



Policy on Country-of-Origin Information Packages in Refugee Protection Claims

Operations Branch
March 2007



Policy on Country-of-Origin Information Packages in Refugee Protection Claims

1. Purpose

The objective of this policy is to ensure that common, nationally issued country-of-origin information (COI) packages are used as the standard country information evidence by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) across Canada. This policy supports quality and consistency in the determination of refugee protection claims and enables efficient operations and effective case management.

2. Application

This policy applies to all COI packages disclosed to the parties by the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) under Rule 29 of the *Refugee Protection Division Rules* for use in all RPD proceedings.

This policy supersedes any documents or portions of documents previously issued that conflict with this policy. In particular it replaces the December 2003 *Policy for Producing Country of Origin National Documentation Packages*, as well as any references to it in other instruments.

3. Definitions

“**Country-of-origin information**” is reliable, timely, and publicly available country information that:

1. does not and could not identify a claimant or any other person who is not a public figure, even if the information is given to another Canadian government department or an external agency; and
2. if the information were made public, would not seriously endanger the life, liberty or security of the claimant or any other person.

Country-of-origin information does not include information about individual claimants collected by officers of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration or the Canada Border Services Agency under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, or information that is specific to a particular claim.

A “**country-of-origin information package**” is a selection of documents that, although not an exhaustive source of information, aims to accurately and objectively report on human rights and country conditions in the countries from which refugee claimants originate. COI packages are standard in format, are nationally issued and provide the best available current COI to decision makers and IRB officers involved in the refugee determination process. This information is equally available to all other parties involved in the process and does not limit, restrict or preclude the submission of additional information to the Board by such parties, particularly the claimant.



4. Context

The IRB's mission is to make well-reasoned decisions on immigration and refugee matters efficiently, fairly, and in accordance with the law. In support of this goal, the IRB uses the best available current information about human rights and country conditions in countries from which claimants originate. The IRB strives for consistency in the information it collects and uses for claims of a similar type in order to ensure that claimants are treated equally and fairly, regardless of the region in which their claim is heard.

The IRB's experience in using documentation packages has demonstrated that packages must effectively address the issues that arise in the types of claims that come before it. This evidence must be up-to-date and must respond to information needs identified during the refugee determination process.

5. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the IRB to create, implement, and use standard COI packages to serve as the Board's disclosure of information in all RPD proceedings.

The development of COI packages is a process that involves the careful selection, production and use of documents about a specific country as a single source of country information for use by the RPD in all of its regional offices. This process is designed to ensure that there are no discrepancies in the information used in and between regional offices, and that the IRB relies on a common base of evidence.

The development of these COI packages is based on the following principles:

Expertise and experience, drawing on the experience of decision-makers and IRB officers in hearing rooms, country-of-origin expertise, and quality assurance analysis;

Collaboration, engaging all regional offices, through members and IRB officers, in order to ensure that COI needs are identified and addressed;

Effectiveness and efficiency, employing a flexible process for coordinated and timely delivery of COI packages; and

Innovation, seeking to continuously improve the process of production, distribution and use of COI packages.

5.1 *General Principles*

(I) **The IRB will:**

- (a) **involve RPD decision-makers, under the auspices of the RPD Deputy Chairperson, and IRB officers in the creation of the list of documents to be included in COI packages;**
- (b) **include accurate, objective and the most current COI in the packages that addresses the information needs of claim types arising in cases before the IRB;**
- (c) **produce and revise COI packages based on the following priority indicators:**
 - **volume of claims;**



- variance rates in RPD decisions in similar claim types across regions; and
 - need to support administrative file transfers between regions.
- (d) produce COI packages that:
- are manageable in size and quantity of information;
 - do not include documents on claim types that represent a small volume of claims, since such documents can be submitted as supplementary disclosure;
 - are relevant, comprehensive, and yet concise;
 - avoid repetition and overlap; and
 - are easy-to-use when preparing a claim, identifying the determinative issues of a claim, and rendering reasons for a decision.
- (II) In the absence of a COI package, a regional office may produce, disclose, and maintain a regional COI package following the format and the principles that guide the production of COI packages under this policy.
- In the absence of either a national or a regional COI package, the regional office should disclose any COI it deems relevant on a claim-by-claim basis.
- (III) In the event that a claim requires the disclosure of additional COI not contained in the COI package, such information should be disclosed on a claim-by-claim basis only, and should not be added permanently to the COI package.
- (IV) COI packages will be updated on a frequent enough basis to ensure that the most current information is available.

6. Implementation

The Operations Branch, the RPD, and regional offices share responsibility for the creation, production, distribution, and ongoing use of COI packages. As such, they will collaborate in developing and maintaining the relevant administrative support to this policy.

Regional Directors and Assistant Deputy Chairpersons are responsible for the application of this policy in all IRB regional offices.

7. Monitoring

The monitoring of this policy will be carried out by the Operations Branch in collaboration with the RPD.

8. References

Legislation and policies:

- ❖ [*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*](#), section 162 and paragraph 170(h)
- ❖ [*Refugee Protection Division Rules*](#), rule 29



9. Inquiries

For information contact:

Director, Research Directorate
Operations Branch
Canada Building (Minto Place)
344 Slater Street, 12th floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K1
Fax: (613) 941-6198

Available in English and French on the IRB's Web site (www.irb-cisr.gc.ca).