

Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement

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1) What is refugee resettlement?

Resettlement under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) involves the selection and transfer of refugees¹ from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State that has agreed to admit them - as refugees - with permanent residence status. The status provided by the resettlement State ensures protection against *refoulement* and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country.

Resettlement is one of three durable solutions to the plight of refugees. Seeking and providing durable solutions – solutions that end the cycle of displacement and allow refugees to lead normal lives – is an essential element of international protection. The other permanent solutions are voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, and local integration in the country of asylum.

Resettlement is an important tool of international protection for refugees at risk in the country where they sought asylum, or separated from family members by conflict and

¹ Exceptions can be made for non-refugee stateless persons for whom resettlement is considered the most appropriate durable solution, and for non-refugee dependent family members to retain family unity. See UNHCR’s Resettlement Handbook at www.unhcr.org/resettlementhandbook.

flight. Where local integration is not an option, and voluntary repatriation is not viable or feasible in the near future, resettlement may be the only durable solution available, especially in protracted refugee situations.²

Resettlement is also an international responsibility sharing mechanism, allowing States to offer protection to refugees outside their territories, and reduce problems impacting the country of first asylum. States are not obliged to accept refugees for resettlement, but rather voluntarily offer resettlement places as a tangible expression of international solidarity. Offering resettlement places may also have strategic value, in that providing a durable solution through resettlement for a number of refugees may open avenues for others remaining behind to enjoy improved conditions in the country of asylum. Resettlement can thus be an important element of comprehensive solutions.

Resettlement under UNHCR's auspices can only be achieved through collaboration with various partners, in particular, resettlement States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As part of its mandate, UNHCR identifies refugees in need of resettlement, but it is States that offer permanent places of residence in their countries. NGOs and international organizations may also play a key role throughout the identification, pre-departure, and the post-resettlement integration processes.

Whether a refugee may be resettled depends on the admission criteria of the resettlement State as well as the cooperation of the State where they have sought refuge. However, resettlement must be a complement to – and not a substitute for – the provision of protection where needed to persons who apply for asylum.

2) Who qualifies for resettlement?

Resettlement under the auspices of UNHCR is only available to mandate refugees who have a continued need for international protection. The search for durable solutions is a central part of UNHCR's mandate. Consideration of all three durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement) may identify resettlement as the optimal solution for an individual refugee or a refugee group.

Resettlement under UNHCR auspices is an invaluable protection tool to meet the specific needs of refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or fundamental human rights are at risk in their country of refuge. Emergency or urgent resettlement may be necessary to ensure the security of refugees who are threatened with *refoulement* to their country of origin or those whose physical safety is seriously threatened in the country where they have sought refuge. Resettlement may be the only way to reunite refugee families who, as a result of flight from persecution and displacement, find themselves divided by borders or by entire continents. Other refugees may not have immediate protection needs, but nevertheless require resettlement as a durable solution – an end to their refugee situation.

UNHCR supports the resettlement of individuals who:

- are determined to be refugees under UNHCR's mandate* for whom resettlement is the most appropriate durable solution, and
- fall under UNHCR's Resettlement Submission Categories.

**Exceptions can be made for non-refugee stateless persons for whom resettlement is considered the most appropriate durable solution, and also for the resettlement of non-refugee dependent family members to retain family unity.*

² Some 6.4 million refugees are in Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS) - situations in which refugees have lived in exile for 5 years or more, and where there is a low likelihood of resolving their situation in the near future. See [UNHCR Global Trends 2012: Displacement, The New 21st Century Challenge](#), 2013, p. 12.

The *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, available from UNHCR's website at www.unhcr.org/resettlementhandbook, provides detailed guidance on the identification of refugees in need of resettlement, and the requirements for submission under the Resettlement Submission Categories. UNHCR encourages States to use the Resettlement Handbook to inform and guide their decisions on resettlement. Linked to the handbook online are individual Country Chapters, which provide detailed information about the resettlement programmes of each of the main resettlement States, including descriptions of their procedures for refugee selection and processing, and the reception arrangements and settlement services provided by the State.

Refugees under UNHCR's mandate

Two categories of persons may be refugees within UNHCR's international protection mandate:

- Refugees within Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention
- Refugees under the broader refugee definition

Pursuant to Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention, the term "refugee" shall apply to:

"a person who... owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or unwilling to return to it."

UNHCR's mandate to protect refugees also extends to persons who are affected by the indiscriminate effects of armed conflict or other "man-made disasters", including, for example, foreign domination, intervention, occupation or colonialism. In addition to individuals who meet the criteria in the 1951 Convention definition, UNHCR recognizes as refugees, those who are:

"outside their country of origin or habitual residence and unable to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order."

The group of persons who may be refugees under UNHCR's international protection mandate is similar to those categories covered by the refugee definitions incorporated in regional refugee instruments, which provide for broadened refugee definitions to address the specific protection problems of the African and Latin American regions.

International refugee law *excludes* from refugee status certain persons who would otherwise qualify as refugees, but who are nevertheless denied international protection under the 1951 Convention, because they are receiving protection or assistance from a UN agency other than UNHCR or because they are not in need or not deserving of such protection. The refugee definition, properly applied, leads to exclusion of people responsible for serious criminal, including terrorist, acts.³

UNHCR has a well-developed exclusion assessment process in place so that the quality and integrity of UNHCR's submissions for resettlement are carefully maintained, for instance by detailed verification and credibility assessments, both at the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) stage and during the process leading up to submission for

³ See Article 1(F) of the [1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees](#)

resettlement. The exclusion clauses are applied scrupulously to protect the integrity of the institution of asylum; but given the possible serious consequences of exclusion, it is important to apply them with caution and only after a full assessment of the individual circumstances of the case. UNHCR takes every precaution to balance these considerations before making a resettlement submission. The standard of proof prescribed in Art. 1(F) is established at the level of “serious reasons for considering”; that is, below a requirement for proof beyond reasonable doubt, but above a reasonable suspicion. Proportionality is also considered a useful analytical tool, as in the gravity of an offence being weighed against the consequences of exclusion.⁴

It is in the interest of all parties involved in resettlement to ensure that individuals who fall under the ambit of Article 1F of the Refugee Convention are excluded from resettlement programmes globally. UNHCR takes such matters seriously and has instituted several measures to protect the integrity of its resettlement programme. To this end, it should be noted that international refugee instruments do not provide a safe haven to terrorists or war criminals.

Resettlement Submission Categories

These categories are inclusive and may overlap. In many cases, submissions are made under both a primary and secondary category.

- **Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs** of the refugee in the country of refuge (this includes a threat of *refoulement*);
- **Survivors of Torture and/or Violence**, in particular where repatriation or the conditions of asylum could result in further traumatization and/or heightened risk; or where appropriate treatment is not available;
- **Medical Needs**, in particular life-saving treatment that is unavailable in the host country;
- **Women and Girls at Risk**, who have protection problems particular to their gender;
- **Family Reunification**, when resettlement is the only means to reunite refugee family members who, owing to refugee flight or displacement, are separated by borders or entire continents;
- **Children and Adolescents at Risk**, where a best interests determination supports resettlement;
- **Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions**, which generally is relevant only when other solutions are not feasible in the foreseeable future, when resettlement can be used strategically, and/or when it can open possibilities for comprehensive solutions.

Resettlement submissions are prioritized according to the urgency of the case. Most of the Resettlement Submission Categories relate to specific individual protection needs, such as where the physical or legal security of a refugee is at stake or where specialized services (e.g. psycho- social or medical) are required that are not available in the country of asylum. The use of resettlement as a tool for international protection generally requires the identification of particularly vulnerable people within a much larger group of refugees.

However, the resettlement of an entire refugee group in a country may be warranted in some situations, either to ensure international protection, or to provide a durable solution in a protracted refugee situation. For example, in circumstances where refugee status is not acknowledged or recognized and where all refugees face a risk of deportation and/or

⁴ [Guidelines on International Protection No. 5: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#), 4 September 2003, HCR/GIP/03/05

refoulement, resettlement of the whole group may be required to ensure their protection. Where a country has not ratified any of the international or regional refugee treaties, has maintained a geographical restriction with respect to the 1951 Refugee Convention, or has not adopted domestic legislation and policies in line with the responsibilities they have assumed under international or regional conventions, resettlement may also be the most appropriate response to protection needs. In some cases, the reliance on resettlement as a tool for international protection may thus involve a considerable number of refugees.

Even if voluntary repatriation should become viable and feasible, local integration and resettlement may still continue to be the most appropriate durable solution for certain refugees. This may be the case, for example, for refugees who for reasons of trauma do not wish to return, or who might face particular protection problems with respect to the country of origin, despite important improvements or changes there. Particularly in post-conflict situations, it may take quite some time before peace and order have been fully re-established and administrative and judicial institutions are functioning effectively.

States recognize that resettlement – as a burden and responsibility sharing tool – can be used strategically to help open possibilities for self-reliance and local integration. Even where this is not possible, more extended use of resettlement in a particular situation could serve to improve the protection situation generally in the first country of asylum. Such a strategic use of resettlement is core to the *Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement* agreed in 2004⁵ as part of the Convention Plus initiative. It emphasizes indeed both comprehensive approaches and the strategic use of resettlement, and specifically sets out understandings related to such approaches in a multilateral context.

3) What is the role of a resettlement State?

States that have established regular refugee resettlement programmes, and agree to consider a certain number of submissions by UNHCR each year are considered resettlement States. Other countries may not have a yearly programme, but also resettle refugees on an *ad hoc* basis and may maintain special resettlement programmes benefiting refugees with specific needs.

Governments have the essential role of establishing and maintaining effective resettlement programmes, including services and supports to assist resettled refugees to integrate into their new communities. Very briefly, key aspects of resettlement programmes include:

- **A legal and policy framework** including legislation to provide resettled refugees a secure legal status on arrival, and access to fundamental civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the prospect of acquiring citizenship;
- **An institutional framework** to support resettlement, including decision-making structure, division of responsibilities, and resource allocation, as well as information-sharing and training of key partners including levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and other service providers;
- **Established processing procedures** including quota allocation, case submission, selection and departure procedures;
- **A reception and integration programme** to deliver essential services including reception, orientation, housing, financial assistance, medical care, language classes, employment preparation, and education, and to support community engagement;

⁵ [Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement](#), High Commissioner's Forum, Forum/2004/6, 16 September 2004.

- **Public engagement** to foster welcoming and hospitable communities, including through media attention.

UNHCR promotes the establishment of resettlement programmes that are:

- **predictable** in terms of admissions levels including multi-year commitments, budgets, and eligibility criteria;
- **diverse** in terms of the refugee beneficiaries, to include protection cases as well as refugees with specific needs;
- **responsive** to urgent needs, emerging needs and appeals for responsibility sharing;
- **non-discriminatory** in selecting refugees for resettlement on the basis of their needs, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, family size or other factors;
- **proactive** in addressing domestic considerations linked especially to budget constraints and problems related to integration;
- **holistic** and comprehensive in approach, in using resettlement to ensure protection, a durable solution, and effective sharing of burdens and responsibilities within the broader protection strategy; and
- open to the **strategic use of resettlement**, e.g. through group resettlement as a means of providing a durable solution in protracted refugee situations where there are no prospects for voluntary repatriation to the country of origin or local integration.

4) Which countries have resettlement programmes?

The number of countries offering resettlement programmes has grown significantly in recent years, from 14 resettlement States in 2005 to 27 resettlement States worldwide in 2013.⁶ Other countries also accept refugees for resettlement on an *ad hoc* basis in response to special appeals.

Certain States are considered “traditional” resettlement States because of their long-standing programmes, namely: **Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands**, the Nordic countries (**Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden**) and the **United States of America**. Other countries have established programmes over the last decade, including **Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Iceland, Ireland** and the **United Kingdom**. Since 2007, 14 new countries⁷ have indicated their readiness to receive a limited number of resettlement submissions from UNHCR, twelve of which have formally announced the establishment of resettlement programmes: **Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan (pilot), Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and Uruguay**.

The adoption of the Joint EU Resettlement Scheme in 2012 is another positive step towards increasing the participation of EU Member States, and providing greater funding opportunities for resettlement.

The increase in the number of resettlement countries has not resulted in a significant increase in the number of resettlement places, which stands at approximately 80,000 places available annually. New resettlement countries are initially able to offer only a very

⁶ *Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Belgium (implementation in 2013), Bulgaria (implementation in 2014 onwards), Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary (implementation in 2013 onwards), Iceland, Ireland, Japan (pilot programme), the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, the United States of America.*

⁷ *The 14 countries are Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and Uruguay. A number of these countries previously had refugee resettlement programmes in the 1980s and 1990s.*

limited number of places, as they require time and resources to build their capacity to develop and implement their resettlement programmes.

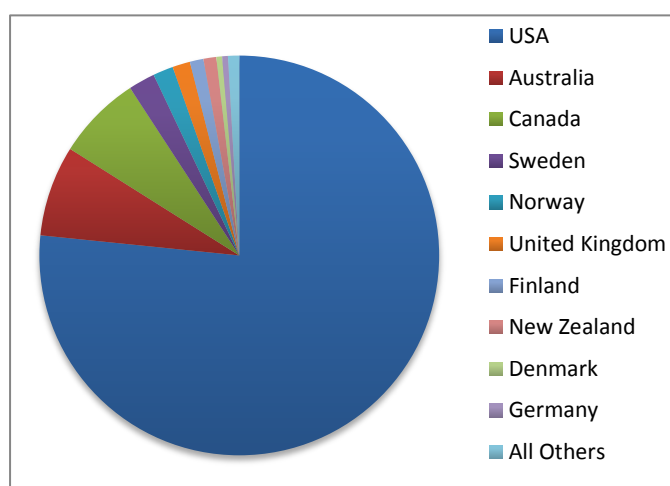
For 2014, global resettlement needs are estimated at 691,000 persons, without considering the possible resettlement needs generated by the massive outflow of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic into neighbouring countries. Resettlement needs therefore continue to outpace available resettlement places by about 9 to 1.

Overall, three countries, the United States of America, Canada and Australia, provide ninety per cent of global resettlement places, while sixteen European countries provide 8 per cent. Four Latin American countries continue to offer a small number of resettlement places mainly for Colombian refugees from the region, and in Asia, Japan is the only resettlement country, implementing a small pilot programme.

5) How many refugees are resettled under UNHCR’s auspices each year?

**Departures by Country of Resettlement in 2012
(Top Ten Countries that resettled UNHCR-assisted Refugees)**

Country of resettlement	Departures (persons)
USA	53,053
Australia	5,079
Canada	4,755
Sweden	1,483
Norway	1,137
United Kingdom	989
Finland	763
New Zealand	719
Denmark	324
Germany	323
All Others	627
Grand Total	69,252



This table shows the actual numbers of departures assisted by UNHCR in 2012. A number of resettlement countries (e.g. Australia, Canada and the United States of America) also admit refugees under family reunion and other migration programmes.

In 2012, 69,252 refugees departed to 26 countries of resettlement with UNHCR’s assistance. This 12 per cent increase from the 2011 departure levels can be attributed to a number of factors. Successful efforts were made by States to expedite security clearances and to interview refugees in inaccessible areas through videoconferencing. IOM and UNHCR also jointly established a cross-border departure platform utilizing Beirut as exit point, for refugees accepted for resettlement from the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite these improvements from 2011, the 2012 departure levels are still 10 per cent below the approximately 80,000 places available globally.

By nationality, the main beneficiaries of UNHCR-facilitated resettlement in 2012 were refugees from Myanmar (17,359), Bhutan (16,674), Iraq (13,556) Somalia (6,610) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2,722). In total, these five nationalities made up 82 per cent of all resettlement departures. Departures were from the following main asylum countries: Nepal (16,754), Malaysia (10,489), Thailand (7,274), Turkey (5,929), Jordan (3,534), the Syrian Arab Republic (3,501), Lebanon (2,979), Kenya (2,659), Ethiopia (2,618) and Tunisia (1,933).

There has been considerable expansion in the volume and scope of resettlement activity in recent years, but available resettlement places have not been filled since the 16-year high of 84,657 departures in 2009. Reduced submission levels are also due to the time involved in resolving complex case processing issues particularly within certain refugee populations undergoing large-scale resettlement processing.

2007-2012 UNHCR Submissions and Departures to Resettlement Countries

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Submissions	98,999	121,177	128,545	108,042	87,849	74,835
Departures	49,868	65,859	84,657	72,914	61,649	69,252
# of countries (based on departures)	25	24	24	28	22	26

UNHCR continues its advocacy and collaboration with resettlement countries to address operational challenges, improve the efficiency of resettlement processing, and strive to fill all available places. Efforts have focused particularly on lengthy processing times, the use of discriminatory selection criteria, and the difficulties faced by some resettlement countries in accessing certain refugee populations due to safety and security concerns.

In 2012, 11.6 per cent of all refugee cases submitted for resettlement were for women and girls at risk, surpassing for a second consecutive year the 10 per cent target to implement Executive Committee Conclusion No. 105 (2006).

Further details on resettlement needs, as well annual resettlement departures and submissions are available from the *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs* document produced annually and available from the Resettlement page under the Durable Solutions section of the UNHCR website www.unhcr.org.

6) How are refugees identified and selected for resettlement?

Ensuring fair and transparent access to the resettlement process is a UNHCR priority. The most vulnerable refugees are sometimes the least visible and vocal. Effective identification and referral mechanisms concentrate on proactively ensuring access to the resettlement process for those most in need. UNHCR has developed a range of tools and methodologies to increase UNHCR's ability to identify needs, and respond better to them.

The identification of refugees potentially in need of resettlement, and the subsequent assessment of individual cases is an ongoing, active and systematic process. It requires detailed knowledge and documentation of the refugee population and of their specific needs and vulnerabilities, and collaboration between UNHCR Protection, Community Services and Durable Solutions staff and implementing partners to identify and implement appropriate responses.

As with refugee status determination, proper registration data is a particularly important source of information, as it assists to protect the integrity of resettlement. An accurate, comprehensive and continuous registration is an effective way to identify individuals and groups in need of protection interventions, including resettlement.

Resettlement is incorporated in the development of overall protection strategies as part of annual regional and country operational planning. UNHCR country offices worldwide use a standard approach to determine the role and scope for resettlement within its overall protection and solution strategy. This determination is normally based on considerations

related to the protection environment/framework in the country and the effective availability of other durable solutions. In this context, resettlement is both a protection tool as well as a durable solution that can be used strategically to help resolve specific refugee situations even if such interventions are not seen to be urgent or life saving.

UNHCR country offices prepare Summary Protection Assessments, which capture the protection situation and highlight key protection problems of the populations of concern at the time of planning. These assessments provide important information to assist with forward planning, especially with regard to the challenges and opportunities to promote resettlement, and the scope for working with partners, staffing and resources. The assessments also make effective use of resettlement tools such as baseline standard operating procedures, the database *proGres*, participatory assessments, the Heightened Risk Identification Tool and other ways to identify refugees with protection risks.

UNHCR developed the *Heightened Risk Identification Tool* (HRIT) to enhance its effectiveness in identifying refugees at risk by linking community-based/ participatory assessments and individual assessment methodologies. First issued in 2008 and revised in 2010, the HRIT has been widely used and field-tested in UNHCR operations worldwide with great success. The tool is designed to be used comprehensively by UNHCR staff involved in community services and/or protection activities (including resettlement) as well as their implementing partners to assist with the identification of individuals at risk in the country of asylum who require immediate protection intervention, which may include resettlement. The HRIT serves to: (i) implement ExCom Conclusion 105 on Women and Girls At-Risk and UNHCR's Global Strategic Priorities 2010-2011; ii) strengthen needs-based planning, identification methodologies and case management systems; and iii) promote UNHCR's age, gender, and diversity sensitive approach.⁸

Drawing on these data sources, UNHCR country offices worldwide forecast the refugee resettlement needs for the next calendar year and UNHCR's capacity to address them. This information is compiled in the *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs* document, which is then used for planning the global resettlement activities of the Office as it provides the rationale and scope of UNHCR's resettlement operations in any given country. Furthermore, the document allows UNHCR to chart the projected global resettlement needs and its capacity to address those needs; taking into account the resource and other challenges that impact resettlement delivery.

This annual *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs* document is shared with the resettlement partners in the lead-up to the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) held in Geneva. The document raises awareness of populations identified as in need of resettlement, and serves as the primary reference document for dialogue on resettlement needs, priorities, likely gaps and challenges in programme delivery, allowing informed decisions on quota and resource allocations.

How do States know which refugees need resettlement?

The majority of resettlement States rely on UNHCR to recommend individuals and groups of refugees according to needs and priorities identified by UNHCR and its partners, and to present these individuals for resettlement consideration. The resettlement States assess the individual case submissions made by UNHCR and decide whether or not to grant resettlement according to their policies, laws and regulations.

⁸ *The significant participation of refugee girls, boys, women and men of all ages and backgrounds is integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all UNHCR policies and operations so that these impact equitably on people of concern.*

UNHCR updates resettlement States throughout the year on the global resettlement needs and priorities. These discussions take place in various fora: (i) the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) involving States, NGOs, intergovernmental / international organizations and UNHCR; (ii) the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) meetings, which support the ATCR process and primarily consists of resettlement States, intergovernmental / international organizations and UNHCR with limited NGO participation; and (iii) bilateral meetings between individual resettlement States and UNHCR to confirm specific aspects of programme delivery. UNHCR also holds Regional Strategic Planning Meetings to strengthen coordination at a regional level.

A meeting between resettlement countries and UNHCR is routinely held in conjunction with the ATCR to discuss ways to respond to specific populations in need of resettlement, including populations for whom resettlement is a priority or where the strategic use of resettlement can be enhanced. This process is designed to strengthen the coordination and management of the global resettlement programme and ensure predictability for planning purposes. The outcome of these initial discussions serves to direct attention to specific refugee populations in priority need of resettlement.

Separate bilateral meetings are normally held outside the ATCR and WGR framework to further discuss and confirm the size and composition of the targets set by resettlement countries for the upcoming year. This includes efforts by governments and UNHCR to bridge gaps and strengthen capacity to address identified needs.

How does UNHCR guide State resettlement selection decisions?

Resettlement States determine the size and composition of their resettlement programmes, and assess the case submissions made by UNHCR. States decide who is granted resettlement admission according to their policies, criteria, laws and migration regulations. The country offering resettlement places therefore has full control with respect to decisions on individual cases.

Nevertheless, UNHCR urges all States to be guided by the agency's internationally recognized criteria on eligibility, global needs and priorities. To preserve the integrity of resettlement as a protection tool and durable solution for refugees most in need, it is important to ensure resettlement programmes are needs-based, non-discriminatory and achieve successful integration outcomes.

The measure of resettlement as a protection tool and durable solution is not only how many refugees in need of resettlement have access to this solution each year, but also the way they are selected, received and supported in the process of becoming full participants in their new communities. It is therefore vital that resettlement programmes are balanced according to global needs and priorities (including considerations of cultural, geographic and individual diversity). Hence, it is UNHCR's position that individuals selected for resettlement by States should be on the basis of protection needs, taking into account security concerns but not so-called "integration potential." It is important to distinguish integration considerations from assessments related to concerns about public security.

UNHCR urges resettlement States not to use integration potential and other discriminatory selection criteria (e.g. family size, age, health status, ethnicity and religion). Such discrimination undermines the protection and needs-based approach to resettlement, creating inequalities and protection gaps, and limits access to resettlement by some refugees most at risk. The UNHCR assessment of global resettlement needs and priorities assists States to target their programmes. Furthermore, UNHCR engages in bilateral discussions with States to identify specific needs that could be met by the State.

The majority of refugee resettlement programmes worldwide rely on UNHCR to recommend specific refugees according to needs and priorities identified by UNHCR and its partners, and to present these cases to States for resettlement consideration. A number of resettlement States also have mechanisms in place to select individuals for resettlement without the direct involvement of UNHCR.

7) How does UNHCR ensure the integrity of the resettlement process?

UNHCR is acutely aware of the concerns of States to maintain public security and combat terrorism. These concerns are entirely legitimate and UNHCR understands and shares the desire of States to ensure the integrity of resettlement programmes. A balance must be struck which addresses these concerns, while avoiding the erosion of long-standing refugee protection principles. Ideally, systems that protect the integrity of the resettlement process also serve to protect refugees.

All UNHCR staff, irrespective of grade or function, have the responsibility of ensuring that protection activities, including resettlement, are carried out to the highest standards possible, and to prevent fraud and malfeasance in all activities.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that a clear management and accountability framework is in place for all resettlement activities in their respective offices. At the field level, management and accountability for resettlement activities rest with the Representative and the senior staff in charge of protection, and continue through staff with specified resettlement functions. Each office designates an officer accountable for resettlement activities within the field office.

These processes are documented and carried out in a way that seeks to insulate them from fraud, whether it is internal or external to UNHCR. Special case management and interview techniques are used to protect the integrity of case file data. All resettlement operations are required to follow Standard Operating Procedures. Each step in the process is documented and interviews recorded. The process is as transparent as possible and subject to several points of review within UNHCR.

UNHCR's electronic registration database, *proGres*, has been implemented in most field operations. The system has been designed to mitigate the risk of fraud. It includes special features to store biometric information (including photographs and fingerprints) and has an audit trail for internal oversight. The composition of families is carefully recorded and stored. All changes to electronic files are logged permanently.

8) How quickly must States make decisions?

UNHCR assesses the protection situation of each individual or family considered for resettlement to assess the urgency of the resettlement need and manage the submission. Delays in the processing of cases by UNHCR and resettlement countries can have serious protection implications for refugees. It is therefore incumbent on all parties to ensure a balanced and predictable programme delivery so that individuals receive timely access to resettlement and information on case processing. Emergency cases, which typically involve immediate life-threatening situations, are expected to depart for resettlement within a period not exceeding seven days; urgent cases should depart within six weeks; and normal priority cases are to be resettled within 12 months. These benchmarks are used by UNHCR to gauge whether resettlement activities are efficient and responsive to the protection and resettlement needs of refugees.

As part of the Office's efforts to improve protection against *refoulement* [forced return] and to improve the urgent resettlement of people in perilous situations, UNHCR established evacuation transit facilities to provide temporary safe haven for refugees pending final resettlement to a third country. Emergency Transit Facilities (ETFs) first established in 2008 in Timisoara, Romania, have expanded to three fully operational facilities: the Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) in Timisoara, Romania; the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Manila, the Philippines; and the Emergency Transit Centre (ETC) in Humenné, Slovakia. Evacuation to an ETF is also a solution for refugees who cannot be processed in their host country due to inaccessibility or lack of security. Over 1,400 refugees have been evacuated to the ETFs since they were established in 2008/9.

9) What happens after refugees are resettled?

Resettlement is a process that does not end with the transfer of a refugee and her/his family and dependants to a new country. Just as with the other durable solutions, providing refugees with support and the opportunity to integrate into their new community is essential to the durability of resettlement. The status provided in the country of resettlement (e.g. Convention refugee status) should ensure protection against *refoulement* [forced return] and provide a resettled refugee and her/his family and dependants with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettled refugees should also have the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of their new country.⁹

Integration requires receiving States to ensure that refugees have access to the resources required for their longer-term stability and adjustment to the new society and to foster a sense of belonging and participation. Integration is a mutual, gradual and multi-faceted process, with inter-related legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions. States must welcome and support refugees, granting them rights and entitlements. Refugees must abide by the laws and adapt to the customs and lifestyle of their adopted country while being able to maintain their own cultural identity. Refugees should take the values of their hosts into account, but the attitude of the receiving communities and host country institutions is also of paramount importance.

Integrating resettled refugees is beneficial for both the refugees and the State. Through integration, resettled refugees become independent and productive participants of their community, which empowers them to make valuable contributions to the host society. It is therefore crucial to put integration systems and programmes into place, including language and vocational training, as well as programmes facilitating access to education and employment. Programmes to provide cultural orientation as well as manage the expectations of refugees prior to and after their arrival in the resettlement country assist to ease the process of adjustment and foster a positive attitude toward integration. As family separation impedes integration, it is equally important for States to facilitate the reunification of family members who were separated by the refugee experience and unable to travel together for resettlement.

Effective integration requires the commitment of the resettlement country to provide the required human and financial resources to support refugees to become independent, the political will to create welcoming communities, and the openness of the society to adapt in response to increasing diversity.¹⁰

⁹ [UNHCR Resettlement Handbook](#), 2011 Revision

¹⁰ [Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration](#), October 2002, sets out

10) What role do NGOs have in refugee resettlement?

Non-governmental organization (NGO) partners are involved throughout the resettlement process from identification to integration. UNHCR is pleased to be working together with NGOs to promote resettlement through advocacy efforts, as well as with direct engagement of stakeholders through training and operational capacity building. Given their specific areas of expertise and knowledge of refugee populations, NGOs supplement UNHCR's core role in facilitating many aspects of the resettlement process. UNHCR continues to strengthen partnerships with NGOs across the continuum of resettlement activities, including through partnership agreements and the deployment of NGO personnel to UNHCR operations.

UNHCR is also working closely with the NGO sector to explore new models for the identification and referral to UNHCR of refugees in need of resettlement. For example, partnership agreements with implementing partners in the areas of legal, social and medical assistance ensure a mainstreaming of UNHCR's organizational priorities and the identification of vulnerable individuals. Indeed, UNHCR's NGO implementing partners have a key role to play to bring to UNHCR's attention refugees who might be in need of this solution given their protection needs.

To support and encourage strengthened cooperation, UNHCR and NGOs have developed the *UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement*,¹¹ a collection of tools and examples that provides practical guidance for UNHCR and NGOs to cooperate in various areas: operational activities; community outreach; information sharing, planning and advocacy; and reception and integration. UNHCR's Resettlement Service remains committed to its strategic objectives to engage proactively with the NGO sector to further develop innovative ways to combine resources and activities to improve resettlement delivery.

The specific role and function of NGOs within a country's resettlement programme varies from country to country. In many cases, NGOs provide a liaison function to the refugee, UNHCR and the receiving Government and community. Some resettlement countries involve NGOs intimately in case preparation, and pre-departure processing, as well as reception and integration. Others involve their NGOs in programme planning, selection missions, or dossier screening.

It is often through the work of NGOs and their community volunteers that the public first gets to know about refugees and the work of UNHCR. This aspect of NGO work has a positive impact on fundraising, advocacy for various refugee groups, and building public support for resettlement.

11) Who funds the refugee resettlement programmes?

Resettlement States are responsible for funding their own resettlement programmes. States are therefore expected to cover the costs including: interview/selection missions,

best practice in various countries in the areas of initial reception, ways of preparing receiving communities, language training, education, employment, and the special needs of children. See also UNHCR, [The Integration of Resettled Refugees: Essentials for Establishing a Resettlement Programme and Fundamentals for Sustainable Resettlement Programmes](#), June 2013

¹¹ This [UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement](#) toolkit is a living repository for exchanging ideas on resettlement partnerships.

medical checks and pre-departure orientation, exit visas from country of asylum, travel from the country of asylum and on- arrival services in the new country of resettlement.¹² Resettlement should only begin once an adequately resourced basic integration programme with identified divisions of roles and responsibilities between partners is in place.

In certain situations, however, such as new/emerging resettlement countries in Latin America, UNHCR provides financial and technical support by way of contributions from donor States. UNHCR and other key stakeholders (including, in certain situations, other resettlement countries) are able to provide specialized guidance and support to new resettlement States. European States can also receive financial support from the European Refugee Fund administered by the European Commission.¹³

12) What is UNHCR's role after refugees are resettled?

UNHCR does not have an operational role in post-resettlement refugee integration. However, refugees remain of concern to UNHCR until they benefit from the effective protection of a State. UNHCR therefore has a responsibility to assess the readiness and capability of a State to resettle refugees, and has a role to play in integration issues.

The measure of effective resettlement is not only the annual number of refugees resettled, but also how well they are received and supported in the process of becoming full participants in their new communities. While UNHCR recognizes and affirms each State's need to approach resettlement in a manner appropriate to its particular context, UNHCR also advocates that the legal and socio-economic needs of resettled refugees be met in a manner that ensures a durable solution has been achieved. Although there is no global standard on resettlement and integration outcomes, States have developed instruments to measure refugees' economic and social outcomes, and there is ongoing collaboration to establish benchmarks and criteria to evaluate integration.

States, NGOs and UNHCR have devoted considerable efforts to assessing integration practices, and sharing guidance and good practices on building the foundation for resettlement programmes, establishing policies and procedures, delivering essential services, and preparing the host society. Distributing guidelines on good practices and organizing trainings, conferences, and twinning exchanges are all invaluable to supporting the efforts of new, prospective and established resettlement countries.

13) What about the family members of resettled refugees?

UNHCR seeks ensure that all of the refugee's family members, including dependent non-nuclear family members, are resettled together to preserve the unity of the family. It is however not always possible for family members to remain together, as involuntary family separation often occurs in refugee situations. UNHCR promotes the unity of the family and urges all States to have generous and flexible programmes to facilitate family reunification. It is a State responsibility to uphold the principle of family unity, and a number of States have established special programmes to facilitate family reunification of refugees without requiring the direct involvement of UNHCR.

¹² *An outline of these various activities can be found in the country chapters of the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, 2011 revision, as well as the UNHCR Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees.*

¹³ *See the [European Commission website](#) for details on the European Refugee Fund.*

Nevertheless, UNHCR has a responsibility, as part of its mandate to protect refugees, to promote and facilitate the reunification of refugee families. UNHCR therefore assists family members of a person who has been recognized as a refugee, to join her or him in the country of asylum or resettlement. This applies whether or not the family members are still in their country of origin. Except for certain special programmes, eligibility for UNHCR assistance with family reunification requires that at least one person within the family unit which is to be reunited must be a refugee under UNHCR's mandate or a person otherwise of concern to the organization. As a matter of principle, this includes situations where the refugee was recognized by a competent government authority. UNHCR's assistance and support may be requested by the family member(s), by the refugee, and/or by the UNHCR office where the refugee or her/his family member is living. This may involve helping refugees or their family members submit applications for family reunification and/or for entry or exit permission, through official procedures and in accordance with UNHCR's guidelines on family reunification.

14) What are the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) and the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR)?

The Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) started in 1995, and have become the main forum for furthering the resettlement agenda, and strengthening cooperation between governments, NGOs and UNHCR in the area of resettlement. The ATCR allow for open and frank dialogue and strive to produce outcomes by forging coherent and collaborative approaches to enhance global resettlement delivery. The ATCR provides an opportunity and process to address a wide range of policy and procedural matters, including advocacy, capacity building and operational support, and serves to influence and focus joint strategies on resettlement consistent with UNHCR's global strategic priorities. An important outcome is the tripartite relationship itself, which promotes transparency and stimulates the development of new and innovative ways to solve problems and to combine resources to improve resettlement outcomes for refugees.

In recent years, the ATCR have taken place annually in June/July. Participants are limited to government representatives from resettlement States, NGOs involved in refugee resettlement, intergovernmental / international organizations and UNHCR. As part of UNHCR's global strategy to broaden the base on resettlement, the ATCR also invites observers from States providing Emergency Transit Facilities, potential/emerging resettlement States as well as to States interested in the resettlement process.

The consultations have become an important vehicle for UNHCR's cooperation with governments and NGOs and a mechanism to enhance partnership. They offer a forum to review progress on resettlement issues during the year, but more importantly, to re-focus and shape a joint strategy on resettlement. In particular, the consultations provide the appropriate environment to: raise awareness with a view toward building consensus in the UNHCR Executive Committee for the support of key resettlement issues, including the establishment of new programmes; share information on a regular basis about resettlement needs, provide opportunities for planning purposes and allow for analysis of important policy issues; focus attention on UNHCR's resettlement activities and priorities, relevant operational issues, and key responsibilities for case identification and referral.

The Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) supports the work of the ATCR. The WGR meetings provide a smaller, and more targeted consultative forum to discuss specific

policy and operational aspects of resettlement. In the past, meetings were only open to resettlement States, IOM and UNHCR; however, in recent years a limited number of NGOs have been invited to attend the WGR meetings in recognition of the synergies between the ATCR and the WGR and in order to provide continuity and follow-up on ATCR conclusions and recommendations.

States volunteer to chair the ATCR / WGR process on a rotating basis, usually for one year, but occasionally extended for an additional year. The Chair is supported by an NGO focal point, who is nominated by the NGOs of the State that holds the chair in a given year. The focal point liaises closely with the chairperson and is responsible for ensuring NGO coordination in the lead-up to the ATCR. This includes a process of information sharing and consultation with the global NGO resettlement network – gathering input and suggestions on the format and content of the agenda as well as consolidating NGO input. UNHCR's Resettlement Service provides a critical role in supporting the process, not only in terms of steering the tripartite process with policy guidance and data, but also in terms of providing secretariat support to the ATCR.

15) What are some useful UNHCR references on refugee resettlement?

The following resources can be found at www.refworld.org and/or www.unhcr.org.

- [UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, including Country Chapters](#), 2011 revision
- [UNHCR Global Trends 2012: Displacement, The New 21st Century Challenge](#), June 2013
- Resettlement Fact Sheet, available from the resettlement page at <http://www.unhcr.org>
- [UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2014](#), June 2013
- [The Integration of Resettled Refugees: Essentials for Establishing a Resettlement Programme and Fundamentals for Sustainable Resettlement Programmes](#), UNHCR, June 2013
- [Self-Study Module: Resettlement Learning Programme](#), October 2012, Rev
- [Progress Report on Resettlement 2012](#), ExCom Standing Committee document, 4 July 2012, A/AC.96/1108
- [UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement](#), 2011
- [UNHCR Position Paper on the Strategic Use of Resettlement](#), June 2010
- [Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement](#), High Commissioner's Forum document, FORUM/2004/6, 16 September 2004
- [Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern](#), EC/53/SC/INF.3, 16 September 2003
- [The Strategic Use of Resettlement](#), A Discussion Paper Prepared by the Working Group on Resettlement, WGR/03/04.Rev3, 3 June 2003
- [Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration](#), 2002