

Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement

What is refugee resettlement?

UNHCR's resettlement activities involve the transfer of refugees and stateless people from the country in which they have sought refuge to another state that has agreed to admit them as refugees and/or to grant permanent settlement there. It is one of three durable solutions UNHCR is mandated to implement, in cooperation with states. The important role of resettlement as a protection tool and as a durable solution has been reaffirmed by a number of UNHCR Executive Committee conclusions.

Whether a refugee or stateless person may be resettled depends on the admission criteria of the third state as well as the cooperation of the country where they have sought refuge. Resettlement is not a right, and there is no obligation on states to accept refugees or stateless people for resettlement. Resettlement is thus an important burden and responsibility sharing tool. However, resettlement must be a complement to – and not a substitute for – the provision of protection where needed to persons who apply for asylum.

UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Erika Feller emphasized at the 2007 meeting of UNHCR's Executive Committee: "While fewer than 1 percent of the world's refugees may be resettled in any given year, resettlement is an important protection tool, a durable solution and a concrete manifestation of responsibility sharing."¹ In her opening remarks at the 2009 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR), Feller said resettlement is more than a protection tool and durable solution. Resettlement is about human security and human participation in peace building. This is demonstrated not only by resettlement's role in providing protection and solutions for refugees but also in forging comprehensive solutions to refugee situations. Resettlement opens avenues for international burden and responsibility sharing and is part of the combination of efforts that can unlock protracted refugee situations. When used strategically, resettlement can mitigate the risks associated with mixed and irregular migration flows.

In his closing remarks at the ATCR, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres spoke passionately about the human face of resettlement and its contribution to building and enriching communities and strengthening cultural diversity and respect for human dignity. Resettlement is a tangible and realizable solution that involves all sectors of receiving communities. Resettlement is about partnerships in action and international solidarity.

From the early years of UNHCR's existence through the 1980s, resettlement was a durable solution available to a considerable number of people, not least in the aftermath of the conflict in Indo-China, which saw more than 700,000 Vietnamese refugees resettled to third countries after having been granted temporary refuge in countries in the region.

Currently, resettlement is a durable solution for a comparatively small number of refugees. Nonetheless, it has a vital role for refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other human rights are at risk in the country where they sought refuge. Resettlement is thus an important tool for international protection as well as a durable solution. Where local integration is not an option, and voluntary repatriation does not

¹ Statement by Erika Feller at 58th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program, 3 October 2007. See, <http://www.unhcr.org/admin/ADMIN/4704d4f32.pdf>

seem viable or feasible in the near future, resettlement may be the only durable solution available, especially in protracted refugee situations.

Resettlement may also have strategic value, in that opening resettlement as a durable solution for a number of refugees may open avenues for others remaining behind to enjoy improved conditions of asylum in the country of asylum.

The availability of opportunities for voluntary repatriation and/or local integration does not exclude the possibility of resettling a refugee or a refugee group. UNHCR may still consider resettlement for individuals who are unable to return to their country of origin due to a continued fear of persecution and in the absence of local integration opportunities. Resettlement could also be considered for individuals with specific needs that otherwise will not be addressed adequately. Resettlement can thus be an important element of comprehensive solutions.

Which countries have resettlement programmes?

A number of states are considered as traditional resettlement countries because of their long-standing resettlement 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 in recent years, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Iceland, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Since 2007, France, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, The Czech Republic and Uruguay have established or re-established resettlement programmes. Japan has also announced that it will embark on a pilot resettlement project in 2010.

Number of places available for refugees submitted for resettlement by UNHCR in 2008 (top ten resettlement countries)	
Countries	No. Places (Persons)
USA	56,750
Australia	6,500
Canada	6,140
Sweden	1,900
Norway	1,200
Finland	750
New Zealand	750
United Kingdom	750
Denmark	500
Netherlands	500
Others	1,000
Total	76,740

This table shows the approximate number of places available for UNHCR resettlement submissions in 2008. In addition, a number of resettlement countries (e.g. Australia, Canada and the United States) admit refugees under family reunion and other migration programmes.

Who qualifies for resettlement?

Resettlement is geared primarily towards the protection of refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or fundamental human rights are at risk in their country of refuge. Resettlement is normally only promoted by UNHCR when the other durable

solutions – voluntary repatriation or local integration – are unavailable, or where the specific protection needs of the refugee cannot be met by the host state, even if there is a willingness to grant asylum.

Refugee resettlement is distinguished from other forms of migration by the primary consideration of “protection and durable solutions needs” above all other concerns. States and UNHCR have repeatedly affirmed that the primary purpose of resettlement must always be the provision of individual protection for those who cannot be provided with adequate protection in the first country of asylum. They also affirm that resettlement can provide a durable solution and a tool for burden and responsibility sharing.

Accordingly, individuals supported for resettlement by UNHCR are (i) recognized as refugees under UNHCR's mandate; and (ii) deemed eligible according to UNHCR's resettlement guidelines and criteria. The UNHCR resettlement criteria and related considerations form the basis for the identification of refugees in need of resettlement. They are contained in the *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*. UNHCR encourages states to use these criteria to inform and guide their decisions on resettlement.

The most up-to-date version of UNHCR's Resettlement Handbook is available on UNHCR's website, Refworld (<http://www.refworld.org>). Refworld also has information on the resettlement programmes of each of the main resettlement countries, including data on refugee selection and processing modalities, reception arrangements and settlement services provided by resettlement countries. Additional information on settlement/integration services can also be found in the *UNHCR Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* – also available on RefWorld.

The agreed global criteria for UNHCR to determine its resettlement interventions encompass the use of resettlement both as a tool of international protection and as a durable solution. They were endorsed by UNHCR's Executive Committee in 1996 and include the following:

- ✚ when there is no other way to guarantee the legal or physical security of the refugees concerned in the country of first asylum; this includes a threat of *refoulement* [forced return];
- ✚ survivors of torture and violence, where the conditions of asylum could result in further trauma or where appropriate treatment is not available;
- ✚ persons with medical needs, in particular life-saving treatment that is unavailable in the country of first asylum;
- ✚ women and girls at risk, where there is a real risk that they could be exposed to sexual or gender-based violence;
- ✚ children and adolescents, where a best interests determination supports this;
- ✚ elderly refugees who may be particularly vulnerable and for whom resettlement appears to be the best solution, generally due to family links;
- ✚ when it represents the only means to reunite refugee families who, owing to refugee flight or displacement, find themselves divided by borders or by entire continents;
- ✚ when voluntary repatriation or local integration are not available or feasible in the foreseeable future.

Most of the criteria relate to specific international 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.

At times, the resettlement of an entire refugee population in a country may be warranted based on international protection grounds. This could be the case, for example, where refugee status is not acknowledged or recognized and where all refugees face a risk of deportation and/or *refoulement*. This could arise where a country has not ratified any of the international or regional refugee treaties, or where it has maintained a geographical restriction with respect to the 1951 Refugee Convention. It could also apply in situations where states have not adopted domestic legislation and policies in line with the responsibilities they have assumed under international or regional conventions. 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 even 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 2004² 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.

How many refugees are resettled by UNHCR each year?

In 2008, UNHCR submitted the names of more than 121,000 refugees for consideration by resettlement countries – the highest number in 15 years and 22 percent above the 2007 level (98,999 people). The number of women-at-risk submitted for resettlement increased by 42 percent.

By nationality, the main beneficiaries of UNHCR-facilitated resettlement in 2008 were refugees from Iraq (33,512), Myanmar (30,388) and Bhutan (23,516). In total, the three nationalities made up three-quarters of all submissions. In terms of departures for resettlement, 65,859 refugees departed to 24 resettlement countries, compared to 49,868 refugees the year before. The largest number of refugees resettled with

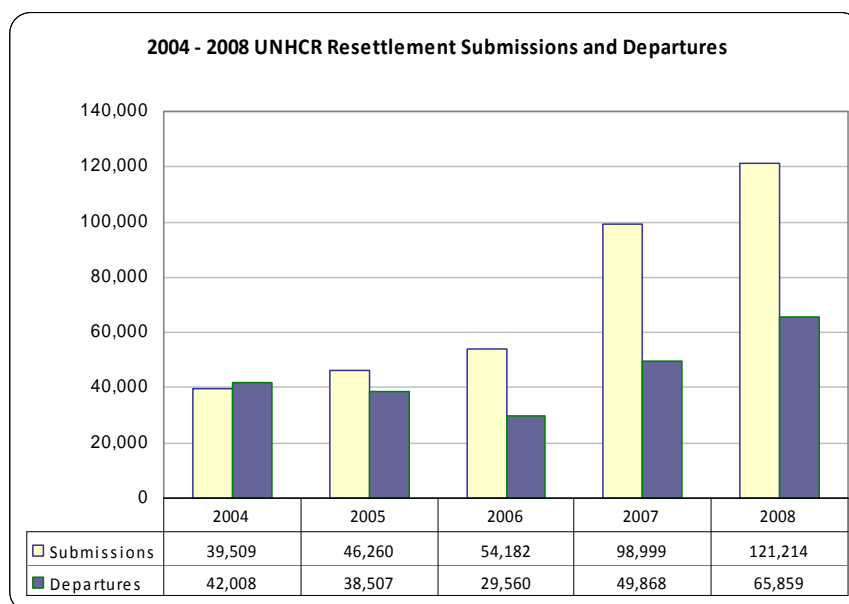
² *High Commissioner's Forum, Forum/2004/6, 16 September 2004.*

UNHCR assistance departed from Thailand (16,807), followed by Nepal (8,165), Syria (7,153), Jordan (6,704) and Malaysia (5,865).

The continued use of group resettlement methodology in Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia and Ethiopia, as well as the streamlined procedure used for Iraqi refugees in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) operations, are among the contributing factors to these achievements. While increasing the number of refugees having access to resettlement, UNHCR has ensured the quality of case submissions through regular staff training, provision of policy guidance, development of a new Resettlement Learning Programme and strengthened connectivity with key resettlement partners.

UNHCR estimates the number of refugees in need of resettlement in 2010 at about 747,000 people, including populations where resettlement is envisioned over a period of several years. This represents a significant increase on estimates reported for 2009 (560,000). Yet only some 79,000 places annually are offered by all resettlement states together. In the last two years, UNHCR has identified and submitted more individuals for resettlement than the number of places made available by resettlement countries. It is imperative that UNHCR's efforts to expand resettlement are matched by commitments from states to provide more opportunities for refugees to be resettled and prioritize places for those most in need of this solution.

The increase in resettlement needs is partly explained by UNHCR's focus on multi-year planning and the strengthened role of resettlement in comprehensive solutions strategies. Resettlement's role in contributing to human security and human participation in peace building is demonstrated not only in terms of providing protection and solutions for refugees but also in forging comprehensive solutions to refugee situations. Efforts have been made in five of the six priority protracted refugee situations of the High Commissioner's Initiative to better integrate resettlement in the protection and solution strategies.



How are refugees identified for resettlement?

According to UNHCR's procedural guidelines on resettlement, it is a priority for the office to ensure fair and transparent access to the resettlement process. The most

vulnerable refugees are sometimes the least visible and vocal. Effective identification and referral mechanisms should concentrate on proactively ensuring access to the resettlement process for those most in need. It follows that identification should be based on a need for resettlement and not a desire for it on the part of refugees or of any specific actors such as the host state, resettlement states, other partners and UNHCR staff. The cooperation of the host state and resettlement states will be required for resettlement to succeed, but this should reinforce rather than diminish the protection principles that underpin the identification process.

Furthermore, UNHCR strives to ensure a clear distinction between refugee status determination and resettlement. As with refugee status determination, proper registration data is a particularly important source of information, as it assists to protect the integrity of resettlement. The *Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement* emphasizes the importance of registration to resettlement. An accurate, comprehensive and continuous registration is considered to be an effective way to identify individuals and groups in need of resettlement, hence resettlement and registration activities should be mutually reinforcing.

UNHCR applies a standard methodology to determine the number of refugees in need of resettlement, further ensuring systematic needs-based resettlement projections. A standard approach is used by each country office 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 undertake a yearly exercise of proactive planning for resettlement as an integral part of the Country Operations Planning (COP) cycle. By the end of March, UNHCR country offices worldwide finalise their COP, which forecasts refugee resettlement needs for the next calendar year and UNHCR's capacity to address them. Each office is required to assess and report on the resettlement needs and, where applicable, explain the strategic role of resettlement in addressing them. In addition to the COP, UNHCR country offices prepare Protection Assessments, which outline the previous year's resettlement activities. 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, proGres, participatory assessments and other ways to identify refugees at heightened risk.

In 2007, 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. It has been designed for use by UNHCR staff involved in community services and/or protection activities (including resettlement) and their implementing partners to assist with the identification of individuals at risk in the country of asylum and who require immediate intervention. UNHCR staff and NGO partners who are involved in these types of activities can use the tool and apply it to different situational contexts. The tool should be used comprehensively and not alone for resettlement identification. The HRIT serves to: (i) implement ExCom Conclusion 105 on Women and Girls At-Risk and UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives; ii) strengthen needs-based planning,

identification methodologies and case management systems; and iii) promote age, gender, and diversity mainstreaming.³

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 by states. The resettlement countries assess the individual case submissions made by UNHCR and decide whether or not to grant resettlement. States make the decision on admissibility according to their policies, laws and regulations.

UNHCR communicates regularly with resettlement states on the projected global resettlement needs and priorities. These discussions take place in various fora: (i) the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) involving states, non-governmental organizations (NGO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR; (ii) the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR), which meets twice yearly and comprises resettlement states, the IOM and UNHCR; and (iii) bilateral meetings between individual resettlement states and UNHCR to confirm specific aspects of programme delivery. Each year, UNHCR also holds Regional Strategic Planning Meetings to strengthen coordination at a regional level. Resettlement country representatives and NGOs are invited to attend these meetings.

Each year, UNHCR country offices undertake an exercise of proactive planning for resettlement which is linked to the Country Operations Planning cycle. This involves the identification and assessment of resettlement needs in all field operations. Various tools have been developed by UNHCR to identify the protection needs of refugees in the field and can be used to determine the likely number of refugees in need of resettlement; e.g. the Heightened Risk Identification Tool.

The results of this process are reported in the *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs*, 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. This document is shared with the resettlement countries in the lead-up to the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) held in Geneva. Furthermore, the document allows UNHCR to chart the projected global resettlement needs and its capacity to address those needs; that is, where reasonably possible, the resource and other challenges that impact resettlement delivery are reflected in UNHCR's ability and capacity to deliver resettlement outcomes. It therefore provides the main reference document for UNHCR's discussions with resettlement states to support global resettlement operations and budget planning.

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

³ *The concept of diversity mainstreaming implies that 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.*

discussions serves to direct attention to specific refugee populations in priority need of resettlement.

Separate bilateral meetings are normally held outside the ATRC 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.

Do states decide who is selected for resettlement?

Resettlement states determine the size and composition of their resettlement programmes. The decision as to who is granted resettlement admission rests with the state. 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. The UNHCR assessment of global resettlement needs and priorities assists resettlement states in targeting their programmes. Furthermore, UNHCR engages in bilateral discussions with states to identify specific needs which could be met by the state. Indeed, 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. States assess the case submissions and decide whether or not to grant resettlement. States make the decision on admissibility according to their policies, laws and migration regulations. A number of resettlement states also have mechanisms in place to select individuals for resettlement without the direct involvement of UNHCR.

How quickly must states make decisions?

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.

UNHCR recognizes that different priorities should be used to help manage specific resettlement needs. Emergency cases, which typically involve immediate life-threatening situations, are expected to depart for resettlement within a period not exceeding five 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 operationalized in 2008 the concept of evacuation transit facilities to provide temporary safe haven for refugees pending final resettlement to a third country. The first evacuation platform opened in Romania in 2008 and a second opened in the Philippines in 2009. Further initiatives in other regions of the world are being explored.

Does UNHCR address fraud and security concerns?

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, whilst avoiding the erosion of long-standing refugee protection principles. Ideally, systems that protect the integrity of the resettlement process also serve to protect refugees.

It is in the interest of all parties involved in resettlement to ensure that fraudulent claims and/or 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. The refugee definition, properly applied, leads to exclusion of people responsible for serious criminal, including terrorist, acts.⁴

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. This officer should be a member of UNHCR's protection staff.

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 resettlement. Exclusion assessments are also conducted at both the RSD and resettlement stages. 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.⁵ 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.

These processes are documented and carried out in a way which seeks to insulate them from and address 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.

⁴ See Article 1(F) of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees.

⁵ *Guidelines on International Protection: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3f7d48514.pdf>

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.

Is integration potential a criterion for resettlement?

According to UNHCR and its Executive Committee member states, the focus of resettlement is to ensure international protection for refugees most in need. That is, the primary purpose of resettlement must always be the provision of individual protection for those refugees who cannot be provided with adequate protection in the country of asylum. It is also acknowledged that resettlement can provide a durable solution and a tool for burden and responsibility sharing and, used strategically, can create opportunities for comprehensive solutions to refugee situations. 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 considerations of integration from assessments that are related to concerns about public security.

In selecting refugees for resettlement, UNHCR urges resettlement states not to use integration potential and other discriminatory 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 integration of refugees in a country of resettlement is therefore a separate consideration which involves the refugees' adaptation and active participation in the new society. 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. Willingness is required to welcome refugees and support them through public and private institutions, granting a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements and finally providing the possibility of naturalization. So too, refugees must abide by the laws and adapt to the customs and lifestyle of their adopted country whilst 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.

Discussions at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, hosted by UNHCR in Geneva, have in recent years posed the suggestion that discussion of the integration potential of refugees might usefully move forward to a focus on the integration capacity of resettlement states. As this suggestion acknowledges, the responsibility rests on receiving countries to ensure access to necessary support services in place to facilitate integration of arriving refugees.⁶

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, integration is thus 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. It should also carry with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country.⁷

Integrating resettled refugees is beneficial for both the refugees and the state. Through integration, resettled refugees become independent and productive participants of society. This, in turn, 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. It is also important to have programmes in place to provide cultural orientation as well as manage the expectations of refugees prior to and after their arrival in the resettlement country. This will ease the process of adjustment to the new society and foster a positive attitude toward integration. It is equally important to provide for the possibility of and support for the reunification of family members who were separated by the refugee experience and unable to travel together for resettlement.

The success of integration programmes remains mostly dependent on the political will and commitment of the resettlement country, and the availability of human and financial resources governments allocate to such programmes.

What role do NGOs have in refugee resettlement?

UNHCR views its non-governmental organization (NGO) partners as strategic partners, not implementing ones. 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.

Pursuant to the Agenda for Protection it is accepted that, given the specific areas of expertise and knowledge of refugee populations, there is a role for NGOs to play in supplementing UNHCR's core role in facilitating many aspects of the resettlement process. The Agenda for Protection explicitly states that UNHCR is to continue to strengthen partnerships for protection and awareness raising with NGOs and that

⁶ UNHCR launched an *Integration Initiative* in 1991. *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, issued in October 2002 together with the *Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST)*, an Australian NGO, is an important outcome of this initiative. It sets out 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.

⁷ *Resettlement Handbook*, UNHCR, November 2004

UNHCR and NGOs are to intensify their cooperation to identify and address protection problems, especially where the latter have a protection presence.

The importance of partnership in the resettlement process has been highlighted many times in the past and the significant role played by NGOs in providing resettlement services and contributing to successful resettlement has in particular been clearly acknowledged. Indeed, an important role of NGOs builds public support for resettlement and underpins the integration of resettled refugees.

In recent years, some NGOs have shown an increasing interest in becoming even more deeply involved in the identification and processing of refugees in countries of asylum. UNHCR welcomes this interest, particularly as certain NGOs are well placed to make an important contribution to the identification of vulnerable individuals and refugees facing specific protection problems.

UNHCR continues to strengthen its partnership with NGOs to support resettlement activities. This includes 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, sub-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, NGOs that are implementing partners of UNHCR have a key role to play to bring to UNHCR's attention refugees and stateless people who might be in need of this solution given their protection needs. This applies in particular to all implementing partners for projects in medical assistance, social/legal counselling and support. 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.

What about the family members of resettled refugees?

Ideally, all close family members and dependants should be resettled together to preserve the unity of the family. Unfortunately, it is 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. Indeed, a number of states have special programmes to facilitate family reunification of refugees without requiring the direct involvement of UNHCR. It is, after all, a state responsibility to uphold the principle of family unity.

Nevertheless, UNHCR has a responsibility, as part of its mandate to protect refugees, to promote and facilitate the reunification of refugee families. This means they should assist 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.

Who funds the refugee resettlement programmes?

Refugee resettlement programmes are essentially funded by states. In certain situations, such as new/emerging resettlement countries in Latin America, UNHCR provides financial and technical support by way of contributions from donor states. However, in most cases, UNHCR would consider it a requirement that states fund their respective programmes. Resettlement countries are therefore expected to cover the costs associated with resettlement, such as: interview/selection missions, 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.⁸ However, as with all new/emerging resettlement countries, UNHCR and other key stakeholders (including, in certain situations, other resettlement countries) would be able to provide specialized guidance and support.

What are the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement?

The Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) started in 1995. This is an annual event that provides an important vehicle for strengthened 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 objectives. 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. The ATCR involve government representatives from resettlement states, non-governmental organizations involved in refugee resettlement, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR. As part of UNHCR's global strategy to broaden the base on resettlement, the ATCR has been open to observers from potential/emerging resettlement states as well as to states interested in the resettlement process. At the 2009 ATCR, observer delegations in attendance included Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Japan, Luxembourg, Philippines, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Spain.

Historical framework

The recommendations arising from the 1995 UNHCR Evaluation Report on Resettlement Activities highlighted the need to improve the dialogue and cooperation between UNHCR and all partners involved in resettlement. The report called upon UNHCR to establish formal mechanisms of systematic consultation with these partners. On the basis of these recommendations, a Working Group on Resettlement was established in June 1995, involving the participation of the 10 traditional resettlement countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States) to discuss their

⁸ *An outline of these various activities can be found in the country chapters of the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (Nov. 2004 ed.) as well as the UNHCR Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees.*

annual refugee resettlement quota. At the same time, a series of informal consultations with NGOs was organized in Canada, Europe, the Nordic countries and the US to incorporate NGOs' views in the overall resettlement consultation process.

The first formal consultations with governments and NGOs were convened by UNHCR in October 1995 in Geneva. The consultations were subsequently convened on a yearly basis, evolving as the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement.

Format

Initially, the consultations were convened in separate sessions. The modalities for a more effective and integrated consultation process were strengthened in the following years. The ATCR in 2000 marked a significant achievement when the 10 traditional resettlement countries agreed to the full participation of eight emerging resettlement countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Ireland, Spain and Iceland) as well as the inclusion of NGOs to jointly focus upon key issues of mutual concern to all participants.

Rationale

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.








Between the yearly ATCR are two Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) meetings, one in October and the other in March. The WGR in the past was only open to resettlement states, IOM and UNHCR; however, in recent years moves have supported the involvement of NGOs in the WGR 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 chair the ATCR on a rotating basis. The chair period is usually for one year, but occasionally extended for an additional year. The ATCR process calls on participating states to express an interest to assume the chair. The chairship is complemented by an NGO focal person, 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.

What are useful references on refugee resettlement?

The following can be found on Refworld (<http://www.refworld.org>):

-  *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook* (2004)
-  *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration* (2002)
-  The Strategic Use of Resettlement, A Discussion Paper Prepared by the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR/03/04.Rev3)
-  Progress Report on Resettlement; Excom Standing Committee document EC/54/SC/CRP.10, dated 7 June 2004
-  Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement; High Commissioner's Forum document (FORUM/2004/6), 16 September 2004
-  Making Comprehensive Approaches to Resolving Refugee Problems More Systematic; High Commissioner's Forum (FORUM/2004/7), 16 September 2004
-  Report on the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (2005-2008)