

Types of documents and information one may find in the UNHCR archives, Fonds 11 Series 2:

General characteristics of the archival body:

The documents are all related to communications between the HQs and UNHCR delegates on the field.

The vast majority of the documents are in English and French. However, some are in Spanish and very few in other languages such as German, Dutch, etc.

The archival body is characterized by its variety. Alongside purely UNHCR documents one can find many documents from other sources.

The period covered goes from 1971 to 1984. However, not all files cover this period entirely and one may also find documents going further back in time (1960s).

Types of documents:

- HCR documents:
 - cables between HQ and Branch Offices (BOs)/Regional Offices (ROs)
 - Letters between HQ/BOs and permanent missions/national governments
 - Letters from refugees or groups of refugees to HQ/BOs demanding better treatment; more assistance; resettlement etc. Replies from UNHCR
 - HQ and field representatives correspondence with Foreign Ministries, Refugee Commissions of member states
 - Memos and “notes for the file” on specific topics/situations
 - Memorandum of conversations
 - between UNHCR representatives
 - with country officials
 - with representatives of other UN agencies, IOs, NGOs or with individual experts (lawyers, academics, etc.)
 - Mission reports
 - Lists of refugees, interview notes, resettlement records, Refugee status forms, etc.
 - Occasional reports on legal issues (eligibility) or political situation
 - Correspondence with other UN Agencies, IOs and NGOs (UNDP, ICRC, OUA, Amnesty International, Oxfam, etc.)

Special note: “Action Sheets”:

Each document is usually accompanied with an “Action Sheet” designed for internal use at the HQs. Each individual reading/working on a document and willing to make a comment or give an advice/opinion/order registers it on the Action Sheet.

- Other documents:
 - Letters from private persons/organizations, voicing concern about certain crises and demanding info/action. (UNHCR usually replies)
 - Newspaper clippings, press releases
 - Speeches by government officials

- Official documents from States (ex.: US State Department or USAID documents/publications; US Congress hearings; UK House of Commons debates, etc.)
- Proceedings of UN GA and SC meetings, of OUA meetings, text of speeches delivered by significant political leaders
- Selected issues of various publications related to refugees
- Reports from NGOs

Types of information:

- Statistics
- Legal issues (mainly about eligibility and UNHCR mandate)
- Personal, medical, legal info on refugees (note: access to these documents is restricted)
- Resettlement issues and programs: groups; individual cases

- Progress/status reports on UNHCR projects
- Progress/status reports on political situation in countries/regions
- Information on conflicts: military groups; fightings/truce/peace negotiations; secure/insecure areas, etc.
- Relations with governments and other political entities (ex: independence movements)
- Relations between governments
- Country's refugee policies, legislation and programs

- Mechanisms to answer specific refugee/humanitarian crises
- Fundraising and funding of operations
- Internal HCR debate on eligibility; HCR mandate; answers to crises or particular refugee cases, etc.
- Relations and coordination with other UN agencies, IOs or NGOs
- Relations with the UN Secretary General