

Referral mechanisms

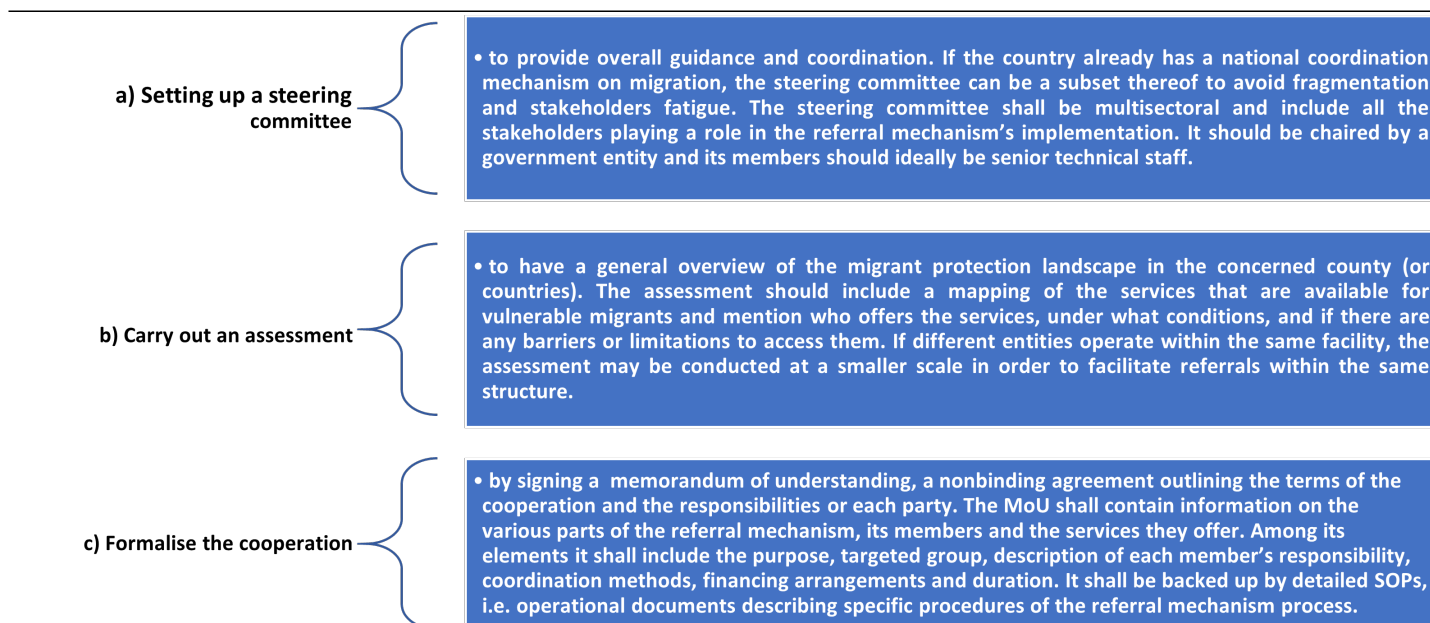
Beneficiaries assisted in migrant centres usually have complex and multiple needs that require a comprehensive and multi-dimensional response that unlikely can be provided by a single entity or organisation. Cooperation among different stakeholders such as United Nations (UN) agencies, government entities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society and the private sector through referral mechanisms is therefore paramount to ensure comprehensive assistance and protection.

Best practices from the field

In Burkina Faso, a national referral mechanism for migrants in transit has been established under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The mechanism brings together governmental and non-governmental partners providing assistance to migrants, and it has greatly contributed to strengthening the partnership between the different organisations.

A **referral mechanism** is not a one-off document, but rather the process of working together through various steps of the assistance process, although a formalisation of such process is needed through a **memorandum of understanding (MoU) and standard operating procedures**. Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to develop referral mechanisms, government should take the lead in their development in order to ensure ownership and sustainability.

Key steps for establishing a referral mechanisms include:



Best practices from the field

In Tunisia, a referral mechanism among more than 15 partners has been established in two key migration hubs. A mapping of partners was conducted to elaborate a cartography that indicates what services for migrants are offered by each partner, and the information is showcased in posters, along with the contact details of each structure. Regular meetings are held among partners to ensure coordination and information sharing.

The **steps for providing protection and assistance through referral mechanisms** vary depending on the context but they generally entail the following components:

a) Identification is aimed at determining what type of assistance is needed by a beneficiary and which partner shall provide it. The referral process may be activated by any of the members of the referral mechanism, or only by designated organisations or government structures. Roles and responsibilities related to identification and initial referral should be clearly spelled out in the MoU and defined in the SOPs. Limiting the number of organisations that can formally identify beneficiaries works best in the context of highly structured referral mechanisms, but it may be too restrictive in other contexts and limit access to assistance;

b) The status or case-type determination step shall be included in the referral process in the countries where it may not be possible to refer beneficiaries without an authority determining their status as a specific type of vulnerable category;

c) Case management is the model to provide assistance to individuals with complex and multiple needs who may access services from a range of agencies and organizations (see [this entry](#)). Referral mechanism members should establish which entities shall carry out case management tasks and clearly indicate in the SOPs how these are coordinated among the different partners;

The **aim of the referral mechanism** is the provision of protection and assistance services, as for instance the provision of accommodation, food and non-food items (NFIs), health and mental health care, education and recreation activities and administrative and legal service. For further guidance on these services, please consult [relevant entries](#).

References and Tools

- [IASC inter-agency Referral Form and Guidance Note](#)
- [IOM Guidance on referral mechanisms for the protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse](#)
- [Running an Effective Migrant resource center: an Handbook for practitioners \(Cooperation, referrals and partnerships, p. 115\)](#)
- [MRC Standard operating procedures for the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants \(Chapter 5 – Referral Systems, pg 10-18\)](#)
- [MHD referral forms \(Somalia\)](#)
- [Referral letter to local partners \(Ethiopia\)](#)
- [IOM external referral form \(DoMV model\)](#)
- [IOM external referral form \(DoMV model\)](#)
- [Government-led national referral mechanism for migrants in transit \(Burkina Faso\)](#)
- [Referral mechanism cartography/posters](#)

Category

Protection and Assistance Services

