

# **NEW ISSUES IN REFUGEE RESEARCH**

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## **A Socio-Economic Review of Japan's Resettlement Pilot Project**

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## **A Socio-Economic Review of Japan's Resettlement Pilot Project**

### **Executive Summary**

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Resettlement provides refugees in need the invaluable opportunity to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Although no country is required to resettle refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) calls on more countries to participate in resettlement, as the number of refugees in need of third country resettlement far outstrips the availability of these places. In 2010 the Government of Japan responded by establishing a Resettlement Pilot Project to become the first Asian resettlement state.

Established under a Cabinet Agreement, the focus of the pilot was to admit 30 refugees a year, focusing on individuals who had the ability to adjust to life in Japan and were likely to be able to support their families through employment. Over the five years of the pilot, 18 families totaling 86 individuals were resettled to Japan from camps in Thailand. The Pilot Project was carefully planned, and closely monitored. At the end of the Pilot phase the government announced their commitment to continue with resettlement, and to establish a regular Resettlement Programme starting in 2015.

As the end of the pilot project is an opportune time to review the implementation of resettlement to Japan, UNHCR Tokyo has undertaken this socio-economic study with a view to assessing lessons learned and making recommendations for the formal Resettlement programme. As the intention of all stakeholders in Japan is to improve the programme, it is hoped that this study will contribute to constructive discussion about revisions. The study is based on reviews of relevant documents; interviews with stakeholders, and most crucially, detailed interviews with all of the resettled families.

The support offered under the Japanese Resettlement Pilot Project was structured in three phases: pre-departure orientation and training; an initial year of orientation, settlement and income support; and continuous assistance offered as required after the initial year. The overall emphasis was on assisting the refugees to become financially self-reliant. The first year was divided into two parts, the first half of which was the Settlement Support Programme offered at a Resettlement Centre. The Settlement Support Programme included immediate post-arrival checks and orientation, after which the adults received an established curriculum of Japanese language classes, guidance on life in Japan, and vocational counselling including introductions to prospective employers. Children also learned Japanese. After this six-month period, the resettled refugees moved to their new settlement city, with the children registering in school, and the adults beginning vocational training at their selected place of employment. After the initial year, the resettled refugees were expected to be self-reliant, however continuous support was provided as necessary.

Challenges were faced and lessons were learned over the course of the pilot and the Government of Japan and its implementing partners have been flexible in making changes in to the settlement support provided as problems arose and needs were identified. The content of the guidance provided in the Resettlement Centre, the selection of employers and settlement cities, the content of the on-the-job vocational training, the possibility of continuous language training and the nature of the on-going support have all evolved based on the experiences from the first years of the pilot project.

Overall, the Japanese Resettlement Pilot Project as outlined in the Cabinet Agreement and the Implementation Decision was effectively and successfully delivered. Responsible entities met their obligations, and the resettled refugees received the planned and budgeted support and services. The necessary human and financial resources were made available, and additional resources were sought as required to meet needs as they arose. However, because of the lack of a clear strategy for ending support to the resettled refugees, it is not certain that adequate budget will be available to meet the needs in the future.

Refugees have largely been successfully integrated into the Japanese economy, and are managing in their new homes and communities. Almost all of the adults are employed, and all but one of the resettled families is meeting their economic needs solely through their own employment. They feel safe in their new homes, and satisfied with their children's schooling. However, the refugees also report feeling insecure about their financial stability, and often exhausted by the realities of the daily stresses of life as low-income residents in Japan. Refugees face high cost of living and long commutes to work six days a week, and report that they have little time for family or social life. It can be concluded that the refugees are indeed economically integrated into the lifestyle of Japanese working-class families and share many of the same problems faced by the Japanese.

However, the refugees report that their major difficulty, even after as much as five years in Japan, remains the Japanese language. Their limited Japanese language skills hamper their ability to develop social networks beyond their ethnic community, and their ability to engage in Japanese life. Lacking time, financial resources, and language skills, the resettled adults have yet to feel truly at home in Japan. On a positive note, the children are adapting more quickly, and in common with resettled refugees everywhere, the refugees' main hope is that their children will have better futures.

Overall therefore, the refugees are well on their way towards economic integration, but social integration is a much longer path. Without public awareness about resettlement, it is difficult to build a welcoming environment, and yet a welcoming environment is crucial to helping refugees restore their faith in others, and enable them to develop friendships and build informal networks. Networks are important, not just for day-to-day support, but also for enhancing access to employment opportunities, recreation, and participation in public life. Looking forward, a major challenge for Japan will continue to be fostering a welcoming environment, and assisting the resettled refugees to integrate socially.

### **Recommendations to the Government of Japan:**

#### *Recommendations on the Implementation of the Resettlement Programme*

- a) Introduce greater flexibility into the Resettlement Programme structure, to take into consideration the possibility of supporting a longer period of language training, while phasing in employment.
- b) Ease the emphasis on self-reliance and be open to different possibilities for the refugees' longer-term path to self-sufficiency.
- c) Introduce broader and earlier engagement of settlement cities, and involve the prefectures to make more effective use of resources and to encourage broader support for the Resettlement Programme.
- d) Consider the allocation of money directly to the local authorities to ensure services are offered equally by all settlement cities, and support better coordination between stakeholders.

- e) Engage the ethnic community, civil society and local NGOs more actively.
- f) Shift the strict focus from employment to also take into account the availability of local services and the presence of ethnic community supports when choosing a settlement city.
- g) Establish a clear transition plan for when the specific support offered by the government to the resettled refugees should end.
- h) Entrench resettlement in a comprehensive legislative and policy framework.
- i) Designate a lead ministry or agency for the Resettlement Programme.
- j) Establish a public information strategy to raise awareness about the Resettlement Programme.
- k) Move towards selecting refugees based on humanitarian need, rather than on the ability to become self-reliant.

*Recommendations for Encouraging the Resettled Refugees' Independence*

- a) Ensure refugees are informed of other sources of assistance and support available from NGOs, volunteers and local authorities, and are assisted to access them.
- b) Consider providing further supports for the education and training of the resettled refugees.
- c) Extend support for cultural activities to allow resettled refugees to maintain their religious and ethnic activities, and preserve their mother tongue.
- d) Promote the acquisition of permanent residency and naturalization, and ease the requirements to qualify.

## **1. Introduction**

Through resettlement, States offer refugees protection, a secure legal status, renewed hope, and the opportunity and support to rebuild their lives in their new communities. Alongside voluntary repatriation and local integration, resettlement to a third country offers refugees a durable solution to their protection needs. Resettlement is also a responsibility-sharing mechanism, through which States demonstrate international solidarity to refugee-hosting countries by offering permanent protection to refugees outside their territories. No State is obliged to participate in resettlement, but UNHCR calls on more countries to participate in resettlement, as the number of refugees in need of third country resettlement far outstrips the availability of these places.

In December 2008, the Government of Japan answered the call, and announced their commitment to establish a Resettlement Pilot Project, becoming the first resettlement state in Asia. Under the terms of the Cabinet Agreement (*kakugiryokai*) establishing the initial three-year pilot, 30 Myanmar refugees from Thailand were to be admitted annually from 2010 to 2012. Based on the assessment of these three years, the pilot was extended until 2014 and commitments were made to improve the implementation. Ultimately 86 refugees, comprising 18 families, were actually resettled to Japan during the period 2010-2014 (27 refugees in 2010, 18 each in 2011 and 2013, and 23 refugees in 2014).



The *Detailed Implementation Arrangements for the Admission of Refugees through a Pilot Resettlement Project* (hereafter the Implementation Decision)<sup>1</sup> was revised twice during the pilot phase, to expand the selection criteria and target populations, while keeping the overall focus on refugees likely to be able to hold a job and adapt to life in Japan. The basic structure of the implementation of the settlement support also remained constant, comprised of a three to four week period of pre-departure training, an initial 180-day Settlement Support Programme offered in the Resettlement Centre located in Tokyo, followed by another 180 days of Workplace Adaptability Training (*Shokuba tekiou kunren*, henceforth referred to as on-the-job vocational training) and local settlement support when the families moved into their settlement cities. After the initial year in Japan, ongoing support is offered as necessary, and the refugees' Japanese language level and their living conditions continue to be monitored every six months.

In 2012 the government of Japan established the Resettlement Expert Council to assess the pilot project, and make recommendations for the future. Taking the recommendations made by the Council's report into consideration, the Government of Japan declared the Japanese involvement with resettlement to be significant, although recognizing the need for further monitoring and flexibility to changes, and announced the establishment of a formal resettlement programme beginning in 2015.

As the end of the pilot project is an opportune time to review the implementation of resettlement to Japan, UNHCR Tokyo has undertaken this socio-economic study with a view to assessing lessons learned and contributing constructive recommendations for the formal resettlement programme to be implemented from 2015. The measure of *effective* resettlement is not only how many refugees in need of resettlement have access to this solution each year, but also how well they are received and supported in the process of becoming full participants in their new country.

Based on careful readings of official documents, interviews with relevant stakeholders and most importantly, with the resettled refugees, this study assesses progress towards the establishment of a sustainable resettlement programme, which provides refugees the legal status, and material and social support to ensure that resettlement provides them a truly durable solution in Japan.

## **1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of the review is to:

- Study and review the design and the implementation of the Resettlement Pilot Project, taking into account its rationale, objectives, opportunities and constraints;
- Gauge the appropriateness and effectiveness of the mechanisms established and the support offered in achieving the overall goal of a durable solution for resettled refugees in Japan, with a particular focus on the economic and social integration of the resettled refugees;
- Identify the lessons learned, good practices, gaps and constraints in the overall integration programme; and

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<sup>1</sup> In Japanese: Daisangoku teijyu ni yoru nanmin ukeire ni kansuru pilot case jisshi no gutaiteki shochi ni tsuite

- Provide recommendations to enhance efficiency of the programme, and strengthen the fundamentals for establishing a sustainable Resettlement Programme.

Although recognizing that the needs and skills refugees arrive with have an impact on the settlement support they require, this study does not examine the selection process, focusing instead on the socio-economic outcomes of the support offered to the refugees admitted to Japan, and recommendations for improving these outcomes.

## **1.2 Structure**

This introductory section continues with a summary of the methodology, including a brief overview of the background of the resettled refugees. The next section presents the essential elements required to establish a Resettlement Programme, as outlined by UNHCR, and sets out the migration context in Japan. Section Three presents the official Japanese government documents, under which the Resettlement Pilot Project is established, followed by Section Four's overview of the technical aspects of the implementation of the Pilot Project. The next two sections present the information gathered from analyzing the official documents, as well as from interviews with the stakeholders and resettled refugees, to analyze the outcome of the implementation. Specifically, Section Five focuses on the content of the settlement support offered to the resettled refugees, while Section Six analyzes the current socio-economic status of the resettled refugees after completing the Settlement Support Programme<sup>2</sup> and the on-the-job vocational training. Section Seven offers concluding comments, lessons learned and recommendations. The final section of Appendices includes definitions, lists of stakeholders consulted, the resettled refugees' interview guide, and a list of references.

## **1.3 Methodology**

This socio-economic study covers the refugees resettled within the framework of the Resettlement Pilot Project from 2010 to 2014. The methodology included desk review of relevant documents, interviews with key stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the pilot project, and, most crucially, detailed consultations with the resettled refugees themselves. The research for this report was conducted between December 2014 and February 2015.

The study's two researchers are Barbara Treviranus and Sayaka Osanami Törngren. Ms. Treviranus is a resettlement professional, with years of experience both in developing international resettlement and integration policies, and implementing resettlement programmes. Ms. Osanami Törngren is a Ph.D. in Ethnic and Migration Studies, who is familiar with the Japanese specific context and has been involved in a previous research project on the Resettlement Programme in Japan.

### **1.3.1 Relevant document review**

The relevant official and public documents that were studied included the Cabinet Agreement, the Implementation Decisions, and the minutes and final report of the Resettlement Expert

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<sup>2</sup> "Settlement Support Programme" refers specifically to the 180 days at the Resettlement Centre, while the general term settlement support refers to the overall support offered to the refugees as outlined in the Cabinet Agreement and Implementation Decision.

Council. International guidance materials on resettlement and integration issues produced by UNHCR and other resettlement actors were also consulted, as were academic studies assessing previous resettlement movements, including reviews of the adaptation of Indochinese refugees in Japan.

Domestic studies of the Resettlement Pilot Project were reviewed carefully, including the report of the Resettlement Expert Council, and the independent study conducted by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, which proposed an alternative model for a better resettlement programme in Japan. The Sasakawa Foundation study drew on the knowledge of experts, but did not include interviews with the resettled refugees. The Resettlement Expert Council report was based on discussions with relevant stakeholders at the Council meetings, and arranged visits made to the resettled refugees in their own settlement cities.

The websites of the relevant Ministries, Agency, and implementation partners were consulted, and handouts provided by the stakeholders during the interviews were also studied carefully.

### **1.3.2 Interviews with stakeholders**

The stakeholders interviewed included national and local government representatives, staff involved in implementing the project, and members of international organizations and various civil society organizations. Among those interviewed were representatives from the relevant Ministries and Agencies, Members of Parliament, staff from some of the local cities where resettled refugees reside, as well as a few school teachers, local volunteers and employers. Staff members of Refugee Assistance Headquarters (RHQ), the implementing agency contracted to deliver the settlement support, provided crucial input. This included Japanese language teachers and local settlement supporters.

The stakeholder interviews were conducted during the period of December 2014 to February 2015. The interviews were conducted in English and Japanese, and were usually one to two hours in length. For the majority of the interviews both researchers (Treviranus and Osanami Törngren) were present. The list of stakeholder organizations interviewed can be found in the appendix. The names of individuals participating in the interviews are not listed in order to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

### **1.3.3 Interviews with resettled refugees**

The input considered most crucial to the study was that of the resettled refugees themselves. Interviews with the resettled refugees were conducted mid-January to mid-February 2015, and usually took place in the family's apartment. The interviewer (Sayaka Osanami Törngren) visited the homes of the resettled refugees together with a Karen/Burmese interpreter. Since 2010, a total of 18 families have arrived in Japan as resettled refugees, and all these families participated in the study voluntarily. The interview guide can be found in the appendix.

The refugees arrived in four groups - in the fall of 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014. Due to a variety of factors, the refugees initially selected in 2012 did not accept the offer of resettlement to Japan, and in response the selection criteria were revised slightly to broaden the camps from which refugees were referred.

The chart below lists the number of families that were resettled to Japan each year of the pilot and their city of residence at the time of this study. Only refugees who arrived in 2010 moved from their original settlement city. After two years in Suzuka, two families decided to move to Shiki and Misato in Saitama Prefecture in 2013, citing a desire to be closer to members of their ethnic community, and to services available centrally. The families in Togane moved to Tokyo directly after the 180 day on-the-job-training period ended in 2011, citing dissatisfaction with their living conditions and employment.

<b>Arrival year</b>	<b>2010 (5 families)</b>	<b>2011 (4 families)</b>	<b>2013 (4 families)</b>	<b>2014 (5 families)</b>
Initial settlement city	Suzuka, Mie (3 families) Togane, Chiba (2 families)	Misato, Saitama (all 4 families)	Kasukabe, Saitama (all 4 families)	Chiba, Chiba (all 5 families)
Current settlement city	1 family each: Suzuka, Mie Misato, Saitama Shiki, Saitama Edogawa Ward, Tokyo Higashimurayama City, Tokyo	Misato, Saitama (all 4 families)	Kasukabe, Saitama (all 4 families)	Chiba, Chiba (all 5 families)

The oldest of the 36 adults was born in 1960 and the youngest in 1993. Six are native Burmese speakers and the remaining are Karen speakers. Although the majority of the native Karen speakers only speak Karen, some are also fluent in Burmese, and others can understand Burmese to the extent that daily conversation and communication is not a problem. The educational background of the resettled varies from no schooling to ten years of education. A handful stated during the interviews that they were illiterate before coming to Japan. Half of the resettled refugees are Christian and the other half are Buddhist. The Christians further identified specific denominations, including Orthodox and Catholic.

The adult refugees are engaged in various types of service and industrial work. The largest family has 6 children, one of which was born in Japan. With the exception of pre-school age children kept at home by the mothers that are not working, all of the children are enrolled either in daycare, elementary school (1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade), middle school (7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> grade) or high school. The three older children attend night-time middle school or high school.

A Japanese-Karen/Burmese interpreter accompanied the interviewer to ensure that communication was not hampered, and to allow the resettled refugees to express their opinions in their mother tongue. The whole family was present for most of the interviews, although some children were not home due to school activities and other engagements. Two older children were also interviewed separately. The interviews normally lasted for about (90 minutes). The interviewer took care to ensure that the refugees understood that individual responses would be kept confidential and the results would be analyzed and used in the aggregate only, and only for the purposes of this review. The interviews were recorded only when the interviewees consented. A UNHCR intern also attended most of the interviews.

The interviewer presented herself as a researcher working for UNHCR and explained the objective and the purpose of the study. Although the interview results give no reason to suspect that the interview subjects were not being truthful and candid in their responses, the

authors of this report cannot ignore the possibility of interviewer effect.<sup>3</sup> Keeping in mind therefore that interview results are always contextual, the analysis is based on the responses given by the resettled refugees during the interviews.

## **2. Setting the context**

Understanding the international and domestic context is important to assessing the implementation of a resettlement programme. This section presents the essential elements required to implement a resettlement programme as identified by UNHCR, and sets out the constraints and opportunities as presented by Japan's immigration, refugee protection and integration policies and experiences. The section concludes with an overview of the recommendations from the assessments of the integration experiences of the Indochinese refugees admitted to Japan, which served as lessons learned in developing the Resettlement Pilot Project.

### **2.1 The essential elements of a Resettlement Programme**

UNHCR defines resettlement as:

*the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country (UNHCR, 2011).*

By definition, resettlement requires states to ensure that individuals resettled are allocated status and rights equivalent to those of refugees, that their basic needs are met, and that they have access to required services. To be truly a durable solution, resettlement must facilitate their integration into their new community. Integration is a dynamic two-way process that puts demands on *both* the refugees and the receiving community to make adjustments to encourage inclusion. Integration requires that receiving states and civil society create a welcoming environment which supports refugees to achieve long-term stability, including fostering a sense of belonging, and encouraging participation in their new communities. However, it is recognized internationally that such societal changes are very long-term goals, particularly for states such as Japan, which have highly ethnically homogeneous populations, limited experience with immigrants, and no defined integration strategy.

As the international agency responsible for protecting refugees and searching for durable solutions for them, UNHCR welcomes the establishment of resettlement programmes by states that have put the required elements in place. To encourage more countries to participate in offering resettlement, established Resettlement States also actively share their best

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<sup>3</sup> Interviewer effect is any impact on data gathered from interviewing people that is caused by interviewees' modifying their opinions or behavior in order not to disappoint the researcher with the answers they give – therefore giving answers closer to what they believe the researcher wants to hear, rather than giving their own opinions. It is found that response bias and measurement error are more common in contexts where the interviewer and the interviewee's race, ethnic and social background are different.

practices with new states through visits and twinning arrangements. These exchanges highlight various stages of the resettlement process from case selection through settlement and integration. In preparation for establishing its own programme, the Government of Japan actively pursued opportunities to visit other resettlement countries, and observe various models of implementing post-arrival assistance.

Although there is no single formula for a new resettlement state to follow, Japan and other states new to resettlement benefit from the considerable guidance developed by states, participating NGOs and UNHCR on essential elements to provide, and good practices to follow, to enable resettled refugees to get a good start in settling in their new countries. Broad conditions required for successful resettlement and critical issues to be considered in the planning process are outlined in detail in the 2002 handbook: *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* (UNHCR 2002). These requirements for new resettlement states are further summarized in the UNHCR guidance document, *The Integration of Resettled Refugees: Essentials for Establishing a Resettlement Programme and Fundamentals for Sustainable Resettlement Programmes* (2013 (a)). The following sections outline these requirements, as they provide a useful overview against which the elements of the Japanese Resettlement Programme can be assessed.

Each country administers their programme according to their local circumstances, but every new programme requires considerable advance planning and preparation. This includes the preparation of:

- 1) legislation and policy instruments to ensure a secure legal status and the allocation of rights,
- 2) stakeholder consultation and collaboration, and
- 3) an integration programme to deliver required supports and ensure access to essential services (UNHCR, 2013 (a)).

### **2.1.1 Legislative and policy instruments**

Resettlement States must establish a legal mechanism to admit refugees, ensuring that they are provided a secure legal status that offers the same protections as Convention refugee status, and access to permanent residence and the possibility of acquiring citizenship. States have an obligation under the Convention to speed up access to citizenship for refugees. Recognizing the importance of reacquiring a nationality, states are especially encouraged to ensure that there are no unreasonable barriers to permanent residence and citizenship, whatever the legal status provided (UNHCR, 2013 (a)).

States must also set their resettlement criteria and procedures. As the over-arching goal of resettlement is to offer protection and a durable solution to refugees on the basis of need, 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 discriminatory criteria undermine the needs-based approach to resettlement, creating inequalities and protection gaps, and limiting the access of refugees most at risk, UNHCR, 2013 (b). There is international evidence that even the most vulnerable and disadvantaged refugees can successfully integrate over time with the right support. States are therefore encouraged to be responsive to UNHCR's humanitarian selection criteria focusing on those most at need, but it is recognized that states establishing a new resettlement programme might *initially* set more restrictive criteria. As resettlement programmes become established and

grow in size, however, the expectation is that the selection criteria will reflect the international humanitarian priorities (UNHCR, 2013 (a)).

### **2.1.2 Stakeholder consultation and collaboration**

As new residents, resettled refugees will interact with all levels of government and civil society, and require a wide range of services. Consultation and collaboration with all the affected ministries, departments, services and providers is essential before welcoming resettled refugees. This includes the central, regional and local governments, the providers of specialized services to be provided to the resettled refugees as well as the providers of mainstream services, and ideally, also civil society representatives including residents of the same ethnic groups as those being resettled (UNHCR, 2013 (a)).

Although the decision to resettle refugees is a national responsibility, it is usually the local authorities that are responsible for the ongoing mainstream supports required by new residents, and their engagement is particularly crucial.

Not only is detailed advance planning required, but adaptations and improvements must be made over time to ensure that the programmes are responsive to the needs of the resettled refugees, supporting them sufficiently to reach their potential as productive citizens.

### **2.1.3 Integration programme**

Establishing an integration programme requires the dedication of adequate resources, and a clear division of responsibilities between partners. Specialized supports are required to address the initial needs of resettled refugees, followed by transition to accessing the same mainstream services provided to other residents. Basic required elements identified in *The Integration of Resettled Refugees: Essentials for Establishing a Resettlement Programme and Fundamentals for Sustainable Resettlement Programmes* include:

- Pre-departure preparations: Courses or brochures to prepare refugees for moving to their new countries, orientation of the receiving community stakeholders.
- Initial reception: Airport reception, provision of documentation, food, initial housing, clothing and urgent health care.
- Interpretation/translation: During reception and orientation sessions, and appointments with service providers.
- Orientation and documentation: Orientation to the community, location of basic services, safety provisions and emergency services, registration for government identification and services, opening a bank account, overview of rights and responsibilities, overview of the integration programme, etc.
- Income support: Allowance or in-kind support for housing, food, clothing, transportation, furniture, household supplies, and other basic needs, with transition to mainstream services including national public assistance support if required.
- Language training: Accessible language classes geared to the abilities and needs of the refugees.
- Housing: Assistance to locate safe, affordable, accessible housing in proximity to public transit, services, employment, education, interpreters, and ethnic support networks.
- Employment support: Assessment of skills, experiences, and qualifications, employment readiness training, counselling and job search support.

- Education and training: School registration for children, educational upgrading for adults, recognition of vocational and professional qualifications.
- Health Care: Screening, vaccinations, preventative care and access to specialized providers as required.
- Services to meet specific needs: As required for survivors of torture, women or children at risk, older refugees, refugees with disabilities, etc.
- Social support: Counselling and referral to relevant agencies, advocacy and community outreach, family reunification and legal support, transition to mainstream services (UNHCR, 2013 (a)).

These elements of material and social support are essential to assisting refugees to meet their daily needs, but also to assisting them to feel safe, secure and comfortable in their new homes and communities.

#### **2.1.4 Sustaining resettlement: a long-term national integration strategy**

Although the essential elements outlined above are sufficient to initially establish a Resettlement Programme, UNHCR also identifies three further fundamentals required to ensure that states are able to sustain their resettlement programmes in the long-term: entrenching resettlement in legislation and policy instruments; ensuring that the integration programme is responsive and supported by consultation and collaboration; and most crucially, fostering supportive, hospitable and welcoming communities (UNHCR, 2013 (a)).

While the societal changes required for fully integrating refugees and other foreigners are long-term goals, resettlement countries recognize the importance of not only preparing the refugees for their new lives, but also raising awareness among the public, and engaging civil society to ensure that refugees are welcomed in their new communities.

To build support among their populations for the changes that resettlement and other forms of immigration bring, it is important for states to develop a broader long-term strategy to respond to increasing societal diversity. States have made their greatest gains in integration through anti-discrimination policies. Broader national strategies focusing on combating racism and discrimination, and promoting equality of access to public services facilitate measures to support refugee integration.

Fostering truly welcoming communities is among the most difficult aspect of integrating refugees, one that resettlement states need to address on an on-going basis. The environment refugees face in their neighbourhoods, workplaces, and schools have a significant impact on their capacity to develop support networks, and rebuild their lives. Awareness-raising activities, media campaigns, and opportunities to meet resettled refugees are all important to engaging the public and winning their support. Established refugee and ethnic communities can play an important role as bridges to promote understanding.

Only through public support for resettled refugees will political support be sustained, and public support can only be nurtured through awareness and engagement. This is recognized as a particular challenge for Japan. As the country has become a leader in promoting the protection of refugees and vulnerable people overseas through generous donations to humanitarian relief and development programs around the world, enhanced efforts may be necessary to protect and provide for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants within its own borders.



## **2.2 Japan's immigration and refugee protection policies and experiences**

Integration occurs within a framework of national policies, and in a particular cultural context. Japan's policies and experiences related to refugees and immigrants are important factors in considering the constraints and opportunities for establishing a Resettlement Programme.

### **2.2.1 Japan's immigration and refugee protection policies**

Japan does not claim to be a country of immigration, and migration-related laws and policies have been developed recently. There have been positive changes, but international assessments of labour market mobility, family reunion, education, long-term residence, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination conclude that immigrants to Japan still face slightly unfavourable conditions for long-term societal integration.<sup>4</sup> The major issues are identified as the lack of anti-discrimination legislation, access to education, access to citizenship, and lack of political participation (Kondo & Yamawaki, 2014). This is the national context in which the Resettlement Programme has been implemented, and it must be recognized that these deterrents to societal integration are constraints facing the resettled refugees.

Japan's declining population since 2008 has accelerated the public and political attention on migration during the past seven years (Akashi, 2014). Even though migration has increased over the past three decades, limited consideration has been given to the integration of long-term immigrants. This may be since Japan's current focus is on temporary labour migration (Fujiwara et.al, 2014). Japan is very open to the admission of high-skilled migrants (Oishi, 2012), which is the main focus for the recruitment of foreign workers. By recruiting trainees, and issuing a long-term settlers permit (*teijyusha*) to Brazilians of Japanese descent, Japan does in practice also admit lower-skilled migrants. With an obligation to give vocational training, the trainee system provides residential permits to migrants for a limited number of years (usually three to five years) and has become a way of attracting labourers mainly from Asia for industries with labour shortages (Miyajima, 2014). Japanese-ancestry Brazilians are issued long-term settler status (*teijyusha*) after the revision of the immigration policy enacted in 1989, which permits second and third-generation descendants of Japanese emigrants to enter Japan without any restrictions on their economic activities or travel between the countries. The number of arrivals has increased significantly since 1990 (Kashiwazaki, 2013).

The post-war Japanese government's contribution to the international refugee situation has mainly been financial and logistical. Japan was one of the top donors to UNHCR in 2014, together with the United States, United Kingdom and the European Union. Japan became a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter the Refugee Convention) in 1981, and subsequently passed the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA). This accession coincided with the international call to resettle Indochinese "boat people", and Japan subsequently opened its doors to accept Indochinese refugees.

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<sup>4</sup> Japan ranks among the most restrictive of the countries assessed under the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) in 2010, and the only one whose legal system is unfavourable for fighting discrimination in society. Independent scholars and practitioners in migration law, education and anti-discrimination score each indicator based on the country's publicly available documents (Kondo & Yamawaki, 2014).

Under ICRRRA to date, approximately 630 asylum-seekers have been recognized as Convention refugees. In recent years, the number of asylum applications has increased considerably and in 2014, it reached a record high of 5'000. However, only 11 asylum-seekers were recognized as refugees in the same year (Ministry of Justice, 2015), which provoked criticisms that the recognition rate (approximately 0.2 % in 2014) was too low.

Another type of protection status may be granted to persons on humanitarian grounds, even though they do not meet the criteria of Convention refugees. Special permits have been issued since 1991, and around 2'500 persons have thus far been granted special permits (Yoshihara et al., 2013).

In addition, Japan grants humanitarian residence status based on a political decision through a Cabinet Agreement (*kakugi ryokai*). Acceptance of refugees based on a Cabinet Agreement can also be terminated by a government decision, in principle, since their admission is not based on an obligation under an international Convention or entrenched in Japanese law. The Indochinese refugees were the largest single group admitted under a Cabinet Agreement, and eventually approximately 11,300 Indochinese were granted a permit to stay in Japan between 1978 and 2006 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (MoFA, 2009). Assisting this group of refugees to adapt to life in the country gave Japan valuable resettlement experience. Refugees resettled under the Pilot Resettlement Project are admitted to Japan under conditions similar to those given to the Indochinese under this earlier Cabinet Agreement.

The legal status granted has an impact on services offered and rights extended. The Settlement Support Programme established for the Indochinese refugees included initial financial support if needed, and continuous settlement support. An adapted version of this Programme was offered to refugees resettled under the Pilot Project. Convention refugees recognized in Japan can also access a similar Settlement Support Programme, however those on humanitarian grounds are not eligible to receive this assistance. A refugee travel document permitting travel abroad is reserved only for Convention refugees, although resettled refugees, Indochinese refugees, and those admitted on humanitarian grounds are eligible for a re-entry permit to Japan (Cabinet Secretariat, 2008).

Holders of long-term residence permits can apply for permanent residence and naturalization after living in Japan for five years. Applicants must be of good conduct, demonstrate that they have sufficient assets or ability to make an independent living, and their permanent residence must be deemed to be in the interests of Japan. The actual decision-making when assessing applications is left to the discretion of the Ministry of Justice, as there are no definitions or specific standards in the law.<sup>5</sup> Under ICRRRA 61-2-11 (Cabinet Secretariat, 2008), the condition requiring applicants to have sufficient assets or ability to make an independent living is relaxed for Convention Refugees, in acknowledgment that refugees have more challenges in leading economically stable lives. This is in accordance with Article 34 of the Refugee Convention, which calls on States to facilitate the naturalization of refugees. However, this relaxed condition is not extended either to the Indochinese refugees or resettled refugees, or to those admitted on humanitarian grounds.

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<sup>5</sup> However, the Guidelines on Permanent Residence suggest that a person of good conduct "observes Japanese laws and his/her daily living as a resident does not invite any social criticisms," and that a person with sufficient assets or ability "does not financially depend on someone in the society in his daily life, and his/her assets or ability, etc. are assumed to continue to provide him/her with a stable basis of livelihood in the future" (Ministry of Justice 2006).

Furthermore, although those with long-term settler status (*teijusha*) including Convention refugees, resettled refugees, and Indochinese refugees, and some of those admitted on humanitarian grounds do have access to public assistance (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2004),<sup>6</sup> their right to access is not protected under the Public Assistance Law (*Seikatsuhogohou*) (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication). Under Article 23 of the Refugee Convention, States are required to provide refugees with the same treatment as nationals with respect to public relief and assistance, however Japan has not removed the citizenship requirement from the Public Assistance Law. In practice, those with long-term settler status (*teijusha*), and others without restrictions on their economic activities, have been granted public assistance when in financial need at the discretion of the local authorities (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2004). Nevertheless, access to public assistance by non-citizens is under debate in Japan, and the resettled refugees' right to receive public support to supplement their own income and resources is not protected by the law.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.2.2 Integration in the Japanese context**

Japan does not have an articulated national integration strategy, nor does it have a national anti-discrimination law. Although the word social integration (*shakai tougo*) exists in the Japanese language, integration is not a word commonly employed by the public administration. Instead, the government and policy makers use the word multicultural coexistence/co-living (*tabunka-kyosei*). Multicultural co-living is defined as “*people of differing nationalities or ethnicities living together as local community members through mutually accepting each other's cultural differences and striving after establishing an equal relationship*” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2006). Language training, education, housing, employment, access to medical care and social welfare are identified as important aspects of life with which foreign residents need support to be able to achieve multicultural co-living (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2006). Cities and local communities with a large foreign resident population are encouraged to establish a “multicultural co-living policy” and public services catering to the needs of the foreign residents.

The Japanese government does not define what social integration is, and therefore the Cabinet Agreements and Implementation Decisions use the words “adjust (*tekiou*)” and “settlement (*teichaku/teijyu*).”<sup>8</sup> These words are not defined in the official documents. The documents do mention that the settlement city and local community should make efforts to assist the resettled refugees,<sup>9</sup> but make no mention of raising the awareness of the broader public. The focus is on assisting the refugees to adjust and adapt to Japanese life, while acknowledging

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<sup>6</sup> In 1954, MoHLW declared in the notice “Implementation of Public Assistance to Foreigners in need” (*Seikatsu ni konkyu suru gaikokujin ni taisuru seikatsuhogo no sochini tsuite*), that permanent residents and holders of certain types of residence permits were eligible for public assistance. There was no change in the text of the Public Assistance Law.

<sup>7</sup> On July 18, 2014 the Supreme Court ruled that “foreigners who possess permanent residency in Japan” do not have the legal right to public assistance under the Public Assistance Law as they are not citizens. Court Case *Heisei 24 (Gyou Hi) Dai 45*. The ruling did not change the actual implementation of the public assistance program.

<sup>8</sup> In fact MoFA uses the word “integration” when translating the Japanese resettlement program (Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

<sup>9</sup> See section 3 for more details.

their cultural differences. That changes to Japanese society may be needed to respond to growing diversity is not yet part of the discussion.

Recognizing that there is still significant progress to be made (Kondo & Yamawaki, 2014), Japan's fledgling multi-cultural co-living policy is a positive step towards acknowledging that integration is a two-way process, and a promising demonstration of political support for further societal openness to change. Services created under the policy represented an opportunity for assisting the resettled refugees within their local communities.

### **2.3 Lessons learned from the integration of the Indochinese refugees**

As well as best practices from other resettlement countries, the Government of Japan also had its own experiences of assisting the 11'300 Indochinese refugees settled in Japan to draw on. Several studies and surveys have been conducted over the years on the adjustment of the Indochinese refugees. These include a UNHCR-commissioned study which had as an explicit objective identifying lessons learned in order to help inform and shape Japan's future resettlement of refugees (Kawakami et al., 2009), and a study on female Vietnamese refugees' adaptation to Japan conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2008).

Although Indochinese refugees are largely self-supporting, the two studies mentioned above highlighted their on-going challenges with communicating in the Japanese language. Overall, the studies conclude that inadequate language training received in the early stages of resettlement has created a long-lasting handicap for many of the Indochinese, trapping them in the lower socio-economic bracket of Japanese life. These two studies also identify the families' struggle to provide the financial means for their children's education. Despite the difficulties faced by the first generation, the second generation is fairly well integrated into Japanese society.

General recommendations made by the UNHCR study included the need to develop a comprehensive approach to resettlement, with the necessary budgetary provisions made at national, local, and civil society levels, and with an effective coordination mechanism, and continuous support. Also stressed was the need for family reunification rights, as a building block for integration, and the importance of regarding refugees not only as new members of the workforce, but as members of society who should be able to enjoy full rights and human dignity (Kawakami et al., 2009).

Wide-ranging specific recommendations were also made about the assistance strategies and partnerships, focusing largely on the need for more meaningful collaboration with local government authorities, and a community-oriented approach (Kawakami et al., 2009). The studies also highlight the overall lack of sufficient support systems for foreign residents of different cultures, such as "vocational training facilities free-of-charge, interpreter-aided training programs, Japanese language education facilities in local communities, and friendly counsellors who speak appropriate languages" as factors hampering the long-term social integration of the Indochinese refugees (IOM, 2008).

The recommendations made in these two studies and the documented integration experiences of the Indochinese refugees represent a great resource for the Japanese Government in developing the Resettlement Pilot Project and guiding their long-term programme.

### **3. Japan's Resettlement Pilot Design and Implementation**

This section outlines the design and implementation of Japan's Resettlement Pilot Project, highlighting the changes both in the official documents and the practical implementation over the course of the five-year pilot.

#### **3.1 The Cabinet Agreement and the Implementation Decision**

The Government of Japan's Cabinet Agreement of 16 December 2008 forms the basis for the admission of the resettled refugees, and the structure of the pilot project. The Inter-Ministerial Coordination Council for Refugee Issues (ICCR),<sup>10</sup> consisting of 13 ministries and agencies,<sup>11</sup> issued an Implementation Decision to outline the specific details on the admission and the settlement support to be provided under the pilot. Initially issued on 19 December 2008, the Implementation Decision was partially revised on both 29 March 2012 and 8 March 2013. A new Cabinet Agreement and Implementation Decision were issued 24 January 2014 to guide the implementation of the post-pilot phase.

Although the Cabinet Agreement does not specify overall objectives, the opening paragraph cites the value of resettlement and stipulates that Japan will take the measures outlined in the Agreement to respond to the refugee issues occurring in the Asia region:

*Admittance of refugees through third country resettlement is one of the durable solutions for refugees, together with repatriation and local integration in the first country of asylum. It is also seen as crucial from the perspective of sharing the burden of the refugee problem equally with international society, ICCR, 2008 (a).*

As quoted above, the Cabinet Agreement frames Japan's establishment of a Resettlement Programme as a commitment to responsibility sharing with the international community. In other official documents, the objective of the resettlement program is variously described as follows: *refugees as labour force and persons who can contribute to the local community, refugees as a contribution to multicultural co-living and accepting refugees represents a good example of international contribution* (e.g. ICCR 2014 (a): The 12<sup>th</sup> Resettlement Expert Council Meeting 2013). Domestically, the Resettlement Programme as a whole does not mention the needs of the resettled refugees, or frame involvement as a humanitarian contribution made by Japan, but focuses rather on refugees as persons who can contribute to their communities through their work. While it is important to highlight that refugees do indeed contribute to their new countries, this indicates the emphasis on self-reliance.

The Cabinet Agreement addresses four components of the Resettlement Programme: 1) admission, 2) eligibility criteria, 3) support for settlement, and 4) consideration for necessary measurement. The Implementation Decision fleshes out the practical details for delivering the Resettlement Pilot Project and settlement support. The following section presents these four

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<sup>10</sup> In Japanese: Nanmin taisaku renraku chousei kaigi.

<sup>11</sup> The 13 members of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Council for Refugee Issues are the Cabinet Secretariat, National Police Agency, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the Japan Coast Guard (ICCR (a).

components as written in the Cabinet Agreement, and outlines the content of the Implementation Decision related to each of these components.

Between them, the two guiding documents demonstrate that the Government of Japan carefully planned the Resettlement Pilot Project, taking into account the essential services and supports required to resettle refugees.

### **3.1.1 Admission of refugees through resettlement**

The first component the Cabinet Agreement addresses is the admission of refugees.

- (1) Concerned administrative agencies shall cooperate with one another for the purpose of the admission of refugees to Japan through a Pilot Resettlement Programme from fiscal year 2010.*
- (2) Concerned administrative agencies shall cooperate with each other in investigating and examining the degree of settlement of refugees admitted under the provision (1) above, and based on the results, shall consider the admission framework and other matters in the future (ICCR 2008 (a)).*

Resettled refugees receive the status of a long-term settler (*teijusha*) upon arrival in Japan. There are no restrictions on the economic activities that long-term settlers can undertake in Japan. The long-term settler status is “*granted to people who, in consideration of special circumstances, are authorized by the Minister of Justice to reside in Japan for a designated period of stay*” (Cabinet Secretariat, 2008). The resettled refugees receive the longest period of long-term resident status available, which was three years until 2013 and is five years since 2014.<sup>12</sup> Although this does fulfill the international expectation of being a relatively secure status, ideally resettled refugees would quickly be assisted to transition to permanent residence.

The Implementation Decision, 2008 (b), 2012, 2013, 2014 (c) specified that the Government of Japan was to conduct an evaluation of the Japanese language proficiency and living conditions of the resettled refugees every six months after entry into Japan for the purpose of properly understanding the status of the refugees' settlement and the implementation of the Pilot Resettlement Project. It was further specified that the results of this research were to be discussed at the ICCR, extending this council's tasks from discussing the coordination and implementation of settlement support provided to Convention refugees.

### **3.1.2 Eligibility criteria for refugees to resettle**

The second component spelled out in the Cabinet Agreement is the criteria for admission.

*Through the pilot project from the year 2010, Myanmarese refugees who are granted temporary asylum in Thailand fulfilling any of the following criteria may be admitted to Japan for the purpose of long-term residency:*

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<sup>12</sup> This was part of the change in the residency management enacted in July 2012, which introduced a system of Resident Cards and abolished the Alien Registration System. The five year permit is only given for certain specified professions and residence status such as professor, engineer, specialist in humanities and international business, spouse or child of Japanese national or permanent resident (Immigration Bureau of Japan 2012).

- (1) Individuals recognized by UNHCR to be in need of international protection, and recommends to Japan to provide protection*
- (2) Individuals with the ability to adjust to Japanese society, and with likelihood to obtain a job in order to maintaining his/her livelihood, and his/her spouse or child(ren) (ICCR, 2008 (a)).*

The eligibility criteria clearly state that the Government's focus is on offering refugees a durable solution and protection through supporting them to find employment and become self-reliant in Japan. However, this introduces a tension between the overall humanitarian objective of providing refugees in need of international protection the opportunity to rebuild their lives, and the focus on requiring selected refugees to demonstrate the ability to adjust to life in Japan, and become self-reliant as soon as possible.

The initial Implementation Decision specified that the 30 persons (consisting of families) were to be selected from Mae La camp only, which was expanded in 2012 to selection from Mae La, Nupo and Umpium camps, and broadened further in 2013 to also include Mae Ra Ma Luang and Mae La Oon camps, ICCR 2008 (b), 2012, 2013. It is further specified that UNHCR would submit dossiers of candidates, and that the Government of Japan would screen out candidates considered undesirable for any reasons that might pose a threat to the maintenance of security in Japan, including terrorists, or who would be denied admission under the ICRA. Interviews of the short-listed candidates would be conducted in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM.

The Government of Japan also outlined preferred characteristics of the refugees to be presented by UNHCR. States commonly make these types of requests beyond their official eligibility criteria. Initially Japan requested that the candidates be relatively young, be Karen speakers, and ideally have only a few children. In response to challenges, finding refugees interested in being resettled to Japan, families that did not meet these specifications were also presented and accepted. Some of the resettled refugees mentioned the specific criteria during the interviews, and one resettled family stated that they had applied for resettlement to Japan despite knowing that they did not fit the preferred characteristics.

To encourage interest, the 2012 revision of the Implementation Decision added a section under the "implementation of the trial admission" committing the Government of Japan to conduct publicity activities for the refugee population targeted for admission to Japan, and to notify them about the resettlement support measures that would be provided, (ICCR, 2012). In order to encourage eligible refugees to consider resettlement to Japan, UNHCR offices in Thailand, Japan and Geneva collaborated with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice, and the Cabinet Secretariat to produce and circulate information and promotional materials to generate interest. This included producing information brochures and videos about Japan's Resettlement Programme, and organizing meetings and briefings. Finding candidates to refer to Japan continued to be challenging, as many families were larger than the "ideal" family size from a government point of view, included extended family members unlikely to be self-supporting, or had unregistered family members.

In 2013 the number of camps was expanded again, and greater openness was introduced. The selection was broadened to include Burmese speakers, resulting in the resettlement of both Karen and Burmese native speakers. Furthermore the definition of "family" was broadened to include not only the nuclear family members, but also parents and unmarried siblings who are also likely to have the ability to be employed and to adapt to Japanese society.

Another crucial point in the amendment of the 2013 Implementation Decision is the inclusion of family members of those refugees who arrived since 2010 as among those who should be considered for resettlement in the future (ICCR, 2013). To date, the families resettled have not included any extended family members such as single adult siblings or older relatives. However, the 2014 group does include two adult sisters with their respective nuclear families, who are also the siblings of a refugee resettled previously.

With the completion of the Pilot Programme, a new Cabinet Agreement for the Resettlement Programme was announced in 2014. The eligibility criteria was revised to switch to the admission of Myanmarese refugees from Malaysia, and to introduce the second category of reunification with families in Thailand, allowing for the resettlement of eligible relatives of those already resettled in accordance with the 2013 Implementation Decision. No specific target was provided for the number of refugees to be admitted under this category, but it was specified that these family members must also have the ability to be self-reliant in Japan, and have an established relationship of mutual assistance with those already in Japan (ICCR, 2014 b, 2014 (c)). This “mutual assistance” for family reunification is defined as having had work with the same employer the past six months, generating enough income to support both the existing family in Japan and the family members to be resettled (ICCR (b)). The Implementation Decision further specified that family reunification with those coming from Malaysia should also be considered in the future (ICCR, 2014 (c)).

Although a measure of openness to admitting family members was introduced through the revision of the Implementation Decision in 2013 and the new Cabinet Agreement and Implementation Decision of 2014, the focus on self-sufficiency continues to underlie Japan's Resettlement Programme (ICCR 2013, 2014 (b)). Despite this government focus on self-sufficiency, no official document defines how the government actually measures the “*ability to adjust to Japanese society*” during the selection process. As outlined in the minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> Resettlement Expert Council meeting held in 2013, the MoJ reviews the refugees' health status, educational and occupational history, their willingness to work and the type of work they wish to do in Japan. All of this information, together with the testing of refugees' basic abilities such as writing, telling time, and simple math functions such as addition, deduction, division and multiplication, is analyzed to assess the family's potential to adjust to life in Japan. It was, however, stressed that the MoJ does not simply conclude that refugees who do not pass these tests do not have the ability to adjust in Japan, and they are not automatically excluded from consideration.

How self-reliance should be measured during the six-months monitoring of the refugees is also never specified in the documentation. The only instance when a definition was specifically mentioned was at a 2012 Resettlement Expert Council meeting, where a MoFA representative explained that self-reliant means: “The person can get employment that generates the necessary living expenses” (The 8<sup>th</sup> Resettlement Expert Council Meeting 2012). Also, in relation to when resettled refugees can apply to be reunited with their family, the representative said, “Refugees need to be able to speak a certain level of Japanese and they should be able to manage all administrative tasks at the ward office themselves. If they can do everything without any help from the government or other stakeholders, then you can say that the person is self-reliant.”



### **3.1.3 Support for settlement of resettled refugees**

The third component spelled out in the Cabinet Agreement specifies the settlement support that should be provided to the resettled refugees.

- (1) As part of the Pilot Resettlement Programme, the concerned administrative agencies shall cooperate with one another for the purpose of providing Japanese language training, job referrals, and vocational training to resettled refugees.*
- (2) Each administrative agency shall make efforts to secure jobs for the resettled refugees.*
- (3) Other government organizations and local governments are expected to make the same efforts as stated in paragraph (2) above (ICCR, 2008 (a)).*

The Implementation Decision (ICCR 2008 (b)) fleshed out the details of the settlement support to be offered both pre and post-arrival in Japan, including the financial support to be provided by the Government of Japan.

#### *a. Pre-departure settlement support:*

The Implementation Decision designated the IOM as the provider of services in Thailand. This included pre-departure medical checks, and three to four weeks of Japanese language instruction and cultural orientation including practical information about travel to Japan and an introduction to life in Japan (ICCR 2008 (b)).

#### *b. After-arrival settlement support:*

The resettlement pilot offered one year of training and financial support, followed by continuous settlement advice and assistance. After their initial entry to Japan, resettled refugees participated in a 180-day Settlement Support Programme conducted in Tokyo. Refugees first went through a week to a 10-day long orientation period consisting of medical checks and basic instructions covering security and daily life in Japan. After the orientation week, the resettled refugees received Japanese language training, guidance on adjusting to life in Japan, and employment consultation and job counselling and referral at a location leased for the purpose in the Tokyo metropolitan area, while accommodated within commuting distance.

The Settlement Support Programme at the Reception Centre was followed by a further 180-day period of on-the-job vocational training and settlement support after moving to their settlement city. During this period, the refugees' living expenses were fully funded by the Government of Japan. This included transportation costs, housing, medical support and a monthly stipend to cover food and incidentals.

The Implementation Decision specified that during the second half of the first year in Japan, the Government of Japan committed to providing ongoing settlement support, which included:

- 1) on-the-job vocational training;
- 2) guidance and monitoring by Japanese language consultants at the Resettlement Centre; and

- 3) periodic guidance and monitoring by settlement support staff on issues related to administrative procedures, housing, job, school, and mental health issues (ICCR, 2008 (b)).

The 2012 revision to the Implementation Decision added:

- 4) the allocation of community-based local settlement supporters (*Chiiki teijyu shienin*) to regions where the resettled refugees are living.

The intention of this allocation was to provide the day-to-day support required to adjust to life at the settlement cities and to build a support network in the local community. During this period, refugees continued to receive financial support, and the employers received a subsidy to provide the on-the-job vocational training (ICCR 2012).

Direct financial support to the resettled refugees ended after one year, however support including guidance and counselling continued to be offered. Continuous support after the initial year in Japan was envisioned to include:

- 1) subsidies for the children's school-entry costs;
- 2) support for job counselling and referral (including securing interpreters at Hello Work);
- 3) access to vocational training (*shokugyo kunren*);
- 4) support for independent Japanese language training by providing self-study material, counselling and information on local public body and voluntary organizations which provide language training; and
- 5) requests to the local governments to cooperate in extending to resettled refugees the same administrative services provided to Indochinese and Convention Refugees (which includes work towards securing interpreters through coordination with civil refugee support organizations), and relaxing requirements to secure entry to public housing (ICCR, 2008 (b)).

The 2008 Implementation Decision states that these five areas of continuous support should be provided, as was the case for Indochinese and Convention refugees. In the 2012 Implementation Decision, specific mention of giving the resettled refugees the same continuous support as given to Indochinese and Convention refugees was removed, and the fifth area was referred to as a “*necessary implementation*.” Furthermore, the phrasing “*requests to the local governments to cooperate*” disappeared. In the 2012 amendment of the Implementation Decision, the “*implementation of Japanese language courses*” was also added under the support for Japanese language training (ICCR, 2012). The Implementation Decision does not specify when the continuous support should end.

Overall, the components covered in the Implementation Decision do address all of the elements identified by UNHCR as *essential* to establishing a resettlement programme. However, it must be noted that there is no mention of raising the awareness of the Japanese public, or engaging the wider community to welcome the refugees.

### **3.1.4 Consideration for necessary measurements**

The fourth component of the Cabinet Agreement, under “consideration for necessary measurements” states:

*The ICCR shall ensure close cooperation among the concerned administrative agencies, and discuss necessary follow-ups regarding issues related to resettled refugees* (ICCR, 2008 (a)).

Although not outlined in the Implementation Decision, this component of the Cabinet Agreement was the basis for extensive discussions within the Government of Japan about the resettlement project, and the decision to convene the Resettlement Experts' Council in 2012. The Resettlement Expert Council met from May 2012 to December 2013 in order to monitor the implementation of the resettlement pilot program and the refugees' settlement progress. Another objective of the council was to suggest amendments and determine the continuation of the resettlement programme as a regular programme from 2015 onwards.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4. Implementing the framework**

This section analyzes the technical aspects of the Resettlement Pilot Project's implementation arrangements based on a careful reading of relevant documents together with information gathered through interviews with the stakeholders.

##### **4.1 Division of responsibility and budget**

The Japanese Resettlement Pilot Project was planned carefully at the Government of Japan level, and its implementation involved a number of government actors. The Implementation Decision clearly lists the settlement support services that were to be offered, and these supports have been delivered accordingly. While specific arrangements to be made for the after-arrival Settlement support by the Government of Japan are described, the Implementation Decision does not specify which Ministry or Agency is specifically responsible for the Resettlement Programme and its implementation.

In practical application, MoFA, the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), and the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (MoHLW) have taken the responsibility for the implementation of the post-selection supports appropriate to their jurisdiction. Furthermore, each of these three bodies administers an annual bidding process to select their implementing partner to deliver the settlement services.<sup>14</sup> The ICCR functions as a platform where the Resettlement Pilot is discussed with all the thirteen Ministries and Agencies that are officially involved with the pilot. Since the Implementation Decision does not specify which Ministry or Agency is centrally responsible for the programme, it was reported that there are some "grey areas" of responsibility that the three implementing bodies coordinate with each other.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond the level of the Government of Japan, however, there seems to have been very little collaboration. Despite the fact that the Cabinet Agreement specifies that "*concerned administrative agencies shall cooperate*" and the Implementation Decision calls for local governments' cooperation, the prefecture and city levels were not involved in the overall planning for the pilot, and the cities are only drawn into its implementation very late in the process. The cities were often not aware of the resettlement pilot project until they were approached either directly by Ministry representatives, or the staff from Refugee Assistance

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<sup>13</sup> See 8.1 for details.

<sup>14</sup> The services are listed in section 3.1.3.

<sup>15</sup> This point is discussed further in section 4.4.

Headquarters (RHQ) in order to discuss housing refugees in their jurisdiction. This gives little flexibility for the cities to adequately prepare the settlement of resettled refugees.

Furthermore, despite recognizing the value of having civil refugee/support organizations assist with interpretation, these groups were not involved in the planning of the Resettlement Pilot Project. Although RHQ initiates local contacts and involves local civil society groups such as the local Residential Association and ethnic communities during the time at the Resettlement Centre, the ethnic communities are not formally involved in the process of assisting resettled refugees to adjust to daily life after moving to their new homes, nor are the local civil society associations from the settlement city part of the process.

To implement the programme, the three implementing Ministries and Agency make an annual application to the Government of Japan for the budget for the Resettlement Pilot Project activities they deliver. Although the budgeted funds have been made available each year, the Resettlement Programme is not secured beyond the annual allocation. The MoFA annual budget for resettled refugees has decreased from 151 million JPY in 2010 to between 91 million JPY and 95 million JPY during the years 2011-2014 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013 (a)). ACA has a budget of approximately 250 million JPY in order to provide Japanese language training to all foreigners, of which approximately 17 million JPY is allocated to resettled refugees learning Japanese (ACA, 2013). MoHLW has increased its budget covering the job referral program for Convention refugees and resettled refugees from 17 million JPY in 2010 to 27 million JPY in 2014 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2013). The increase of the budget for MoHLW may reflect the government's focus on economic self-reliance for both resettled and Convention refugees.

#### **4.2 Bidding for the implementation partner**

All three main government partners<sup>16</sup> refer to the Cabinet Agreement as part of their announcement for the annual bidding to become the implementation partner. When asked to define their objectives, the two Ministries and the Agency representatives replied that their ministries do not have their own specific objectives, but rather follow the Cabinet Agreement. The bidding announcement stresses the Cabinet Agreements' focus on achieving self-reliance.

ACA specifically states that the goal of their implementing partner is “to promote and ease the settlement of refugees and third country resettled refugees to our country through the implementation of the project which facilitates the Japanese language acquisition” (Agency for Cultural Affairs 2015 (a)). Referring to their responsibility area, MoHLW states their “purpose” in detail:

*For refugees and others to settle in our country and to be able to live a stable life, where the language and the customs are different, it is absolutely necessary that they get employed as early as possible and receive a stable income. To facilitate this, “the project for employment support for refugees and others for the purpose of settlement or promotion of self-support,” which is one of the Japanese Government's general Settlement Support Programmes, offers various*

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<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare have one bidding process which encompasses support for Convention refugees and the resettled refugees, while the Agency for Cultural Affairs has a separate bidding process for the two refugee groups.

*employment supports to refugees and others who wish to settle and be self-supporting in our country* (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2014).

MoHLW's stated purpose suggests that early employment is *the* means to achieve a "stable life" in Japan, even without linguistic and cultural adjustments.

MoFA reiterates the Cabinet Agreement reference to resettlement as one of the durable solutions to the plight of refugees, and stresses Japan's role as "the leader in Asia" from the perspective of promoting human rights through foreign policy, and contributing humanitarian aid. MoFA is in fact the only ministry that specifically describes the Resettlement Programme as "humanitarian action" in their bidding announcement. Since 2013 MoFA has referred to the Resettlement Pilot Project as part of Japan's "international contribution and humanitarian aid" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013 (b), 2014 (b)). As per MoFA the purpose of the settlement support is to "*assist resettled refugees towards self-reliance*", and to "*monitor and examine the status of resettled refugees for the improvement of the Resettlement Programme*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

To date, the semi-governmental agency RHQ has been appointed the implementing agency for the delivery of these services each year. Initially established by the Foundation for the Welfare and Education of the Asian People in 1979 to take responsibility for the settlement of the Indochinese refugees, RHQ has been actively involved in assisting refugees to adjust to life in Japan for over 35 years. As of 2002, RHQ has also been contracted to offer a Settlement Support Programme for Convention refugees. RHQ individually contracts teachers from the Association for Japanese Language Teaching (AJALT) to conduct the Japanese language training. Since RHQ and the responsible ministries and agency had been cooperating for many years, RHQ was considered the natural implementing partner for the resettlement pilot.

The Settlement Support Programme offered to resettled refugees today is very similar to the one established for the Indochinese in the 1980's, and subsequently also offered to Convention refugees, including a set number of hours of Japanese language classes, guidance on life in Japan, and vocational counselling and job referral, followed by after-care counselling services and support for Japanese language learning. However, Convention refugees have more flexibility, as they can choose to follow either a full-time six month long programme offered during the day, or the same content delivered part-time in the evening over one year. Convention refugees are provided this choice because most of them are already working in Japan during the day.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the fact that the implementing partner is expected to monitor and provide continuous support to an increasing number of resettled refugees each year, the annual budget for the Resettlement Pilot Project's post-arrival costs has been fairly stable since 2011. Although the overall number of staff and budget available for administering the Settlement Programme and the continuous support did not increase, the number of local settlement supporters has grown.

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<sup>17</sup> If an asylum application is made while holding a valid residency status, depending on the circumstances, an asylum seeker may request a change of status from their current one to that of "Designated Activities (*tokutei-katsudo*)" status, which allows the asylum seeker to work in order to support themselves. UNHCR highly recommends asylum seekers attempt to become financially self-reliant while waiting for the decision (UNHCR Japan 2005), and most often recognized Convention refugees are already employed when they participate in the Settlement Support Programme.

Each of the resettled refugee families is monitored every six months, which is highly resource consuming, both in human and financial terms. Within the MoFA budget, staff travel costs have grown from 2.9 million JPY in 2011 to 5 million JPY in 2013, and 6 million JPY in 2014. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011, 2013 (a.)) These increased travel costs are indicative of the growing responsibilities RHQ staff have for providing ongoing support to all the resettled refugees after the initial settlement year. It was not anticipated that the resettled refugees would require the level of ongoing support they currently receive, and the structure and required budget must be reconsidered. Since there is no official end set to the continuous support offered to the resettled refugees, it is unlikely that the implementing partner will be able to provide the same level of service without a budget increase.

### **4.3 Monitoring of the implementation**

RHQ's implementation is monitored by the three contractors: MoFA, ACA and MoHLW. Each of the three has their own way of monitoring RHQ's implementation. MoFA monitors RHQ's performance through requiring RHQ to submit a report twice a year. MoHLW receives a report from RHQ at significant moments during and after the initial year after arrival, such as when the refugees visit employers, when they start on-the-job training, or when they receive formal employment. After the refugees are formally employed, a report is sent every three months to MoHLW unless some problems arise in the interim. ACA representatives attend the teacher's meeting once a month and give necessary feedback and suggest changes, and the Japanese language counsellor submits a report to ACA once a month. ACA also observes the Japanese language program twice a year.

RHQ values the flexibility available to amend the content of the Settlement Support Programme, and the implementation of the continuous support. RHQ representatives stated that the Ministries and Agency pay attention to their requests and that RHQ could make changes as necessary within the established framework. RHQ and MoFA especially have a close relationship and correspond with each other on a daily basis, which was regarded as positive by both actors. Notable changes made over the years of the pilot programme include the change to the content of the Settlement Support Programme in the Resettlement Centre, the selection of employers and settlement cities, on-the-job vocational training, the introduction of the local settlement supporters, the possibility of continuous language training and expanded support offered in later years.

However, since RHQ is a contracted agency, it must be noted that there are limits on how much RHQ can affect the Resettlement Program itself. At times, RHQ appeared to have faced limitations in the flexibility of the pilot implementation, due to the structure established in the Cabinet Agreement and the Implementation Decisions. As an implementing partner, RHQ could not impact the structure of the programme itself, which created a gap between what RHQ actually might have wished to deliver based on its experience, and what was possible within the pilot project.

### **4.4 Stakeholders' thoughts on implementation arrangements and coordination**

Stakeholders were asked their perspectives on the overall structure of the support offered to resettled refugees after their arrival in Japan, the division of responsibilities and coordination, and the success of the implementation.

Overall, the ministries agree that the basic division of responsibilities was clear for the elements of the settlement support that are outlined in the Implementation Decision. The Implementation Decision does not specify which ministry is responsible for each element; rather individual Ministries and Agencies were allocated responsibilities appropriate to their jurisdiction. These bodies all agree that there was good coordination and cooperation among them related to these responsibilities, and the implementation was smooth.

However, needs and challenges that are not covered in the Implementation Decision have arisen, and responsibility for those “grey areas” was not clearly established. Several stakeholders mentioned that it has been confusing and problematic that no Ministry or Agency was put in charge overall. Although not specifically named as the lead Ministry, MoFA has in practice taken de facto operational responsibility for liaising with partners, including for the “grey areas.”

The responsibility for the selection of the settlement city was identified as one of the grey areas. The Implementation Decision only specifies that the support to secure housing for the refugees should be offered, without mentioning the need for securing the cooperation of a settlement city. In the initial years the Cabinet Secretariat was very active in coordinating participation, and seeking to attract the support of local cities, but as the project became routine their role has shifted back to the originally envisaged role of coordination. Since it is not possible to search for housing without approaching city authorities, MoFA is, in practice, in charge of securing a settlement city as well. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity about the responsibility for this aspect, the MoFA representative identified increasing cooperation and coordination between the main Ministries and Agency in this area as a positive trend.

Overall, the fact that the current implementation of the Resettlement Programme is dependent on MoFA's pro-active rather than official leadership does raise coordination challenges. In order to get other Ministries to take appropriate action, MoFA sometimes needs to ask the Cabinet Secretariat for assistance. As required, the Cabinet Secretariat convenes the ICCR, which functions as a platform to discuss cooperation and coordination between different Ministries and Agencies. In the absence of an official lead agency, the Cabinet Secretariat must continue to play a central role in coordinating the various Ministries and Agencies. However, to improve coordination, and ensure greater transparency about the Resettlement Programme in the future, it is recommended that a lead agency be designated and allocated responsibility for oversight.

When asked about the delivery of services, the relevant ministries expressed their general satisfaction with RHQ's delivery of the Settlement Support Programme, and feel that their overall collaboration functions well: RHQ responded to problems as they arose, making effective and timely changes to address the problems; the employment statistics demonstrate that RHQ is delivering on their contract; and, the experience and skill of the AJALT teachers contracted by RHQ to deliver the language training is highly valued.

Despite the fact that the national government bodies perceive the implementation to be smooth and well-coordinated, local stakeholders expressed concern about the overall lack of clarity regarding responsibility and implementation. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation study (2014) also highlighted this point. Several respondents mention that it is *not* clear who is in charge of the overall project and who has responsibility for unforeseen issues. The concern was mentioned specifically by representatives from settlement cities, who often expressed

their frustration that they were not involved early enough in the planning process, and that the prefectures are left out of the planning process completely.

In general, although the settlement city representatives for the most part expressed their willingness to participate, there is concern that the settlement city must raise the extra resources that are essential for the resettled refugees, including for extra teachers at schools, and must manage the fact that there is a waiting list for daycare places.<sup>18</sup> Without sufficient involvement in the planning process to adequately prepare for the needs of these new residents, the general perspective among settlement cities is that families were still the responsibility of the Government of Japan, even after the initial settlement year.

## **5. Settlement Support: The initial year and continuous support afterwards**

This section describes the settlement support provided under the Resettlement Pilot Project, and outlines the stakeholders' and refugees' views on various aspects of the pilot's implementation.

Stakeholders outlined changes that were made to the settlement support over the years of the pilot, and these adjustments were also described in the documentation. The most significant changes were made immediately after the first year's delivery of the pilot, in response to challenges faced in that year. In particular, the decision to settle the families close to each other, and in proximity to Tokyo, addressed the bulk of the dissatisfaction expressed by the first arrivals. The marked differences in the responses of the refugees resettled in the first year versus subsequent years clearly indicate that these changes resulted in improved experiences for the refugees.

The Japanese support given under the Resettlement Pilot Project can be divided into three phases, the pre-departure settlement support, the initial year after entrance to Japan, and the continuous support after the initial year. The initial year in Japan is composed of two parts, with the first half spent in orientation and taking part in Settlement Support Programme at the Resettlement Centre and the second half following vocational training after moving to start their lives at the settlement city.

### **5.1 Pre-departure Settlement Support**

IOM is commissioned by MoFA to conduct three to four weeks of pre-arrival training consisting of cultural orientation sessions and language training. The cultural orientation introduces the refugees to everyday life in Japan, and the content is planned together with MoFA and RHQ. Although practical information related to the flight to Japan is also covered, such as fastening the seatbelt, and using the onboard toilet, the main focus is on introducing self-reliance in Japan, including employment and managing household budgets. However, the bulk of the time is dedicated to introductory Japanese language training, which amounts to around fifteen days total. AJALT teachers delivered the pre-departure language training during the Resettlement Pilot Project.

IOM made minor adjustments to the delivery of the cultural orientation and the language training over the years of the pilot in response to the experiences and challenges faced by the

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<sup>18</sup> This point is discussed further in sections 5.2.4 and 6.1.



resettled refugees after arrival. From the beginning the cultural orientation underlined the importance of working hard to become independent in Japan, but after the first year the time spent on budgeting, and on employment was increased. Later changes included an expanded session on Japanese laws and regulations. The Japanese focus appears to be mainly on the need to work in Japan, but it may be worth noting that pre-departure orientations conducted by other states also emphasize reassuring the refugees during that stressful period about the welcome and supports that will be made available in their new country.

In 2011 the cultural orientation and language training was combined and delivered together over a nineteen-day period. However, it was felt that this did not work well, and from 2013 onwards the cultural orientation and language training was delivered separately once again. The number of hours per day of Japanese language instruction was also increased from three to four hours initially, to six hours a day starting in 2013. However, it was acknowledged that it is challenging to stay focused for six hours of foreign language instruction a day.

The refugees themselves were not asked to specifically comment on the orientation and language classes provided pre-departure, but about the overall orientation and language training received pre-and post-departure. Some refugees mentioned that they learned about Japan for the first time during the pre-departure training. Several also mentioned seeing and hearing the Japanese language for the first time pre-departure and learning basic greetings before arriving in Japan, which assisted them on their arrival.

The value of pre-departure orientation to introduce refugees about to be resettled to their new country is recognized internationally, although very few countries offer language classes overseas. Although this study cannot assess the value of this pre-departure language training, the Resettlement Expert Council concluded that it should continue, as it gives the refugees some familiarity with the Japanese language before arrival. The value is further confirmed by the resettled refugees' experience stated above.

## **5.2 The first 180 days: Settlement Support Programme in the Resettlement Centre**

### **5.2.1 Overview of the first 180 days**

The actual implementation of the Resettlement Pilot Project closely followed the Implementation Decision. During the first week to 10 days in Japan, resettled refugees were given medical checks, established in their apartments and provided basic orientation to daily life in their new neighbourhoods including safety, food and transportation. During this period, RHQ staff members were required to live in the same housing to be able to provide twenty-four hour support. Moreover interpreters are recruited from among the Karen and Burmese-speaking population, and are present throughout this orientation period.

After this initial orientation, the six month-long Settlement Support Programme began. All of the resettled refugees commuted on foot to the Resettlement Centre for full day sessions Monday to Friday and half-day sessions on Saturday. Within this facility, adults received an established curriculum of Japanese language support, guidance on life in Japan, and vocational counselling which included introductions to various possible employers. School-age children were separated into two classes for Japanese language classes, and younger children were cared for in the nursery. Interpreters are available as required. Japanese language support and guidance on Japanese life is conducted through lectures, as well as activities involving the local residential community. Moreover interactions with the ethnic

communities are organized to facilitate ethnic ties that can be relevant especially after moving to settlement cities. Towards the end of the 180-day period the children of elementary school age are offered the opportunity to attend classes for three weeks at a local school.

Overall, the refugees had mixed opinions about whether the six months at the Resettlement Centre was an appropriate length of time or not. One family says, *“Only six months of language training and the government says that you need to be independent. It is very difficult. They don't even teach Japanese to the extent that we can function.”* Others believed that the training was long enough and that *“you learn things through doing”* by living independently. Some said that the six months at the Resettlement Centre was necessary *“to get the daily rhythm of Japanese life.”* However, one refugee summed up the intense first year and the continuous pressures of life in Japan in the comment: *“Since we arrived to Japan, there has been no single day off.”* The five families that were still enrolled at the Resettlement Centre at the time of being interviewed expressed their general satisfaction with the training and support they receive. However, the families also seemed to be overwhelmed by the amount of Japanese language training and other instructions on living in Japan they receive every day. Many of the adults in this group said, *“too much information (is given) at the same time and I can't remember.”* These very candid opinions from the refugees about their capacity to absorb and retain information delivered during intensive sessions are very significant, and should be considered when reflecting how the Settlement Support Program could be made more effective.

### **5.2.2 Guidance for adjustment to Japanese life (*Seikatsu tekiou shidou*)**

Resettled refugees are given 120 hours of guidance for adjustment to Japanese life during the time at the Resettlement Centre. The curriculum delivered to guide the resettled refugees to life in Japan focuses on three broad themes: life and health, security, and employment and school. Interpreters are present for these guidance sessions to ensure that the details are understood. The life and health theme includes an orientation to lifestyle and health which facilitates the refugees' adjustment to Japanese life. For example, personal hygiene, health care, family planning, clothing, nutrition and grocery shopping, lunch boxes, basic numeracy, budgeting, banking, telephones and computers are topics covered under this theme. Security topics include housing, electricity, gas and water, traffic rules, public transportation, riding a bicycle, emergency response, and fire drills. The introduction to employment and school focuses on equipping the refugees with the information and skills they need to establish independent lives, which includes salaries and household economy, rules at work and how to work, using *Haro waaku* (Hello Work, a public employment agency), and reading school correspondence. As the emphasis is on the practical application of the skills taught and issues discussed, sessions are held outside of the Centre as appropriate.

Topics covered under the guidance for adjustment to Japanese life curriculum have been adapted as required based on difficulties experienced by previous groups, and the actual life experiences of individuals in the programme. Further stress was put on introducing the Japanese work culture after the initial year, and more recently more time was spent on responsibilities under Japanese law.

Only a few of the resettled refugees mentioned the specific content of the sessions about life in Japan when asked what they learned in the first 180 days. Some families mentioned that they learned how to do grocery shopping, and how to cook Japanese rice, but the most

common responses were about the language training. This may reflect the fact that the guidance is woven into the content of the Japanese language training.

Notably however, the families that arrived in the first year stated that there was a gap between the reality of their daily life in the settlement cities and their expectations based on what they had learned at the Resettlement Centre. This indicates that the guidance for adjustment to Japanese life given to them did not equip the first group of resettled refugees appropriately. In contrast, the resettled refugees arriving from the second year onwards noted that their living situations after moving to their settlement city were much as expected, indicating that the guidance did adequately prepare them for daily life. This difference between the experiences appears to be largely due to the fact that the refugees who arrived in 2010 were settled in rural areas, while the latter groups were settled in more centrally located cities.<sup>19</sup>

### **5.2.3 Japanese language training**

Resettled refugees receive 572 hours of Japanese language training during the time in the Resettlement Centre. The objective of the training is to equip refugees with the basic Japanese skills that are required to settle in Japan. Adults and school-age children study in separate classes.<sup>20</sup>

The children were divided into two classes according to age. The adults were separated into two classes based on their ability to write and speak Japanese when they initially arrived in Japan. Monday to Friday, refugees normally participated in four lessons per day (one class being 75 minutes long) and two lessons on Saturdays. Approximately 20 teachers were individually contracted by RHQ to teach Japanese. These are teachers from AJALT who had previous knowledge and experience of teaching Japanese to refugees, especially Indochinese and Convention refugees. The same teachers were previously contracted to provide the pre-arrival language training in Thailand, which provided refugees familiar faces upon arrival.

Each teacher was responsible for giving lessons on a specific week day, with five to six teachers working together as a team to teach one class. Two types of teaching are conducted: learning the letters and characters, and “unit teaching,” which is learning through various topics and integrates speaking, listening, writing and reading. The teachers consider learning the letters to be a crucial element of the language training during the time at the Resettlement Centre since the refugees do not normally have a further possibility to learn written Japanese (Japanese alphabets, *hiragana*, *katakana* and Chinese characters, *kanji*) once they move to the settlement city and start working. The unit topics evolved from basics to putting what they learned into practice — for example refugees first learned how to introduce themselves, and then moved on to practice self-introduction in job interviews.

#### *a. Stakeholders' thoughts on Japanese language training*

Japanese language teachers agree that there are difficulties in teaching Japanese to the resettled refugees and that flexibility is something they highly value in teaching refugees. For example, although the basic curriculum is set, the teaching materials are adapted according to the needs of the refugees and by observing what they would like to learn. Moreover, the

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<sup>19</sup> This is discussed further in section 5.2.4.

<sup>20</sup> Children under school age spend time at the daycare facility at the Resettlement Centre.

teachers give take-out classes to the refugees in need, especially for those who are illiterate. Some changes are made to the specific content based on the experiences of resettled refugees in the settlement cities. For example during the first year the employers criticized the fact that the refugees did not know any work-related Japanese. From the second year onwards, this type of vocabulary was given greater prominence within the language training.

As ACA's overall objective for the Japanese language training is to "*facilitate the Japanese language acquisition*,"<sup>21</sup> the teachers' aim is to give refugees a basic knowledge of Japanese, rather than to have them reach a specific standard. Moreover, the teachers stress that there is great variation between the proficiency individuals can achieve, and therefore they focus on raising each individual's potential as much as possible, through setting and achieving individual goals. In agreement with ACA, the teachers stress the importance of giving the refugees the confidence during the training to communicate with Japanese people in Japanese.

The teachers believed that the length of the language training at the Resettlement Centre is appropriate and that more hours of learning within the confined environment of Resettlement Centre was not necessary. The teachers instead stressed that the language training must continue after the resettled leave the Resettlement Centre, since the level of Japanese that they acquire during the training is not enough to function in Japan. They suggested that the refugees needed more real life experience in Japan to learn and apply the language. The teachers feel that the refugees sometimes did not understand the abstract meaning of the words, because they did not have the real life experience using and "feeling" the words. One of the teachers felt that this lack of real life experience in Japan might have made them less active in the classes as compared to the Convention Refugees. They advocated for providing an environment at the settlement city where resettled refugees could continue learning Japanese while working. With this in mind, the teachers suggested that there could be a "middle option" where refugees could work and study part-time for a while, before committing to full time work. ACA also indicated the need to consider providing options for the resettled refugees to study Japanese full-time or part-time within the framework of Settlement Support Programme, options which are already provided to the Convention refugees.

Stakeholders acknowledge that in the original design of the Settlement Support Programme, it was hoped that the resettled refugees would be able to learn sufficient Japanese in the first six months to be able to function fairly independently, and would continue to manage studying Japanese on their own with the resources available in the settlement cities. However the experiences of the first years proved that ongoing language support was required. This resulted in the introduction of an annual subsidy in 2013 for the settlement cities to organize Japanese language classes specifically for resettled refugees. The cities can apply for this annual subsidy every year and the subsidy will be granted as long as the need proposed by the cities is identified by ACA. As the previous experiences of the Indochinese highlight the challenges faced by refugees who never acquired adequate Japanese to function independently, this commitment to providing the resettled refugees with continuous language training was a significant positive addition to the pilot.

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<sup>21</sup> See section 4.2.

*b. Resettled refugees' thoughts on Japanese language training*

In response to the question of what they learned during the first 180 days at the Resettlement Centre, all of the resettled refugees focused on the Japanese language training. When the interviewer asked for the specifics, they normally answered “*greetings, Japanese alphabets and some Chinese characters.*” All said that they were generally satisfied with the Japanese language training, however when asked whether they felt that they learned enough Japanese to cope after moving to the settlement city, all but a couple answered “*it was not enough.*” One of the refugees stated, “*The biggest shock after moving to the settlement city was that I didn't understand Japanese at all.*”

As they reflect back, the resettled refugees believe that they needed to learn more vocabulary. Once the resettled refugees settled in their new homes, they faced new real-life experiences at work and in the local community, which required new vocabularies. These opinions are consistent with the Japanese teachers' reflections that the resettled refugees' lack of experience using the vocabulary made it difficult for them to understand the abstract meanings of different words. Moreover some resettled refugees indicated that the ways of teaching should be adapted to the needs of the individual students. For example one individual still engaged in the six- month programme said, “*I have studied at schools in the camp and know how to study so it's been effective. But for my wife who has never been to school and has never held a pen, it is not as effective.*” Some resettled refugees said that they would rather “*learn Japanese through living and trying.*”

Overall, the feedback from both the stakeholders and the refugees reflects the reality that intensive formal classes are not necessarily the most effective way to teach a complex new language to adults. Although ensuring that resettled refugees have the opportunity to learn the local language is an essential part of any resettlement programme, there must be sufficient flexibility to accommodate the individual needs of the learners, and sufficient time to absorb the information given.

Given the fact that the resettled refugees all stated that they did not learn enough Japanese language during this period to cope independently, it is recommended that the model of six months of intensive language training be revisited. As the Japanese language teachers and ACA suggested, one possibility would be to phase in employment, while continuing language classes on a part-time basis. This would provide the real-life experience that both the teachers and the refugees themselves noted was important to learning to actually use Japanese. Providing the option of part-time Japanese language training may prepare the resettled refugees better in the transition from settlement support to self-sufficiency. The previous experiences of the Indochinese refugees demonstrate how key language is to self-reliance and upward mobility in socio-economic status. Therefore flexibility in providing the form of language training most appropriate for the specific refugee is highly relevant to the Resettlement Programme's success.

#### **5.2.4 Job referral and selection of settlement city**

During the pilot, the settlement city was not decided before the refugees arrived. Before selecting the settlement city, the emphasis was on securing suitable employment for the resettled refugees (especially the men who are the main bread-winners). An appropriate settlement city was sought within commuting distance only after the employment was secured. It was noted that when the Indochinese refugees arrived in Japan, one full-time job and salary

in the factory and industrial sector was adequate to support the whole family, however with the increased cost of living that is no longer the case. To ensure that a family can earn sufficient income to meet their daily needs, more than one family member needs to be employed.

One of the difficulties of securing a settlement city during the pilot therefore, was the fact that both the male and female resettled refugees needed to find a job, and the city selected had to be located in commutable distance for both. In order for both the men and women to work, there needs to be an available daycare that is able to admit the children who are not attending school. This is challenging due to the shortages of daycare places and the large number of children wait-listed (*taiki jido*) in Japan. The city must agree to the settlement and needs to be engaged in assisting to secure day-care places and extra resources as required in the schools the children will attend.

With some challenges, the Resettlement Pilot Project has generally been successful in securing employment, housing and admission to schools and daycare facilities for the resettled refugees. After the difficulties faced by the first group of families, employment and housing has been found for the families in close proximity to each other, and near to Tokyo, starting with the refugees arriving in 2011.

*a. Stakeholders' thoughts on job referral and the selection of the settlement city*

The fact that both the men and women need to find work in a commutable distance was identified as a challenge. RHQ changed the way of looking for employment since the first group of resettled refugees arrived in 2010. In the first year of implementation, the focus was on finding employment in the agricultural sector, as the Myanmarese had pre-arrival experience with this type of work. However, due to the challenges encountered in settling refugees in remoter regions where such jobs are available, including the long commute for children to school and daycare, this focus changed with the second group to only searching for jobs within and in the vicinity of Tokyo, where most factory and industrial jobs are located. Although there are jobs available everywhere, the variety of jobs available outside of Tokyo is limited. Since they need to secure employment both for the men and women, the variety of jobs offered becomes important. Therefore it was decided to look for employers located in the vicinity of Tokyo and as a consequence also choose settlement cities near Tokyo. While not uncommon in Japan, this has resulted in lengthy daily commute times for the men, whereas the women's jobs are in closer vicinity to their residence.

There is no official document that specifies the criteria for possible employers, although employers must comply fully with Japanese labour laws. MoHLW and RHQ agreed that the priority was to find employers that would consider making a long-term investment in the resettled refugees, and be willing to offer the men full-time employment at over the current minimum wage.<sup>22</sup> It was important to find tolerant employers who understood that the refugees required time to adapt, and could not immediately engage in full-time work. As the families all had young children, the jobs also had to give the parents the weekend off. RHQ aims for full-time employment for men with a salary of around 200,000 JPY per month. When looking for possible employers, RHQ also took into consideration the workplace surroundings and the proximity and availability of daycare facilities, schools and housing.

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<sup>22</sup> This is 888 JPY per hour in Tokyo, and 802 JPY per hour in Saitama where the refugees are working currently.

Another point that RHQ stressed was the need to introduce the refugees to different job possibilities and let them choose which to take.

Employers are offered subsidies to provide six months of on-the-job vocational training (25,000 JPY per month), with interpretation support as required, after which they are expected to provide refugees with a regular contract. During the first year of employment after the on-the-job vocational training, up to one third of the resettled refugee's salary is also subsidized by the government. Various employers in the manufacturing and food sectors are approached, and refugees are presented with options to choose from. In 2012 MoHLW introduced an extra subsidy for the employers offering on-the-job vocational training to more than two refugees at a time (25,000 JPY per month) to attract a larger number of potential employers.

The employers selected for the men provided regular contracts as envisioned, and the majority of men continue to be employed where their on-the-job vocational training was conducted. Securing and retaining part-time jobs has been more difficult for the women, however, and is acknowledged to present an ongoing challenge.

Under the Resettlement Pilot Project structure, the settlement city was chosen based on the employment and therefore the local cities were not involved in the decision making process. The settlement cities only learned that the resettled refugees would reside in their city three to four months before the actual move. The Resettlement Expert Council (2014) proposed establishing a system to engage the local government, and encouraged the cities to raise their hands to admit refugees. However, the council also recognized the difficulties in finding cities and communities that are willing to admit refugees. Therefore the council stressed the importance of securing the employment and the settlement place as early as possible, so that the settlement cities can be involved and make appropriate preparations (REC, 2014).

During interviews for this study as well, the difficulties encountered in finding a city willing to admit resettled refugees and negotiating with cities to accept subsequent groups of resettled refugees were repeatedly stressed. Efforts to relocate the Resettlement Centre to a city where the refugees could be settled permanently have also failed. In 2014, in an attempt to inform and recruit new settlement cities, a survey of cities already hosting foreign residents was conducted to explain what is provided under the resettlement program, and ask their willingness to accept resettled refugees. The researchers of this study are not aware of the results of the survey, however, it was clear from the interviews with the representatives of the cities already admitting resettled refugees, that cities, including their own, are generally *not* volunteering to take resettled refugees. The city representatives formulated their answers carefully, saying that if they are asked directly they cannot refuse since the Resettlement Programme is an important national programme; however they will not actively invite the refugees to settle in their city, nor do they pro-actively inform the Government that they would like to welcome the refugees.

Representatives of settlement cities stressed at the interviews that accepting additional refugees does present a financial burden, and was not considered a priority, particularly for those cities already hosting relatively large foreign resident populations. As also proposed by the Resettlement Expert Council, representatives of settlement cities all stressed the need for engaging the cities earlier in the planning cycle for each group, and involving the prefecture level (which is responsible for the school budget allocation of school and for the daycare facilities), as important to encouraging support. Attempting to find the extra resources needed just before the school year begins was noted as particularly problematic. Various stakeholders

raised the fact that subsidies are not automatically allocated to the settlement cities to accompany the resettled refugees as a problematic point, and the Resettlement Expert Council report (2014) also specifically mentioned this. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation study (2014), proposed that the money should be allocated directly to the settlement city for two years, and resettled refugees should ideally stay in the initial settlement city during the period. Despite all this input, there seems to be no plan in place to allocate budgets to cover the expenditures a city must make specifically for resettled refugees.

RHQ's focus when locating an appropriate host city matches the selection factors identified as important in the Resettlement Expert Council report (2014). The settlement community is chosen based on the overall situation in the city, including whether the school and the daycare are willing to admit refugee children. Cities and communities with a large foreign resident population often have established local volunteers and Japanese language classes that can offer help to the resettled refugees. Moreover the schools are often staffed with extra teachers for take-out classes or to offer Japanese language help to the children in need. Although there are many cities and communities adequately prepared for the arrival of foreigners, including in theory resettled refugees, the resettled were not always settled in these communities. The fact that such services were not available locally for the refugees settled in the first year proved to be a major difficulty.

As stated earlier, RHQ has been successful in securing employment and housing for all the resettled refugees. Over the course of the pilot necessary changes were made to the process of identifying employers and selecting the host city. However finding a settlement city has still been a major challenge each year, which can be rooted in two issues: the first is the lack of involvement of the settlement city in the settlement support planning, and the second is the fact that resources are not allocated directly to those settlement cities which admit the resettled refugees. Echoing various earlier recommendations, including the assessment of the adaptation of the Indochinese refugees, the successful integration of refugees into local communities will remain difficult unless local governments take a proactive role. Furthermore, allocating a portion of the budget directly to the local governments is likely necessary in order for them to become more involved.

*b. Resettled refugees thoughts on the job referral process and the selection of the settlement city*

The experience of the job referral process differed according to the year of arrival, and this corresponds with the changes RHQ made in the job referral process after the first year.

The majority of the refugees that arrived in the first year of the pilot were not satisfied with the process, and noted that they were not presented with choices. They said that they were given no choice of occupation other than jobs within the agricultural sector, even in cases when the resettled refugees specifically stated their unwillingness to engage in agricultural work. The resettled refugees also told the interviewer that they were presented no options in either the settlement community or in their housing, but were simply told where to live. This lack of choice, combined with sub-standard housing in some cases, were contributing factors in the decision of the majority of this group to move from their original settlement community and change jobs.

However, those resettled from 2011 onwards, including those who arrived in 2014, share the opinion that they had enough opportunity to outline their previous experience, and express



their job preferences, and that these were reflected in the choices presented to them. The men were largely better satisfied than the women, and said that they were interested in their work from the beginning. The women, however, often said that although they were given enough options, they based their job decision on what they felt they could manage, not on their preferred type of work. This may not be surprising, since many of the women stated that they had no work experience before coming to Japan, and are also expected to perform the bulk of the domestic duties.

The settlement city is chosen by RHQ together with the Government of Japan, therefore the resettled refugees have no influence as to which city they would like to settle in. The majority of the resettled, however, said they were presented with housing options, and felt that they could make their own choice of apartment/housing complex where they would like to live. The families arriving in 2011 and after were given options of two to eight apartments with different floor plans to choose from, although all were located in the same housing development. The resettled refugees expressed their wish to settle in the same city together, and RHQ has succeeded in placing the resettled arriving the same year to the same city since 2011. This has been very important to the ability of the resettled refugees to support each other in their day-to-day lives. What RHQ and the government have not managed successfully is to settle the resettled refugees in the same area where the previous groups are residing, which was particularly unfortunate for those refugees with family links. Some resettled refugees also expressed their wish to live closer to the existing Karen and Burmese community in Tokyo.

In sum, it must be noted that after the experiences of the first year of the pilot, significant changes were made in the process of job referral and the selection of housing. These changes are clearly reflected in the satisfaction expressed by the resettled refugees arriving in 2011 and later. Keeping in mind the difficulties of securing settlement cities and negotiating with the settlement cities to admit subsequent groups resettled refugees, it is recommended that the authorities and RHQ should make a greater effort to settle the refugees in close proximity to the previous arrivals.

### **5.2.5 Community outreach at the Resettlement Centre**

The lack of community outreach during the time at the Resettlement Centre was criticized during the first year of Resettlement Pilot Project, which led to improvements in later years. During the time at the Resettlement Centre efforts are made to engage both the Convention refugees and the resettled refugees in activities happening locally. The local residence association invites refugees to four events a year, two of which coincide with the time the resettled refugees are at the Centre. RHQ also facilitates the participation of refugees in activities and festivals organized by the existing ethnic community. Even though the Convention refugees and resettled refugees spend some time together, and in fact participate in the Settlement Support Programme at the same facility, they do not seem to establish close ties with each other.

In recent years RHQ has also invited leaders from the Myanmar and Karen ethnic community to the Centre several times during the six-month period to speak about life and work in Japan, and to share how they overcame struggles. Establishment of a mentor system was announced in 2014, introducing resident refugees from the same ethnic community as “mentors” whom the refugees could consult and discuss issues with as desired (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014 (a)). However, it is also acknowledged that due to ethnic, linguistic and

perhaps also economic differences, there is limited ongoing interaction between the established community and the resettled refugees, with the exception of those recruited to be interpreters.

Resettled refugees expressed their appreciation for the help provided by the interpreters, especially in the initial phase after moving out to the settlement city. RHQ provided a couple of their main interpreters with a mobile phone that the resettled refugees could call as needed, and the refugees reported that they contacted the interpreters every time they faced a problem. These phone numbers are given out to all resettled refugees that RHQ has contact with, regardless of the arrival year.

To help prepare the resettled refugee children for the transition to the second phase, the children of elementary school age are offered the opportunity to attend classes for three weeks at a local school towards the end of the 180-day period. As well, children of age to start the 1st grade at the settlement center attended a public daycare for three weeks. This is offered as a part of the guidance to Japanese life for children, and is also part of the community outreach. Elementary school participation is determined not only through the actual age (6-12), but also according to the equivalent academic ability. The school has a multinational student population, and an interpreter is present as required for certain activities. The emphasis during these weeks is to introduce children to the patterns of school and interaction with other children, rather than assisting them to follow the curriculum.

Stakeholders from civil society, however, point to the lack of emphasis on Japanese language learning and studying in general during the three-week school experience. The children are simply present in the classrooms, and not assisted to follow the curriculum. Moreover, children older than elementary school age have no possibility of experiencing school life currently, even though some of the children will start attending night middle school. Even though these older children are given special language training by AJALT teachers to prepare them for their school work, more effort could be made to engage a local middle school to make the school experience possible for these older children as well. This requires strengthening cooperation between the Government, RHQ and the local community where the Resettlement Centre is located.

Although there was criticism in the early years that too little effort was made to reach out to the established ethnic community, opportunities for the resettled refugees to establish ethnic ties are made now. Stakeholders acknowledge a significant improvement in efforts to introduce the resettled refugees to Japanese society and the ethnic community during the time at the Resettlement Centre.

### **5.2.6 Location of the Resettlement Centre**

RHQ's existing Support Centre in Shinjuku, Tokyo, where the Settlement Support Programme for Convention refugees was already being conducted, was designated to serve as the Resettlement Centre. RHQ had previously established good relationships and collaboration with the residence association, shopping association and a nearby elementary school. The existence of a Burmese community in the same area, which facilitated the access to interpreters and experienced Japanese language teachers, are also named as positive factors for locating the Resettlement Centre in central Tokyo. Throughout the pilot, resettled refugees were housed within commuting distance of this facility during the delivery of the Settlement Support Programme.

Despite the positive feedback about the support offered at the Resettlement Centre, some stakeholders are of the opinion that it would be better to have the Resettlement Centre located outside of central Tokyo, preferably in a city where the refugees could be settled permanently. This point was raised repeatedly at the Resettlement Expert Council meetings, and the council's report recommends that the settlement city be determined before arrival, allowing the Settlement Programme to be conducted at the settlement city. Even if continuing with the pilot's structure of finding employment first and the settlement city after the employment is secured, placing the Resettlement Centre outside of central Tokyo would reduce the adjustment required between the life at the Resettlement Centre and the life at the settlement city.

The resettled refugees were not asked specifically about the location of the Resettlement Centre. However, it is not difficult to understand that although the refugees live in their own apartments, and begin the process of adjusting to life in Japan during their first six months in the country, the move to a new city after this period requires them to restart the process of getting used to their surroundings and making new connections. This readjustment seemed particularly pronounced for the first group of resettled refugees, who were placed in rural communities and cities where the daily life skills learned at the Resettlement Centre were not applicable. The gap between what the refugees experienced and learned during the first six months and what they experienced after settlement to their new homes diminished for the refugees arriving from 2011 onwards, due to the selection of settlement cities in the vicinity of Tokyo.<sup>23</sup>

It is acknowledged that efforts have been made to secure a new location for the Resettlement Centre, preferably within a city where the refugees could find permanent homes. However, the cities that have been approached have not agreed to host the Centre, citing concerns about taking on too large a burden. Up until 2015, MoFA's bidding document for the implementation partner stated clearly that the Resettlement Centre should be located in Tokyo (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). However, it was reported that the location will not be specified in the 2016 call for proposals, and that the Ministry will rely on the experience, knowledge and connections of the selected implementing partner(s) to propose the location of the Resettlement Centre in the future, rather than remaining proactively involved in approaching cities.

Where the Resettlement Centre should be located remains a debatable point. RHQ's reasons for choosing the current location appear legitimate, but requesting the resettled refugees to adjust to one environment initially and to another one after six months would not seem to be ideal. In the current Japanese situation where there are hardly any cities or communities volunteering to settle the refugees, the question of location becomes even more complex.

### **5.2.7 Stakeholders' thoughts on the Settlement Support Programme in general**

Reference was made to the fact that the basic structure of support established in the Implementation Decision followed the support offered to the Indochinese and Convention refugees. However, a number of stakeholders pointed out that the economic circumstances in Japan had changed significantly in recent years. With their lack of previous education and employment experience, and their limited Japanese language skills, coupled with the higher

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<sup>23</sup> This aspect is discussed further in section 5.3.2b.

cost of living, the resettled refugees face serious challenges in finding employment that can adequately sustain their families. Therefore, some stakeholders felt that greater flexibility should be introduced, to accommodate the need for a longer period of language learning, perhaps combined with easing into employment.<sup>24</sup>

As mentioned earlier, interpreters are available as required. However there is a concern that the pool of Karen-speaking interpreters is too small to meet the needs. Although a number of the interpreters have been employed for several years, there are also on-going worries that their Karen and Japanese language skills are not adequate to the job, which undermines the delivery of the Settlement Support Programme. The lack of interpreters is addressed as a problem in the Resettlement Expert Council's report as well (2014). From this perspective, currently settling resettled refugees in areas near Tokyo within commuting distance of available interpreters is reasonable, however this can be reconsidered as the resettled refugee population grows in Japan and as language needs change.

The representatives of the cities where the resettled refugees reside and the employers share the opinion that the resettled refugees manage their lives and their work relatively well, considering that they only receive six months of language training and guidance for adjustment to Japanese life. As one of the employers said, their initial level of Japanese was about what you would expect a refugee to be able to learn after spending only six months in the country. This is an indication that the Settlement Support Programme at the Resettlement Centre fulfills its objective to equip refugees with the minimum knowledge of Japanese language and support required to progress towards self-reliance. However, the strong feelings of the refugees that they do not have sufficient Japanese to manage their own lives cannot be ignored.

Further flexibility in the Settlement Support Programme at the Resettlement Centre is needed in order to ease the resettled refugees' move to the settlement city. Japanese language training is the crucial component of the time at the Resettlement Centre, and although the resettled refugees have managed to survive on a daily basis, their limited Japanese is identified as a major barrier to their independence. Although RHQ considered it very positive that the Indochinese were able to find work quickly, it must also be remembered that decades after their arrival a large percentage still feel that their lack of fluent Japanese has hampered their adjustment in Japan, restricting them to lower-paying jobs (Kawakami et al., 2009). International experiences prove that early investments providing resettled refugees with local language training pays off in both reduced dependency on public assistance, and increased tax contributions in the long term. Changes in the structure of the Settlement Support Programme should be considered to avoid repeating this pattern of handicapping the ability of the resettled refugees to reach their full potential by failing to provide them adequate Japanese language training after arrival.

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<sup>24</sup> This is discussed in section 5.2.3.

### **5.3 The second 180 Days: Move to the local settlement city and on-the-Job vocational training**

#### **5.3.1 Overview of the second 180 Days**

RHQ settlement support staff prepare the move to the settlement cities while the refugees are at the Resettlement Centre. During the second half of their first year, the resettled families continue to receive income support from the government. The government pays their rent, and they also receive a set amount of money per person participating in the on-the-job vocational training (including older children working part-time), as a monthly allowance that should cover the necessities (around 120,000 JPY per month per person). They are also provided with a lump sum to cover moving costs and purchase household furnishings. This amount varies according to the resettled refugees' destination.

Immediately following the move the families are oriented to their new neighbourhoods, and assisted to complete required paperwork including registration forms for health insurance, government pension, children's health insurance, allowances for children, and their school entry. The parents are assisted to practice travelling to work from their homes, using the actual transportation means they will need to use daily. As the women are usually employed close to home, they practice bicycling to work. The children are accompanied on their first day of school.

The settlement progress of the resettled refugees is monitored every six months by interviewing the refugees and other stakeholders including their employers, schoolteachers, daycare staff and local settlement supporters. Refugees are asked about their challenges, their satisfaction levels, and their plans for the future. A separate survey on language skills is conducted every six months as well. This assessment is also based on interviews with refugees, employers and school staff members.<sup>25</sup>

#### **5.3.2 On-the-job vocational training**

Soon after the resettled refugees move to their settlement city, they begin their 180 days of on-the-job vocational training at their places of future employment. During this period employers introduce the jobs, and assist the new employees to acquire the skills required. An interpreter has typically been present every day for the first month, to assist the new employees understand their tasks, and be fully briefed on all safety provisions. After the initial period the interpreter comes less frequently. RHQ staff also visit the job site frequently to address any concerns. The content of the vocational training is decided with the employer.

##### *a. Stakeholders' thoughts on the on-the-job training*

Stakeholders reported that improvements were made in response to the experiences of the first group of resettled refugees. The specific improvements mentioned during the interview were the reduction of the actual hours engaged in work and the increase in time spent on introducing the work environment at the beginning of the training, and gradually increasing the working hours to full-time as the resettled get used to the work tasks and environment. It was reported to the Resettlement Expert Council that at one workplace, the first two weeks

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<sup>25</sup> This is analyzed further in section 5.5.

were focused not on work, but on learning the Japanese vocabulary that is needed at work (The 12<sup>th</sup> Resettlement Expert Council, 2013).

The employers interviewed expressed their satisfaction both with the support offered under the Resettlement Pilot, and with the work of their employees. The initial guidance provided by RHQ, and the availability of interpreters as required during the on-the-job training and afterwards were highlighted as key factors to ensuring that the employers understood the workers' challenges, and that the workers understood their tasks.

The employers interviewed also noted that it was difficult for them to recruit Japanese workers due to the nature of the work, and that they considered it very positive that the resettled refugees would potentially be employed for the long-term, in contrast to trainees, or other foreign workers who typically are in Japan only on a short-term basis. Some of the employers were approached by RHQ and the government specifically because they already participated in the trainee programme recruiting foreign migrant labourers.

While these jobs do not require a high level of Japanese, the employers noted that communication was initially very challenging, as the refugees' Japanese abilities were not sufficient for the job when they first began working. The employers interviewed described the on-the-job vocational training as a necessary time period while the resettled refugees get used to the work tasks and the environment.

None of the interviewed employers mentioned or commented on the financial support or the subsidy provided by the government when they were asked whether they received the necessary support from the government. Their answers about support focused on positive feedback about the availability of interpreters, and the guidance provided by RHQ. Financial concerns arose during the interviews with the employers only when asked whether they would like to employ more resettled refugees in the future. Their positive experiences made them receptive to the idea, however they noted that their companies were too small to absorb many more workers.

*b. Resettled refugees' thoughts on the move to the settlement city and on-the-job training*

With variations according to the arrival year, the resettled refugees in general feel that they were presented with enough housing and work options.<sup>26</sup> The resettled refugees noted that although they did not know very much about Japan and were not aware of what other options there might be, they were satisfied with the process of being presented with various apartments and occupations from which to choose.

The level of satisfaction on the process of moving to the settlement city and engaging in the on-the-job training was markedly different for the first group as compared to the latter arrivals, which again matches the changes implemented by RHQ. These latter groups feel that they generally received the immediate help and support they needed. The adults of the 13 families who have to date experienced the on-the-job vocational training feel that the training they received was appropriate and prepared them to work independently after the six months.

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<sup>26</sup> See section 5.2.4b.

However, it should be noted that there are cases where the 180-day long on-the-job training was not fully completed at the initial placement. Notably, during the initial year of the pilot project, refugees expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the working conditions at one of the first job placements, and also had problems with the distance between the location of their housing, their employment, and their children's schools (Watanabe, 2011). In these cases, the refugees themselves decided that they would not continue to participate in the training. In one later instance, a woman also decided that she did not want to continue with the on-the-job vocational training, but in her case it was due to having small children.

There were also more recent cases where the employer terminated the on-the-job training for a couple of resettled refugees, which included an older child who was also expected to work part-time. The employer told the refugees that their training was terminated because they lacked adequate Japanese language skills to continue. They themselves also felt that the work tasks were too difficult and they had problems understanding the instructions. The authors of this report were not informed whether an interpreter was available during the training, or the type of support RHQ offered the employer before the decisions were made. However, it must be noted that the termination of the on-the-job training and inability to find subsequent employment because of inadequate Japanese language skills had an impact on the families' financial stability. This case demonstrates that further emphasis must be placed on ensuring that appropriate placements are found.

The Resettlement Pilot Project offered 120,000 JPY per month to resettled refugees only if the individual participated in the on-the-job vocational training. If the training was terminated, whatever the reason, the resettled adults did not receive the monthly income support. Alternative allocations of income support should be provided if refugees are not able to continue with the training due to circumstances beyond their control, such as childbirth, or the employer's termination of their contract. Moreover, to best meet the individual needs of resettled refugees, alternatives to on-the-job training could be introduced, such as further Japanese language training, or support to acquire certain skills.

Although the Resettlement Pilot Project has successfully found jobs for most of the resettled refugees with supportive employers, the immediate emphasis on becoming financially self-sufficient through employment does not allow resettled refugees to pursue their own long-term ambitions by providing opportunities for educational upgrading, or pursuing advanced training. By considering alternatives to on-the-job training, the resettled refugees could utilize their time effectively to invest energies in improving their competencies, which may lead to better job opportunities and a higher standard of living in the future.

### **5.3.3 Support for children's education**

There is no separate governmental subsidy provided to the family or schools specifically to support the resettled refugee children's continuous education. However, there is a one-time subsidy paid to the families to cover the children's school entry costs.<sup>27</sup> In order to assist non-Japanese children to follow the elementary school and middle school curriculum, cities can apply for pre-existing subsidies available from the prefectural level, which allow schools to

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<sup>27</sup> 20'000 JPY for entry into elementary school, 30,000 JPY for entry into middle school, 50,000 JPY for entry in vocational/language school and high school, and 100,000 JPY for entry into university and college.

contract extra teachers (*kahai*) to offer individual or small-group instruction.<sup>28</sup> According to settlement city representatives, these subsidies are offered to schools hosting a minimum number of foreign children, although special arrangements have been made for some resettled refugee children. Children are usually enrolled in a regular class, but provided “take-out” classes (*toridashi jyugyo*) where children learn the language while studying different subjects such as Japanese, math and social science.

Middle school age foreign resident children without Japanese skills and older children who have not completed the obligatory nine school years, are usually enrolled in public night middle schools that are specifically catered to meet their needs. While regular middle school is three years long, the years of education at the night middle school vary and most of the students spend around two years. Since almost all Japanese children complete middle school,<sup>29</sup> these night middle school students are predominantly children and adults of foreign background. Moreover, the number of schools is limited and some prefectures in Japan have not established night middle school classes. Currently all the resettled families are residing in areas where night middle schools are available. The need to choose a settlement city where a night middle school is available was a specific response to the experience from the first year of pilot project. One of the reasons for some the families that arrived in 2010 to move from their original settlement city was due to the difficulty of access to children’s education. The families lived in a city where the night-middle school was available, however the long distance to the school was not manageable for the children.

High school attendance is not mandatory in Japan, and students must pass entrance exams to enroll in either public or private high school. Night high schools, which also require the passing of entrance exams, are available for those who need to work while studying. However, in contrast to night middle school, the majority of students in these classes are Japanese. As a consequence, the students do not normally receive special Japanese language help, and take-out classes are not available. The night high school education is usually four years long, or until the students earn enough academic credits to graduate.

As mentioned earlier, no education subsidy specifically for resettled children was offered to the schools under the Resettlement Pilot Project. Rather, just as they did for other foreign resident students, the cities needed to apply for the resources for extra teachers at elementary schools and middle schools through their prefecture. Under the pilot the settlement city was decided only after the employment was secured, usually very shortly before the beginning of the school year, it was sometimes difficult for the settlement cities to secure the subsidy from the prefecture so late. This factor should be considered in the future, together with the issue of earlier involvement of the settlement cities and stakeholders at the prefectural level. Although the concerns about not favouring resettled refugees are valid in the long-term, States do have a responsibility to ensure that resettled refugees are given the best possible start in their new lives, and this includes ensuring that the children get the support they need in schools. Therefore, directly allocating subsidies to schools being attended by resettled children should also be considered.

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<sup>28</sup> See 8.1 for clarification.

<sup>29</sup> Middle school is part of obligatory schooling in Japan, and therefore graduation is not based on credits acquired. Even when a child did not attend school, with consent from the parents, the child most often receives a middle school graduation diploma.



### **5.3.4 Continuous language support**

The resettled refugees were provided continuous language support after the move to the settlement city, but the form of support offered changed after the Implementation Decision of 2012. Before 2012, the continuous language support consisted of guidance related to learning Japanese independently provided by Japanese Language Education counsellors at the Resettlement Centre, and monitoring of the Japanese language skills every 6 months.<sup>30</sup>

In 2012, a third component 3) implementation of Japanese language courses and training of the Japanese language teachers at the local cities was included (ICCR, 2012). In response, since 2013 local cities can apply for a subsidy from ACA specifically in order to provide language courses for the resettled refugees. Currently a couple of cities are utilizing the subsidy to provide language training at the settlement city. In these cities, the resettled refugees typically start continuous language classes in July, a few months after settling into the community. The subsidy is given for one year at a time, and depending on the needs, the cities can apply for a subsidy each year. This subsidy can be used not only for actually conducting language classes but also for the settlement city to establish a language centre, and train Japanese teachers. How the continuous language support is offered depends on local circumstances, and the systems set up by the cities vary. Some cities do not wish to use the subsidy since the cities have a policy not to discriminate between resettled refugees and other foreign residents. ACA informs the cities about the possibilities, and states that the agency would like to give continuous support as much as possible, however in the end it is the settlement cities that identify the need for the subsidy from the agency.

Even when this special subsidy was not available during the period of 2010 to 2012, cities in fact utilized other general subsidies that aim to promote Japanese language learning towards foreigners provided by, for example, ACA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Since the resettled refugees have faced problems with the Japanese language, settlement cities have tried to organize language classes for the resettled refugees. The introduction of the subsidy by ACA has been very significant where utilized, however the fact that not all the settlement cities take advantage of the subsidy is problematic since this creates unequal chances for the resettled refugees to take part in the continuous language training. This point should be considered together with an idea of allocating financial support directly to the settlement cities, so that the subsidies available for resettled refugees are automatic, not optional.

### **5.3.5 Support through the local settlement supporters**

During the initial years of the pilot, resettled refugees were assisted by settlement support staff based in Tokyo rather than in the refugees' local area, which sometimes made it impossible to give the necessary help promptly. To facilitate more flexible and immediate help when issues arose, part-time local settlement supporters were recruited to supplement the assistance offered by the RHQ settlement support staff starting in 2012. Local settlement supporters are mandated to assist the resettled refugees with the challenges of day-to-day life, and also to establish a network for stakeholders engaged locally with the resettled refugees

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<sup>30</sup> See section 5.5 for the monitoring criteria.

and provide information as necessary. The settlement city was asked to recommend appropriate individuals who were knowledgeable about their community, flexible with their time and interested in the position. Supporters are not required to have specialized training in counselling or social work, and the focus was on whether the person is well established in the community. RHQ selected and contracted the supporters individually. The tasks to be performed by the local settlement supporters are not outlined specifically, and their engagement and activities vary according to the specific needs of the resettled refugees. Currently there are two local settlement supporters each in Suzuka, Misato and Kasukabe and one in Shiki.

It was recognized by the Resettlement Expert Council report (2014) that the placement of a local settlement supporter to provide the resettled refugees with day-to-day support was important. It was not possible to interview the local settlement supporters in all the cities. However, other stakeholders explained that the local settlement supporters visit the families regularly and spend a bulk of time assisting the adults with paperwork and the children with schoolwork, and accompanying them as required to appointments at hospitals and schools. Interpreters are also available in person on important events and occasions, and on the telephone to assist the local settlement supporter as required.

Even though interviews with the local settlement supporters were not possible, details about their work can also be found in the minutes of the Resettlement Expert Council. In Misato's case, the local settlement supporters are cooperating with six other staff members working with the city's settlement program offered all foreign residents, which gives wider exposure to activities with the local community. In 2012 when the council meeting was held, Japanese language lectures were organized once a week through the settlement supporters. The resettled refugees participated in local community activities such as the cherry blossom festival (*Ohanami*), fireworks, and working in a house garden. The resettled refugees also participated in festivals such as the "Indian festival" in a neighbouring city and the "Global citizen fiesta" held in Misato where the resettled refugees and other foreign residents in the area introduced their countries and cultures (The 5<sup>th</sup> Resettlement Expert Council Meeting 2012).

The feedback received from the resettled refugees during this study is consistent with the information given during the Resettlement Expert Council meetings. At the third Resettlement Expert Council meeting, a resettled refugee said that whenever she needed help or felt insecure she called the local settlement supporter. At the same meeting, one of the local settlement supporters stated that she tried to visit the families every day during the weekday and even on weekends when she had time. The local settlement supporter stated that the refugees consulted her with issues about their health and the education for the children (The 3<sup>rd</sup> Resettlement Expert Council Meeting 2012). For this study resettled refugees in Misato and Kasukabe interviewed said that the local settlement supporters visited their homes once a week and helped them with reading their children's school letters and other official letters and paperwork. They also said that they contacted the local settlement supporters on the phone, either directly or through an RHQ interpreter. The school representatives at the settlement cities also appreciated the help that they received from the local settlement supporters.

However, the Resettlement Expert Council noted that although the local settlement supporter spent hours helping the refugees, this was still not enough for the refugees to be incorporated into the local community (The 3<sup>rd</sup> Resettlement Expert Council Meeting, 2012). Some stakeholders interviewed for this study also raised concerns about the fact that the settlement

supporters are not social workers, and have received very limited training to act as the main counsellors for the resettled refugees in the long-term. Furthermore, certain stakeholders noted that some of the repetitive tasks, although helpful in the short-term, were not necessarily leading the refugees towards self-sufficiency and were not sustainable in the long-term. Some of the refugees themselves also noted that when they asked for specific longer-term support such as finding public housing or information on naturalization, they were told that what they were asking was “difficult” to achieve. It seems that refugees were not directed to broader sources of information and assistance to help them understand the steps to follow to reach these long-term goals.

It does appear that the local settlement supporters fulfill their mandate to assist the resettled refugees with the challenges of day-to-day life. However, fulfilling their mandate to establish a network at the local community has been more challenging. In the case of Misato, according to the Resettlement Expert Council's minutes, the local settlement supporter facilitates resettled refugees to establish links with the local community and other foreign residents. However, even in the case of Misato, no settlement support network for sharing information within the local community has yet been established. RHQ does organize a network meeting approximately every three months at each settlement city, where all stakeholders involved with resettled refugees participate and exchange information about the refugees' status in order to establish local networks among those who support refugees (Refugee Assistance Headquarters). The hope is that responsibility for these meetings will gradually be taken over by the settlement city.

In sum, the work of the local settlement supporters seems to be highly appreciated by the stakeholders and by the refugees themselves. They are a great source of support and comfort for the resettled refugees. However, the focus is on assisting them with daily life, not on helping the resettled refugees to establish their own network. The local settlement supporters' objective should be to facilitate the resettled refugees becoming more self-reliant, and independent of national government assistance. In order to wean the resettled refugees off of long-term reliance on them, the local settlement supporters' role and work tasks should be more focused on showing the refugees where to find local resources, and helping them navigate the supports available locally.

Although it is certainly acknowledged that the type of support provided by the local settlement supporters is necessary in the initial phase of settlement, the support could and should be gradually provided by the civil organizations and NGOs existing in the local community. With an earlier engagement of the local governments, settlement cities will have the time to inventory the services and resources provided and made available locally by volunteers and NGOs. Gaps in services and resources identified by the local government during the inventory process could be addressed by subsidies provided directly to the city by the national government. This is already in place in relation to the subsidies for Japanese language support provided by ACA, which allow the settlement cities to establish language courses and train language teachers. Through the allocation of direct subsidies, settlement cities could establish a system where the day-to-day support provided by the local settlement supporters under the Pilot and funded centrally by the Government of Japan, could transition to resources provided locally.

#### **5.4 After the initial year: Continuous settlement support**

RHQ settlement support staff and local settlement supporters continue to assist the resettled refugees after they have completed their first year in Japan, and are financially self-supporting through earning salaries from their employers. From the initial guidance on budgeting their income, and understanding their tax, pension and health insurance deductions, to continuing to assist parents to understand the correspondence from the children's school, the resettled refugees are guided to become increasingly self-reliant in their daily lives.

The government of Japan does not set any time frame as to when the continuous support should end. This is also reflected in the ACA's subsidy for the local cities to organize language classes, and the continuation of the appointment of local settlement supporters. The Government takes the position as well that the support should be provided as long as the need exists. The settlement support budget, which includes the continuous support provided by the local settlement supporter and language training is allocated annually, therefore each settlement city needs to indicate the necessity for this support. Another way of assessing the need is the survey and monitoring of the refugees' level of adjustment to life in Japan, and the Japanese language monitoring. Continued subsidy and support has normally been granted based on these reports.

Representatives from settlement cities stated that there were no mechanisms for the cities to exchange information and share experiences with other cities that admitted resettled refugees during the Pilot Project. The Resettlement Expert Council's report (2014) also identified the lack of cooperation between the settlement cities. RHQ currently organizes a network meeting at each settlement city separately; however there is no meeting organized for all the settlement cities together.<sup>31</sup> The representatives from the different cities and other civil organizations were receptive to having a common platform to exchange information and expressed their willingness to participate in such a meeting and share their experiences. However, governmental and other stakeholders were careful to note that one city's experience cannot be duplicated in another city, and were therefore more skeptical about the idea of cooperating and coordinating settlement support across different cities and communities.

RHQ staff members were aware that it is problematic that the Resettlement Pilot did not specify when and how to shift the refugees from the national Government-led support to the mainstream supports offered at the city level. However, it was reported that there is no concrete transition plan or criteria to decide when to end the continuous settlement support. Such a transition plan is essential in order to establish a resettlement programme that is sustainable in the long-term. This is important not only from the perspective of effectively utilizing the limited budget but also from the perspective of encouraging engagement with the wider community, as well as self-reliance among the refugees.

The lack of a transition plan highlights the limited availability of support systems for foreign residents, resulting in the ongoing reliance on RHQ. Despite the encouragement to establish a "multicultural co-living policy" and public services catering to the needs of the foreign residents, the types of services available in most other resettlement countries are still very limited in Japan. As highlighted in the evaluation of the Indochinese adaptation, vocational training facilities free-of-charge, interpreter-aided training programs, Japanese language

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<sup>31</sup> See section 5.3.5.

education facilities in local communities, and friendly counsellors who speak appropriate languages are all services that would assist refugees and other foreign residents to become more self-reliant (IOM, 2008).

However, some cities have established supports and services. Although their practices may not always translate to other cities, a platform where stakeholders from all settlement cities gather and share information could function as a forum where the transition plan and criteria could be discussed. Such a forum would also create the opportunity to discuss the formulation of standardized services for foreign residents to be offered at the local level. Moreover this platform can facilitate the collaboration of various cities with the national government to make important information regarding housing, education, employment, health care, and public assistance available to refugees in their native language, which would help ensure that they are able to be fully involved in decisions about their own lives.

### **5.5 Monitoring of the resettled refugees**

As stipulated in the Implementation Decision, every six months a survey of the resettled refugees is conducted. MoFA and ACA commissions RHQ to conduct monitoring of the refugees' level of adjustment to Japan and their Japanese language skills. The results of this monitoring are not released to the public. Both surveys are based on interviews not only with the refugees themselves, but also with stakeholders such as schools and employers. Through monitoring the resettled refugees' lives and their Japanese language level from multiple perspectives, the assessment is made whether or not the resettled refugees are in need of continuous help.

Although the specific questions posed during the monitoring of the refugees' level of adjustment were not shared with the authors of this report, interviews with the stakeholders and resettled refugees indicated that details about the families' lives and the problems that they face are documented through the monitoring. RHQ submits the actual survey responses and a report to MoFA and MoFA sends a summary of this information to all thirteen Ministries and Agencies represented in ICCR. The ministries are therefore informed of the issues that arose within each individual family during the preceding six months. These range from employment to personal and private issues. It was mentioned that it is important to report these issues to other ministries, which makes each Ministry and Agency ready to take responsibility and action when requested. MoHLW, for example, is informed about the employment issues that are identified during the biannual monitoring, and also through job counsellors at the Resettlement Centre.

Ministries believe that they use the monitoring results effectively. However, it should be noted that the resettled refugees reported that although they were frequently asked what they needed, they did not always feel that they were heard. Some expressed particular dissatisfaction that their concerns and requests were dismissed, as they were not within the overall plan for their settlement. Examples included questions about further education and the costs involved, questions about public assistance, and queries about the possibility of travel. These concerns from the refugees reflect the limited framework of the pilot, and the emphasis on self-reliance through employment.

In the monitoring of the progress of Japanese language skills, speaking, reading and writing ability is assessed with the following terminology: V Self-reliant (level 11), IV Watch for (level 8-10), III In need of support (level 5-7), II Basic (level 2-4), I Introductory (level 1).

The resettled refugees at the time of arrival to Japan is expected to have completed level I and at the end of the 180-day Settlement Support Program, the resettled should have completed level II (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2015 (b)).

Feedback from the biannual monitoring is given to the refugees themselves and also to the settlement cities including children's schools. Each individual refugee has a portfolio where they can follow their progress developing Japanese language skills. According to the needs identified in the monitoring results, individuals are given suggestions on available language training possibilities, or guidance on studying and self-study resources. ACA collaborates actively with RHQ to create relevant self-study resources for the resettled refugees. ACA has contracted RHQ to conduct a monitoring survey summarizing the past five years. Through releasing this report to the public, ACA hopes to create awareness about the involvement and efforts they have made to support the resettled refugees' language learning, and share their knowledge and experience with other Japanese language teachers teaching foreigners, and other foreign citizens learning Japanese.

Even though the results of the monitoring seemed to be a valuable source of information to adapt the Resettlement Pilot Project, it is also important to decide when this should end since it is highly resource demanding, and often little changes in later years. Moreover, as ACA hopes, part of the results should be public in order to raise broader awareness and understanding of the Resettlement Programme.

Overall, monitoring is considered an important aspect of implementing a Resettlement Programme internationally, and the Japanese government has established a highly detailed and intensive monitoring process. However, the adaptations made as a result of the monitoring seem to have been limited to those possible within the framework of the Resettlement Pilot Project, resulting in the perception of some of the resettled refugees that they were very closely monitored and watched, but that their desires and requests were not fulfilled. Introducing greater flexibility into the programme's structure would provide resettled refugees with individualized options and the support to reach their own potential, and would enable effective responses to the requests and wishes expressed during the monitoring interviews.

This section has examined the settlement support the government of Japan established for the Resettlement Pilot Project. The national governmental stakeholders noted that there is currently no consideration being given to changing this structure as they thought that the current model of 180 days at the Resettlement Centre and 180 days of vocational training with services delivered by a central implementing agency was appropriate. However, other stakeholders have questioned why this overall framework could not be reconsidered to introduce greater flexibility. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation study (2014) for example suggests a two-year Settlement Support Programme in which the money should accompany the refugees for services to be delivered by the settlement city. It is recommended that there be active discussion about the overall framework and the introduction of flexibility into the settlement support to best meet the needs of individual refugees.

## **6. Current status of the Resettlement Programme and the resettled refugees**

This section examines the current socio-economic situation of the resettled refugees, and the status of the Japanese Resettlement Programme overall. Stakeholder input is included, but the main focus is the refugees' own perspectives on their settlement and their future in Japan.

## **6.1 Awareness of international resettlement needs and Japan's participation**

There is widespread consensus among the stakeholders that there is limited public awareness of international refugee resettlement needs, and of Japan's commitment to accepting refugees. There were some media announcements, and basic information about the resettlement pilot project is provided by the Public Relations Office of Government of Japan, and posted to the involved ministries and agency's websites. However, the majority of the settlement cities and civil society stakeholders became aware of the Resettlement Pilot Project when they were approached either directly by Ministry representatives, or the staff from RHQ.

The Resettlement Expert Council report (2014) pointed out the need to raise awareness by organizing publicity about resettlement for future settlement cities. The Council also recommended the establishment of an inter-ministerial website where all information on Japan's Resettlement Programme is gathered. The council states that the lack of such a website makes it difficult for the public to understand that resettlement is a national programme of importance, and to appreciate why the government invites refugees to resettle in Japan. Moreover, the council points to the necessity of regularly updating information for the public.

In response to calls for greater transparency, the implementing partner has organized an annual "study tour" of the Resettlement Programme for the public since 2014, with the cooperation of the Association for Japanese Language Teaching, International Organization for Migration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and UNHCR. Although this is a beginning, the numbers that participate are very small, and the overall impact is unknown. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and RHQ representatives also participate actively in seminars and conferences.

Since the information released to the public by the Government on the Resettlement Pilot and on the arrival of the resettled refugees has been limited, unfortunately a major focus of public attention has been on the negative media coverage about some of the individual families. In particular, the media has drawn attention to the challenges faced by some of the early arrivals in their efforts to be self-supporting, and to one resettled refugee's conviction on criminal charges.

The focus of the Japanese Resettlement Pilot Project is on achieving self-reliance, however the refugees quite naturally face struggles, especially in the initial settlement phase. The Government's perspective is that these challenges, and in particular the report of criminality was undermining the efforts to gain support from possible settlement cities. Whether or not this publicity has actually undermined the efforts to gain support from cities and its residents to welcome resettled refugees in the longer-term is unknown. The Government's and settlement cities' concern that more public information will lead to the invasion of the resettled refugees' privacy is legitimate since the number of refugees admitted thus far is very small, and it would be easy to identify the individual if too much detail were disclosed. However, overprotecting the refugees' privacy may have hampered their access to activities and connections that might have assisted their integration. Certain stakeholders particularly considered the Pilot's lack of openness to be too protective and inhibiting civil society's involvement with the Resettlement Programme.

Stakeholders generally seem to agree that there is a need for acceptance by the Japanese public before the Resettlement Programme can be expanded. There is also broad agreement

that there is currently a lack of effort by the Government of Japan to promote the Resettlement Programme and raise awareness among the public. Overall, a balance must be struck between informing the public why Japan invites refugees to resettle in their country, and what is involved in the process of resettlement, and the need to protect the privacy of the individual refugees resettled.

Furthermore, although the cities do understand that the Government of Japan is engaged in refugee resettlement as part of an international responsibility sharing, the cities have difficulties matching this national objective with their realities. Since the cities themselves do not have humanitarian outreach as one of their objectives, resources cannot be allocated on this basis. Another difficulty seems to lie in the fact that despite recognizing the world refugee problem and UNHCR's three durable solutions, the Cabinet Agreement does not in fact present resettlement as a humanitarian responsibility for Japan. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation study (2014) raises this point and stresses the importance of making the principle of the Resettlement Programme clear. It should be clearly explained to the public why Japan admits resettled refugees, and this should strongly be based on humanitarian grounds.

It is noted that NGOs contributed to the mobilization of public opinion favouring refugee acceptance and signing of the Refugee Convention at the time of Indochinese refugees, and contributed to the idea of international responsibility sharing (Kawakami et al., 2009). The stakeholders from civil society interviewed for this report all expressed their wish to be more involved in the Resettlement Programme and noted that the program is currently not taking advantage of the resources that exist locally. The Government on the contrary says that they do welcome more involvement from the civil society.

There is a clear gap here between the perspective of the civil society organizations and the Government. The civil society organizations would like to lend a hand but feel that they are not welcomed, even though government officials state that there is a desire to cooperate. As examples of how they welcome the civil society's involvement, the Government mentions the activities with the local and ethnic communities that are initiated during the time in the Resettlement Centre. While it is true that the involvement of the local and ethnic community in the Resettlement Programme during the initial six months of Settlement Support Programme has increased, the lack of engagement of the civil society in the second half of the settlement support and afterwards cannot be denied. Although the local settlement supporters were intended to bridge these gaps, by all accounts their focus has still been on assisting the refugees with their day-to-day practical needs, particularly for support to understand Japanese.

The difficulties faced by the NGOs in their activities to mobilize public opinion during the time of the admission of the Indochinese refugees included their limited financial resources to engage in publicity activities and the lack of Government funding (Kawakami et al., 2009). As was eventually done during the time of the Indochinese refugees' arrival, the Government of Japan could utilize the publicity activities already organized through the advocacy of various refugee support organization and NGOs in order to raise awareness about Japan's Resettlement Programme. However, it is important to note that the necessary human and financial resources would need to be provided to help the organizations. Moreover these publicity activities need to go hand in hand with the government making information about the Resettlement Programme more accessible to the wider public.

As pointed out by one of the civil society stakeholders, the lack of current cooperation between the Government and the civil society to raise awareness of resettlement may be



rooted in the inadequate coordination and information sharing between the Government, the settlement city, refugee assistance organizations and civil society about the kind of supports for foreigners that could be provided locally. This inadequate coordination is especially apparent after the resettled refugees settle in their local community. Recently, the local settlement supporters have been mandated to establish local refugee support networks. However, the cities and refugee assistance organizations including RHQ are not always aware of the support already offered by local NGOs, and the pilot did not bring NGOs and ethnic organizations into the process of settling the resettled refugees into their settlement cities and communities. Becoming more aware of the services that are provided locally, not only through the city but also through existing local NGOs and volunteers, will enable the cities and the Government to identify which services are lacking and where resources are needed. Currently the services are provided in an ad-hoc way: when the need is identified, the financial resources are provided. Greater awareness and advance planning would lead to more effective provision of governmental support to the settlement cities.

It is identified internationally that public support is necessary to ensure that Resettlement Programmes continue, and that public support can only be established through raising the awareness and engagement of civil society and the general public. In order to improve the current situation in Japan, increased cooperation between stakeholders at all levels, and more public transparency about the Resettlement Programme is required. Only with public support will there be long-term political support in Japan to continue to engage in refugee resettlement. Japan must establish a public information strategy in order to ensure that their Resettlement Programme has a stable future.

## **6.2 Geographical mobility and current housing situation**

The majority of the resettled refugees live in a three-room apartment, with a few living in a four-room apartment or a house/townhouse. Most of the families live in public housing developments (*danchi*) in the vicinity of Tokyo.

As indicated in the brief information on the resettled refugees in the introduction, only families from the first group moved from their original settlement community. Each of the families from the first group has moved at least once – four families made a secondary move to a different city and the remaining family switched housing. The families who moved found a new apartment in a new city, with some help from RHQ, and in a few cases, NGOs or the ethnic community.

Later arrivals are still living in the apartment to which they initially moved after spending six months at the Resettlement Centre, with the exception of one family that changed apartments following noise complaints by the neighbour.

Many families felt that their current housing is “*too small*,” especially when thinking about their growing children. However, all but a few stated that they are satisfied with the current housing since it is located conveniently to the daily necessities such as the children’s school, grocery shops, and medical clinics. The women in the families expressed their satisfaction with the fact that their workplace is close to their home and convenient, while the men in the families noted that they had a long commute to their work. The resettled men typically commute around one and a half hours one-way by train.

At the time of the study, the families who arrived as the fifth group in 2014 were still living in Shinjuku, Tokyo where the Resettlement Centre is located. They all lived in two-room apartments, whatever the size of the family. The apartment that they were going to move into at the settlement city was already decided. They will live in two or three-room apartments and looked forward to having a larger space for the family, as even those choosing a two-room apartment stated that the rooms were larger than in the current apartment.

The rent varied from around 54,000 JPY to 90,000 JPY. The families living in a housing development paid lower rent than those who lived in an independent apartment or townhouse. Moreover the rent in the housing developments that RHQ found for the resettled refugees is significantly lower than the rent of the housing the resettled refugees found in other ways. This demonstrates the success of RHQ in locating affordable housing. Some families expressed their desire to live in Tokyo or in a larger apartment but the awareness of the cost of moving and the possible higher rent prevented the families from making a move. Lack of information on how to apply for public housing and how to look for housing in general was also identified. The families who have moved to a different apartment from the one where they were initially settled did note that although the monthly cost for housing was higher now, and the cost for moving was in some cases substantial, they were nevertheless happier with the new place.

Resettled refugees were satisfied with the process of the move to the settlement cities and the housing offered to them.<sup>32</sup> The families that were not presented with options and were dissatisfied with the housing chose to move. The secondary moves were possible through the help offered by refugee assistance organizations and the ethnic community. One of the resettled families that did move said that if you do not have a social network that helps you, moving is not possible. Many expressed their desire for a bigger apartment in the future, but cited the financial costs of moving and the lack of information on how to look for an apartment as factors preventing them from moving. It can be concluded that the families' mobility is constrained by the lack of both a social network to assist them and sufficient resources to cover the costs.

## **6.3 Children's education**

### **6.3.1 Stakeholders thoughts on children's education**

Interviews with the daycare staff and elementary and middle school teachers, including those who are engaged in the take-out classes, gave a clear impression that the children are adjusting well to life in Japan. The understanding was that the younger children are doing better, showing almost no difference in their Japanese language level and their interaction with other children and the staff/teachers.

The older children, especially those who arrived in Japan around the age of transition from elementary school to middle school are experiencing more difficulties. Middle school teachers showed a concern that as the grades advance, the refugee children are struggling due to lack of previous educational experiences. The children in middle schools preparing for the entrance exams for high school struggle with their Japanese skills. As one of the teachers put it, it is one thing to be able to speak and understand Japanese, but another thing to be able to

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<sup>32</sup> See also section 5.2.4.

understand the abstract meaning of the words and sentences. Entrance exams, and exams in middle schools in general, require advanced understanding of abstract meanings and involve a process of giving complex explanations, with which the refugee children arriving at a slightly older age face difficulties. As the school teachers and some stakeholders indicate, entrance to high school in Japan is a crucial factor for these children and families to be able to attain self-reliance and secure a better economic status in the future. Therefore the teachers were concerned and did their best to provide the resettled children with as many opportunities and options for high schools as possible.

The teachers were also concerned with the financial status of the family. While elementary schools most often offer after-school activities where children can receive help with their homework if they wish, middle schools do not offer this daily help. Normally Japanese children will study in a “cram school (*juku*)” after school to keep up with the schoolwork and prepare for the entrance exams, but these are private institutions and cost money. According to the teachers, the refugee families are not always able to afford these fees and they have to manage studying on their own. While the teachers showed concerns, they were also positive about the fact that some children will be able to pass an exam to attend regular high school. The schools also inform the children and the parents about the possibility of pursuing a high school diploma through night high school, since the entrance to the night high school is less competitive and the cost of tuition is also lower.

Children who are too old to attend elementary school at the time of arrival to Japan, however have not completed the Japanese obligatory schooling (9 years) and therefore have the alternative of attending night middle school while working during the day. Stakeholders identify the night school as a perfect environment for older children to learn Japanese and receive education.

Various stakeholders referred back to the fact that resettled refugees come to Japan with a wish to give their children the opportunity for higher education. They also identify a gap between the refugees' wish and the current Resettlement Programme, which does not address the financial support for education for children. Currently, different settlement cities need to apply for a subsidy from their own prefectures in order to secure extra teachers and take-out classes. There are two problems identified in the current system. The first problem is that these subsidies need to be applied for almost a year in advance, while the settlement city finds out about the resettled refugee children's school attendance only about two months before the school year starts — therefore the timing is very late. MoFA has been actively addressing the issue with the Ministry of Education, from which the prefectures receive the subsidies that are allocated to the cities. Settlement cities have so far been flexible in finding the resources needed to have the extra teacher in the schools. The Ministry of Education is, according to MoFA, willing to allocate resources to the prefectures if necessary, and if the settlement cities express the need for it. The second problem is in fact the requirement that the settlement city needs to take the initiative to apply for a subsidy. The involved Ministries cannot help if the settlement city does not request the extra teachers.

To respond to the above two problems, several stakeholders suggest allocating money directly to the city so that the schools can hire extra teachers for take-out classes specifically for resettled children in need. This can be implemented in two ways, either as recommended in by Sasakawa Peace Foundation study (2014), by allocating the funds to the settlement cities for them to administer, or by allocating money from the government directly to the schools that the resettled children will attend. The Resettlement Pilot Project did not provide any

financial support for children's education except for one-time school entrance subsidies; it is highly recommended that such support be considered in the future.

Another point raised by stakeholders is the importance of choosing a settlement city according to the standard of locally existing support for children in schools. It is recognized that some cities in Japan offer extra language support in schools, and that there are many cities with established international associations that offer supplemental Japanese language classes for children. After the experience of the first year of the pilot project, this point is already incorporated by RHQ when looking for a potential settlement city, however greater efforts are expected to be made to recruit these cities to welcome resettled refugees.

The Cabinet Secretariat noted that there are good scholarship programmes available for university education, UNHCR's programme being one of them, but also recognized that being awarded a scholarship requires a high level of Japanese competency and academic skills. Moreover, some scholarships are restricted to Japanese citizens, or citizens of certain other countries. Japan Student Services Organization, which provides student loans, states that individuals with foreign citizenships should consult individual universities and colleges for their eligibility criteria (JSSO). Local governments and cities also offer scholarships, requiring that applicants have been residents of the city for a certain period of time. It is also important to note, as some of the stakeholders interviewed stressed, that the majority of the financial support available is in the form of student loans, which means that the financial burden is simply pushed forward into the future.

### **6.3.2 Resettled refugees thoughts on children's education**

The resettled refugees were generally satisfied with the education that their children are receiving currently and hopeful that they will be able to provide their children with educational opportunities. The five families enrolled in the Resettlement Centre at the time of the interviews also shared the hope that they can support their children to obtain a good education. Through the children's three-week school experience, and information about the education system in Japan given so far, the five families felt that they understood how the education system works in general.

All of the resettled refugees, however, share a concern about the cost of education in the future. Most of the families have younger children and the concern is abstract; but those families with children already in middle school or who will be attending middle school in the coming years are seriously considering the financial burden and the limitations in their ability to support higher education. One family said *"Japan is good for the children and for the children's future. But if the parents can't provide for the children, you can't provide the future."* These families told the interviewer that they shared these concerns with the children's teachers.

Some of the families were not worried about their children's Japanese ability, but showed concern that their children will never be at the same level as other Japanese children because of the lack of Japanese ability of the parents. One said, *"When Japanese children have problems with their homework, they can ask their parents, but if our children ask us we can't help them."*

The three older children also reported difficulties with the Japanese language. They are currently enrolled in either nighttime high school or middle school. In the night middle school,

where most of the students are of foreign background, they receive support to learn Japanese. However going into a night high school at which most students are Japanese, the amount of support they receive decreases. One of them said he could speak the language better than his parents; however, at the same time he described his situation as “*frustrating*.” He shared the helplessness of not being able to achieve as much as he expected himself, and his concern that he may not get the job that he wants because of the lack of Japanese language. Even though he feels great frustration, he expressed his hope of studying at a university through scholarship programmes.

Since the resettled families arrived in Japan with the hope of giving their children better educational opportunities, it is very encouraging that the parents are satisfied with the education their children are receiving. However their worries about not being able to afford higher education for their children should not be taken lightly. Financial constraints in supporting their children's education were identified even among Indochinese refugees arriving 35 years ago, and the current income level of the resettled refugees will make it difficult to fund higher education from their earnings in the future.

As mentioned earlier, scholarships and student loans are available for higher education. However this requires a certain level of academic and language skills. Providing sufficient Japanese training and academic support at the early stages is therefore crucial to ensuring that the resettled children have the option of higher education. To provide the best possible start, the financial resources to fund extra teachers at elementary and middle schools should be secured for all the children. It is also recommended that offering resettled families not only a one-time sum when the children enter schools, but continuous financial support for their children's education. For example, Japan offers financial support for children to attend cram schools if the family is on public assistance. Extending this support to resettled refugees, even when they are not on public assistance, would recognize their efforts to support their families through their own employment, as well as the needs of their children for extra support to reach their potential.

## **6.4 Japanese language proficiency**

### **6.4.1 Stakeholder's thoughts on language proficiency and continuous language support**

According to ACA, the bi-annual monitoring of the resettled refugees' Japanese language proficiency confirms that they have not reached the level of self-reliance.<sup>33</sup> ACA representatives said that the refugees all advance in their speaking ability, but the reading and writing ability varies. The disparities in the Japanese ability levels between those who receive targeted language training and are making progress, and those whose ability significantly declines after settlement is growing steadily.

As of 2012, subsidies are available for the settlement city to organize language classes specifically for the resettled refugees.<sup>34</sup> However, some cities do not wish to use the subsidy as they have a policy to not discriminate between resettled refugees and other foreign residents. The ACA informs the cities about the possibilities, and would like to provide as

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<sup>33</sup> See section 5.5.

<sup>34</sup> See section 5.3.4.

much support as possible. In the end, however, it is the settlement cities that must notify the agency of the need for a subsidy, and the cities cannot be forced to apply for the subsidy. Some of the settlement cities have pre-existing, well-established language classes run by local volunteers and organizations. Japanese language education counsellors interview the refugees every six months and give them advice on resources and the classes that are available locally. However, the refugees identify that they have very little free time, which limits the participation in these established classes. In the cities that utilize the subsidy to offer classes tailored to their needs, resettled refugees do attend the language classes. The fact that some cities are not taking advantage of the subsidy is therefore exacerbating the widening disparity in language proficiency among the resettled refugees mentioned above.

According to ACA, the monitoring results show that the children are doing much better than the adults and there are some who are at the level of self-reliance. However, sometimes the school teachers do not understand the difference between using Japanese in daily life and Japanese as a language to study. As discussed previously,<sup>35</sup> the ability to speak and understand Japanese is separate from the ability to understand the abstract meaning of the words and sentences. Other stakeholders also identify this gap between spoken Japanese, and the ability to study in Japanese. Left unaddressed, this gap can lead to further disadvantages in educational attainment as the children become older. Having the Japanese language education counsellor and ACA inform schools of the monitoring results and provide necessary advice is therefore crucial to the future of the individual children.

According to their employers, the refugees' language skills have improved, and only the employer of the refugees who arrived in 2013 continues to request the presence of an RHQ interpreter when needing to give complicated instructions. The employers of the resettled refugees who arrived in 2010 and 2011 did not identify any further need for interpreters or special supports related to the workplace.

Although refugees are making progress, providing effective continuous language support continues to be challenging. It is recommended that financial support be allocated directly to the settlement cities to ensure that all resettled refugees have access to classes, and avoid creating an unequal language-learning environment.<sup>36</sup>

#### **6.4.2 Resettled refugees thoughts on their language proficiency**

Difficulty with the Japanese language is the one thing that all the resettled refugees have in common, whichever year they arrived in Japan. This is the area of life for which the families still express the need for help and support, no matter how independent they feel in other aspects. It is important to note though that there might be a gap between their evaluation of their Japanese and their actual skills; one individual reported, *"My Japanese is 1% of 100%."* Some of the resettled said that they face difficulties finding work because they do not speak or understand a sufficient amount of Japanese. One resettled who changed jobs said, *"It is difficult even for a Japanese person to find a job, and if you can't read and write it is even more difficult."* Poor Japanese skills seemed to hinder the resettled refugees' social interaction as well. Many expressed the wish to participate more fully in Japanese society, but reported that they could not do so because of their limited language skills.

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<sup>35</sup> See section 5.3.3.

<sup>36</sup> See also the discussion in section 5.2.3a.

Reading and writing Japanese were identified as the most difficult aspects. Although the schools and workplaces make efforts to spell words using the Japanese alphabet which most of the resettled refugees can read, they report that they need help reading the documents sent from their workplace or children's schools. The refugees report that they can read the words, but they do not always understand the meaning. The most complicated are the administrative documents and letters sent by the settlement city office related for example to pensions, taxes and insurance, which are written in Chinese characters rather than in the Japanese alphabet. Help is provided by RHQ staff (including the local settlement supporter), neighbours, co-workers, and in a few cases, NGO staff members. Some families said that their children sometimes read documents for them, but the children often do not understand the meaning of the words, and therefore it is better to ask an adult Japanese person.

It is also significant that the resettled feel that their mobility is affected by their limited language skills. Some said that because of their difficulties in reading Japanese, they are not comfortable taking trains or buses to visit new places. One family stated, "*Because of the Japanese language barrier there is less entertainment in life.*" Some of the resettled are more mobile than others, exploring different places in Tokyo with their families and able to do some grocery shopping outside of their residential areas.

Among the resettled refugees that arrived before 2014, all except one individual indicated that they are not satisfied with their abilities and wished to continue studying Japanese. However, the majority of the refugees arriving in the initial years said that they currently do not study Japanese at all. They explained that this was due to the lack of free time, since they are busy with work and domestic duties. The men particularly reported that their long working hours prevented them from studying. Many stated that if they did not have to worry about earning an income in the short-term they would choose to go back to school and study Japanese full-time to improve their long-term prospects. It is clear that the form of continuous language training and support offered by the settlement cities does have an impact on the refugees' attendance. The families who are currently offered individual language classes as a result of the subsidy provided by the ACA told the interviewer that they gather every Sunday at the community center where the adults study work-related Japanese and the children do their homework or play games using Japanese.

Even though the resettled are not satisfied with their language skills, many declared that their speaking ability has improved and that have no problem understanding the work-related Japanese. Most of the resettled that arrived in 2010 and 2011 seemed to feel a certain degree of confidence in daily conversations as well. The interviews conducted with the refugees depicted their willingness to communicate directly in Japanese, and the degree of confidence they have in speaking the language. Even though the interviewer can never be sure that the resettled refugees understood every word, the interviews were mostly conducted in Japanese without the help of the interpreter, and the interviewer had no difficulty understanding what the resettled refugees wanted to say. Other indications of the increased confidence in speaking Japanese include the fact that refugees are going to the doctor at the local clinic by themselves, and are able to have a meeting with their children's teachers without an interpreter.

Achieving proficiency in the local language is crucial to any resettled refugee's ability to become self-reliant in their new country. Despite gradual improvements, the majority of the refugees resettled to Japan feel that their insufficient language skills are restricting their access to information, their social integration, and their overall mobility, which is a significant concern.

## **6.5 Health**

The resettled refugees have full access to Japanese health care. They are covered under the national health insurance plan through their work, or on their own. The children are also entitled to the regular medical subsidies for infants and children, and have free medical care until they reach the age of 15. The majority of the resettled described their health status as good or fair, but a handful of resettled described their status as poor. Some had work-related physical issues, while others have chronic health conditions pre-dating their arrival in Japan. Some with chronic health conditions obtained special health insurance covering all costs for the consultation and the medication related to the specific disease. None of the families were dissatisfied or worried about the medical care and cost for themselves or their children. However, those with health problems that caused them to miss work from time to time were worried about not being able to work and generate adequate income to meet their needs.

While a handful of the refugees have never seen a doctor, all of them reported that they knew where to go if they need any medical attention. All the families have received medical care for their children when they were sick. One family had experienced calling an ambulance. Several of the women have given birth in Japan, and said that they were satisfied with the medical attention they and their babies received during their pregnancy.

Most of them feel confident about seeing a doctor at a local clinic by themselves, however they occasionally need the help of an interpreter or a Japanese person when going to a hospital or when receiving important information from a doctor. This is due to the administrative procedures that require writing, reading, and advanced Japanese language skills in these situations.

## **6.6 Economic self-sufficiency**

The majority of the resettled refugees are currently able to meet their own economic needs, however many are insecure about their long-term financial stability. For some this insecurity was related to having health issues or insecure jobs. The men are mostly working full-time, while the women are working part-time. A number of the families are living on low incomes, and are not able to save any money to provide security for the longer-term.

Currently one family is on public assistance but there are other families who likely qualify, and would benefit from extra financial support to meet their basic needs. Resettled refugees can in theory access the support and services available to other low-income residents in their local cities. However, here again they are challenged by insufficient language skills, lack of information on how to access the services, and the lack of a social network to help them. As well, the resettled refugees feel the pressure to be self-supporting through employment.

### **6.6.1 Stakeholder's thoughts on resettled refugees' economic self-sufficiency**

The employers interviewed reported that the resettled refugees learned quickly, and were diligent workers. Their pay is comparable with other types of jobs available in Japan for low-skilled workers, and with more experience the workers can eventually earn a higher income at these positions. Employers also demonstrated their concern for the refugees' welfare, and willingness to be flexible to ensure that the refugees earned a minimum monthly income to support their families. Nevertheless, while the employers are supportive, the pay is relatively low considering the number of children the families need to support. From the perspective of



the employers, the jobs do offer the possibility of promotions and higher income in the future, however the low language skills could hinder the refugees' advancement.

When viewed only from the perspective of whether or not the families are receiving public assistance, all but one family is self-supporting. This family is currently receiving financial assistance to supplement their earnings. As defined under the Public Assistance Law, Japan's social security programme assures a minimum level of support for those who are not able to meet their needs through their own income (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication). Although foreign residents' right to public assistance is not currently protected under the Public Assistance Law, permanent residents and those with long-term settler permits are eligible to apply and local governments have the discretion to allocate assistance under their budgetary provisions (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2004 (b)).

An NGO helped the resettled refugee family apply for the assistance through the local government. The civil society's understanding is that the government sees this as a possible failure for the resettlement pilot. Concerns were raised about government pressuring families to work rather than go on public assistance for fear that they might not resume employment and reach self-sufficiency. The Cabinet Secretariat did acknowledge clearly that when there is a need, resettled refugees could apply for assistance under the social security system that exists in Japan, in order to ease their temporary difficulties and reach the minimum standard of living. However, it cannot be denied that the overall perspective of the government authorities was that employment was the goal for all the resettled refugees, and public assistance was to be avoided.

A social worker stressed that the family on public assistance clearly deserves the assistance they are receiving. According to this case worker, the size of the family, combined with health issues that impacted one member's ability to work, make it very unlikely that the family members together will be able to earn the minimum income that the family is considered to need until one of the children reaches adulthood. Some of the other families that are struggling with health problems and the challenge of supporting large families on limited incomes could also benefit from having their earned income supplemented through public assistance.

It is considered a success of the Resettlement Pilot that all the adults who are able to work are in fact working. Their low salaries are not due to the fact that they are resettled refugees, but are rather a common problem in the Japanese service and industry sectors. Nevertheless those families experiencing challenges in making ends meet likely qualify for public assistance to supplement their income, and their access should be facilitated. Lessening the emphasis on being completely financially self-reliant would ease the concerns and insecurity of these families, considerably improving their quality of life. Requiring extra financial support from public assistance in the short term should not be regarded as a failure for the Resettlement Programme.

### **6.6.2 Refugee's thoughts on their work and economic situation**

Since the families arriving in 2014 have not started their on-the-job vocational training at the time of the interview, the feedback is limited to 13 families that are at the settlement city and working. The majority of the adults continue to be employed at the initial workplace where they did their on-the-job vocational training, although a large number of those that arrived in 2010 and 2011 have changed jobs.

All stated that they earn slightly more money per household now compared to the income support they received from the government during the on-the-job vocational training. However, many resettled families indicated that the men were earning more while the women were earning less. This is due to the fact that the men have a full-time contract while the women have part-time work. During the on-the-job vocational training, both the men and women were working the set full-time hours (9-17) and were paid the same amount of money (around 120,000 JPY per month).

The majority of men have secure, full-time employment, although the basis of payment varies between commission-based pay and a monthly salary, depending on the employer. Those who did not possess a secure job, or had a lower income were those who had changed jobs. None of the men were unemployed at the time of the interview. They normally work six days a week and the working hours vary depending on the workplace. The estimated average working hours, according to the employers and the resettled refugees, are between five to ten hours a day (with a lunch break). Those paid on a commission basis tend to work longer hours compared to those who earn a monthly salary. Most of them need to commute about an hour and a half by train to the workplace. The majority of the resettled men have a fixed worksite, however the worksites of those employed in construction change, which results in their commuting time varying from one hour to more than two hours. The resettled refugees talked about the initial difficulties they had in commuting such a long distance. Some still complain about the long commute, resulting in comments such as: *"I am away from home from 5am to 11pm."* The men earn around 200,000 JPY per month after taxes and all necessary benefits such as health insurance and pension are deducted. Some of those who are paid by commission noted that they are occasionally able to earn around 300,000 JPY or more. The men who did not have a secure job were working part-time and were paid by the hour, earning between 90,000 to 160,000 JPY per month. Their jobs are based on a split shift system and they are not guaranteed a certain number of hours of work per month, which results in an unstable income.

The majority of the women, on the other hand, were working five days a week, part-time, and were paid by the hour. Most of the women who arrived in 2010 and 2011 changed jobs from the initial workplace where they conducted their on-the-job vocational training. Only one fourth of resettled women have stayed with their initial workplace, and one third were unemployed at the time of the interview. Unemployment is caused by a variety of factors including the availability of daycare places, language difficulty and pregnancy/childbirth. The fact that the women are only engaged in part-time jobs is explained as something that cannot be helped, since most of the families have small children who need to be picked up from the daycare facilities at a certain time, and are also prone to becoming sick in which case mothers are expected to stay home with them. Some of the women explained that they changed jobs to find an employer who would allow them to take days off or leave work earlier if the situation demanded. The women earn less than the men due to the nature of their employment. They work between five to seven hours per day, earning between 40,000 JPY to 100,000 JPY per month. The ones who have stayed with the initial employer earn slightly more per month, which amounts to between 80,000 and 150,000 JPY per month.

Three older children are attending night middle or high school, and are working part-time during the day. Their school hours are from 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm, and they work about four hours per day, earning around 40,000 to 50,000 JPY. All but one found their part-time job through their own networks. In general they regarded these part-time jobs as temporary places to work until they graduate.

On average, each family has a minimum household income of around 300,000 JPY after tax if both of the adults were working, and around 200,000 JPY if only one is working. RHQ initially aims for full-time employment for men with a salary of around 200,000 JPY per month, which is a good reflection of the current economic situation of the resettled refugees. There are a few families who are not able to earn 200,000 JPY per month, and one of them is on public assistance. All except the family receiving public assistance said that they always had enough money to make ends meet, and never faced a situation where the family could not pay the necessary bills or buy the necessary things. Rent, utilities, and food are named as the expenses on which they spend most of their money. One third of the 13 families indicated that even though it is a small amount, they are able to save some money for the future. The rest of the refugees stated that they have just the exact amount that they need every month, but it is not always enough to buy extra things for their children. One family even stated that they sometimes borrowed money from their friends. RHQ's target of an income of 200,000 JPY per month for the men, with the expectation that the women would also be working, suggests that 200,000 JPY is a cutoff line indicating whether or not the families have sufficient income. The fact that there are several families only earning around 200,000 JPY per household indicates the necessity to examine whether they really have an adequate income to support their families.

Although families are generally able to make ends meet every month, they have concerns about their financial status. Many of the resettled refugees reported that other than RHQ, they do not know who to talk to when they have difficulties securing sufficient income in a particular month and are in financial need. The common understanding was that *"the government will not help us with money."* One family reported that when they raised their financial concerns, the advice was focused on employment: *"Your wife is not working and she should work."*

Some of the resettled stated that securing a job is difficult because of the stagnating economy and limited opportunities in Japan, together with their limited Japanese language ability. Half of the refugees also feel that it is difficult to ensure a secure income. This was noted by those who were working on a commission basis, and those with health issues that hindered them from working the hours necessary to receive a full salary. This feeling of insecurity, however, is not necessarily a reflection of their actual income and their current economic situation, but rather an indication of the common worry about their ability to keep up with their obligations.

In general, the refugees seemed to be satisfied with their work and work tasks, and describe their employer and colleagues as friendly and nice. Some of the resettled refugees reflected that the initial difficulties they faced derived from the lack of understanding of the subtle nuances in the Japanese work culture. For example, one of the resettled refugees said that he had a small conflict with the employer since he did not stand facing his boss when the morning gathering was held. He said, *"Nobody told me that I needed to look into my boss's eyes when I listen to him speaking!"* None of the resettled refugees mentioned having current difficulties with their employer, except for occasional language barriers. They also felt that they can take days off when they or their family members are sick and in need of care. The majority of the resettled are employed in an environment that is predominantly Japanese, however they state that they very seldom use Japanese at work since their manual/factory labour doesn't require speaking. A few mentioned that they spend time with their colleagues outside of the workplace, for example going out for a drink after work, or meeting for lunch on a day off. Some of the resettled see the possibility of a raise and advancement at the current workplace, and a couple of them have in fact already received a pay increase.

Even though the resettled refugees are satisfied with their work, and are working hard, it is challenging for them to earn enough to ease their worries about their future socio-economic condition. They feel considerable pressure to survive on their own income, even when encountering temporary difficulties that mean they cannot reach the minimum standard of living. Despite the fact that resettled refugees have the right to access the Japanese social security system when they are in need, just like any other residents of Japan, their own perception is that they should not apply and would not get any financial support.

It is unclear what the resettled refugees are actually told, but it is clear that they do not feel reassured that the basic needs of their families would be met regardless of whether they are able to earn sufficient income. Moreover, their lack of social network and challenges accessing locally available sources of information are further barriers to learning about possible sources of financial assistance. The majority of the resettled refugees seemed not to be aware that they are eligible for financial help from their settlement cities if it were assessed as necessary. Access to the public assistance programme if required is essential to restoring safety and security for resettled refugees, and knowledge is essential for access. It is recommended that the process of applying for public assistance be explained to families encountering financial difficulties, and that enough information about this possibility be given in the initial orientation about life in Japan.

## **6.7 Social network and interaction**

With only limited publicity about Japan's participation in resettlement, and no preparation of the local communities where the refugees were settled, it is not surprising that the refugees demonstrate very limited involvement in their neighbourhoods. Without awareness of the fact that these refugees are invited to build permanent new lives in Japan, there is little encouragement for the Japanese public to foster a sense of belonging for their new neighbours, or encourage participation in local society. Giving local settlement supporters the mandate of establishing a local network for the resettled refugees was recognition of the importance of such support.

Around half of the resettled had some kind of interaction with their neighbours, such as exchanging greetings or having a small chat. However, the remaining did not know who their neighbours were and could not answer whether the residential area was predominantly Japanese or a mix of foreign and Japanese populations. One refugee said, *"If you don't come across another Karen person, you don't speak to anyone."* Especially the male refugees did not have any interaction with the neighbours, since they left for work early and came home at night. The female refugees had more interaction with their neighbours, especially with neighbours that had children in the same school. Most of the resettled refugees, both mothers and fathers, have met their children's teachers and participate in school activities. Through school activities, the resettled seem to have some interaction with other parents even though the exchange is limited in light of language difficulties.

The resettled refugees had not only very little connection with their neighbours, but also little knowledge of their neighbourhoods. Many of the resettled did not know where the local facilities, such as the community center or library, were located. Even those who knew where to find the facilities said that they had never made use of them. Some did say, however, that their children were taking advantage of these local facilities.

Refugees reported that the Japanese people around them are friendly and nice, but only a handful mentioned engaging in activities with them, such as spending time with colleagues after work. The majority of the families reported that they spend their weekends at home due mostly to household duties or financial constraints. As mentioned earlier, the resettled refugees participate in school activities and seem to have connections with the community through their children's school and daycare. However, because of lack of time and financial means, they almost never participate in recreational events outside of their local neighbourhoods.

The families have a very limited network to ask for help when in need of financial or social support. The majority of the resettled refugees, regardless of their year of arrival, identify RHQ as the only or main organization they can contact for help. They do not have a clear idea either where to get information about available pre-existing services in the settlement cities. This includes the five families who are yet to move into their new settlement city. Only a handful of resettled refugees from earlier groups mentioned their colleagues, neighbours, ethnic community members or representatives of other NGOs as possible persons to turn to when in need of help. One of the families utilizing other sources of help commented, "*We do what we can ourselves. If you don't try yourself and ask always, you will never learn.*"

When the interviewer asked the families if they had anything they would like to say about the pilot, several adults expressed their dissatisfaction about being asked periodically what support and help they needed and wanted, but feeling that these requests were never heard. Moreover, some felt discouraged about consulting the only source of help, RHQ, as they felt that RHQ's focus was limited to immediate issues, and that they were not able to assist refugees to reach longer-term goals beyond the scope of the Resettlement Pilot. Again, this is indicative of the need to ensure that resettled refugees can access broader sources of information and support to assist them to plan their own lives.

The refugees have interactions and connections with the other resettled families living in the same residential area, and some families travel to meet other resettled refugees in their communities. Most of the men shared the same workplace as well, which seems to provide them great support not only in commuting but also in managing the actual work tasks. Even though the resettled have connections to each other, connections to the wider ethnic community were almost never mentioned. The lack of contact was explained by the resettled refugees partly due to the problems with logistics but mostly to the lack of time and interest in connecting with the wider Karen or Burmese community. However, it must be noted that several of the resettled refugees reported that they called the RHQ interpreters frequently for help and advice, particularly during the initial period after moving to their new homes. These interpreters, therefore, did provide a bridge to the wider Karen or Burmese community.

The five families participating in the Resettlement Programme said that they have had opportunities to meet and talk to people from their own ethnic groups. However, the resettled refugees reported that they did not talk to them on a regular basis or did not exchange phone numbers with them, because they were "*not interested.*"

Contrary to the lack of network among the adult resettled refugees, the older children seem to have established a better social network with Japanese friends, however they raise the lack of ethnic ties as a problem. The three older children have a network of friends through school and spend time with them outside of school. The friends they have seem to be predominantly Japanese, and they noted the absence of ethnic community members of their own age. None

of the three attended the same night school. From April, a couple of older children will start attending the school that one of the three is currently attending. The child said that he talks on the phone with them sometimes, tells them about school, and is looking forward to attending the school together.

In sum, the resettled refugees do not have a wide network of support. Very few adult refugees indicate that they have friends outside of the group of Karen resettled refugees. Although several talk about being friendly with their Japanese work colleagues, to date, the resettled refugees have not built support networks beyond those contracted to assist them, or others from their same cultural background. This point can be connected to the fact that civil society stakeholders are not involved, and that refugees are not systematically introduced to the services available in the settlement cities and local community. Currently there is no transition plan outlining how and when the resettled refugees should shift from the national Government-led support to the support system offered at the city level. Such a transition plan would guide RHQ's work towards introducing alternative support networks other than those contracted by the government. A clear transition plan and informing the resettled refugees when the after-support ends is also essential for the resettled refugees to understand that it is important for them to establish their own networks and reach out to other sources of advice and information.

#### **6.8 Resettled refugees thoughts about the future, and the level of overall satisfaction**

The resettled refugees were generally satisfied with their lives in Japan. Half of the adults who had been in Japan longer than a year stated that they are satisfied and the rest showed some mixed feelings. Some clearly stated that they are happy that they came to Japan, but that their current situation is not satisfactory. Those who expressed mixed feelings share the same thought *"It is tough to live and work in Japan."* The mixed feelings often seemed to derive from issues concerning their financial status and their limited language skills. One resettled person said, *"Japan is a country where you need to fight alone. You work alone and save money, then you become happy."*

Most identify security and safety as the best thing about living in Japan. All except one felt safe in Japan, and most of them felt that they are given enough support and help when needed. However, the refugees' limited Japanese language skills and limited social networks to seek help could lead to situations where their security and safety could be undermined. Also named among the positive things about Japan were being able to find work, access to education for children and nice people in the country. When asked the most difficult thing about living in Japan, all but a couple named their challenges with the Japanese language. Some shared their worries about their financial status, that they may not be able to pay for their children's education, or that if they get sick they will not have any income.

All are positive about being able to teach their children the Karen/Burmese language and culture. The resettled refugees felt that they were able to uphold their own cultural traditions so far, however they expressed concerns about keeping the mother tongue alive for the children's generation. Some families who arrived in 2010 and 2011 are facing the fact that their children feel more comfortable speaking in Japanese than Karen or Burmese, and expressed worries for the future. Thai and Burmese groceries are available in central Tokyo, where some of the resettled refugees regularly go and buy food. Religious symbols were often visible in their homes, however only a few resettled refugees participate in the religious community. One family said that they do not go to a temple because there is currently no

Karen Buddhist temple, although the community hopes to establish one in the future. Among the Christians only a few attended church, citing lack of time and transportation costs as among the reasons. It is not possible to draw a conclusion at this point whether the resettled felt socially accepted in their new communities. Although they had only limited contact outside of their own resettled refugees' community, they did not mention any incidents where their cultural traditions contradicted those of the Japanese society or where they came into conflict with Japanese people in their neighbourhood. From the stakeholders' perspective, the resettled refugees have a very similar "way of being" to the Japanese, which may indicate a certain level of social acceptance.

Concerns raised about the preservation of their mother tongue are also significant. This issue is of interest not only to the resettled refugees, but also to the Indochinese refugees and other foreign residents in Japan, and some good practices can be found in areas where a large community of non-Japanese speakers exists. One well-known good model is Kanagawa prefecture, where various organizations exist to support different mother tongues (Kanagawa city).

For the 13 families who have been living in Japan for at least a year and a half, the questions of family reunification and the future possibility of naturalization are relevant. Resettled refugees in general had very little knowledge about their residence permit status, the possibility of acquiring a travel document, and the requirements and the process of applying for naturalization. This is also a concern related to the long-term safety and the security of the resettled refugees. Being aware of their own immigration status is important to securing their legal rights. The resettled refugees do receive all this information both in written form and orally as explained by RHQ staff (with the use of interpreters). It is important to note that there is a gap between the information given to the resettled refugees and the information they actually understood and retained.

Half of the adults in the families reported that there are family members they would like to reunite with in Japan while the other half said that they do not wish to bring their family to Japan. All these adults shared the same thoughts for not wishing to reunite with their family: they are having enough difficulties making their own lives in Japan. They either believed that they are not capable of offering financial support to relatives as required under the Japanese programme, or did not want other family members to face similar kind of difficulties after arriving. As in the case of Indochinese refugees, resettled refugees had close communication with their extended family members resettled in other countries such as U.S., Canada and Australia. Comparing their lives, some resettled believed that settling in these countries was easier. With the exception of a few who applied for the resettlement of a family member, the majority of the refugees were unaware of the criteria for family reunification, or how they could apply. Quite a few in fact did not even know about the possibility. However, the requirement for their families to ensure they become self-supporting, coupled with the limited income currently earned by the resettled refugees, suggest that reuniting with extended family members will not be feasible under the current provisions. It is recommended that Japan consider the longer-term benefits of reuniting with extended family members, and remove the self-reliance requirements for admission.

Responses to the question of interest in naturalization were divided. Almost all the resettled refugees who arrived in 2010 expressed their desire to become Japanese citizens, while those coming in 2011 and 2013 were less interested. It should not be ignored that several stated that they would like to go back to the camp or move to another country if their situation in Japan

does not improve. Moreover, many wished to secure a travel document to enable them to visit their elderly parents at the camp or extended families abroad. The resettled refugees who wish to become Japanese citizens told the interviewer that they had consulted RHQ staff about applying, but felt discouraged as they were told the process was “difficult”. The resettled refugees have not yet been resident in Japan the required five years, so it is premature for them to apply for citizenship. However, this is another area where resettled refugees should be assisted with information to guide them to move forward on their own in the long-term, whether or not they currently meet the qualifications.

The majority of the resettled refugees were not aware of the requirements to become Japanese citizens, and although they were not specifically asked about permanent residence, the impression from the stakeholders is that applying for permanent residence is not promoted openly either. This low awareness is due to two factors. First is, as mentioned earlier, it is recognized that the resettled refugees had challenges retaining the detailed information they received. They were provided written information about the requirements and the process of becoming Japanese citizens together with the process of renewing their residence permit, and applying for permanent residence. This content, and the process of applying for travel documents is also explained by RHQ staff with the assistance of interpreters. The second factor leading to low awareness is the fact that the Government of Japan does not appear to openly promote naturalization among foreigners residing in Japan. Since Japan does not see itself as a country of immigration, the Government of Japan does not have a long-term political vision regarding the integration and naturalization of resettled refugees.

The application procedures for citizenship can be complicated and applicants are required to submit documentation to prove that they are self-supporting persons of good conduct (Kawakami et al., 2009). However, unlike many other countries, there is no formal requirement to prove local language proficiency. Nevertheless, in order to ensure that possible barriers to acquiring permanent residency and Japanese nationality are removed, it is recommended that the requirement to have sufficient assets or ability to make an independent living be relaxed for resettled refugees, as it is currently for Convention refugees in accordance with Article 34 of the 1951 Convention.

Securing permanent residence is an important part of third country refugee resettlement, and naturalization removes some of the final barriers to integration. Ideally resettled refugees would quickly be assisted to transition to permanent residence, and able to access citizenship. Consideration should be given to further reducing the number of years required for permanent residency in order to ensure that the resettled refugees are able to acquire secure status in Japan, before deciding whether to apply for citizenship. Even though applying for Japanese citizenship should not be imposed on the refugees but should be based on personal choice, it is necessary to actively inform the refugees of the opportunity, especially those whose residency is approaching the five-year mark, which makes them eligible to apply. As stressed by UNHCR, permanent residence status leading to citizenship, and family reunification are key to providing resettled refugees with security and a truly durable solution (UNHCR, 2013 (a)).

## **6.9 Fulfilling the objectives of resettlement: Towards self-reliance**

The Government does not have a definition of integration, focusing rather on self-reliance as a way towards integration. Although self-reliance is not defined, the main focus in the



Japanese Resettlement Pilot has been on ensuring the refugees are able to support their families through employment.

Beyond economic self-sufficiency however, the overall objective of resettlement is to enable refugees to rebuild their own lives, and restore their ability to determine their own futures. Developing friendships, building informal networks, active engagement with their children, and making choices about their own lives are all part of longer-term self-reliance.

Although the selection of the settlement city was made by RHQ together with the Government of Japan, resettled refugees were able to influence the decisions regarding their future through the choice of housing and work. Looking at the current economic situation of the resettled refugees, the work RHQ introduced to the refugees was generally more secure and slightly better paid than that they have found for themselves. The same can be said about the housing. However, the higher pay and the lower rent do not necessarily correlate with the resettled refugees' satisfaction of life. The resettled families who made secondary moves stated that their level of satisfaction and contentment increased after their move.

MoHLW's objective states that secure employment and income is necessary in order for refugees to become integrated and have wider options in the future, and this objective has been fulfilled. However, the resettled refugees lack information necessary to guide their futures on their own, for example information on housing, citizenship, and employment alternatives. Therefore not all the families are able become self-reliant, and their options remain limited. Part of the clear challenge is the lack of services available in Japan geared towards support systems for foreign residents. Even when services may be available, lack of local coordination further hampers access for the resettled refugees. For example, the settlement city may not be aware of the details of the support offered by the established International Associations, and these International Associations may also be unaware of the support organized by other local volunteers and NGOs. Another part of the challenge is the resettled refugees' lack of social network and limited interaction with both the Japanese and the ethnic community.<sup>37</sup>

With limited Japanese language ability, weak support networks, and lack of interpreter-aided services (especially Karen), the resettled refugees continue to rely on the specialized services offered by RHQ. This dependency undermines the resettled refugees' long-term ability to truly become independent in Japanese society, and increases the overall costs for the government. As mentioned earlier, a transition plan to alternative services is essential to assist the resettled refugees to access local supports and develop a social network, and essential also for the long-term sustainability of the Resettlement Programme. Overall, resettled refugees still face a long path towards independent life in Japan.

## **7. Conclusions, lessons earned, and recommendations**

Based on interviews with resettled refugees and stakeholders, and the review of relevant documents and literature, this socio-economic study reviewed the design and the implementation of the Resettlement Pilot Project, and analyzed the appropriateness and effectiveness of the programme delivery. The stakeholders in Japan are all interested in ensuring Japan's Resettlement Programme is effective, and the overall objective of this study

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<sup>37</sup> See section 6.7.

is to provide constructive input. This final section therefore provides an overview of lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations for the Government of Japan on improving the implementation of resettlement in Japan, and encouraging the independence of the resettled refugees.

## **7.1 Conclusions and lessons learned**

Establishing a regular resettlement programme is a generous expression of Japan's commitment to sharing the responsibility for addressing refugee situations with countries of first asylum. The Government of Japan carefully planned and implemented the Resettlement Pilot Project, taking into account the essential services and supports required for refugees to support themselves in Japan. However, for resettlement to Japan to truly offer refugees the chance to rebuild independent lives, better access to resources and opportunities that ensure their longer-term stability and foster a sense of belonging and participation are also required. Social integration, as well as economic integration, is important for refugees to move towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Overall, the Japanese Resettlement Pilot Project as outlined in the Cabinet Agreement and the Implementation Decision was effectively and successfully delivered. Responsible entities met their obligations, and the resettled refugees received the planned and budgeted support and services. The necessary human and financial resources were made available, and additional resources were sought as required to meet needs as they arose. However, as there is currently no strategy for easing the resettled refugees off the specialized central supports over time, it is not clear that adequate budget will be available to meet the needs in the future.

The resettled refugees have largely been integrated into the Japanese economy, and are managing in their new homes and communities. Almost all of the adults are employed, and all but one of the resettled families is meeting their economic needs solely through their own employment. They feel safe in their new homes, and satisfied with their children's schooling. However, the cultural, social and economic transition from life in the camp to the demanding Japanese work culture has been challenging. The refugees report feeling insecure about their financial stability, and often exhausted by the realities of the daily stresses of life as low-income residents in Japan. Refugees face high cost of living and long commutes to work six days a week, and report that they have little time for family or social life. It can be concluded that the refugees are indeed economically integrated into the lifestyle of Japanese working-class families and share many of the same problems faced by the Japanese.

However, the refugees report that their major difficulty, even after as much as almost five years in Japan, remains the Japanese language. Their limited Japanese language skills hamper their ability to develop social networks beyond their ethnic community, and their ability to engage in Japanese life. Lacking time, financial resources, and language skills, the resettled adults have yet to feel truly at home in Japan. On a positive note, the children are adapting more quickly, and in common with resettled refugees everywhere, the refugees' main hope is that their children will have better futures.

Overall therefore, the refugees are well on their way towards economic integration, but there has been insufficient attention given to their social integration. Without public awareness about resettlement, it is difficult to build a welcoming environment, and yet a welcoming

environment is crucial to helping refugees restore their faith in others, and enable them to develop friendships and build informal networks. Networks are important not just for day-to-day support, but also for enhancing access to employment opportunities, recreation, and participation in public life. Looking forward, a major challenge for Japan will continue to be fostering a welcoming environment, and assisting the resettled refugees to integrate socially.

Lessons have been learned during the five years of the pilot. The government of Japan has been flexible in making changes in implementing the settlement support as problems and need arose. The content of the Settlement Support Programme delivered in the Resettlement Centre, the selection criteria for employers and settlement cities, the on-the-job vocational training, the introduction of the local settlement supporters, and the possibility of continuous language training have all evolved based on the experiences from the first two years of the pilot project.

Among the specific changes, the content of the guidance for adjustment to Japanese life and Japanese language training that the resettled refugees received at the Resettlement Centre was modified over time in response to the experiences and shortcomings identified after the resettled refugees moved to their settlement cities. Initially the selection of the employers was focused solely on the agricultural sector and the refugees from the first year were separated into two settlement cities, which caused some distress and problems in settling. Furthermore, despite the efforts to make special arrangements to support the refugee families in more rural areas, challenges encountered highlighted the benefits of settling refugees to closer proximity to the services, interpreters and community support available in Tokyo.

In the response to this experience, starting from the second group the government has been firm on settling the refugees together in the same city, and in close proximity to each other. RHQ has also been successful in presenting different types of occupation and employers to the resettled refugees in order for them to be able to make their own choices. Flexibility according to the needs of the employer has been introduced into the implementation of the on-the-job vocational training. The settlement city can now offer continuous language training supported by a governmental subsidy, and a large part of the after-care is taken care of by the local settlement supporter rather than the settlement support staff at the Resettlement Centre.

All these are positive changes that were made in response to the lessons learned during the pilot phase, however there is still considerable room for improvement. The Resettlement Expert Council report (2014) and the Sasakawa Foundation's study (2014) have previously made recommendations based on their knowledge. This socio-economic review, based on a thorough examination of the Resettlement Pilot Project through interviews with the resettled refugees themselves, seeks to contribute to the ongoing improvement of Japan's resettlement programme through the recommendations presented below.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

Japan's Resettlement Pilot Project fulfilled the basic requirements for establishing a Resettlement Programme as outlined by UNHCR,<sup>38</sup> and delivered most of the necessary services to resettled refugees. However, considerable progress is still required in the long-term goal of supporting the refugees to integrate into Japanese society, and creating a sustainable Resettlement Programme responsive to humanitarian needs. Recognizing the

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<sup>38</sup> See section 2.1.3

lessons learned and the improvements that the programme has made during the five-year pilot phase, this report concludes with two sets of recommendations.

### **7.2.1 Recommendations on the implementation of Japan's Resettlement Programme**

These recommendations relate specifically to the implementation of the Japanese Resettlement Programme.

- a. Introduce greater flexibility into the Resettlement Programme structure, to take into consideration the possibility of supporting a longer period of language training, while phasing in employment.*

The Resettlement Pilot Project was implemented following a very rigid plan of six months of intensive language training and orientation in a central location, followed by a further six months of continued national financial support after moving out to their settlement city and starting at their new workplaces and/or schools. This was the settlement support model for the Indochinese and Convention refugees, and the Cabinet Agreement and the Implementation Decision was drafted following this structure. Although adjustments were made to the content of the settlement programme, and some extra supports were added in response to the lessons learned from the Indochinese experience, (such as the efforts to offer continuous language support), there was very little flexibility to change this basic structure.

It is recommended that greater flexibility be introduced, to take into consideration the possibility of supporting a longer period of language training, while phasing in employment. An option would be to offer either six months of full-time language training or one year of part-time training while working, depending on their choice and their learning style. This option is already given to the Convention refugees; therefore the basic structure already exists. Introducing this flexibility better recognizes the experiences, needs and abilities of the individual resettled refugees. Given the challenges facing them, it is not realistic to expect that all resettled refugees are able to engage in work fully from the beginning. How to phase in employment within the one-year programme should be considered carefully to ensure that the refugees get the best possible start to life in Japan.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the possibility of offering alternatives to the on-the-job training for those either unable to work immediately, or those wishing to acquire or upgrade specific skills also be considered. To make this flexibility possible, the Resettlement Programme budget needs to be carefully reviewed to determine how long the monitoring should continue, which specialized services should continue to be provided centrally, and which services refugees can access in their local areas in the longer term.

- b. Ease the emphasis on self-reliance and be open to different possibilities for the refugees' longer-term path to self-sufficiency.*

Connected to the previous recommendation on flexibility, the future Resettlement Programme should ease the emphasis on refugees becoming economically self-sufficient as soon as possible, and instead focus more on the long-term path to full engagement in Japanese society. It is clear that the resettled refugees are struggling with their daily lives in Japan, mainly due to their limited Japanese language skills, and limited education. Currently when resettled refugees become unemployed, the focus is solely on finding another job as soon as possible, instead of investing the time to upgrade their language ability or acquire skills to improve

their future employment prospects. Opening up the possibility of further language instruction and schooling for adults will broaden the refugees' long-term prospects, and facilitate their integration.

In this process of reconsidering the options for the resettled refugees, it should also be acknowledged that families might need public assistance to bridge short-term challenges, which should not be considered a negative aspect or even a failure of the programme, but rather a normal component of a phased integration process. Opening options for the refugees' longer-term path to self-sufficiency recognizes that refugees come with individual abilities, needs and ambitions, and that tailoring the support given in the short-term will provide long-term benefits to the refugees, and to their new country, Japan.

*c. Introduce broader and earlier engagement of settlement cities, and involve the prefectures to make more effective use of resources and to encourage broader support for the Resettlement Programme.*

Settlement cities were generally not involved in the planning and decision-making process of the Resettlement Pilot Project. Moreover the prefectural level was not at all engaged with the implementation of the pilot, even though the prefectures are responsible for allocating some of the subsidies necessary to admit resettled refugees.

Broader and earlier engagement of settlement cities, and involvement of the prefectures is necessary to make more effective use of resources and to encourage broader support for Japan's Resettlement Programme. As the settlement city was not decided until the workplace of the resettled adults was finalized, the settlement cities were only informed three or four months before the resettled refugees moved into their jurisdiction. This gave the settlement cities inadequate time to plan a budget and make administrative preparations of the services for which they are responsible, such as the recruitment of extra teachers in schools, which affected both the settlement city and the resettled refugees negatively. It is also important to consider the option of choosing the local cities that are willing to welcome resettled refugees first, and only then looking for possible employers.

Furthermore, given the reality of the resettled refugees' weak Japanese language skills and the complex governmental administrative procedures, making important information available to the refugees in their native language is very important to enabling them to function effectively in Japan. Translating important information about local housing, education, employment, health care, and public assistance helps ensure that they are fully involved in decisions about their own lives. This preparation of translated information is only possible through the early engagement and cooperation of settlement cities and prefectures.

*d. Consider the allocation of money directly to the local authorities to ensure services are offered equally by all settlement cities, and support better coordination between stakeholders.*

Earlier involvement of the local cities and better coordination between the different stakeholders cannot be discussed without the question of the allocation of money. The government subsidies currently available to the settlement cities are solely for providing Japanese language education, and the cities must submit annual applications for the funds. However, some cities are currently not utilizing the subsidies available for supporting resettled refugees, noting that they do not wish to discriminate between resettled refugees and

other refugees and foreign residents living in their city. This has created differences in the services available depending on the city in which the refugees are settled, and has left some of the resettled refugees without access to language classes tailored to their needs. If governmental subsidies for resettled refugees were allocated directly to the settlement cities, the cities could offer services to all the resettled refugees on an equal footing.

While recognizing the need for allocating subsidies to provide services specifically for the resettled refugees, these should be allocated only for a limited amount of time, after which the refugees should turn to the pre-existing local services, including those offered to other residents of foreign origin.

To ensure effective use and improve access, settlement cities need to inventory the services and resources provided by their city, and made available locally by volunteers and NGOs. Cities could then notify the Government of the services that already exist, the services they are lacking, and where additional resources could most effectively be put to use to bolster services. Moreover, establishing a platform for settlement cities to share their lessons learned and their good practices will encourage settlement cities to consider improvements in the services they offer. Better coordination between the stakeholders will also contribute to the wider efforts to build public support for the Resettlement Programme.

*e. Engage the ethnic community and local NGOs more actively.*

The Resettlement Pilot Project appears to have been administered in a tightly controlled fashion, and civil society organizations were involved only in a limited manner. The ethnic community already present in a resettlement country can, however, be an invaluable resource to assist newly arrived refugees with their adaptation. Local NGOs can also offer supplemental services, and assist the refugees in their integration in their local community. The Implementation Decision does recognize the importance of drawing interpreters from the existing refugee support organizations, but there does not seem to have been sufficient openness to deeper engagement. Although greater efforts were made to introduce the Myanmar community leaders during the later years of the pilot, officials did not involve the local NGOs and ethnic communities in the process of settling the resettled refugees into their settlement cities and communities. The government is encouraged to engage the ethnic community and local NGOs more actively in the Resettlement Programme, which would enrich the programme, offering the resettled refugees a broader base of informal support.

*f. Shift the strict focus from employment to also take into account the availability of local services and the presence of ethnic community supports when choosing a settlement city.*

In order to provide the resettled refugees the best possible start in Japan, it is also recommended that the choice of a settlement city not be focused as strictly on the proximity to the refugees' workplaces, but also take other crucial factors into account. The difficulties encountered by the government and RHQ in securing cities willing to accept the resettled refugees and the efforts they have made to also consider other factors are acknowledged, but it is clear that the main focus has been on the employment.

The supports in place at the local communities are crucial factors to consider, including the existence of established local volunteers or Japanese language classes, and schools prepared with extra teachers and Japanese language help for children in need. Whether there are resettled refugees or other Karen or Burmese-speaking residents in the area should be

considered as well. Even though the government recognizes the importance of ethnic ties, the presence of established ethnic community supports has not been prioritized in the choice of a settlement city during the pilot.

- g. Establish a clear transition plan for when the specific support offered by the government to the resettled refugees should end.*

A transition plan outlining when the specialized support offered to the resettled refugees should end should be established. Although it was expected that resettled refugees would eventually transition to mainstream national services and supports available at the local cities, the resettled refugees continue to rely on practical assistance from RHQ staff, even five years after arrival. Japan has not established a clear long-term plan or a specific goal for the resettled refugees to reach before RHQ support is phased out.

The government needs to set criteria for objectively assessing self-reliance. This will assist the Japanese Government to establish and plan for shifting the resettled refugees from refugee-specific support, to the pre-existing local supports. By making this plan concrete, the stakeholders will have clearer guidelines on introducing refugees to the support services available to other residents, including other low-income residents in their communities. In this process, the paid local settlement supporters and the centralized monitoring of the refugees could be phased out over time.

Ensuring that a transition plan is in place is also essential for the long-term viability of the Resettlement Programme, as currently the need for continuous support years after arrival in Japan is having a major impact on the established budget.

- h. Entrench resettlement in a comprehensive legislative and policy framework*

Japan's Resettlement Pilot Project was implemented under the terms of a Cabinet Agreement. As Japan has now decided to establish a formal Resettlement Programme, it is also appropriate to pursue legislative and policy changes to formalize Japan's commitment to resettling and integrating refugees.

To ensure stability of their programmes and guarantee the rights of resettled refugees, UNHCR advises resettlement countries to entrench resettlement securely in national legislation and policy. Japan's overall framework should include not only the terms of admission for both resettled refugees and asylum seekers, and set out the rights to be granted to refugees in the country, but also Japan's commitment to providing integration supports after arrival. As part of the legislative reform, Japan is further encouraged to establish a specific agency to take overall responsibility for refugee-related matters, which would also ensure more effective coordination and oversight.

The lack of an anti-discrimination law has been identified as a significant barrier to societal integration of migrants in Japan, and it is also crucial for the government to develop both legislation and a strategy to respond to increasing diversity. National programmes to combat racism and discrimination are important components of a broader strategy to support integration in Japan.

*i. Designate a lead ministry or agency for the Resettlement Programme*

Although the relevant ministries and agencies have coordinated their involvement in the Resettlement Pilot Project, there has been frequent criticism that it is *not* clear who is in charge of the overall project and who has responsibility for unforeseen issues. MoFA has functioned as *de facto* lead, but without any formal designation. Until a specific refugee agency responsible for refugee-related matters as a whole is established, having a lead ministry or agency would remove uncertainties and improve overall coordination. Therefore it is recommended that one ministry or agency be designated officially as the lead for the implementation of Japan's Resettlement Program.

*j. Establish a public information strategy to raise awareness about the Resettlement Programme*

Public support is necessary to ensure that Resettlement Programmes continue, and public support can only be established through raising the awareness and engagement of civil society and the general public. The lack of public engagement in Japan's Resettlement Programme makes it vulnerable, as the Japanese people are not sufficiently informed why the government invites refugees to resettle in their country, and are not encouraged to support Japan continuing to offer resettlement.

The government of Japan has made efforts to organize study tours, and the key governmental stakeholders and implementation partner participate in public and academic seminars. However, these are rather small-scale activities with limited impact. The Government's and settlement cities concern that more public information would lead to the invasion of the resettled refugees' privacy is legitimate since the number of refugees admitted thus far is very small. However, public information about resettlement can be disseminated without compromising the privacy of the resettled refugees. Being overly concerned about their privacy may hamper their access to activities and connections that could assist their integration. Overall, a balance must be struck between informing the public why Japan participates in resettlement and what is involved in the process, and the need to protect the privacy of the individual refugees resettled.

Taking into account the concerns mentioned above, Japan is encouraged to establish a wider public information strategy to raise awareness about resettlement among the Japanese population, and create the public support required in order to ensure that their Resettlement Programme has a stable future.

*k. Move towards selecting refugees based on humanitarian need, rather than on the ability to become self-reliant.*

From the selection of who will be admitted, to the support provided, Japan's Resettlement Pilot Project focused particularly on supporting the refugees to become self-sufficient. Although recognizing that resettlement is one of the durable solutions for solving the international plight of refugees, the Cabinet Agreement and the Implementation Decision do not specifically outline the objective of the program to be humanitarian action undertaken by Japan. However, changes can be observed as MoFA began to refer officially to the Resettlement Programme as part of Japan's "*international contribution and humanitarian aid*" during the past couple of years. It is recognized that States establishing a new Resettlement Programme might initially set more restrictive criteria, but all States are encouraged to be



responsive to UNHCR's humanitarian selection criteria focusing on those most at need (UNHCR, 2013(a)).

As Japan is finishing the pilot phase and moving forward with the Resettlement Programme as one of the Government's regular programmes, it is time for Japan to move towards selection based on humanitarian needs. As discussed in the Resettlement Expert Council, it would not be difficult for the current Japanese Resettlement Programme to effectively become a programme providing resettlement possibilities for those who are in humanitarian need. Japan has the resources and capacity to resettle more refugees, and include among them refugees requiring extra support to become self-reliant. Implementing the possibility of family reunification for those who can be supported by their families already in Japan is a good first step, however these financial restrictions to the admission of family members should be removed.

Japan is also encouraged to engage actively in the international fora organized to discuss priorities, and strengthen cooperation between governments, NGOs and UNHCR in the area of resettlement.<sup>39</sup> These fora foster coherent and collaborative approaches to enhance global resettlement delivery, and ensure that resettlement continues to be an effective tool of international protection.

### **7.2.2 Recommendations for encouraging the resettled refugees' independence**

These recommendations relate to encouraging the independence of the resettled refugees, and assisting them to reach their potential as future Japanese citizens.

- a. Ensure refugees are informed of other sources of assistance and support available from NGOs, volunteers and local authorities, and are assisted to access them.*

There is a need to guide refugees on the broader public resources, services, and channels of information beyond RHQ. Currently the majority of the resettled refugees say that they rely solely on RHQ staff (including local settlement supporters) when they are in social and financial need. Some expressed dissatisfaction that they do not receive the help they need. If the resettled refugees are to become self-reliant they need to be able to independently seek and access help at their local level without consulting RHQ.

The Japanese Government, together with RHQ should more actively introduce the resettled refugees to diverse sources of advice and assistance that the refugees can access on their own, including local NGOs and volunteers. This should begin during the time at the Resettlement Centre, and be an important focus after they move to the settlement city. The resettled should be encouraged to seek information at the settlement city offices, which are an excellent source of information, help, and services for families in need. It is acknowledged that some of the resettled refugees may be aware of other services but may not have sufficient Japanese language skills to independently access sources of information outside RHQ. To address this challenge, assistance for refugees to access outside resources should be included with the Japanese language training. Improvements in this area are possible through utilizing the existing RHQ staff (including the local settlement supporters) and the language training

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<sup>39</sup> This includes the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) and the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR). Further information is available from [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).

available in the settlement cities. These staff should not only give the refugees the necessary support, but also give guidance as to where the refugees can seek support independently.

*b. Consider providing further supports for the education and training of the resettled refugees.*

It is recommended that further financial supports be provided both for the education of children, and also for vocational training for adults.

However, education is a complex area, since the financial challenges of pursuing higher education after the mandatory schooling in Japan are not specific to the refugee population but present a problem for the Japanese in general. There are scholarships and student loans available in Japan, but these require high Japanese language and academic skills, and moreover may require Japanese citizenship or permanent residency. Therefore, it is crucial to provide sufficient Japanese training and academic support at the early stages in order to ensure that the resettled children have the option of higher education in the longer-term. As student loans only push the financial burden into the future, other means to ease the costs of higher education could also be considered for the refugee children.

The pre-existing Japanese system providing extra teachers (*kahai*) to elementary and middle schools is a good practice utilized currently to assist the resettled children, which could be strengthened further. Currently the settlement cities need to secure the resources to be able to place extra teachers to the schools. It is recommended that the government consider allocating the required resources either to the settlement city or directly to the schools attended by resettled children.

Another existing type of support, which could be extended to the resettled families, is the current system that gives subsidies for children from families on public assistance to attend cram schools. Granting this type of support would recognize the disadvantages facing the resettled children and give them greater ability to succeed within the competitive Japanese education environment.

It is shown internationally that early investments in education and training pay off in raising the economic status of the resettled refugee family in the long term. Currently RHQ's support includes offering information about vocational schools. However, without any financial support it is difficult for adults to attend these schools even when they have specific ambitions for their future. Consistent with the recommendation to ease emphasis for immediate self-sufficiency, introducing income support or permitting registration for public assistance while upgrading skills and education should be considered.

*c. Extend support for cultural activities to allow resettled refugees to maintain their religious and ethnic activities, and preserve their mother tongue.*

RHQ has provided the Indochinese communities support for their cultural activities, and similar support should be considered for resettled refugees to be able to maintain their religious and ethnic activities. Moreover, to answer the concern raised among the resettled about the preservation of the mother tongue, the government could consider the possibility of offering children with mother tongue support if there is a desire within the family. Good models can already been found in cities (such as in Kanagawa), which have a considerable number of children of Brazilian decent. Promotion of the mother tongue and fostering of

bilingualism from an early age will be a benefit not only for the resettled community but also for encouraging diversity within the Japanese society. Furthermore, if the Japanese government is considering admitting more Karen and Burmese refugees in the future, these bilingual future adults could function as an important resource for the coming refugees.

*d. Promote the acquisition of permanent residency and naturalization, and ease the requirements to qualify.*

By definition, resettled refugees are to be provided permanent residence status, and the opportunity to acquire the citizenship of their new country. Furthermore, their status and rights on arrival should be at least equivalent to refugee status, including the right to a travel document, and the access to citizenship without excessive barriers. This is to protect the resettled refugees and their families against refoulement and to ensure their rights in the country of resettlement. The Refugee Convention stipulates that States are obliged to facilitate refugees' naturalization.

As the first step to ensure that possible barriers to acquiring permanent residency and Japanese nationality are removed, it is recommended that the condition requiring applicants to have sufficient assets or ability to make an independent living be relaxed for resettled refugees, as it is currently for Convention Refugees.

Recognizing that the long-term residence permit that resettled refugees receive is a relatively secure residential status, it is still essential for the resettled refugees to be able to see the path towards settling in Japan permanently, first through the acquisition of permanent residency and then choosing whether or not to become Japanese citizens. Naturalization removes some of the final barriers to integration, and deepens the bond between resettled refugees and their new country.

Currently, resettled refugees are eligible for permanent residency and for naturalization after five years in the country. While becoming a citizen is an individual choice, the time required to be eligible for permanent residency should be reduced to ensure that resettled refugees are able to acquire truly secure status in Japan.

### **7.3 Looking forward**

The world is currently facing an unprecedented surge in the number of refugees worldwide, leaving host countries overwhelmed, and putting greater pressure on the search for durable solutions. Offering resettlement places is an expression of international solidarity and responsibility sharing, and can be an invaluable tool to offer protection to those most in need.

Japan has made humanitarian assistance for refugees an important pillar of its international contributions, and was the first country in Asia to offer resettlement. Although the cultural, social, linguistic and economic transition has been challenging, and the resettled refugees do not yet feel completely at home, Japan's Pilot Resettlement Project has proven that Japan has the capacity and resources to make a larger contribution to resettlement. Looking forward, Japan is encouraged to make the adaptations and improvements required over time to ensure that its resettlement programme is sustainable and responsive to changing needs. The authors of this report hope that the recommendations included will facilitate constructive discussions about the Resettlement Programme and assist the Japanese government to move forward.

## 8. Appendices

### 8.1 Definitions (in alphabetical order)

#### **Cabinet Agreement (*Kakugiryokai*)**

A public and official document signed at a meeting in which all governmental Ministries participate. This is a decision made under the responsible Ministers' jurisdictions, in contrast to a Cabinet Decision (*Kakugikettei*), which requires the full Cabinet's approval.

#### **Elementary school (*Shogaku kou*)**

Elementary school includes the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade of schooling, which is obligatory in Japan. There are both public and private alternatives. Public school tuition is free, however there are additional costs that the family needs to pay, such as for lunches and extra learning materials. The Ministry of Education estimates that families need to pay around 56,000 JPY per year for children to attend elementary school. An average cost for attending private elementary school is 822,000 JPY per year (Ministry of Education, 2014).

#### **Extra teachers and take-out classes (*Kahai and toridashi jyugyo*)**

This subsidy is provided by the Ministry of Education. The *Kahai* system in general provides a subsidy to elementary schools and middle schools when the need for extra support is identified for students to follow the curriculum, and for student and academic counselling. There is a special *Kahai* scheme to promote foreign children's Japanese language learning and the government subsidizes one third of the extra teacher's salary. The extra teachers support foreign children's Japanese language acquisition in two ways: first through take-out classes (*toridashi jyugyo*) where the students are taken outside of the regular class to study, secondly through a Japanese language teacher or supporter attending the regular class and assisting the children in class (Ministry of Education (b)).

#### **High school (*Koukou*)**

High school includes the 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade of schooling. Although not part of the mandatory schooling, 94% of students continue their studies from middle school to high school in Japan. Including the 4% that attend night high school and specialized training colleges, the percentage of those who continue their education after the 9<sup>th</sup> grade is 98%. There are both public and private alternatives. Public schools continue to offer free tuition, however the Ministry of Education estimates that there are additional costs amounting to about 231,000 JPY per year for extracurricular activities, extra learning materials and school trips. The private high schools are significantly more expensive to attend, with tuition costing an average of 722,000 JPY per year. There are also both public and private night high schools, with the cost of tuition varying as well. Public night high schools have tuition fees of around 10,000 JPY per month, while the private alternatives can cost around ten times more. There are various subsidies families with lower income can receive in order for their children to pursue higher education. Moreover, a subsidy in the form of tuition reduction will be provided for students starting to attend school from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 onwards (Ministry of Education (a), 2009, 2014).

**Inter-Ministerial Coordination Council for Refugee Issues (*Nanmin Renraku Taisaku Chosei Kaigi*, ICCR)**

Originally established as a council for matters concerning Indochinese refugees, the ICCR was renamed and reestablished in 2002 as a council where the thirteen Ministries and Agencies coordinate problems concerning recent refugee arrivals. Since 2010 matters concerning resettled refugees are also coordinated in the council.

**Japanese Language Education Counsellor (*Nihongo kyouiku soudanin*)**

Staff members who are placed at the Resettlement Centre to consult resettled refugees, government bodies at the settlement cities and stakeholders about their Japanese language training needs, and give necessary advice as required. This includes visiting the settlement cities. Once a month the Japanese Language Education Counsellors report to the Agency for Cultural Affairs about the progress of the cases and the advice they have given.

**Job counsellor (*shokugyo soudanin*)**

RHQ staff at the Resettlement Centre hired to conduct job counselling and job referral.

**Local settlement supporter (*chiiki teijyu shienin*)**

RHQ staff members at the settlement city individually contracted on a part-time basis to assist the resettled refugees with the challenges of their day-to-day life. The settlement city recommends persons who may be appropriate for the position.

**Local volunteers**

Used in this study to refer to volunteers active locally in the settlement cities, independently of RHQ and the Government of Japan. These include persons involved in the local International Associations. All of the settlement cities involved in the Resettlement Pilot Project have well-established community-based International Associations.

**Middle school (*Chugaku kou*)**

Middle school includes the 7 to 9<sup>th</sup> grade of schooling, which is obligatory in Japan. There are both public and private alternatives. Tuition is free in the public schools, however there are additional costs including extracurricular activities, extra learning materials and school trips. The Ministry of Education estimates that families need to pay around 132,000 JPY per year for children to attend a public middle school. The cost of attending private middle school is estimated to be around 998,000 JPY per year (Ministry of Education 2014).

**Refugee Assistance Headquarters (RHQ)**

RHQ is the implementing agency of Japan's Resettlement Pilot Project. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MoHLW), contracted RHQ separately to deliver components of the pilot since 2010.

RHQ was established in 1979 by the Foundation for the Welfare and Education of the Asian People, and commissioned by the Government of Japan to promote the settlement of Indochinese refugees in Japan. RHQ eventually opened Resettlement Promotion Centers in Himeji (Hyogo), and Yamato (Kanagawa) a Refugee Reception Center in Omura (Nagasaki) and an International Refugee Assistance Center in Shinagawa (Tokyo) to assist the Indochinese refugees. While all but the Shinagawa centres were closed in the 1990's, a Kansai branch was opened in 1996 to provide ongoing care to the Indochinese refugees settling in the West of Japan.

In 2003 RHQ started to offer Convention Refugees the Settlement Support Programme introduced in response to the Cabinet Agreement of 2002. As the resettlement of Indochinese refugees had ended, RHQ closed the Shinagawa Centre in 2006, and opened the RHQ Support Center in Tokyo in order to continue providing settlement support to Convention refugees. Since 2010 RHQ has also been contracted to provide settlement support to the resettled refugees at this center.

Currently RHQ has offices in Tokyo and in Kobe. It is an organization that operates only on contract to the Japanese Government, and is often referred to as a semi-governmental organization (Refugee Assistance Headquarters).

#### **Resettlement Expert Council (*yushikisha kaigi*)**

The Council was convened from May 2012 to December 2013 in order to monitor the implementation of the resettlement pilot program and the refugee's settlement progress, and also to suggest amendments, and determine whether the resettlement program should continue as an ordinary program as of 2015. Members of the Resettlement Expert Council included eight experts on refugee issues, including prominent academic scholars, a NPO representative, and representatives from local communities which were already admitting refugees. IOM, RHQ and UNHCR joined the council as observers. Seventeen meetings were convened and the minutes are available to the public.

#### **Settlement city (*chihou jichitai*)**

Used in this study to refer to the city or ward in which the refugees are settled. Whether it is a city or a ward depends on the individual prefecture's structure.

#### **Settlement support staff (*seikatsu shidouin/seikatsu soudanin*)**

*Seikatsu shidouin* are RHQ staff members available during the 180-day-long Settlement Support Programme. These staff members support the refugees during the orientation period, and live in the same accommodation together with the resettled refugees to be able to give 24-hour support. *Seikatsu soudanin* are those providing on-going support after the resettled refugees move to the settlement city. These staff members periodically monitor the lives of the resettled refugees, consult them about their problems with administrative procedures, housing, employment and schools and give necessary advice. In this report both staff members are referred to as settlement support staff.

## **8.2 List of Stakeholders Interviewed (in alphabetical order)**

### **8.2.1 National government stakeholders**

Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cabinet Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MoHLW), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Members of the Lower and Upper Parliament

### **8.2.2 Representatives of the local cities**

Futaba Middle School, Higashimurayama city, Higashi Elementary School, Kasukabe city, Misato city, Misato Hikoito Elementary School, Misato Hikoito Middle School, Misato International Association, Momiji Daycare, Nakano city, Shinjuku city, Shinjuku Totsuka Daiichi Elementary School, Shinjuku Suwa Residential Association, Suzuka city, Suzuka Board of Education, Suzuka Reiho Middle School, Suzuka Tsubaki Elementary School

### **8.2.3 Representatives of Refugee Assistance Headquarters (RHQ)**

Japanese language teachers, Assistance Division, Japanese Language Education Counsellor, Planning and Coordination Division, Local Settlement Supporter

### **8.2.4 Representatives of civil society and international organizations**

Forum for Refugees Japan, International Organization for Migration, Izumibashi Law Office, Japan Association for Refugees, Karen National League, Minna no ouchi, NPO Peace, Panama shoes, Suzuka Sanroku Yume Koubou, Tsukada Architects and Engineering, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Tokyo Office

## **8.3 Refugee interview guide**

Biographical Details (gathered from data provided by UNHCR Tokyo and confirmed at interview)

- Sex, birth year, religion, marital status
- Native language, other languages spoken, language spoken at home, ability to read and write in your native language
- Number of children, details, any other children that do not live with you?

### Housing

- Who do you live with?
- How did you find the house?
- How long have you lived in your current housing?
- How many times have you moved since you left the resettlement center?
- Are you satisfied with your current living arrangements? Why or why not?
- Are you able to easily access the stores, services, school/work?
- Do you talk with your neighbours? What kind of interaction do you have?
- What is the national/ethnic mix of the neighbourhood you live in?

### Employment

- Are you employed?
- How much do you earn per month?
- What do you do?
- How did you find this job?
- Is this the first job you have had in Japan? If not, what did you do before?
- Have you received on-the-job vocational training from the current employer?
- Have you had difficulty securing employment?
- Have you had difficulty securing income?
- Are there prospects for ongoing training and promotion where you work?
- Can you receive training/education needed for promotion?
- How does your employer treat you?
- Who are your co-workers?
- How do your co-workers treat you?
- Do you talk with or meet with your co-workers outside of work?
- Are you satisfied with your job?

### Education (\*questions for children)

- Have you attended, or are you currently attending school/night school?
- Would you like to have further training/education in the future?
- Do you have children who go to school?
- Are you satisfied with their education?
- Have you met the teachers?
- How do the teachers treat you?
- Do you think your children have good opportunities for education in Japan?
- Do you participate in the PTA or other school activities?
- Do you talk with other parents?
- How do the parents treat you?
- Are you planning to continue studying?\*
- Do you think you have the opportunity for a good future in Japan? \*

### Language

- Are you satisfied with your Japanese language skills?
- Are you formally studying Japanese?
- Do you study on your own?
- Do you think your Japanese has improved since you finished the settlement program?
- When do you face difficulties communicating in Japanese?
- How do you communicate when you have difficulties?

### Health Care

- How would you characterize your current state of health?
- Do you know how to access health care when needed?
- Have you accessed medical care in Japan?
- Did you receive the care you needed?



- What medical services have you received?
- If you have children, what medical services have they received?
- Are you satisfied with the health care available in Japan? Why or why not?

#### Budget

- Do you have an individual bank account?
- Are you and your family able to meet your monthly expenses?
- If you aren't able to pay your monthly bills, what do you do?
- Do you budget your income?
- What is your biggest expense?
- Are you able to save money?
- Can you read and understand your own bills?

#### Social

- What modes of transportation do you use most frequently?
- If you need help, who do you turn to?
- What do you need help with in your daily life?
- Do you use the services and facilities available in your community?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- How do you get information?
- How do people in your daily life treat you?

#### Satisfaction

- Are you satisfied with your life in Japan?
- What is the best thing in your life right now?
- What is the most difficult thing in your life right now?
- What is your main worry right now?
- Do you feel safe in Japan?
- Do you get support and help when you need it?
- What kind of help do you mostly need?
- Do you know who you should contact when you need help?
- Do you feel you can keep your culture and preserve your language in Japan?

#### Future

- Do you have family members you wish could join you in Japan?
- Do you know the requirements for becoming a citizen, and the process for applying?
- Do you know where to get information?
- Are you interested in applying for Japanese citizenship?
- Are you happy overall that you came to Japan?

Support at the Resettlement Centre

- What did you learn during the first 180 days?
- Were you satisfied with the Japanese language training?
- Did you learn enough Japanese in the time at the Reception Centre to function in Japan?
- Were you satisfied with the guidance you were given for adjusting to Japanese society?
- Did you learn enough about Japanese society to function in Japan?
- Were you satisfied with the job referral process?
- Did you have enough choice of employment?
- Was the job that was found appropriate for your skills?
- Did you learn enough about Japanese working life to function in Japan?
- Were you able to learn what you wanted to?
- Did you feel free to ask questions?

Move to Settlement City and Vocational Training

- What support was given when you moved to your local community?
- Was the information you received at the Reception Centre about life in a Japanese community accurate in your opinion? Where there any surprises?
- Were you offered continuous support to learn Japanese after arriving in the local community?
- Are you satisfied with the vocational training?
- Was the training appropriate for the job?
- What kind of help did you receive with daily living?
- Was there always someone available to answer questions?
- Was your family assigned a Local Settlement Supporter?
- Has anything changed after the first year?
- Do you have any comments/advice on the resettlement pilot project?

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