



Standard Operating Procedures

DETERMINING THE LEGAL IDENTITY OF MIGRANTS WITHOUT PROOF OF LEGAL IDENTITY



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil society organizations
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MRZ	Machine Readable Zone
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPS	Uninterrupted Power Supply



1. INTRODUCTION

Global migration has increased in absolute terms over recent decades, with over 281 million international migrants worldwide as of 2020.¹ Many migrants cross borders without proof of legal identity documents, leaving them particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, including discrimination, and restricted access to essential services, such as health care, education and legal protection. A lack of legal identity can also limit access to regular pathways for migration, complicating migrants' situation in origin, transit, or destination countries.

A broad range of international law instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), recognize the right to legal identity. Legal identity is also emphasized in international frameworks such as the Sustainable development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal 16.9, which aims to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) Objective 4 emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation. These instruments call on States to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their documentation status, ensuring that no one is left behind.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Identifying migrants without proof of legal identity is complex, compounded by numerous procedural pathways and intersecting legal frameworks. To streamline this process, IOM has developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) that offer a step-by-step guide, aiming for uniformity, efficiency, and adherence to international law standards, while addressing the ethical dimensions intrinsic to this work.

Adaptable to various national contexts, the SOPs accommodate specific legislative and operational needs/requirements and are designed for a wide array of stakeholders, including immigration and border authorities, law enforcement, refugee and asylum organizations, health-care providers and other key entities. By defining the roles and responsibilities of each party, the SOPs support a coordinated, collaborative approach to migrant identification and verification.

Moreover, the SOPs foster inter-agency cooperation and emphasize continuous improvement. Acknowledging the fluid nature of migration, the procedures encourage periodic review, ongoing training and quality assurance, ensuring that they remain effective and responsive to evolving migration needs and challenges.

1.2 SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

The SOPs encompass a broad range of processes required to establish and verify the legal identity of migrants without documentation. These processes can include:

Initial contact and screening: Procedures for the first interaction with migrants, including assessing immediate needs and determining eligibility for regular migration pathways.

Data collection: Gathering personal information, biometric data and other relevant details through document-supported and declaration-based forms.

Identity verification: Using various methodologies, including biometric data and third-party corroboration, to verify the migrant's claimed identity.

¹ McAuliffe, M. and L.A. Oucho (eds.)(2024). *World Migration Report 2024*. IOM, Geneva.

The SOPs outline key legal, ethical and technical considerations critical to the identity verification process. This includes adherence to international law instruments, data protection laws and established best practices for managing sensitive personal data. The document specifies the safeguards necessary to uphold the rights of migrants, ensuring the protection of their privacy, preventing discrimination and facilitating access to justice. It also addresses the technical standards for biometric data collection, document security and the interoperability of identity systems with national and international databases.

The SOPs provide a flexible framework for countries to develop procedures suited to their legal and administrative systems. They ensure transparent and consistent practices in migrant interactions, covering data collection and verification while allowing for adaptation to national regulations. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, such as children and victims of trafficking, with an emphasis on inter-agency collaboration.

The SOPs outline the roles of personnel at all levels, from front-line staff to management, ensuring coordination and accountability. While they establish guiding principles, they remain adaptable to national roles and hierarchies. The SOPs also emphasize training and capacity development, ensuring that national contexts and operational requirements are reflected in implementation.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

Asylum: The grant, by a State, of protection on its territory to persons outside their country of nationality or habitual residence, who are fleeing persecution or serious harm or for other reasons. Asylum encompasses a variety of elements, including non-refoulement, permission to remain on the territory of the asylum country, humane standards of treatment and eventually a durable solution.

Biometrics: An automated means of identifying an individual through the measurement of distinguishing physiological or behavioural traits such as fingerprints, facial features, iris patterns, retina or ear characteristics. Nowadays, it is used also as a synonym for “biometric identifiers”, which are pieces of information that represent a person’s unique biological make up (e.g. fingerprints, retinal scans or voice scans).

Case management: The administration and oversight of a migrant’s entire migration process by qualified caseworkers which involves guidance, monitoring, advocacy and referrals.

Civil registration system: The system used by governmental authorities to perform the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of vital events about the population in a country, including births, deaths, marriages and divorces.

Contact information: Details such as permanent and temporary addresses, phone numbers and email addresses used for ongoing communication and follow-ups with the migrant.

Country of origin: In the context of migration, a country of nationality or former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, regardless of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.

Cultural mediators: Professionals trained in interpreting languages and cultural practices and norms of diverse communities. They facilitate communication and understanding during migrant interviews and orientation.

Declaration-based form: A standardized application used when a migrant lacks documents to support their identity and State authorities must rely solely on self-declaration of biographical details.

Document verification: The process undertaken by officials to authenticate the migrant’s documentary evidence, check security features, and confirm that no alterations were made, ensuring the integrity of the documents.

Document-supported form: A standardized application used during migrant data collection when the individual can provide supporting documentation such as passports, IDs, or birth certificates, to verify their identity claims.

Documentary evidence: Official documents such as passports, national IDs, birth or marriage certificates and licenses, presented by the migrant to validate their identity claims. These are critical for document-supported applications.

Family information: Key details about a migrant's immediate family members, including names, ages, locations and contact information. These are useful for verification and options such as family reunification.

Identity verification: The process of confirming and validating a person's claimed identity through various means, including checking documents, databases, biometric data and testimonies.

Initial screening: The first interview conducted with a migrant arriving without legal documentation or status. It involves gathering information to ascertain the migrant's identity, immediate needs and intent, and eligibility for a migration pathway.

Migrant in an irregular situation: A person who moves or has moved across an international border and is not authorized to enter or to stay in a State pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party.

Laissez-passer: A travel document issued in exceptional circumstances by the consular officials to nationals of the country or to nationals of other States. It may also refer to a travel document issued by an international organization to its civil servants.

Legal identity: According to the United Nations operational definition, legal identity refers to the basic characteristics of an individual's identity, e.g. name, sex, place and date of birth conferred through registration and the issuance of a certificate by an authorized civil registration authority following the occurrence of birth. In the absence of birth registration, legal identity may be conferred by a legally recognized identification authority. This system should be linked to the civil registration system to ensure a holistic approach to legal identity from birth to death. Legal identity is retired by the issuance of a death certificate by the civil registration authority upon registration of death.

Migrant: An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

National legislation: Laws enacted by the legislative authority of a country that establish the legal framework for the functioning of the State across all sectors.

Orientation: An information session detailing the various options and procedures for migrants to obtain legal status or valid documentation (known as regularization). It typically involves explaining the criteria for pathways, such as asylum or temporary permits, as well as outlining documentation requirements and application processes.

Personal data: Any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person who can be directly or indirectly identified by reference to identifiers including name, identification number, location data and online identifier.

Personal information: Basic biographical data including full name, date and place of birth, gender, marital status and nationality. This information is used to establish core identity particulars.

Regularization: Any process or programme by which the authorities of a State allow non-nationals in an irregular situation to stay lawfully in the country by granting them regular status.

Statelessness: The condition of an individual who is not considered a national by any State under its laws. Stateless people often face challenges accessing rights and services due to a lack of nationality and identity documentation.

Temporary protection: Arrangements developed by States to offer protection of a temporary nature, without prior individual status determination, to persons fleeing from situations of conflict, generalized violence, disasters or other humanitarian crises, including persons who do not have access to protection under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Third-party corroboration: The verification of a migrant's identity and claims by external contacts, such as family, friends, employers and religious leaders, who can vouch for the person. This provides additional credibility.

A photograph showing an immigration officer in a light blue uniform with a gold star on the shoulder, looking down at a document. A woman in a colorful blue, red, and yellow patterned dress is smiling and looking at the same document. In the background, other people are visible, including a child. The scene is outdoors, possibly at a border crossing or a community center.

2. LEGAL AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

A foundational human rights framework is provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. It enshrines basic rights for all human beings such as equality before the law, freedom from discrimination, and the rights to life, to family life, to leave any country and enter one's country of nationality, to shelter, health, work, education and an adequate standard of living.² As a milestone human rights document, the UDHR protects fundamental freedoms and entitlements for every person by virtue of their humanity alone, not contingent on citizenship, legal status or proof of identity. Human Rights are inalienable, meaning they cannot be renounced or taken away from an individual. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)³ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),⁴ both adopted in 1966, further codify these rights into binding treaties for State parties who have ratified them.

The core international human rights treaties affirm that human rights apply universally and equally to all persons within a State's territory or jurisdiction. Article 2 of both the ICCPR and ICESCR explicitly prohibits discrimination based on national or social origin, or other status, in the application of rights. Therefore, migrants without proof of identity remain rights holders entitled to all human rights contained in both covenants on a par with citizens. States have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all migrants regardless of their documentation status.

The 1990 United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families reinforces this non-discrimination principle.⁵ It calls for treatment of documented and undocumented migrants on an equal footing in relation to a broad range of civil, political, economic and social rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1990). Other core United Nations' treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD),⁶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),⁷ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),⁸ and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)⁹ prohibit discrimination on various grounds, including national origin and "other status", which have been interpreted to encompass migrant status in relevant General Comments and Recommendations.¹⁰

Regional treaties and national laws also enshrine fundamental rights and freedoms for all persons regardless of migration or documentation status. For instance, the American Convention on Human Rights upholds rights like right to life, humane treatment, personal liberty, due process and freedom from arbitrary detention for "all persons" subject to State jurisdiction.¹¹ The European Convention on Human Rights protects basic liberties for "everyone" within member States' jurisdiction, documented or undocumented.¹² Many countries' constitutions also guarantee fundamental freedoms and entitlements universally to "all persons" rather than only citizens.

² United Nations (1948). [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).

³ United Nations General Assembly (1966a). [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

⁴ United Nations General Assembly (1966b). [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#).

⁵ United Nations General Assembly (1990). [International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#). United Nations (1965). International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/

⁶ [instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial](#).

⁷ United Nations (1979). [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#).

⁸ United Nations (1989). [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

⁹ United Nations (2006). [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

See CERD General Recommendation No. 30 (2004) on Discrimination Against Non-Citizens, UN Doc. CERD/C/64/Misc.11/rev.3 (2004); CEDAW General Recommendation No. 26 (2008) on Women Migrant Workers, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/2009/WP.1/R (2008); CRC General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, UN Doc. CRC/GC/2005/6 (2005); and CRPD Article 5 (Non-Discrimination), UN Doc. A/61/611 (2006).

¹¹ Organization of American States (1969). [American Convention on Human Rights](#).

¹² Council of Europe (1950). [European Convention on Human Rights](#).

International human rights bodies like United Nations' treaty monitoring committees consistently call on States to ensure human rights apply equally to migrants despite status. The Human Rights Committee's General Comment 15 on non-citizens notes that while States can regulate entry and stay of migrants, human rights protections cover anyone in a State territory or subject to its jurisdiction.¹³ The Committee on Migrant Workers affirms that migrants without documents remain rights holders and any restrictions on their rights must be proportional, pursue legitimate aims and consider individual circumstances.¹⁴

In line with these international law standards, States should ensure that a lack of valid identity documentation does not deprive migrants of their fundamental rights or lead to discrimination in accessing essential services. All migrants should enjoy equality before the law, the right to life, liberty and security, freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, due process guarantees, and access to health care, adequate housing, education and fair working conditions, on a par with citizens and documented migrants. Targeted support services may be needed to enable undocumented migrants to realize these rights in practice. No one should be denied emergency medical care, shelter, food, water or sanitation due to a lack of paperwork. Children have a right to birth registration, health care, education and other necessities regardless of parentage or status.

While States retain the authority to regulate borders and entry requirements, enforcement measures must not violate migrants' rights by using identity checks in an arbitrary, discriminatory or disproportionate manner. Forcibly returning or detaining migrants without considering individual protection needs or barriers to acquiring documents would contravene the prohibition on refoulement, the right to seek asylum, the right to liberty and security of person, and due process safeguards. IOM recognizes that States, as duty bearers, hold the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all persons who find themselves within the State's jurisdiction or effective control, and where appropriate, their nationals abroad, in accordance with international, regional and national law.

2.2 NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

National legislation and policies play a pivotal role in dictating the mechanisms through which migrants can establish their legal identity and secure the necessary identity documents. These legislative and policy frameworks provide the formal structure and specific criteria that determine migrants' access to identity registration, verification and recognition within a given State.

The foundational basis of any national approach to identity management for migrants lies in the country's constitution, migration laws, civil registration laws and harmonization of national legislation to international law standards. These laws often define who is recognized as a citizen or a legal resident and under what circumstances. Moreover, they specify the rights and entitlements of these individuals, including the right to obtain identity documents.

Subsequent policies, regulations and administrative decrees must be aligned with national and international law, and provide detailed guidelines on the specific procedures migrants must follow to establish their legal identity. For instance, they may specify the documentation required, designate responsible governmental departments, and provide timelines for processing. In many countries, national strategies also encompass biometric registration systems, which utilize technological solutions like fingerprinting, facial recognition and iris scanning to uniquely identify and verify individuals.

Moreover, national policies can create specific pathways for different groups of migrants. For refugees and asylum-seekers, special provisions may exist, allowing them to initiate identity verification processes upon claiming asylum or once granted refugee status. In the case of migrant workers, bilateral labour agreements and labour

¹³ United Nations Human Rights Committee (1986). [General Comment No. 15: The Position of Aliens Under the Covenant](#).

¹⁴ United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers (2017). [General comment No. 2 on the rights of migrant workers in an irregular situation and members of their families](#).

¹⁵ IOM and European Migration Network (2017). [Challenges and Practices for Establishing Applicants' Identity in the Migration Process](#).

law standards may define processes through which they can verify their identity and obtain work permits, serving both as identity and employment documents. For stateless persons, countries may have policies to address the challenges they face, offering them a route to establish a legal identity, often through special identification programmes or naturalization processes.

However, challenges persist. Migrants may face protection risks, bureaucratic obstacles, discriminatory policies, or insufficient infrastructure that hampers their ability to establish a legal identity. There can also be gaps between policies at the national level and their implementation at regional or local levels, further complicating the process for migrants.¹⁵ National legislation and policies form the bedrock that determines the avenues available to migrants for establishing their legal identity. As the global landscape continues to change with increasing migration movement, it becomes imperative for nations to adopt inclusive, forward-looking and flexible policies that address the diverse needs of migrants, ensuring their rights and dignity are upheld.

2.3 DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY

While verification of migrant identity is often indispensable for status granting and service provision, the responsibility lies on States to collect and handle identity data in a way that both serves administrative needs and respects the privacy, humanity and dignity of individuals. Personal data like names, dates of birth, photographs, fingerprints and other biometric data are collected to verify applicants' identities, check eligibility and facilitate status granting. While essential for administrative purposes, mishandling such data can infringe on privacy rights and endanger migrants if the information is not used in accordance with human rights norms or in the event of a data leak. Principles like lawfulness, transparency, purpose limitation, data minimization, accuracy, storage limitation, integrity and confidentiality should guide approaches to identity data management in accordance with international standards.

Lawful grounds for data processing should be established through national legislation that is aligned with international and regional human rights standards. A transparent privacy policy detailing data use, sharing and retention should be publicly available.

- Data collection and use should be limited only to what is directly relevant and necessary for identity verification, status determination and service provision. Excess data beyond this need-to-know should not be collected. Minimizing the collection of data mitigates risks of breach or misuse.
- Steps must be taken to ensure the accuracy of identity data through cross-checking across systems. Erroneous data can lead to denial of status or mistreatment and therefore, the ability to update incorrect records is essential.
- Time limits should guide how long data is stored. Retention duration should correspond to the processing purpose. Data that is no longer needed should be deleted according to institutional policies.¹⁶
- Robust cybersecurity protocols for all databases containing identity data are vital to maintain integrity and prevent unauthorized access or systems tampering by malicious actors. Encryption, multi-factor authentication, audits and strict access controls should be implemented.
- Confidentiality obligations bind all personnel handling identity data to only use information according to established protocols. Special categories of data, such as biometrics and children's data, warrant stronger measures such as de-identification and aggregation.
- When sharing data across borders or agencies, special care must be taken to ensure that transferee destinations also uphold data protection regulations. Clear cooperative agreements help govern secure data exchange, and a thorough protection assessment or due diligence process should be conducted to confirm that shared information does not expose individuals to heightened risks.
- Providing the applicants with accessible avenues to review their data and request corrections or deletions is essential. There should be a right of appeal for those denied status based on identity checks. Additionally, in many jurisdictions, it is mandated to notify individuals of any breaches involving their data.

¹⁶ For IOM staff, compliance with the IOM Data Protection Legal Framework is mandatory. For external stakeholders, compliance with relevant national and regional laws on data protection is required.

2.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In designing procedures to determine the identity of migrants without documentation, ethical considerations must be central to demonstrating respect for fundamental human rights and inherent dignity. The following are key aspects to consider:

- **Respecting human dignity and rights:** Collection and use of identity data should uphold the inherent dignity and rights of migrants as human beings first, regardless of their documentation status.
- **Informed consent:** Migrants should be clearly informed about how their personal data will be collected, stored, used and shared. Their voluntary, explicit and revocable consent is essential.
- **Transparency:** Data policies and management protocols should be transparent and accessible to build trust. Any changes must be communicated.
- **Purpose limitation:** Personal data should only be used for the specific purpose stated and consented to by migrants. It should not be processed for any other undisclosed reasons.
- **Data minimization:** Only essential identity data strictly necessary for the specified purpose should be collected. Excessive data heightens privacy risks.
- **Accuracy:** Reasonable efforts are needed to ensure identity data is factually correct and updated as needed. Inaccurate data prejudices migrants' rights.
- **Access and correction:** Migrants should have avenues to access their data and request corrections or deletion. Lack of access compromises privacy.
- **Security:** Strong cybersecurity controls and organizational safeguards are vital to protect identity data against breach and unintended access.
- **Oversight:** External and internal monitoring mechanisms are key to ensuring data practices adhere to privacy and ethical principles as outlined in laws, policies and human rights charters.
- **Accountability:** There must be accountability and sanctions for any abuse, misuse or negligent handling of migrant identity data that violates established ethical protocols.

When migrant identity determination is framed ethically, both destination countries and migrants experience restored agency. Cooperation replaces coercion, and rights replace risks, moving towards a just model that benefits all equitably at personal and societal levels.

3. REGISTRATION PROCESS

Biometrics collection at a Canada Visa Application Centre. © IOM 2019/Muse MOHAMMED



Depending on national circumstances, migration officials can manage the registration of migrants in periodic cases – situations where migrants arrive or require registration sporadically and unpredictably, rather than in large waves. These cases typically involve individual migrants or small groups entering a country at certain intervals, such as those seeking asylum, family reunification, employment or individuals already present but residing irregularly. Unlike mass migration, where large numbers of people arrive after being displaced by armed conflict, disasters, political persecution or severe economic crises, periodic cases are smaller in scale and more manageable within existing systems. Migration officials ensure that each individual's registration complies with national laws and procedures without the need for large-scale or emergency operations.

In contrast, large-scale displacement involves the rapid movement of large numbers of people due to extraordinary circumstances. These situations can overwhelm a country's administrative capacities, requiring the migration authority to establish customized operations with potential support from international organizations and cooperation with civil society. Standard procedures for periodic cases may not be sufficient in large-scale cross-border displacement scenarios, and more robust, tailored systems are needed to handle the influx efficiently.

3.1 INITIAL SCREENING

The initial screening interview serves as a critical first step in assessing undocumented migrants entering or already present in the country. In-depth preparation and cultural sensitivity provide the foundation for an effective screening that yields comprehensive insights into each migrant's background. The interviewer must balance establishing rapport and trust with obtaining actionable information to determine the next steps. Assessing immediate needs also remains paramount before proceeding. The involvement of trained cultural mediators further facilitates open communication and informed decision-making. Overall, a well-executed initial screening sets the tone for aligning services to the unique needs of each migrant while upholding their dignity and rights. It represents the start of an informed, tailored process to evaluate available pathways forward.



The outcome of the initial screening of migrants should provide a well-rounded understanding of each individual's identity, immediate needs and long-term intentions. This baseline information will enable officials to tailor subsequent orientations and processing steps to the unique circumstances of each migrant.

Preparations for initial interaction

Preparations for the initial screening interview involve setting the stage for a comfortable and supportive environment, assessing the needs of the migrant, and engaging cultural mediators to facilitate effective communication and ensure cultural sensitivity.

Set the Stage

Physical environment: To effectively set the stage for an interview with a migrant who lacks any identity documentation, the interviewing official should first consider the physical environment, as this facilitates more accurate and honest information from the individual. Choose a private, quiet space where the individual can feel at ease and ensure that the room temperature is comfortable. Opt for a simple, neutral decor to minimize intimidation, and if security measures are required, make them as unobtrusive as possible.

Personal conduct environment: The interviewer's personal conduct is equally crucial; maintaining a friendly or neutral facial expression, making eye contact, and being conscious of open body language can signal active listening. It is advisable that personnel conducting interviews refrain from wearing uniforms, as this can create a more neutral environment and help reduce perceived intimidation. Additionally, they should avoid openly displaying weapons or guns, which could further contribute to an atmosphere of discomfort or fear.

Cultural sensitivity and communications: Sensitivity to cultural norms related to gender, eye contact and personal space is important. The interviewing official should use a language the individual is comfortable with and engage a trusted interpreter if there is a language barrier. The tone and pace of the conversation should be calm, clear and unhurried.

Purpose and explanation: The purpose of the interaction should be clarified at the beginning, emphasizing that the goal is to understand the individual's situation and explore how best to assist them, while reassuring them that all information shared will be kept confidential.

Interview approach: The interviewing official should start with general, non-threatening questions as an icebreaker and practice active listening, giving the person ample time to think and respond. By thoughtfully setting the stage, a sense of trust and openness can be fostered, increasing the likelihood that the dialogue will yield honest and useful information to determine the individual's needs and status. Clearly state that the aim of the interaction is to determine the best course of action to assist them, either in terms of return or local integration, including protection under the host State when relevant.

Assess immediate needs: Before beginning the interview, verify if the individual has any immediate health or safety needs that must be addressed. This step is crucial and should be one of the first actions taken by the interviewing official. This ensures that any urgent health or safety concerns are addressed before the interview commences, which is not only humane but also practical. An individual who is facing immediate health issues or fears for their safety is unlikely to be able to engage effectively in an interview process.

- Immediate health needs can range from acute medical conditions that require urgent attention, including injuries, to chronic conditions that may need ongoing care, such as diabetes or asthma. It is important to inquire directly but sensitively about any health issues, asking questions like, "Do you need medical attention right now?" or "Do you have any health conditions we should be aware of?" If there is a need for medical care, the interviewing official should coordinate with health-care providers to ensure that medical needs are met as soon as possible.
- Safety needs can include immediate threats to the individual's physical safety, potential exploitation or psychological trauma. It is imperative to ask whether they feel safe and if they have any immediate security concerns. Questions can include: "Do you feel safe here?" or "Is there an immediate safety concern you would like to report?" If there are immediate safety needs, these should be addressed in coordination with the appropriate security or social services agencies.

Emotional and psychological well-being are also vital and can impact the interview. Traumatic experiences can make the individual less likely to share information openly. For this reason, it is recommended that interviewers and cultural mediators are trained in psychological first aid and other psychosocial, trauma-informed approaches to interviews to understand the emotional state of the individual, identify and respond to signs of distress and navigate the conversation in a sensitive way (see more information under section 4.2).

Engage cultural mediator: Cultural mediators are individuals trained to facilitate communication and understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds. They not only help in translating language but also interpret cultural nuances, norms and traditions that may impact the interaction, playing a multifaceted role that goes beyond mere translation.

- First, they help overcome language barriers by translating not just words but also the subtleties and nuances behind them, which can be pivotal when discussing complex issues like asylum or residency.
- Second, their understanding of cultural norms, taboos and traditions is crucial for navigating sensitive topics like persecution or family matters. This sensitivity is particularly useful when the interviewing official is trying to establish the migrant's eligibility for various pathways, such as asylum or temporary residence.
- Third, the presence of a mediator from a similar cultural background can put the migrant at ease, thereby building trust and encouraging more open and honest communication.
- Lastly, from an ethical standpoint, cultural mediators help ensure that the interview process respects the individual's dignity and rights, aligning the procedure with international standards.

- Fourth, they can assist in explaining the intricacies of legal statuses in a culturally sensitive way, benefiting both the interviewing official and the migrant.
- Lastly, from an ethical standpoint, cultural mediators help ensure that the interview process respects the individual's dignity and rights, aligning the procedure with international standards.

Cultural mediators can be instrumental in identifying whether a person is likely from a specific country or belongs to a particular ethnic group. Their nuanced understanding of cultural markers, dialects, traditional practices and even non-verbal communication can offer clues about a person's origin that may not be immediately apparent to others. Mediators can discern subtle accents, recognize traditional attire and interpret body language that is specific to certain cultures or regions. Additionally, they can pick up on references to events, places or customs that may indicate a person's country of origin or ethnic affiliation. Such insights are particularly useful in situations where a migrant lacks documentation but needs to be identified for legal or humanitarian reasons. Nonetheless, while cultural mediators can support the process, the ultimate responsibility for determining these facts rests with the responsible official.

3.2 INITIAL DATA COLLECTION

The intricacies of procedures designed to decide which regular pathways for migration are most applicable for an individual can vary considerably. Despite these distinctions, a common thread uniting these processes is the emphasis on acquiring accurate identity data on the applicant.

When an applicant has a valid identity document, the process remains fairly straightforward. The presence of an official document, such as a passport or national identity card, allows for a relatively swift verification of the applicant's identity. However, complications arise in scenarios where migrants do not possess these valid identity documents, making the procedure to gather data for identifying and verifying applicants multifaceted and challenging.

Collecting this foundational data is essential as the integrity of this information determines the efficacy of subsequent verification processes. If the collected data is inaccurate or incomplete, it becomes nearly impossible to ascertain the authenticity of the applicant's claimed identity in the later phases of verification. As such, authorities must employ a meticulous and exhaustive approach when faced with applicants who do not have valid identity documents.

The following section outlines the procedure for gathering this critical information and sheds light on the multiple avenues used to gather data that will later play a pivotal role in the verification of the claimed identity. This data collection is not merely a procedural step but forms the bedrock of the identification process. Its significance is amplified during the subsequent phases of identity verification, where the accuracy and completeness of this data are indispensable.

Document-supported and declaration-based forms

The forms should be designed to collect essential identity information for migrants who do not have documentation or regular status. These forms serve as a critical step in determining the most appropriate path for migration or assistance.

For clarity, two types of forms should be used (see Annex 8.1 for samples):

1. **Document-supported form:** This form should be used when the individual can provide documentary evidence to support their identity claims.
2. **Declaration-based form:** This form should be used when the individual cannot provide any identity documents and must solely rely on their declaration.

The dual form system ensures that all individuals, regardless of their ability to provide identity documentation, have a structured and standardized way to supply the necessary information. This design contributes to a more equitable and thorough identity verification process, enabling more effective support for individuals in varying circumstances.

Common sections in both forms include:

- **Personal information:** Full name, date of birth, gender, marital status and nationality.
- **Contact information:** Permanent address in the country of origin, temporary address in the destination country, phone number and email address (if available).
- **Country of origin:** Specify the country, and if applicable, the city or region.
- **Family information:** Names, ages and contact details of immediate family members, and their current location (if known).

1. Document-supported form

Additional sections for the document-supported form:

- **Documentary evidence:** A section to list and describe all documents provided, such as passports, birth certificates or other identification papers.
- **Document verification:** A section for officials to confirm that the documents have been verified, including space for any identification numbers, unique markers and notes on the condition of the documents.

2. Declaration-based supported form

Where valid documents cannot be presented, the declaration-based information should be collected through a set of interview questions to ensure that all efforts are made to capture accurate information.

For this purpose, the form should be supplemented with an extensive questionnaire that provides the officer and officials reviewing the application with the best possible insight into whether the claimed identity is genuine and offers extensive lead information to verify the claim with other relevant sources of information.

Table 1. Interview questions to establish name and surname

Question	Reasoning
Do you have a hard copy of any of your original identity documents that you can present to us, and/or you can download from an online source?	Although a digital or paper copy of an original identity document is not valid under national law, it can still provide a strong indicator of identity.
What name do people usually call you by?	Provides an informal way to initiate the naming query without making the individual feel scrutinized.
What is your family name or surname?	Surnames often hold significant importance and can be useful for establishing family connections.
Do you have any variations or aliases of your family name?	Different cultural or legal circumstances may lead to surname variations, which can be useful for future identification.
What is your given name?	Helps differentiate the individual and is especially useful when the surname is common.
Do you have a middle name or additional given names?	Middle names can help further distinguish the individual.
Have you ever been known by any other names or nicknames?	Alias or nicknames may provide alternative ways to identify the individual.
Are there any cultural or religious naming conventions we should be aware of?	Understanding cultural or religious nuances in naming conventions may aid in the verification process later.
Would you be able to recognize your name if you saw it written down, even in another script or language?	Relevant in multilingual settings and may be useful in identity verification processes.

Alternatively, the claim of specific citizenship can be assessed by a cultural mediator with a set of questions that help determine if a person comes from a specific country and has a strong connection to that country. Accurate responses increase the likelihood that the person is a citizen of a given country.

Table 2. Assessing specific citizenship

Question	Reasoning
What is the first language you spoke at home?	Language is often a strong indicator of cultural or national origin. Understanding the first language can provide immediate clues about the person's background.
Can you describe any traditional festivals or holidays you celebrate?	Festivals and holidays are strongly linked to cultural and national identity, and therefore, the celebrations a person observes can offer insights into their place of origin.
What kind of food is commonly prepared in your household?	Culinary traditions are unique to specific regions and can reveal important information about a person's origin.
Do you know any regional songs or dances?	Cultural expressions, such as songs or dances, are usually specific to particular regions or ethnic groups, and knowledge of these can help confirm a person's claimed background.
Are there specific customs or rituals followed in your family?	Family rituals can be unique to specific cultural or ethnic groups and can indicate where a person comes from.
Can you name any landmarks or cities in the country you claim to be from?	Familiarity with landmarks or cities can help verify that a person is from the claimed region or country.
Do you belong to a specific community or tribe?	Tribal or community affiliations are strong indicators of ethnic or national origin and can be cross-referenced for accuracy.
What currency is used in your place of origin?	Knowledge of local currency is a strong indicator that a person is familiar with a specific country or region.
Are there any proverbs or sayings that are commonly used in your community?	Proverbs or sayings are deeply rooted in culture and can provide insights into a person's ethnic or cultural background.
What is the traditional attire worn by people in your region or community?	Traditional attire can be unique to specific regions or communities and is another way to verify a person's claimed origin.

Additional sections

Additional sections for the [declaration-based form](#) aim to make it as comprehensive as possible and assist in accurate identification and decision-making regarding migration pathways or assistance routes. These sections include the circumstances of arrival, third-party corroboration, personal narrative, preliminary risk assessment, case officer's remarks, applicant's acknowledgement and legal guardian information.

1. Circumstances of arrival: This section should focus on capturing specific details about how the individual arrived in the country of destination. It can also include questions about any interactions the individual had with governmental or non-governmental organizations, as these can provide additional avenues for identity verification and understanding the individual's situation.

Table 3. Circumstances of arrival

Question	Reasoning
When did you arrive in the country?	Establishing a timeline is crucial for cross-verification with other data points, border management information system databases, and surveillance or transportation records, as well as determining whether smugglers were engaged in the process.

Can you describe the route you took to get here?	The route information can be matched against known migration paths, providing another avenue for verification.
Were you assisted by any organizations during your journey? If yes, which ones?	Organizations may have their own set of records that can be accessed for cross-verification, which can also indicate a network of support.
How did you finance your journey?	Financial transactions, if traceable, offer a concrete data point for verification, and may also reveal networks to which the individual belongs.
Did you enter the country alone or with others?	This can help identify additional witnesses or contacts that may corroborate or contradict the individual's account.

2. Third-party corroboration: This section is used to record names, contact information and the nature of the relationship of people within the destination country who can vouch for the individual's identity. These can be friends, family, employers or even community leaders. The reason for collecting third-party information is to provide a way to verify the person's identity through external sources, potentially accelerating the regular migration process or aiding in criminal investigations.

Table 4. Third-party corroboration

Question	Reasoning
Do you know anyone in the country who can confirm your identity?	A third-party testimony can provide valuable validation of identity and may also uncover connections that warrant further investigation.
What is the nature of your relationship with this person?	Understanding the nature of the relationship helps to assess the credibility and potential bias of the third-party source.
Can you provide their contact information?	The ability to follow up with third parties is crucial for further verification of the details provided.
Have you ever been employed in this country?	Employment records can serve as a reliable source for confirming identity and can also provide insights into the individual's background.
Are you affiliated with any organizations in this country?	Organizational affiliations can offer both positive and negative insights into the individual's history and should be corroborated for accuracy.

3. Personal narrative: This free-form section allows applicants to describe their life history, the circumstances leading to their migration and why they cannot provide valid identification documents. The narrative can give context to the individual's situation and offer clues that may be useful for identity verification. It also provides the individual with an opportunity to state their case for a regular migration pathway in their own words.

Table 5. Personal narrative

Question	Reasoning
Can you describe your life before arriving here?	A comprehensive profile provides context and can also offer points for cross-verification with other known records or accounts.
Why did you leave your country of origin?	This question is important for assessing the credibility and motivations behind the individual's claims and can also serve as a basis for any asylum, refugee or protection claims.
What led to the absence of standard identification documents?	Knowing the specific circumstances behind the lack of identification can help evaluate whether it is a legitimate issue or something that requires further scrutiny.

What kind of work did you do before coming here?	Employment history can provide cross-verification points and also contribute to understanding the individual's skills and background.
Tell me about any educational or professional qualifications you might have	Understanding an individual's educational background and professional qualifications provides valuable context and cross-verification points, contributing to the individual's overall profile and credibility.
Have you ever applied for identification documents? What happened?	Information about past attempts to obtain identification can reveal systems where the individual is already recorded or explain the absence of records.

4. Preliminary risk assessment: In this section, the officials can note any inconsistencies or red flags observed during the interview or while reviewing the form. For example, discrepancies between an individual's account of their travel route and known facts can be documented here.

Table 6. Preliminary risk assessment

Question	Reasoning
You mentioned arriving here on (date), are there any people or records that can corroborate your account?	Corroborating the date of arrival with independent sources adds credibility to the account and can highlight inconsistencies.
You said you do not have ID because [reason]. Can anyone vouch for this?	This is important for gauging the credibility of a potentially suspect claim.
Have you ever been convicted of a crime?	Criminal history is a significant risk factor and must be verified with available databases.
Have you ever been associated with any groups considered to be extremist or criminal?	Association with extremist groups can pose a significant security risk and warrants further investigation.
Are you seeking asylum? If so, what is the basis for your claim?	Asylum-seeking status is critical for understanding the urgency of the case and the risk profile of the individual.

5. Case officer's remarks: This is where the interviewing official can add any observations, initial recommendations, or additional context about the individual. This section can include anything from observations about the person's demeanor during the interview, to initial judgements about the veracity of their statements or the need for urgent humanitarian and/or protection assistance.

6. Applicant's acknowledgement: A legal statement in which the individual acknowledges that providing false information can result in legal consequences. Applicants should sign this statement to signify their understanding and agreement.

7. Legal guardian information: If the individual claims to be a child, this section becomes vital. It should include fields for the names, last known locations and potential contact information for any parents or legal guardians. Additionally, it can contain questions aimed at understanding the guardians' legal status, occupation and the nature of their relationship with the child.

3.3 INTERVIEW PROCEDURES FOR OTHER DATA COLLECTION

These interview procedures cover four key categories for data collection, including immediate family members, family history, marital status and children.

Immediate family members

This category aims to establish an overview of the individual's closest family relations. It can help to form a family tree for verification or background checks, as well as to understand the dynamics and relationships within the immediate family. This section can also be instrumental in assessing an individual's support network and living conditions.

Table 7. Immediate family members

Question	Reasoning
Who are your immediate family members?	Names and basic information can help in constructing a family tree for verification or background checks.
What is your relationship with each of them?	Understanding the dynamics within the immediate family can offer insight into an individual's support network and living conditions.
Do any of your immediate family members live with you?	Cohabitation status may indicate the nature and strength of family bonds and also provide more options for verification.
What are their addresses?	Addresses can be essential for cross-referencing and verification.
Do you have email or phone contacts for them?	Contact information offers more immediate ways to corroborate information and relationships.

Family history

This category aims to examine the historical and geographical context of the individual's family. It provides a comprehensive background that may be essential for understanding the individual's current situation and it offers additional opportunities for verification and corroboration.

Table 8. Family history

Question	Reasoning
Where is your family originally from?	Geographic origin can offer sociocultural context and may be important for cross-referencing records or stories.
Is there a history of migration or displacement in your family?	This information can provide a larger context for the individual's current situation and may offer additional clues for verification.
Are there any family heirlooms or shared properties?	These can serve as additional identification and background verification points.
What are the addresses of these properties?	Location information of properties for cross-referencing and verification.
Do you have email or phone contacts related to these properties or heirlooms?	Contact points are important for further verification and information gathering.

Marital status

Understanding marital status can provide valuable information for verifying identity and understanding an individual's immediate responsibilities and commitments. Marital relationships often involve legal documentation, which makes this category important in the verification process.

Table 9. Marital status

Question	Reasoning
Are you currently married or have you ever been married?	Marriage often involves legal documentation and provides an additional source for verification.
If married, what is your spouse's name and occupation?	This can help in further verifying an individual's identity and situation.
What is your spouse's address, email and phone number?	Asking for the spouse's address, email and phone number offers multiple avenues for verifying the spouse's identity and corroborating the applicant's information.

Children

This category focuses on children, who can be crucial for understanding an individual's responsibilities and priorities. The identity of children is often easier to verify due to institutional records like schools, making this an important section for verification and risk assessment.

Table 10. Children

Question	Reasoning
Do you have any children?	Children may be crucial for understanding an individual's responsibilities and priorities, and their identities can often be easily verified.
If yes, what are their names and ages?	More detailed information about children can add to verification efforts and help in understanding the family structure.
What are their addresses?	Addresses of children are important for additional cross-referencing and verification.
Do you have email or phone contacts for them?	Additional contact details provide further avenues for immediate contact and verification.
Are they enrolled in any educational institutions?	School or college records can offer another layer of identity verification.

3.4 BIOMETRIC DATA COLLECTION

Biometric data plays a pivotal role in the identification and verification of migrants, serving as a cornerstone for a multitude of administrative, legal, protection and humanitarian activities. Unlike traditional forms of identification, which can be easily lost, damaged or forged, biometric data provides a more reliable and secure means of establishing an individual's identity. This is particularly crucial for migrants, who may not have access to standard identification documents due to various circumstances such as displacement, conflict or administrative barriers. The use of biometric data, which includes fingerprints, iris scans and facial recognition, enables authorities to quickly and accurately identify individuals. However, this is applicable only if the person has been registered before by either the destination country or a country with whom they share diplomatic ties and where biometric data is exchanged.

The primary utility of biometric data is its ability to establish a unique, unalterable link to an individual. Once collected, this data becomes an enduring identifier that can be used repeatedly over time. The persistent nature of biometric data ensures that individuals can be reliably identified during subsequent interactions with authorities, whether for accessing services, processing through immigration or engaging in other official activities. This capability is crucial in preventing and detecting fraudulent activities, such as identity duplication or misrepresentation.

Furthermore, biometric data can be cross-referenced against national and international security databases, where available, to assess any security risks associated with an individual. By matching biometric data with records from various security agencies, authorities can quickly and accurately determine if there is a history or a potential threat that needs to be addressed.

Lastly, biometric data collection offers a reliable means to cross-check an individual's identity with national authorities in their country of origin. This cross-verification process is critical in situations where the validation of an individual's claimed identity is required for legal, security or administrative reasons. The ability to ascertain a person's identity with certainty is not only vital for the integrity of national security measures but also for the protection of the rights and identities of individuals themselves.

Required equipment

High-resolution fingerprint scanners, iris scan apparatus and facial recognition cameras are fundamental hardware requirements. These should be compliant with international data standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)¹⁷ and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)¹⁸ to ensure interoperability and data integrity.

Required software

Secure servers are necessary for storing the collected biometric data. These servers must be equipped with state-of-the-art encryption technologies to prevent unauthorized access. Biometric data software should also comply with ICAO and ISO international standards, ensuring that the data can be cross-referenced with other global databases if needed (i.e. INTERPOL databases).

Pre-collection preparations

Personnel training

All operators and personnel involved in biometric data collection should undergo rigorous training on how to use the equipment and how to interact ethically with migrants. Training should be standardized and regularly updated to include new technologies or changes in international standards.

Informing the migrant

Before data collection, the migrant must be clearly informed about the types of biometric data that will be collected, the reasons for the collection and how their data will be stored and used. Consent forms should be available in multiple languages, and migrants should have the opportunity to ask questions before consenting.

¹⁷ ICAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that establishes standards and regulations for the safety, security, efficiency and environmental protection of international aviation. This includes specifications for biometric data in Machine Readable Travel Documents, such as passports, which support global interoperability and data security in international travel.

¹⁸ ISO is an independent, non-governmental international organization. It develops standards that ensure data accuracy, security and interoperability in various fields, including biometrics. These standards enhance biometric data quality, protect personal information, and support global compatibility in systems used for identity verification, access control and border management.

Table 11. Pre-collection preparations

Biometric method	Step	Procedure
Facial recognition	Preparation and capture	The area where the photograph is taken should be well-lit to ensure high-quality data collection. Migrants should be instructed to look straight into the camera with a neutral expression, as facial recognition software can be sensitive to lighting and angles.
	Quality check	Each photograph should meet specific quality and angle requirements and should be reviewed immediately after being taken. If there are issues with the quality of the photograph, it should be retaken to ensure accuracy.
Fingerprint scanning	Preparation	Before capturing the fingerprints, it is essential to make sure that the migrant's hands are clean and dry to achieve a high-quality scan. This is crucial for the accuracy of the data collected.
	Scanning and quality check	The fingerprint scanner is then used to capture all ten fingerprints. After capturing, the data should be reviewed straightaway to ensure the scans are clear and complete. Any issues should be resolved immediately by recapturing the fingerprints.
Iris scanning	Preparation and capture	Iris scans offer a high degree of accuracy. The individual should be positioned correctly before the iris scanner and a qualified operator should initiate the scan. The migrant should be instructed to keep their eyes open and look directly into the scanner for the duration of the scan.
	Quality check	As with fingerprint scanning, the quality of the iris scan should be verified immediately after capture. This ensures that the data is as accurate as possible, and reduces the chance of errors during future verification processes.

Verification process

Access to the biometric verification system should be strictly limited to trained and authorized personnel. Biometric data should be matched using specialized software with a proven record of accuracy to minimize false positives and negatives. Clear matching thresholds should be established to determine what constitutes a “match”. In cases where the software produces borderline results, these should be flagged for manual review by trained personnel to provide an additional layer of scrutiny.¹⁹

Ethical considerations

In considering the ethical dimensions of biometric data collection, particularly in relation to migrants, it is crucial to navigate the intersection of rights, privacy and security. The collection of biometric data such as fingerprints can significantly aid in the effective management of migration movements and bolster security measures. However, it also raises ethical concerns related to the right to privacy, the protection of personal data and the potential for stigmatization or discrimination.

Privacy and data protection are foundational ethical concerns. Biometric data is inherently personal, and its collection must be conducted with the utmost respect for the individual's privacy. It is essential that such data is collected lawfully, and that the individuals from whom the data is collected are fully informed about the reasons for its collection, how it will be used and how their privacy will be safeguarded. Additionally, there must be an assurance that the collection is not only necessary but also proportionate to the aims it seeks to achieve.

Groups in vulnerable situations, such as children, victims of trafficking or individuals seeking asylum, present additional ethical considerations. These groups may be less aware of their rights or less capable or unable to give informed consent, so the impact of data collection on them may be more profound.

¹⁹ For more information, please refer to the IOM (2024). *Introduction to Biometrics Manual*.

The principle of non-discrimination must be strictly upheld, ensuring that the collection and processing of biometric data does not lead to differential treatment of certain groups unless objectively justified. There should be robust mechanisms in place to prevent and address any form of misuse of biometric data, which can lead to stigmatization or discrimination.

Security of the data is another ethical imperative. Adequate safeguards must be in place to protect biometric data against unauthorized access, breaches and other forms of abuse. The integrity and confidentiality of personal data must be maintained throughout its life cycle, from collection to eventual deletion.

In ensuring ethical compliance, it is imperative to incorporate mechanisms for independent oversight and provide clear avenues for individuals to exercise their rights and seek redress in cases of infringement. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of data-collection practices are required to respond to the evolving context and to ensure that the rights and dignity of individuals remain at the forefront of migration management policies.

A photograph of two men, likely IOM staff, looking down at a clipboard. The man on the left is wearing a dark jacket with an IOM-Jordan logo. The man on the right is wearing a blue jacket. They are standing in front of a white vehicle, possibly a bus, with a hazy background. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting sunrise or sunset.

4. PROCEDURES FOR VERIFICATION OF OBTAINED INFORMATION

IOM staff members are checking lists to verify which refugees will be travelling to the processing centre. © IOM 2015/Muse MOHAMMED

The process of information verification, especially in relation to migrants lacking valid identification documentation, is a complex but essential operation to ensure data accuracy and reliability. The verification procedure encompasses various components, such as researching existing national and international databases for biometric matches, contacting friends and family to support identity claims, and with the migrants' consent, seeking assistance from the embassies of their countries. This approach is designed to be comprehensive, respectful of individual privacy and aligned with international standards and ethical considerations.

4.1 STEPS FOR INFORMATION VERIFICATION

When an individual arrives without proper documentation, authorities must take reasonable steps to confirm their claimed identity while respecting their dignity and rights.

Ideally, the steps for identity data verification should proceed as follows:

1. Researching national identity management databases to verify if an identity has been already determined and registered

Many migrants may have previously visited the country and already have biometrics registered in national identity management databases, even if they currently lack identity documentation. A fingerprint or facial recognition match can help instantly verify their identity if the biographical data they originally provided still aligns with their currently claimed identity. Officials should check whether migration, visa, immigration, or other domestic databases contain a biometric match linked to the migrant's self-identified details.

To ensure the integrity of identity verification, officials can consider various methods including enrollment checking, match verification, international outreach, migrant interviews and external confirmation.

Enrollment checks

- Conduct biometrics against applicable traveller, immigration, visa, passport and other domestic databases with enrolled identities to identify potential match candidates. Checking biometric data against multiple domestic databases broadens the initial search for previous enrollment records linked to the migrant when documents are lacking. Historical matches can verify if prior visa or asylum applications, border crossings, or other documented interactions align with current identity claims.
- Cross-reference both historical and recently collected biometrics for completeness. Older enrollments may confirm identities used over time. Comparing recent biometrics with archived records accounts for factors such as age progression in facial matching, updates for damaged fingerprints and consistency in iris scans throughout the migrant's life. Enrollments from earlier interactions can help confirm identities used in the past even if documents were also lacking at that time.
- Coordinate with agencies managing each database to ensure appropriate data-sharing agreements are in place permitting lawful access. Under national data protection legislation, ensure that the sharing of biometrics is legal, appropriate and ethical. Define practices, such as one-to-one verification rather than bulk data transfers. Confirm that the agency's role in authorizing access is formally aligned with organizational mandates before extracting any restricted identity data results. These mandates define the organization's scope of work, the goals it aims to achieve, and the boundaries within which it operates. Safeguards should be implemented to ensure that authority is not abused or extended beyond that which is legally permitted, especially in areas where security oversight or legal jurisdiction is not clearly defined or does not exist.



A match, along with consistent personal information, helps streamline confirmation that the person is who they claim to be. The case management software or paper case file should be updated accordingly. If an identity is verified at this stage, the identity verification process is complete. If no match is found, authorities should expedite the case and conduct subsequent verification steps.

However, inconsistencies between a biometric match and differing biographical data provided compared to past documentation raise red flags for potential fraud or an attempt to claim a different identity than previously recorded. This signals a need for more extensive interviewing and investigation before an identity can be confirmed. While database hits do not provide definitive proof of identity, they offer valuable starting points for deeper investigation when accounts do not align.

Reasons for identity data mismatches can include prior use of false documentation, legal name changes since a last visit, attempts to conceal a criminal history, or innocent mistakes in birthdates or spellings. Officials must approach these scenarios without prejudice while thoroughly vetting any explanation provided.

If a biometric match points to a different identity than the migrant now claims, verification is incomplete without further scrutiny using additional interviews, database checks on the alternate identity and contacts in the country of origin to determine which version, if either, is accurate.

Match verification

- Carefully verify biographical data enrolled against the matched biometrics ensuring that it logically aligns with the details presented in the migrant's current claimed identity. Cross-check names, birthdates, home towns and other biographical data stored with previously matched biometrics. Allow reasonable margins for spelling or transliteration variations, and adjust for cultural naming conventions and as required. Seek to validate matches based on the totality of all data collected rather than rejecting a migrant's identity over inconsistencies that can be explained as clerical quirks.
- Identify any serious criminal offense related to matched identities in domestic systems for further attention on case handling. If identity matches reveal domestically flagged criminal records or warrants (beyond minor civil fines), route these cases for secondary review to assess security risks, detention determinations, flight risk factors, or other legal implications linked to migration decisions.
- Validate historical matches through secondary checks of physical documents, prior application files or other paper trails to rule out isolated system errors. Verifying case files attached to previous matched enrollments reduces the likelihood of false digital positives that can confirm fraudulent identities. Review application materials, interview recordings, previously submitted documents, related case notes and other evidence beyond biometric links, to guard against over-reliance on limited systems.

Carefully vetting biometric hits supports the use of holistic intelligence drawn from broader documentation on previous case histories available via interior data networks. More extensive validation through reviewing paper and database records lowers the risk of confirmation bias in security assessments, particularly when derogatory information surfaces. This information can include evidence of criminal activity, involvement in illegal or unethical practices, or other details that may raise concerns about a person's background or intentions.

In addition to domestic sources, international biometric databases like INTERPOL should also be checked for matches linked with any known identities or criminal records. Biometric evidence shared across borders can help locate contradictory visa applications, border crossings, past deportations, or deterrence orders, terrorist watchlist designations, international arrest warrants, and other scenarios that require questioning the migrant to explain discrepancies.

International outreach

- Transmit biometrics to international agencies like INTERPOL to screen for matches beyond domestic jurisdiction. Checking international databases broadens the search for prior biometric enrollment in other countries where migrants may have previously applied for visas, refugee status or had encounters with law enforcement that link their identities to records abroad.
- Adhere to the rules for using information established by the country or organization that controls the data. Ensure compliance with the data-sharing policies of countries that contribute to international systems like INTERPOL. When asking for identity verification, focus on confirming someone's identity rather than conducting full criminal investigations, which require more formal legal steps. Ensure that agreements between agencies permit the use of INTERPOL's database specifically for identity verification purposes.
- Investigate any hits linked to names, nationalities or facts contradicting the claimed migrant identity backstory. If INTERPOL or partner databases surface biometric matches to alternate names or nationalities than presently claimed, extensive questioning is needed to investigate discrepancies between the enrolled records abroad and the details shared with authorities in the destination country. Evaluate the appropriate notice periods across different legal systems or countries, each of which may have its own set of laws and regulations, while remaining alert to the risk of fraudulent multiple identities in connection with asylum claims made in different countries.

Checking matches in international databases, and those of other countries, greatly broadens the search to determine if the identities and stories migrants claim are accurate. Cross-checking biometrics against asylum/visa applicants and criminal databases in other countries can reveal if currently claimed histories align, or if there are major inconsistencies linked to different countries that raise red flags about truthfulness.

If INTERPOL fingerprint records, visa files in other jurisdictions, or criminal data or photos under other names suggest that applicants have engaged in activities abroad that contradict their claim, further investigations through interviews should be conducted. Key questions include: Why do the facts not align across borders? Are there legitimate reasons which explain the existence of multiple IDs? Can statements made at different border crossings be exaggerated if files from other nations reveal contradictory evidence?

Legal identity verification efforts should respect the database regulations of the contributing countries, and add value in determining if claimed migrant backstories match with or diverge from applicant histories in other countries. The aim is to strike a balance between compassion and security by leveraging available data to corroborate genuine migrant requests while scrutinizing potential fraud risks.



If an opportunity arises to reach out to the embassy of the claimed country of origin, proceed to seek assistance from the embassy/consular staff to arrange for identity data information verification by the authorities at the country of origin, subject to the migrant's permission.

Interviewing migrants

When biometric database checks reveal potential alternate identities or conflicting personal details, caseworkers must discuss these inconsistencies with migrants in one or more follow-up interviews.

Open-ended questions should aim to elicit detailed explanations rather than yes or no responses regarding:

- Reasons behind using multiple past identities;
- Explanations for differences in birthdates or home towns listed;
- Discrepancies between paper documentation and database records;
- Recent names change logs if enrolled names now vary;
- Alibis confirming locations during gaps that do not match with claimed timelines.

Look for credible spontaneous narratives rather than overly practiced responses when evaluating honesty. Additionally, note any contacts who can corroborate elements of the story provided.

Seeking external confirmation

- In tandem with migrant interviews, reach out to contacts in the claimed home regions or cities to verify applicant details, such as family members listed as present in the destination country or credible sources from the country of origin mentioned during the initial enrollment or interview. Prioritize individuals who can demonstrate a longstanding, meaningful relationship with the applicant, ideally spanning at least several years.
- Ask employers in the destination country if the migrant has a working relationship with them, and if past worker records match the identities cited in the intake documents.
- Question family members for detailed verifiers that go beyond public data, which home governments can access speculatively.
- Determine which past, current or potential hybrid identity may be legitimate based on the totality of external confirmations gathered in records searches, thoroughly investigating every named entity and life event documented across all formats.
- Assemble a wide range of digital and paper records from both past and present evidence including visas, prior asylum petitions, travel histories, earnings reports or salary slips, as well as school, medical and insurance records. Alongside interview explanations, evaluate which version or amalgamation credibly prove legitimacy based on the cohesion, consistency and reliability of external data validation that affirms the individual's true core identity.

Independent outreach to first-person sources who can authoritatively confirm or refute elements of an applicant's backstory provides external reinforcement or raises potential red flags. Consistent confirmations build confidence in the claimed identity, while firm contradictions suggest potential misrepresentations.

2. Reaching out to the embassy of the migrant's country of origin to request support with identity verification

Subject to the migrant's permission, officials can reach out to embassy or consular staff from the individual's country of claimed origin. Embassy personnel have access to internal records and databases from their home country and may be able to cross-check information against birth certificates, passport registries, driver's licenses or criminal records held internally.

This avenue depends on the migrant's willingness to request assistance from representatives of their country of origin. For asylum-seekers legitimately fleeing oppressive regimes or violence, contacting that country's authorities may be extremely unwise or dangerous for themselves or their family members. Caseworkers must explain embassy procedures and allow migrants to decline participation for safety or privacy reasons.

Precautions

- Caseworkers must explain potential risks to the migrant's safety or family's safety back home if oppressive State authorities are asked to verify the identity claims of those fleeing legitimate persecution. The migrant has the right to decline participation without prejudice.
- Contact with the embassy of the country of origin is only made with the migrant's written informed consent, verified by signature. The migrant can opt out at any point and consent can be withdrawn verbally if they become uncomfortable during any communications with the embassy.
- Staff responsible for conducting interviews with migrants must be prepared to ask thorough and detailed questions, to ensure that the information provided by the individuals is truthful and accurate. The rigorous questioning helps detect any potential inconsistencies or attempts at deception, such as the use of multiple identities or fraudulent asylum claims. This careful approach is essential for safeguarding the integrity of the asylum or immigration process and ensuring that protection is granted to those with legitimate claims.

Procedure

- The officer provides forms to the migrant outlining the embassy verification process, its voluntary nature, risks if applicable including the risk of refoulement, and consent to contact their embassy for identity confirmation. Calls or emails are directed to the appropriate embassy staff with jurisdiction over the migrant's home region. The migrant's permission is obtained, along with details such as their full name and home town. No contact is made without the migrant's clear consent.
- In interviews with the migrant, embassy or consular staff will request specific details about their place of birth, home town, schools attended, employers, personal acquaintances, family connections, childhood events, or documentation from their home country that can confirm or contradict their claimed identity, birthplace, upbringing and citizenship.
- According to the migrant's preference, interviews can be conducted by video, phone or in person. Evaluation of consistency, credibility and corroboration will determine whether embassy staff certify the migrant's background as claimed or raise doubts to share with the receiving country's border/immigration authorities.
- If the migrant shows signs of distress or withdraws consent, the officer should pause or cease embassy communications according to the migrant's wishes, without negative judgement of the verification outcome.

The right of refusal will not prejudice the application.



If identity is verified at this stage, the process of verification of identity is completed.

3. Consulting witnesses listed in the migrant application to confirm identity verification

Interviewing domestic contacts

- Reach out first to any contacts within the country who applicants list as references. These references, who know the applicants and can vouch for their identity claims, may include family, close friends who migrated earlier and former colleagues. Local contacts nearby allow for the most feasible in-person meetings to gauge genuineness through direct questioning and physical interactions, which are more difficult to fabricate than remote calls. Meet contacts in person where possible to validate legitimacy beyond potential phone or email fabrication if references seem dubious or overly convenient. In-person meetings create more accountability as opposed to impersonal phone or email communications that can more easily be fabricated with false references.

- Assess whether explanations align logically against known timelines that can be externally verified with the applicant's file records. Train officers to recognize cues that signal truthful, detailed recall versus guarded, defensive or memorized responses. Accounts that seem scripted or artificially created raise skepticism compared to those that reflect organic, first-hand familiarity. In this context, particular consideration should be given to the fact that individuals being interviewed may have gone through traumatic events and may experience difficulties in recalling details and recounting their migration journey, claim for international protection, or other relevant life events and information.

Contacting references abroad

For applicants without reliable domestic contacts, initiate phone or video conversations with acquaintances abroad who can confirm biographical authenticity. In the absence of accessible local ties, remote conversations can help broaden the reach to contacts in home regions that may provide credible insights that are unavailable domestically.

- Focus the initial outreach on more impartial cultural leaders such as tribal elders, religious contacts or home town administrative officials to minimize the possibility of family members protecting false narratives due to personal loyalties. Seek digital copies of evidence of migrant identity issued by the national authority from the contact.
- Provide external references abroad with limited information about the applicant to prevent coaching answers. After receiving independent responses, expand discussions by sharing additional case file information to check for reasonable consistency in their narratives, now that they have more details. This vetting approach looks for alignment between the information volunteered early on and the narratives given later, ensuring that responses have not been adjusted in the light of new information.

Adding external perspectives from claimed communities abroad provides localized insights that are otherwise unavailable. Using techniques to guard against biases that may incentivize false validation helps ensure the credibility of the information.

4.2 HANDLING OF CONFLICTING INFORMATION

In the complex and sensitive task of verifying the identity of migrants who lack official documentation, traditional interviewing methods may not always be sufficient or appropriate. These individuals, who may have faced challenging circumstances, require a more thoughtful and nuanced approach to ensure accurate and respectful handling of their cases. Recognizing the limitations of conventional interrogation techniques, which often rely on direct and binary questioning, there is a growing need for a more holistic and empathetic strategy. This strategy should not only aim at gathering factual data but also at understanding the personal and often traumatic experiences of the migrants.

Open-ended questioning approaches

Officers should employ extended, open-dialogue interview styles going beyond narrow yes or no questions. This approach empowers migrants to expand on their stories, direct the narrative flow, and make associative connections regarding identity events and timelines from memory. Such techniques are more likely to trigger cues signaling truthful recall rather than pre-scripted responses designed to pass the vetting process. Maintaining a warm and patient demeanor during these discussions can reveal meaningful consistencies or contradictions without the need for aggressive cross-examination, which may inhibit transparency. Allowing migrants to speak freely, with occasional requests for clarification, provides deeper insights compared to rigid, scripted questions and answers and is less confrontational.

Spontaneous conversation dynamics, aligned with trauma-informed techniques, give applicants the opportunity to share their authentic personal histories. This method reduces reliance on perfectly memorized data points, which are prone to normal lapses, and encourages a more genuine recollection of events. Consequently, interviewers

must be aware of the potential trauma experienced by individuals, such as asylum-seekers or migrants, and adjust their approach accordingly. Trauma-informed techniques involve creating a supportive environment that minimizes distress, avoids retraumatization, and allows individuals to share their experiences in a manner that feels safe and respectful. Interviewers should be trained to recognize signs of distress and trauma and ask questions in a way that acknowledges these experiences, ensuring that the process remains respectful and compassionate while still gathering accurate information. Implementing this approach is crucial for maintaining the well-being of vulnerable populations and upholding the integrity of the information-gathering process.

Non-confrontational inconsistency probing

Before questioning migrants about factual discrepancies, officers should gently query the timelines to identify any gaps or inconsistencies. Once the gaps emerge, officers can then address the contradictions:

"Earlier you said you attended school number 5, but this document lists number 7. Can you help me understand the reason for that?"

This starts a non-judgemental conversation as opposed to:

"Your school information doesn't match - why did you lie about this?"

When dealing with inconsistencies in someone's records or statements, it is important not to jump to conclusions about intentional deceit. Assuming dishonesty from the outset can make the person feel defensive and cornered, which can get in the way of uncovering the truth.

A more respectful and useful approach is to start with neutral questions that help check their memory, allowing misunderstandings or forgetfulness to be addressed without making the person feel accused. This method helps maintain trust and can lead to a more accurate understanding of the situation.

4.3 PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Paying attention to procedures for addressing language barriers is important in the process of determining a migrant's legal identity. This aspect of communication is crucial because language barriers can lead to serious misunderstandings and misinterpretations, which can significantly impact the accuracy and fairness of the identity determination process.

Ensuring accurate communication is the primary reason for addressing language barriers. When there is a language mismatch between the migrant and the officials, crucial information can be miscommunicated. Procedures aimed at overcoming these barriers ensure that both parties understand each other correctly, leading to more effective and precise exchanges. This accuracy is especially critical when determining legal identity, where every detail is important.

Upholding fairness and equality is another critical aspect. All individuals, regardless of their language proficiency, should have equal access to fair treatment in the process of legal identity determination. Procedures for managing language barriers ensure that non-native speakers are not disadvantaged, maintaining an equitable approach.

Building trust and rapport through effective communication is key, particularly in sensitive situations involving migrants. When individuals feel understood in their own language, it creates a sense of respect and trust, which is crucial in the delicate process of legal identity determination.

Compliance with legal requirements often necessitates addressing language barriers. Many jurisdictions have mandates for providing language assistance in processes involving legal identification. By having procedures to manage these barriers, organizations and authorities ensure adherence to legal standards.

Enhancing the quality and reliability of the information exchanged is also vital. Language barriers can lead to incorrect information being relayed, which can have significant consequences in the determination of a migrant's legal identity. Correct procedures help ensure that the information exchanged is both reliable and accurate.

Addressing language barriers goes hand in hand with promoting cultural sensitivity. Understanding cultural nuances is just as important as translating words. Procedures that incorporate cultural sensitivity help prevent misunderstandings and promote a more inclusive and respectful approach to determining a migrant's legal identity.

In the process of hiring trusted interpreters to work with migrants, several key steps are essential to ensure effective communication and trust-building. It is important to recruit interpreters who are not only formally qualified in the key languages spoken by migrants but also have a specific accreditation in regional dialects. This goes beyond general language proficiency and ensures a more precise understanding of the nuances in communication.

The credentials of these interpreters should be meticulously verified. This includes confirming their training and certificates in translation and interpretation skills meet the standards established by professional organizing bodies. Additionally, conducting thorough security clearance and background checks is crucial to eliminate any potential conflicts of interest or red flags.

For improved consistency in communication, it is advisable to have one interpreter handle a full case, rather than switching interpreters randomly. This approach helps in maintaining continuity, as the migrant does not have to re-explain their situation to new individuals repeatedly. Developing a consistent interpreter assignment protocol within the intake processing workflows can increase the likelihood of repeat assignments. Moreover, limiting interpreter swapping once a case is initiated, except in unusual circumstances such as formal complaints, can enhance the accuracy of communication, as interpreters accumulate case-specific vocabulary and context from past interviews.

Being culturally informed is equally important. Therefore, merging the role of interpretation and cultural mediator is an advised approach. Engaging with local migrant community centres or embassies can provide valuable insights into culturally sensitive practices, including appropriate eye contact, forms of address and ways of phrasing questions. Written guidance from credible cultural or regional experts, attending embassy-hosted orientation sessions, and inviting community leader panels to speak directly with staff can all contribute to a better understanding of the cultural nuances. Adapting question framing and body language to align with cultural sensitivities can greatly assist in building trust and avoiding misunderstandings.

Finally, monitoring interpretation is a critical aspect. Recording interpreter sessions and having them reviewed by quality control staff ensures that nothing is incorrectly added or omitted. Checking transcripts against the audio for accuracy and completeness, assessing potential interpreter biases, and addressing migrants directly in simple language are all practices that contribute to the effectiveness of the communication process. Observing migrants' facial expressions and adjusting the communication style accordingly helps ensure the message is conveyed clearly and respectfully. Offering migrants opportunities to provide confidential feedback on the process, including interpretation, through accessible feedback and complaints mechanisms is also essential to identify and mitigate issues linked to language barriers and cultural sensitivities.

Table 12. Procedures for dealing with language barriers

Procedure	Description	Reasoning
Accurate communication	Use qualified interpreters and ensure that the communication is clear and precise between officials and migrants.	Prevents miscommunication and ensures that both parties understand each other correctly, which is critical in legal identity determination.
Fairness and equality	Provide language assistance to all individuals regardless of their language proficiency to ensure equal access to services.	Ensures that non-native speakers are not disadvantaged, maintaining an equitable process for all.
Trust and rapport	Engage interpreters who can effectively bridge cultural and language gaps to foster a trusting environment.	Builds a sense of respect and trust, which is crucial in sensitive situations involving migrants.

Legal compliance	Adhere to legal requirements for providing language assistance in legal identification processes.	Ensures that the organization or authority remains compliant with laws mandating language assistance.
Quality and reliability	Regularly assess and ensure the quality of translation and interpretation services.	Enhances the reliability of information exchanged and prevents errors in legal identity determination.
Cultural sensitivity	Incorporate cultural sensitivity training and practices in the handling of language barriers.	Prevents cultural misunderstandings and promotes a respectful and inclusive approach.
Interpreter credentials verification	Thoroughly verify the credentials, qualifications and backgrounds of interpreters.	Ensures interpreters are professionally qualified and trustworthy, maintaining the integrity of the communication.
Consistency in interpretation	Assign one interpreter per case where possible and develop a consistent interpreter assignment protocol.	Maintains continuity and accuracy in communication, as interpreters become familiar with specific cases.
Interpreter preparation	Provide interpreters with all necessary background information and context on the migrant's journey and situation.	Prepares interpreters to better understand and convey the nuances of the migrant's narrative.
Cultural practice awareness	Engage with local community centres, embassies and cultural experts to understand and implement culturally sensitive practices.	Enhances the ability to communicate effectively and respectfully with migrants from various backgrounds.
Monitoring and quality control	Record and regularly review interpreter sessions and adjust practices based on feedback and assessments.	Ensures ongoing quality and effectiveness of language assistance, correcting any issues promptly.

4.4 SENSITIVE DATA HANDLING

Personal sensitive data refers to any information that can be used to identify an individual and includes details that are inherently private or sensitive in nature, such as biographical information (name, date of birth), biometric data, racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, health status, sexual orientation and criminal records. Verifying the identity claimed by a migrant requires a careful, respectful and secure approach to handling this type of data.

Firstly, the collection of personal sensitive data should be strictly limited to what is necessary for the verification of the individual's identity. Extraneous details not directly relevant to these purposes should not be pursued. This practice ensures that the dignity and privacy of the individual are respected and that any potential harm or discomfort resulting from unnecessary disclosure of sensitive information is avoided.

The data collected must be handled with the utmost confidentiality and security. Access to this information should be restricted to authorized personnel only, and secure data handling and storage protocols should be strictly followed. This includes encryption of digital records, secure storage of physical documents and regular audits of data security measures.

Staff involved in the verification process must be trained in handling sensitive data. They should understand the importance of confidentiality and be aware of the legal and ethical implications of mishandling personal information. This training should also cover cultural sensitivity and respect for the diverse backgrounds and experiences of migrants.

When personal sensitive data is used in the verification process, the individual should be informed about the data that is being collected, why it is necessary and how it will be used. They should also be informed about their rights regarding their data, including any rights to access, correct or delete their information. Consent should be obtained wherever appropriate, and the individual should feel that they can trust the process and the intentions of those handling their data.

Finally, once the verification process is complete, any sensitive data that is no longer needed should be securely disposed of or anonymized if retained for records. The principle of data minimization should be adhered to throughout the process, ensuring that only the necessary data is collected, used and retained.

Handling personal sensitive data in the context of verifying a migrant's identity is a responsibility that requires a high level of care, respect and professionalism. By adhering to these principles and practices, authorities and organizations can ensure that the process is not only effective but also upholds the rights and dignity of the individuals involved.

Table 13. Sensitive data handling

Procedure	Description	Reasoning
Data collection	Collect only essential information necessary for identity verification, such as name, date of birth, nationality and biometric data. Ensure justified collection of sensitive data like religious beliefs and health status.	To ensure efficiency, minimize invasiveness, and respect privacy while reducing data management burden. Justified collection protects individuals' dignity and minimizes potential harm.
Data access and confidentiality	Restrict access to sensitive data to authorized personnel only, with strong security measures and staff training on confidentiality.	Prevents unauthorized use or disclosure, protects data integrity and privacy, and ensures responsible handling.
Data storage and security	Use secure, encrypted storage and maintain robust physical and digital security measures. Regularly update and audit security protocols.	Protects data from unauthorized access or breaches, ensuring confidentiality and integrity.
Staff training	Provide comprehensive training on legal obligations, ethical handling and cultural sensitivity. Regularly update training materials.	Ensures staff are informed and capable of maintaining high standards of data protection and ethical conduct.
Consent and information	Obtain informed consent where possible and inform migrants of their data rights.	Ensures ethical handling by informing individuals about data use and obtaining consent, to promote transparency and trust.
Data use	Strictly use data for identity verification and legal status determination. Avoid using the data for unrelated or unauthorized purposes.	Prevents misuse or exploitation of personal information and maintains process integrity.
Data retention and disposal	Retain data only as long as necessary and securely dispose of or anonymize it afterward.	Reduces risk and burden by preventing potential misuse of sensitive information that is no longer needed.
Monitoring and compliance	Regularly monitor compliance with procedures, address breaches promptly and continuously update practices.	Ensures ongoing effectiveness, minimizes harm from incidents and maintains up to date standards.

4.5 HANDLING OF SPECIAL CASES INCLUDING CHILDREN AND VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

When it comes to protecting child migrants, the primary focus is on their welfare and the best interest of the child. Children should not be detained for immigration offences, as detention can cause psychological harm and impede development. Instead, appropriate alternatives to detention should be identified for children and their families, including age-appropriate childcare arrangements for unaccompanied children. Interviews with children should be conducted by qualified child protection personnel who are trained in trauma-informed, age-appropriate techniques to build trust and reduce the risk of retraumatization. The child's claimed age should generally be accepted unless there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Children should be granted the benefit of the doubt to protect their safety and dignity. Unaccompanied and separated children should have appointed legal guardians to represent their best interests and help trace their families when possible. Providing children with legal residency consideration is crucial, as it enables them to access essential services like schooling, health care and social services, which are vital for their development.

In assisting victims of trafficking, it is crucial to arrange contact with specialized appointed counsellors immediately, ensuring that they are not pressured into participating in cases against their traffickers. Granting victims reflection periods free from detention or immediate removal allows them time to stabilize and consider their options without immediate pressure. They should be provided with specialized medical and mental health services to address trauma and recover. Officers should be trained to recognize the signs of trafficking in persons and respond appropriately. Residency options for victims should not be contingent solely on their cooperation in legal cases against their traffickers; instead, the focus should be on the victims' protection and rehabilitation. Providing anonymity and witness protection options can encourage voluntary cooperation in legal proceedings against traffickers while ensuring the victims' safety and dignity.

Table 14. Handling of special cases

Procedure	Description	Reasoning
Child welfare priority	Prioritize child welfare and the best interest of the child in all procedures and provide appropriate alternatives to detention for children and their families, including appropriate childcare arrangements for unaccompanied children.	Detention is harmful to children's development and contravenes child rights conventions, while professional care provides age-appropriate support.
Trauma-informed interviews	Use qualified child protection personnel to conduct interviews with trauma-informed, age-appropriate techniques.	Specialists can build trust and reduce trauma, ensuring a more effective and sensitive communication process.
Age identity acceptance	Lean towards accepting claimed age identities in the absence of overwhelming contrary evidence, using the least invasive verification methods.	Balances procedural rigor with dignity and the benefit of the doubt, reducing the risk of further trauma to the child.
Guardianship for minors	Appoint legal guardians for unaccompanied and separated children and assist in tracing parents or relatives when possible.	Ensures child-centred decisions and provides oversight, acting in the best interests of the child when family is unreachable.
Legal status consideration	Grant residency consideration for children, recognizing their unique needs and vulnerabilities and supporting access to essential services.	Enables the exercising of basic child rights and ensures stable access to developmentally essential services such as education and health care.
Immediate counsellor access	Connect suspected victims of trafficking to trained counsellors immediately.	Provides immediate, trauma-informed care and respects the victim's agency, avoiding re-victimization and encouraging recovery.
Reflection periods	Grant reflection periods to victims of trafficking, exempting them from detention or immediate removal.	Offers necessary stability and empowerment before expecting any legal collaboration or status adjudication from the victim.

Specialized services provision	Offer specialized medical and mental health services tailored to the needs of victims of trafficking.	Addresses the complex trauma typically experienced by victims, aiding in their recovery and ensuring a comprehensive care approach.
Alternative residency pathways	Develop residency pathways for victims that focus on protection and rehabilitation, not contingent on legal case participation.	Prioritizes the well-being and recovery of victims over their utility in legal proceedings, avoiding commodification of their trauma.
Anonymity in legal proceedings	Provide anonymity and witness protection options in legal proceedings if the victim agrees to participate.	Encourages voluntary cooperation by reducing risks and placing decision-making power back in the hands of the victims.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the process of determining a migrant's legal identity, it is crucial to focus only on collecting information that is directly relevant to these tasks. Any further investigation or use of additional verification tools should be avoided once the identity has been conclusively determined. It is important to emphasize that the methods for identity verification should be proportional to the type of data that needs to be verified, ensuring a targeted and respectful approach.

Officials and staff involved in this process should be specifically trained to focus their questioning on core details essential for determining identity such as the migrant's name and birthplace. It is vital to avoid straying into tangents or delving into non-pertinent private matters such as personal relationships, medical issues or other aspects unrelated to the individual's legal status or identity.

This focused approach respects the privacy and dignity of the individual while ensuring that the process of identity verification is efficient and relevant. Once the individual's identity is determined, all further investigations should cease, adhering to the principle of proportionality and relevance. This ensures that the verification process is not only effective and respectful but also complies with necessary legal and ethical standards.

4.7 CONSULTING WITH EXTERNAL SOURCES

When consulting with external sources to verify the claimed identity of migrants, various databases and digital footprints can provide valuable information. These external sources complement the information migrants provide and can help confirm their identity claims. Here are some ways authorities and organizations can ethically and effectively consult these sources, including voter registrations and civil databases, social media and online presence, and media reports and publications.

Voter registers and civil databases

Countries often maintain voter registers and civil databases that can be queried. These databases typically contain vital information such as names, dates of birth and sometimes photographs. Consulting these registers can provide a baseline verification of an individual's claimed identity, particularly when matched with the personal details provided by the migrant.

Social media and online presence

Social media platforms and other online networks are rich sources of personal history and connections. Authorities can work with migrants to search for their names on major social media sites, alumni networks, and niche forums. Posts, photos and friend networks containing contacts listed as relatives or close associates can provide confirming evidence of an individual's identity and backstory.

Media reports and publications

Credible news outlets or publications may have reported events, stories or interviews featuring the individual. This can include coverage of community events, professional achievements or other notable activities that align with the individual's claimed history.

When consulting these external sources, it is important to approach the process ethically and with the consent of the individual whose identity is being verified. The information gathered should be used solely for the purpose of identity verification and in a manner that respects the individual's privacy and dignity. Additionally, the fragmented nature of information across the web requires careful analysis to ensure that the data points are accurate and genuinely pertain to the individual in question. This multifaceted approach, combining government-held data with community-based corroboration and digital footprints, can significantly enhance the reliability of identity verification processes for migrants.



5. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

5.1 WORKING WITH OTHER LOCAL AND NATIONAL AGENCIES

In the context of cooperation with local agencies, certain organizations specifically contribute to combating trafficking in persons, protecting children and verifying age, all crucial aspects of ensuring legal identity and safety for individuals. These include government agencies for the prevention of trafficking in persons, child protection, judicial organizations and civil society organizations.

Agencies for the prevention of trafficking in persons

Agencies for the prevention of trafficking of persons play a crucial role in identifying and aiding victims of trafficking. These individuals often have their documents taken away or falsified, making identity verification a critical step in both rescuing victims and prosecuting traffickers. These agencies work closely with law enforcement, immigration and other relevant bodies to verify identities, maintain databases of traffickers and victims, and provide a vital link in preventing and responding to trafficking incidents.

Child protection agencies

Government child protection agencies are at the forefront of ensuring the safety and rights of children, including their fundamental right to a legal identity. They are actively involved in registering births and assisting in obtaining necessary documents like birth certificates. In situations where child trafficking, illegal adoption or exploitation is suspected, they collaborate with other agencies to verify the age and identity of children. For unaccompanied children or orphans, agencies may be directly involved in establishing a child's identity through various means when traditional documentation is unavailable.

Judicial organizations

Judicial organizations, including courts and legal aid societies, often become involved in cases where age and identity need to be legally verified. This includes legal disputes, age determination for consent or responsibility, and other instances where age or identity is a critical factor. They oversee age assessments, verify documents and provide a legal framework within which identity and age are determined. This is particularly important for undocumented individuals or those with complex legal histories, as it ensures that justice is served in alignment with each individual's verified identity.

Civil society organizations

Working with civil society organizations (CSOs) is critical in establishing and verifying legal identity, especially in contexts involving vulnerable populations, such as migrants, including refugees and internally displaced persons. CSOs often work closely with these communities and can provide valuable support and resources to governmental agencies in the identity verification process. Their role is particularly important given their extensive contacts with migrants, potential past interactions and their ability to assist in establishing identity data.

CSOs typically have extensive on-the-ground presence and experience, enabling them to reach and engage with communities that may be inaccessible or reluctant to interact with government authorities. They often build trust within these communities and have a deep understanding of their needs, challenges and the specific contexts they come from. This level of engagement is crucial for collecting accurate and comprehensive identity information, especially in cases where official documents may be missing or insufficient.

Migrants often face specific challenges in establishing and maintaining their legal identity, due to the loss, confiscation, expiration or destruction of documents during displacement. CSOs working with these populations frequently help in documenting their identities through various means, such as collecting testimonies, issuing informal identity papers and maintaining records of the individuals they assist. These records can be invaluable when individuals seek to formalize their identity with State authorities or need to access services and rights in their destination countries.

Moreover, CSOs can facilitate the identity verification process by acting as intermediaries between individuals and government agencies. They can help explain the importance and process of legal identification to communities, assist individuals in gathering necessary documentation or evidence, and accompany them through what can be a daunting bureaucratic process. Their support can make the process more accessible and less intimidating for individuals, leading to higher success rates in establishing legal identities.

In addition to their direct work with communities, CSOs often conduct research, collect data and provide policy recommendations related to identity issues. They can offer insights into the specific challenges faced by different groups, propose innovative solutions and advocate for policy changes that make identity systems more inclusive and effective. Their research and advocacy work can help ensure that identity systems are sensitive to the needs of all populations, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

However, cooperation with CSOs requires careful coordination and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Data-sharing and protection are critical concerns, as identity information is sensitive and must be handled with the utmost care to protect individuals' privacy and safety. Governments and CSOs need to establish clear protocols for data-sharing, ensure that all activities comply with relevant laws and standards, and work together to maintain the trust of the individuals they serve.

5.2 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DATA-SHARING

In the context of establishing and verifying legal identity, cooperation with embassies and international organizations such as INTERPOL is crucial for a comprehensive and secure identity verification framework. These international entities provide a unique and crucial layer of verification that complements the efforts of local and national agencies.

International organizations

International organizations such as INTERPOL provide a different kind of support. As a global police organization, INTERPOL's role in identity verification is primarily related to security, law enforcement and crime prevention. They maintain databases of stolen and lost travel documents, fingerprints and facial recognition information, among other types of data, which can be crucial for verifying identities. These databases are accessible to law enforcement agencies worldwide, making INTERPOL a key player in international efforts to combat identity fraud, trafficking in persons and other crimes involving identity deception.

INTERPOL facilitates the rapid exchange of police information between countries and can issue notices to alert law enforcement agencies worldwide about criminals, missing persons and other subjects of international police cooperation. Their involvement ensures that identity verification processes are not just accurate and efficient, but also secure and resistant to exploitation by criminals.

Cooperation with these international entities involves data-sharing, joint operations and at times, the development of shared technology and standards for identity verification. For such cooperation to be effective, it requires robust legal frameworks, respect for sovereignty and local laws, and stringent measures to protect individual privacy and data rights.

Embassies and consulates

Embassies and consulates play a vital role in verifying the identities of individuals outside their country of origin. They hold records of citizens abroad, issue passports and other identification documents and have the authority to verify or attest to the nationality and identity of their citizens. For individuals living, working or travelling abroad, the embassy serves as a critical link to their home country's civil registration and identity systems. They can provide the necessary documentation or verification needed for various legal processes, ensuring that individuals are connected to their national identity systems, even when overseas.

Embassies also facilitate communication between destination and origin countries in matters of identity verification, acting as a liaison to share information and documents securely and promptly. In cases of international legal matters, such as cross-border crime, child abduction or trafficking in persons, embassies work alongside other agencies to ensure that the right individuals are identified and dealt with according to the law.

Embassies and consulates can leverage an extensive network of agencies in the country of origin to expand the range of instances that can verify claimed identity such as:

- Civil registration offices are key as they maintain birth, marriage and death records which are foundational documents for establishing legal identity. These offices provide the primary documentation that confirms an individual's existence within the legal framework of a country and serves as the starting point for most identity verification processes.
- Immigration and border protection agencies hold travel records and biometric data that can be vital in confirming identities, especially for individuals crossing international borders. Their contributions are especially critical in ensuring the integrity of identity verification processes in the context of international mobility and security.
- Health departments often hold birth records and other health-related information that can corroborate identity information. Their records are particularly useful in verifying the identities of individuals at the beginning and end of life, as well as ensuring the health-related aspects of identity are accurately recorded.
- Social security agencies manage databases of individuals who are part of employment, taxation and social welfare systems. They hold essential data on individuals' economic activities and contributions, which can be used to cross-verify identities and ensure that benefits and services are correctly allocated.
- Educational institutions maintain records of students and alumni, which often include birthdates, family information and other personal details. These records can be used to verify the identities of individuals, particularly in the absence of other forms of documentation.
- Driving license authorities hold information about individuals who are licensed to drive, including photographs, addresses and sometimes biometric data. Their records are a valuable resource for confirming identities, especially as driving licenses are commonly used as identity documents in many contexts.
- Financial institutions, including banks and credit agencies, maintain detailed records of their clients for financial transactions and credit history. These records are often used in identity verification processes, particularly in transactions requiring high levels of security and trust.
- Electoral commissions, responsible for managing voter registrations and elections, also hold significant identity information. Their databases can confirm an individual's identity, residency and citizenship status, which are often required in various legal and civic processes.
- Law enforcement agencies have access to criminal records and other data that can be used to confirm or deny identities. Their cooperation is vital in preventing and detecting identity fraud and ensuring the overall integrity of identity verification systems.



6. HUMAN AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES

6.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF FRONT-LINE STAFF

As the first point of contact for migrants arriving without (valid) identification documents, front-line staff play a crucial role in the identity determination process. Their responsibilities include initial data gathering, needs assessments, interviewing and documentation collection.

Basic biographic details are collected through standardized forms, regardless of whether individuals can provide supporting documents or rely solely on self-declaration. Detailed supplementary interviews also assist in developing a comprehensive profile. Front-line staff take the lead in communicating with migrants to gather necessary information for subsequent verification and status-granting procedures. This places them at the forefront of ensuring procedures are conducted with empathy, cultural awareness, adherence to human rights standards and strict confidentiality.

The key responsibilities of front-line staff include:

- Conducting initial screening interviews upon first contact with undocumented migrants. This involves gathering basic biographical information, assessing immediate needs and determining possible regular pathways.
- Providing orientation to migrants on the available options for obtaining regular status and identity documentation, including procedures for asylum and temporary protection.
- Collecting required information and documentation from migrants using standardized forms, including both document-supported and declaration-based applications.
- Assisting migrants in filling out forms, providing clarifications on questions and offering language assistance if required.
- Conducting detailed interviews to gather supplementary information in addition to the forms, such as family history and circumstances of arrival.
- Collecting biometric data such as fingerprints and photographs according to standardized procedures.
- Identifying any immediate humanitarian needs or vulnerabilities requiring urgent attention such as medical care, shelter or protection needs and promptly referring these cases to appropriate services.
- Remaining alert to signs of trauma, distress or hesitancy during interviews and adapting approaches accordingly to build trust and minimize retraumatization.
- Protecting confidentiality and appropriately handling sensitive information shared by migrants during screening and interviews.
- Recording clear, accurate and comprehensive notes from all interactions and procedures with each migrant.
- Liaising and coordinating with interpreters, cultural mediators, caseworkers and legal representatives involved in specific migrant cases.
- Routing cases to appropriate departments or partner agencies according to standardized criteria and procedures.
- Attending regular training and update sessions on interview practices, cultural sensitivity, human rights standards, protection mainstreaming and emerging policies related to migrants.
- Providing feedback to supervisors on any issues and recommendations based on front-line experience engaging with migrants.

6.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORY STAFF

While front-line staff directly interact with migrants, supervisory personnel play a key oversight role in ensuring the integrity and efficacy of procedures. Their responsibilities revolve around guidance, monitoring and quality assurance of the identification process. This managerial role is critical for standardizing practices, maintaining accountability and continuously improving systems.

The key responsibilities of supervisory staff include:

- Providing capacity development, guidance and standard operating protocols to front-line staff on screening, interviewing, data and document collection, and special needs handling.

- Conducting regular audits of forms, documentation and case records to ensure adherence to standardized protocols.
- Routinely observing interviews by front-line staff and providing feedback on areas such as cultural sensitivity, privacy, interview tactics, centrality of protection and distress recognition.
- Reviewing a sample of cases to monitor decision quality, procedural accuracy and appropriate handling of vulnerabilities, such as trafficking or exploitation.
- Overseeing the timely review of feedback and complaints raised by migrants through confidential, safe and accessible channels.
- Liaising with other departments and partner agencies to ensure coordinated case management and seamless referral mechanisms.
- Overseeing interpreter services, cultural mediation activities and community outreach initiatives linked to the identification process.
- Continuously assessing staff training needs based on audits, feedback and trends and coordinating regular skills upgrade training.
- Leading periodic reviews of existing protocols and recommending evidence-based modifications to senior management.
- Analyzing performance data, audit reports and quality assessments to identify areas for improvement in procedures.
- Remaining up to date on human rights standards, legal obligations and best practices related to migrant identity determination.
- Escalating any major issues identified to senior management and coordinating responses.
- Maintaining comprehensive records of all monitoring and oversight activities linked to the identification process.

6.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT

Senior management personnel are responsible for providing strategic leadership to ensure continuity of operations, governance and accountability within the identity determination framework. Their focus is on governance, oversight, resourcing and fostering an ethical organizational culture.

The key responsibilities of management include:

- Establishing standard operating procedures (SOPs), policies and a code of conduct for the identification process aligned with human rights standards.
- Ensuring adequate staffing, infrastructure and budget allocation to sustain efficient and humane identification operations.
- Liaising with government bodies and external partners to secure cooperation, data access and coordination on policy matters.
- Initiating periodic external reviews and audits by qualified bodies to assess efficacy, integrity and rights compliance.
- Reviewing reports from supervisors on a regular basis and directing corrective actions on identified issues or gaps.
- Remaining vigilant to any incidents of abuse or negligence and imposing disciplinary actions for violations of the code of conduct.
- Leading senior management reviews of protocols to guide evidence-based modifications reflecting emerging best practices.
- Analyzing key performance indicators and audit results and planning quality improvement initiatives.
- Overseeing the training department to ensure effective staff capacity development and upskilling programmes.
- Promoting a culture of respect for diversity, empathy, privacy, protection mainstreaming and human rights in managing migrant identification processes.
- Directing external outreach initiatives to migrant communities aimed at building trust and awareness.
- Engaging with rights advocates, researchers and policy institutions to integrate insights into identity systems.
- Briefing relevant government authorities and bodies on key developments, challenges and recommendations on a periodic basis.

- Maintaining comprehensive records on all governance and oversight activities linked with the identification process.

6.4 EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

When establishing and verifying legal identities, particularly for migrants, the context of the operation – whether in country districts, or capitals or elsewhere in the country – greatly influences the equipment and supplies needed.

For operations in the field

- **Portable biometric devices:** These compact devices are used for capturing unique individual attributes such as fingerprints, iris patterns and facial features. They are built to withstand extreme temperatures, moisture and other challenging field conditions. Their portability allows officials to reach remote populations and their robust construction ensures reliable operation away from conventional office settings.
- **Rugged laptops:** These are specially designed laptops that can endure drops, vibration, dust and water exposure common in field environments. They typically have a long battery life and bright screens readable in sunlight, making them ideal for data entry and access in any location.
- **Scanners:** Are often utilized to capture important identification documents, forms and certificates. They help to streamline the registration process, allowing for easy access, sharing and storage of critical data. Scanners can also be used in remote areas where physical documents may need to be digitized on-site, improving the speed and accuracy of identity verification.
- **Solar-powered chargers:** Reliable in areas without a stable electricity supply, solar chargers provide a renewable source of power for charging essential devices. They can be particularly useful in remote areas where traditional power sources are unavailable or unreliable.
- **Off-road vehicles:** These vehicles are crucial for transporting personnel, equipment and supplies across rough terrains. They are typically equipped with features like 4-wheel drive and enhanced suspension systems, ensuring they can navigate through difficult roads and conditions to reach underserved populations.
- **Satellite phones:** Offering communication capabilities where traditional cellular networks fail, satellite phones are essential for staying connected. They ensure that teams can coordinate, report and call for assistance in emergencies, regardless of their location.
- **Temporary shelters or tents:** Providing a controlled environment is crucial for conducting sensitive registration and interviews. Temporary shelters protect equipment and individuals from the elements, offering a semblance of privacy and security in otherwise open settings.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** This includes masks, gloves and other protective gear to safeguard the health of both staff and individuals being registered. In environments with health risks or harsh conditions, PPE is essential for preventing disease transmission and ensuring the well-being of everyone involved.

For operations in country districts or capitals

- **High-definition scanners and printers:** Used for producing high-quality, secure identity documents, these scanners and printers capture and reproduce detailed images and texts. They often come with security features to prevent forgery and ensure that the documents are official and reliable.
- **Stable network infrastructure:** This is critical for supporting the vast array of software needed for data management, security and communication. Reliable internet and intranet connections ensure that data can be securely accessed, stored, and shared across different locations and teams.
- **Comfortable office supplies and furniture:** Ensuring the comfort and efficiency of staff, these supplies include ergonomic chairs, desks and organized workstations. A well-equipped office environment increases productivity and helps maintain the focus and well-being of the team.
- **Sophisticated security systems:** These might include surveillance cameras, biometric access controls and secure data networks. They protect the physical and digital integrity of the operation, safeguarding sensitive information and equipment from unauthorized access or breaches.

- **Uninterrupted power supply units (UPS):** To ensure that critical equipment does not shut down unexpectedly during power outages, UPS units provide temporary power. This is crucial for maintaining the continuity of operations and protecting sensitive electronic equipment from power surges and interruptions.

For both field and office settings, the selection and management of equipment and supplies are critical to the successful establishment and verification of legal identities. Each piece of equipment serves a specific purpose, contributing to the efficiency, security and integrity of the operation. Regular training, maintenance and updates ensure that the equipment continues to meet the needs of the staff and the populations they serve, adapting to changing conditions and challenges.

6.5 LOCATION AND FACILITIES

To establish and verify the legal identity of individuals, it is essential to examine the specific attributes and considerations of the facilities used. Each aspect of the facility and its location significantly impacts the effectiveness, security and dignity of the verification process.

Accessibility of locations: Selecting an accessible location is essential to ensure that all individuals requiring verification can reach the facility. In rural or remote field operations, this may involve setting up temporary registration camps near villages or using mobile units that can travel to the individuals. In urban settings, considerations include selecting sites near public transport, providing clear signage and ensuring facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Accessibility reduces barriers to participation, ensuring that no one is excluded due to location constraints.

Security measures in facilities: Security is a multifaceted concern that includes the physical safety of staff and individuals, as well as the protection of sensitive data. Facilities should be equipped with security personnel, surveillance systems and secure entry points to prevent unauthorized access. Data security measures should include encrypted networks, secure storage for sensitive documents and protocols for handling data breaches. Ensuring a safe environment builds trust and maintains the integrity of the identity verification process.

Capacity and space considerations: The selected facilities must be capable of handling the expected volume of individuals without overcrowding, allowing for an orderly flow of people and activities. This includes having enough space for waiting areas, interview rooms, data entry stations and administrative offices. Adequate space not only ensures efficiency but also contributes to a calm and dignified environment for both staff and the individuals being registered.

Privacy and confidentiality: Privacy is critical in the registration process, as individuals share personal and often sensitive information. Facilities should be designed with private interview stations where individuals can speak freely without fear of being overheard. Data entry and storage areas should be restricted to authorized personnel. Maintaining privacy safeguards the rights of individuals and ensures compliance with data protection laws.

Environmental control: Locations and facilities should provide a controlled environment that supports the tasks being performed. This includes protection from harsh weather conditions, adequate heating or cooling, good lighting and minimal noise disruption. A comfortable environment ensures that staff can work effectively and that individuals have a positive experience during the registration process.

Infrastructure requirements: The infrastructure of a facility is essential to its operation. Reliable power sources are necessary to run equipment, while internet connectivity is crucial for database access and communication. Sanitation facilities and clean water are also essential for the health and comfort of both staff and individuals. Ensuring robust infrastructure supports seamless operations and minimizes downtime or disruptions.

Reception and waiting areas: First impressions are important, and the reception and waiting areas are often the first point of contact. These spaces should be welcoming, clearly marked and comfortable, with adequate seating and readily available information. Efficient management of these areas ensures that individuals know where to go and what to expect, reducing anxiety and creating an orderly process.

Interview and data entry stations: Interview stations should be private and quiet to facilitate open communication. They should be equipped with the necessary technology and supplies for recording information accurately. Data entry stations must be secure, with access restricted to authorized personnel to protect sensitive information. Both areas should be ergonomically designed to support the well-being of both staff and individuals.

Storage for sensitive materials: Secure storage is essential when handling personal documents and sensitive data, and can include lockable file cabinets, safes or secure rooms with controlled access. Regular audits should be conducted to ensure that all materials are accounted for and properly protected.

Staff areas: Staff areas are important for the well-being and efficiency of the team. These may include break rooms, meeting rooms and administrative offices. Providing a separate space for staff allows them to rest, prepare and manage the operations effectively, contributing to the overall success of the registration process.

Maintenance and management: Continuous maintenance is important as it ensures that facilities remain operational and effective. This includes regular checks of physical infrastructure, technological systems and security measures. Effective management involves ongoing assessment of needs and challenges, with adjustments made as required to ensure that the facility continues to meet the demands of the operation.

Each aspect of the location and facilities plays a crucial role in the successful establishment and verification of legal identities. Through careful planning, regular assessment and adaptation, these spaces can effectively support the complex and sensitive nature of the identity verification process.



7. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The border area of Huaquillas, where Venezuelans wait for their documentation to enter Peru regularly. © IOM 2019/Muse MOHAMMED

7.1 PERIODIC REVIEW AND UPDATE OF PROCEDURES

Periodic review and update of procedures are critical components of a robust continuous improvement strategy. This practice involves regularly assessing the effectiveness of current procedures, identifying areas for enhancement, and implementing updates to reflect best practices, technological advancements, and changes in the legal or social environment in a country. It ensures that the relevant government agencies stay ahead of challenges and continuously refine their approach to delivering their services effectively and efficiently.

The following key inputs are to be used for periodic review and update of procedures:

- **Assessment of current procedures:** Regularly scheduled reviews should be conducted to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and compliance of current procedures. This involves analyzing data, feedback and performance metrics to understand the impact of existing methods and identify any gaps or inefficiencies.
- **Stakeholder feedback:** Engaging with staff, partners and the populations served to gather insights and feedback is crucial as their experiences and perspectives provide valuable information on what is working well and what needs improvement. This inclusive approach ensures that updates are responsive to the needs and realities of all stakeholders.
- **Incorporating technological advancements:** Technology evolves rapidly, offering new tools and solutions that can enhance the identity verification process. Regularly reviewing and integrating appropriate technological advancements can improve accuracy, efficiency and user experience.
- **Training and capacity-development:** Updates to procedures often require changes in staff roles or the adoption of new skills. Providing ongoing training and capacity development ensures that staff are well-equipped to implement the updated procedures effectively.
- **Documentation and communication:** Any changes or updates to procedures should be well-documented and communicated clearly to all relevant parties. This includes updating manuals, guidelines and training materials, as well as ensuring that staff and stakeholders are aware of and understand the changes.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** After implementing updates, it is important to monitor the impact and evaluate the effectiveness of the changes. This continuous feedback loop allows for further refinement and ensures that the procedures remain aligned with the organization's goals and the needs of the populations served.
- **Adaptation to legal and policy changes:** Legal frameworks and policies related to identity verification can be amended and modified. Staying updated on these changes and adjusting procedures accordingly is vital to ensure compliance and protect the rights and dignity of individuals.

By committing to the periodic review and update of procedures, organizations ensure that their operations adapt to changing needs, incorporate new insights and continuously improve over time. This commitment not only enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of the verification process but also reinforces the dedication to best practices and high-quality service delivery.

7.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

Quality assurance mechanisms are a set of processes and tools designed to systematically monitor, evaluate and enhance the quality of operations. In the context of establishing and verifying legal identities, these mechanisms ensure that every step of the process meets the established standards and continuously improves over time. Effective quality assurance not only enhances the service's reliability but also strengthens the accountability and credibility of the organization.

The following are key aspects of quality assurance mechanisms:

- **Standard operating procedures:** Well-defined SOPs are the foundation of quality assurance. They provide a detailed road map for every aspect of the operation, ensuring consistency and clarity in the execution of tasks. Regularly reviewing and updating SOPs as part of quality assurance helps ensure that procedures remain current and effective.

- **Regular audits and inspections:** Conducting routine audits and inspections of processes, equipment and facilities help identify any deviations from established standards. These audits can be conducted internally or externally, providing an objective assessment of the operational quality and areas for improvement.
- **Feedback loops:** Establishing mechanisms for collecting and analyzing feedback from individuals, staff, partners and the populations served is crucial. Feedback loops help in understanding the efficacy of procedures and stakeholder satisfaction levels, guiding targeted improvements.
- **Error tracking and management:** Implementing systems for tracking and managing errors or incidents is an essential part of quality assurance. Understanding the type, frequency and cause of errors allows for targeted corrective actions and preventive measures, reducing the likelihood of future occurrences.
- **Technology and infrastructure upgrades:** Regularly assessing and upgrading the technology and infrastructure in the identity verification process ensures that the operations are efficient and secure. Staying updated with the latest technological advancements can significantly enhance the quality and reliability of services.
- **Risk management:** Proactively identifying, assessing and mitigating risks associated with the identity verification process is a crucial quality assurance mechanism. A robust risk management strategy helps in preventing issues and ensures preparedness for any challenges that may arise.
- **Periodic self-evaluation mechanisms:** Integrating self-assessment tools, such as e-learning modules, enables staff to periodically evaluate their understanding of procedures, standards and policies. These tools provide a scalable way to reinforce knowledge, identify gaps and promote continuous professional development.

By incorporating these quality assurance mechanisms, organizations can ensure that their processes for establishing and verifying legal identities are efficient, reliable and continually improving. This commitment to quality not only enhances the effectiveness of the operations but also builds trust and confidence among all stakeholders involved.

7.3 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance indicators are critical tools for measuring the success of any operation. Therefore, it is essential to establish and monitor specific metrics that assess the efficiency, effectiveness and overall performance of the processes used in establishing and verifying legal identities. Performance indicators are quantifiable measurements that provide insights into how well operations are performing against set objectives, allowing for data-driven decisions and targeted improvements. In the context of establishing and verifying legal identities, they help assess whether the procedures are meeting their intended goals, highlight areas for improvement and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders. By regularly measuring and analyzing these indicators, organizations can make informed decisions to enhance their services and outcomes.

The following are the set of key performance indicators to establish and monitor:

- **Accuracy rate:** This indicator measures the accuracy of the identity verification process. It includes the percentage of correctly identified individuals and the error rate in data capture and entry. High accuracy rates are crucial for the reliability and credibility of the identity verification process.
- **Process time:** This metric tracks the average time to complete the verification for each individual. It helps identify bottlenecks and assess the overall efficiency of the process. Shorter processing times indicate efficient operations, while longer times may signal the need for procedural refinements.
- **Customer satisfaction:** Gathering feedback from the individuals who have undergone the verification process is essential. Satisfaction surveys can provide insights into their experience, highlighting what is working well and what can be improved from a user perspective.
- **Volume of cases handled:** This indicator tracks the number of individuals whose identities have been verified within a specific period. Monitoring the volume of cases can help in resource planning and understanding the demand for services.
- **Data quality and integrity:** Ensuring the quality and integrity of collected data is paramount. This indicator may include measurements of the frequency of data errors, discrepancies or breaches, to achieve the lowest possible rate to maintain trust and reliability.
- **Compliance rate:** This metric assesses adherence to legal and regulatory requirements. It is crucial that the identity verification process complies with all relevant laws and guidelines, and this indicator can help track that compliance.

- **Staff performance:** Evaluating the performance of the team involved in the verification process is important for overall operational quality. This may include assessments of efficiency, adherence to protocols and professional development needs.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Understanding the cost per verification and the overall budget adherence is important for maintaining financial sustainability. This indicator can help assess the cost-effectiveness of the identity verification process.
- **Innovation and improvement measures:** Tracking the implementation and impact of any new strategies or technologies adopted in continuous improvement efforts is important. This indicator can illustrate how innovation contributes to better outcomes and efficiencies.

By regularly monitoring these performance indicators, organizations can maintain a high-quality, efficient and effective identity verification process. Performance indicators provide a clear, quantifiable way to assess operations, identify areas for improvement and measure the impact of any changes made. They are essential tools in the continuous effort to enhance the procedures and outcomes of establishing and verifying legal identities, ensuring the process remains robust, reliable and responsive to changing needs and environments.

7.4 TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Training and capacity development are essential aspects of continuous improvement, focusing on enhancing the skills, knowledge and abilities of staff involved in establishing and verifying legal identities. This process ensures that all personnel are equipped to perform their duties effectively, adapt to new methods or technologies and respond to evolving challenges and requirements.

The following are key aspects to consider when designing training and capacity development:

- **Regular skills update:** As procedures, technologies and legal requirements evolve, staff need to be kept up to date through regular training sessions. These sessions may cover new software tools, changes in data protection laws or innovative identification techniques. The goal is to maintain a high level of competency and ensure that all team members are aware of and proficient in the latest developments.
- **Comprehensive onboarding:** New staff members require a solid foundation to perform effectively. A comprehensive onboarding process introduces them to the organization's culture, role specifics, tools and standards. It typically includes orientation sessions, shadowing opportunities and initial assessments to ensure understanding and capability.
- **Professional development opportunities:** Encouraging and providing opportunities for further education and specialization can significantly enhance the capacity of the team. This may include sponsoring advanced courses, facilitating attendance at relevant workshops, or encouraging certifications in specialized areas. These investments in staff not only improve the quality of operations but also contribute to job satisfaction and retention.
- **Performance enhancement:** Training programmes should be designed to address any identified gaps in performance. By analyzing performance data and feedback, organizations can target specific areas for improvement such as speed, accuracy or customer service. Tailored training can then be provided to elevate these areas, enhancing overall operational performance.
- **Adaptability training:** The ability to adapt to new challenges or changes in the operational environment is crucial. Training in problem-solving, flexibility and innovation can prepare staff to handle unexpected situations or transitions, such as the adoption of new technologies or changes in regulatory frameworks.
- **Feedback and improvement:** Continuous evaluation of training programmes is vital. Feedback from participants, along with performance data, should be regularly collected and analyzed. This information is invaluable for identifying what is working and what is not and for making necessary adjustments to the training content, methods or frequency.

Training and capacity development are vital for maintaining the effectiveness and responsiveness of the legal identity verification process. Regular skills updates, comprehensive onboarding, professional development, performance enhancement, adaptability training, and a feedback-driven approach to improvement are all crucial

components. By investing in the ongoing development of staff, organizations not only enhance the quality and efficiency of their operations but also demonstrate a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

7.5 TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Training needs assessment is a systematic process used to determine what training is necessary for staff at various levels to meet the goals of establishing and verifying legal identities. It involves identifying the specific skills, knowledge and abilities that are required and then assessing the gaps between the current state and desired competencies.

The following are key factors to consider when designing training needs assessment:

- **Skills and competency analysis:** Each role within the identity verification process requires a specific set of skills and competencies. Conducting a thorough analysis of job descriptions, tasks and desired outcomes can help create a profile of the ideal skill set for each position, against which current capabilities can be measured.
- **Individual assessments:** Assessing the current skills and knowledge of each staff member provides a clear picture of where training is most needed. This may involve direct observations, reviews of work outputs or formal assessments. The goal is to identify any gaps or weaknesses that training can address.
- **Operational requirements:** The operational needs of the identity verification process can change due to factors such as technological advancements, policy changes or shifts in the demographic being served. Assessing these needs involves staying informed about the external environment and anticipating future skill requirements.
- **Feedback from staff:** Staff members are often aware of their own training needs and can provide valuable insights into areas where they feel less confident or where they see opportunities for improvement. Regularly soliciting and incorporating this feedback ensures that training is relevant and targeted.
- **Alignment with organizational goals:** Training needs should be aligned with the broader goals and objectives of the organization. This alignment ensures that as individuals improve their skills and competencies, they are contributing more effectively to the mission and vision of the organization.

Conducting a thorough training needs assessment is essential for ensuring that training programmes are targeted, relevant and effective. By analyzing skills and competencies, assessing individual and operational needs, incorporating staff feedback, and aligning with organizational goals, organizations can identify the specific areas where training is most needed. A well-executed training needs assessment provides a solid foundation for developing training programmes that enhance staff capabilities and improve operational outcomes.

8. SAMPLE FORMS AND TEMPLATES

IOM transit centres in the Niger. © IOM 2016/Amanda NERO

Profilage Centres d'accueil et de transit
de migrants de l'OIM au Niger

☐ DIRKOU ☐ ARLIT ☐ AGADEZ ☐ NIAME

Date de l'enquête :/2015

1. INFORMATION

1.1 Nom :

1.2 Prénom :

1.3 Adresse :

1.4 Nationalité :

1.5 Date de naissance :

1.6 Sexe : ☐ M ☐ F

1.7 Niveau d'éducation :

1.8 Profession :

1.9 Statut marital : ☐ Marié ☐ Célibataire ☐ Divorcé ☐ Veuf

1.10 Nombre d'enfants :

1.11 Nombre d'adultes :

1.12 Nombre de personnes à charge :

1.13 Nombre de personnes dans le foyer :

1.14 Nombre de personnes dans la communauté :

1.15 Nombre de personnes dans le pays d'origine :

1.16 Nombre de personnes dans le pays d'accueil :

1.17 Nombre de personnes dans le pays de transit :

1.18 Nombre de personnes dans le pays de destination :

1.19 Nombre de personnes dans le pays de transit :

1.20 Nombre de personnes dans le pays de destination :

8.1 INITIAL MIGRANT SCREENING FORM

Date: [Enter date]

Location: [Enter location]

Full name: [Enter full name]

Date of birth: [Enter date of birth]

Nationality: [Enter nationality]

Gender: [Enter gender]

Languages spoken: [Enter languages]

Current address: [Enter address]

Phone number: [Enter phone number]

Other contact details: [Enter details]

Reason for migration: [Explain reasons for leaving country of origin and what you are seeking]

Immediate needs:

☐ Medical care

☐ Shelter

☐ Food

☐ Legal assistance

☐ Mental health and psychosocial support

☐ Other:

Initial risk assessment:

☐ Unaccompanied minor

☐ Medical condition or disability

☐ Victim of trafficking

☐ Other vulnerability:

Screening officer's notes:

[Additional observations/comments]

Signature of migrant: _____

Signature of officer: _____

8.2 ORIENTATION AND CONSENT FORM

Full name: [Enter full name]

Identification number: [Enter ID number]

Date of orientation: [Enter date]

Preferred language: [Enter language]

Staff member name: [Enter name]

Orientation checklist:

- ☐ I was provided an overview of the identity verification process
- ☐ I was informed about my rights as a migrant
- ☐ I received information about data protection and privacy
- ☐ The consent procedures were explained to me
- ☐ I had the opportunity to ask questions

Migrant's acknowledgement:

I, [full name] _____, acknowledge that I have been informed about and understand the identity verification process, my rights related to data protection and consent procedures.

Consent to proceed:

☐ I consent to the collection and processing of my personal data for the purposes explained to me.

Signature of migrant: _____

Signature of officer: _____

8.3 IDENTITY VERIFICATION FORM (DOCUMENT-SUPPORTED)

Full name: [Enter full name]

Contact information: [Enter contact details]

Date of birth: [Enter date of birth]

Nationality: [Enter nationality]

Gender: [Enter gender]

Migrant photo

Document(s) provided:

☐ Passport ☐ National ID card ☐ Driver's license ☐ Other (specify)

Biographic data from document(s):

Type: [Enter document type]

Number: [Enter number]

Issuing country: [Enter country]

Issue date: [Enter date]

Expiry date: [Enter date]

Secondary documents reviewed:

[List any additional documents checked and details]

Fraud detection checks:

☐ Security feature check ☐ Database lookup ☐ Other (specify)

Verification officer's notes:

[Observations, discrepancies, notes]

Migrant's certification:

I certify the documents provided are genuine.

Signature: _____

Comments from migrant:

[Any discrepancies or issues explained]

Verification status:

☐ Identity verified on [enter date] ☐ Identity not verified

Verification officer's signature: _____

8.4 INITIAL IDENTITY VERIFICATION FORM (DECLARATION-BASED)

Alleged identity details:

Full name: [Enter alleged name]

Date of birth: [Enter alleged date of birth]

Place of birth: [Enter alleged place of birth]

Nationality: [Enter alleged nationality]

Migrant photo

Interview on identity:

Name interview:

[Enter responses to name interview questions]

Citizenship interview:

[Enter responses to citizenship interview questions]

Circumstances of arrival interview:

[Enter responses to circumstances of arrival interview questions]

Personal history narrative:

[Detailed personal history and circumstances explaining lack of documents]

Known associates or references:

[Enter details of any known associates or references]

Official's observations and notes:

[Observations regarding the credibility of information provided]

Decision justification:

[Detailed justification for verifying or rejecting alleged identity]

Follow-up verification plan:

[Steps to further verify identity]

Verification status:

☐ Identity tentatively accepted

☐ Identity not verified

Verification officer's signature: _____



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