



VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Post Title: Protection Assistant
Duty Station: Panama City, PANAMA
Duration of Assignment: 1 January to 31 December 2015
Type of Contract: Individual Contract Agreement - UNOPS
Employment Conditions: USD 1,150/monthly and medical insurance

Important Notice: Persons interested in applying for this position must be Panamanian Nationals or must hold a valid work permit in Panama

Qualified candidates who are interested in the below position are invited to submit their written application, attaching a UN Personal History Form (P.11) and motivation letter (1 page maximum), not later than **29 November 2014**. Application documents should be sent by email to UNHCR (panpa@unhcr.org), including the reference of RO PAN "Protection Assistant (UNHCR) Application" in the subject field.

Due to the foreseen number of applications, only persons shortlisted will be contacted.

General Background of Project or Assignment:

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has an international mandate to protect refugees, persons whom have fled their country of origin due to well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or belonging to a particular social group. The UNHCR Regional Office for Central America, Mexico and Cuba (RO PAN) is located in Panama City. The Protection Assistant will be supporting the UNHCR protection focal point for Central America in the achievement of five strategic priorities: improvement of the asylum systems, addressing forced displacement due to the activities of transnational organized crime, enhancement of durable solutions, prevention and reduction of statelessness and strengthening strategic partnerships. Within these five areas, some of the main functions include developing tools, identification of good practices, workshops (both internal and external), and identification of protection needs.

Traditionally, Central America has been an area of migration, be it internal, from rural areas to urban slums, or to the USA and Canada. Hundreds of thousands left Central America in the 90's fleeing civil wars, while years later the migration trend obeyed mostly to economic reasons.

However, since at least 2006, the on-going wave of violence is expelling thousands from their homes. In a frequent scenario, we are observing cycles of forced displacement caught in the cross fire of Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) and/or are victims of other situations of violence (i.e. forced recruitment, persecution and extortion by criminal gangs). This population first escapes to another part of its country of origin, trying to seek protection with family or friends. However, when located by their aggressors, these persons often decide to leave the country. Only few of them cross borders in a regular way and/or are able to apply for international protection regimes. Therefore, the vast majority are deported within the framework of enforcement and removal operations. Once in their country of origin, returnees are exposed again to the same violent situation that had forced them to leave, but with a higher degree of vulnerability. Just to show the magnitude of this "cycle of displacement", 78,000 persons from the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) were deported by land from Mexico (2012) and some 69,000 by air from the United States (2011).

During the same period of time, nationals from the NTCA continue to seek international protection, particularly by heading north. The number of asylum applications from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador has sharply increased in the last few years. By the end of 2012, asylum had been granted to more than 17,000 refugees coming from these three countries (mostly in the United States of America and Canada, but also in countries of the sub-region). However, there are signs that this figure only represents a small sample of the population at risk or in need of international protection. Firstly, because only few of the trans-migrants are aware of the possibility to seek asylum and of the existence of complementary protection regulations and humanitarian visas for those who do not qualify as refugees but who have protection needs. Secondly, because the recognition rates for asylum-seekers from the NTCA are still very low.

Considering the magnitude of the current crisis, UNHCR will seek to increase its presence in the region as part of a two-pronged approach to address the humanitarian impact of TOC and Other Situations of Violence (OSV) in Central America. UNHCR's engagement will focus on the following pillars:

- Enhance international protection of asylum seekers, refugees and other persons of concern who are escaping from TOC and other forms of violence in Central America.
- Raise awareness on new displacement patterns generated by TOC and other forms of violence in Central America at the national and regional level.

For the implementation of this regional strategy, UNHCR has maintained a close relationship with governments, the UN System, civil society and donors.

Purpose and Scope of Assignment:

Under the direct supervision of the Regional Protection Officer, the incumbent carries out the following tasks:

- Stay abreast of political, social, economic and cultural developments that have an impact on the protection environment;
- Support the Regional Protection Officer in advising on eligibility and status determination procedures, ensuring compliance with UNHCR procedural standards and international protection principles;
- Support UNHCR RO in the linkage with relevant Government authorities dealing with protection and migration issues;
- Support the participation in REDLAC and other inter-agency coordination mechanisms to share information on new displacement patterns in the region and develop new cooperation areas;
- Assist in enhancing the protection capacity of national and local governments, partners and civil society to assume their responsibilities vis-à-vis all persons of concern through protection training, mainstreaming and related activities;
- Ensure the coordination with UNHCR's implementing partners and other institutions, working on protection related issues (Ombudsperson's Offices, NGOs, volunteer organizations, universities);
- Support the design and/or implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all protection/solutions-related activities;
- Assist in the provision of legal advice and guidance on protection-related issues to persons of concern;
- Assist in promoting and implementing effective measures to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness;
- Support activities aimed at ensuring that durable solutions are sought and provided to the largest possible number of persons of concern;
- Assist in developing and implementing a child protection plan as part of the protection strategy and ensuring partnerships are forged with UNICEF and other key stakeholders;
- Assist in the implementation of UNHCR's strategies / projects / studies to assess new displacement patterns in the region;
- Carry out legal analysis and research as requested;
- Support UNHCR RO, in the organization of workshops, seminars and activities on displacement & protection issues;
- Assist in other tasks performed by RO PAN including preparation of case studies, presentations and materials.

Monitoring and Progress Control:

- Assist in the preparation of periodic reports and statistics of asylum seekers, refugees and others persons of concern to UNHCR;
- Support the design, implementation and evaluation of protection-related programming with implementing and operational partners. Contribute to and facilitate a programme of results-based advocacy through a consultative process with partners;
- Establish constant communication mechanisms with IUNVs and implementing partners working in the area of responsibility, through the exchange of information and regular reporting;
- Actively participate in all aspects of operations planning, monitoring and evaluation of UNHCR's programme;
- Assist in facilitating a regular flow of information and provide technical support / guidance on monitoring and evaluation to implementing / operational partners where required;
- Assist in logistics and preparations for workshops including preparation of materials, workshop activities and logistics;
- Manage and keep up-to-date all the registries and files related to the office's work;
- Support UNHCR RO PAN in the elaboration of reports for donors and other internal reporting requirements.

Travel plan:

- Should be available for missions to Central American countries as required, inter alia to attend trainings, support the coordination of events/meetings, follow up protection issues, etc.

Competencies of the Protection Assistant:

Professionalism

- Good knowledge of institutional mandates and policies related to international protection, human rights and migration.
- Good knowledge and/or experience of the United Nations system and its mechanisms.
- Good analytical and research skills, ability to evaluate and integrate information from a variety of sources.
- Takes responsibility for incorporating a gender perspective and ensuring the equal participation of women and men in all areas of work.

Communication

- Strong communication skills (spoken, written and presentational), including the ability to produce written reports in a clear, concise style, to deliver training presentations to external audiences as well as to build and maintain effective partnerships.

Planning & organizing

- Ability to establish priorities and to plan work assignments, handle competing demands and work under pressure of frequent and tight deadlines.
- Ability to work independently, with little supervision and keep to task.

Teamwork

- Proven interpersonal skills and ability to work in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic environment with sensitivity and respect for diversity;
- Willingness to learn from others;
- Places team agenda before personal agenda, sharing credit for team accomplishments and accepting joint responsibility for team shortcomings.

Client Orientation

- Ability to establish and maintain productive partnerships with persons of concern (PoCs) to UNHCR by gaining their trust and respect;
- Identifies PoCs' needs and matches them to appropriate solutions;
- Monitors ongoing developments inside and outside the PoCs' environment to keep informed and anticipate problems.

Qualification and Experience:

- (Advanced) University degree in Law, International Relations, Political Sciences or related field with:
- Minimum 4 years of relevant professional experience (2 years with University degree).
- Familiarity with and/ or interest in Refugee Law, Human Rights Law and International Law or related areas. Preference will be given to those familiar with refugee protection and mixed migration flows and/or internal displacement.
- Demonstrated writing, reporting and presentation skills in English and Spanish. Knowledge of a third language is an asset.
- Ability to conduct functions on computer programs such as Microsoft Office (including Excel y Power Point, Access).
- Good understanding of the current political, human rights, migration context in Latin America, particularly in the Central American region. Experience from the region will be regarded as an asset.