questionnaire through a survey provides a multitude of individual responses by respondents which need to be aggregated to reflect an average of the scores. Particularly if implemented as a survey, it is important that all respondents have a common understanding about the answer options. For the last implementation option, the "don't know" answer is available to address the situation where some personnel with specific technical know-how at the individual/organizational level lack knowledge about certain topics.

The Questionnaire is scored by assigning points to each answer option (from 0 to 4 and N/A). For the purposes of the analysis, the number of points reached by the respondent(s) and the maximum number of points for the module is then used to calculate a percentage score. "Not applicable" and "Don't know" do not affect the score. Respondents can provide comments along the different modules and sub-modules in the dedicated boxes: "Comments and notes to inform on priority areas". This will provide qualitative information to make the body of evidence richer and feed into recommendations and prioritization later during the validation workshop (see Step 4. Analyze the Results and Conduct a Root Cause Analysis).

0	Not at all	"Not at all" can be used whenever a "no" is the answer to the statement at hand.
1	Small extent	Basic elements of the information contained in the statement are available in the asylum system.
2	Moderate extent	The statement is true on average though important actions still need to be undertaken to fully address the topic of the statement.
3	Large extent	Substantial actions have been undertaken in the asylum system though the policies/systems/processes and practices are not adequately in line with the topic of the statement.
4	Very large extent	The information mentioned in the statement is almost perfectly in line with the policies/systems/processes and practices in the asylum system.
N/A	Don't know	The respondent is not sure or has no strong opinion in relation with the information mentioned in the statement or can also genuinely ignore how to assess it. This is particularly relevant when the questionnaire is used as a survey with stakeholders individually filling out the questionnaire or relevant parts.
N/A	Not Applicable	The topic addressed in the statement has no relevance to the asylum system in question.

3. ENSURE THE STORAGE OF THE DATA AND INFORMATION COLLECTED

When implementing the assessment, the assessment team should ensure that the data collected is stored in a repository, ideally using a corporate system. Whatever the format, the repository will archive all data and make it accessible to the stakeholders involved in the assessment. In addition, and to avoid any harmful outcomes, it is important that sensitive data is treated appropriately and in line with relevant data protection safeguards.

SUMMARY OF KEY STEPS:

At the end of this step, the assessment team should have:

1. Implemented all assessment activities, including the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, in accordance with the assessment plan and selected methodology;
2. Stored all collected data in an adequate repository that will be accessible to the relevant stakeholders, including those who will further proceed with the assessment analysis.

Expected Timeframe: 4-8 weeks.

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IV.

ANALYZE THE RESULTS AND CONDUCT A ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

After completing the relevant assessment activities, the collected data will be analyzed and validated. The assessment team might have to enlist the support of experts or technicians as ad hoc team members who can support the analysis. Once analyzed, the key outcomes of the assessment should be validated through a multi-stakeholder discussion. This dialogue will facilitate the identification of weaknesses and gaps in the national asylum system and an examination of the root causes of the issues and capacity gaps identified. The root cause analysis will then provide the basis for the determination of priority areas for the ACD response. This analysis will also help in the formulation of actions to be implemented to achieve the capacities required in terms of enabling environment, institutional and individual capacity for a quality asylum system that functions with fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity.

The outcome of this fourth step of the assessment process should be documented in **the assessment report** which will summarize the analysis of the assessment findings and

include information on root causes and priority areas for developing a capacity development response.

In the implementation of this step, a meeting or workshop should be organized to bring together key stakeholders of the asylum system. The meeting or workshop serves to validate the assessment findings, develop a root cause analysis, and prioritize capacity areas. It is also important to include the development of a theory of change (see Step 5. Develop an Asylum Capacity Development Response) during the meeting or workshop that fosters the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the capacity development response.

The assessment team should determine an approach to the meeting or workshop, prepare the products and validate these through multi-stakeholder participation. A collaborative approach involving relevant stakeholders with diverse capacities will facilitate the validation of the assessment findings and root cause analysis and further secure broader validation and buy-in to the capacity development response.

The approach to the analysis step depends on the factors indicated above, nevertheless the key elements will remain consistent:

1. ANALYZE THE DATA

The assessment team should start by analyzing the data collected to identify the information this provides in relation to the capacities, strengths and weaknesses of the asylum system. The starting point for this will be the dashboard resulting from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire which will provide scores per selected module and sub-module. The dashboard will also provide complementary data analysis on broader thematic comparisons on:

a) The level of capacity (individual, organizational and/or enabling environment);
b) Stages in the national asylum system that are relevant to ensuring access to asylum and entitlement to refugee status (registration, RSD first instance and appeal process); and,
c) The institutional structures and mechanisms for decision-making.

The average percentage score per module, sub-module and thematic will assist the assessment team to identify areas requiring particular attention:

- **The average score is below 60%:** Generally, priority action should be taken to address the situation. For example, if the score of the sub-module 'General' in the module 'Processing of Personal Data and File Management' is 20%, this outlines that data protection in the asylum procedure is weak and there is a high risk of a data breach. This may represent a priority area to reflect on during the multi-stakeholder validation discussion while exploring the root causes of this weakness/gap.

- **The average score is in between 60 and 80%:** Action should be taken to build on or consolidate the area in question.

- **The average score is over 80%:** The related thematic area assessed could be seen as a relative strength in the asylum system. Action can be taken to further enhance capacity as deemed fit.

The dashboard of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire will be generated once the Questionnaire is completed and shared by email directly to the assessment coordinator. A static report can be printed out on the dashboard to support the multi-stakeholder discussion in order to validate the results of the assessment (i.e. validation workshop).

To analyze the data, the results of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire should be compared and assessed against the other data collected with the additional methods selected during the planning phase of the assessment. Quantitative or qualitative data from other data collection methods such as focus group discussions or key informant interviews should be compiled and cross-checked against the findings from the Self-Assessment Questionnaire. For qualitative methods, the data collected should be organized and coded to allow for the identification of themes in the data and the relationships between these themes.

The information resulting from this process should then be mapped against the relevant thematic areas outlined in the Self-Assessment Questionnaire. Equally, the comments manually entered in the different modules of the questionnaire should also inform the analysis of the assessed areas. For other quantitative methods, the data should be compiled and then mapped onto the thematic of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire.

2. VALIDATE THE RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT

In order to ensure that the assessment results are correctly interpreted, the assessment team should invite the relevant stakeholders to validate the findings and outcomes of the assessment. Stakeholders from outside the assessment team may interpret the results in different ways. Hence, a variety of perspectives will strengthen the validity of the results in addition to promoting ownership of the future ACD response. In addition to the key stakeholders from the asylum institution and from other government authorities, it is good practice to invite to the meeting or workshop, or at a later stage through multi- or bilateral consultations, a broader range of relevant actors to contribute to the validation of the assessment amongst development partners, donors, national human rights institutions, NGOs, regional/international organizations. Their engagement at this stage could provide additional benefits such as their support or engagement in the further capacity development process.

> For example, participating in the validation of the assessment process may increase the likelihood of development partners supporting the capacity development response.

It is also encouraged to include refugee led organizations as they have direct or lived perspectives to convey regarding the users' experiences as asylum-seekers in the asylum system.

The assessment team can refer to the relevant roles assigned when planning the assessment (see Step 2. Plan the Asylum Capacity Assessment) to identify stakeholders in order to ensure the meaningful inclusion of diverse views. During the meeting, the

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scope of the asylum capacity assessment, its methodology and the initial analysis of data made by the assessment team should be presented to stakeholders. It is important to discuss any inconsistencies in the data and to compare data from the different assessment methodologies (if used) in order to bring together validated conclusions. Through the joint validation of the assessment findings, stakeholders should be able to establish an agreed view of the existing level of capacity in the asylum system, including gaps and weaknesses, and assess it against the level of capacity sought. This will facilitate the identification of root causes and priority areas for the capacity development response.

3. CONDUCT A ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS AND PRIORITIZE

To ensure the capacity development response is targeted correctly, root causes of weaknesses should be explored and identified. The scope of the root cause analysis will be determined by the gaps and weaknesses identified during the assessment. Whenever a capacity area is assessed below 60% in the Questionnaire, it is important to conduct a root cause analysis. It should also be done systematically for any issues and challenges that led to the decision to conduct an asylum capacity assessment (see Introduction When should the Tool be used).

Understanding the root causes facilitates the design of appropriate and effective capacity development responses that tackle not only the symptoms of weaknesses in the asylum system (for example a large backlog), but also address the deeper causes and contributing factors underlying these gaps (for example poor working conditions, lack of procedures, etc.). There are different methods available to conduct a root cause analysis of the gaps and weaknesses in the national asylum system. An effective exercise is the "Five Whys" method which involves asking "why?" to ultimately understand the basis of the problem at hand.

An example of the Five Whys is as follows:

Problem: Legal reasoning of RSD decisions is not consistent in quality

Why? → There is a lack of RSD personnel with specialized experience

Why? → RSD personnel do not benefit from regular training

Why? → There is a high turnover of staff, rendering training activities largely redundant

Why? → The benefits of RSD personnel are not commensurate with similar positions, negatively impacting staff retention

Why? → Contract types of RSD personnel do not meet HR needs

Root cause: The HRs policy of the relevant line Ministry needs to be reformed.

In addition to root causes, it is important to consider the factors which contribute to the challenges at large. Using the above example, contributing factors could include for instance a lack of personal motivation from RSD personnel; or a misalignment between career aspirations of registration personnel and professional prospects offered by the asylum institution.

Depending on the various challenges pinpointed in the asylum system, the assessment team and stakeholders involved in the discussion may wish to delve deeper into these areas to gain a better understanding of the issues at hand.[15] Based on the analysis of the various gaps and causes identified, a prioritization of needed changes might be required. At this point, a prioritization matrix can be a useful tool when deciding which interventions to prioritize. A prioritization matrix will help chart the relative impact/benefit and effort of the different options to consider.

Below is a graphic description of the prioritization matrix:
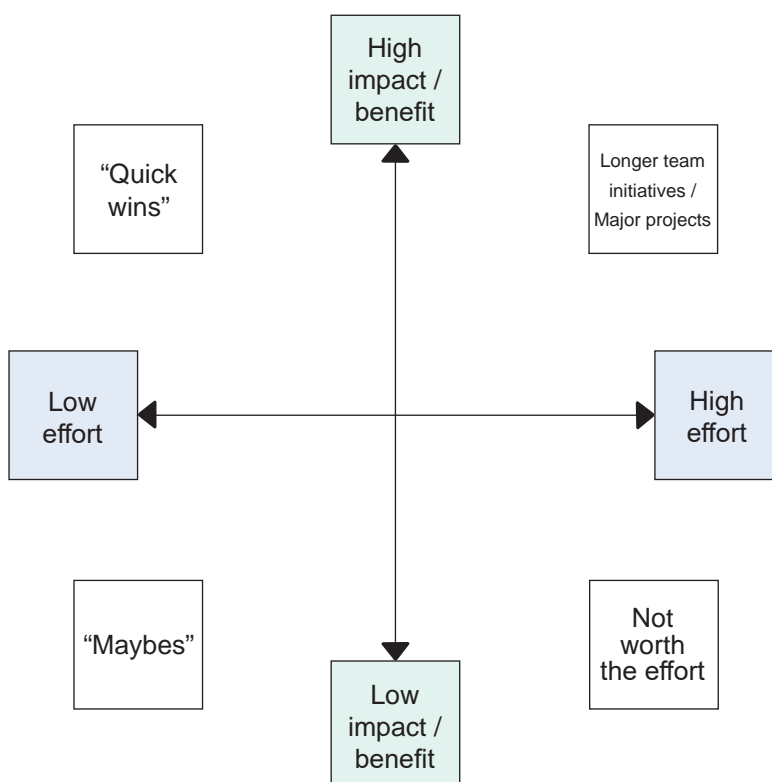
To use the matrix, the list of the causes should be assigned a relative impact/benefit along with a related effort required to address them. This can be done for example in the context of a participatory discussion. The quadrants of the matrix help in the prioritization of initiatives which, within the possibilities, should provide a mix of "quick wins" (which are low effort and high impact/benefit) and longer-term initiatives/major projects (which are high effort and high impact/benefit). The "quick wins" can build trust, maintain the momentum of change and secure buy-in the short term. Some of the initiatives which are low effort, but also low impact/benefit could be considered for situations where there are clear advantages beyond the impact.

After validating the assessment findings and finalizing the root cause analysis, the assessment team members, together with the relevant stakeholders, should develop recommendations at the individual, organizational and/or enabling environment levels reflecting the objective of

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[15] The annexes of this How-To Guide provide checklists, surveys, and further guidance on specific areas of asylum systems. For example, where the results of the assessment indicate that it would be prudent to study interviewing capacities in more detail, reference documents are provided to support in doing so.

the capacity development action, the causes, and prioritized actions/activities. Ideally, these recommendations should be endorsed by the assessment owner and relevant line Ministry (through a letter of commitment for example) as they provide a solid basis for formulating a capacity development response.

Dissemination of the assessment report, which will include a summary of the assessment findings, the root cause analysis and the recommendations resulting from the multi-stakeholder discussion, is important. It will ensure the engagement of relevant actors, including some who have been part of the assessment, into the planning process of the asylum capacity development response.

SUMMARY OF KEY STEPS:

By the end of this phase, the assessment team together with relevant stakeholders should have:

1. Completed an initial compilation and analysis of results;
2. Validated the findings of the assessment during a multi-stakeholder discussion;
3. Formulated recommendations to address the necessary changes/priority capacity areas in the national asylum system based on a thorough root cause analysis; and,
4. Shared the assessment report with the relevant stakeholders considering the forthcoming formulation of an ACD response.

Expected Timeframe: 2-4 weeks.

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V.

DEVELOP AN ASYLUM CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE

The asylum capacity self-assessment is the starting point for developing and planning an ACD response implementing sustainable change. To implement the recommendations resulting from the capacity assessment, the asylum authority should develop a programmatic response to identify and implement a sequence of activities to achieve the changes in capacities required. In defining a response, the assessment team, reinforced with technical staff as required, should ensure the elaboration of a theory of change, a detailed planning document which is costed, as well as a monitoring and evaluation framework to be ready to start the implementation of the response.[16]

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[16] The ACD response can take many years as it should be a long-term endeavour focused on sustainability. However, it is possible to develop a logical and sequenced mix of short-term and longer-term interventions within the ACD initiative.

The methodology for implementing this fifth step will depend on the approach taken in the previous step of the assessment and the country context, in particular the guidance and formats provided by national budget structures and processes. Where necessary, the needs and reporting requirements of potential donors to ensure the implementation of the activities should be considered. There is very close interaction between this step and the previous one (see Step 4 Analyze the Results and Conduct a Root Cause Analysis). In case the assessment team organized a workshop to implement the validation, root cause analysis and prioritization, it would be beneficial to develop the theory of change during the same workshop. Where the previous step was implemented through a (series of) meeting(s), the different elements of this step would equally benefit from inputs and validation during (an) additional meeting(s). When considering the format, it is good practice to meaningfully include asylum-seekers and refugees to reflect their views in the ACD response.

To develop an ACD initiative, the assessment team, with the inputs of relevant stakeholders, should:
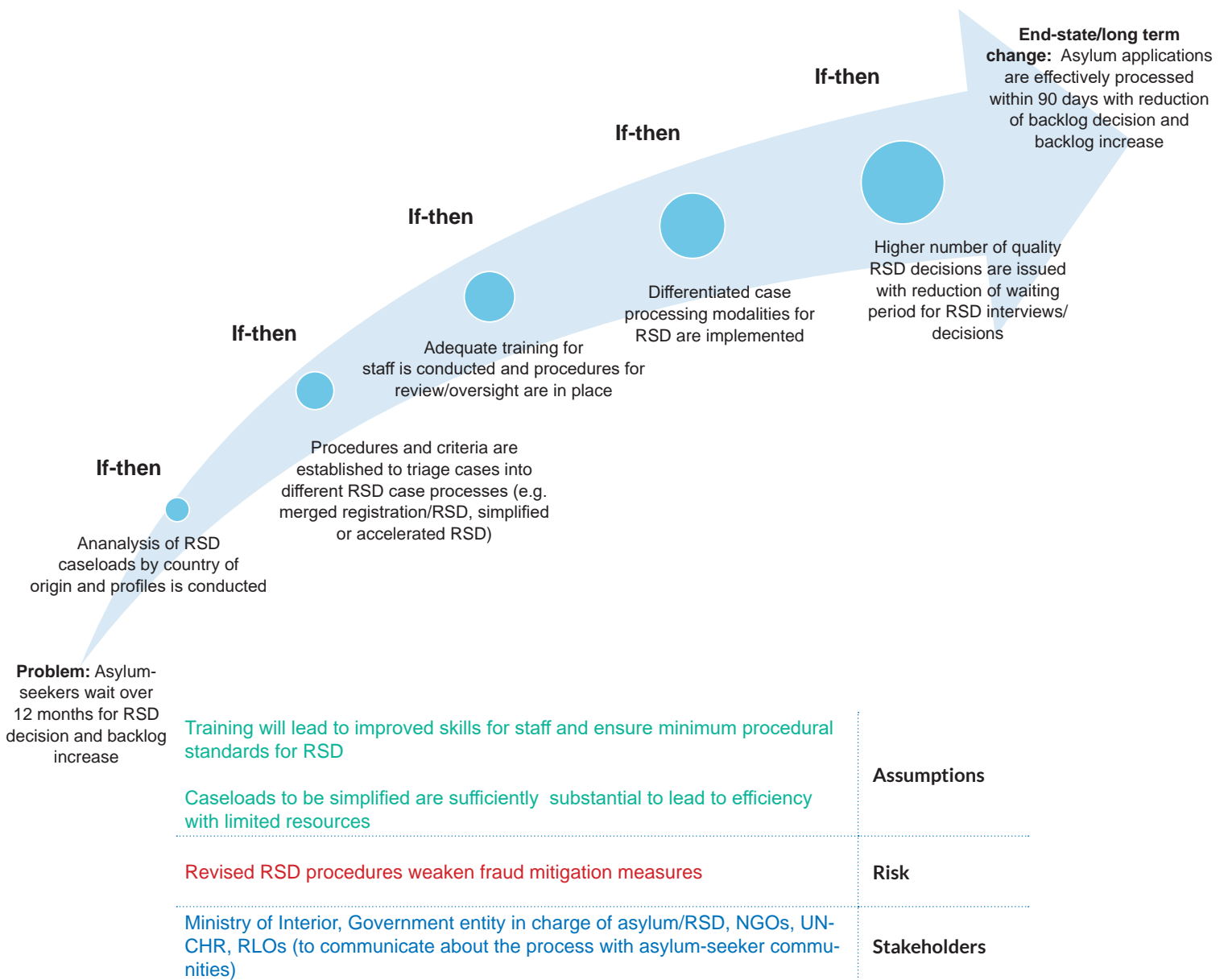
1. DEFINE A THEORY OF CHANGE

Defined changes should be clear, sequenced appropriately and should include a mix of short- and long-term targets for change. Employing a theory of change is a recommended strategic planning approach to explore what change is needed in the asylum system and how this change can happen.[17] To develop a theory of change, the assessment team and relevant stakeholders should compare the existing capacities identified in the national asylum system to the desired level of capacity for a quality asylum system which functions with fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity. The assessment team should also refer to the root causes of the gaps and/or weaknesses previously identified in Step 4 Analyze the Results and Conduct a Root Cause Analysis, and then formulate assumptions (what is expected to happen) in order to:

a) Map the relevant and necessary actions to address these challenges and reach the desired level of capacity (this will form the basis of the different activities of the ACD response);

b) Identify the relevant stakeholders who will implement the ACD response.

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[17] United Nations Development Group, Theory of Change – UNDAF Companion Guidance, 2017.

In order to meet the requirements of potential donors, the theory of change should anticipate potential risks that could affect the results (positively or negatively). The below is an example of a theory of change in a national asylum system:

If-then

End-state/long term change: Asylum applications are effectively processed within 90 days with reduction of backlog decision and backlog increase

If-then

Higher number of quality RSD decisions are issued with reduction of waiting period for RSD interviews/ decisions

If-then

Differentiated case processing modalities for RSD are implemented

If-then

Adequate training for staff is conducted and procedures for review/oversight are in place

If-then

Procedures and criteria are established to triage cases into different RSD case processes (e.g. merged registration/RSD, simplified or accelerated RSD)

If-then

Ananalysis of RSD caseloads by country of origin and profiles is conducted

Problem: Asylum-seekers wait over 12 months for RSD decision and backlog increase

Training will lead to improved skills for staff and ensure minimum procedural standards for RSD Caseloads to be simplified are sufficiently substantial to lead to efficiency with limited resources	**Assumptions**
Revised RSD procedures weaken fraud mitigation measures	**Risk**
Ministry of Interior, Government entity in charge of asylum/RSD, NGOs, UN-CHR, RLOs (to communicate about the process with asylum-seeker communities)	**Stakeholders**

2. ELABORATE AN ACD ACTION PLAN

The asylum capacity assessment process involves creating a planning document or a detailed action plan offering a solid vision for an ACD response through the theory of change. This document ought to translate the theory of change into results, describing the impacts, outcomes and outputs the asylum authority wants to achieve through the ACD response. It should also set out indicators for monitoring purposes to help measure these results. Risks and opportunities which have been assessed in the initial situation analysis should also be revisited as part of the action plan in order to mitigate risks and identify means of leveraging opportunities. The planning document needs to be costed to support resource mobilization activities. It should be a practical and living document that can be adjusted during the implementation phase, with corrective actions for continuous improvement.

As with the other steps of the assessment, collaboration with key stakeholders will enhance the quality of the action plan. A multi-stakeholder approach will help leverage technical and financial resources including through existing national programmes. The action plan should include well-defined roles and responsibilities for stakeholders and task owners. In defining the roles of stakeholders, the assessment team should consider whether further actors, in addition to those previously involved in the asylum process or the assessment, would add value or otherwise contribute to the implementation of the ACD response. The activities, sequencing and cost should be validated and confirmed by the stakeholders.

Besides being a roadmap for activities, the action plan serves as a tool to provide a financial estimate of the planned activities and to identify and secure funding. In considering the format, the assessment team should look at the document's purpose and potential source of funding to ensure a close linkage between the document and the requirements of the funding source. This will facilitate integration of the action plan into one or more of the following documents: a submission to a national development plan, a donor proposal or a UNHCR Project Partnership Agreement, etc. The action plan should further be integrated or linked to national reforms, a national development plan and other existing national development priorities whenever possible.[18]

For example, there may be national development plans or strategies for strengthening the public sector that focus on human resources, oversight, planning or budgeting functions. If these are capacity areas of concern in the asylum system, linking these processes can be of use to leverage related financing, technical assistance, or programmatic support.

3. ESTABLISH A MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

In order to prepare for the implementation phase of the planned capacity development initiative, a monitoring and evaluation framework with relevant indicators (including source of verification), baselines and targets should be prepared. Monitoring should be adequately resourced and done in a consistent manner, both before and during implementation (with the development of indicators), and post-implementation.[19] Clear data will demonstrate the value of the project, which could potentially support in attracting funding for subsequent activities. The monitoring results will also help adjust the action plan and course correct the activities to achieve continuous improvement drawing on the participation of key stakeholders.

By the same reasoning, an external and independent evaluation of the initiative should be conducted at regular intervals, either at the end of a project or periodically for ongoing projects.[20] This will ensure sustainability of the initiative as it will help take stock of accomplishments. It will also help identify what has (and has not) worked and how future engagements can be improved to achieve quality protection results consistent with international standards.

[18] Among other development priorities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework is the core instrument for the implementation of UN development activities at country level.
[19] "Monitoring can be defined as the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives". UNDP, Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results, 2009, p. 8.
[20] "Evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision making". UNDP, Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results, 2009, p. 8.

SUMMARY OF KEY STEPS:

To formulate a capacity development response, the assessment team in coordination with relevant stakeholders should have:

1. Defined a theory of change to address the root causes prioritized in the recommendations;
2. Developed an action plan to tackle the prioritized gaps/weaknesses and defined changes resulting from the assessment process; and,
3. Established a monitoring and evaluation framework for the implementation phase of the ACD initiative.

Expected Timeframe: 4-8 weeks.[21]

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[21] This final timeframe is for planning the capacity development response only. It does not include the implementation phase which will depend on the format of the initiative.

ANNEX

CHECKLISTS AND OTHER GUIDANCE MATERIALS ON ASYLUM PROCEDURES

- ASQAEM Checklists
- Toolkit for Governments to Strengthen National Asylum Systems through Digitalization in the Americas
- Effective Processing of Asylum Applications – Practical Considerations and Practices
- EUAA Quality Assurance Tool for Examining the Application for International Protection
- UNHCR Guidance on Registration and Identity Management, Chapter 3.1 "Understand the Context"

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