Disruptive Protection Practices - The Biometric Variable

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Refugee Protection Outside of the International Legal Framework
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A. Biometrics?
B. UNHCR & Technology? – proGres+AFIS
C. The “Biometric” Priorities
D. The “Protecting” Legal Back-end
E. Operation Kenya
F. Disruptive Perspectives
• “…measurement and analysis of unique physical and behavioral characteristics…”

• “…matching system, in which similarities between statistical quantities are determined on the basis of probabilistic calculations…”

• Biological/Physical Attribute
• Unique
• “Decoding” to template vs. “Recording” a Picture
• Identify // Verify --- Identity
  • 1-1 / 1-M
• Accuracy
  • False + vs. False -
Re-engineering Refugee Protection
Global Consultations – ExCom 91.

“encourages […] UNHCR to introduce new techniques and tools to enhance the identification and documentation of refugees and asylum-seekers, including biometrics features, and to share these with a view towards developing a more standardized worldwide registration system.”

> Project Profile > proGres + AFIS
  • Business case clarity
  • Accuracy measurement benchmark
  • FP + Iris + Photo

• UNHCR – proGres+AFIS
  • Unified data-management system
  • Globally largest non-national DB on individuals
  • Most extensive biographical data-sets

“collection of biometric data as a regular and routine feature of ... the registration process ... and in support of identity verification exercises”
1. Detecting multiple registrations
2. Preventing identity theft and identity substitution
3. Fixing PoC’s biographical data against biometric data
4. Identifying PoC’s in external biometric systems
• National Legislation vs.

• UNHCR
  • Member of the UN system is obliged to illustrate a positive example in privacy protection
  • Adheres to international standards and principles, practices

• The UN falls outside of many legal instruments and is not subject to the obligations or oversight of any particular jurisdiction but its own

The “Protective” Legal Back-end
• Article 17, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:
  • “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy”
• Preamble, 1951 Convention:
  • “Considering that the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved […] by the General Assembly have affirmed the principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination”
• Article 12, Universal Declaration of Human Rights:
  • “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy”
• UN General Assembly Resolution 45/95: Resolution adopting the "Guidelines on the use of computerized personal files [series of minimum guarantees]"
• Guidelines in the UN Secretary General’s bulletin: Use of information and communication technology resources and data - ST/SGB/2004/15

• UNHCR Confidentiality Guidelines
  • Data-Sharing is possible if in need of protection
  • Refugee’s consent may be waived
  • Right to privacy is not absolute

The “Protecting” Legal Back-end
• 2011/2012 ~ Transition/Take over of RSD

• Refugee-Cycle
  • Event logging (REG / RSD / RST / PRT)
  • System shortages (capacity, connectivity, cross-checks, government/IP access)

• Capacity building
  • proGres iterations
  • Bare-eye FP check

• Technology Limitation:
  • reliability Q
  • accuracy Q
• Case Management vs. Identity Management
  • [proGres v.4 + AFIS]
  • Global Scale / Centralized Database

• Connecting Databases
  • Host Government vs. UNHCR data-sets
  • RST country access

• Multimodal Biometric solutions
  • Reliability / Accuracy

• Crossing borders
• Ownership
• Access

• Donor pressure
  • Collision of interests

• Legal regime

  Protecting vs. Exposing? [Farraj, 2011]
  Inclusion vs. Exclusion? [Btijha, 2013]

• Choice of Technology?
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