



Expanding the Evidence Base on Registration, Documentation and Protection:

SYNTHESIS REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA AND SUDAN

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning of Actions financed
by the Asylum Migration Integration Fund (AMIF)

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GLOSSARY

Biographical data	Refers to personal data such as name, sex, marital status, date and place of birth, country of origin, country of asylum, individual registration number, occupation, religion, and ethnicity
Biometric data	Data related to a personal biological (anatomical or physiological) characteristic which can be used to establish a person's identity by comparing it with stored reference biometric data, specifically fingerprint, facial or iris image
Civil registration	The continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population as provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements of a country. Civil registration is carried out primarily for the purpose of establishing the documents provided by law
Case management	Refers to all the actions taken in relation to an individual or case over time, including referral to protection intervention, assistance, counselling, and other follow-up based on registration and other data recorded in Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem (PRIMES)
Continuous registration	Refers to the updating and verifying of records that takes place as part of day-to-day case management activities over time.
Entitlement document	Any document which is used to identify eligibility for, allow access to and/or track the provision of benefits, services or assistance to specific individuals or groups
Identity	A set of attributes that uniquely describes an individual or entity. Identity document or credential is any document or credential which may be used as proof of identity, which may also include reference to the individuals' legal status and associated rights
Implementing partner	An organisation established as an autonomous and independent entity engaged through a project partnership agreement to undertake the implementation of programmatic activities within a given organization's mandate
Implementing partner	An organisation established as an autonomous and independent entity engaged through a project partnership agreement to undertake the implementation of programmatic activities within a given organization's mandate
Legal identity	A person's existence everywhere before the law, facilitating the realization of fundamental rights and corresponding duties. Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms this right, which is realized, inter alia, through registration of birth in a state civil registry or population register
Joint registration	An arrangement whereby UNHCR works in partnership with governments of host states to provide individual registration and documentation of refugees and asylum seekers
State legal identity system	Refers to any centralized, government-administered register by means of which a state manages identity records of its citizens and residents, including for the purpose of issuance of identity documentation
Targeting	A process that aims to ensure that persons of concern are supported with the most appropriate interventions to address their needs, reinforce their capacities, and exercise their rights
Personal data	Means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (i.e. information about a person from which the person can be identified)
Person of concern	Refers to specific categories of persons in need of protection and assistance. This often includes refugees and asylum seekers, returnees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons
Proof of legal identity	Defined as a document or credential, such as a birth certificate, identity card or digital identity credential that is recognized as proof of legal identity under national law and in accordance with emerging international norms and principles
Registration	The recording, verifying, and updating of information on individual persons of concern to UNHCR with the aim of protecting, assisting and documenting them and of implementing durable solutions
Verification exercises	Time-bound registration activity in a defined area and/or for a specific population or caseload and consists of verifying and updating individual registration records and, as appropriate, collecting additional information. Verification exercises are considered a type of continuous registration
Vital event	The occurrence of a live birth, death, foetal death, marriage, divorce, annulment, judicial separation, adoption, legitimation, or recognition of parenthood

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ARRA	Administration for Refugee & Returnee Affairs
APAI-CRVS	Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
BIMS	Biometric Management System
COR	Commission for Refugees
COVID-19	CoronaVirus Disease 2019
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ID	Identification Document
INVEA	Immigration Nationality and Vital Events Agency
IP	Implementing Partner
KII	Key Informant Interview
OSS	One Stop Shop
PRIMES	Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem
ProGres	Profile Global Registration System
RDPP	Regional Development and Protection Programme
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United National Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VERA	Vital Events Registration Agency

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Registration and documentation are fundamental components of international protection – registration is a first step in formalising the relationship between an asylum seeker and authorities. The second step is the issuing documentation that should allow persons of concern to avail themselves of the assistance they need, access services that they have a legal right to, and possess a proof of their legal identity. A third step is their inclusion in a functioning civil registration and vital statistics system for planning development projects and contributes to the integration of refugees into national government processes. Improvement in and access to these systems will not only enable refugees and nationals to better access essential services and humanitarian and development assistance, but also enable government authorities to plan stronger area-based, development approaches.

In Ethiopia and Sudan, the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) actions aimed at enabling the provision of better protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers through improved documentation and robust data storage systems. This involved building a refugee registration system with biometric identification management, real-time data verification capacity and simultaneous identification of protection needs of persons of concern. Not only benefiting refugees, the actions also aimed to improve civil registration more broadly, in particular birth registration, be it among the refugee or the host community.

This evaluation focuses on AMIF 2016-2018 under the framework of the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) in the Horn of Africa. In line with the RDPP approach and consistent with the AMIF Annual Work Plan 2018 and ongoing actions, the activities carried out were financed by AMIF 2016 (Ethiopia), 2017 (Sudan) and 2018 (Ethiopia and Sudan) direct grants (and co-financed by the Netherlands and other member states) aim at strengthening the protection of refugees and their hosts through registration (for the former) and improved civil documentation (for both groups).

Methodology & Objectives

The overarching objective is to assess the results and effectiveness of the AMIF-funded RDPP programme activities at country level, through an analysis of the activities in Ethiopia and Sudan. The research process includes a learning component to inform partners on the ground, policy makers and donors on the potential for replicability of activities, and to further migration dialogues in the thematic fields of the programme.

The study focuses on two main research questions:

1. How have AMIF 2016, 2017 and 2018 interventions in Ethiopia and Sudan **strengthened the registration and protection of refugees and asylum seekers, and allowed the governments to better manage the migration and development nexus?**
2. What lessons learned can be captured from these interventions to **inform the continuation and replication of current activities** at the country and regional level?

Three locations of fieldwork were chosen in each country based on discussions with the Implementing Partners (IPs), coordinating research with the RDPP endline evaluation, and ensuring a variety of demographic and contextual samples. Adapted to difficult 2020 context created by COVID-19, the research relied on a mixed methods approach to capture the voices and perspectives of a range of actors, including IPs, host and refugee communities, registrars, humanitarian and development actors and government counterparts. Over 600 phone-based surveys were conducted across both countries, including 17 focus group discussions (FGDs), 12 case studies, 31 key informant interviews (KIIs), eight registration site visits and observations, six registration staff skills tests and literature review.

Evaluation findings were presented at a **regional learning workshop in January 2021** with key stakeholders from Ethiopia and Sudan working on the nexus of protection, civil documentation, and registration to allow for the exchange of learning and knowledge. Lessons were gathered on successes and challenges encountered in open, interactive sessions on impact and sustainability, data sharing and coordination. This report is an output of that workshop, bringing together findings from both countries, to inform thinking on future strategy development and solutions.

Key Findings: Implementation of AMIF-Financed Actions

In **Ethiopia**, AMIF 2016-2018 primarily supported the creation of a nationally implemented and unified (digital) registration system and enhanced access to the national civil registration system for refugees and nationals, followed by actions to build on those systems for improved identify management and digital inclusion. **AMIF 2017 in Sudan** similarly focused on standardising and improving registration throughout the country. Actions under **AMIF 2018 in Sudan** focused on the protection issues in Khartoum but had only just begun implementation during the evaluation in mid-2020.

In terms of **refugee registration**, the creation of a unique refugee identification (ID) recognised by all, at different levels was one of the main protection impacts. The AMIF contribution allowed the operations in Ethiopia and Sudan to:

- Rolling out network-based registration systems based on biometrics and to set up a digital filing system which in turn allowed identity documents to be distributed - for the first time for many refugees.
- Supporting the transition of UNHCR's refugee registration from manual to digital through investments in equipment, network and training
- Coordinating with government counterparts to overall the systems and address connectivity and other challenges in access

Gaps still exist in the interoperability between various systems and databases used by humanitarians to better meet the needs of refugees. This includes the promised one-stop-shop in Ethiopia still being rolled out. Goals for digital inclusion of refugees in both countries are underway.

Under the **vital events registry** component, AMIF-funded activities have been an important step in necessary institutional capacity building. AMIF contributed to:

- Increasing birth registration rates in Ethiopia and Sudan, by improving access and awareness, and to a better understanding of the factors influencing demand.
- Providing material support and capacity building for registration centres and supporting awareness raising to strengthen demand
- Supporting refugee access to the national civil registration system
- Improving coordination systems and strengthening political commitment at the national and sub-national levels

However, adequate coverage is still lacking due to limited funding and resources; more outreach is needed with the necessary technical capacity building to provide services. Legal and procedural restrictions require more advocacy to improve procedures and make gains more sustainable.

Lessons Learned from Ethiopia and Sudan

The goal of the regional learning workshop was to gather key actors from the region and provide an opportunity for further sense-making, verification and expansion of the preliminary research results. Over 2-days, a space was provided to discuss issues of coordination, alignment of plans and the quality and commitment of partnership, particularly with government actors, to reflect on the nature of an integrated approach in this context.

The evaluation team synthesised the discussion and conversation among participants – all stakeholders involved in the AMIF actions – which were triangulated with the evaluation findings to produce six key messages and additional lessons learned were

Refugee registration


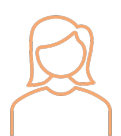
1. **Clear linkage between effective registration system and identity card provision and positive, immediate protection outcomes for refugees**
 - Making the concrete linkages between registration data and protection must be a collective and conscious effort for all partners involved
 - Registration is a protection tool to better target assistance
2. **Multi-pronged approach for systems-building**
 - Interoperability between systems requires clear coordination between partners and necessary digitalisation for data sharing and systems integration. Duplication still needs to be addressed




- Addressing necessary connectivity issues requires flexibility and long-term commitment and is required to reach goals of digital inclusion
 - The One Stop Shop (OSS) model is promising and must include a learning component to capture best practices
3. **Generation of reliable refugee numbers for better monitoring and accountability**
- Integration of refugee data into national systems has the potential to improve service provision, if adequately monitored
 - Activities must continue to ensure the sustainability of successes achieved to date

Fostering vital events registration for refugees and nationals

4. **Inclusive planning and coordination with refugees, nationals, and governments**
- Addressing legal and procedural issues needs both parallel and sequential action
 - Early engagement with critical ministries improves the overall efficacy of the system
 - Creation of coordination mechanisms among key actors is critical for systemic change and sustainability of action.
 - Listening to refugees and nationals is critical to identify and address barriers to registration.
5. **Capacity building to link registration with protection**
- Addressing limitations in human resource and technical capacity require ongoing commitment.
 - Material support and improvements in existing equipment is significant but as yet insufficient to ensure the needed coverage.
 - Comprehensive assessments of registration systems remain critical to ensure alignment between best practices in data protection
6. **Linking access with awareness raising and clear benefits of vital events registration**
- Building access points for registration for refugees and host communities can further promote integrated service delivery under the goals of RDPP.
 - Innovative and highly localised outreach campaigns are effective in building demand for birth registration. However, this needs to coincide with capacity to meet demand.
 - Linkages to practical benefits increases likelihood of being registered for both refugee registration and vital events registration.

Recommendations to build on AMIF actions

Recommendations for implementers	
	<p>Prioritising coordination between partners at all levels: Cross-cutting issues require many actors, particularly between IPs and national and sub-national government agencies and ministries, to work together while avoiding duplication. More can be done to address gaps planning and duplication of efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating explicit cross-linkages between IPs and parallel actions • Including joint monitoring missions to include local and central government • Embedding clear action plans to outline responsibilities
	<p>Translating data into action: Ensuring reliable data through improved data systems is only the first step to improving service delivery and addressing protection outcomes for refugees and nationals. There still remain disconnects between data sharing and meeting urgent needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying solutions for data sharing, in the long and short term, and automated referrals for protection actors • Continuing to build alliances to integrate civil registration data into systems, while thinking broadly about who can benefit from and use this data. • Prioritising digitisation of civil registration data and increased coverage

	<p>Transforming the institutional context: Many legal and procedural barriers exist which continue to impede progress and even coordinated actions, where existing systems may conflict with the protection agenda inherent in registration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing legal and technical frameworks that impeded access to registration and improved coordination. • Combining continued financial support with government commitment to takeover capacity building and infrastructure maintenance
	<p>Integrating learning and innovative methods: Remote locations and underserved areas have required innovative and creative solutions to reach vulnerable populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on inclusivity and expanding access to meet the goals of digital inclusion through improved access to technology and connectivity
<p>Recommendations for donors</p>	
	<p>Prioritising future AMIF investment: AMIF funding has significantly focused systems building and registration where few donors have prioritised. This is where AMIF can really contribute systematic change and a significant learning agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing long term funding and commitment to build on the important progress over the last several years, including needed capacity building efforts • Building more opportunities for learning exchanges within and across countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Context

A cross-cutting goal of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a critical component of the Sustainable Development Goals is universal legal identity. Legal identity, including birth registration, communicated through official documentation is often a prerequisite to accessing basic social services such as education, health care, employment and protection services. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) led to the development of a comprehensive set of commitments specific to refugees and countries hosting them.¹ The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework aims to strengthen the international response to large or protracted refugee situations, including by easing pressure on host countries and enhance refugee self-reliance in host countries.² With respect to both of these goals, registration and civil documentation are crucial.³

Refugee registration is the recording, verifying, and updating of information on persons of concern with the aim of protecting and documenting them and of implementing durable solutions.

UNHCR – Operational standards for Registration and Documentation

Registration is crucial for identifying those who are at risk, those who are often the least likely to come forward and make their needs known. Registration data analysis can facilitate early identification of vulnerabilities and inform resources for the greatest protection impact through a rights-based and needs-based approach. This includes socio-economic inclusion and livelihood opportunities as well as pathways to solutions such as those made possible through the Global Compact on Refugees. Registration informs planning, with the number of people requiring protection determining the amount of food, water, shelter, health and sanitation facilities etc. which should be made available under ever-evolving circumstances.

Yet, in many countries which host vast numbers of refugees there is a significant backlog in terms of registration. Frequently national data collected through various systems has not adequately covered the displaced, whose vital events were not recorded in a civil registry. This was the case in both **Ethiopia and Sudan**, which are countries situated at the crossroads of the Horn of Africa's complex and evolving migration routes and lagged far behind other countries in the region. **Significant gaps existed in the overall data on the protection needs of the displaced - hampering government-level planning and the activities of humanitarian and development actors.**

1.1.2 AMIF actions

The RDPP for the Horn of Africa was launched in June 2015 in support of the European-African migration dialogue with the overarching purpose to create evidence-based, innovative and sustainable protection and development approaches for refugees and their host communities. Under the RDPP umbrella, the AMIF-funding for the Horn of Africa mainly focused on registration and civil documentation, with the goal of enabling the provision of better protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers and their host communities in Ethiopia and in Sudan.

For **Ethiopia**, AMIF-financed activities support government in their transition from a country that faced a significant backlog in terms of registration and corresponding technology to a country that aims to be one of the frontrunners in the field of refugee registration. The activities financed by **AMIF 2016 and 2018** direct grants (and co-financed by the Netherlands and other member states) in Ethiopia aim at strengthening the protection of refugees and nationals through registration (for the former) and improved civil documentation (for both groups).

¹ UN General Assembly, "New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants," 2016.

² United Nations, "Global Compact on Refugees," 2018.

³ UNHCR, "Strengthening the protection of and durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers in Sudan, including children, through improved registration," 2019.

Sudan is a country of origin, transit and destination, hosting the largest refugee population of South Sudanese and internal displaced persons in Africa. Critical to mounting an effective response to these ongoing crises has been strong mechanisms for identification and registration of refugees and asylum seekers. The main objective of AMIF 2017 and 2018 in Sudan was to promote a systems-building and systems-improvement approach to improve refugee registration, advance the civil registry of Sudan as a whole, and strengthen the protection of vulnerable populations (including asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, and with a particular focus on marginalized children).

1.2 Objectives

In 2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands on behalf of the donors funding RDPP commissioned an evaluation to assess the results and impact of the AMIF-funded activities. The scope of this work was designed to complement the broader activities of Learning and Evaluation Team consortium focused on the Combined Quantitative and Qualitative Progressive Effects Evaluation for the RDPP in the Horn of Africa. The evaluation centred on two main research questions:

1. How have AMIF 2016, 2017 and 2018 supported interventions in Ethiopia and Sudan **strengthened the registration and protection of refugees and asylum seekers, and allowed the governments to better manage the migration and development nexus?**
2. What lessons learned can be captured from these interventions to **inform the continuation and replication of current activities** at the country and regional level?

To answer these, the following evaluation sub-questions (Table 1) were included as part of the terms of reference.

Table 1: Evaluation questions

Evaluation sub-questions	
1.	How did AMIF 2016-2018 activities improve the registration, monitoring and protection of refugees through sustainable data systems?
2.	How did AMIF 2016-2018 activities help to strengthen the capacity of local and central authorities to maintain these data systems?
3.	What is the effect of each of the activities on the targeted beneficiaries?
4.	How did AMIF 2016-2018 activities enable the government of Ethiopia and the government of Sudan and their partners to better plan for, and implement development projects?
5.	How did AMIF 2016-2018 activities improve basic service delivery to refugees and their host communities?
6.	How did AMIF 2016-2018 activities improve the coordination and information management between the government of Ethiopia and the UN agencies, and between the government of Sudan and the UN agencies on registration-related objectives and activities?
7.	Based on evaluation findings, is it possible to identify some first lessons learned valuable for improving the continuation of current activities, as well as for the replication of these activities and/or for regional learning?
8.	To what extent have partners in Sudan been able to learn and build on experiences in Ethiopia, where it concerns the improvement of registration systems? Which experiences could be generalized to other countries in the region?

1.3 Research approach

Samuel Hall adopted a learning approach. This included a process of collecting, presenting and exchanging on research data to build consensus among IPs around the final results. Using a mixed-methods design, quantitative and qualitative elements built on each other to allow for cross-validation and combined statistical rigour with the nuances found only in conversation. Country reports were drafted based on the data collected and refined and validated through conversations with IPs (UNHCR, UNICEF and UNFPA). Finally, a **regional learning workshop** was held in January 2021 to gather stakeholders working on the nexus of protection, civil documentation and registration. The goal was to present research findings as an entry point into broader conversation and experience sharing. **This report is a direct output of the learning workshop**, synthesising the lessons learned and best practices and presenting critical recommendations.

1.3.1 Data collection

Data collection focused on three sites in each country based on discussions with the IPs, coordinating research with related fieldwork exercises, and ensuring a variety of demographic and contextual samples (Figure 2). Research activities were adapted to account for the COVID-19 imperatives of 2020 but maintained a commitment to hearing directly from the targeted beneficiaries and project stakeholders. Data collection activities followed guidelines for health and safety with respect to COVID-19, such as provision and use of personal protective equipment, social distancing, limited interactions and the study of impacts of COVID-19 on the research population, and the AMIF actions themselves. A locally recruited team of enumerators were overseen by the Nairobi-based team to both ensure data quality and reduce travel. The team used **remote methods** – reaching participants via phone for a quantitative survey and key informant interviews (KIIs) where possible – and **minimum-contact methods** – reducing group size, ensuring social distancing, and adhering to public health guidelines during qualitative data collection.

Figure 1: Total data collected

Qualitative

- 17 FGDs
- 12 Case studies
- 31 KIIs
- 8 Registration site visits & observations
- 6 Registration staff skills tests
- Literature review

Quantitative

- 665 phone-based surveys (412 refugees and 253 hosts)

Figure 2: Research locations in Ethiopia and Sudan



Registration site visits were conducted and used as an opportunity to administer **skills test** to registration staff who had benefited from capacity building support. This information collected on the ground was triangulated via KIIs with implementing partners, government counterparts and international organisations who do, or might one day, benefit from the data improved via the AMIF-funded intervention.

Research started with refugees and nationals themselves to understand the direct impact of AMIF funding on their lives. With that in mind, the research team conducted FGDs with refugee women, youth, elders and single mothers, with an eye to capturing the breadth of experiences in different contexts (urban and camp) and for different cohorts (nationals and refugees). In addition, case studies (in-depth individual life-story type interviews) allowed to shed light on particular experiences and vulnerabilities. A rapid phone-based quantitative survey focused on the perceptions of the AMIF activities of the targeted populations, with an eye to how those actions have positively or negatively impacted their vulnerability and responded to their needs.

Two country reports outline the evaluation findings of the AMIF-sponsored actions. The analysis informs the continuation of the activities and their potential replicability, as well broader policy and migration dialogues.

1.3.3 Limitations and constraints

The field-based, bottom-up methodological approach did not fully capture the breadth of AMIF activities that may be more technical and systems-focus in nature. Similarly, the geographic focus excluded much of the work done in other regions in each country. This was particularly true in Sudan, where the focus on Khartoum and the East, meant that progress in previously underserved areas could not be reported on with the same level of detail. While efforts were made to through document review, KIIs and ongoing conversations with IPs to ensure a full picture of AMIF-supported actions, **the final country reports and this synthesis report may not cover all aspects**

comprehensively due to the limited scope of this evaluation. The goal of this report, however, is to identify concrete lessons learned and key takeaways to influence future iterations of this and similar actions. In all locations, COVID-19 impacted the delivery of AMIF’s planned activities. Due to a delayed release of funds until March 2020 and COVID-19, the AMIF 2018 grant in Sudan had only just begun implementing activities at the time of this evaluation; it is only lightly covered here.

2. OVERVIEW OF AMIF ACTIONS

Prior to AMIF, in both countries the needed infrastructure to ensure quality registration did not exist and parallel structures between UNHCR and the government added to a cumbersome and inefficient system. National data collected through various systems was also incomplete and the vital events of refugees were excluded from civil registration. The reliance on poor data impacted the ability to adequately plan and respond and ensure the necessary protection interventions. AMIF 2016, 2017 and 2018 (Table 2) sought to address existing gaps and weakness within various systems leading to improved protection outcomes.

Table 2: AMIF objectives in Ethiopia and Sudan

Ethiopia	Sudan
<p>AMIF 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the creation of a unified refugee registration system using biometric technology (UNHCR) Enhancing the national civil registration system for refugees and hosts by strengthening administrative data management and the capacity of institutions (UNICEF) Support the Central Statistical Agency in preparation of the 2018 Census, inclusive of refugees and asylum seekers (UNFPA, <i>partial implementation only</i>)⁴ <p>AMIF 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the digital identify of refugees by ensuring interoperability between the UNHCR and Administration for Refugee & Returnee Affairs (ARRA) databases and issuance of refugee ID (UNHCR) Strengthening interoperability and integration of refugees' civil documentation within the national system and between various national systems (UNICEF) 	<p>AMIF 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributing to the roll-out of a standardised and network -based data collection system for the registration or refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR) Improving access to civil registration, in particular birth registration, to promote protection and safeguard against risks of statelessness (UNHCR, UNICEF) <p>AMIF 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the protection environment for refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable host communities in Khartoum State through enabling prevention mechanisms for better child protection and against gender-based violence incidents, while establishing robust and sustainable access to integrated protection and referral services for affected individuals by strengthening of information sharing protocols and mechanisms (UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, <i>delayed implementation</i>)⁵

In the broader context, the unpredictable political and security situation and the difficult economic situation created considerable challenges for the roll-out of AMIF activities in Sudan in particular. The priorities of the government shifted and continuous political instability in the different targeted states led to high turnover of critical state and national staff.

In both countries, COVID 19 significantly impacted ability to move forward on critical tasks, delaying most work until the final quarter of 2020 and affecting all levels of AMIF action. For AMIF 2018 in Sudan, this led to only a few months of activities implemented at the time of research. More broadly, prices increased drastically, while service provision dwindled as many organisations paused activities or their funding was reallocated. For the host community, vital events registration services were drastically reduced. In Ethiopia, registrations were more than halved compared to the previous year. The vital events of refugees were no longer registered in camps or urban environments and refugee registration paused.

⁴ The remainder of UNFPA's funds were diverted to other activities, notably related to the COVID-19 response

⁵ Activities under AMIF 2018 had only just started at the time of this evaluation.

2. KEY FINDINGS BY EVALUATION QUESTION

Despite the challenging contexts, significant progress has been made in **building the foundation and needed momentum** to reach the goals outlined by AMIF to improve protection for refugees and communities that host them through registration and documentation, discussed in the next section. Outlined in this section is progress towards objectives organised by the **first six evaluation questions listed in Table 1 above**.

2.1 Registration, monitoring and protection of refugees through improved data systems

AMIF contribution allowed the operations in both Ethiopia and Sudan to roll out **network-based registration systems based on biometrics** and to set up a digital filing system which in turn allowed identity documents to be distributed – for the first time for many refugees. The creation of a unique refugee ID recognised by all actors at different levels was one of the main impacts in terms of protection, particularly for Ethiopia where number of refugees with identity documents increased from 2% to 76%. For Sudan, UNHCR is working closely with the Ministry of Interior to extend distribution of IDs to all registered refugees; currently only a fraction is covered.

The comprehensive registration, verification and documentation that accompanied the rollout of the new systems allow for more accurate information on and better monitoring of the refugee populations in Ethiopia and Sudan. The reregistration of refugees between 2017 and 2020 significantly improved data in Ethiopia, readjusting the estimated population numbers, reducing fraud, allowing for more efficient allocation of resource and improving planning for both national and international partners.

AMIF was instrumental in supporting the transition of UNHCR’s refugee registration from manual to digital through investments in equipment, network and training. This improved created a smoother and less lengthy registration processes, ensuring at risks individuals could access support as quickly as possible. The upgrade to Profile Global Registration System (proGres) v4 in both countries holds promise for future integrated service delivery.

AMIF contributed to increasing birth registration rates in Ethiopia and Sudan, by improving access and awareness, and to a better understanding of the factors influencing demand, particularly for refugees. While demand remains low overall. Technical support has had a positive effect on the government counterparts to facilitate an improved and streamline processes, but lack of staff and manual systems continue to impact data quality and efficiency. The creation of sustainable coordination systems at the national and sub-national levels has been one of the most important achievements. While demand remains low overall, it seems likely that these activities will be sustainable, given that they are inscribed in a broader national agenda.

2.2 Capacity of local and central authorities to maintain data systems

AMIF contributed to significant technological and capacity upgrades in refugee registration through provision of equipment and multiple training sessions for staff. As a result, the registration process significantly improved refugees through the use of the digital system. Important steps were taken to build the necessary infrastructure, including ensuring needed connectivity in remote locations and offline access. In Ethiopia, the OSS registration centre has promise as an infrastructure solution with further opportunity embed services in the national system. However, that component has been significantly delayed.

For vital events, AMIF-funded activities have been an important step in necessary institutional capacity building. Support provided under AMIF ranged from material support for registration centres to capacity building of registrars and awareness raising to strengthen demand for vital events registration. Activities had a positive effect on the capacity of vital events registration staff, and on the environment at the registries. However, the resources need remain great in both countries. In Sudan in particular, **embedding birth registration within the health systems for refugees and hosts** was a significant outcome of AMIF activities. Further coordination with the Ministry of Health in Ethiopia is still needed to address interoperability between civil registration and health systems.

Organised efforts to overcome procedural barriers to birth registry, such as for children of unwed mothers and orphans, were partially successful, but more advocacy is needed to improve procedures and make gains more sustainable. Ethiopia is currently undergoing a comprehensive assessment of civil registration and vital statistics to generate the needed evidence to fully address the issues of efficiency and effectiveness with the existing systems.

Innovative community outreach proved an important component to increase demand around vital events. Mobile birth registration in remote locations and distribution of key messages on the importance of birth registration during school enrolment campaigns were effective.

2.3 Coordination and information management between the government of Ethiopia and Sudan and the UN agencies on registration-related objectives and activities

The overhaul of the refugee registration system to an integrated biometric identity management system was a challenging process - registration servicers located in the field had to be consolidated, data cleaned, connectivity established. **These activities have required close coordination between the government entity responsible for the registration of refugees, either Commissioner of Refugees in Sudan and ARRA, and UNHCR.** To facilitate full integration into national systems, AMIF-funded activities focused on the institutional setting to ensure interoperability with refugee databases and build standardised data management and sharing processes. Findings from the research showed that strong coherence between the partners, but implementation of proGres v4 would ensure a fully integrated system and pave the way for better service delivery.

Gaps still exist in the interoperability between various systems and databases used by humanitarians to better meet the needs of refugees. For Sudan, the goal is to implement a digital inclusion strategy and address the interoperability of key processes among partners. However, connectivity remains a key challenge despite offline progress. First steps have been taken on the digital inclusion of refugees in Ethiopia. Among other components, a Digital Request and Complain System is underway to better manage refugee flows. Here too, practical obstacles remain: a critical hinderance to digital inclusion by refugees is due to simple lack of access to the necessary phones.

For vital events registration, the alliances fostered at the national level between key institutions that should outlive donor involvement. A positive example is the tripartite agreement signed between COR, the Civil Registry and UNHCR to improve communication and coordination around registration of vital events for refugees. Coordination was an important component given the complex, and ever-evolving, stakeholder landscape. AMIF also contributed to improved coordination systems at the national and sub-national levels. Perhaps most importantly, the implementation of the civil registration system in both refugee and host community contexts was embedded in the national legal framework, and political commitment has been strengthened.

2.4 Effect of each of the activities on the targeted beneficiaries

The foundations have been laid for improved protection in the future through the systems-building approach, and activities closer to the ground have already begun to show preliminary impact. From the perspective of refugees, possibly the most immediate effect in terms of protection was the creation of a unique refugee ID. Creation of a more efficient system built a level of trust in authorities, even though refugees may not understand the biometric aspects or even its value.

For vital events, specifically births, registration levels remain low despite awareness raising efforts largely due to cost (real or imagined), the perceived complexity of the process, and limited access, as well as lack of identified benefits, particularly among the host community. According to IPs, the linkage between birth registration and child protection has been clear, particularly for refugees at risk of statelessness. Increased access to birth registration has been linked to avoiding recruitment of children in armed groups and child labour, addressing stigmas, and ensuring the right to education.

2.5 Basic service delivery to refugees and their host communities

AMIF actions have added to the enabling environment for meeting the needs of vulnerable populations, through contributing to more reliable numbers and detailed data to target service delivery. The improved quality data has already improved distribution of social services. In Sudan, a Global Distribution Tool linked to the system was rolled out to support the management and verification of assistance in Khartoum and Darfur states. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, a digital education platform allows students to be tracked in Ethiopia to better provide needed support. Yet clear linkages to referral processes and transparent support to vulnerable populations have not materialised.

Delays have worked to the detriment of some of the more immediate results in the realm of protection and coordination gains. In time, proGres v4 should better ensure efficiency, linkages to protection actors through data sharing and referrals and real time data verification.

2.6 Better planning for, and implementation of development projects by the government and their partners

AMIF-supported improvements to the refugee registration process have contributed to a more efficient system which should in the future benefit all those seeking to serve vulnerable refugees - but does not yet fully do so. Opportunities exist to take better advantage of address protection needs through improved data.

Government planning should in the long run be strengthened by an improved civil registry, but birth registration cannot yet be a conditionality for receiving services given the low overall coverage. The tangible impact on the target population itself, in particular the host population, in terms of protection and access to services thus remains limited. At a systems level, however, the foundations have been laid for improved processes and coordination at different levels in a complex stakeholder environment.

3. CONCLUSIONS: AMIF CONTRIBUTION TO RDPP

The AMIF actions over the past years did not happen in a vacuum but inscribed themselves into the broader logic of the RDPP, which aimed to effect change in the four key results areas of integrated service delivery with an eye to gains in social cohesion as a benefit beyond improved services. These included improved protection, improved livelihoods and improved capacity of local actors to implement integrated programming (with the added benefit of sustainability due to local ownership). While RDPP, like AMIF, covered many locations and projects, these desired outcomes are a guiding lens through which all programming can be viewed.

3.1 Integrated service delivery

In Ethiopia and Sudan, RDPP's focused on better basic service provision (water, energy) to both hosts and refugees, with the added benefit of improved relations between groups. These components, and those coming in their wake, stand to benefit from better planning data: AMIF's contribution to improved, consistent, up-to-date information to inform integrated programming is a crucial step to making service delivery more efficient across the board. This will lead to more efficient distribution of aid by all actors and increased accountability at multiple levels.

In Ethiopia for instance, the re-registration of refugees between 2017 and 2020 significantly improved the basis for planning, readjusting the estimated population numbers, reducing fraud, allowing for more efficient allocation of resources for both national and international partners. This in turn will support increased coherence and alignment of all interventions, in line with the Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan. It is also a necessary condition for the planned shift to an out-of-camp model over the next decade.

Benefits exceed the delivery of basic services to encompass a clear development angle: Armed with information regarding, for instance, the skills profile of refugees, UNHCR will now also be able to make more informed referrals to partners for livelihoods programming which can benefit both hosts and refugees.

3.2 Improved protection

RDPP in the Horn of Africa aimed to improve protection mainly via fostering access to justice and setting up community-based conflict resolution mechanisms. This was very necessary in a context of generally declining protection levels, as evidenced by the RDPP effects evaluation.

AMIF contributed to enhancing the protection of the population of concern in multiple ways, first and foremost via its focus on improved registration. More comprehensive and detailed registration information in turn allows to refer those in need to relevant service providers and provides protection from deportation. Crucially, the AMIF action was the first to allow refugees to have a refugee ID - for the first time, many of those benefiting from the AMIF action were able to prove their identity. This in turn will provide them with the opportunity to obtain other vital documents, including a SIM card in their own name, or a bank account. While birth registration rates overall remain low, AMIF has contributed significantly to raising awareness and building capacity to increase them in the future, protecting children from statelessness and allowing them to have an administrative existence.

For hosts also, government-level protection planning should in the long run be strengthened by AMIF's efforts to improve vital events registration: the foundations have been laid for improved processes and coordination at different levels in a complex stakeholder environment.

In Sudan specifically, AMIF had a component focused on protection in Khartoum State, aiming to strengthen information sharing and referral mechanisms. With AMIF support, a national childhood strategy was developed, and its implementation / operationalisation planned hand in hand with government counterparts. Closer to the ground, awareness-raising campaigns and the creation of community-based groups complemented the efforts. These efforts complement others under RDPP Sudan, which saw awareness raising and protection committees empower communities tackle critical issues like child marriage and female genital mutilation.

3.3. Improved livelihoods

RDPP aimed to improve livelihoods opportunities for both refugees and their host communities in all countries, mainly via technical and vocational training and improved access to finance, but also the creation of livelihoods groups. AMIF did not have a direct livelihoods remit, but will indirectly contribute to further efforts in this vein via improved availability of information needed for effective targeting. Indeed, under proGres v4, more detailed

data is collected on the skills and educational background of refugees, and the basis is laid for data sharing with livelihoods actors. At the same time, AMIF helped many refugees have a legal identity for the first time, with knock-on effects in terms of documentation, access to communication, finance, etc. Those provided with a birth certificate as a result of efforts under AMIF, be they hosts or refugees, have a legal identity which will benefit their lives, and livelihoods, in the long term.

3.4. Improved capacity of local actors

Building the capacity of local authorities was an integral part of RDPP with a strong focus on strengthening multi-stakeholder coordination and building the capacity of local authorities with respect to integrated programming. This filled an important gap - as noted in the effect's evaluation for RDPP in the region, the lack of an exit strategy, and of capacity by authorities to take on the work of IPs, leads to a lack of sustainability in the medium term. A key lesson of this evaluation was that programmes at this scale and with such ambition required a strong advocacy component.

AMIF is an example of the type of alliances which can be built when the building of wide-ranging coalitions and strengthening of capacity is not an afterthought but an integral part of the project design. From the onset, the action worked closely with ARRA and COR to improve capacity, data sharing and data management for refugee registration. For vital events registration, efforts focused on creating interoperability between the civil registration and health systems, while navigating a highly complex landscape of actors involved and conflicting protocols.

Closer to the ground, the provision of technical and material capacity for registration service delivery was a crucial AMIF contribution which inscribed itself in the broader RDPP action. These efforts went hand in hand with the provision of material support and the improvement of existing equipment. The sustainability of these efforts, like those of the capacity building of RDPP as a whole, will require strong government ownership. But the foundations for this have been laid by RDPP, and specifically AMIF, in both Ethiopia and Sudan.

4. REGIONAL LESSONS FOR THE REPLICATION AND CONTINUATION

Samuel Hall designed and facilitated a participatory learning event, held over two days (24-25 January 2021), to bring together key stakeholders to further contribute the evaluation of AMIF 2016-2018 in Ethiopia and Sudan and collectively consider recommendations and ways forward. It provided an opportunity for stakeholders to showcase experience on the thematic focus of the supported programme and allow for the exchange of knowledge. The overarching objectives were to:

- Gather lessons learned across the region for the replication of best practice
- Create opportunities for progress towards strategy development and implementation
- Enhance cross-country and regional learning and coordination.

Invited participants included AMIF IPs in Ethiopia and Sudan, national government counterparts, humanitarian and development partners who do, or could, benefit from data generated through the AMIF activities, as well as other stakeholders in the region. **Over 40 participants joined each day of the workshop to add their perspectives to the rich discussion on these critical issues in the region, showcasing strong appetite for more regular learning exchanges both across and within countries.**

The structure of each day included brief presentations of achievements and challenges by relevant lead IPs in Sudan and Ethiopia and two panels composed of key focal points, both government and non-governmental organisations, best placed to reflect on AMIF actions. Samuel Hall kicked off each panel by presenting key research learnings to frame the resulting discussion. The open interactive sessions on impact and sustainability, data sharing and coordination resulted in regional lessons gathered to inform future strategy development and solutions.

The evaluation team synthesised the rich discussion and through triangulation with the research findings produced the following lessons learned.

4.1 Improving refugee registration in Ethiopia and Sudan

- Building sustainable and improved registration data systems in coordination with local counterparts
- Using registration data for improved protection outcomes and sustainable impact

Panellists included representatives from UNHCR Sudan and Ethiopia, COR and ARRA, as well as UNHCR Kenya for an external perspective, who responded to questions posed by the facilitators from Samuel Hall and the audience. The conversation focused on addressing system integration between UNHCR and government counterparts, including considering legislation and SOPs, capacity building, infrastructure and the needed coordination. On improved protection outcomes, discussion centred on both opportunities, around case management, data sharing and better integrated systems, and challenges with data protection. Building from the research findings, key lessons emerged from across the two countries:

1. Systems-building requires a multi-pronged approach.

Much of the success and momentum built through AMIF actions has been due to its comprehensive approach that realised the need for coordinating actions. Refugee registration in Ethiopia and Sudan relied on systematic rollout of existing standardised UNHCR tools, including biometric registration and upgrading to proGres v4, requiring adaptation to the context and extensive capacity building and coordination with government counterparts. However, systems integration between ARRA/ COR and UNHCR are still ongoing. This requires advocacy and addressing legal and technical frameworks. The technological and capacity upgrades allow for real-time data verification capacity and simultaneous identification of protection needs of beneficiaries. But translation of data into protection requires further coordinating with those delivering protection programming.

Government structure and infrastructure, human resources... parallel investment of AMIF was important and will last after the project. — UNICEF Ethiopia

2. Addressing necessary connectivity issues requires flexibility and long-term commitment and is required to reach goals of digital inclusion.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the AMIF partners and governments was infrastructure, in particular internet connectivity to ensure up-to-date data and fully capitalise the comprehensive proGres v4 and, taken further, addressing interoperability with key humanitarian partners. Some issues have been solved thanks to the offline registration system, but installing necessary offline tools is still ongoing in Sudan. UNHCR Ethiopia has begun to extend connectivity in Ethiopia through their Camp Internet Projects.

We have 31 sites and those sites are in very remote areas and we need to bring internet connectivity there. For that we need to partner with the government. We need to work for this, there are many layers. But we are still waiting for Ethio telecom to have a connectivity offered to the remaining 9 sites. – UNHCR Ethiopia

This is a critical ongoing issue to fully address issues of identity management and system interoperability and allow for investment of a digital space that will include the refugees. Only with necessary connectivity can there be effective inclusion of services. For Ethiopia, this includes their plans for a new generation of identity documents, including a digital identity for refugees, and the Digital Food Distribution System.

3. Interoperability between systems requires clear coordination between partners and necessary digitalisation for data sharing and systems integration.

To ensure full integration into national systems, AMIF-funded activities focused on the institutional setting to ensure interoperability with refugee databases and build standardised data management and sharing processes. Findings from the research showed that lack of clarity still existed between partners and, without the implementation of proGres v4, institutions continued with parallel data management systems. Similarly, with vital events systems, multiple stakeholders made coordination difficult. The ground is being prepared for interoperability between vital events registration systems and other systems, but work is currently targeting the systems level via the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) approach which targets political commitment, country ownership, coordination between Immigration Nationality and Vital Events Agency (INVEA) and the National Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Steering Committee including key ministries, UN agencies and academia.

Ongoing digitisation of registration and documentation has been a critical development and transformed data quality and the potential for systems integration. The move to a fully digitalised system for vital events registration in Ethiopia is still ongoing and is required to embed linkages to proGres v4 for refugees.

4. The OSS model is promising and must include a learning component to capture best practices.

In Ethiopia, the 'one-stop-shop' in camps promised to better facilitate access services for both refugees and host communities. Construction of these locations was outsourced and currently only one of the 27 planned OSS is semi-operational. UNOPS will be charged with undertaking the construction of the remaining OSS, and renovation of the existing insufficient ones. The timeline for operationalising this important element of the AMIF vision, arguably the most visible AMIF contribution from a public relations standpoint, was delayed significantly.

However, the model has promising components that would allow for better coordination among different service providers, including the roll out of proGres v4, and referrals for improved protection outcomes. Particularly relevant in light of the out-of-camp policy which foresees a significant number of refugees living and working outside of camps and accessing basic services provided by the government, this will not only facilitate processes for the refugees, who will no longer have to navigate different offices, but also improve coordination between ARRA, UNHCR and their partners. As these OSS are fully implemented these should be accompanied with a clear learning component as it responds to many of the challenges raised in other countries.

What we have done [with OSS] is to come up with one snapshot – to bring all the services that we provide to the refugees in one physical place... We hope to have more appropriate infrastructures by the end of the year. These centres will be connected to the internet and also will be providing training and services to refugees and also extend to the host community. – UNHCR Ethiopia

5. Provision of an identity card has direct and often tangible benefits for refugees.

The provision of an identity card was for many refugees the most tangible benefit from AMIF-actions – be it for refugees who benefited for the first time from an official ID (having only been attributed a refugee number in the

We have worked very closely with the Ministry of Interior on the issue of the ID card and there is a lot that needs to be done on ID card issuing. We are also working closely with institutions such as the World Bank to implement and to speed up this process. – UNHCR Sudan

past, but no document with their name on it), or for newly born children through a state-issued birth certificate. Holding an identification document was highly valued by refugees as means to access assistance and for their own protection as they encountered police and security personnel, particularly in Sudan. Efforts are still ongoing in Sudan on documentation for refugees.

6. A more effective registration system has inherent protection outcomes identified by the beneficiaries themselves.

Refugees' experience of the registration process has been improved by moving from a manual to a digital system. Improvements in wait times and overall efficiency in process facilitated access to need services. This further encourages trust in the process, which was high in Ethiopia. Alternatively, in Sudan, while trust was high in UNHCR, the pre-registration process through the government's security office was discussed negatively. This highlights some of the limitations in coordinated actions, where existing systems may conflict with the protection agenda inherent in registration.

7. Generation of reliable refugee numbers and vital statistics allowed for better monitoring and accountability. Integration of refugee data into national systems has the potential to improve service provision.

Through generating more reliable refugee numbers and vital statistics data, the effective monitoring of national and donor resources has improved. This was particularly true for the thorough re-registry effort in Ethiopia which resulted in updated statistics regarding refugee numbers and profile in Ethiopia. Information provided by refugee registration informs service delivery by UNHCR and its partners for more targeted and efficient approach. Alternatively, low coverage of birth registration and lack of fully digitised civil registry systems still limits how data can be used. However, progress in refugee registration provide important insight in possible uses. Further integration of refugee data into national systems has the potential to improve service provision by respective governments.

8. Registration is a protection tool to better target assistance.

AMIF actions have supported the concept that registration is a protection tool – tracking family reunification, improving systems for child protection, supporting education quality, etc. UNHCR Ethiopia now has improved access to quality data on education, using multiple data sources, including EMIS (Education Management and Information System) from the Ministry of Education and multiple education partners. A digital education platform tracks individual students at different levels, by linking students to the proGres database.

Further, refugees feel safer and have better access to resources and services in camp settings. Systems were streamlined and refugees were registered at higher rates and more quickly. Interconnection of systems enabled all partners to act more quickly in reporting on child protection cases.

What is very important is that we can track individuals out of school/ in the school and also we know the specificity of the children, especially the disabilities. We can provide individual support to the children. For example, if a child drops out of school, we can track that child because with the system we have the names and addresses. This actually a beginning; we are intending to collect data at least once in a year and then we have a dashboard where the government, the partners and also different sectors can have access so you can have the data for implementation by camps, by locations, for countrywide, by education level. – UNHCR Ethiopia

9. Making the concrete linkages between registration data and protection must be a collective effort.

A point emphasized during the learning workshop by UNHCR Sudan was that the registration process, data quality, and building effective protection and service delivery systems must be a collective effort. Partners now better understand the limitations of data sharing due to data protection protocols. Registration data is only part of the puzzle. Increased and broader data sharing, more coordination, and conducting joint assessment is a necessary supplemental effort to a clear learning agenda.

“Registration is not just the collection of data; it is a holistic approach.” – Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

“It needs to be a corporate responsibility of all partners, governments, UNHCR. Registration is not enough on

10. Activities must continue to ensure the sustainability of successes achieved to date.

Fundamental to AMIF activities is ensuring sustainable outputs, including national partners’ ownership over and willingness to maintain data systems and share data responsibly with relevant counterparts. The research team found close collaboration between implementing partners and various government stakeholders and clear efforts to embed efforts within national systems. The sustainability of the project’s activities aimed at enhancing the institutional and technical capacity of registration staff is at risk by both staff turnover and increased demand.

The successes achieved are first steps in building sustainable systems and need to be further supported.

Most important [output of AMIF] is being a catalyst in terms of leading the launch of the registration system for refugees and helping us to put the necessary groundwork. – UNHCR Ethiopia

4.2 Fostering Vital Events Registration for Refugees and Nationals in Ethiopia and Sudan

- Generating demand and mitigating obstacles for vital events registration
- Data systems and potential usage and sustainable impact

Panellists included representatives from UNICEF Sudan and Ethiopia, UNHCR Sudan and Ethiopia, ARRA, INVEA, Civil Registry, National Council for Child Welfare and Central Statistical Agency. Coordination was a critical discussion point due to the large number of actors and partners involved in vital events registration, including delivery of services, demand generation, advocacy and linkages across sectors and ministries. The conversation also focused on harmonising protocols for refugees and nationals and addressing many of the procedural barriers to civil registration more broadly. Key lessons emerged from across the two countries that complemented the research findings:

11. Addressing foundational issues needs both parallel and sequential action.

Weak institutional setting remains a key barrier, particularly in vital events registration, where legal and procedural hurdles impede needed progress. More advocacy for law and procedural reform is necessary to sustain access of refugees to the process and address existing barriers for nationals, such as issuance of late birth certificates free of charge and removal of excessive requirements in case of children born out of wedlock in Sudan.

Conducting a full review of laws, policies and regulation must be part of taking the necessary steps in addressing gaps in regulations, building standard operating procedures (SOPs), and constructing a national strategy. Sudan UNICEF finalized a birth registration system review and developed and adopted crucial SOPs. Similarly, Ethiopia is currently undergoing a full comprehensive assessment of civil registration and vital statistics. AMIF actions have been setting the stage for what will likely be larger institutional and legal changes, highlighting the need for incremental but not necessarily sequential actions.

12. An inclusive approach across critical ministries improves the overall efficacy of the system.

The AMIF action focused building the capacity at multiple levels and across ministries to effect system-wide changes. In Sudan, this included the Civil Registry personnel, local authorities, COR and the Ministry of Health to improve the overall efficacy of the civil registry system, ensuring an inclusive approach. UNICEF was particularly effective in building the necessarily alliances to pursue its ambitious systems-building approach to improve the

civil registry of Sudan as a whole. Their efforts were arguably even broader than for its peers focused on refugee registration. UNICEF aimed to strengthen the system to ensure that all additional data was supported by a continuous, permanent and universal registration that was sustainable and inclusive, also for refugees and migrants.

13. Addressing limitations in human resource and technical capacity require ongoing commitment.

AMIF actions sought to address some of the human resource and technical capacity limitations that had thus far hindered vital events registration service delivery and refugee registration, clearly having a positive effect wherever implemented. For example, INVEA and the regional Vital Events Registration Agencies (VERAs) conducted an assessment in 2018 to identify the technical capacity needs of existing and newly appointed civil registrars serving refugees and host communities in the five refugee-hosting regions. The assessment identified critical capacity gaps, including a limited understanding of the vital events registration process by registrars, a lack of consistency in practices, gaps in filling even basic information in a harmonised fashion, and a lack of monitoring and evaluation. To tackle these challenges, the INVEA training manual was revised to address key knowledge and skill gaps identified by the assessment, and a series of training programmes were organised to improve the technical capacity of registrars with varying degrees of experience and educational backgrounds.

As particularly evident in Sudan, high rates in turnover of national staff due to the political instability limits these gains, requiring ongoing commitment to train staff, provide needed resources and upgrade old and outdated systems.

14. Material support and improvements in existing equipment is significant but as yet insufficient to ensure the needed coverage, particularly for vital event registration.

Provision of material support and improvement of existing equipment was a significant step forward, although major resource gaps still exist. Despite investments, the equipment and infrastructure built at civil registries across both countries remains insufficient, particularly in light of rising demand. The increased demand has resulted in a need for more staff. In Addis alone, VERA recruited 700 new staff over the past two months, none of whom have received training on vital events registration processes.

In Sudan, the absence of cars and fuel made setting up remote registration points difficult. Government respondents recommended finding further funding to allow for the association of community workers in remote communities, a person who should be able to read and write, and follow up on birth registration, working with the local midwives. Again the high level of staff turnover also remains a major challenge to build capacity in a sustainable manner without necessary ongoing structures for staff inductions and refresher trainings.

The main issue is the limited resources and funding allocated by the state. It is not sufficient. UNICEF also has very limited funding; this is a barrier to a comprehensive strategy. – UNICEF Ethiopia

15. Building access points for registration for refugees and host communities can further promote integrated service delivery under the goals of RDPP.

From the research, there was stronger demand for birth certificates among the refugee population interviewed. In the qualitative interviews conducted, the refugees' particular interest in vital events registration became more obvious: it was indeed crucial for them, particularly in the camp setting, to register vital events to ensure that allocated support matches the size and needs of their households and address potential issues of statelessness. In Sudan, the construction of permanent birth registration centres in sites where refugees are located provides integrated access to services for both refugees and hosts.

16. Innovative and highly localised outreach campaigns are effective in building demand for birth registration. However, this needs to coincide with capacity to meet demand.

The lack of awareness regarding vital events was addressed both by targeting refugees and nationals directly via community awareness-raising interventions and by targeting key institutions and actors at the community level. These included religious leaders, health extension workers and the women development army, who were all incited to disseminate messages on vital events registration, particularly birth registration. In addition, awareness raising was conducted via microphone announcements, public meetings, brochures, ads in magazines and the local media. In Sudan mobile birth registration campaigns were very successful to reaching remote areas. These efforts have been very productive, but more efforts are needed to reach unserved populations.

We also need to use more innovative means such as mobile apps for birth registration in remote areas. We want to see more activation through midwives who can reach remote areas. – UNICEF Sudan

17. Linkages to practical benefits increases likelihood of being registered for both refugee registration and vital events registration.

The structure humanitarian response to refugees and asylum seekers has integrated registration and access to support. Among refugees, particularly in Ethiopia, registration was highly normalised. The most commonly expressed advantage of refugee registration was assistance and, particularly for urban refugees, the hopes of protection from deportation. Alternatively, the importance of civil registry was less frequently well known, for both refugees and nationals, even though, in Sudan, a birth certificate is prerequisite for a national ID and sitting for national exams. While UNICEF and UNHCR continue to stress that vital events registration cannot be a prerequisite for service delivery in a context where it remains very rare⁶, at other levels there does appear to be a trend towards making vital events registration a condition for certain services, adding to the demand narrative.

A Memorandum of Understanding is being discussed between the Ministry of Education and INVEA which might eventually lead to schools requesting birth certificates for registration. Linking vital registration with UNHCR food rationing system through a soft conditionality is being considered in some refugee camps to promote birth registration (although, as noted previously, this linkage may de-incentivize death registrations).

18. Listening to beneficiaries, refugees and nationals, is critical to understanding and addressing the barriers to registration.

IPs, such as UNHCR Sudan, has worked hard to get the feedback from population of concern on planned actions, in particular the barrier to vital events registration, which identify either legal issues or simply lack of knowledge by registration staff. For birth registration, refugees disclosed that they are sometimes required to bring witnesses, show authenticated marriage certificates, or show an ID – many requirements not possible. Similarly, misspelling of names in birth certificates creates significant problems. UNHCR has been advocating for the government to adopt special and more flexible procedures for refugees.

19. Comprehensive assessments of registration systems remain critical to ensure alignment between best practices in data protection

As discussed above, the ongoing comprehensive assessments of civil registration will provide input to ensure alignment with best practices in terms of data protection. In Ethiopia, both UNICEF and UNHCR have undertaken joint advocacy, including technical consultations and meetings with senior management of INVEA and ARRA, to prompt an amendment of the refugee vital events directive to align the system with international good practices. This remains a work in progress.

20. Creation of coordination mechanisms among key actors is critical for systemic change and sustainability of action. Duplication still needs to be addressed.




AMIF-funding strengthened coordination by clarifying roles at different levels, but the context remains complex with an evolving stakeholder landscape. This can be mitigated by clarifying roles at all levels. As outlined above, UNICEF was particularly adept at constructing diverse alliances on birth registration, inclusive of COR to state ministries and grassroots activists, host community leaders and religious figures. Partners noted that the partnerships established among the Civil Registry Department, COR, UNHCR and UNICEF were new and useful



⁶ Much to the dismay of INVEA, where a key informant noted that they had pressed UNHCR to require vital events registration in order to access rations to avail. “If we cannot force them, they are not interested in vital events registration”

to driving the concerted effort. This is likely one of the reasons why both hosts and refugees living in and around Wad Sharifey and Shagarab camps were considerably more likely to have been exposed to communications campaigns regarding the importance of/ process for vital events registration than their urban peers. The creation of a sustainable coordination mechanism between UNHCR, Civil Registry, Commissioner of Refugees and other national actors on birth registration was one of most important achievements under AMIF. Alternatively, the systems upgrade required close coordination between UNHCR and government counterparts. However, duplication of efforts is still ongoing and strong collaboration is still needed. Activities under AMIF 2018 Sudan also strove to build alliances at the national level, and to create better conditions for vulnerable children by influencing policy. If relevant laws are passed and upheld, the AMIF contribution will be significant.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO BUILD ON THE AMIF FOUNDATION

The recommendations below primarily focus on the implementers of registration activities. Understanding that AMIF supported foundational actions, there are clear next steps needed to build on the important work completed. However, a number of recommendations must be directed at the funders of these actions. The following provides these two sets of recommendations.

Recommendations for implementers	
	<p>Prioritising coordination between partners at all levels: Cross-cutting issues require many actors, particularly between IPs and national and sub-national government agencies and ministries, to work together while avoiding duplication. Significant efforts have been part of activities to date and provide some of the best practices outlined above. <i>There are coordination gaps, but we've come a long way – UNICEF Ethiopia</i></p> <p>More can be done to address gaps planning and duplication of efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating explicit cross-linkages to better coordinate and build on the parallel activities of IPs. Too often partners worked in silos and missed critical opportunities to learn from and build collective efforts. • Including joint monitoring missions to ensure that national and local authorities are involved and can witness progress towards common objectives. • Embedding clear action plans on how responsibilities will be split in the short, medium and long term. There is general confusion between UNHCR and its local counterparts (ARRA and COR); they have many overlapping responsibilities leading to inefficiencies.
	<p>Translating data into action: Building reliable data is only the first step to improving service delivery and addressing protection outcomes for refugees and nationals. There still remain disconnects between data sharing and meeting urgent needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying solutions for data sharing, in the long and short term, and automated referrals for protection actors to ensure that anyone requiring assistance can receive it immediately, while adhering to data sharing protocols. Focusing on integrated systems will be a key component in the long term, but immediate solutions are needed to address urgent protection issues. • Continuing to build alliances to integrate civil registration data with health systems, education systems, urban planning, and so on, as well as to think more broadly about who can benefit from and use this data. • Prioritising digitisation of civil registration data to move forward on integration of systems and reduce a backlog in paper registration. Low coverage of birth registration and lack of fully digitised civil registry systems limits how data can be used
	<p>Transforming the institutional context: Many legal and procedural barriers exist which continue to impede progress and even coordinated actions, where existing systems may conflict with the protection agenda inherent in registration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing legal and technical frameworks that impeded access to registration and improved coordination. Various laws and regulations create barriers to access to registration, from the excessive requirements on children born out of wedlock to restrictions on right work which cause many refugees to avoid registration altogether. Some of the overlapping remits of UNHCR and its government counterparts require changes in legislation to address. • Combining continued financial support with government commitment. Further building of infrastructure and registrar capacity is necessary as demand continues to increase. This must be linked to a firm commitment by national government partners to take over and a clear exit strategy to ensure sustainability of action.

	<p>Integrating learning and innovative methods: Remote locations and underserved areas have required innovative and creative solutions to reach vulnerable populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on inclusivity and expanding access to meet the goals of digital inclusion. Reaching remote locations, ensuring active outreach and addressing connectivity must be prioritised in future actions, where resource and capacity needs are often greatest.
<p>Recommendations for donors</p>	
	<p>Prioritising future AMIF investment: AMIF funding has significantly focused systems building and registration where few donors have prioritised. This is where AMIF can really contribute systematic change and a significant learning agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing long term funding and commitment to build on the important progress over the last several years. Systems change is a long-term investment that needs to build on evidence. Further support, particularly ongoing capacity building and technical inputs, is necessary to ensure gains and momentum create through AMIF actions are not lost <i>Process change takes a long time – UNHCR Ethiopia</i> • Building more opportunities for learning exchanges within and across countries. The learning event showcased the appetite for more regular exchanges both across countries and among IPs in the same country. AMIF is well placed to facilitate these exchanges for the benefit of the wider community.

ABOUT SAMUEL HALL

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research in countries affected by issues of migration and displacement. Our mandate is to produce research that delivers a contribution to knowledge with an impact on policies, programmes and people. With a rigorous approach and the inclusion of academic experts, field practitioners, and a vast network of national researchers, we access complex settings and gather accurate data.

Our research connects the voices of communities to change-makers for more inclusive societies. Samuel Hall has offices in Afghanistan, Kenya, Germany and Tunisia and a presence in Somalia, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. For more information, please visit www.samuelhall.org

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