

AFRICA FIELD STORY

CHAD



I first joined UNHCR Chad as an interpreter in 2013. I worked with different resettlement colleagues, providing support during resettlement interviews, translating from Arabic to French and/or English. I was also involved in translation of various documents such as the marriage certificates, birth certificates, etc. What I liked most about my job at that time was that it allowed me the opportunity to directly interact with the refugees as they navigated the resettlement process.

In 2015, I was contracted by the *Commission Nationale pour l'Accueil et la Réinsertion des Réfugiés et des Rapatriés* (CNARR), Government of Chad's department responsible for dealing with all issues related to refugees and returnees. I was fortunate to be part of a joint CNARR-UNHCR roving registration mission where I visited refugee camps located in eastern and southern Chad and actively participated in the registration of refugees. The camps, particularly in eastern Chad had Sudanese refugees while in southern Chad, the refugee population was mostly from the Central

African Republic. My task was to record the biodata and biometric information of refugees (through Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) in the UNHCR database. Once registered, the refugees were issued with a ration card which granted them access to services and food items in the camps.



March 2021. Senior Resettlement Assistant Aboulaye Mahamat assists refugees before their departure on resettlement.

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From 2016 till now, I have been working as the Senior Resettlement Assistant in UNHCR Branch Office N'Djamena. I undertake various administrative tasks linked to resettlement, including planning for and organizing refugees' departures to resettlement countries, compiling resettlement statistics, liaising with IOM on refugee movement from the camps to N'Djamena, providing counselling to refugees to manage their expectations, coordinating with CNARR colleagues for issuance of exit permits for refugees ready to depart on resettlement, etc.

I believe that my work contributes in making a difference to the lives of refugees. For example, in 2018-2019, when we experienced difficulties in the issuance of

exit permits for refugees, I was part of the broader UNHCR Protection team that advocated with the Government for resolution of the problem. We continue to maintain very good relations with CNARR and receive pro-active support from them in issuance of exit permits for resettlement departures.

I am also actively involved in conducting BIMs verification for all refugees prior to their international departures. The process involves confirming key bio-data information, ten fingerprints and iris scan for each individual who is already registered in the UNHCR database. I feel proud that my work helps safeguard the resettlement process from potential abuse or fraud.

Overall, I enjoy the team spirit and the transparency linked to my work. Over the years, I have gained proficiency in several aspects of my job, which helps me deliver my tasks more efficiently. I get regular opportunities to coordinate with Resettlement and Protection colleagues from all offices in Chad. I derive tremendous satisfaction when I see the most vulnerable refugees getting the opportunity to leave for another country. I strongly believe that their lives will improve significantly, and that they will receive specialized care, if they have any medical or other needs.



March 2021. Senior Resettlement Assistant Abdoulaye Mahamat assists refugees before their departure on resettlement.
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The most challenging aspect of my work is that there are always competing deadlines to meet – and all of them are important! To achieve all given tasks requires a lot of dedication and focus. One needs to be very well organized and have the ability to multitask to achieve good results.

Working during the COVID-19 pandemic was difficult and required a lot of adaptation. Direct interaction with refugees decreased, whereas our reliance on technology increased. I continued to provide counselling by phone during the year and successfully managed to reach 171 families/ 605 individuals to provide status updates on their resettlement cases. Of course, some activities required an in-person presence, and when participating in them, I strove to ensure that all measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 were diligently observed.

I hope to continue to contribute to resettlement work, which I believe offers the refugees a chance to reinvent themselves and become contributing members of the society. What can be more satisfying than that?

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