

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT
SUBMISSION**

1405-0102 REFUGEE BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by the Refugee Act of 1980, allows for the admission as refugees persons of special humanitarian concern to the United States who can establish that they have suffered past persecution or have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. See INA §§ 101(a)(42) and 207. The law also provides for resettlement assistance to be provided to arriving refugees including initial reception and placement with a voluntary public or private nonprofit agency serving as a sponsor. See INA §§ 411-14. Biographical information is collected from each applicant to place him or her with a sponsoring agency at an appropriate resettlement site if admitted to the United States.

2. This information is collected at refugee processing locations abroad during a personal interview with the applicant using already pre-approved DHS and DOS collections. The interviewer is either an embassy consular officer or, at locations with a large number of applicants, an employee of a nonprofit or international organization that has a cooperative agreement with the State Department to perform this service for us as an Overseas Processing Entity. The data collected include a refugee applicant's personal characteristics such as date and place of birth, sex, marital status, religion, ethnic group, education, occupation, and English language ability. While most of the information is captured through pre-existing collections with DHS and DOS, there is additional data, such as case number, skills, language ability, priority and case cross references that are needed by the sponsoring agencies. The data is transmitted to the Refugee Processing Center in Rosslyn, Virginia, and is given to sponsoring agencies at a weekly allocation meeting. Sponsoring voluntary agencies use the data to place each refugee in an appropriate resettlement location in the U.S. If the data were not collected, the sponsoring agencies would not be able to provide appropriate initial reception and placement services as provided for in the Refugee Act.

3. There is currently no form associated with this data collection. The applicants provide the information during a personal interview. The State Department has developed an automated data capture system called the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) that is in use at processing locations for electronic transmission of the data to Refugee Processing Center which permits faster dissemination of the information to the sponsoring agencies. The Department has designed this data collection to combine interview techniques with digital data capture. While this does not represent a complete end-to-end electronic process (client to application), it equates to paperwork reduction by incorporation of the electronic entry of interview responses.

4. There is no duplication of collection. Some information is available on other forms necessary for the processing of refugees, but all the required information is not available

on other forms. It is more efficient to collect the complete data needed by the resettlement agencies on one form than it would be to collect partial data and then search other completed forms for the remaining information.

5. The information collection does not involve small businesses or other small entities.
6. Failure to collect these data would seriously detract from the ability of the voluntary agencies to place refugees in appropriate resettlement locations in the United States.

7. The data are collected only once for each refugee.

8. The State Department (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration) published a 60-day notice in the *Federal Register* on September 4, 2007 (69 F.R. 53969) to solicit public comments for this collection. One comment was received. After reviewing the comment, PRM determined that the comment was unrelated to the information collection and instead addressed the underlying refugee policy which is a statutory program mandated by Congress. The State Department has consulted with voluntary agencies who resettle refugees and they are satisfied that we are collecting the appropriate biographic information. Consultation with refugees or applicants, from whom we collect the information, is inappropriate because they are unaware of what information the voluntary agencies need that is relevant to resettlement.

9. Respondents receive neither payments nor gifts for providing their biodata sheets. However, the level of resettlement benefits which refugees receive in the United States is based in part upon needs that are identified through a review of the data provided.

10. Respondents are notified that the information in their files is released to State Department personnel, officers of other federal agencies including Health and Human Services, and the Department of Homeland Security, and voluntary agency employees on a need to know basis. Guidelines for the disclosure of information are attached to the cooperative agreements between the voluntary agencies and the State Department

11. Information on religion and ethnic group is provided at the option of the respondent, but it can be useful in determining which voluntary agency or resettlement site is appropriate for a refugee. For example, a Jewish refugee from the former Soviet Union might prefer to be sponsored by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and located in a city with a synagogue. This placement could not be assured if the applicant had not indicated his or her religion during the collection of biographical data.

12. Based upon current refugee admission numbers set by the Presidential Determinations for FY 07, up to 70,000 individuals provide biographical information. Each individual provides the information only once. Based upon our experiences in collecting data, we estimate that it takes approximately one-half hour per individual to collect the necessary data.

13. There is no cost to the individual who provides biographical information.
14. Annualized cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$350,000. This is based upon an average hourly salary of an Overseas Processing Entity worker of \$20; data collection time of one-half hour per refugee; and 70,000 total refugees estimated for admission in FY-08.
15. The number of hours reported on our last submission was 70,000, based on a FY-04 projected annual ceiling of 50,000 refugee admissions. The refugee ceiling has remained at an estimated 70,000 in FY-07, while the salaries of caseworkers also have remained at \$20 per hour
16. Not applicable. The results of this collection will not be published.
17. Not applicable. Interviewers will inform applicants of the expiration date of the collection.
18. Not applicable. There are no exceptions to this certification statement.

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

This collection does not employ statistical methods.

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