

# Refugee Resettlement

An International Handbook  
to Guide Reception and Integration

A publication prepared by  
the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
in collaboration with its governmental and non-governmental  
partners and resettled refugees



## RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Resettlement is a form of durable solution for refugees who are unable to return to their country of origin or to remain in their country of asylum. It is a process that involves the transfer of refugees from one country to another, where they can start a new life in a safe and secure environment.

### Principles

Resettlement is a form of durable solution for refugees who are unable to return to their country of origin or to remain in their country of asylum. It is a process that involves the transfer of refugees from one country to another, where they can start a new life in a safe and secure environment.

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### Guidelines for practice

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### Resettlement process overview

Resettlement is a form of durable solution for refugees who are unable to return to their country of origin or to remain in their country of asylum. It is a process that involves the transfer of refugees from one country to another, where they can start a new life in a safe and secure environment.

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A handbook for governments, UNHCR, NGOs and resettled refugees



# The Commissioner's Foreword

THIS VOLUME GREW FROM A SEED PLANTED IN APRIL 2001 in Norrköping, Sweden, at the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*, hosted by the Government of Sweden. Several hundred government officials, UNHCR staff, NGO representatives and resettled refugees gathered there for intensive discussions on how to help resettled refugees to integrate in their new countries. One of the ideas was to produce a book to share experience and good practice across international borders.



The result is this Handbook to guide the reception and integration of resettled refugees. Its production was a truly collaborative effort, with NGOs, governments and UNHCR staff contributing in many different ways. It would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Government of Australia and the long, hard work of experts at the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture in Melbourne, Australia, to whom UNHCR is extremely grateful.

Resettlement is a vital durable solution for many refugees around the world. It offers protection and a new beginning to tens of thousands of men, women and children, many of whom have suffered atrocious forms of persecution. However, resettlement is a complex and difficult process, which does not end when a refugee steps off the plane in his or her new country. On the contrary, that is just the start of the integration challenge.

UNHCR's new *Agenda for Protection* calls upon states to put in place policies to ensure that resettlement runs in tandem with a vigorous integration policy. Language training, education, vocational training, employment, support for family reunification – these and many other activities are the building blocks of integration. And while resettlement is a way of protecting refugees and a tangible sign of responsibility-sharing by states, there is no doubt that refugees also make important contributions to their new societies.

I hope this Handbook will prove useful for government and NGO officials in countries setting up resettlement programs for the first time. Since the environments in which refugees resettle are extremely diverse, this should not be considered a 'how to' manual. Instead, it is intended to assist those who are developing programs for resettled refugees by sharing a wide range of practices from five continents. I am sure that both 'old hands' and newcomers to refugee resettlement will derive inspiration from this volume. Together we are working to provide refugees with a chance at a new life.

**Ruud Lubbers**

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

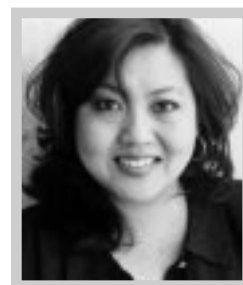
# Introducing Integration: Some Personal Views



IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF MY EXPERIENCE AS A REFUGEE, a volunteer, a resettlement worker, or in my capacity now as a government official in my new home, there were times when I was about to lose hope of seeing indicators of a better future for refugees and meaningful responses to their plight from the international community. In each of those stages there was a critical event that kept my hopes alive. As a refugee, resettlement was the most significant event, which revived my shattered hopes. It was a departure from nowhere and an opportunity to restore a normal life. Being accepted by the host community, and enjoying the privileges and fulfilling my obligations as a citizen was another significant event in my life. Today as a professional and a stakeholder in the resettlement and integration of refugees I see the development of this Handbook as a cornerstone in building the capacity of the international community to respond meaningfully to the plight of refugees. It is another significant event in my experience which will keep my hopes for a better future for refugees alive for some years to come.

**Ismail M Ibrahim**  
RESETTLED REFUGEE  
NATIONAL REFUGEE EDUCATION COORDINATOR,  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
NEW ZEALAND

AFTER 26 YEARS IN THE USA, I HAVE BEGUN TO examine my own integration into the complex fabric of American society. In some ways it has come naturally, but there are times when I have had to be intentional about integrating. Integration is a long and personal journey involving self-examination, acceptance in a new community and a sense of belonging. It requires a level of pride in one's identity, and a willingness to adopt aspects of the cultural practices of the host community. Integration is more than achieving self-sufficiency. It includes a commitment to participate fully in the receiving society and to expect responsible reciprocity from host communities.



Although integration is a personal journey, external factors can influence the degree and willingness of individuals or groups to integrate and enhance mutual respect. Receiving communities which demonstrate acceptance, and embrace newcomers by respecting their cultures and valuing their contributions, will empower newcomers to integrate with ease and confidence. These welcoming communities see newcomers as a gift, rather than a threat. Unfortunately, however, many refugees escape hostile environments only to resettle in another hostile and foreign society.

This Handbook is a resource to support host communities and resettled refugees to work in partnership to create an environment which fosters leadership, and to institutionalise policies that support newcomer contributions in meaningful ways. It will, I hope, empower resettled refugees to organise and mobilise their communities to continue to seek freedom and justice in their new home. It will help resettlement countries to understand better the challenges involved in resettlement, while creating innovative programs to help refugees rebuild their lives with dignity.

### **KaYing Yang**

RESETTLED REFUGEE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOURCE CENTER (SEARAC), USA

## INTRODUCING INTEGRATION: SOME PERSONAL VIEWS



IN 1987 MYSELF AND MY FAMILY – MY WIFE, BOYS aged 6 & 3 and my 60-year-old mother – were forced to flee our homeland. Even now, memories of our flight can keep me awake all night.

All through that agonizing experience, my biggest worry was the uncertainty of the future. As a refugee, without a place to call home, I often wondered: Does anybody care? Will we be accepted somewhere? What will happen to my children?

Starting over in a new country was at times overwhelming, even for me, and I was a seasoned traveller who had studied and worked in several countries. I learned first hand that resettlement – in a generous country like Canada – can be as hard as the escape from our homeland was.

In my family, each of us had a different integration experience. Although we were willing to work hard, we needed people to accept us for who we were, to see us as equals and to give us the opportunity to be fellow citizens.

Looking back, I can say that people did care. We were accepted for who we were and we were given a place to call home and the chance to call ourselves Canadian. In return, we have given back as much as we can by working hard and taking the responsibility of Canadian citizenship to heart. This was all possible because there were programs in place and a community willing to help us.

Resettled refugees need to have hope for the future. Hope can be nurtured – and realized – if refugees are seen as equals and given the chance to engage fully in all aspects of community life. This can best be achieved by fully involving the grassroots community in a refugee's settlement.

I hope this Handbook, which explores the many facets of the resettlement process, becomes a real tool to enhance refugee integration around the world. That would enable refugee families who face the same uncertainty as mine once did, to have the opportunity we had to find hope and a place to call home.

**Fariborz Birjandian**  
RESETTLED REFUGEE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
CALGARY CATHOLIC IMMIGRATION SOCIETY  
ALBERTA, CANADA

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# Country-of-origin Background Information: Key Websites

Amnesty International [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

Human Rights Watch [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

One World [www.oneworld.net](http://www.oneworld.net)

United Nations Development Program [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

US Committee for Refugees [www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org)

World Health Organisation [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

## Acronyms

AMES	Adult Multicultural Education Services – Victoria, Australia
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
ICRIRR	International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
NGO	Non-government Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



# Acknowledgments

THIS HANDBOOK IS BASED ON THE experience of over 18 countries across the globe offering refugee resettlement programs in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was made possible by the generosity and commitment of many individuals with an interest and expertise in integration from refugee communities and governmental and non-governmental agencies in these countries.

The authors would like to acknowledge participants in the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* (ICRIRR), Sweden, 2001, on whose contributions this Handbook is based. Particular thanks are extended to those who prepared papers and other materials for presentation at the Conference. Special credit in this regard is owed to Dr Tracey Spack (Citizenship and Immigration Canada), who researched and drafted a number of key materials, and to Lynda Parker (also of Citizenship and Immigration Canada), who made Dr Spack's association with the Conference possible, as well as contributing to the planning process.

The Conference was generously hosted by the Swedish Integration Board and was part of a larger *Integration Initiative* supported by Nordic countries, the USA and Canada, the Ford Foundation and the German Marshall Fund. Mark Hetfield (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, USA) helped to secure funding for the initiative and made an important intellectual contribution to its design and implementation.

The Conference brought together a large and diverse group of participants with interest and expertise in integration and developed, for the first time, a set of commonly endorsed principles to guide integration program development and implementation. These achievements were due in large part to the skills and effort of Ms

Deborah DeWinter (Consultant to the *Integration Initiative*), who assumed responsibility for planning and coordinating this important forum. It was capably chaired by Erik Stenström (Swedish Integration Board), who gave generously of his time and wisdom. Dr Elizabeth Ferris (World Council of Churches) played a significant role in engaging Conference participants in drafting the integration principles.

The authors are also indebted to all those who assisted in producing this Handbook.

This task was coordinated by Ms Deborah DeWinter and Mr Michael Casasola (UNHCR, Canada) with the support and guidance of Ms Judith Kumin (UNHCR, Canada). The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Melbourne, Australia assumed responsibility for drafting and production of the Handbook. Particular thanks are due to Mr Paris Aristotle (Project Manager), Ms Sue McGrillen (research and executive support) and Ms Kim Webster (research and drafting). Their work was made possible with generous funding support from the Government of Australia.

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**Judi Altinkaya**, Chief Executive Officer, National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes (Inc.), New Zealand  
**Paris Aristotle**, Director, The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Australia  
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Individual chapters were developed in consultation with subject matter experts from the Task Force as well as other international experts, including:

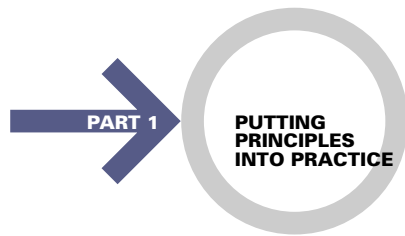
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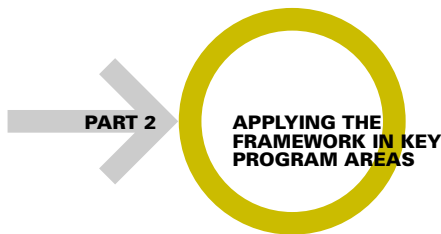
Thanks are also due to those many individuals and organisations who, while too numerous to name individually, facilitated and contributed to consultations on the Handbook and gave generously of their time, expertise and resources.

# Using this Handbook

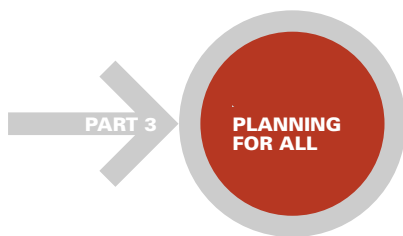
Each section of the Handbook has been written so as to be as self-contained as possible so that it can be read either in part or in its entirety. It is divided into three parts.



**PART ONE** sets the context for planning resettlement programs. It discusses the nature and consequences of the refugee and resettlement experiences and their implications for planning, and defines broad planning goals. The features distinguishing planning environments and resettlement programs are also described to provide readers with a context for considering some overriding planning issues as well as to evaluate the relevance of specific ideas in the Handbook in their local environment. This Part concludes with a Chapter describing the basic steps involved in establishing a new resettlement program.



**PART TWO** is divided into 11 Chapters dealing with the individual components that together make up a resettlement program (see Table of Contents). Each begins with a checklist which foreshadows the content of the Chapter while at the same time providing a summary of the key activities to consider. Each concludes with a list of 'good practice features'. The checklists distinguish between those activities which are a priority in the establishment phase of a resettlement program and those which can be developed as resources permit and the program matures.



**PART THREE** explores some of the particular issues which need to be taken into account to ensure that the needs of all resettled refugees are considered in the planning process. It has been included recognising that, as is the case with the general community, there is significant diversity within refugee populations in terms of gender, age, special needs and past experience.



Throughout the text, particular issues of concern or strategies of interest to emerging resettlement countries are highlighted in specially marked boxes.

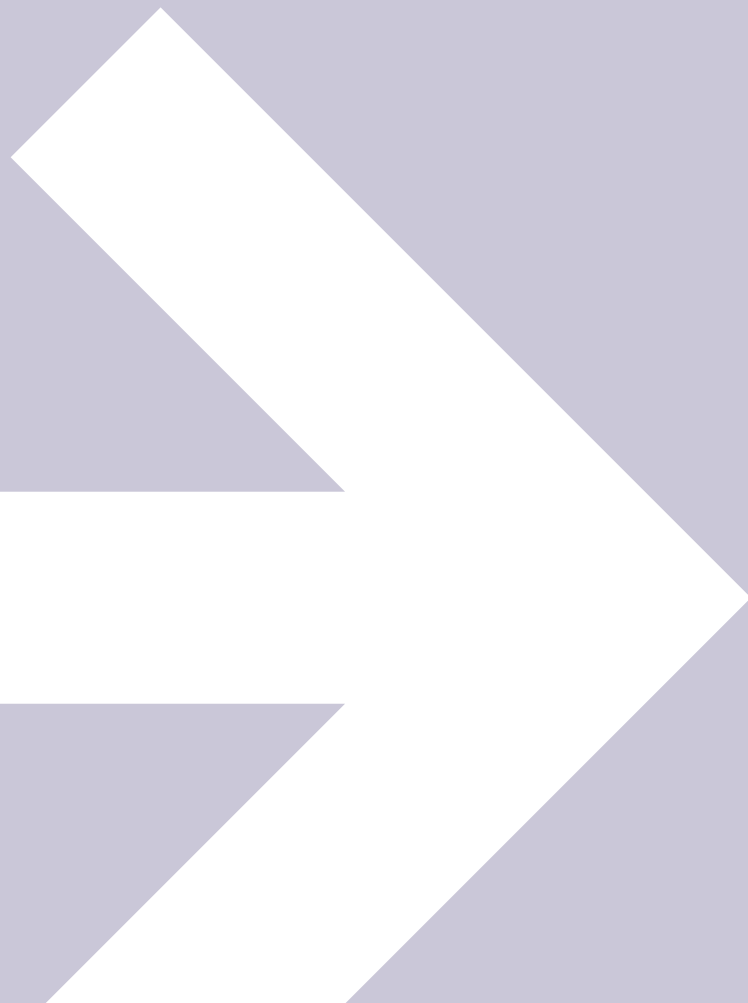


**TAKE CARE** boxes draw attention to issues which, while important, can be readily overlooked.



PUTTING  
PRINCIPLES  
INTO PRACTICE

PART ONE  
**Putting  
Principles  
into  
Practice**





# CHAPTER 1.1

## Why offer a Refugee Resettlement Program?

# Chapter 1.1

## Why Offer a Formal Refugee Resettlement Program?

### The origins of refugee resettlement

Contemporary refugee resettlement programs have their origins in the aftermath of the Second World War when many thousands of people affected by conflict in Europe were offered refuge in countries across the globe. However, prior to the 1950s, distinctions were rarely made between refugees and displaced persons and immigrants.

Following the Second World War, it became increasingly apparent to the international community that many people lived under the threat of various kinds of persecution and would not be protected if left to the mercy of their own governments. A number of international legal instruments were subsequently developed with a view to securing a concerted and cooperative international response to human rights problems.

Significant among these were the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its 1967 *Protocol*. One hundred and forty four countries are now signatories to one or both of these instruments. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in January 1951 with a mandate to provide international protection to refugees and seek durable solutions to their plight.

A refugee is defined in the 1951 Convention, as someone who has left his or her country and is unable or unwilling to return to it 'owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion'.

### REFUGEE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

**1830** Polish composer Frederic Chopin performs his last concert in Warsaw before going into exile in Paris.

**1933** Acclaimed scientist Albert Einstein is accused of high treason by the Third Reich in Germany. He seeks refuge in Belgium, Great Britain and finally the United States.

**1941** Peter Lorre, actor and refugee from Hungary, is cast in a starring role in the film, *The Maltese Falcon*.

**1942** Austro-Hungarian refugee Paul Henreid plays a resistance leader in the film *Casablanca*.

**1944** Dr Anita Donaldson is born to Latvian parents in a children's refugee camp in Germany. In 1993 she becomes the Dean of Performing Arts at Adelaide University, Australia.

**1947** Jewish-German refugee W. Michael Blumenthal arrives in San Francisco with sixty dollars in his pocket. In 1977 he is sworn in as the 64<sup>th</sup> USA Secretary of the Treasury under President Carter.

**1950** Hungarian Refugee Samuel "Billy" Wilder directs Academy Award winning film *Sunset Boulevard*. >



## WHY OFFER A FORMAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM?

## REFUGEE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

**1950** Joe Schlesinger is admitted to Canada as a displaced person from Czechoslovakia. He goes on to become head of CBC TV News (Canada's national broadcaster) in the late 1960s and later the network's chief political correspondent.

**1954** Film director and producer Otto Preminger, in exile from Austria, produces the first film with an exclusively African-American cast, *Carmen Jones*.

At the start of the new millennium, it was estimated that there were around 12 million refugees and 20–25 million internally displaced persons around the world. Early in 2002, the number of people of concern to the UNHCR was 19.8 million, roughly one out of every 300 people on Earth<sup>1</sup>. Over 70% are women and children<sup>2</sup>.

Refugees come from many countries, with refugee movements constantly changing in response to events around the world. In the post-war period, people fleeing Communist Eastern Europe constituted a large proportion of the world's refugees. In the 1960s and 70s, many refugees were fleeing political turmoil in Central and South America and Africa. In the latter part of this period and into the 1980s, there were large numbers of refugees from conflicts in Indo-China. Following the end of the Cold War, refugee flows resulted from a new series of conflicts, including those in the Balkans, Asia and Africa. The global refugee population has become increasingly diverse, with the UNHCR currently providing protection and assistance to refugees from over 50 different countries.



**Table One:**  
**What countries do refugees under UNHCR's mandate come from? (Top 10 countries)**

Country-of-origin	Refugee Population End 2001
Afghanistan	3,809,600
Burundi	554,000
Iraq	530,100
Sudan	489,500
Angola	470,600
Somalia	439,900
Bosnia Herzegovina	426,000
Democratic Republic of Congo	392,100
Vietnam	353,200
Eritrea	333,100

Source: UNHCR, *Refugees by Numbers*, 2002



**Table Two:**  
**Selected major refugee-hosting countries**

Country	End 2001
Pakistan	2,199,000
Iran	1,868,000
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	777,000
Tanzania	691,000
Democratic Republic of Congo	367,000
Sudan	354,000
China	295,000
Zambia	285,000
Kenya	252,000
Uganda	201,000

Source: UNHCR, *Refugees by Numbers*, 2002



## Durable solutions

In partnership with the international community, the UNHCR promotes three durable solutions to the plight of refugees:

- voluntary repatriation to the country-of-origin, in conditions of safety and dignity;
- local integration in the host country;
- resettlement in a third country.

Resettlement has a critical and complementary role in the system of international protection, offering both protection and a durable solution to those refugees for whom neither voluntary repatriation nor local integration is possible.

Resettlement is the concrete expression of a commitment to refugee protection and to the promotion of human rights. It is also a practical manifestation of international responsibility-sharing.

## Voluntary repatriation

Most refugees hope to return to their countries-of-origin and to be able to rebuild their lives in a familiar environment<sup>3</sup>. The UNHCR and its international partners support voluntary repatriation through the establishment of protective legal frameworks and activities to safeguard and assist refugees to return and reintegrate into their countries-of-origin. These activities are undertaken with a view to ensuring that refugees are not subject to further persecution and discrimination after return and that their right to national protection is restored.

## Local integration

However, for many, circumstances in their countries-of-origin are such that safe return is unlikely to be possible at least in the foreseeable future. Others may have experienced such extreme trauma and persecution, that they cannot reasonably be expected to return.

Some refugees without voluntary repatriation prospects are able to settle in their country-of-refuge. They are granted asylum; have access to the resources to rebuild their lives (including access to education and the labour market, housing, medical care and social services) and enjoy basic human rights such as freedom of movement, the right to marry, practise their religion and own property. Once they are granted citizenship of their country-of-refuge, they no longer require the protection of the international community.

**1955** Julius Rundel becomes Director of the New York City Opera having arrived in the USA in 1938 as a refugee from Austria.

**1956** The first shopping centre to be fully enclosed opens in Minneapolis, USA. It has been designed by architect and Austrian refugee Victor Gruen.

**1957** Judit Korner arrives in Australia from Hungary. Today she is the Director of a group of companies, which includes five beauty training colleges and numerous salons.

**1961** Hungarian refugee Judy Cassab wins Australia's Archibald Prize for portraiture.

**1965** Brazilian refugee and jazz musician Gilberto Passos Gil Moreira has a breakthrough in his musical career with the recording of his song *Louvaniao*. He goes on to make 32 albums in 29 years.

**1968** South African refugee and jazz musician Hugh Masakela's song *Grazing in the Grass* tops the charts and sells four million copies worldwide.

**1972** Yasmin Alibhai-Brown flees Uganda following Idi Amin's rise to power. Twenty five years later she becomes a Research Fellow at the Institute of Public Policy Research.

**1973** Max Frankel is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his unique coverage of Richard Nixon's visit to China. A refugee from Germany, Frankel will go on to be the executive editor of *The New York Times* from 1986 to 1994. >





## WHY OFFER A FORMAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM?

### REFUGEE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

- 1974** Congressman Sam Gejdenson becomes the first child of Holocaust survivors elected to the USA House of Representatives.
- 1975** Ethiopian Alem Desta is granted asylum in the UK. Later, in the Netherlands she establishes and becomes president of the Refugee Organisation Netherlands, an umbrella organisation for 230 local and national refugee support organisations.
- 1975** Czechoslovakian refugee Milos Forman receives accolades for his direction of the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.
- 1977** Sir Gustav Nossal, renowned scientist and refugee from Austria, is knighted. He will later be appointed Australian of the Year for his work in medical research.
- 1981** Eleven year old Nyamko Sabuni arrives in Sweden with her mother and six siblings from the Democratic Republic of Congo following time in exile in Burundi. In 2002 she plans to run as a candidate in the Swedish Parliamentary elections.
- 1981** Estonian refugee Ennio Hallek becomes a professor of painting at the Art Academy of Stockholm. His murals adorn the University of Stockholm and the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital. In 1989 he returned with a delegation to Estonia to give advice on the restoration of churches.

### Third country resettlement – contributing to international protection and durable solutions

There are many refugees for whom neither repatriation nor local integration in their first country of asylum is possible. For these refugees, permanent resettlement in a third country may be the most appropriate, and in some cases the only, durable solution.

In recent years the opportunities for local integration in first countries of asylum have become more limited. Some countries are not signatories to international instruments designed to protect refugees. Others may only offer protection on the condition that refugees are resettled elsewhere within a specified time frame.

Countries may have difficulties absorbing large numbers of refugees without generating economic, social or political instability. In some cases, refugees risk attack by hostile groups or arrest and detention. Clearly, in these circumstances, resettlement in a third country may be required both as an instrument of international protection and as a durable solution.

Refugees may also face conditions in their initial countries of asylum which seriously undermine their prospects for long term integration. For instance they may be excluded from employment owing to their status as refugees; denied the right to practise their religion; suffer social exclusion or be denied access to education. In such cases resettlement in a third country may be the only durable solution.

Third country resettlement may also be the most appropriate option for refugees who are at particular risk or have special resettlement needs which cannot be met by their country-of-refugee owing to prevailing economic and social conditions. Among these are unaccompanied children and young people, refugees with serious disabling conditions, refugee elders, refugees with special medical needs, women-at-risk and survivors of trauma and torture.

### International responsibility sharing

Refugee resettlement programs are also an important way to ensure that the responsibility for addressing refugee problems is shared among countries across the globe and between the developed and developing world.



Currently a disproportionate share of this burden is borne by some of the world's poorest nations, with refugees often seeking asylum in neighbouring countries, many of which have low levels of economic and human development. For example, in 2001, nearly two thirds of countries identified by the UNHCR as the main countries receiving refugees were also among those 40 countries identified by the United Nations Human Development Program as the poorest in the world<sup>4</sup>. Already struggling to meet the needs of their citizens, many of these countries can ill-afford to offer long term, local settlement prospects to those seeking refuge within their borders.

Providing refuge is a generous step taken by many governments and is fundamental to the success of the system of international protection. If responsibility for refugees is not shared, however, there is the very real risk that both the practical capacity and commitment to offer asylum will be compromised in some countries.

There are a number of ways in which countries can and do contribute to global responsibility sharing, both within and outside of their formal partnership with the UNHCR. Among these are diplomatic efforts to promote the safe return of repatriated refugees and financial and in-kind contributions to humanitarian assistance, local settlement, and reconstruction and development programs. A formalised resettlement program complements these efforts, allowing countries to ease the pressures on countries of first asylum and to share responsibility for refugees in need of a durable solution.

**1981** Makau Matau flees Kenya for the USA following arrests and detention for student activism. He is now a Professor of Law at the State University of New York.

**1983** Kim Dae-Jung, South Korean in exile in the USA, works as an advisor at a centre for survivors of torture in Minnesota. In 1997 he is elected President of the Republic of Korea and in 2000 is awarded a Nobel Peace Prize.

**1984** The writing of Czech in exile in France, Milan Kundera, comes to prominence in the Western world with the publication of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

**1984** Cambodian refugee Haing Ngor wins an Academy Award for his role in the portrayal of the Cambodian genocide, *The Killing Fields*.

**1987** Soviet writer in exile in the USA, Joseph Brodsky, is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for *The Condition We Call Exile*.

**1989** A refugee from Nigeria 15 years earlier, Philip Emeagwali, wins the Gordon Bell Prize, computing's Nobel Prize, for solving a problem classified as one of the 20 most difficult in the computing world.

**1990** Maria Guadalupe Garcia Hernandez, a Guatemalan refugee then aged 28, founds *Mama Maquin*, a human rights organisation which today promotes sustainable development projects, women's human rights, and provides literacy and health education. >



## WHY OFFER A FORMAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM?

## REFUGEE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

**1991** Feminist writer and activist Nawal El Saadawi accepts a teaching position at Duke University in North Carolina following many years of repression in Egypt.

**1991** A South African in self-exile in the USA, writer Nadine Gordimer, is awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature.

**1991** Batulo Mohamed Essak arrives in Finland as a refugee from Somalia. She now works as a translator and assists Somali women to integrate in the Finnish community.

**1992** Guatemalan refugee Rigoberta Menchu Tum accepts the Nobel Peace Prize in the name of all indigenous people.

**1993** Cambodian refugee Niborom Young records an oral history project featuring the testimonies of ten Cambodian refugee women which is now stored at the New Zealand National Archives.

**1993** Sonia Pressman Fuentes, a refugee from Germany, retires after having served as the first woman attorney in the United States General Counsel's Office at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and also as the founder of the USA National Organisation for Women.

**1994** Formerly Education Minister of Mozambique, Graca Machel, who had spent many years in exile in Switzerland and later Tanzania, is appointed to chair the UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. In 1995 she was awarded the UNHCR Nansen Medal for her outstanding contribution on behalf of refugee children.

## Enhancing overall capacity and diversity of durable solutions

Increasing the number of states willing to resettle refugees helps to strengthen the position of resettlement in the system of international protection and as a durable solution. It not only increases the number of places available to the UNHCR for re-settling refugees under its mandate, but also provides a more diverse range of resettlement options.

Increasing the diversity of states accepting refugees for resettlement enables the UNHCR to match those who have particular needs with appropriate resettlement programs.

Countries in the process of establishing a resettlement program may not have the integration infrastructure other countries have developed in the course of many years of involvement in refugee resettlement. Nor, if they are developing economies, may they be able to commit the same level of resources to integration as their developed counterparts.

Nevertheless many of these countries have other, often less tangible assets. These may include, for example, a broad understanding of what constitutes 'family', a strong tradition of welcoming and extending hospitality to newcomers, or a high level of commitment to assisting others whose human rights have been violated, in some cases born of their own histories of conflict and persecution.

For example in Chile, resettled refugees who are survivors of trauma and torture are offered assistance through some of the same programs established to support nationals affected by persecution in the context of the military coup in that country in 1975.

Some non-traditional resettlement countries have developed expertise through their involvement in the informal local integration of refugees from neighbouring countries. Much of this expertise is readily transferable to the task of developing a formal resettlement program. Such countries may also have economic characteristics which match the attributes of particular refugee groups. For example, resettled refugees with certain professional qualifications (e.g. medicine) may have better employment opportunities in developing countries where their credentials may be more readily recognised and there may be a demand for their particular skills.



## Enhancing receiving communities

While countries resettling refugees are motivated by humanitarian concerns, they also believe that refugee resettlement, along with their general migration programs, enrich them as societies.

No two refugee populations are alike. There are also differences in the extent to which policies and practices of receiving countries enable refugees to realise their full potential. While very little contemporary research on immigration distinguishes between refugees and migrants, overall, it indicates that resettlement and migration offer net benefits<sup>5</sup>.

Refugees generally have a high level of motivation not only to rebuild their own lives but also to make a meaningful contribution to the receiving society. The fact that they have survived often horrific experiences is testimony to their resilience. In their countries-of-origin many lived lives distinguished by a commitment to achieve high standards in their workplace and community. Many refugees come from cultures in which particular value is placed on personal industriousness and enterprise.

**1996** Together with his fellow East Timorese countryman Bishop Carlos Belo, Jose Ramos Horta is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his dedication to human rights.

**1997** Phan Thi Kim Phuc, a Vietnamese refugee resettled in Canada, is appointed goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

**1998** Renowned poet, writer and artist from the former USSR, Tatyana Mamonova, receives the USA World Heroine Prize for her contributions as a founder of the Russian Women's movement.

**1998** Tan Le, aged 21 years, is awarded the Young Australian of the Year, having fled to Australia from Vietnam in 1981. Today she is the Chief Commercial Officer of a telecommunications company.

**1999** Romanian refugee and writer, Ana Maria Narti, is elected to the Swedish Parliament.

**1999** Adrienne Clarkson becomes the first overseas born person to be appointed as Canada's Governor General. She had arrived in Canada as a refugee from China with her family in 1941.

**1999** Vaira Vike-Freiberga is sworn in as the first President of Latvia after spending 44 years as a refugee in Canada. She is the first female head of state in post-communist Eastern Europe. >





## WHY OFFER A FORMAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM?

### REFUGEE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

**1999** Following the opening in Kiev, Ukraine of the first social centre for refugees, Afghani refugee Akbar Khurasani begins teaching art to local Kiev and refugee children. His paintings can be found in private collections all over the world.

**2000** Community educator, Spokesperson for the USA Campaign for a Landmine Free World and Cambodian refugee Loung Ung has her book, *First they Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*, published.

**2000** Gao Xingjian becomes the first Chinese National to receive the Nobel Literature Prize for *One Man's Bible*.

**2000** Argentinian pianist, Miguel Angel Estrella, in exile in France, receives the Nansen Refugee Award for his extraordinary work in support of refugees.

**2000** Ugandan refugee Lesley Akora is employed as a Community Services Settlement Officer in a Migrant Resource Centre in Perth, Australia having arrived only nine years earlier.

**2000** Fazil Kawani, Iraqi refugee, works as the Communications Director at the Refugee Council in London.

**2002** The work of picture archivist and German refugee Otto Bettman is recognised as a vital source of picture material for editors, designers and multi-media specialists all over the world.

Refugees contribute a wealth of personal attributes and skills to the social and economic fabric of receiving societies.

Refugees can also make an important economic contribution by creating new businesses and jobs, filling labour market gaps, and helping to improve productivity<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, both refugee resettlement and general migration are now recognised as critical factors in the economic success of a number of industrialised countries. As the populations of these countries age, migration and resettlement will help to maintain their revenue base and to meet labour force demands<sup>7</sup>.

The social benefits of refugee resettlement are much harder to quantify and measure. However, experience suggests that refugees have made a significant contribution to the growth of intellectual, social and cultural capital in receiving countries<sup>8</sup>. Having been offered a refuge from persecution and the opportunity to build a new life, resettled refugees have a high level of motivation to 'give back' to receiving societies. While for some this has been through exemplary achievements in the arts, science, industry and public life, many others have contributed through their day-to-day participation in communities, families, workplaces and social institutions.



# CHAPTER 1.2

## Introducing this Handbook



## Chapter 1.2 Introducing this Handbook

In recent decades, 10 countries have developed formal refugee resettlement programs. A further eight countries have newly established programs, or are in the process of establishing them. Many other countries, such as France and Germany, have offered resettlement on an ad hoc basis in response to specific humanitarian crises.

Both the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its resettlement partners in these countries recognise that if resettlement is to be both a tool of international protection and a durable solution, it does not end at the point of the acceptance of refugees for resettlement and the provision of safe passage to a receiving country.

Unlike other migrants, refugees are compelled to leave their countries-of-origin. Their departure is often hurried and unplanned; many have endured deprivation and trauma prior to their arrival.

The fact that refugees have survived these events is a testament to their skills and strengths. The great majority of those offered resettlement establish productive lives in receiving societies. However, if their full potential is to be realised refugees will require some support to overcome the negative consequences of their refugee experiences and to rebuild their lives in a new country. Taking steps to optimise integration potential also has benefits for receiving societies, ensuring that refugees are well placed to contribute the skills and attributes they bring.

However, it is important that resettlement be understood as a process beginning with the identification and assessment of applicants, extending to reception on arrival in a resettlement country and including longer term integration into the receiving community.

### Table Three: Countries of refugee resettlement

#### Countries with established refugee resettlement programs

Australia  
Canada  
Denmark  
Finland  
The Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Norway  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
USA

#### Countries with emerging\* refugee resettlement programs

Benin  
Brazil  
Britain  
Burkina Faso  
Chile  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Spain

\*Emerging resettlement countries are those that may have been accepting refugees in various capacities for many years and are now formalising their resettlement programs.





## INTRODUCING THIS HANDBOOK

**The RESETTLEMENT HANDBOOK sets out UNHCR's policies and procedures relating to resettlement. It is available on the UNHCR website (see p. xi).**

## The purpose of the Handbook

While UNHCR's *Resettlement Handbook* articulates policy and procedures for identifying and documenting refugees in need of resettlement, it does not discuss reception and integration of refugees in countries of resettlement. To this end the *Integration Initiative* was launched in 1999. This Handbook has been developed as part of this initiative.

The Handbook has been developed as both a planning and professional development resource for those with responsibility for, or an interest in, planning, promoting, developing, implementing and monitoring programs and strategies to facilitate the integration of resettled refugees.

It is anticipated that it will:

- contribute to supporting new and strengthening established integration programs;
- enhance understanding of the processes and benefits of resettlement and integration at governmental and community levels and among international organisations with an interest in refugee protection and resettlement;
- serve as a source of information for those countries considering resettling refugees.

The Handbook has been written with a broad audience in mind, recognising that refugee integration is typically a partnership of government and non-government organisations and the refugee and wider communities.

It is not intended as a guide to practice for those in direct support roles with resettled refugees. However, many of the principles and approaches outlined in it may be useful in a direct service setting.

The emphasis in the Handbook is on the integration of refugees offered resettlement through a formal program. However, many of the ideas presented in it may also be useful in planning program responses for the settlement of refugees arriving spontaneously.

## Accommodating and respecting global diversity

Refugee resettlement programs exist in a diverse global context. Countries offering resettlement have very different governmental structures and social and economic environments and varying levels of prior experience in supporting culturally diverse migration and resettlement.

In the interests of respecting this diversity this Handbook does not set out to provide detailed instruction on the procedures and processes involved in establishing an integration program, nor does it seek to prescribe ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways of going about the task of refugee resettlement. Rather, its aim is to provide information and ideas to guide integration practice. It does this by articulating the broad conditions required for successful resettlement and by identifying some of the critical issues that need to be considered in the planning process.

The Handbook draws extensively on the experience of countries of resettlement and presents a number of specific ideas and approaches developed in these countries. Alternative perspectives are presented, along with discussion about their costs and benefits. Readers are encouraged to evaluate the applicability of these approaches to their local environment.

Given that the global refugee population is both diverse and changing, the Handbook does not provide information on specific refugee groups. However, a list of resources providing this information is included on page ix.

### How was the Handbook developed?

The Handbook was developed on the basis of materials developed in the context of the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* held in Sweden in April 2001, hosted by the Swedish Integration Board (see p. viii). These included a set of principles to guide integration of resettled refugees (see p. 12). Further input was sought from an international Task Force and international integration experts (see p. x).





## Reception and Integration: Guiding Principles

THIS HANDBOOK is based on the following principles developed and endorsed at the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* held in Sweden April 2001:

### Preamble

Refugees strengthen societies through their cultural diversity and the contributions, which they bring. We affirm that resettlement of refugees works. Most refugees integrate successfully into their host communities and most of the support and services provided by governments, refugee communities, non-governmental organisations and the public makes a difference.

Resettlement is an important tool of refugee protection and a durable solution for many refugees. It is not a substitute for asylum, but rather a complementary way of providing protection to people in need. Resettlement offers refugees the possibility to begin new lives and to become fully participating members of society. Given global needs and the success of resettlement as a durable solution, we believe that the use of resettlement should be expanded in the future.

The challenge for states and for UNHCR is to ensure that resettlement selection is carried out in a fair, transparent, and equitable manner based on refugee needs for protection and for durable solutions. A particular challenge for states is to be inclusive in their resettlement criteria and not automatically to exclude groups or countries from consideration. While we acknowledge that resettlement may not be appropriate in every situation, it should be

seen as an integral component of a comprehensive international response.

Experience with resettlement varies from country to country. Some countries have long resettlement histories while others are new to the process. But all resettlement countries are committed to facilitating refugee integration, to nurturing a hospitable environment for refugees, and are willing to learn from one another. While integration occurs within a framework of national policy and in a particular cultural context, it is fundamentally a personal process through which refugees develop a sense of belonging, make friendships, and enjoy mutual respect in their new society.

The following general principles will serve as a guide to our efforts to promote refugee integration.

### Integration

- Integration is a mutual, dynamic, multi-faceted and on-going process. "From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population."<sup>a</sup>
- Integration is "multi-dimensional in that it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees' own perceptions of, acceptance by and membership in the host society."<sup>b</sup>

- Opportunities for resettled refugees to become citizens and to enjoy full and equal participation in society represent an overarching commitment by governments to refugee integration.
- Family reunification is crucial to refugee integration. Similarly, relatives and ethnic community networks can play key roles in successful refugee integration.
- A multi-dimensional, comprehensive and cohesive approach that involves families, communities and other systems can help refugees to restore hope and to re-build their lives.

#### **Refugees at the centre**

- Refugees bring resources and skills to the countries in which they resettle. Host societies are strengthened and enriched by the contributions of refugees.
- Refugee participation and leadership are essential in the development, implementation and evaluation of both refugees' own individual resettlement and integration programs.
- Underlying the practical, tangible needs which refugees have are more fundamental needs for dignity, security, social connectedness, and identity. Both these more fundamental needs and immediate material needs must be addressed.
- Enabling refugees to use their own resources and skills to help each other is a priority.

- Responding to the range of needs specific to the refugee experience will improve resettlement programs and enhance integration.

#### **Strengthening receiving communities**

- Building community capacity for equitable partnership in refugee reception and integration involves all sectors of the community.
- Refugees integrate themselves. The responsibility of the public, private and community sectors is to work alongside refugees as facilitators to create an environment in which people can be empowered.
- The public should receive accurate and timely information about refugee situations. Receiving communities require additional specific information in preparing for the arrival of refugees in their communities. In both cases, the media have an important role to play.

#### **Strengthening partnerships**

- Multi-faceted partnerships need to be continually developed and strengthened among governments, refugees, communities, non-governmental organisations, and volunteers.
- Strengthening relationships between those working to identify refugees in need of resettlement and the communities where they will be resettled is important to the resettlement process.

a. Adapted from the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), *Policy on Integration*, 1999.

b. ECRE, *Policy on Integration*, 1999.





# CHAPTER 1.3

## Laying the Foundations for Integration: Planning Goals



# Chapter 1.3

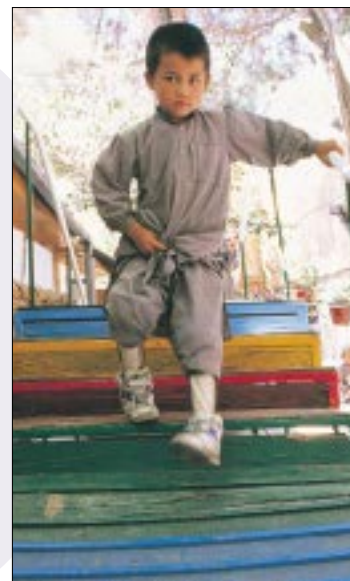
## Laying the Foundations for Integration: Planning Goals



GOALS

### **The nature of the refugee and integration experiences: Implications for planning**

There is considerable variation in conditions in refugee source countries and countries of refuge and in the experiences of both individuals and groups of refugees. Nevertheless, research and the experience of refugees and those working with them suggest that there are a number of elements often present in refugees' countries-of-origin. These elements, documented in the first column of Figure One (overleaf) give rise to common experiences responsible for producing refugee flows (see column two). Many of these experiences will also have been a feature of the lives of refugees in countries of refuge. While the personal and psychological consequences of these experiences will clearly differ for individual refugees, a number of common patterns can be discerned (see columns three and four).



This understanding, explored in greater detail below, provides a broad framework for anticipating the conditions refugees are likely to have been exposed to prior to their arrival in resettlement countries, and the implications of these for planning and providing integration support. It provides the basis for developing specific goals for planning refugee integration in countries of resettlement (see column five).

### **Conditions and experiences in refugees' countries-of-origin and of initial refuge and their consequences for resettled refugees**

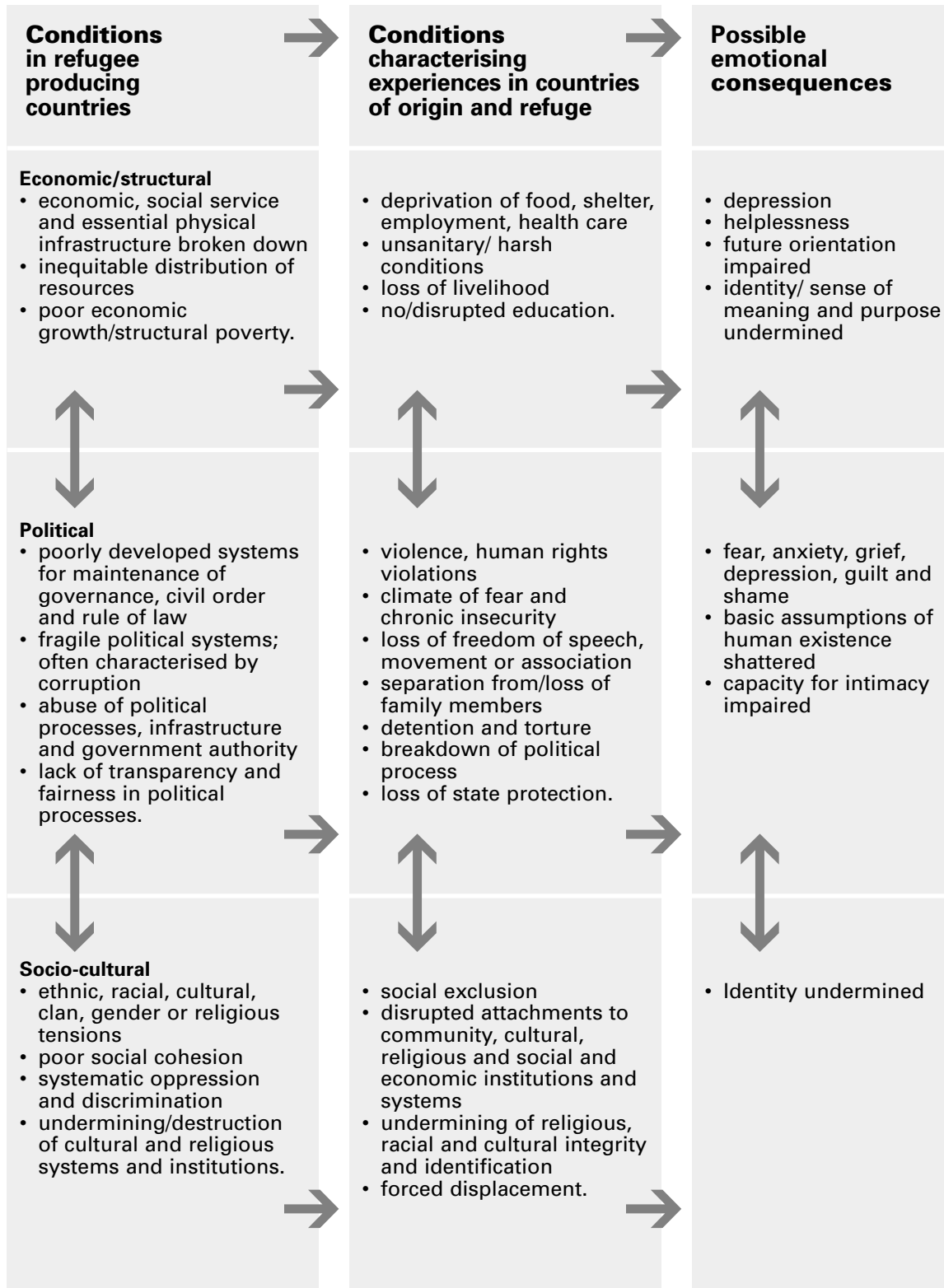
#### Economic and material conditions

Loss of livelihood and shelter and exposure to harsh and unsanitary conditions are an almost inevitable consequence of forced displacement. Many people will have endured a long and hazardous escape from their countries-of-origin, during which they lacked access to food and water and faced threats to their personal safety.





➔ **Figure One:**  
**A framework for planning refugee integration programs**



### Possible personal and social consequences

- social and economic dependency
- loss of control
- poor health
- education/employment skills impaired.



- lack/loss of family support
- changed family relationships
- loss of trust
- personal boundaries invaded
- lack of privacy
- impaired attachments/relationships.



- loss of a sense of place and belonging
- cultural, racial or religious integrity undermined
- lack/loss of social and community support and connections.

### Goals for integration in countries of resettlement

**ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.  
**TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.



**THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.  
**FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support  
**FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.



**SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity  
**SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.  
**EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.

**NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.



GOALS



**The gravity of problems reached the point where we did not have any alternative but to flee the country. Our voyage lasted seven days and seven nights. We reached the point that we had only one egg to eat every day.**

Resettled refugee



For most refugees, however, forced displacement and flight are likely to have been preceded by a prolonged period of deprivation of the basic resources required both for human existence and to build a positive future. In many countries, education and health systems as well as essential physical infrastructure such as housing, water supply and sanitation are poorly developed or have broken down or been destroyed in the context of conflict (see Table Four).

These conditions have a particular impact on women and girls with gender acting as an additional barrier to accessing resources in many refugee source countries.

In their countries of refuge, many refugees will have lived 'hand-to-mouth' in the general community or in a refugee camp. They may have been dependent on government and non-government agencies for basic necessities, have had limited or no access to education and faced intense monotony and boredom.

#### Emotional and personal impact

As a result of these exposures, resettled refugees may be in poor health on arrival in a resettlement country. Many will have achieved high levels of education and professional or vocational

**Table Four: Human development in selected refugee countries-of-origin and countries receiving refugees and asylum seekers**

Refugee countries-of-origin <sup>a</sup>	Human Development Index Ranking <sup>b</sup>	Refugee receiving countries with developing economies <sup>c</sup>	Ranking	Countries with high levels of human development <sup>d</sup>	Ranking
Burundi	171	Pakistan	138	Norway	1
Sudan	139	Iran	98	Sweden	2
Angola	161	Tanzania	151	Canada	3
Democratic Republic of Congo	155	Democratic Republic of Congo	155	Belgium	4
Vietnam	109	Sudan	139	Australia	5

(a) Figures presented for the top five refugee countries-of-origin for which Human Development Index (HDI) data available. (b) The HDI, developed by the United Nations Human Development Program, measures the average achievements of a country on three basic dimensions of human development – a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Indices have been developed for 173 countries with a figure of 1 indicating high levels of human development. (c) Figures presented for the five main countries receiving refugee and asylum seekers in 2001 for which HDI data is available. (d) Figures presented as a basis for comparison. Source: United Nations Human Development Program, *Human Development Report 2002 – Deepening democracy in a fragmented world*, Oxford University Press, New York 2002.

experience in their countries-of-origin. However, disruption to employment may have had an effect on their capacity to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills and to progress in their chosen field. Those who have had limited or disrupted education may have low levels of educational attainment or lack literacy and numeracy skills.

These experiences have an emotional impact. Loss of control over the very basic resources required for survival can create feelings of fear, helplessness and dependency. Without access to these resources, people have limited capacity to maintain a sense of a meaning and purpose in their day-to-day lives or to plan for or perceive of a positive future for themselves and their families. Loss of the opportunity to work, or to work in one's chosen field, carries with it a loss of social status and the very means by which we define ourselves and shape our identity. This is true whether work is in the public sphere or, as is the case for many women, in the home.

### Political conditions and experiences

Many refugees originate from countries where systems for maintaining governance, civil order and the rule of law are poorly developed, compromised or have completely broken down<sup>1</sup>. Prior to fleeing their countries-of-origin, many will have been exposed to a prolonged climate of violence and human rights violations, and have been subject or witness to events such as:

- killings, assaults and rape, sometimes on a massive scale, including family members and friends
- torture
- disappearances
- summary executions
- restrictions on freedom of speech and movement
- imprisonment
- enforced separation from families and communities
- destruction of their homes
- forced displacement
- enforced conscription.

It is estimated that around one in three of the world's refugees has had at least one experience of torture<sup>2</sup>. Studies of refugees offered permanent resettlement indicate that one in four has been subject to torture or severe human rights violations, with almost seven in ten being subject to other traumatic events such as prolonged political repression and the loss of family members in violent circumstances<sup>3</sup>.



**In a refugee camp you don't have a life. You're empty.**

Resettled refugee



**As my parents are illiterate, I don't know when I was born. I myself am 'almost 30' they keep telling me. One thing I know is that I hadn't started school when we fled in 1979.**

Resettled refugee

**The women sat in their tents all the time and hardly ever went out. There was nothing for them to do out there, and also it was dangerous to go out...when they washed, a tent was set up within the tent using pieces of cloth.**

Resettled refugee

**I can't give my children love because I am always thinking about my brother left behind in the camp.**

Resettled refugee



GOALS



**In the discussions, refugee women emphasised that in all cultures, rape is a taboo that silences women. In some cultures, rape survivors are forced to marry the man who raped them or face rejection.**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
*Respect Our Rights: Partnership for Equality — UNHCR Report on the Dialogue with Refugee Women*, Geneva, June 2001



In countries of asylum, refugees may be vulnerable to further violence or abuse of their human rights. They may face the hostility of local communities. Some spend a prolonged period in a refugee camp, where they may experience violence and lack personal safety.

### Emotional and personal impact

Exposure to extreme and indiscriminate human cruelty, such as mass rapes and the killing of children, can serve to undermine those assumptions that are fundamental to our human existence. In the face of overwhelming destruction and death, people may also struggle to maintain a view of the future and question the meaning and purpose of life.

Events such as rape, torture and imprisonment which involve violation of personal boundaries may lead to intense feelings of guilt, shame and a loss of dignity. This is graphically illustrated in the silence often maintained by refugee women victims of rape<sup>4</sup>.

In a climate of violence and human rights abuse, trust in others is frequently undermined. In many regimes, violence is state-sanctioned, perpetrated or supervised by officials who are in theory responsible for maintaining peace, human rights and human dignity (e.g. doctors, lawyers, law enforcement personnel). As a consequence, refugees may distrust and fear others, in particular those in positions of power and authority.

Violence and human rights abuse not only have a profound effect on those directly exposed to them, but also generate a climate of fear and chronic insecurity in the wider community.

Some refugees will have lost or become separated from family members, often in violent circumstances. In some persecutory regimes purposeful strategies are adopted to isolate people from family support (for example, through harassment or imprisonment of family members). These losses may lead to intense and prolonged grief<sup>5</sup> and difficulties in forming future relationships and attachments (a particular concern for child refugees)<sup>6</sup>.

People forced to leave family members and friends behind in unsafe or difficult conditions in their countries-of-origin or asylum may also feel a profound sense of guilt. For others, guilt may result from a perception that they should have done more to prevent the events to which they or family and friends were exposed<sup>7</sup>.

Refugees separated from family members also lose the support these relationships otherwise provide, support critical to both physical and mental well-being and social stability<sup>8</sup>. Those families who have lost a breadwinner, unaccompanied minors and women separated from male relatives may be particularly vulnerable to deprivation and violence<sup>9</sup>.

While many families survive intact, they may be fundamentally changed by their exposure to violence and human rights abuses, with the capacity to parent and maintain intimate relationships often impaired<sup>10</sup>.

### Socio-cultural conditions and experiences

In the past, refugee flows were commonly the consequence of inter-country conflict. Many contemporary crises, however, are driven by internal conflicts which have their origins in deep seated religious, ethnic, political, racial or clan based tensions. This pattern has a powerful influence on the nature and consequences of the refugee experience.

Prior to fleeing their countries-of-origin, many refugees will have been exposed to a prolonged climate in which their religious, racial, political or cultural integrity was systematically undermined or destroyed. They may have faced:

- prohibitions on their religious or cultural practices;
- forced adoption of practices of the dominant culture;
- social exclusion on grounds of their religion, race, culture, ethnicity or political associations;
- discrimination in access to important resources such as housing, employment and education;
- the destruction of their religious and cultural symbols and icons (e.g. churches, mosques);
- racially, culturally or ethnically motivated violence;
- forced displacement from their homes and communities.

Sometimes these conditions persist in countries of asylum, particularly when refugees are unwelcome minorities in the dominant culture of the host country. Viewed as competitors for scarce resources, asylum seekers may be ready targets for racially or ethnically based violence.

In many countries they are again excluded from the wider community, often denied access to employment and education or detained or accommodated in remote locations in refugee camps.



**As a child she watched as her younger sister and father were brutally murdered. Her mother and extended family escaped to another country in Africa. Today...citizenship is a priority as a passport would allow her to visit her mother who she has just found after many years.**

Resettlement worker



GOALS



### Emotional and personal impact

Civil conflict of this nature has the effect of undermining social and community cohesion, by breaking down trusting and supportive relationships within communities. As a consequence, refugees may have endured a long period during which their access to the protective effects of social support and connections with their communities was compromised. They may also have internalised distrust and suspicion of others as fundamental to their survival.



**Life in the refugee camp is something that you can really only experience in order to adequately describe it.**

Resettled refugee



Many refugees will have been subject to social exclusion. In some regimes this may have taken the form of constraints on their access to education, employment or participation in public life. In others it may have been through practices such as imprisonment, the creation of ethnic or racial ‘ghettos’ or mass population displacement. As well as having implications for people’s sense of belonging, social exclusion compromises their capacity to access material and social resources, and if prolonged, to develop the skills required to participate in public and cultural life.

The undermining of religious, ethnic or racial integrity has a negative impact on one’s identity and sense of belonging and may lead to people feeling a sense of shame and humiliation about their heritage. This is a particular concern for young people for whom the refugee experience coincides with a critical stage of identity formation<sup>11</sup>. Since cultural and religious systems and beliefs play an important part in regulating roles, relationships and behaviours, reduced cultural and religious identification may also compromise family and broader community stability.

### The experience of integration

Resettlement in a safe country offers refugees the opportunity to rebuild a positive future. However, in the early resettlement period at least, there are some potential barriers to this process (Figure Two).

The early resettlement period involves enormous challenges, among them adapting to a different culture and way of life and mastering a host of practical tasks, from establishing a household and using public transport, to negotiating new and complex education, income support and health care systems. Many resettled refugees also need to learn a new language. These tasks may be overwhelming for many people, perpetuating feelings of anxiety and loss of control.

## Figure Two: The experience of integration

Potential sources of stress in the integration environment:	Possible personal and emotional consequences:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing danger in country-of-origin</li> <li>• continuing separation from family members</li> <li>• lack of understanding/hostility on the part of government officials</li> <li>• injustices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fear and anxiety</li> <li>• loss of trust</li> <li>• grief</li> <li>• lack of family support</li> <li>• guilt</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minority status in a dominant culture</li> <li>• limited community support networks</li> <li>• prejudice and hostility on grounds of ethnicity, race, religion</li> <li>• limited access to cultural and religious institutions</li> <li>• poor social status</li> <li>• gender role and status adjustment</li> <li>• intergenerational adjustment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loss of a sense of belonging</li> <li>• cultural, racial or religious integrity undermined</li> <li>• identity undermined</li> <li>• lack/loss of social support</li> <li>• family conflict and tension</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unemployment</li> <li>• underemployment</li> <li>• difficulties in accessing education and health care</li> <li>• insecure housing</li> <li>• new and unfamiliar environment</li> <li>• lack of proficiency in the language of the receiving society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fear about the future and of not coping</li> <li>• altered capacity to plan the future</li> <li>• social and economic dependency</li> <li>• poor health</li> </ul>

Adjustment may be particularly difficult for resettled refugees originating from rural or pastoral communities in developing countries where they lived a traditional way of life and had limited exposure to modern technology and the effects of urbanisation and industrialisation.

Without support, resettled refugees may also have difficulties in accessing basic resources for survival and rebuilding, such as housing, health care and education. As well as having obvious consequences for immediate material well-being, limitations on access to these resources may affect people's sense of safety and control. Those originating from relatively affluent backgrounds in their countries-of-origin may face the additional difficulty of adjusting to a lower social status.

As minorities in the dominant culture of the receiving community, refugees face the challenge of developing a sense of belonging and identity. Lack of understanding, and in some cases active discrimination and hostility in the receiving country may work against this and serve to further undermine their sense of physical security and self esteem. This may be a particular challenge for resettled refugees with distinguishing cultural and religious practices or racial features.



GOALS





## The impact of the refugee and resettlement experiences on refugee families

THE REFUGEE and resettlement experiences have a significant impact on refugee families. These impacts, summarised below, are discussed in greater detail in Part Three of this Handbook.

- Refugee trauma and the practical demands of resettlement may affect relationships within families and the capacity to provide support, particularly to dependants such as elders, children and young people.
- Families may not be intact on arrival, a particular concern for families who have lost a breadwinner. Others may be reuniting after prolonged separation and it may take time for them to re-establish mutual understanding. Some refugees, such as children and single men

and women, may arrive without customary family support.

- Tensions may arise within families as men and women come to terms with differences in gender roles and status between their country-of-origin and the receiving society, in particular women's greater social and economic power (see Chapter 3.2).
- There may be some adjustment involved for refugee parents in receiving societies in which there may be very different approaches to child welfare and discipline. Children and young people are also likely to be accorded a greater range of rights and freedoms in their new country and this may lead to intergenerational conflict.

- Children and young people tend to acquire the language of the receiving country, to learn about its systems and ways and to adopt its culture more readily and rapidly than adults. They may be called upon to translate, interpret and mediate with systems in the receiving society on behalf of their families. This has the potential fundamentally to alter power and dependency relationships between refugee children and young people and their parents and grandparents. Children and young people's more rapid adaptation to the culture of the receiving society may also be a factor in intergenerational conflict and tension.

The early resettlement period is also a time when people may have limited access to family support. While many refugees will have lost or become separated from family members, even in intact families, the stresses and adjustments involved in resettlement may compromise the availability and quality of support (see box).

Uncertainty about the welfare and safety of family members may be an ongoing source of anxiety and guilt for resettled refugees.

Cultural and language differences may make it difficult for resettled refugees to establish social connections and secure support within the receiving community. Feelings of shame and guilt can undermine the belief that they are worthy of help,

## The process of adapting to a new country

DESPITE diversity among refugees and the countries in which they settle, research suggests that the process of adapting to a new country is very similar for most individuals. Four stages can be discerned and are presented in a necessarily simplified form below. In practice, the process for individuals is not a linear one. Rather, most will move back and forward and there may be times when reactions lie somewhere between the stages.

Integration support will be most important in the confrontation and adjustment stages. These are not only stressful points in the resettlement process, but are stages at which intervention can help to ensure a positive outcome.

The time involved in adaptation will differ depending on the characteristics of individual resettled refugees, their past experiences and factors in the resettlement environment.

### **The Honeymoon stage**

This occurs prior to arrival, while en-route and immediately after arrival. Depending on their individual circumstances resettled refugees may have

extreme positive or negative reactions (e.g. euphoria, excitement, thankfulness or exhaustion and anxiety). They may cling to unrealistic ideas about the receiving society as a survival mechanism (ie to avoid facing challenges they are not yet ready to handle). Physical symptoms are common (e.g. sleep problems and reaction to climatic and dietary change; memory loss and poor concentration).

### **Confrontation**

Confrontation occurs as newcomers begin to interact with and attempt to come to terms with the receiving society (e.g. finding housing and employment). Many previously held assumptions about self and others may be shattered at this time and newcomers may be forced to re-evaluate their perceptions, values and identity. Common responses include frustration, dissatisfaction, embarrassment, fear, anger, guilt, nostalgia and irritability. It is not uncommon for newcomers to attribute complex issues to singular causes such as unemployment or separation from family members.

### **Adjustment**

Adjustment occurs as newcomers begin to face the daily reality of living in the receiving society. At this time they develop an increased awareness that established behavioural patterns and coping mechanisms do not work in their new situation. Feelings of failure and self doubt may result. Commonly, newcomers respond by developing new coping styles and behavioural patterns. However, others may react to these challenges with responses such as dependency on others, or escapism (e.g. addiction). Periodic withdrawal to gain strength and courage from self reflection are not uncommon during this stage.

### **Reconstruction**

In this final stage, newcomers build on their inner strength and begin to feel more comfortable in their new society. They gain a sense of control over their lives in their new situation and begin to feel attached to friends, activities and objects in their new country.



GOALS

Adapted with permission from C Murphy and D Zend, *Linking paths: A guide for orienting newcomers to Ontario*, 1994.



affecting their capacity to access both formal and informal sources of support. For refugees who experienced extreme hardship and trauma, feelings such as anxiety or mistrust may persist for some time after arrival. For some these problems will be sufficiently severe as to interfere with daily life<sup>12</sup>.

Resettled refugees may also have to learn new ways of coping and behaving. Coping strategies which served them well in a situation of dependency on a refugee camp or in a corrupt and oppressive political regime may be counter-productive in the receiving society.

Established refugee communities have an important role to play in supporting newcomers. However, resettled refugees may have limited connections with these communities or they may not be well established in the receiving society. As indicated above, conditions in countries-of-origin and refuge can have the effect of undermining cohesion and trusting and supportive relationships within communities. New refugee communities may themselves be in the process of developing effective leadership and support systems and this in turn may compromise their capacity to extend support to newcomers.



**Everything was new for me and I have experienced a lot of joyful happenings. I didn't confront any problems yet.**  
Resettled refugee



### **Goals for integration in countries of resettlement**

If resettled refugees are to have the best prospects for realising their potential, most will require some support in the period immediately following their arrival. This is important both to redress the personal, social and economic disadvantage they have faced and to deal with the intensive demands of adjusting to a new society.

Countries of resettlement also have a role in ensuring that refugees have access to the resources required for their longer term stability and adjustment. Among these are housing, employment and education. Countries can foster a social environment in which resettling refugees feel welcome and understood, in which they can be assured that their rights will be respected and in which they can develop social connections and contribute to civic life.

While providing integration support requires investment by receiving countries, it is effort well spent. Promoting optimal conditions for integration enables refugees to achieve independence and settle harmoniously and ensures that countries reap the benefits of the skills and attributes refugees bring with them.

## An integration analogy: Resettling in Canada

“Integration means for me to feel in a new country like at home. For me integration is like a triathlon race.

The first leg of the race is cycling. The best thing to do is to cycle in a group. It is the same with integration. In the beginning the most important thing is to learn language, learn and understand education, employment, economic and social systems of the new country. To a newcomer it means that he or she is part of new society, a member of a community or group with the opportunities and good perspectives.

Once language knowledge is at a comfortable level, education and employment barriers are solved, new friends are met, and the second leg of the race is beginning. It is the swimming leg. While swimming you hardly hear or see others, you concentrate on yourself. This period in integration is obviously very individual. Basics are already met and it is time to reflect and assess how far one has come and how far you could go. At this point the realisation has come that it is a completely new world that one is living in and with it many, many new fine tunings that have to be done...

So you swam your part well and there is not much to go. The last part of the race is the running part. But this is also the most difficult one. You feel a little tired and the finish line seems further away not closer. It is a period in integration when one thinks that he or she has already done so much. And the newcomer does not expect many more challenges. At least the feeling of real integration is there. But from time to time, a completely new word will come up, a holiday or custom that is still unknown, or a little administrative thing that everyone seems to know about.

So, the one who still runs is the one who is integrated.”

*Resettled refugee*

A set of integration goals have been developed with a view to putting into operation the principles developed and endorsed at the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*. The goals, outlined below and summarised in Figure One (see p. 16), describe the practical elements of an integration program and the basic resources that will be required to assist refugees in their resettlement, while ensuring that the process is a mutual one to which both refugees and receiving societies contribute and from which both benefit.

### Meeting basic needs

A secure environment with adequate access to income, accommodation and health care are among the basic rights of all people. As well as being fundamental to refugees' survival in a new country, these resources assist them to regain a sense of security, predictability and control.

Owing to the unplanned nature of their departure, most refugees will arrive in countries of resettlement with few personal effects and limited if any financial reserves. It is

### INTEGRATION GOAL

**ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.



## LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR REFUGEE REBUILDING: PLANNING GOALS



important, therefore, that arrangements are made for the provision of immediate accommodation, and financial support.

Early access to health care will also be important to ensure that resettled refugees have the optimal physical and mental health required to deal with the challenges of resettlement.

### Communicating in the receiving country

The ability to communicate in the receiving country is a critical condition for achieving control and independence, gaining access to resources, participating in the social and economic institutions of the receiving country and establishing social connections.

It is therefore important that new refugee arrivals have access to interpreting and translating services and other forms of language assistance as well as opportunities to learn the language of the receiving country.

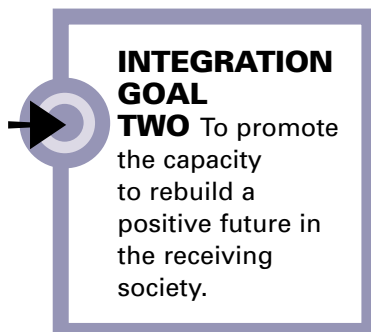
### Orientation to the systems of the receiving country

New arrivals' ability to establish a new life and to access resettlement resources will be critically dependent on understanding and being able to negotiate basic systems, programs and entitlements in the receiving country. Among these are procedures for banking, transportation, registering for employment, accessing health care and enrolling for school and language tuition.

An effective integration program, therefore, will incorporate means for informing new arrivals about and orienting them to basic systems of the receiving country and the benefits and programs available to them.

### Planning for the future

Long term housing, employment and education are essential for planning a positive future, for achieving economic stability and for establishing one's sense of place and identity. Accordingly, it is important that arrangements are made for new refugee arrivals to access these resources, either through specialised programs or support in accessing services and systems also available to nationals.



## Family reunification

As indicated above, many refugees experience grief, anxiety and guilt associated with having left close family members behind in countries-of-origin or asylum. Offering resettled refugees the opportunity to apply to have family members join them in the receiving country plays a powerful role in addressing these feelings<sup>13</sup>. Family support is also important for both mental health and well-being and longer term economic and social stability. In the early resettlement period it can serve as a buffer against the stresses which may be involved in the integration process. The principle and importance of family unity is enshrined in a number of international human rights instruments (see p. 83).

For this reason an essential element of an integration program will be provision for resettled refugees to have family members join them in the receiving country. Most countries also promote family unity by enabling resettled refugees to settle in communities where they already have relatives living.

## Restoring supportive relationships within families

The refugee and resettlement experiences involve numerous adjustments for families (see box, p. 24) and may have a significant impact on the availability and quality of family support. Most countries of resettlement aim to provide integration programs in ways which take account of this impact both on individual family members and on the family as a unit.

## Systems of support

Settling in a new country can be difficult and complex, particularly for those in poor physical and mental health. Newly arrived refugees are unlikely to have connections with people able to support them with these tasks. Guilt and the erosion of trust, dignity and self esteem which may result from traumatic refugee experiences can undermine refugees' capacity to access formal and informal support networks and services.

For these reasons, it is important that steps are taken to connect new refugee arrivals with individuals who are able to offer individualised support in the early post arrival period. In

### INTEGRATION GOAL THREE

To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.


 GOALS

### INTEGRATION GOAL FOUR

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.



the context of these relationships new arrivals can be offered practical assistance, information and help to understand and negotiate their new culture and society. The opportunity to form a trusting relationship can also help people to re-establish their sense of dignity and self-respect and their trust in others. Lessons learned through these key relationships can be transferred to the refugee's experience with others in the receiving society.

Most existing integration programs have mechanisms for assessing the needs of new arrivals and ensuring that they receive an appropriate level of individualised support in the early resettlement period. This may be provided by professionals in government or non-government agencies, volunteers and community groups or through refugee sponsorship programs or by a combination of these.

Also important are strategies to enhance the capacity of key professionals (such as doctors and teachers) to identify and support new refugee arrivals.


### Restoring faith in government

Many resettled refugees come from countries where governments failed to protect their rights or where violence and human rights abuses were perpetrated by the state.

Countries of resettlement can help to restore refugees' confidence in government by providing integration programs in ways which demonstrate respect for freedom, human rights and individual dignity. Also important in this regard will be measures to ensure that resettled refugees have equitable access to government services and programs available to the wider community.

Resettled refugees will have day-to-day contact with a range of personnel, from law enforcement officers to government officials responsible for administering income support payments, employment schemes, family reunion programs and the like.

For refugees who experienced state-sanctioned violence and human rights abuses in their countries-of-origin, interactions with people in positions of authority can be stressful. It is important that professional development and awareness raising programs are offered to relevant officials to enhance their understanding of and sensitivity to the nature and consequences of the refugee experience.



**INTEGRATION  
GOAL  
FIVE**  
To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.



## Reinforcing human rights and the rule of law

A broad commitment of resettlement countries to the protection and promotion of human rights at the domestic and international levels can help to demonstrate to resettled refugees their new country's abhorrence of human rights abuses and to reassure them that their rights will be observed in their new homeland.

## Valuing diversity

There is increasing recognition among countries currently offering refugee resettlement that integration is more likely to be successful in an environment in which new arrivals are able to maintain their cultural, racial, religious or ethnic integrity while at the same time being encouraged to participate in, and access the resources of, the receiving society. This is also understood to have benefits for receiving societies, since they are able to benefit from the unique skills and attributes of resettled refugees.

In this context, integration becomes a 'two-way street' with the receiving society both learning from and adapting to the needs of newcomers and resettled refugees learning from and adapting to the receiving society.

Most countries take steps to ensure that integration programs (such as language training and orientation) are delivered in ways which value and respect refugees' culture and customs. Many also aim to foster a climate in which diversity is valued and to support the development of strong ethno-cultural communities.

Promoting a climate in which diversity is valued is particularly important for refugee arrivals, many of whom will have been exposed to discrimination and hostility in their countries-of-origin and asylum. As well as demonstrating that they are welcome in the receiving country, the promotion of diversity enhances opportunities for people to reconnect with cultural and religious communities, practices and institutions and to re-establish or maintain their identity.

At the same time it is important that refugees are able to participate in the civic, economic and social institutions of the receiving country and to foster social connections within it. For this reason, refugees will also require opportunities to learn about laws, customs, role expectations and communication patterns in the receiving country.



GOALS

### INTEGRATION GOAL SIX

To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.



**To me integration means bringing one's personality, skills, knowledge and culture into a new society and also receiving all the positive values from the same society.**

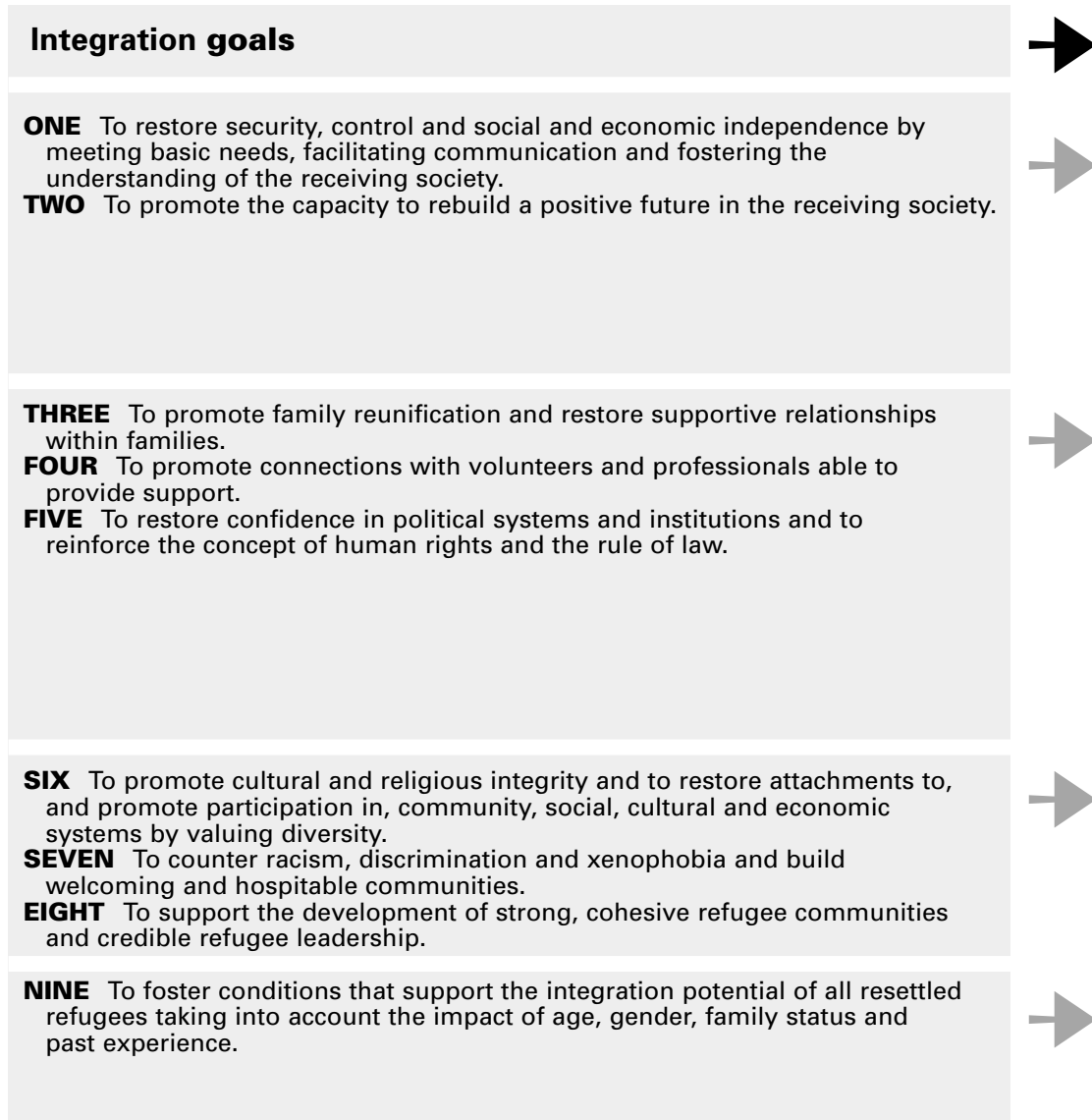
Resettled refugee







## → Figure Three: Implementing the goals: Key planning activities



## Planning activities

 For further  
information

• Immediate accommodation	Chapter 2.2
• Orientation to systems and resources	2.7
• Assessment and early settlement support	2.3
• Income support	2.4
• Support to access employment, education and training	2.9
• Long term housing	2.8
• Household establishment resources	2.4
• Language assistance (e.g. interpreting and translating services, bilingual workers)	2.5
• Target language instruction	2.6
• Family reunion	2.3
• Placement practices promoting family unity	2.3, 2.1
• Volunteer and community support networks	2.3, 2.11
• Services for survivors of trauma and torture	3.1
• Health assessment and care	2.2, 2.10
• Strategies to enhance the capacity of professionals in the wider society to provide support to resettled refugees	2.3, 2.11, 3.1
• Legislative initiatives to promote equal opportunity and prevent discrimination	2.11
• Being signatory to key instruments to protect and promote human rights	2.11
• Sensitisation of key governmental systems and personnel	2.11
• Permanent residency and citizenship provisions	2.11
• Strategies to promote cultural diversity and counter racism and xenophobia	2.11
• Media liaison	2.11
• Capacity building in ethno-cultural and wider communities	2.3, 2.11
• Cultural orientation	2.7
• Processes and strategies to respond to the particular needs of new arrivals with refugee-related trauma, men and women, elders, and children and young people, especially separated minors.	Part Three



GOALS



## Countering discrimination, racism and xenophobia

Refugee communities may be particularly vulnerable to racism and xenophobia in countries of resettlement<sup>4</sup>. This can compromise their safety and contribute to heightened anxiety. In some countries, negative or inaccurate portrayal of refugees and asylum issues in the media may fuel anti-refugee sentiment and affect the extent to which resettled refugees feel welcome. Refugees may also face discrimination in their access to important social and economic resources such as housing, employment and education.

Countries with established integration programs have sought to counter this through a range of strategies including advocacy programs, legislation and community education.

## Creating welcoming and hospitable communities

The environment refugees encounter in the neighbourhoods, workplaces, social venues and classrooms of the receiving society will have a significant bearing on their capacity to rebuild their lives.

A welcoming environment not only helps refugees to restore their faith in others, but will enable them to develop friendships and build informal networks. These are important both for day-to-day support and to enhance their access to other resources such as employment, and recreation and to provide opportunities for participation in public life.

Also important will be measures to ensure that resettled refugees are granted permanent residence in the receiving country and the opportunity to become citizens as soon as possible. Legal residence and the right to citizenship are important expressions of the resettlement government's willingness to welcome refugees to full participation in, and the protection of, the receiving society.

Due to loss of trust and cultural and language differences refugees may experience some difficulties in interacting with, and developing connections in, the community. In turn, this may be exacerbated by a lack of understanding in the wider community.

This suggests the importance of providing information and education programs to receiving communities to enhance their understanding of the refugee experience and their capacity to extend friendship and support to new arrivals.

Strategies to counter racism and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities are also in the interests of receiving societies, ensuring that they are well placed to benefit from the skills and attributes of resettled refugees, and that conflicts are avoided.

## Refugee communities

In countries with a history of culturally diverse migration and resettlement, refugee and ethnic communities have an important role in extending hospitality and support to new arrivals. In addition these communities provide a means for refugees to connect with cultural and religious institutions and practices. Established refugee communities can serve as bridges between new arrivals and the receiving country, interpreting the practices and values of the receiving society to new arrivals and promoting understanding of the needs of refugees in the wider community.

Strong refugee communities and effective refugee leadership may take some time to develop. However, they contribute to supporting integration as a 'two-way' street, providing a base from which resettled refugees can interact on a more equal footing with the receiving society.

In many countries, the contribution of refugee communities to supporting integration is fostered by government or private funding and other forms of support to strengthen their capacity.

## Planning for all

While resettled refugees share many experiences and issues in common, as is the case in the general population, particular groups of refugees face different concerns as a result of their age, gender, family status or past experiences. These are factors which need to be taken into account to support the integration potential of all resettled refugees, in particular, refugee children and young people, refugee elders and survivors of trauma and torture.

Gender role and status differences between countries-of-origin and resettlement may have a powerful impact. It is important that the particular challenges faced by refugee men and women are considered in the planning process.



GOALS

### INTEGRATION GOAL EIGHT

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.

### INTEGRATION GOAL NINE

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.





# CHAPTER 1.4

## Implementing Integration in Contrasting Global Settings



# Chapter 1.4

## Implementing Integration in Contrasting Global Settings

This Handbook draws on the experiences of over 18 countries currently offering formal refugee resettlement programs. While these programs share many common features, they have developed in very different political, social and economic contexts.

In particular there are significant differences among countries currently offering refugee resettlement with regard to:

- **the availability of existing service and program infrastructure to support integration.** This includes employment placement programs, health care, education and training facilities and income support and safety net services for those outside of the labour force. This infrastructure may not be well developed in receiving countries with low or moderate levels of economic development. Some countries have a strong tradition of public provision of these services. In others, greater emphasis is placed on individual responsibility, with governments seeking to minimise reliance on publicly funded services and programs;
- **the extent of involvement in culturally diverse migration and resettlement.** This has a significant influence on the availability of ethnic community support and prevailing community understanding of and support for resettlement. Countries with large and well established refugee and immigrant populations are more likely to have a policy and service infrastructure and the work force capacity to support integration. They may also benefit from economies of scale, being better placed to develop specialised programs and services;
- **the level of economic capacity to support integration.** Resettlement countries with low or moderate levels of economic development may find it difficult to meet some of the up-front costs of integration, in particular income support payments until such time as resettled refugees are self-sufficient;





## Being mindful of the role of resettled refugees

THIS Chapter is concerned with how receiving countries, in particular governments, understand integration and the choices they make in integration planning. While clearly, receiving countries have an important role in creating an environment for successful resettlement, it is important that there is scope for individual refugees to plan and follow their own resettlement pathways.

- **the level of non-government and community sector involvement in planning and service delivery.** In some countries non-government participation is fostered and indeed there may be specific expectations that the support of people with special needs, among them resettled refugees, will be a shared responsibility of the government and non-government sectors. In other countries, these roles are seen to be primarily those of government;
- **governmental structures and arrangements governing relationships between levels of government.**

This diversity in conditions in resettlement countries has produced contrasting approaches to some key integration planning issues. These varied approaches provide a basis for resettlement countries to learn from one another. However, an appreciation of the different conditions in which they have developed is important since a practice which is very effective in one country may meet with limited success if applied in a different social, economic or political environment.

Contrasting international contexts and approaches also raises important questions for those concerned with overall planning or evaluation of integration programs. The ways in which these questions are addressed influence the overall goals of an integration program and affect planning across program areas in the individual Chapters of this Handbook. For example, as indicated below, language training and income support programs are structured very differently in countries with high expectations of early self-sufficiency, than in those countries where greater emphasis is placed on supporting resettled refugees to accomplish other integration tasks prior to entering the work force.

### Funding arrangements for integration

Countries of resettlement have a common goal of supporting refugees to achieve independence in the receiving society; to assume the same rights and responsibilities as nationals; and to have access to the same range and quality of services and programs.

However, it is recognised that in the early settlement period, most refugees will require a period of targeted and more intensive support. Typically, this includes reception accommodation, early assessment and settlement support, orientation and basic health care, as well as income support until resettled refugees become self-sufficient.

Some countries provide this support through separate and special programs for refugees and immigrants (such as designated reception centres). There has been increasing recognition, however, that integration is more likely to succeed if resettled refugees are assisted at the earliest possible stage through systems and networks in the receiving society that are also available to nationals. This approach:

- fosters contact between resettled refugees and receiving communities;
- helps to avoid the dependency that separate services and programs may engender;
- ensures that resettled refugees have access to the same quality of services available to nationals.

For this reason, in most resettlement countries, dedicated integration programs are time limited. While meeting immediate needs, they are generally delivered in ways that facilitate resettled refugee's early access to resources and systems in the community required for their long term settlement, such as permanent housing, employment, education and social support networks.

Nevertheless, many resettlement governments recognise that resettled refugees will have some special needs extending beyond the reception phase, and which are unlikely to be met by services provided to nationals. Examples include interpreting and translating services, counselling for survivors of trauma and torture, and language training programs.

Such programs are generally funded (though not necessarily implemented by) national governments. Most national governments also recognise the need to invest funding and effort to build the capacity of the receiving community and various levels of government to support integration of resettled refugees.

For example in the USA and New Zealand, special grants are available to school boards serving a large number of refugee children. The Australian government has a community grants program aimed at promoting cultural diversity and tolerance. Other resettlement governments provide funding to existing refugee communities and faith-based and other non-governmental groups to strengthen their capacity to support newcomers.





## The roles of levels of government

While in most countries refugee selection and resettlement is the responsibility of central governments, in practice integration occurs at the local level. Moreover, many integration resources (such as housing and education) are commonly administered by other levels of government and in some cases, by non-governmental agencies. Consequently, in most countries, integration is conceptualised as a shared responsibility of central and other levels of government and specific planning forums and processes are established to facilitate partnership arrangements.

There are different approaches internationally, however, in the extent to which various levels of government are engaged in administering dedicated reception and income support programs. While in some countries, national governments undertake these aspects of integration, in others municipal, state or provincial governments are engaged in implementation, with national governments assuming responsibility for funding, planning, coordination and monitoring. In such countries funding transfers between national and other levels of government are made for these purposes.

These different approaches have their origins in part in prevailing constitutional arrangements. For example, in some countries responsibility for income support for nationals lies with state, provincial or municipal governments. These

### INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

#### Implementing integration locally in Denmark

WHILE Denmark has a long history of offering resettlement to refugees, historically the national government had assumed primary responsibility for all aspects of integration. In 1999 Denmark passed a new law delegating responsibility for implementing refugee resettlement to municipal governments. When refugees	are settled in the municipalities, they develop an individual integration plan in cooperation with a municipal officer. The legislation also defined a strong role for local communities. If more than 50 people request it in writing, municipalities are required to establish a local integration board comprising members	from refugee and local wider communities. The new Danish resettlement program has been successful in engaging communities and supporting integration at a local level. Some of the factors which need to be considered in adopting this approach are discussed in Chapter 2.1.

countries have more compelling reasons for involving these levels of government in income support programs for resettled refugees than is the case in countries such as Australia where both refugee selection and income support systems are administered by the central government.

In a number of the Nordic countries, significant powers of governance are vested in municipal governments, making it possible to implement integration at a relatively local level. In contrast, in the USA and Australia, responsibilities are divided primarily between federal and state governments, with local governments playing a less significant role.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Taking a strategic approach in Australia with the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)

AT THE governmental level in Australia, integration is implemented as a partnership of the national and eight state and territory governments. The national government is constitutionally responsible for income support programs and for financing health care (through a national health insurance scheme, Medicare) and resettled refugees are entitled to these programs on arrival. The national government funds specialist integration support through the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. However, this program has the strategic objective of ensuring that resettled refugees have access to support from family, friends and governmental and non-governmental services and programs provided to nationals in the states and territories in which they settle.	The level of support provided through the IHSS is determined on the basis of an assessment of the resettled refugee's needs and support available from family and friends in Australia. Through this program resettled refugees are offered temporary accommodation, if required; and support to understand their environment and to make links with essential services such as health, education, employment and income support; assisted to secure longer term housing; and provided with basic items to establish a household. This assistance is provided by non-government agencies contracted by the national government and is generally available in the first six months following arrival. Consistent with the strategic approach of the program, where relevant these contractors also work with	the community and other providers to enhance their responsiveness to resettled refugees. To ensure that appropriate planning occurs at the state and territory level, each state and territory has a resettlement coordinating committee comprising senior officers of Ministries responsible for key aspects of integration (e.g. housing, education). While the emphasis in Australia is on promoting access to existing services, the national government also funds a number of specialist services in recognition of the fact that resettled refugees have some specific needs which may not necessarily be met by general services. These include a national translating and interpreting service; a national language training program and programs for survivors of trauma and torture.
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## The role of the non-governmental sector

A significant feature distinguishing established integration programs is the extent to which the non-government and community sectors are engaged in refugee resettlement. In some countries, government assumes almost exclusive responsibility for all aspects of integration, while in others integration is seen as a partnership between government, non-governmental agencies and both refugee and wider communities.

The extent to which non-government organisations (NGOs) are formally engaged in the integration process varies from country to country. In some, they play supplementary or advisory roles. In others, such as the USA, NGOs are contracted to implement key aspects of integration from the provision of reception services and early settlement support, through to job placement and administering social support payments. Similarly while in some countries, volunteer and community support networks complement the role played by government, in others they are engaged through formal arrangements such as private sponsorship programs.

## Expectations of early economic and social self-sufficiency

While there is a consensus internationally that economic self-sufficiency is a pivotal goal of integration, there are significant differences in expectations about how soon after arrival this should be achieved and about the importance of self-sufficiency in the integration process. In this context, self-sufficiency is defined as the capacity to live independently of government and other external sources of income support.

Self-sufficiency goals vary from eight months in the USA to between two and five years in the Nordic resettlement countries.

In some countries resettled refugees are expected to obtain employment very soon after arrival, with income support payments being available for only a limited time. In others, income support and other safety net services are available for longer, allowing resettled refugees to accomplish other resettlement tasks prior to entering the work force.

In still others, specific self-sufficiency goals are not set. Rather, resettled refugees are subject to the same expectations and requirements as nationals. In these countries, however, specific strategies may be used to ensure that the special needs of

## The advantages of implementing integration as a partnership between the government, non-government and voluntary sectors

MANY NGOs and community and ethno-cultural groups have a wealth of expertise and knowledge in refugee resettlement and established networks and resources in the community. Their involvement can help to broaden awareness of refugee issues and build a base of political support for refugee resettlement, particularly given that many are linked with larger faith based constituencies. Being independent of government, NGOs and community groups can also play an advocacy role in relation to refugee resettlement and integration.

In countries where government service provision is highly regulated, NGOs, volunteers and community support networks may be able to offer a more flexible response. They may be better placed to attract bilingual and bi-cultural workers and volunteers who do not have the formal professional qualifications required in a government setting. However, these

personnel often require extensive professional development and support and this needs to be reflected in funding and contractual arrangements between NGOs, volunteer and community groups and government.

There is a strong consensus internationally that governments have a pivotal role in integration and that primary responsibility for funding, coordinating and monitoring ought to lie with governments. Government involvement communicates to the non-governmental sector that their role is welcomed and that their work is likely to be sustained by ongoing budgetary and statutory support. It is essential for delivering those aspects of integration (such as income support and health care) which are beyond the modest resource base of non-governmental organisations. Government involvement makes for more efficient and effective planning of those aspects of integration which transcend local communities

(e.g. the development of national curricula for language training programs).

Governments can also provide a framework for ensuring that there is a coherent and predictable approach to resettlement, using the provision of funding support as leverage. NGOs are not governed by the same procedural and accountability requirements as their counterparts in the government sector, with the result that resettled refugees may lack access to a uniform range of integration supports and to the right to effective recourse in the event of poor quality or unfair treatment. This is a particular concern where NGOs or volunteer and community groups have responsibility for administering or providing basic resources such as income support payments or housing.

Government support also communicates to resettled refugees that they are an important constituency, and provides reassurance that they are welcome and valued.



refugees are taken into account in assessing their eligibility for income and job placement support.

Allied to the question of economic self-sufficiency are questions concerning the level of support resettled refugees require to integrate successfully. There is a clear international consensus that dedicated support in the early reception phase is a critical component of an integration program. However, very different approaches can be distinguished internationally regarding the role of intensive support in meeting longer term integration goals. In some countries, integration is largely the responsibility of resettled refugees themselves, being achieved primarily through the vehicle of economic self-sufficiency (see above). In these countries very few specialised services are available to refugees following a brief initial reception phase.

In others, however, integration is thought to be best facilitated by offering resettled refugees relatively intensive support in the early resettlement period to overcome the negative impact of their refugee experiences and to prepare them for participation in the receiving society. While the range of programs offered varies between countries, they may include subsidised housing, intensive orientation, health care, language training programs and opportunities to participate in education and training.

From a planning perspective, it is important to clarify self-sufficiency goals, since they influence both the level of resources required for integration as well as how other critical components of an integration program are delivered (see below). Where refugee resettlement is implemented at the municipal, provincial or state level with funding from a central government, self-sufficiency goals provide the basis for determining funding levels and regularising funding arrangements between tiers of government (particularly in relation to social support payments).

A number of factors influence self-sufficiency goals, including:

- prevailing views about the role of employment in the overall integration process (see box, p. 45);
- unemployment levels (with economic self-sufficiency being an unrealistic goal in countries with high unemployment);
- expectations of economic self-sufficiency among nationals;
- the capacity of the resettlement country to provide income support until such a time as self-sufficiency has been achieved. This is a particular concern for less affluent countries of resettlement. In these countries planning for economic self-sufficiency will be critical to the long-term sustainability of a refugee resettlement program.



## Employment and integration: Contrasting international perspectives

IN THOSE countries with a principal emphasis on early employment, it is understood that integration is best facilitated through the social and economic benefits accruing from participation in the labour force. Employment is viewed as the primary vehicle for integration with other tasks (such as language learning and cultural orientation), being achieved more readily and rapidly if undertaken concurrently with paid work. In these countries social support payments are paid for a limited period. Where the need for other integration resources (such as language programs and further training) is recognised, these are provided through the workplace.

High expectations of employment, communicated at an early stage, are also thought to reduce the risk of resettled refugees developing a long term dependency on social support payments and services.

Early economic self-sufficiency is understood to have benefits for receiving countries by reducing dependence on social

support payments and programs, filling labour force gaps and engaging new arrivals in contributing to the tax base at an early stage of their resettlement.

It is thought that by reducing the 'up-front' costs that would otherwise be incurred in integration, expectations of early economic self-sufficiency allow countries to maintain a high refugee intake.

In contrast, in other countries, while employment is encouraged, income support is offered for a longer period to enable new arrivals to participate in other programs such as health care, language training, cultural orientation and in some cases, further education and training.

This approach is based on the belief that refugees may require a period of respite from the pressures of paid employment to adjust to their refugee and resettlement experiences; orient themselves to their new country; attend to the practical tasks of resettlement, and prepare for employment. The prospects for successful integration are thought to be better if resettled refugees are able to acquire

the skills and information required to participate fully in the receiving society.

In countries adopting this approach there is a concern that high expectations of early economic self-sufficiency may compel resettled refugees to accept poorly paid, low level entry jobs, the demands of which compromise their capacity to acquire the skills and resources for long-term social and economic integration.

It is recognised that this approach involves a greater investment of time and resources in the early resettlement period. However, by optimising opportunities for refugees to participate in and contribute their skills and attributes, it is also thought to have benefits for receiving societies. It is believed that refugees whose needs are respected and who are offered support to rebuild their lives will in turn have higher levels of motivation to contribute to the receiving society.

This approach is also understood to help prevent the long-term costs that may be involved if refugees struggle to integrate.





## Assimilation or integration?

Historically, in many countries receiving refugees and immigrants, it was thought that resettlement would be best facilitated by encouraging new arrivals to shed the cultural and linguistic heritage of their countries-of-origin and adopt, as soon as possible, the ways of the receiving society.

However, there is increasing recognition that resettlement is more likely to be successful through a process of integration<sup>1</sup>. This approach, embodied in the principles developed at the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*, understands integration as a ‘two-way street’, with new arrivals adapting to the receiving society and receiving societies adapting to the ways of newcomers. Integration is thought to have benefits for both because:

- if assimilation is a goal, the culture and ways of the newcomer are defined as inferior, with consequences for their identity, self esteem and dignity;
- if, as is often the case, assimilation is slow to occur, the newcomer is defined as the problem. As well as contributing to low self esteem among new arrivals, this may fuel and give credence to racism and xenophobia in the wider community;
- resettlement is more likely to be successful if people are able to retain their cultural and religious integrity;
- people’s motivation to contribute to the wider society is likely to be higher if they are made welcome and are accepted and valued for who they are;
- by learning about and adapting to the ways of newcomers, receiving societies benefit from the skills and attributes they bring.

In some countries, such as Australia and Canada, resettlement is facilitated through multiculturalism<sup>2</sup>. In these countries, diversity is positively valued and promoted and new arrivals are supported to maintain their cultural, racial, religious or ethnic integrity while at the same time being encouraged to participate in, and access the resources of, the wider society.

Countries offering formal resettlement programs vary on the continuum from assimilation and integration through to multiculturalism. Some place greater emphasis on new arrivals learning about and adapting to the receiving society (for example, through formal orientation programs) while others prioritise building the capacity of existing systems and services to accommodate the diverse needs of refugee communities. There is also variation within resettlement countries. For example, some countries promote integration through their education systems, yet have placement practices favouring assimilation.



## CHAPTER 1.5

# Establishing a New Integration Program



# Chapter 1.5

## Establishing a New Integration Program

This Chapter is concerned primarily with the processes and issues involved in planning the early phases of a new refugee resettlement program. It does not deal with specific program components, such as housing and employment. However, planning issues of concern in these areas in the establishment phase are foreshadowed, with further information provided in the individual Chapters of this Handbook.

### Starting small and optimising the conditions for success

The first years of operation of a resettlement program will be critical to its success. In most countries, there will be varying levels of support for refugee resettlement at both community and governmental levels. As with all new initiatives some 'teething problems' are inevitable. However, if the program flounders in its early years, it may not develop the basis of government and community support required for its long term survival.

The experience of those countries which have recently established resettlement programs is that in the early years, it is best to optimise the conditions for success by starting with a small and relatively homogenous caseload, and by selecting communities for resettlement with maximum integration potential.

This approach is also in the interests of early refugee intakes, ensuring that they are offered the very best prospects for successful resettlement.

For the same reasons it is also important that resettlement programs be closely monitored in their early phases so that problems can be identified and addressed.





## ESTABLISHING A NEW REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM



## Laying sound foundations – a capacity building approach

Refugee resettlement will compete with other pressing issues for the attention of government officers. In those countries with limited prior involvement in refugee resettlement, there may also be few personnel with relevant expertise either at the governmental level or in non-governmental agencies.

Resettlement programs require coordination, co-operation and collaboration. For some countries, the task of establishing a refugee resettlement program may be the first time so many different government branches or ministries have been called upon to implement an initiative in a co-operative fashion. Similarly, there may have been limited prior non-government involvement in government program delivery and hence few opportunities for government and non-government personnel to gain a mutual understanding.

For these reasons it is important that effort be invested at an early stage to ensure that sound coordinating infrastructures and processes are established; that co-operative relationships

### ▶ The importance of early selection and placement planning

WHILE THIS Handbook is concerned primarily with the process of resettling refugees after they have been selected for resettlement, the experience of emerging countries of resettlement is that the size and composition of a program are critical in the establishment phase.

- Depending on the size of the resettlement program, partner with the UNHCR to identify a particular refugee caseload to target for the first year or two. Consistent with UNHCR policy, this should be based on unmet resettlement needs.

A relatively linguistically and culturally homogeneous caseload will allow the new receiving country to focus on the development of the program with a limited number of variables. Clearly, this approach would not limit the possibility of resettling other refugee groups in the future.

- Careful consideration is needed of the extent to which there is the capacity to respond to resettled refugees with complex needs such as particular medical conditions.
- Placement strategies

within the resettlement country should consider the social and economic backgrounds of resettled refugees and the receiving community. Resettlement may be more difficult for refugees where there are marked differences in the degree of industrialisation and urbanisation between their countries-of-origin and resettlement.

- A significant factor for consideration will be whether resettled refugees can be supported by existing services and programs or whether there will be a need to establish new services.

are fostered between players and that relevant personnel have opportunities to develop their expertise in integration program development and implementation.

Similar effort will be needed at the local level to select and prepare communities for the placement of resettled refugees as these communities may have little prior experience of refugee resettlement.

Critical to the success of these efforts will be opportunities to bring people together to build relationships and identify and address issues.

These tasks require an investment of time, resources and expertise. In some new resettlement countries such as Brazil, Burkina Faso and Benin the assistance of expatriate personnel who have worked in established resettlement countries has helped to facilitate the setting up of their own resettlement programs. Typically these officers have worked with new programs in their first two years.

Funding for such personnel will usually need to be secured through intergovernmental, private or charitable organisations operating at the domestic or international levels. Countries with established resettlement programs might also be asked to second an integration expert to an emerging resettlement country.

While the role of these experts varies, typically it has included assisting countries with overall planning; fostering collaborative relationships among key players; professional development; and the selection and early development of specific resettlement communities.



## Securing the resources for refugee resettlement

REFUGEE resettlement requires resources which may not be readily available through existing government programs provided to nationals in developing countries (e.g. income support payments,

housing). Emerging resettlement countries will need to develop a plan to ensure that these can be provided. In the formative years of a program consideration might be given to securing funding or

in-kind assistance through sources at the domestic or international levels (e.g. inter-governmental or religious organisations or private foundations).



## What steps are involved in establishing a new resettlement program?

While the steps in establishing an integration program will depend on the particular characteristics of the receiving country concerned, those typically involved are outlined in Table Five below.

### Table Five: Steps involved in planning and establishing a new resettlement program

Planning steps	Considerations
Securing the formal commitment of government to refugee resettlement through legislation or other relevant instrument	This instrument is important since it will form the basis for engaging the co-operation of the range of government ministries typically involved in integration. As an expression of the country's commitment to integration, it is also a tool for communication with receiving communities and the media. This instrument should also allow for expeditious naturalisation of those offered resettlement as a fundamental aspect of integration.
Establishing a formal arrangement with the UNHCR as an implementing partner	Co-operation with the UNHCR will be important for the identification of individuals or groups in need of resettlement.
Identifying a government ministry with lead agency responsibility for resettlement	This ministry usually plays a primary role in overall planning, implementation, funding and monitoring.
Identifying other relevant government ministries	Typically this includes those ministries responsible for migration matters (e.g. visa, citizenship), health, housing, education and employment.
Identifying personnel with delegated authority for resettlement within relevant government ministries	This is particularly important in the establishment phases when many decisions need to be made often within very short time frames. The experience of emerging resettlement programs is that some effort is required to ensure that senior officers have the confidence to delegate this authority to officers working at an operational level. Engaging senior officers in the early planning phases and developing the expertise of operational officers can foster this.
Identifying non-government partners at the national and local levels	The advantages of involving NGOs in integration discussed elsewhere in this Handbook, (see p. 43) are particularly pertinent in the formative program years.  Not all emerging countries will have local NGOs able to support refugee resettlement. However, where this is the case, NGOs bring to the planning process a detailed knowledge of aspects of their local communities which may not be immediately apparent to government. They are well placed to identify problems.



Planning steps	Considerations
Identifying non-government partners at the national and local levels (continued)	Most emerging resettlement countries have engaged NGOs in key planning forums at the earliest possible stage and at both the national and local levels. In some countries, NGOs have been given lead agency status at the local level.
Establishing a coordinating body involving key government and NGO partners	This should comprise representatives of relevant ministries and non-government organisations to oversee planning and implementation. In most countries, parallel structures are similarly established at the local level once specific resettlement communities have been selected.
An agreement outlining in broad terms the roles and responsibilities of government and non-government partners	<p>The purpose of this agreement is to outline which ministry or non-government agency is responsible for each of the elements of an integration program (see Table Six below). While this document should be developed early in a program, it is also important that there is some flexibility for revision and amendment to address any problems that emerge as the program evolves.</p> <p>Consideration will need to be given to some of the key planning questions outlined in Chapter 1.4. There will also need to be an assessment of the extent to which resettlement resources are already available through programs provided to nationals and in what areas additional or dedicated resources will be required. This is particularly the case with income support payments, housing and employment placement.</p> <p>In those countries in which the UNHCR or other external agency has undertaken to support the development of the integration program, they may also be signatories to this document.</p>
Selection of specific integration communities	Specific selection criteria are outlined in Chapter 2.1. The presence of established NGOs and the availability of housing and employment will be particularly important at this stage. The latter are critical for successful resettlement, and present challenges for new countries of resettlement, especially those with developing economies (see Chapters 2.8 and 2.9).







➔ **Table Six: The essential elements of an integration program**

<b>Integration Program Component</b> (see Handbook Part Two)	<b>Essential elements</b>	<b>Priority planning activities Consider:</b>
Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance selection and development of placement communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific selection criteria outlined in Chapter 2.1, giving priority to employment, housing and established NGOs;</li> <li>• advance preparation of communities with limited prior experience of culturally diverse migration.</li> </ul>
Reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arrangements for meeting resettled refugees on arrival;</li> <li>• initial accommodation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engaging local NGOs.</li> </ul>
Assessment and early social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• systems and resources for assessing the need for and providing early settlement support;</li> <li>• family reunion provisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engaging local NGOs and other constituencies (e.g. faith-based communities, human rights groups).</li> </ul>
Income support and establishment resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial assistance to meet household establishment costs and income support prior to paid employment being secured.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• defining expectations of economic self-sufficiency;</li> <li>• securing funding from external sources in the establishment phases if required;</li> <li>• long term planning to meet costs within state resources.</li> </ul>
Language assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpreters, translators, bilingual workers and volunteers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the early phases of the program, making selection decisions which maximise language compatibility between refugees and languages spoken in the receiving country;</li> <li>• assessing local resources (government and community).</li> </ul>
Language training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• language instruction for children and adults;</li> <li>• education for school-aged children and young people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a long term plan for the development of language training programs;</li> <li>• early contact with educational authorities to ensure appropriate arrangements are made for school-aged children and young people.</li> </ul>

Integration Program Component (see Handbook Part Two)	Essential elements	Priority planning activities Consider:
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-arrival orientation and preparation of written material;</li> <li>post arrival orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-arrival orientation to inform candidates for resettlement about the receiving country and its resettlement program and ensure that they understand that they are being offered permanent resettlement (see p. 148 for further information on the importance of these processes in emerging countries).</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>longer term housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>early contact with public housing authorities and the private sector, to ensure the availability of housing in advance of refugee arrivals to avoid prolonged periods in reception accommodation.</li> </ul>
Employment and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>employment placement assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strategies for promoting early employment as these will be important in countries with limited capacity to offer income support.</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>health care on arrival and arrangements for ongoing care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identification of local health-care providers with appropriate expertise.</li> </ul>
Hospitable and welcoming communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provision for issuing entry visas, travel and identity documents and permanent residence status for those offered resettlement;</li> <li>a media strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>preparing materials and protocols for responding to the media in advance of first arrivals.</li> </ul>



## What are the essential elements of an integration program?

As resettlement programs develop, they may attract additional resources to build the infrastructure required to optimise integration potential. However, those elements that are critical to the success of a new program are identified in Table Six. Issues requiring particular consideration in the planning stages are highlighted, with more detail in relevant Chapters of this Handbook.





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### An exchange between Canada and Chile

Throughout the year, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) holds conferences, providing among other things, the opportunity for those involved in refugee resettlement to exchange ideas and strategies with one another. The refugee office director at the Diocese of London, Ontario, an active participant in CCR, was aware through the Diocese's international links, that Vicaria de la Pastoral Social, a non-government organisation in Chile, was actively involved in the planning and development of that country's fledgling refugee resettlement program. In consultation with staff at Vicaria, he sought funding from a Canadian Catholic philanthropic trust which enabled a representative of the Vicaria to attend the CCR's fall 2001 meeting. As well as providing an opportunity for Canadian and Chilean integration personnel to learn from one another, this exchange has strengthened relationships and links between these two countries.

### Learning from other refugee resettlement programs

Established resettlement programs have a wealth of experience which emerging resettlement countries can draw on. As noted above, these countries may be prepared to contribute this experience as part of their commitment to resettlement and global responsibility sharing.

Other emerging resettlement countries may also be able to offer valuable input, particularly if they have comparable social and economic conditions or have faced similar planning issues.

However each country is best placed to determine what will and what will not work in the local environment. To date countries of resettlement have shared their integration expertise and resources by offering:

- secondments of experienced personnel to serve as integration consultants or facilitators or to play monitoring or trouble-shooting roles;
- training and professional development initiatives;
- professional development resources on integration issues (e.g. instructional manuals);
- multilingual information for refugees;
- information on the cultural practices of particular refugee groups;
- site visits, study tours, conferences, personnel exchanges and other training opportunities;
- support to prepare grant submissions to private organisations and charitable organisations to augment resettlement resources.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**The Brazilian story**

BRAZIL, THE BIGGEST of the South American countries, has a long and diverse immigration history, boasting the largest population of people of African ancestry outside Africa.

Long a destination for refugees fleeing conflict and persecution in other parts of its region, Brazil has a number of former refugees in positions of leadership in both the public and private sectors, many of whom have a deep personal commitment to the promotion of human rights. Steeped in Brazilian culture is a tradition of hospitality to others.

These factors have contributed to a strong interest in refugee resettlement in Brazil and were given practical expression in 1997 when the Brazilian parliament passed its first refugee law. This legislation defined criteria for selection of refugees for resettlement and outlined mechanisms for planning, selection and resettlement.

Implementation of the legislation commenced in 1998 with the formation of Comit  Nacional para os Refugiados (CONARE) the National Refugee Committee. An interdepartmental body lead by the Justice Ministry, CONARE engaged those ministries responsible for foreign relations, health, education, employment and law enforcement, along with an active non-government

agency, Caritas. The UNHCR serves on the committee in an advisory capacity.

The following year an agreement was struck between the Brazilian government and the UNHCR to establish a refugee resettlement program. Recognising the planning challenges ahead, this agreement defined a significant role for the UNHCR in working with the Brazilian government and its integration partners in the first years of the program. In November 2000 the UNHCR

seconded a regional resettlement expert to assist in planning and development. While recognising the value of this external technical assistance, both the UNHCR and the Brazilian integration partners have been aware of the need to make the Brazilian experience and Brazil's unique strengths the point of departure.

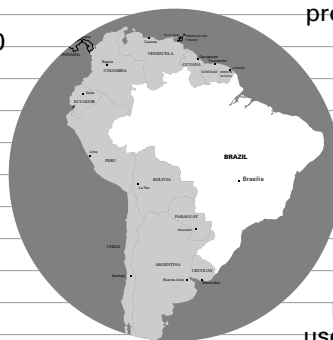
Although the Brazilian government is responsible for refugee selection and overall planning, coordination and monitoring of resettlement, it was agreed very early that integration would be more likely to be successful if programs were implemented in the local communities in

which refugees were to settle.

To ensure the very best conditions for success, it was decided to start the program in up to four communities with a target of between 25-30 refugees per site for the first arrivals. The pilot communities were selected on the basis of visits undertaken by representatives of CONARE and the UNHCR, taking into account factors such as size, the ethnic composition of local populations and economic opportunities. Site profiles identifying particular assets and opportunities in each of the communities were developed as a basis for subsequent planning and to use in developing pre-arrival orientation information for refugees.

The first group of refugees to be resettled were approved in the last quarter of 2001 and settled in Porto Alegre in Southern Brazil early in 2002. UNHCR continues to work with CONARE to develop other resettlement communities and identify the refugees to be resettled in each location. The NGOs working with CONARE and the UNHCR have begun organising 'Local Commissions for Reception

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### The Brazilian story (continued)

and Integration', comprising representatives of state and local governments, non-government organisations and community members at each of the sites.	are supplemented by other integration partners, in particular state and local governments, non-government agencies, the private sector and international organisations.	resettlement was jointly organised by CONARE and the UNHCR which brought together personnel from across state and national government ministries, non-government agencies and the community to discuss the implementation of the
<b>Addressing resource challenges</b>	<b>Investment in the early stages</b>	Brazilian program. There was also a high level of investment in technical training for personnel at both national and local levels, through programs provided in the communities, agencies and government ministries of Brazil as well as the participation of local personnel in international resettlement conferences and meetings.
With its developing economy, the Brazilian government has a limited capacity to meet both the up-front and longer term costs associated with refugee resettlement. The UNHCR currently provides funding for services in the reception phase (including orientation, temporary housing, employment training and placement services and income support) and sub-contracts local NGOs to provide these. The Brazilian government, meanwhile, assumes responsibility for longer term integration resources through state-funded programs, among them health care, education and other social services. Given economic conditions in Brazil, these programs are not well developed and in some cases already struggle to meet the needs of nationals. Accordingly, these resources	While there is strong will in Brazil to make organised refugee resettlement a success, there was very little prior experience of formal refugee resettlement, a particular issue for those in local communities and non-government agencies involved at an operational level. Few of the integration partners had worked together previously on such a large undertaking. Perhaps one of the most significant factors contributing to the success of the Brazilian program was the time and resources invested in building relationships and expertise. With the assistance of the UNHCR regional resettlement expert, particular emphasis was placed on engaging people through committees, collaborations and meetings. In 2001 a national conference on	At each stage of planning and development, there has been considerable tri-partite involvement (government, non-government agencies and the UNHCR) in an effort to develop a comprehensive program that addresses the entire resettlement pathway from selection to successful integration. The program has also drawn on the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers settling in Brazil.

# PART TWO

## Applying the Framework in Key Program Areas









## CHAPTER 2.1

# Matching People with Communities:

## Placement in the Receiving Society



## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.



The focus of  
this Chapter



To keep  
in mind

# Chapter 2.1

## Matching People with Communities: Placement in the Receiving Society

The focus of this Chapter is on strategies for ensuring that resettled refugees are placed in communities where they will have the best prospects for successful resettlement. It is concerned both with the selection of specific placement sites or communities as well as with processes for ensuring that individual refugees are matched with communities that best suit their needs.

It is important to note that there are wide variations in placement practices. In some countries, resettled refugees are assigned to specific local communities and strategies are undertaken to develop the integration potential of these communities.

In others, resettled refugees are destined or choose to go to a state or province within the receiving society prior to arrival. In some of these jurisdictions (such as the Canadian Province of Québec), governments or non-government settlement organisations may plan placement and develop specific placement communities. In others, the communities refugees settle in are determined by refugees themselves, usually with the assistance of social support providers or family and friends.

This Chapter has been written with this broad range of contexts in mind.



## MATCHING PEOPLE WITH COMMUNITIES: PLACEMENT IN THE RECEIVING SOCIETY

### CHECKLIST



## Building resettlement communities and facilitating sound placement choices

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ selecting and developing destinations for refugee resettlement (see also Chapter 2.2);
- ✓ developing brief information on resettlement destinations for refugees offered resettlement.

In the longer term, aim to:

- ✓ develop more comprehensive information on possible resettlement destinations for refugees offered resettlement;
- ✓ develop a placement protocol which is disseminated to relevant officers involved in the refugee selection and resettlement process;
- ✓ provide training to personnel involved in refugee selection and placement, including cultural diversity training;
- ✓ ensure that placement choices are effectively communicated to those involved at all stages of the selection and resettlement pathway.

## The placement community as a resource for rebuilding

The challenge in placement is to ensure that there is an appropriate match between the needs of resettled refugees and resources available in the receiving community. In the longer term, resettled refugees may choose to move in search of employment or housing and social conditions which better meet their needs.

Careful planning of placement and the involvement of resettled refugees in placement decisions can help to ensure that refugees start out with the best prospects. The first placement site is particularly critical since this is a time when resettled refugees are more likely to need intensive formal and informal assistance.

If refugees are placed in communities where they are unable to secure basic resources required for integration they may be compelled to move soon after arrival.

Experience suggests that this process, known as ‘secondary migration’, frequently results in significant long term improvements in the overall health and well-being and employment prospects of resettled refugees<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, if it occurs early in the settlement period it can also be disruptive, a particular concern for a population whose recent life experience has been characterised by dislocation and displacement.

Early secondary migration also involves considerable costs for resettled refugees, such as transport and household establishment expenses, at a time when they are likely to be in receipt of a low or fixed income<sup>2</sup>.

High rates of secondary migration in the early period of resettlement may also be problematic for receiving communities, involving both direct and indirect costs and creating planning dilemmas for communities receiving large numbers of secondary migrants. For instance, in 1989 the Canadian Province of Ontario planned its integration program on the basis of an intake of 2,432 resettled refugees and this was reflected in its financial agreements with the Canadian government. However, in practice this province attracted 1,271 additional resettled refugees in that year who were originally destined to other Canadian provinces<sup>3</sup>.

Inappropriate placement decisions leading to high levels of early secondary migration can also lead to a loss of community and official support for refugee resettlement in the primary site, in other communities and at governmental level.

### **Factors affecting settlement community planning and placement decisions**

Placement and site selection are complex processes which need to take into account the characteristics, attributes and wishes of resettled refugees as well as conditions and practices in the receiving country. While salient factors differ markedly for both individual resettled refugees and refugee groups, they may include:

- the presence of friends and relatives in the receiving country, with experience indicating that this is among the most important placement priorities for resettled refugees<sup>4</sup>;
- their aspirations and priorities. For example, a recent Swedish study comparing placement issues in the Iranian and Kurdish refugee communities found that access to ethnic community support was a high priority for Kurdish refugees, many of whom had spent years in harsh



**Once a refugee has been selected for resettlement, there is perhaps no decision more critical to the course of the resettlement process than the selection of the initial placement site. In its simplest terms, placement is the assignment of a newly arrived refugee to a specific resettlement program within a given community in the country-of-refuge. The importance of the decision cannot be over-emphasised for it is in this initial placement site that the newly arrived refugee first experiences his/her new environment; receives initial nesting and medical services; has the opportunity to develop a sense of safety and security and takes the first steps toward building a new life in a new land. And if, as in most human developmental processes, early experiences help shape future patterns of growth, then the nature of the refugee’s first settlement experiences play a central role in determining the ultimate course of the settlement process.**

Resettlement worker





### MATCHING PEOPLE WITH COMMUNITIES: PLACEMENT IN THE RECEIVING SOCIETY



**Relatives help the refugees find their way around on the housing estate and in the town in general. They also familiarise them with hundreds of facts about housing, eating habits, daily routines, school, courtesy and consideration. There's a noticeable difference between people who have contact with relatives when they come here and those who arrive completely on their own.**

Resettlement worker



conditions in refugee camps. In contrast, educational opportunities for children and placement in a more affluent environment were more important considerations for those from Iran, whose experiences in their countries of refuge had been somewhat shorter and who had been relatively affluent and well educated in their country-of-origin<sup>5</sup>;

- prior social conditions. For example, resettled refugees who lived in a rural community in their country-of-origin may feel more comfortable if they are placed in a rural environment. Where there is a large gap between the culture and prior life experience of resettled refugees and the receiving community, the presence of ethno-cultural community support will be particularly important;
- employment skills and educational background;
- whether they have special needs (e.g. access to transport and support services will be particularly important for groups such as sole parents and refugee elders);
- their language abilities. For example, Canada is a bilingual society with both English and French speaking communities;
- perceptions of safety, which may be influenced by pre-migration experiences. For example, while densely populated urban neighbourhoods may be perceived negatively in the receiving society, some resettled refugees may feel safer in them than a quieter rural community.

Factors in the receiving society also influence both site selection and individual placement decisions (see Table Seven).

### Issues to consider in developing settlement communities and planning placement practices

#### Prioritising needs

In some countries the emphasis in site selection and placement practices is on the needs of resettled refugees, while in others the needs of the receiving community are also taken into consideration (e.g. labour demand; regional and rural development objectives).

In practice, there may be a need to balance these objectives since the long term success of refugee resettlement will depend at least in part on the extent to which it benefits receiving communities. Nevertheless, most countries recognise that their involvement in refugee resettlement is motivated primarily by a commitment to humanitarian values.

**Table Seven: Factors influencing the selection of specific placement communities and placement of resettled refugees**

Factors:	Consider:
Availability of secure and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rental costs relative to the earning potential of resettled refugees;</li> <li>• compatibility between housing supply and common family formations (e.g. singles, large families).</li> </ul>
Access to employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initial employment opportunities;</li> <li>• opportunities for advancement in the labour force.</li> </ul>
Presence of appropriate cultural and religious support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• established ethno-cultural communities and ethno-cultural institutions;</li> <li>• ethno-cultural support organisations.</li> </ul>
Commitment of community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• existence of local leaders willing to serve as advocates for refugee resettlement;</li> <li>• willingness of the local community to provide support through volunteer and other support programs.</li> </ul>
Sufficient capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• existence of infrastructure to resettle sufficient numbers of refugees to make the site viable in both human and economic terms.</li> </ul>
Availability of key resettlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• existence of requisite infrastructure, including adequately funded, readily accessible and linguistically and culturally appropriate services such as language instruction, medical care, employment counselling and training and services for survivors of trauma and torture;</li> <li>• local work force capacity (i.e. do local personnel have the requisite expertise or will intensive work force development and/or transfer of personnel to the placement community be required?).</li> </ul>
Partnership potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• existence of NGOs, local service agencies and civic or religious organisations to serve as partners in supporting newly arrived refugees.</li> </ul>
Attitude and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extent to which the community exhibits an openness to strangers and a respect for religious and cultural diversity.</li> </ul>

Adapted from N Levine, 'Placement strategies to enhance effective integration of resettled refugees', Paper presented to the International Conference for the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, Sweden, April, 2001.

### Involvement in placement decision-making and freedom of movement

In some countries resettled refugees are actively involved in the process of deciding their placement community, while in others they are assigned to particular states, provinces, municipalities or communities. Similarly, while some countries allow resettled refugees to move from their initial destination without penalty,



### MATCHING PEOPLE WITH COMMUNITIES: PLACEMENT IN THE RECEIVING SOCIETY



in others resettled refugees risk losing their entitlement to integration support in the event that they relocate.

The reality is that the range of initial placement sites available to resettled refugees is constrained by factors such as the availability of affordable housing and specialist settlement supports. Moreover, it is difficult for resettled refugees to make informed choices about their first placement given that they have little advance knowledge of the receiving society.

Nevertheless, involving resettled refugees in placement decisions can help them to re-establish control over their lives, reduce anxiety and prevent placement being perceived as something done to or for them. Importantly, it can also help to prevent secondary migration and its associated costs.

Involvement in placement decision-making and freedom of movement are particularly important to resettled refugees, many of whom will have experienced restrictions on their civil and political rights in countries-of-origin and asylum.

How placements and secondary migration are managed will depend in part on how resettlement is organised and financed in the receiving society. For example, the choice of placement communities may be limited in countries, such as Denmark, where quotas are set to define the number of resettled refugees settling in a municipality in any given year. Similarly, in countries in which integration is funded through specific funding transfers from national governments to provinces, municipalities or communities, there will be a need to address both the planning and financial issues associated with secondary migration.

### **Initiatives to support the development of resettlement communities and placement decision-making**

#### New site development

The selection and development of communities for refugee resettlement are necessary processes in emerging countries with minimal prior experience in culturally diverse migration (see Chapter 1.5).

A number of established resettlement countries have also endeavoured to identify and develop specific communities to increase the range of placement possibilities, and in many cases to meet other social and economic objectives. In the



Canadian Province of Québec. for example, regional centres have been identified as potential communities for resettlement, with the provincial government entering partnerships with local authorities and non-government organisations to build integration potential in these areas.

Developmental initiatives may also be useful where a potential resettlement community offers some critical integration resources (e.g. employment and ethnic community support) but lacks others (e.g. social support services). In these cases, investing in social support may be worthwhile. In some countries, specific interventions have also enhanced the viability of placement communities. For example, in Burkina Faso and Benin, the main impediment to placement in otherwise highly suitable communities has been a lack of employment opportunities. In those countries, resettled refugees have been offered micro-economic enterprise loans to establish small businesses, as one of a range of supports to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Conscious selection and development of placement communities has some potential to promote integration by matching resettled refugees with communities with particular integration resources such as secure and affordable housing or employment. However, as noted below (see box, p. 64), due regard needs to be given to advance preparation and to ensuring that resettled refugees play an active role in placement decisions.

### Placement matching processes and protocols

Most countries endeavour to offer resettled refugees placement in communities that best meet their needs and attributes. Matching is a highly individualised matter. While for some refugees, access to tertiary and post secondary education may be an important factor, for others social support may have higher priority.

Sound destination matching is a reciprocal process. It enables the resettlement country to develop an understanding of the needs and attributes of resettled refugees (e.g. education, life skills, language capabilities, resettlement priorities and existing supports in the resettlement country) and provides resettled refugees with information about potential resettlement communities and their advantages and disadvantages.

Destination matching is particularly important for resettled refugees who have additional needs such as intensive medical and rehabilitative support.



**You see relatives like first cousins are also close in our culture. We don't get attachments and the attention we would get from family members from anyone else. For example my wife was hospitalised...it's not that she will be better taken care of if we had a sister or a brother here. The hospital does their job to the best of their ability and knowledge. But just a sister calling me saying 'Don't worry, I will take care of this part'. This is helpful and I don't know anybody here. My English is ok but my association outside my work environment is zero almost.**

Resettled refugee







## MATCHING PEOPLE WITH COMMUNITIES: PLACEMENT IN THE RECEIVING SOCIETY

### Should geographic dispersal of resettled refugees be promoted?

IN MANY resettlement countries, resettled refugees have traditionally gravitated toward large urban centres, many of which have established ethno-cultural communities and well developed services to support refugees and immigrants. Some of these centres, however, are affected by overcrowding, housing shortages and high unemployment rates.

Some governments have sought to encourage more dispersed refugee resettlement by identifying and developing other communities, particularly in regional and rural areas (see above) and encouraging or mandating resettled refugees to settle in them. In contrast, in other countries, greater

emphasis is placed on strategies to build the capacity of existing ethno-cultural communities to support and welcome newcomers. Indeed in many countries the presence of family and community support is a criterion for selection for resettlement and therefore influences subsequent placement in areas with established ethno-cultural communities.

Promoting dispersed refugee resettlement and allowing freedom of placement choice are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, in the Canadian Province of Québec, resettled refugees are encouraged, but not compelled, to settle in regional communities outside of the city of

Montreal. They retain their right to integration assistance regardless of their ultimate choice of placement community.

Dispersed refugee placement can help to:

- prevent overcrowding in urban areas;
- reduce the costs of resettlement, with housing in particular being more affordable outside of major urban centres;
- promote refugee economic self-sufficiency, by matching refugees with communities with labour demand;
- promote a 'whole-of-country' approach to refugee resettlement by engaging a range of communities;
- provide placement communities which are



### Enhancing placement in emerging countries and new communities

WHERE new sites are being developed in areas or countries without established ethno-cultural communities, support can be facilitated by offering groups of resettled refugees placement together at the same site (particularly if friendship bonds have formed among them prior to arrival).

more compatible with the needs of some resettled refugees;

- fulfil regional economic development and social goals in receiving countries.

It is important to consider the following when considering new site development in countries in which ethno-cultural communities are well established in specific areas:

- advance site assessment and development. The resources involved in this process will be a significant factor in considering the cost effectiveness of developing new communities;
- freedom of choice and movement;

- the critical role of family and ethno-community support in the resettlement process<sup>6</sup>. Through families and friends, resettled refugees receive not only day-to-day practical support in their own language, but valuable moral and emotional support from individuals with whom they share a common experience and culture. Strong ethno-cultural communities offer resettled refugees opportunities to participate in a range of cultural activities, from attending places of worship and participating in celebrations and festivities to shopping in traditional food outlets and accessing ethnic

newspapers and magazines;

- the role of family and ethno-cultural community support in contributing to refugee economic self-sufficiency. These communities can offer employment in industries compatible with the skills and experience of resettled refugees; link them with employment opportunities through informal social networks; and offer other resources required to achieve economic self-sufficiency goals (e.g. child care and transport);
- that family and ethnic community support cannot be readily substituted by other support networks.





## MATCHING PEOPLE WITH COMMUNITIES: PLACEMENT IN THE RECEIVING SOCIETY



**If the person understood the differences from the beginning that would make it less hard. If you're thinking always that your place is a problem and you are not succeeding because you are living there, you are going to blame that place or that part of the world whatever you cannot solve. You have to feel that you are stable and that this is your place.**

Resettled refugee



### Issues to consider in planning sound placement practices and processes

THE following are particularly important considerations in developing placement matching protocols and processes:

- providing adequate, accurate and realistic information to resettled refugees about potential placement communities and their advantages and disadvantages (see Chapter 2.8);
- finalising placement decisions prior to departure wherever possible. This helps to minimise anxiety and enables resettled refugees to prepare themselves for resettlement in a particular community;
- providing appropriate training to officers responsible for discussing placement options and finalising placement choices (e.g. interviewing techniques, assessment);
- developing clear protocols to guide the process of placement and ensuring that they are applied consistently and at all stages of the resettlement pathway;
- ensuring that adequate time is allocated for the interview at which placement choice is made. While this involves some initial investment of time in an already burdened system, it can help to prevent poor decisions which prove costly in the long term;
- ensuring that placement decisions are honoured through clear documentation and communication at all stages of the selection and placement pathway.



## SELECTING AND DEVELOPING PLACEMENT COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORTING SOUND PLACEMENT CHOICES

### OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- be clearly planned, with clear guidelines for assessment and ongoing monitoring of resettlement communities, taking into account relevant criteria;
- incorporate ways to engage refugees in placement decision-making;
- be flexible to changing domestic and external factors affecting refugee resettlement;
- where practical, have a range of placement options flexible to the needs of different groups of refugees;
- undertake advance assessment and preparation of communities in which resettled refugees are offered placement.

### SPECIFIC PLACEMENT PROTOCOLS WOULD ENSURE THAT:

- resettled refugees are 'matched' with appropriate resettlement communities;
- resettled refugees are actively involved in placement decision-making;
- resettled refugees, like other members of the receiving society, are free to move from their initial placement community while retaining an appropriate level of resettlement support;
- resettled refugees have information about placement communities so that they can play an informed role in placement decisions;
- placement processes are well coordinated so that the preferences of resettled refugees are observed wherever possible.





## CHAPTER 2.2

# Welcoming and Receiving Resettled Refugees

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 2.2

# The First Weeks and Months: Reception Arrangements



RECEPTION

This Chapter defines the basic elements of a program for welcoming resettled refugees and for supporting them prior to their placement in the receiving community. More detailed information on these elements (e.g. orientation, social support) are described in other Chapters of this Handbook.

While the emphasis in this Chapter is on reception arrangements for resettled refugees funded by government, many of the principles and processes described in it apply equally to resettled refugees received by private sponsors or proposers (see Chapter 2.3).



## CHECKLIST

## Welcoming and receiving resettled refugees

Think about:

- ✓ airport reception and transit arrangements;
- ✓ reception accommodation;
- ✓ basic practical orientation;
- ✓ linkages between reception care and settlement support;
- ✓ arrangements for identifying resettled refugees with intensive needs, in particular, acute health problems.



## Welcoming and reception as resources for rebuilding

While the first weeks and months in a receiving society have the potential to be among the most overwhelming for resettled refugees, they can also be a time when the foundations are laid for positive and successful resettlement.

On arrival, resettled refugees may be suffering the effects of their recent experiences of trauma, displacement and loss. At the same time, knowing little about the receiving society, they may be anxious about their future and how they will cope. The reception period is also one of intense adjustment to an unfamiliar environment, a time when resettled refugees will be coming to terms with a range of changes, from different climatic conditions and daily routines to new foods, shopping conventions and currency.

Given the circumstances surrounding their migration, many resettled refugees will not have family and friends in the receiving society, nor access to the basic resources required for day-to-day survival.

This is also a time when resettled refugees must undertake a range of practical tasks such as opening a bank account, registering for income support and health care, and enrolling children in school.

It is on the basis of their first days and weeks that resettled refugees form their first impressions of the receiving society. To the extent that these impressions are long lasting, they will have a bearing on the course of the integration process.



**When I arrived here, I first had a feeling of security, relief, peace in general, that permitted me to be calm in the first place, to be calm psychologically. I am grateful for this, I must be grateful.**

Resettled refugee





The reception phase provides resettlement countries with their first opportunity to welcome resettled refugees and to assist them in re-establishing a sense of safety and security.

While volunteers and refugee communities have an important role in refugee reception, it is typically funded by government as an integral part of an integration program (though often delivered by non-governmental agencies).

### Issues to consider in planning welcoming and reception

#### Defining the elements of the reception process

While reception processes differ, common elements include:

- meeting resettled refugees at the airport. As well as serving obvious practical purposes, this is an opportunity to welcome refugees. In some countries, among them Sweden and Iceland, volunteers and members of refugee communities are engaged in this process. These countries have found that this not only enables resettled refugees to communicate directly in their own language, but enhances their sense of safety and security. However, caution should be taken not to overwhelm resettled refugees, many of whom may be suffering the effects of a long journey;
- transit arrangements between the airport and either reception accommodation or the first placement community.

In some countries (such as Norway and Sweden), the reception phase is very short, with resettled refugees being placed in permanent housing in the community within days of their arrival. They are linked with municipal support providers who are responsible for conducting assessment in co-operation with the resettled refugee and for providing both immediate and long term resettlement support.

More commonly, however, the following is also included as part of the reception phase:

- temporary accommodation until such time as permanent accommodation can be arranged;
- basic practical orientation including orientation to banking systems, registering with relevant government programs (e.g. income support, health care, public housing) and school enrolment;
- initial assessment and the establishment of linkages with a resettlement agency to provide ongoing settlement support.



RECEPTION

**How can you describe how it feels to leave hell and enter paradise? Living in a small room and then being able to walk out into the sunshine and meet people.**

Resettled refugee



## The advantages of supported reception accommodation arrangements

A SUPPORTED reception accommodation arrangement can:

- provide a safe environment in which resettled refugees can deal with the immediate tasks of resettlement. If permanent housing takes some time to secure, this can create considerable

- instability at this time;
- allow other services such as health care and basic orientation to be delivered more efficiently before resettled refugees settle in the wider community;
- allow resettled refugees to play a more active role in choosing permanent housing, as they are able

- to draw on their experience of the resettlement country;
- allow permanent housing to be selected taking work-travel arrangements into account (in circumstances where employment is obtained in the reception period).



The reception process may also be utilised to:

- offer post arrival health care (see Chapter 2.10);
- begin to provide language instruction;
- provide more intensive orientation.

How should reception be organised?

As indicated above, most countries have a period during which resettled refugees are offered temporary accommodation and early practical support, prior to settling in the community. This period can range from several weeks to up to 12 months. There are a number of advantages in this approach (see box).

However, supported reception housing arrangements have the potential to foster dependency and resettled refugees may be reluctant to leave them for permanent housing; alternatively, delay in finding housing can be a source of anxiety. Active support to secure long term housing is therefore important at this time.

In those countries where reception housing is provided in institutional settings such as reception centres and hostels, they are readily identifiable to the wider community. This may in turn lead to the stigmatisation of resettled refugees. Where resettled refugees spend an extended period in a reception centre with others from their community, their day-to-day opportunities to connect with the community and to practise the language of the receiving country are limited. For these reasons, a number of countries have established smaller individual reception houses in the general community.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE



RECEPTION

## Easing the way in Spain, New Zealand, Australia and Denmark

IN <b>SPAIN</b> , resettled refugees are met at the airport by representatives of the UNHCR, government and the main resettlement non-government organisation. The Spanish Red Cross is responsible for transporting them to a reception centre where they are offered accommodation, medical care and basic orientation.	Service offers immediate social support and links resettled refugees with specially trained volunteers for longer term resettlement support.	In <b>DENMARK</b> , four municipalities have recently trialed a program involving former refugees in the reception process. Former refugees prepare new arrivals' accommodation with food and flowers, welcome them and in the following weeks take them on guided tours of the city to introduce them to basic facilities and services (e.g. health clinics, the post office). The volunteers impart informal local knowledge, such as where cheaper retail or traditional food outlets can be found. They also play an important role in explaining and 'interpreting' Danish society. This program was planned on the basis of meetings with former refugees to ascertain, from their experience, what could be done to enhance the reception and orientation process. The program complements the roles of municipal officers who retain primary responsibility for the reception process. It has been effective in relieving the pressures on municipal officers, enabling them to provide more personalised and intensive support to newcomers.
In <b>NEW ZEALAND</b> , resettled refugees spend their first six weeks in a refugee reception centre where they are offered a comprehensive medical and dental check-up and psychological support, where required, by personnel from the Ministry of Health. The New Zealand government funds the Auckland University to coordinate an adult English language training and orientation program and a special program for children and young people to prepare them for entry into mainstream schooling. The Refugees as Survivors Centre provides a trauma counselling service as well as therapeutic activities for children and adults. The Refugee and Migrant	In <b>AUSTRALIA</b> , resettled refugees are met at the airport by an Initial Information and Orientation Assistance Contractor (funded by the Australian government). If the refugee does not have temporary accommodation of their own, for instance with relatives, they are referred to an Accommodation Support Contractor whose role it is to provide initial accommodation and to assist them to secure longer term housing. The Initial Information and Orientation Assistance Contractor is responsible for conducting a comprehensive assessment of their resettlement needs and for coordinating resettlement support in the first six months following their arrival. All resettled refugees have access to specialist support to access health services and, where required, trauma and torture counselling, for the first 12 months in Australia.	



## WELCOMING AND RECEPTION ARRANGEMENTS



**I had mixed feelings, but I was happy. When we arrived at the airport I knew my friends were waiting outside.**

Resettled refugee



### A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- have arrangements in place to ensure that resettled refugees are met and welcomed on arrival at the airport;
- provide resettled refugees with temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation has been secured;
- provide resettled refugees with assistance in securing longer term accommodation;
- have arrangements in place for basic practical orientation as part of the reception process;
- have sound linkages between reception support providers and services providing longer term resettlement support;
- have measures in place for the identification and treatment of health problems;
- have measures in place to identify and offer additional support to resettled refugees with complex needs.

### RECEPTION SERVICES WOULD:

- be provided in the language of the resettled refugee, or arrangements made for interpreters.





## CHAPTER 2.3

# Promoting Integration through Early Settlement and Social Support

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 2.3

# Promoting Integration through Early Settlement and Social Support

SOCIAL  
SUPPORT

The focus of this Chapter is on ways in which receiving countries can promote resettled refugees' access to:

- individualised assessment of the newcomer's needs and assistance with the basic tasks in the period following their initial reception;
- the emotional and practical support of family and friends;
- supportive social connections in both refugee communities and the wider receiving community.



## CHECKLIST

## Planning settlement support and building social connection

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ establishing processes and services for individualised assessment of the needs of resettled refugees and the coordination of their integration process in the first weeks and months after arrival. In those emerging countries in which there is an established and suitable NGO or ethnic support service, it is contracted to play this role (see p. 52);
- ✓ developing a Family Reunion program;
- ✓ identifying opportunities for resettled refugees to participate in local cultural, community and recreational events;
- ✓ placement policies to enhance social support.

In the longer term aim for:

- ✓ incorporating information about family reunion provisions and settlement support programs in orientation information provided to resettled refugees;
- ✓ private sponsorship or like arrangements, along with appropriate training, support and monitoring;
- ✓ support for the development of volunteer social support programs in the refugee, immigrant and the wider communities;
- ✓ professional development and support for settlement support workers and volunteers;
- ✓ strategies to build the capacity of general services to support resettled refugees;
- ✓ activities to maintain, build and support the capacity of refugee and immigrant communities to support resettled refugees.

## Settlement and social support as resources for rebuilding

Most countries of refugee resettlement have arrangements in place to ensure that resettled refugees:

- are offered individualised assessment and support to access basic integration resources and systems;
- are able to reunite with family members from whom they have been separated in the course of their refugee experiences;
- have access to some form of personalised emotional and social support and assistance to build supportive relationships and connections in the receiving society.

In the early resettlement period, resettled refugees will need to access a range of resources such as housing, employment, income support payments and health care, as well as to learn about the culture, conventions and routines of the receiving society. They are required to accomplish these tasks in an unfamiliar environment, often with limited fluency in the language of the receiving country.



Providing support at this time can help to reduce anxiety and assist resettled refugees to gain a sense of control and independence. Importantly, support providers can help to ensure that resettled refugees have equitable access to the resources they will require for their resettlement.

The support provided by family is perhaps one of the most vital resources in the resettlement process. These relationships offer practical and emotional support and serve as a buffer against the stresses often involved in adjusting to a new country (see box p. 85). Anxiety and guilt about the fate of family members left behind, meanwhile, can be significant barriers to successful integration<sup>1</sup>.

Supportive relationships with members of established refugee and wider communities can help resettled refugees to build their connections with the receiving society. Through these connections they can access other important integration resources such as employment and a wider social network, as well as opportunities to participate in cultural and civic life.

Social connections between resettled refugees and members of established ethno-cultural communities are particularly important in this regard. By enabling refugees to reconnect with the cultural and religious institutions of their culture-of-origin, these relationships can assist them to maintain their cultural integrity while building a new identity in the receiving society.

Early positive relationships in the receiving society have other psychological benefits, such as restoring refugees' sense of belonging and helping to rebuild their faith, hope and trust in others. Often, the lessons learned in these relationships can be transferred to the many other contacts resettled refugees will have in the course of their resettlement.

The benefits of social support are well established. Studies in a number of countries indicate that individuals with supportive relationships in their family and community have better physical and mental health than those with limited or poor quality support<sup>2</sup>. Social support is especially important for resettled refugees suffering psychological difficulties and for those facing particular integration challenges, such as women at risk, refugee elders and refugee children and young people.

As indicated in Chapter 1.3, many resettled refugees will have experienced disruption to supportive relationships and to connections with their communities in the course of their pre-migration experiences.



SOCIAL  
SUPPORT



## PROMOTING INTEGRATION THROUGH EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Attending to the social support needs of resettled refugees also has benefits for receiving societies. Resettled refugees whose needs have been understood, who believe that they belong, and who feel that they have been supported in their resettlement will have a greater sense of motivation to give back to their new communities. They will also be better prepared to contribute their skills and attributes to a society of which they feel a part.

Personal contact between resettled refugees and members of the wider community, meanwhile, helps to foster mutual understanding and empathy and to promote greater community understanding of and support for refugee resettlement. By serving as a vehicle through which resettled refugees can access wider social networks and other integration resources, supportive relationships also help to prevent the marginalisation of refugee communities and its attendant social and economic consequences.

Experience shows that settlement and social support can prevent problems occurring later in the resettlement period when they may be more complex and costly to address.

### **Factors affecting access to integration and social support and the development of support services and networks**

A number of factors may influence the support available to resettled refugees, including:

- their fluency in the language of the receiving country;
- their psychological condition. For example lack of trust in others may serve as a barrier to accessing formal social support services as well as to developing supportive relationships with people in the refugee and wider communities. Guilt may affect the extent to which resettled refugees feel worthy of support;
- their family status, with many resettled refugees having lost or become separated from family members. The refugee and resettlement experiences can also compromise the quality of emotional and practical support provided within refugee families;
- whether they have family members in the receiving society or established links with support networks;
- prior social conditions. Resettled refugees from rural or pastoral communities in developing countries may require more intensive support to deal with the process of cultural adaptation, particularly if settling in highly urbanised and industrialised communities.

- Factors in the receiving society are also influential, including:
- the extent to which support services, in particular, those familiar with working with refugees and immigrants, are developed;
  - the existence of established refugee and other ethno-cultural communities and their capacity to provide support;
  - the broader social climate – in particular, the extent to which newcomers are welcomed; the level of understanding of the refugee experience; and the extent of support for refugee resettlement (note that strategies for promoting a hospitable social environment are discussed in Chapter 2.11);
  - whether the country has a tradition of voluntary participation in the support of people with special needs.

### Issues to consider in planning social support programs

Are special services required to provide settlement support to resettled refugees?

The long term objective of integration programs is to ensure that resettled refugees have access to the same level and quality of services as nationals, and that refugees come to feel part of their new society. However, in most countries it is recognised that in the immediate post arrival period, refugees have particular and intensive support needs which are unlikely to be met by existing services. For this reason, in most countries, resettled refugees are offered individualised needs assessment and settlement support through a specialised program (see below). While arrangements differ, this support is generally time limited

In a number of countries specialist services have been established in recognition of the fact that some new arrivals will require longer term integration support. In most cases, these services, like those providing early settlement support, aim to support clients to access services in the wider community, rather than to create a special program stream to meet the needs of refugees and immigrants. As well as providing support to individuals, these services often have a strategic role in building the capacity of the refugee and wider communities to support new arrivals (e.g. through professional development and advocacy). This strategic approach is vital. Without it there is the very real risk that refugees will be perceived as having unique needs which can only ever be met by long term specialised services. This can contribute to isolating refugees from the wider community.



SOCIAL  
SUPPORT



**At first we were very isolated. We didn't know that there were other Kurdish families here. My wife cried a lot.**  
Resettled refugee





## PROMOTING INTEGRATION THROUGH EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT



What is the role of government in providing support to resettled refugees?

The role of government in funding, planning and monitoring refugee resettlement has been discussed elsewhere in this Handbook (see Chapter 1.3) and applies equally to social support, in particular, assessment and settlement support programs (see below).

There is a general consensus, however, that settlement and social support are areas in which it is particularly important to engage other partners, among them non-governmental agencies, ethnic support services and volunteers in both the refugee and wider communities, as governments tend to be centralised and to have few links with informal social networks. The experience of some countries in which settlement and social support have been the primary responsibility of government has been that social integration of resettled refugees has been slow to occur. In contrast, non-governmental agencies and community networks tend to be locally based and to bring with them a wider support network and a more intimate knowledge of local resources and systems.

Resettled refugees require personalised, flexible and very practical support which may be difficult to deliver from a government setting, particularly if it is highly regulated and professionalised.

Workers with bilingual and bi-cultural skills play a critical role in providing social support (see below), especially where access to interpreting services is limited. Non-government and ethnic support agencies may have greater flexibility to attract personnel who hold these skills but who do not necessarily have the professional qualifications required in a governmental human service setting or who do not wish to be employed in the government sector.



## Initiatives to build social support

### Individualised assessment and early settlement support

Individualised assessment and early settlement support are critical components of a refugee resettlement program for a number of reasons:

- Resettled refugees have particularly intensive support needs in the early resettlement period (see above).
- Existing services may have neither the expertise nor the resources to address the needs of resettled refugees in the early resettlement period (e.g. interpreting resources, cross-cultural expertise).
- In countries with a relatively large refugee intake and complex social service systems, there may be logistical difficulties in ensuring that resettled refugees are identified by service providers and that support is offered in a coordinated fashion.
- Routine assessment provides an opportunity to identify the supports and resources required for integration. It is particularly important for resettled refugees with special needs which, if not addressed, may become enduring barriers to resettlement.
- In countries with developing economies, social support services may not be well developed.
- Resettled refugees with psychological responses to trauma and torture may experience difficulties in accessing other forms of support (see Chapter 3.1) and may require a particularly sensitive approach.

While arrangements differ markedly between countries, assessment and early settlement support are usually the responsibility of a readily identifiable and single entity and are funded, though not necessarily provided, by government. The exception are refugees who are privately sponsored (see below), with their early settlement support being provided by the sponsoring group



## PROMOTING INTEGRATION THROUGH EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

In the Nordic countries, where integration support is provided at the municipal level individualised introduction plans are developed and implemented by a municipal officer in partnership with the resettled refugee (see box, p. 83).

In the USA, resettled refugees are assigned to one of ten NGOs one month prior to arrival. The NGOs (funded by the government) are responsible for developing and coordinating an integration plan (dealing with such issues as housing and social support) and an economic self-sufficiency plan (identifying goals for economic self-sufficiency and the supports required to reach this).

On arrival in Australia all resettled refugees are referred to an NGO funded by the Australian government. This organisation is responsible for conducting an assessment and supporting refugees to access basic integration resources.

To ensure that assessment and early settlement support reflect the needs of resettled refugees these processes are conducted in partnership with resettled refugees themselves.

It is important that early settlement support programs are provided in ways that strengthen relationships within refugee families and between resettled refugees and informal social support networks in the refugee and wider communities. These are enduring and accessible sources of support and will be critical to resettled refugee's long term integration prospects. Important factors to consider in this regard are role and status adjustments often occurring in the resettlement period. These may have a particular impact on relationships between men and women, and between parents and children and young people (see p. 24 and Chapters 3.2 and 3.3).

The early resettlement period is also a time when families may have contact with a number of service providers and systems. Care will need to be taken to ensure that the efforts of those involved are carefully coordinated.

### Family reunion provisions

When refugees leave their country-of-origin, family members may be left behind or dispersed during flight. Such separation leads to obvious hardship and may also have a negative impact on the integration process.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Personalised introduction plans in Sweden**

IN SWEDEN resettled refugees are offered placement in a municipality where they work with a municipal officer to develop and implement an individual introduction plan. The overall goal of the introduction plan is to support resettled refugees to become self-sufficient so that they no longer require government income and other specialist support. The plan is developed for implementation over a period of up to two-and-a-half years.	require different levels of support in their resettlement and have diverse motivations and goals. Plans take into account such factors as gender, age, pre-migration experience and prior participation in employment and education. Individual introduction plans are developed for all resettled refugees including children, refugee elders, refugees with disabling conditions and those without prior work or educational experience. In the case of resettled refugees for whom economic self-sufficiency goals are inappropriate (e.g. children and elders) planning is geared toward enabling them to participate in society based on their requirements and experience.	are being developed for each family member, the needs of the family as a whole are also considered. The municipal officer assumes responsibility for providing basic orientation to the municipality and its facilities and for coordinating the range of programs and services required to implement the plan. These include employment placement services and language training programs. An overall agreement has been developed between the Swedish Integration Board, the National Labour Market Board, the National Agency for Education and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities to strengthen coordination and cooperation between these agencies in the implementation of the introduction plans.
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SOCIAL  
SUPPORT

Family reunification is a fundamental principle of refugee protection, and derives directly from the universally recognised right of the family to state protection. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that the family “is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by society and the State”. The same principle is embodied in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (Article 23), and in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Articles 9 and 10). Although the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* does not include provisions on family reunification, the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, which adopted the Convention, recommended that governments take the necessary measures for the protection of





## PROMOTING INTEGRATION THROUGH EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT



the refugee's family, especially with a view to ensuring that the unity of the family is maintained.

When refugees are resettled, they often do not know the whereabouts of all of their family members, or even whether some family members are still alive. For this reason, states need to make it possible for resettled refugees to be joined by their family members later in their country of resettlement. UNHCR urges states to take relations of dependency into account when interpreting family membership, and to adopt policies and procedures which will enable refugee families to reunite quickly. More detail on the principles and procedures pertaining to family reunification can be found in UNHCR's *Resettlement Handbook*, Section 4.6 (see web address, p. ix).

Family reunification is important not only for humanitarian reasons. It has numerous other benefits for both resettled refugees and receiving societies (see box, p. 85). Prolonged family separation, on the other hand, can have far-reaching negative social and economic consequences for resettled refugees, and can impede their integration.

Family reunion programs also help the UNHCR to fulfil its protection mandate, particularly where resettlement of the principal applicant leaves dependent family members at risk of destitution or threats to their personal safety and well-being in a country of first asylum.

Family reunion may be an especially important consideration where the resettled refugee or the relative awaiting resettlement is a minor, a woman alone, an elderly person or a people with a severe medical or disabling condition. These groups are more likely to be dependent on others for their welfare and may be particularly vulnerable.

While many resettlement countries have family reunion provisions as part of their general immigration programs, people who apply to have family members join them are often required to assume a high level of financial and practical responsibility for the resettlement of their relatives. This may be difficult for resettled refugees, particularly early in their resettlement. Further, as discussed below (see box, p. 86), a more liberal and flexible approach to family reunion is indicated for refugees than may be adopted for non-refugee applicants. For these reasons, specific provisions for family reunification of refugees and other humanitarian entrants will usually be necessary.



## The benefits of family unity for resettled refugees, receiving societies and the system of international protection

- Intact families (particularly those with more than one breadwinner), generally have better prospects for achieving economic self-sufficiency. Families can pool and share their resources and support employment activity, for instance, by providing child care for employed family members. Family-based businesses are often the foundation for economic self-sufficiency.
- Family support has a positive influence on physical and mental health and can serve as a buffer against the stresses associated with resettlement (see above). Furthermore, family support can be a significant factor in promoting the recovery of resettled refugees from psychological trauma<sup>3</sup>.
- Families provide important practical and emotional support in the process of resettlement. As well as having obvious benefits for resettled refugees, this also helps to reduce the costs that would otherwise be incurred by governments in providing support.

SOCIAL  
SUPPORT

### INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

#### Supporting refugee family unity in Canada

WHEREVER possible, Canada supports concurrent processing abroad of the whole refugee family. This may include the processing of de facto dependants who are economically and emotionally dependent upon the principal applicant. However, Canada also recognises that family members may become separated due to circumstances beyond their control. Accordingly, when a refugee is accepted for resettlement and travels to Canada, separated family members can be included	on the same application. If the whole refugee family are not able to be resettled to Canada concurrently, resettled refugees may apply to be reunited with family members subsequently. The refugee must have identified all the separated family members prior to departure to Canada, and the separated family members are required to submit an application at a Canadian visa office within one year of the principal applicant's arrival in Canada. These family members will then also be	resettled to Canada as refugees under Canada's 'one year window of opportunity' policy and may benefit from the Canadian refugee resettlement programs. De facto family members cannot be processed under the one year window of opportunity, but may be considered for resettlement based on the merits of their own cases. Those not able to apply within one year, may still apply to be reunited under Canada's regular Family Class (immigration) program.
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## Family reunion programs for resettled refugees: Factors to consider

- While the UNHCR gives priority to the unity of the nuclear family, more liberal and flexible definitions may need to apply in determining which individuals are considered part of the refugee's family. In many countries from which refugees come, a broader cultural definition of what constitutes immediate family prevails than in countries where the nuclear family is the dominant family form. Further, in precarious situations of conflict or other threat, "families may be reconstructed out of the remnants of various households who depend on each other for mutual support and survival"<sup>4</sup>. In some cultures, couples are united by custom rather than by formal marriage. De facto relationships may also be the cultural norm or have become more common as the result of war and conflict. Accordingly, the UNHCR encourages states to consider relationships of dependency when determining family reunion criteria. This means that "economic and emotional relationships between refugee family members should be given equal weight and importance ... as relationships based on blood, lineage or legally sanctioned unions"<sup>5</sup>.
- Information on family reunion provisions will need to be included in orientation materials given to resettled refugees, at the earliest possible stage. Assistance may also need to be provided with application procedures.
- Procedures will need to be in place for the prompt, efficient and transparent processing of family reunion applications. In this respect there will be a need to strike a balance between protecting the program against fraudulent claims, while at the same time ensuring that resettled refugees benefit from reunion as early as possible in their resettlement, thereby minimising the emotional harm associated with ongoing separation.
- In the early stages of resettlement, refugees will have a limited capacity to provide financial support to family members joining them. In some countries, family members being reunited with resettled refugees are therefore eligible for the same support and assistance as the resettled refugee.
- Consideration will need to be given to whether individuals offered admission for the purpose of reuniting with refugee family members are counted against the annual intake set for the refugee or humanitarian program. UNHCR recommends that they be additional to the annual resettlement intake, to the extent possible.
- While family reunification affords clear benefits, the experience of existing resettlement countries is that families reuniting after many years of separation may require some support in the adjustment process.

### Sponsorship or proposer programs

A number of countries have programs whereby refugees needing resettlement are sponsored or proposed by an individual or group in the receiving community who agrees to assume responsibility for some, or all, aspects of their

## Think about family tracing services

RESETTLED refugees may have become separated from family members during conflict or flight. Not knowing where relatives are is a source of constant anxiety and grief. Helping refugees to trace family members is important. Currently the International Committee of the Red Cross and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies present in 176 countries worldwide provide a range of services to assist in tracing individuals and

reuniting family groups. The ICRC and its Red Cross and Red Crescent affiliates use a variety of means for family tracing. The process and services may include:

- tracing services – efforts to locate missing relatives when contact has been lost;
- message services – facilitating communication of personal or family news to relatives in a conflict zone;
- services to unaccompanied children

including registration, identification and tracing;

- internet linkage and lists; radio broadcasts and use of mobile or satellite phones;
- advice and certification of captivity and/or death of a family member.

While tracing and reunification services may vary from one country to another, the national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in each country is almost always the first point of contact.



resettlement. Refugees may be identified by the sponsor or proposer (through family or other overseas contacts) or referred by the government.

Sponsorship and proposer programs are generally seen as complementing a broader refugee resettlement program, either by allowing a larger refugee intake than would otherwise be the case or enabling the responsibility for resettling individual refugees to be shared between government and the community.

In some cases (such as Canada's Private Sponsorship Program), sponsors agree to assume responsibility for all aspects of the refugee's resettlement, from income support through to orientation and emotional support. In others, (such as the Australian proposer program), responsibility for resettlement is shared between government and private sponsors or proposers.

Private sponsorship or proposer arrangements are a valuable way of engaging members of the wider community (such as faith-based communities and human rights groups), refugee communities and family members of refugees needing resettlement. They provide resettled refugees with immediate access to a support network and associated resources in the receiving community. Private sponsors or proposers are generally well placed to offer highly personalised and flexible assistance.



## PROMOTING INTEGRATION THROUGH EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT



Through its Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program (JAS), the Canadian government has also used private sponsorship to complement the government resources available to refugees with more intensive support needs. In this program the Canadian government assumes primary responsibility for funding resettlement, with private sponsors offering logistical and personal support.

Private sponsorship and proposer arrangements, however, do require a level of investment by government. Supporting refugee resettlement is a complex task requiring an understanding of cultural and religious issues, the nature and consequences of the refugee and resettlement experience and a working knowledge of integration resources in the wider community. There is significant potential for arrangements to break down. In both Australia and Canada where these programs are well established, arrangements are in place so that sponsors or proposers:

- are carefully assessed to ensure that they have the capacity to provide an appropriate level and quality of support;
- are offered initial and ongoing training and information both about their role and integration resources in the community;
- are offered support, particularly to deal with difficult or more complex issues;
- participate in monitoring so that problems are identified and addressed at an early stage.

**“The volunteer support group were there for us on the good days and the bad.”**

Resettled refugee

### Volunteer programs

Volunteers are well placed to offer personalised, flexible and informal support and can serve as important role models for resettled refugees, particularly if they are themselves from a refugee or immigrant background. They also bring a broader social network and associated resources and help to foster mutual understanding between resettled refugees and the wider community<sup>6</sup>.

A number of countries have sought to tap this potential through befriending programs (sometimes known as mentoring programs) or through more formal initiatives where volunteers are actively engaged in some or all aspects of the orientation and support of resettled refugees (e.g. providing transport, accompanying new arrivals to medical appointments). Volunteer programs may be particularly valuable for supporting refugees with more intensive needs (e.g. refugee elders, sole parents with large families).

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Engaging the community in refugee resettlement in Canada**

CANADA currently offers resettlement to around 10,000 refugees annually. This includes some 7,500 government sponsored refugees whose support is provided primarily by the government in partnership with government funded organisations and volunteers. The remainder are privately sponsored. The Private Sponsorship Program allows private organisations, mainly refugee and faith-based communities, to sponsor refugees for resettlement. In some cases a group sponsors a specific refugee known to it through overseas contacts or through friends or relatives in Canada. In others a refugee in need of resettlement may be suggested to a sponsoring group by the government. As well as providing an important vehicle for engaging volunteers in supporting resettled refugees and meeting the costs of early settlement support, sponsorship also offers newcomers an immediate link to networks	and resources in the receiving society. The benefit of private sponsorship is that it enables a larger number of refugees to be resettled. Sponsored refugees also tend to attain self-sufficiency faster than those assisted by government <sup>7</sup> . Private sponsors assume responsibility for certain aspects of the refugee's resettlement, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial support for food, clothing and other material needs;</li> <li>• housing and furnishings;</li> <li>• orientation to life in Canada;</li> <li>• assistance in accessing services and resources (e.g. medical services);</li> <li>• assistance in enrolling children in school;</li> <li>• assistance in accessing English or French language classes;</li> <li>• assistance in finding employment;</li> <li>• logistical support and friendship;</li> <li>• assistance in becoming independent.</li> </ul> However, privately sponsored refugees remain	eligible for government funded services, including medical and newcomer services such as language training, interpretation and employment services. Private sponsors agree to provide support usually for a period of 12 months or until such time as the resettled refugee is self-sufficient, whichever is less. Private sponsorship is monitored and supported by government. There are three types of sponsorship groups that may privately sponsor refugees: groups of five people, community sponsors (corporations, organisations, or associations), and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) and their constituent groups. The majority of private sponsorship is conducted by SAH which are mainly faith-based or ethnic cultural community groups which have signed an agreement with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration allowing them to sponsor refugees.
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As is the case with sponsorship and proposer programs, however, volunteer programs are not 'cost neutral', requiring considerable investment in training, ongoing support and monitoring, including:

- screening and training to ensure that volunteers have an opportunity to explore their motivations; that they fully



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Engaging the community in refugee resettlement in New Zealand and Denmark**

THE REFUGEE resettlement program in New Zealand has long relied on the goodwill of volunteers and a welcoming community, with faith-based communities assuming primary responsibility for coordinating and supporting resettlement in earlier days. Over the past 20 years, the sector providing services for refugees has widened to become an inclusive partnership between government, NGOs and former refugee communities. The volunteer contribution has remained central but the volunteer profile has broadened to include individuals in the wider society, including those from ethno-cultural communities.	of volunteers in refugee resettlement has a more recent history. In that country, there has been a strong tradition of voluntarism and community involvement in a range of issues, from the support of people with special needs, through to environmental and international development issues. In recent years, the Danish Refugee Council has sought to tap this resource to support refugee resettlement. In partnership with local communities it has established some 80 voluntary groups across Denmark. This development was in part motivated by a concern that, despite a well planned integration program, resettled refugees were continuing to live in isolation from the wider Danish community. Meanwhile, as is the case in many other countries, racism	and xenophobia were significant problems, having consequences for both resettled refugees and potentially undermining long term support for integration. In both countries, volunteers work alongside and complement the role played by settlement support professionals and, in the case of New Zealand, cross-cultural workers. In Denmark, municipal social workers assist resettled refugees to secure essential services such as housing and employment, while volunteers offer informal emotional and practical support. This may include coaching about certain aspects of Danish society (such as how to use public transport) and home visits, attending appointments with resettled refugees and introducing them to local recreational and leisure
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- understand their obligations; and that they are aware of the boundaries of their role. Many volunteer programs also require volunteers to undergo routine police clearances to optimise the safety of clients;
- ongoing training and support;
  - quality assurance and accountability measures;
  - debriefing (see p. 244);
  - public liability insurance.

Countries with established resettlement programs have also been mindful of the need to avoid exploitation of volunteers, particularly those from refugee communities (see below). In most countries volunteers fulfil supplementary rather than core integration functions.

<p>activities. In New Zealand, volunteers assist resettled refugees to furnish their new homes and have an ongoing role of advocacy, friendship and empowerment, supporting families to access resources and to function in the broader community.</p> <p>In both countries the key to the success of the programs has been the role of settlement support agencies in the recruitment, training and ongoing support of volunteers. For example, in New Zealand, the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) offers a training program for volunteers, including information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the refugee experience;</li> <li>• understanding health and education issues as they affect refugees;</li> <li>• respecting and valuing cultural diversity;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acquiring knowledge about existing support services for refugees and understanding the resources available to support volunteers in their placements;</li> <li>• recognising issues that require referral to specialists and or professional staff.</li> </ul> <p>The training also includes personal reflection on the motivations that have brought volunteers to this task, and the importance of setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries.</p> <p>The RMS Volunteer Program has been accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, and those who successfully complete it are awarded a nationally recognised certificate. After training, the volunteers are matched with an appropriate refugee family. They operate in teams of two</p>	<p>to four people – based on a variety of factors, including geographical location, personal preference, group dynamics and the size and special needs of their assigned family. Placement is made within a specific Job Description and a Volunteer Employment Agreement which recognises the value of the work of volunteers, even though they are not paid. Volunteers commit to this role for a six-month period.</p> <p>While these volunteer programs have obvious benefits for resettled refugees, the inter-cultural linkages and friendships that result from their work help to produce important social capital and contribute to the development of social harmony and cohesion in the increasingly multi-cultural societies of New Zealand and Denmark.</p>
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## Capacity building in refugee and ethno-cultural communities

Members of established refugee and ethno-cultural communities have contributed to the social support of resettled refugees through their participation in sponsorship and proposer arrangements, as workers or volunteers in ethnic support services and non-government agencies and as volunteers in befriending or mentor programs. They bring with them:

- language skills – a particularly important resource in countries where formal interpreting and translating services are not well developed;
- cultural skills – as well as being important in supporting individual new arrivals, members of ethno-cultural




**TAKE CARE** 
**Respecting and building on diversity**

SOME receiving countries have offered resettlement to refugees from a number of countries within the same continent or region (e.g. Africa, the Middle East). Refugees sharing a common region of origin have many similar experiences and

issues. However, as is the case in other world regions, there may also be significant differences between them. While in some areas resettled refugees will see benefits in a pan-community approach, in others separate responses will be more

appropriate. Some, though certainly not all, refugee groups may also be characterised by diversity in religious, political, ethnic and clan affiliations. These will be important factors to consider in integration planning.

communities can serve as ‘cultural consultants’ or ‘cultural interpreters’. ‘Cultural interpreters’ are people from an ethno-cultural community who use their knowledge of their community to assist services and groups in the receiving society to better understand and respond to the needs of resettled refugees;

- an understanding of the demands and requirements of resettlement borne of their own experience. Those who are well advanced in their own resettlement may also serve as role models to new refugee arrivals;
- links with established ethno-cultural communities, providing a bridge between new arrivals and ethnic social and business networks and religious and cultural institutions. In this respect, members of established communities may also play a mediating role around sensitive issues where there is the potential for cultural conflict or misunderstanding between social support providers and resettled refugees (e.g. female genital mutilation or child welfare practices).

Importantly, engaging refugee communities in the provision of social support is one way of ensuring refugee involvement in the planning and development of services.

Resettlement countries have sought to build the capacity of refugee communities to provide support by:

- offering training and professional development programs to members of refugee communities working in social support roles in either a paid or voluntary capacity. These can range from highly formalised, accredited programs through to relatively informal peer training;
- work force development initiatives aimed at enabling ethnic support services and non-government agencies to employ bilingual and bi-cultural staff;



—providing funding and technical support to facilitate the development of ethnic support services and associations.

Capacity building initiatives are particularly important for small and emergent refugee communities and some resettlement countries have made a conscious choice to give priority to them, recognising that they face particular challenges in their integration process.

### Placement and destination selection policies

Social support can also be optimised through placement and site selection practices. While these are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.1, the following criteria are important:

- the presence of established refugee communities and family members;
- the availability of formal social support and ethnic services;
- the extent to which the site has a tradition of welcoming and supporting newcomers;
- whether the community has a tradition of voluntary involvement in supporting groups with special needs.

### Building the capacity of existing support services

While most countries offer resettled refugees an intensive period of social support early in their resettlement, in the longer term resettled refugees, like nationals, will depend on services in the wider community to support their integration.

Moreover, at all stages of their resettlement, resettled refugees will have contact with professionals, such as teachers, child carers and health care providers, who have the capacity to offer support in the context of their professional roles.

Support providers in general services also have an important role in identifying and arranging referral for resettled refugees requiring more intensive or specialist assistance (e.g. trauma and torture counselling).

There are a number of ways in which countries have sought to enhance capacity to extend support to resettled refugees, including:

- providing professional development programs to people working in key social support positions (e.g. teachers, health care professionals);
- work force development initiatives aimed at enhancing the

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Technical support to build capacity

THE BRITISH Refugee Council has a community outreach team which supports the development of smaller, community based refugee organisations. Advisers, many of whom are themselves former refugees, provide technical support to emerging groups (such as financial management and funding) as well as assisting with organisational development issues such as communication skills and conflict resolution.



SOCIAL  
SUPPORT



## Settlement support for small and emergent refugee communities

THE contemporary intakes of many resettlement countries are diverse and include groups not previously represented in resettlement or general migration programs. These groups may be small in number. It may take some time for settlement services to develop an understanding of the needs of new communities and to tailor approaches and programs. Ethno-cultural services may not be well developed and the pool of appropriately trained bilingual and bi-cultural staff is likely to be small. At the local level, the resource demands of developing linguistically and culturally

relevant services and programs for small communities can be prohibitive.

Established countries of resettlement have adopted a number of approaches to addressing these issues including:

- fostering national planning processes and program development activities, to avoid duplication of effort at the local level (e.g. training programs);
- placing concerted efforts into involving refugee communities in planning and implementation processes;
- ensuring that resources developed in the context

of small locally based projects are disseminated to other relevant service provider and community networks;

- establishing 'bank' style systems for providing language assistance and cultural consultancy to both integration and general services (see examples pp. 95 & 270);
- the establishment of service provider networks to facilitate information exchange and resource sharing;
- work force development initiatives to accelerate recruitment and training of bilingual and bi-cultural workers.

- number of personnel with bilingual and bi-cultural skills;
- the development of resource materials (such as videos and manuals) to enhance professionals' understanding of the refugee and resettlement experiences;
- special funding programs to support services and systems to build their capacity to meet the needs of refugee communities.

### Mutual support programs

Supportive relationships between resettled refugees at comparable stages of their integration can be fostered either through formalised support groups or by linking people with similar needs and experiences with one another. This approach also provides refugees with the chance to share experiences with someone in a similar situation. This can have other therapeutic benefits (see Chapter 3.1).

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Building refugee community capacity in Canada**

SMALL CITIES may receive refugees from many different countries. However, when the number of arrivals from each country is small, it may be difficult to warrant full time settlement staff with language and cultural skills to meet the needs of arrivals from all countries represented.	refugee communities, provides ongoing settlement training to them and then contracts them on an 'on-call' basis. The Community Resource Persons (CRPs) usually have identified leadership abilities or skills and training in a caring profession. They become the focal resource contact for newcomers to their community, delivering individual settlement services as well as group orientation training. The CRPs are also a resource for the receiving community. They deliver training to mainstream service organisations accessed by resettled refugees (e.g. employment and housing services, health services and schools) to build awareness	and sensitivity among service providers. The CRPs are a vital resource for newcomers. However, the experience of the program has been that there is a need to put safeguards in place to ensure that they are not subject to unduly high expectations from their communities and are supported to maintain boundaries between their work with the program and their family and personal life. In the Australian state of Victoria a similar model has been used in larger urban centres to meet the needs of people from small and emergent refugee communities accessing child care and pre-school centres (see p. 270).
The Thunder Bay Community Resource Program in the Canadian province of Ontario has developed a program model to meet the resource challenges in smaller cities and towns by offering culturally and linguistically appropriate settlement services to refugees and immigrants. The D.O.O.R.S. to New Refugee Life Centre recruits newcomers from		

SOCIAL  
SUPPORT

**Communicating with providers of social support**

CONSIDER incorporating the following when communicating with support providers:

- that while resettled refugees have faced considerable stress, they are survivors with generally high levels of motivation to settle well in their new country;
- factors associated with the refugee and resettlement experience that might affect relationships with

- both volunteer and professional support providers (e.g. undermining of trust);
- relevant cultural factors and how these can be accommodated when providing support;
- information about the obligations of those providing support, particularly under private sponsorship or proposer arrangements;
- the advantages of

providing support to

- resettled refugees;
- information about resettled refugees entitlements (employment assistance, income support, housing subsidies);
- information about special programs and supports available to resettled refugees (e.g. trauma and torture services; translating services; family tracing services).



## Issues to consider in engaging refugee community support

MEMBERS of refugee communities have a critical role to play in providing social support to resettled refugees (see p. 91). Experience suggests that there are a number of factors to take into account when encouraging this activity:

- Training and ongoing support needs to be provided. As people who share a common language, culture and life experience with their clients, former refugees often face high expectations from their communities. They may be expected to be 'on-call' 24 hours a day and feel unable to refuse requests for help. This is particularly the case for those working in a voluntary capacity who lack the protection of agency policy and

routines and the peer support and supervision typically available to paid workers. Effective training and support can help to enhance workers' understanding of their roles and their ability to convey this to clients; to place boundaries around their relationships with clients; and to affirm their right to privacy and their personal and family life.

- Former refugees bring language and cultural knowledge. However, they may need some support to acquire the skills needed to fulfil other aspects of a social support role (e.g. dealing with complex cross-cultural and interpersonal issues or providing information about the systems and resources available to resettled refugees in the

receiving society).

- Access to debriefing (see p. 244) will be particularly important for these workers since exposure to clients' traumatic histories may serve as painful reminders of their own experiences or those of close relatives and friends.
- Efforts should be made to maximise mutual benefit, particularly when former refugees are engaged in voluntary roles. For example, in a number of countries, training programs for volunteers are accredited or voluntary work is given formal recognition, thereby enhancing future employment prospects for participants.
- Dialogue needs to be maintained between refugee communities and

## Building on existing assets

IN COUNTRIES where ethnic communities and or social support infrastructure are not well developed, other groups with experience of living across two cultures, of being part of a minority or who themselves have had refugee experiences may be willing to extend support. For example, in Atlanta, Georgia an African-American church community provided support to resettling refugees, believing that they offered a personal understanding of what it was like to live bi-culturally and to feel like 'outsiders'. Indigenous communities and those with expatriate experiences have played a similar role.

integration personnel in the receiving community. This will help to promote integration as a two-way street; ensure that support is provided in a manner which is broadly consistent with the objectives and values of the receiving society and facilitate resettled refugees' integration into the wider community.

- Expectations of the contribution which former refugees can make need to be considered in light of the fact that they may themselves be in the process of resettlement. This will influence the extent to which they have the personal resources and energy required to extend support to others.
- Having survived difficult experiences and been offered the chance of a

new life, many resettled refugees have a high level of motivation to support others. It is important to avoid exploiting the goodwill, particularly of those working in a voluntary capacity. Equally, the wishes of former refugees who are unable, or who do not wish, to be involved in supporting newcomers should be respected. Like their counterparts in the wider community, former refugees will have different levels of motivation and interest in this regard.

Refugee community support may not always be the best form of support. This is because:

- There is significant religious, ethnic, political and clan-based diversity within refugee communities

which may influence their suitability to provide support to all newcomers.

- Those in established refugee and ethno-cultural communities may not have a well developed understanding of the contemporary refugee experience or resettlement process. This may be particularly the case in countries where refugees and migrants settling through earlier waves of migration did so at a time when support services were not well developed, but economic conditions were generally better. This may lead to a perception that contemporary refugees are receiving too much support and contribute to antipathy between established communities and new arrivals.



SOCIAL  
SUPPORT





## FOSTERING SOCIAL SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

### OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- offer individualised assessment and early settlement support conducted by an identifiable entity funded by government;
- conduct early assessment with the aim of facilitating resettled refugees' access to support services and systems provided to nationals;
- engage government, non-government agencies and the refugee and wider communities in social support;
- make provision for resettled refugees to apply to have family members join them;
- implement social support programs at the local level;
- develop strategies for enhancing the capacity of refugee communities to offer support to newcomers;
- develop strategies for ensuring that social support services provided to nationals are accessible to resettled refugees;
- have systems for ensuring ongoing monitoring of social support programs provided to resettled refugees.

### SPECIFIC PROGRAMS ESTABLISHED TO ENHANCE SOCIAL SUPPORT TO RESETTLED REFUGEES WOULD:

- provide language assistance;
- engage resettled refugees in developing and implementing settlement and social support or integration plans;
- engage refugee communities in planning and implementation;
- promote social support as having mutual benefits for both resettled refugees, the receiving society and individuals and volunteers providing support;
- provide or facilitate access to support by removing practical barriers (child care, transport);
- promote access to support systems and services available to nationals in the wider community;
- provide culturally sensitive support;
- take account of the needs of the whole family as well as individual family members;
- build connections and supportive relationships between resettled refugees and refugee and wider local communities.







## CHAPTER 2.4

# Meeting Immediate Material Needs: Income Support and Establishment Resources

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind



## Chapter 2.4

# Meeting Immediate Material Needs: Income Support and Establishment Resources

This Chapter focuses on programs for resettled refugees to meet basic living costs prior to becoming self-sufficient. It also addresses income support issues of concern to resettled refugees outside of the labour market (e.g. refugees of retirement age, those with severe disabilities).

Assistance to meet health care costs is discussed in Chapter 2.10. Strategies for assisting resettled refugees with the cost of securing a housing tenancy are outlined in Chapter 2.8.

The term 'income support' means those payments made to resettled refugees to meet basic living costs. These payments may be described in various countries of resettlement by different terms such as cash assistance, welfare payments, pensions or benefits.

The term 'establishment resources' is used to describe assistance given to resettled refugees to establish life in a new country (e.g. household furniture, clothing). This assistance may be provided in the form of goods or a 'one-off' payment.

INCOME  
SUPPORT



**MEETING IMMEDIATE MATERIAL NEEDS:  
INCOME SUPPORT AND ESTABLISHMENT RESOURCES**

**CHECKLIST**

## **Planning income support and establishment resource programs**

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ funding for income support payments;
- ✓ determining the length and amount of support required;
- ✓ arrangements for the payment of income support;
- ✓ defining expectations of economic self-sufficiency;
- ✓ establishing links between income support and job placement programs.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ professional development and awareness raising activities with personnel responsible for administering income support programs to enhance their understanding of the refugee and resettlement experiences;
- ✓ strengthening links between income support and job placement programs;
- ✓ reviewing existing income support arrangements for those outside of the labour force to ensure that resettled refugees are eligible for programs provided to nationals (e.g. provisions for retirees, those with severe disabling conditions).

## **Income and establishment support as resources for rebuilding**

Income support payments for resettled refugees before they become self-sufficient are a vital part of an integration program. Searching for employment or other income-generating activities inevitably takes some time. Moreover, in most countries of resettlement it is recognised that resettled refugees will require time to adjust to both their past experiences and new country; acquire basic language skills; and participate in formal orientation. This time may be particularly important for refugees suffering from trauma.

Few refugees will arrive with cash reserves large enough to obviate the need for income support. Owing to the circumstances surrounding their migration, most will have limited personal effects. They will face the expenses involved in establishing a life in a new country, including the costs of accommodation and food (if not covered under separate programs), clothing, household goods, furniture, transportation, educational expenses and other out-of-pocket expenses.

## Factors affecting income support

The duration of income support required by resettled refugees will depend upon:

- the level of trauma experienced and stress associated with resettlement;
- their employment skills;
- their individual choices about their process of resettlement.

Also relevant are factors in receiving countries, including:

- whether the country has income support programs for nationals who are outside of the labour market and their nature and structure;
- the capacity of government to meet the cost of funding income support;
- expectations of economic self-sufficiency, for both resettled refugees and nationals;
- employment opportunities and the effectiveness of employment programs;
- how cultural orientation and language training are delivered.



INCOME  
SUPPORT

## Issues to consider in planning income support and establishment resources

The level and duration of income support payments

The challenge facing countries of resettlement is to set income support payments at a level which allows resettled refugees to live in dignity and to meet their immediate material needs while at the same time discouraging long term economic dependency.

In countries of resettlement with established income safety net programs, resettled refugees are generally entitled either to the same benefit as nationals or to a benefit set at a comparable rate. In other countries, the national minimum wage is used as a benchmark with additional payments being made depending on family size. It is important that these payments enable resettled refugees to meet basic housing, food, transportation and educational expenses.

Ideally payments should be made available for long enough to allow resettled refugees to adjust to and orient themselves to their new country, attend to basic practical post arrival tasks, prepare for and search for employment or other income-



### MEETING IMMEDIATE MATERIAL NEEDS: INCOME SUPPORT AND ESTABLISHMENT RESOURCES

generating activities and, if necessary, go some way toward recovering from traumatic experiences.

In the interests of ensuring that resettled refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency as soon as is practical, in most countries, there are close linkages between income support and vocational counselling and job placement programs (see Chapter 2.9). Commonly, this involves making continued income support contingent upon active job seeking or co-operation with a job placement program.



**He (a resettled refugee) understands that being in Canada requires hard work and flexibility. Although optimistic, he is critical of an immigration system which is insensitive to the difficulties families face when they must attend classes, take care of children and work to make ends meet, all at one time.**

Resettlement worker



Payment levels and eligibility criteria should also bear some relationship to income support policies pertaining to nationals. Resettled refugees do face additional costs in the early resettlement period (see above) and are engaged in other personal and practical tasks which affect their capacity to search for and participate in paid employment. While these need to be reflected in income support programs, if there are significant disparities between the benefits paid to nationals and resettled refugees, this may become a source of antipathy toward refugees and ultimately compromise broader acceptance of resettlement.

A factor to consider when using national income support programs as a benchmark, however, is whether these are adequate to meet the needs of resettled refugees. In countries with very high expectations of economic self-sufficiency among nationals, income support payments may have been kept intentionally low. In those with developing economies, these programs may not exist or may not be well established.

How should income support be administered?

Although integration is normally funded by national governments, it is commonly implemented at a more localised level. Further, in many countries, responsibility for administering income support payments lies with other tiers of government (for example the states in the USA). Reflecting this, in many countries funding for income support payments is made by national governments to other levels of governments, or to NGOs, who subsequently pass the money to the refugee. In emerging resettlement countries that do not have well established income support programs, payments may come from an external source such as the UNHCR and be administered by the coordinating NGO (see Chapter 1.5).

In many countries with established income support programs, resettled refugees are given money through the same



“  
**Actually working here takes all my thinking...my wife is good because she has a better opportunity than me, because I have to work, I have two children. Now she is studying computer science. Here you and your wife cannot study at the same time. You have to let her or him finish, get a job and after that you can study.**  
 Resettled refugee



INCOME  
SUPPORT

administrative processes as nationals who are outside of the labour market. As well as offering administrative efficiencies, this approach establishes at a very early stage that resettled refugees have the same privileges and responsibilities as nationals.

Nevertheless, special programs have been established in some countries to allow tailoring to the particular needs of resettled refugees (see box, p. 104). Special allowances may also be necessary where the basis or mode for payment differs from that available to nationals or where there are no established income support programs.

In countries where it may take some time for an application for income support to be processed, a special transitional benefit is given to resettled refugees while their application is pending.

While income support is commonly paid as one inclusive amount, some living costs may be covered through payments made direct to vendors on the refugee's behalf (e.g. for rent or utilities).

### **Initiatives for providing income support and establishment resources**

Income support payments for those with additional barriers to economic self-sufficiency

Resettlement countries will need to ensure that appropriate income support provisions are available to those who have additional reasons for being either temporarily or permanently

“  
**Unless you have a cheque in hand it's difficult to start looking for apartments, because many landlords want cash on the table.**  
 Resettled refugee




**MEETING IMMEDIATE MATERIAL NEEDS:  
INCOME SUPPORT AND ESTABLISHMENT RESOURCES**

outside of the labour market, including:

- refugees of retirement age;
- unaccompanied minors;
- sole parents with responsibility for young children;
- those with severe disabilities;
- those with acute physical or psychological health problems.

In countries where income support is made available for those with disabilities and people of retirement age, there may be residency or prior employment requirements. These will need to be reviewed to ensure that resettled refugees are eligible for support on a similar basis to nationals

Awareness raising and professional development

As indicated above, in most countries income support payments will be administered through large government

**INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE**
**Tailoring cash assistance in the USA and Sweden**

<p>IN BOTH the USA and Sweden, resettled refugees are eligible for an allowance to meet their basic needs prior to securing employment. In the USA this allowance, called Refugee Cash Assistance, is commonly administered through state government departments of human services, while in Sweden income support is paid through existing municipal social assistance programs. In recent years, however, both countries have developed new programs tailored to the needs of resettled refugees.</p> <p>In the <b>USA</b> non-government organisations (NGOs) play a prominent role. Prior to</p>	<p>arrival, refugees are assigned to one of ten NGOs operating across the USA, for assistance with individual settlement support, housing, community orientation, and sometimes job placement assistance and language training.</p> <p>Several states in the USA have formed partnerships with resettlement NGOs, whereby the administration of Refugee Cash Assistance is transferred to the NGO, which in turn passes the money to its refugee clients. Refugee Cash Assistance is paid for up to eight months. Experience in the USA suggests that this arrangement has a number of advantages. First, NGOs</p>	<p>have greater flexibility than government departments to structure disbursement models. For example, in some instances, it may be appropriate to ‘front-load’ assistance and taper it toward the end of the qualifying period as resettled refugees approach self-sufficiency. In contrast, where it is apparent that resettled refugees are likely to face barriers to employment, payments can be spread over a longer period of time while these barriers are addressed. Second, it enables income support payments to be closely linked with other types of settlement support, most particularly employment placement.</p>
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welfare departments, many of which carry a diverse case load. Activities to sensitise personnel in these departments will be particularly important given that:

- some resettled refugees may have a distrust of authorities (see Chapter 1.3);
- in many countries the administration of income support is closely allied to job placement. Officers need to be aware of some of the barriers resettled refugees face to active job search (e.g. trauma and torture symptoms, language barriers, resettlement demands, lack of family support, and constraints on their access to transportation and child care);
- some resettled refugees may be unable to work for an extended period and hence may need to be assessed for alternative forms of income support (such as disability or sickness allowances). Those responsible for assessment will require some understanding of the physical and psychological consequences of the refugee experience.



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SUPPORT

Third, it allows income support payments to be administered by resettlement staff with sensitivity to resettled refugees and expertise in supporting their resettlement. There is also a belief in the USA that if resettled refugees do not have contact with the mainstream welfare system early in their resettlement, they are less likely to become reliant on it in the longer term.

In **SWEDEN**, integration is implemented at the municipal level and facilitated through individual introduction plans (see p. 83). Existing social assistance programs

in Sweden are designed primarily for people who are unable to work. Recent legislation now gives the municipalities the option of paying resettled refugees through a new program introduced in the belief that, given initial support, refugees will readily achieve self-sufficiency.

The new program enables the payment of support to be more closely linked with, and made contingent upon, participation in language and vocational training and job seeking activities outlined in individual introduction plans. As payments can be made for up to two-and-a-half years resettled refugees are able to participate in language

and vocational training to prepare them for work if necessary. Additional payments are also available to meet the costs of dental care, medicines and some travel expenses.

As is the case with the program in the USA, the level of payment can be tailored according to the needs of resettled refugees at different stages of their introduction. In Sweden, resettled refugees may also continue to receive payments, though at a reduced rate, for a short time after employment has been obtained. As well as ensuring continuity in their income, this serves as a further incentive to job seeking.


**MEETING IMMEDIATE MATERIAL NEEDS:  
INCOME SUPPORT AND ESTABLISHMENT RESOURCES**

### Establishment costs

Some countries provide ‘one-off’ cash or material assistance to resettled refugees to meet the costs of establishing themselves in a new country, in particular, household costs. Cash payments enable resettled refugees to exercise choice over the goods purchased. On the other hand, pre-purchasing goods enables resettled refugees to avoid the organisational effort which would otherwise be involved in shopping for major household items in an unfamiliar environment. In Sweden this assistance is made available in the form of a loan.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Moving in

IN <b>AUSTRALIA</b> , a Household Formation Support worker assesses the refugee’s needs for household items and delivers them to the accommodation before they move in.	Before refugees arrive in <b>ICELAND</b> , Red Cross volunteers collect furniture, kitchen utensils and clothes and prepare the apartments rented to resettled refugees by local authorities.	depending on their level of need. During this time they are provided with accommodation, meals, clothes, shoes, medicines and transportation and a small grant for ‘out-of-pocket’ expenses. Upon leaving the reception centre, they receive a benefit for renting a flat and a food allowance.
In <b>BENIN</b> , resettled refugees receive assistance from a non-government organisation, to find an apartment and receive a grant to purchase essential household items.	In <b>SPAIN</b> , resettled refugees are accommodated in reception centres (established for both refugees and asylum seekers) where they can stay for up to six months,	





**...right away you are thinking, you have to start looking for work to try to pay back your (travel) loan, So you have to think about the place to find work.**

Resettled refugee



INCOME  
SUPPORT



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Setting up a house in Sweden

REFUGEES resettling in Sweden are entitled to a special loan for home furnishing and equipment. The amount is set according to family composition, with larger loans being available to families with children. The loans are interest free for two years, after which	time interest is charged at a fixed annual rate. The loan scheme enables refugees to establish a household without entering into costly private lending contracts. As a generous window period for repayment of the loan is allowed, it can be repaid at	a time when refugees are more likely to be self-sufficient. As it is a repayable loan, resettled refugees can be offered larger amounts of money than would be the case if assistance was made available in the form of a grant.



**MEETING IMMEDIATE MATERIAL NEEDS:  
INCOME SUPPORT AND ESTABLISHMENT RESOURCES**



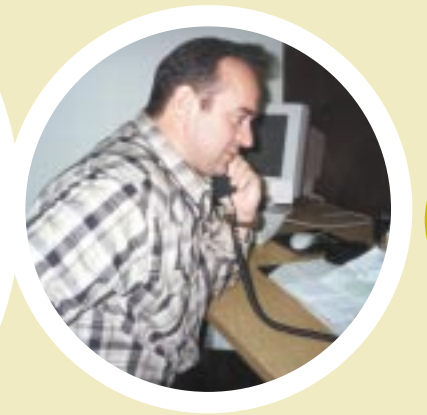
**PROGRAMS PROVIDING INCOME SUPPORT AND ESTABLISHMENT RESOURCES**

**OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:**

- provide income support for a period following arrival which is long enough for refugees to adjust to their refugee and resettlement experiences, acquire basic language skills and receive adequate orientation;
- provide income support during this period at a rate that is sufficient to meet basic living costs (housing, food, transportation, educational expenses, etc.);
- provide some form of 'one off' cash or material assistance to meet household and personal establishment costs;
- foster formal linkages between income support and job placement services;
- ensure that refugee elders have access to government provided retirement income;
- ensure that appropriate income support arrangements are made for resettled refugees who have physical or psychological difficulties that impede their participation in paid work, sole parents and unaccompanied minors.

**INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS WOULD:**

- be provided by personnel who have received appropriate training on the needs and circumstances of resettled refugees;
- have processes for assessing entitlement to income support payments which are sensitive to the past experiences and current stresses of resettled refugees;
- communicate with resettled refugees in their own language.





## CHAPTER 2.5

# Easing Early Communication: Language Assistance

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 2.5

# Easing Early Communication: Language Assistance

This Chapter focuses on providing language assistance to resettled refugees both in the context of reception and early settlement support and in their later interactions with programs and services in the receiving society.





## CHECKLIST

### Planning language assistance

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ identifying interpreters and translators speaking relevant languages;
- ✓ recruiting bilingual settlement support workers;
- ✓ providing basic training to professional and volunteer language assistance providers on refugees and resettlement issues, roles and confidentiality.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ establishing centralised interpreting and translating services or 'banks';
- ✓ establishing interpreting services in key government departments (education, income support);
- ✓ formal training, accreditation and standards for professional interpreters;
- ✓ strategies to promote the use of interpreters among government and community based service and program providers.

### Language assistance as a resource for rebuilding

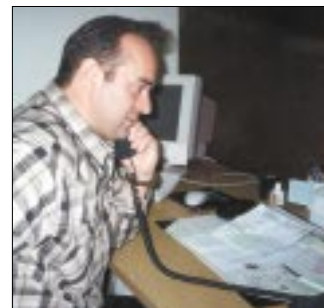
In the early resettlement period, many resettled refugees will have a limited grasp of the language of the receiving society (referred to as the target language). While they will begin to acquire this through their participation in language training programs (see Chapter 2.6) and their day-to-day interactions in the receiving society, it will be some time before they achieve basic competency and longer still before they are technically proficient (see p. 128). Even if functional in the target language, resettled refugees may require assistance when communicating about matters requiring a high level of technical proficiency or in circumstances they experience as stressful (e.g. health care or legal matters).

Some groups, such as refugee elders, may have language learning difficulties and will require ongoing access to interpreter support.

Providing access to language assistance helps to:

- promote clear communication. This is particularly important as language difficulties may be further complicated by refugee and resettlement related anxiety or different cultural communication patterns;
- foster rapport, trust and a sense of safety in relationships between resettled refugees and others in the receiving society. This is particularly important for resettled refugees, with trust being a common casualty of traumatic

- experiences (see Chapter 1.3);
- facilitate resettled refugees' access to the services and resources they will require for integration;
- ensure that resettled refugees have equitable access to the resources of the receiving society and that their rights are respected;
- foster resettled refugees' understanding of the receiving society.



Care should be exercised when using family, friends and staff who are not trained in formal language assistance, professional or settlement support roles to interpret, as:

- they may be placed in a position where they are exposed to information of a sensitive or traumatic nature;
- communication with the resettled refugee may be impaired if there are issues they feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about discussing;
- this may place undue stress on these relationships and, if involving children, may impose an unfair burden of responsibility;
- they may lack the proficiency in both languages to accurately interpret information, particularly in matters requiring technical language proficiency (e.g. legal and health care matters);
- confidentiality is particularly important when working with resettled refugees, especially those from small, close-knit communities.

In the course of their resettlement, refugees will also require access to translated materials including information about services and entitlements as well as forms and questionnaires. They may also need to have important documents translated (e.g. medical records, professional qualifications).

### **Factors affecting language assistance**

A number of factors will influence the planning and provision of language assistance in receiving societies, including:

- the extent to which there are established refugee and ethnic communities speaking languages represented in contemporary refugee intakes;
- whether there is an established work force to provide language assistance (e.g. bilingual professionals, bilingual support workers, interpreters and translators);
- the existing infrastructure for work force development, support and quality assurance for language assistance providers, in particular, it is important that language assistance providers are offered training to deal with the





## EASING EARLY COMMUNICATION: LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

- effects of traumatic experiences on the communication process;
- any other languages spoken in the receiving country which may be known by resettled refugees (e.g. common European languages);
- funding arrangements for language assistance.

### **Issues to consider in meeting language assistance needs**

Planning language assistance for reception and early settlement support

Resettlement agencies responsible for receiving refugees and providing early settlement support will need to make provision for language assistance, both to communicate with resettled refugees and to facilitate their access to services and programs in the wider community. In most countries provision is made for this in funding arrangements or service agreements. For example, in Australia, resettlement services have access to the centralised government interpreter service. In Spain, interpreters are provided by government either directly or by agreement with a local non-government organisation. In the USA, funding agreements between government and resettlement NGOs require that assistance be provided in the refugee's own language for the first 90 days following arrival. This is achieved by employing bilingual settlement workers and, for smaller language groups, using centralised interpreter services.

Language assistance for long term integration

As resettled refugees' link with resettlement support agencies is necessarily time limited, strategies will be needed to improve the provision of language assistance by mainstream service and program providers (e.g. government income support programs, health care services).

Approaches to providing language assistance

There are three primary ways in which existing resettlement countries meet language assistance needs:

- by recruiting bilingual staff in resettlement support roles and in key professional positions in mainstream agencies located in areas with significant refugee populations (e.g. bilingual doctors, bilingual teachers);



- by building a work force of professionally trained interpreters and translators;
- by using volunteers, primarily from ethno-cultural communities.

These are not mutually exclusive, with many countries using these different approaches in a complementary fashion. Some of the issues to consider in building language assistance capacity are discussed in Table Eight on the following page.



### Promoting access to interpreters in emerging resettlement countries

RESETTLEMENT programs in their founding years may experience some difficulties in providing language assistance, particularly if they have relatively small refugee intakes or limited capacity to fund training and employment of interpreters. Emerging resettlement countries have sought to address this by:

- recruiting bilingual volunteers;
- employing bilingual settlement support workers;
- prioritising the use of interpreters and translators (e.g. for first or more complex appointments);
- communicating in a third shared language. For

example, some of the Iraqi, Iranian and Afghan refugees recently settled in Chile are fluent in Russian, having studied in that country. The resettlement NGO in Chile was able to secure the support of a retired Russian language professor to assist with communication;

- selecting refugees who speak a second language also spoken in the receiving country, even if not that country's main language. For example, in Chile, where many nationals speak another major European language (e.g. French or German), refugees who spoke one of these languages were targeted;

- placing particular emphasis on target language training for resettled refugees to facilitate early independence;
- securing assistance with translations through the government ministry responsible for foreign affairs;
- aiming for linguistic homogeneity in early caseloads and placing resettled refugees from the same language group in one resettlement community;
- facilitating communication on very basic concepts through the use of language dictionaries (see box, p. 114).





## Table Eight: Factors to consider in planning to meet language assistance needs

Mode of assistance	Possibilities	Limitations and cautions
Professional interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• technical linguistic competence is assured;</li> <li>• trained in ethics, approaches, role etc;</li> <li>• bound by professional code of ethics (e.g. concerning confidentiality);</li> <li>• role boundaries clear;</li> <li>• particularly important for ensuring access to services and programs in the wider society that do not have bilingual professional and client contact personnel;</li> <li>• if provided as part of a 'bank' or contractual arrangement, assistance can be provided to a diverse range of language groups and across geographic areas relatively efficiently and cost effectively;</li> <li>• modern telecommunications systems can be used to facilitate geographic access.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training and qualifying periods may create delays in making interpreters available for emerging refugee communities;</li> <li>• if training and accreditation requirements are too stringent they may serve as a disincentive to trainees particularly those in emerging refugee communities and communities with limited formal education;</li> <li>• relatively resource intensive.</li> <li>• hands-free telecommunications equipment ideal when using telephone interpreters</li> </ul>
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resource efficient;</li> <li>• advantages associated with engaging community in integration (see Chapter 2.3);</li> <li>• has possibilities for providing language assistance and social support in one relationship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not bound by a professional code of ethics, confidentiality may be compromised;</li> <li>• need to consider general issues involved in engaging former refugees in voluntary support roles (see Chapter 2.3);</li> </ul>

### INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

#### Responding to urgent need in Spain

IN 1999 Spain accepted nearly 1,500 Kosova Albanian refugees as part of the UNHCR's humanitarian evacuation program. As this country did not have the capacity to provide language assistance to all evacuees, the local Kosova Albanian community developed a practical Albanian–Spanish dictionary for use by both evacuees and Spanish settlement workers, covering key words and concepts.

Mode of assistance	Possibilities	Limitations and cautions
Volunteers (continued)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training and support critical;</li> <li>• untrained personnel may not necessarily be technically bilingual. Should be used with care in contexts requiring technical language proficiency;</li> <li>• possibility of blurring of interpreting and support roles.</li> </ul>
Bilingual integration support providers and professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rapport building eased by eliminating three-way communication;</li> <li>• resource efficiencies result from building integration support and language assistance into one role.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as above;</li> <li>• difficult to meet the needs of all language groups by establishing staff positions, especially if refugee intake is diverse;</li> <li>• resource inefficiencies and professional boundary issues may result from using bilingual professionals to undertake interpreting tasks on behalf of resettled refugees (i.e. as opposed to practising their own profession bilingually);</li> <li>• settlement workers recruited for their language skills may require training in other aspects of their job role;</li> <li>• some resettled refugees may not wish to consult with a professional from their community.</li> </ul>





## Initiatives to support access to language assistance

Centralised interpreter services or ‘interpreter banks’

Given that most resettlement countries have a highly diverse refugee intake, it is difficult, even for specialist services, to employ interpreters or bilingual staff to meet all needs. This is particularly the case given that the need for language assistance at any point in time cannot always be predicted.

In countries with large refugee and immigrant programs, this has been addressed by establishing centralised interpreting and translating services (either by government, voluntary organisations or the private sector) through which agencies serving resettled refugees can book the services of interpreters and translators.

Generally these services offer interpreters who attend appointments ‘on-site’ (or face-to-face) as well as via three-way telephone communication. Examples include the Canadian province of Manitoba’s Language Bank, a program staffed by trained volunteers and the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), established by the Australian government which provides free interpreting services to facilitate access to government funded services.

In the USA, some smaller agencies meet language assistance needs through contracts with larger facilities (such as hospitals) to secure interpreters on a sessional basis.

While in most countries, centralised interpreter services can only be accessed by service providers on behalf of resettled refugees, in some they can be accessed free-of-charge by resettled refugees themselves.

Dedicated interpreter services may also be established in larger government departments in some countries.

Promoting use of interpreting and translating services

The experience of resettlement countries is that even with well established and relatively accessible interpreter services, there is a need to ensure that professionals and personnel in the wider community utilise them. Professional development and awareness raising activities may be required to ensure that relevant personnel are:

- able to identify clients requiring an interpreter;
- understand the importance and advantages of communicating through an interpreter, despite the additional time and costs involved;
- aware of booking arrangements;
- understand the basic skills involved in communicating through an interpreter;
- aware of any legislative requirements to provide language assistance.

Strategies that have been used by resettlement countries to promote the use of interpreters include:

- simplifying booking procedures at both the agency and interpreter service level;
- developing cards held by the resettled refugee which identify the language they speak and interpreter service details;
- activities among refugee communities to promote awareness of the right to an interpreter (e.g. multilingual posters in health care waiting rooms);
- funding agreements between government and agencies serving refugees obliging services to provide language assistance to clients who are not proficient in the target language;
- legislation to mandate the use of interpreters (see box, p. 118).



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### On-screen interpreting in Finland and Norway

INTERPRETING centres in Finland and Norway have begun to use on-screen interpreting enabling all parties to the communication to see one another. This form of communication requires a personal computer, camera and microphone. Picture and sound are communicated via internet or telephone.	may be superior to telephone interpreting since it gives parties to the communication the benefit of eye contact and of reading non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions. It may be particularly useful in hospital and other medical settings. With increasing technological developments, the equipment involved in this communication is	becoming more readily available and affordable. However, particular attention is required to ensure that confidentiality is observed. Experience in Finland and Norway has been that, although it has taken some time for this new technology to be accepted by clients and service providers, it is being used more frequently and in an increasing number of settings.
In certain circumstances on-screen communication	this communication is	



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Promoting the right to language assistance

SEVERAL jurisdictions have legislation which mandates the use of language assistance. The Office of Civil Rights in the USA has issued policy guidance based on a title in the 1964 <i>Civil Rights Act</i> which prohibits discrimination in federal government programs on the basis of race, colour or national origin. Under the guidance, all services in receipt of any federal government funding	are required to provide assistance to people with limited English language proficiency (LEP). This includes anyone unable to speak, read, write or understand English at a level that permits effective interaction with health and social service agencies and providers. Other examples include the State of Massachusetts, USA, where all hospital emergency rooms are	required to have interpretation facilities available and the Swedish <i>Integration Act</i> and the Spanish <i>Law of Asylum</i> which oblige services to provide language assistance. The experience of these countries is that while this is a highly effective strategy, legislation needs to be complemented with awareness raising, professional development and monitoring activities.
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#### Work force development, quality assurance and professional support

In some countries interpreting and translating has become increasingly professionalised. This has occurred in recognition of the fact that these are roles which require skill not only in the area of technical language proficiency, but in interpersonal communication, ethics and cross-cultural issues.

This has been achieved through the development of:

- formal training, credentials and accreditation for interpreters and translators. In some countries, interpreters have also been offered specialist training in particular areas (such as mental health interpreting, legal interpreting);
- professional standards for interpreters and translators;
- professional codes of ethics for interpreters and translators.

Like other professionals working closely with resettled refugees (see Chapter 3.1) interpreters require professional debriefing and support.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Meeting diverse language assistance needs across Finland**

REFUGEES, immigrants and asylum seekers settle in municipalities across Finland. Many different languages are spoken, among them Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Somali, Vietnamese, Russian, Albanian, Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Estonian, French and Turkish. Since Finland was a relatively linguistically homogenous society until the mid 1980s, its existing interpreter work force had developed primarily for the diplomatic service and to meet conference and commercial needs.	interpreting, over the telephone or on-screen, free-of-charge to resettled refugees. These technologies make it possible to meet language assistance needs in distant municipalities and for scarce resources to be put to the best use.	In 1996 the Finnish National Board of Education established the <i>Further Qualification for Community Interpreter</i> with the aim of working toward an appropriate and uniform level of skill among community interpreters. To obtain the qualification certificate, applicants complete a skill test demonstrating that they have met a prescribed level of competence (as opposed to meeting formal education, training or prior work experience requirements). This allows people who have developed their skills through practical or life experience to seek qualification.
As its resettlement and migration programs have expanded, however, Finland has recognised the need to invest in the development of community interpreting services. While integration is facilitated at the municipal level in Finland, it is not practically or economically viable for each individual municipality to have its own interpreting facility.	Community interpreters are employed by the centres on a full-time, part-time and freelance basis, depending on the demand for particular language skills. This enables the service to meet diverse language needs relatively cost effectively. Many community interpreters are themselves former refugees.	Training for community interpreting remains a challenge for Finland. A number of universities, vocational adult education centres, providers of adult education and interpreter centres have begun to offer courses. However, they are relatively short and, as yet, there is no uniform syllabus. A greater number of appropriately qualified teachers and learning materials are required to support the development of the courses.
Accordingly, since the early 1990s eight regional interpreter centres have been established. They are currently funded by the Finnish Ministry of Labour.	The interpreter centres can be accessed by health, social welfare and other settlement related services on behalf of refugee clients and by the municipalities during resettled refugees' initial introduction period and thereafter if required.	
These services provide translating, on-site interpreters and distance	The regional interpreter centres are responsible for recruiting new interpreters and for maintaining the professional skills of their work force. The centres also offer customer training on cross-cultural communication, interpreter booking procedures and communicating with an interpreter.	





## PROMOTING ACCESS TO LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

### OVERALL, A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- take steps to ensure that government programs and services in receipt of government funding provide appropriate language assistance;
- take steps to ensure that reception and early settlement support services provide appropriate language assistance;
- support the development of centralised interpreter and translating services;
- have ongoing strategies for planning and building an interpreter work force in response to changing needs and intake patterns;
- have systems for screening and training volunteer language assistance providers;
- support the development of appropriate training, accreditation and standards for professional interpreters;
- provide funding and technical support for professional development programs for bilingual resettlement support workers who do not have requisite human service qualifications;
- have arrangements for the translation of key integration documents at minimal or no cost to resettled refugees (e.g. prior professional qualifications, medical records).

### SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WOULD:

- have a formal written language assistance plan;
- inform resettled refugees of their rights in relation to language assistance;
- provide language assistance in a timely fashion;
- have key information, forms and other documents translated into relevant community languages;
- have protocols to ensure the sensitive management of incoming telephone calls from people who are not proficient in the target language;
- provide training to staff on booking and using interpreters and the importance of communicating through them;
- have hands-free telecommunications technology to promote the use of telephone interpreters;
- have some means of identifying and recording resettled refugees requiring an interpreter and the language they speak for the purpose of their ongoing support;
- wherever practical, recruit bilingual staff in key professional and client contact positions;
- avoid the use of untrained personnel to interpret;
- identify a senior employee to coordinate and monitor the agency level language assistance program.

Adapted from E Mercer, *Connections: An information service of the Immigration & Refugee Services of America's Alliance for Multicultural Mental Health*, vol.2 no.1, 2001.







## CHAPTER 2.6

# Fostering Independent Communication: Language Training Programs for Adult Resettled Refugees

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 2.6

# Fostering Independent Communication:

## Language Training Programs for Adult Resettled Refugees

The focus of this Chapter is on strategies to support resettled refugees' acquisition of the language of the receiving society (called the target language). While, it is concerned with adult resettled refugees, many of the principles and strategies outlined in this Chapter apply to language programs for refugee children and young people. Further detail on programs for this group can be found in Chapter 3.3. Strategies for enhancing women's participation in language training are addressed in Chapter 3.2.





## CHECKLIST

### Planning target language training programs

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ a basic post arrival language instruction program;
- ✓ professional development for language instructors to enhance their capacity to teach and support resettled refugees;
- ✓ incorporating informal language training into the role of volunteer support providers (see Chapter 2.3);
- ✓ identifying and building relationships with existing adult education facilities with a view to developing more advanced language training options.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ incorporating information on language training options, and how they can be accessed, into refugee orientation programs;
- ✓ developing a flexible range of delivery options (e.g. specialist class based programs, on-line and distance learning, work and community based options, full and part-time study);
- ✓ coordinating, monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms (e.g. benchmarking; national curricula);
- ✓ standardised pre-course analysis;
- ✓ advanced language training options for those wishing to advance to further education and training;
- ✓ technical support for language training program providers;
- ✓ linkages between post arrival language training programs and vocational counselling and education;
- ✓ enhancing the capacity of volunteer social support providers to contribute to language acquisition (see Chapter 2.3);
- ✓ learning options for those with low levels of participation in, or high rates of attrition from, formal language training programs;
- ✓ building a work force of bilingual teaching professionals and teacher aides;
- ✓ liaising with relevant teacher training facilities to develop and maintain a teacher work force with skills in adult education, cross-cultural learning, second language acquisition, and teaching non-literate, pre-literate and semi-literate learners;
- ✓ establishing specialist teacher qualifications in second language learning for both adults and children;
- ✓ professional development and debriefing for language training providers to enhance their capacity to support learners affected by refugee-related trauma.

## Target language competence as a resource for rebuilding

Target language competence is a basic requirement for achieving independence in day-to-day matters such as shopping, banking and driving a motor vehicle, as well as for negotiating systems such as health care and education. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate in the language of the receiving country have better prospects for achieving self-sufficiency. They have access to a wider range of employment opportunities and are better equipped to participate in further education and training.

Language is the vehicle through which resettled refugees come to feel 'part' of the receiving society. It enables them to engage with its broader social milieu through exposure to its media and community life; to participate in informal interactions in neighbourhoods, shopping centres and community facilities; and ultimately to form meaningful social connections with others.

Competence in the target language also has psychological benefits, helping resettled refugees to regain a sense of autonomy, dignity and self worth. Struggling to communicate, or depending on others (in particular, children) to communicate on their behalf can be a source of shame and embarrassment.

Having the ability to comprehend basic safety instructions (such as traffic warnings or labels on medicines and appliances) and to contact an emergency service in the event of a health or security crisis, provides reassurance to resettled refugees, helping them to regain a sense of security.

Facilitating language acquisition also helps to promote the human and civil rights of resettled refugees, enhancing their capacity to act as self advocates in commercial transactions and in their dealings with employers, law enforcement personnel and government agencies.

Language acquisition is particularly important for resettled refugees in parenting or guardianship roles. It can help both to avoid the negative family dynamics which may result from dependency on children (who generally acquire a new language more rapidly) and optimise parents' capacity to support children and young people in their resettlement.

While language training programs require careful planning and adequate resourcing, they are an investment that reaps





## FOSTERING INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATION: LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR ADULT RESETTLED REFUGEES

long term benefits for receiving societies. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate independently are better placed to contribute their skills and attributes and will require fewer long term resettlement supports.



**Communication is an important thing, because it is important to speak the language, otherwise you cannot talk of integration.**

Resettled refugee



### Factors affecting target language acquisition and participation in language training

Factors which affect a resettled refugee's capacity to acquire a second language include:

- their level of literacy in their own language. People who are literate in their own language learn a second language more readily. Second language acquisition depends in part on learners having grasped basic communicative and numeracy concepts in their first language;
- their fluency in languages other than their mother tongue;
- their prior familiarity with the language of the receiving country or a variation thereof;
- age, as learning another language becomes more difficult with age;
- the extent to which they are experiencing psychological responses to torture and other traumatic refugee experiences or stress associated with resettlement (e.g. anxiety about family members left behind or trauma symptoms such as flash-backs may interfere with the learning process)<sup>1</sup>.

There are a number of factors which may affect resettled refugees' participation in language training programs, including:

- their familiarity with a classroom environment. Some resettled refugees will not have participated in formal education for some time and some may never have done so;
- family responsibilities and the availability of appropriate child care options. Refugee families may have limited access to informal child care through the family yet may be unaware of, uncomfortable with or unable to afford formal child care services;
- other resettlement demands. Some resettled refugees may find it difficult to give priority to language learning over other tasks of resettlement;
- economic factors. Resettled refugees may wish or need to give priority to employment over language learning;
- gender. In many cultures it is unacceptable for women to participate in a mixed-gender setting. In cultures where the role of women is seen to be primarily in the home, language learning may not be seen as a priority for refugee women. It is important for resettlement countries to address this since, as indicated in Chapter 3.2, the integration of refugee

women is vital both for the women themselves and their families and communities;  
—their physical and mental health status.

Factors in the receiving society affecting language acquisition and training include:

- whether formal language training programs are offered and their accessibility. This will depend in part on the size and composition of the resettlement program and the geographic distribution of new refugee arrivals;
- the availability of an appropriately qualified and experienced work force to support language training, including teaching professionals, interpreters, bilingual support staff and teachers with expertise in target language training, adult education and teaching pre-literate, non-literate and semi-literate learners;
- the extent to which existing educational facilities are orientated to meet adults with special educational needs. The education systems of many countries of resettlement are highly developed, well established and oriented to meet the needs of nationals with a continuous educational history;
- whether income support payments are made available to resettled refugees while they participate in language training programs. This is usually influenced by the expectations of the resettlement country in relation to economic self-sufficiency (see Chapter 1.4);
- the availability of supports to enable resettled refugees to participate in language training (e.g. child care, transport);
- opportunities to practise the target language;
- the relative need to speak the target language in order to ‘survive’ (e.g. employment opportunities for individuals with limited target language proficiency, access to bilingual family support);
- languages spoken. In some countries a number of local dialects may be spoken in addition to the official language. It may be of equal, if not greater, importance for resettled refugees to learn these languages if they are to manage and participate in the receiving society.

### Issues to consider in planning target language programs

Should resettled refugees be offered formal language training programs on arrival?

While most countries make some provision for post arrival language training, there are variations in the duration of



**If he started learning the language he would lose his job. The working plan changed all the time so he couldn't follow a regular class.**

Resettled refugee



LANGUAGE  
TRAINING




**INTEGRATION  
IN PRACTICE**
**Learning a local  
language in Benin**

WHILE resettled refugees in Benin are offered classes in French, the country's official language, a local dialect, Fon, is spoken in the community in which many settle. Recognising that it would be important for resettled refugees, in particular, those starting small businesses, to communicate in the local language, classes were also offered in Fon.



language training programs and their position in the integration process.

Three approaches can be distinguished. In some countries, such as the USA, language training is offered via a basic and time limited program, conducted as part of the refugee reception process. The focus is on imparting the language skills needed to accomplish basic tasks such as banking and using public transportation. Opportunities for ongoing language training are available. However, the emphasis is on resettled refugees accessing these programs concurrently with paid employment, either through training provided in the workplace or outside of working hours through community based programs.

This approach is promoted in the belief that resettled refugees will learn the language more quickly through their day-to-day interactions in the receiving society, and in particular through employment. In some countries, it is thought that overall integration goals are better served through early economic self-sufficiency (see Chapter 1.4), a process that would be delayed by extended participation in a dedicated language training program.

A second approach is that adopted in Canada and Australia where extended specialist language training programs are a core component of the integration program. They are funded by central governments and are provided free-of-charge, with resettled refugees being offered income support to meet basic living costs to enable their participation. Newcomers have a right to these programs, but are not obliged to participate in them.



**Sometimes I learn a bit of Swedish from my eldest daughter, but it's difficult as she has already forgotten her Kurdish.**

Resettled refugee





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Integrating language training and employment through individual introduction plans in Sweden**

IN THE course of	into account the resettled	experience. This
developing their individual	refugee's language training	approach is taken on the
introduction plans	needs, qualifications, past	understanding that
(see p. 83) resettled	employment and	employment provides
refugees settling in the	educational history and	resettled refugees with
Swedish municipality of	their goals for the future.	natural opportunities to
Lulea meet with their	While tailored to the needs	practise and consolidate
refugee case officer and	of the individual, it	their Swedish language
guidance officers from the	commonly includes a	skills while at the same
municipal adult education	combination of formal	time gaining the
program and the	class-based language	psychological and practical
employment office. The	training and relevant	benefits of participating
plan is developed taking	part-time employment	in employment.

In these countries it is thought that given a grounding in the target language, resettled refugees will have better prospects for achieving self-sufficiency in the long term, accomplish other integration tasks more independently, and participate on a more equal footing in the receiving society. It is also recognised that the process of acquiring a new language as an adult is a difficult one which is further complicated for refugees by the stress of their experiences. Income support is provided in the belief that resettled refugees will acquire the target language more readily if they do not simultaneously face the additional demands of searching for and participating in paid employment.

A third approach is that adopted in a number of the Nordic countries. As is the case in Australia and Canada, resettled refugees are offered language instruction free-of-charge and have access to social support payments to enable their participation. However, in these countries planning for language training is individualised and more formally linked with vocational counselling, further education and employment placement through individualised 'introduction' plans (see Chapter 2.3). This may involve a program of part-time language training alongside part-time employment. Participation is generally obligatory and in some countries, resettled refugees may have their income support payments reduced if they do not participate.

It is important that the circumstances and priorities of individual resettled refugees are respected in relation to





## FOSTERING INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATION: LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR ADULT RESETTLED REFUGEES



language training. Some may need time to cope with trauma and stress before they can make meaningful use of language training opportunities.

Language training will be a vital first step in the resettlement pathway of many resettled refugees. Others will see their integration goals as being better served through early employment. Even in those countries offering relatively generous conditions for participation, the reality is that income support payments typically cover basic living costs only. While in most cases this is to ensure parity with income support paid to nationals outside of the labour market (see Chapter 2.4), they may be prohibitively low for resettled refugees who face additional costs involved in building a life in a new country. Some may also be supporting relatives overseas. Resettled refugees in these circumstances may have no choice but to give priority to employment over language training. Nevertheless, experience in those countries offering specialist language programs suggest that the majority of refugees elect to participate.

Resettlement countries can support resettled refugees to balance language learning with other resettlement objectives by providing flexible language learning options (see below). Some countries also allow a generous 'window period' between the resettled refugee's arrival and the time they are expected to have enrolled in or completed a language training program.

### Language acquisition as a process not a program

Language acquisition is an ongoing process. Even where relatively generous provision is made for post arrival language training, many resettled refugees will only achieve partial language proficiency<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, it is important that there are ongoing opportunities for resettled refugees to participate in language learning. Adequate provision will also need to be made for interpreting and translating services, particularly for communicating about matters requiring a high level of technical language proficiency, such as health care or legal concerns (see Chapter 2.5).

### Language training as a resource for resettlement

Language training programs delivered in an integration context are distinguished from those which may be offered to nationals in a traditional educational environment, in that one of their primary goals is to support refugees to resettle in their new country.

In most countries post arrival language training programs emphasise language learning for social and communicative competence, rather than for achieving technical proficiency. Typically programs combine language training with learning about practical resettlement tasks and the laws, customs and practices of the receiving society. In some countries, language training programs are also used as a forum for linking new arrivals with other resettlement services, either by inviting support services to deliver information sessions in class time or conducting excursions (or field trips) to key services and institutions. These are usually conducted in resettled refugees' mother-tongue.



This approach has been adopted recognising that target language training is more likely to be effective if it is based on adult learning principles (see box, p. 130) and is meaningful to the everyday lives and needs of adult learners in their roles as shoppers, parents, citizens and so on<sup>3</sup>. It also offers obvious efficiencies for resettlement countries, enabling other integration goals to be served in the context of language training.

Some countries also link language training with vocational education, training and employment placement.

### Language training and cultural adaptation

Language training programs enable resettled refugees to acquire the target language and learn about the receiving society. However, there should also be opportunities for bilingual instruction and the history, literature and cultural experiences of resettled refugees should be reflected in the curricula and classroom environment.

The merits of rebuilding and maintaining cultural connection and exchange have been discussed elsewhere in this Handbook (see Chapter 1.3). Similar considerations apply in the use of resettled refugees' first languages. The process of learning a second language is more likely to be effective if individuals have ongoing opportunities to use their mother tongue<sup>4</sup>. Further, as indicated above, there are some concepts that need to be learned in a first language before they can be grasped in a second.

### Funding and planning of language training programs

In most resettlement countries responsibility for funding, planning, coordinating and monitoring language training





## Developing language training on the basis of adult learning principles

ADULT education is more likely to be effective if:

- learners are involved in planning and implementing learning activities;
- it draws upon learners' experiences as a resource. These provide a foundation for learning new things and enhance readiness for learning;
- it cultivates self direction in learners as an important characteristic of adulthood. This may need to be encouraged as many participants may be more familiar with teacher directed learning environments;
- it is delivered in a climate which encourages and supports learning, which is characterised by trust and mutual respect, and in which conflict is effectively managed;
- a spirit of collaboration is fostered in the learning setting, in recognition of the fact that both teachers and learners have something to contribute;
- it uses small groups to promote team work and encourage co-operation and collaboration;
- it is based on an understanding of learners' experiences and communities (e.g. taking into account such factors as gender, refugee experience);
- it involves adult learners in identifying and establishing their own evaluation techniques.

Adapted from S Imel, *Using Adult Learning Principles in Adult Basic and Literacy Education* from the website of the Adult, Career and Vocational Educational Clearinghouse, 1998.

programs lies with national governments. However, in recognition of the importance of implementing integration at a more localised level, programs are generally delivered by community based providers such as educational institutions, community based ethno-cultural agencies, non-government organisations and municipal governments.

For example, Canada's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC) is funded by the federal government which also assumes responsibility for setting broad curriculum goals and guidelines and monitoring. However, programs are delivered by some 80 providers across Canada.

### Initiatives for facilitating target language acquisition

Flexible delivery options

A flexible range of delivery options is important (see box), as:—some options may be more suited to those with special learning needs (for example, home tutoring may be more accessible to women with child care responsibilities, trauma

## The importance of flexibility: Delivery options for language training programs

THERE ARE a range of models for delivering language training, including:

- specialist group based programs;
- work based programs;
- home based tutor schemes (delivered by paid teachers or trained volunteers);

- ‘distance’ education programs ;
- on-line learning. For example, refugees resettling in Canada can access instruction under that country’s LINC program on-line;
- instruction within and outside of conventional working hours as well as

on a full and part-time basis.

While language training programs should be delivered by personnel with appropriate training, informal language learning objectives can be built into the roles of sponsors, be-frienders and volunteer support providers.



## Building language training capacity in emerging resettlement countries

LANGUAGE training programs take some time to build and are a cost consideration. It may not be possible for developing countries to offer a comprehensive program, particularly in the founding years. However, consider:

- establishing a task force or working group of specialists (such as adult education experts and language teachers) who can assist in identifying appropriate language programs, placement options and other strategies for language training;
- developing a long term

plan for building language training capacity (three to five years and beyond), aimed at linking early language training with other existing formal or specialised courses;

- liaising with existing educational institutions to offer advanced language training;
- placing resettled refugees in sites with other linguistically diverse communities (e.g. immigrant or asylum seeker populations) where there may be established training programs or where there are greater possibilities to benefit

from economies of scale;

- tutor programs (offered by paid or trained volunteer teachers), an option where numbers do not warrant a more formal program;
- identifying and developing specific integration communities for resettlement (see Chapter 2.1). If resettled refugees are dispersed it will be logistically difficult and more costly to deliver language training programs;
- incorporating informal language training into the roles of volunteer support providers.





## FOSTERING INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATION: LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR ADULT RESETTLED REFUGEES

- and torture survivors or those with disabilities);
- more formalised learning options will be required for those wishing to participate in advanced language training and further education and training;
- language acquisition is an ongoing process. By accessing flexible learning options such as on-line instruction and home tutor schemes, resettled refugees can hone the language skills learned in a class program;
- in those countries where resettled refugees are placed outside of large urban centres it may be difficult to offer all new arrivals a group based program;
- flexibility allows integration planners and providers to explore opportunities for learning in a range of social contexts such as the workplace, school communities and in social support relationships;
- resettled refugees who are holding down jobs may have a limited capacity to attend classes.

### Individualised pre-course needs analysis

Analysis of the language training needs of resettled refugees is conducted in a number of countries prior to their entry into a language training program. Some countries have developed standard assessment instruments for this process. Needs analysis helps to:

- assess refugees' mother-tongue literacy and their knowledge in the target language so that they can be placed in a course at an appropriate level. This is important to avoid the attrition which may result from learners being required to learn at too fast a pace or being under-challenged;
- enable language training providers to establish with resettled refugees their language learning goals, i.e. whether they are learning primarily to manage day-to-day life in the receiving society or for the purposes of further training and study. In some countries, pre-course needs analysis is specifically linked with vocational orientation and counselling to support resettled refugees to plan appropriate learning and training pathways;
- identify participants with special language learning needs (e.g. pre-literate learners, trauma and torture survivors, refugees with disabilities).

### Quality assurance

Since language training programs are typically provided by a range of community based providers, it is important that strategies are developed to ensure an appropriate standard of

## Providing language training in the workplace

LANGUAGE training providers in the USA and other established resettlement countries have placed some emphasis on developing work based language training programs. These are offered either in work time or immediately prior to or following working hours, thus eliminating travel time and transportation problems.

In some cases work based language training is provided as a discrete program. In others, language instruction may be tailored to enable resettled refugees to perform their job roles more effectively.

As indicated in Chapter 2.9, work based language instruction can also be offered to prospective employers where limited language proficiency might otherwise serve as a barrier

to employing resettled refugees.

Employers may be prepared to support work based language training, either by allowing resettled refugees to withdraw from work to participate or by contributing to the costs of the program. One of the disadvantages of 'withdrawal' programs, however, is that the time available for instruction may be limited.

Work based language training, particularly where it is tailored to the requirements of particular job roles, can be highly effective, enabling refugees to acquire language skills that have immediate application and meaning for them and which they have ongoing opportunities to practise in their job roles. Through improved language

competence resettled refugees may also have better prospects for advancement within their workplace.

At the same time, however, programs that are workplace driven may not necessarily enhance resettled refugees' communicative competence in other settings, suggesting the importance of participants having access to other language training opportunities.

Work based programs have been particularly important in the USA where resettled refugees are required to access language training concurrently with paid employment. However, in other countries they can be used to provide ongoing opportunities for language acquisition, thereby complementing dedicated post arrival programs.

program delivery and that the objectives of language training programs are broadly consistent both with one another and with national integration goals. Specific initiatives in established resettlement countries include:

- language benchmarking (or scales of communicative proficiency). As well as providing a basis for conducting pre-course needs assessment, benchmarks can be useful tools for setting standards for language training programs, for teacher training and for promoting clear communication among language training personnel and between them and funding bodies, employer organisations, assessors and licensing bodies. Canada, Australia and Ireland have national benchmarks for language training programs;
- national curricula. For example in Canada and Australia, providers of language programs have developed a national



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## FOSTERING INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATION: LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR ADULT RESETTLED REFUGEES

- curriculum. Recognising the need for flexibility, the curriculum is not highly prescriptive, but outlines broad content areas, objectives and competencies;
- technical assistance bodies and resources. For example, in the USA the Office of Refugee Resettlement funds the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. The Institute supports community based language training programs through the provision of professional development programs, curriculum development and advice on program design. In Canada, teachers have access to a national website which provides specific curriculum guidelines, lessons plans and further resources;
  - quality assurance systems. For example, in the USA the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning (as above) has developed the *English Language Training Program Self Review*. Designed as a tool for self improvement, the self review identifies quality indicators in a range of key areas, such as curriculum and professional development, against which providers assess their programs.

### Language training for resettled refugees with additional or more intensive needs

Resettled refugees who have no or limited mother-tongue literacy, who originate from pre-literate societies (sometimes known as societies with oral traditions) or who have refugee-related trauma may have additional language training needs.

Resettlement countries have sought to support the participation of these groups in language training and to enhance learning outcomes by:

- integrating psychological and resettlement support with language training. In some countries partnerships have been formed between language training program and settlement support providers so that resettlement issues can be addressed alongside language training (see box, p. 138);
- delivering language training in contexts which may be more acceptable to resettled refugees than a traditional classroom environment (e.g. as part of recreational or social activities);
- ensuring that a flexible range of language training options is available;
- providing practical assistance to access language training (e.g. child care, transportation);
- providing specialist professional development or qualifications for teaching professionals who are teaching learners with special literacy needs, since this task requires different skills and approaches;



- offering special needs learners a longer and/or more intensive period of language instruction (see box, p. 138);
- developing opportunities for bilingual instruction. These will be particularly important for special needs learners, as many concepts cannot be taught in a second language until they are grasped in the first;
- engaging ethno-cultural communities in planning language programs;
- contracting ethno-cultural groups and services as language training providers.

Targeted approaches may also be required to ensure the participation of refugee women and elders. These are discussed in Chapters 3.2 and 3.4 respectively.

### Supports to participate in language training programs

In a number of countries, formal funding provision is made by national governments to meet the cost of child care to enable resettled refugees with family responsibilities to participate in language training. Where formal funding is not available for this purpose, volunteer programs may provide an important source of child care.

### Curriculum resources

Curriculum resources have been developed to facilitate language acquisition and to provide a vehicle for learning about the receiving society and other resettlement services. Curriculum resources enable practice to be documented and made available to a wider range of language training providers and, by reducing class preparation time, enable more efficient use of teacher time.

### Work force development and support

Teaching professionals working in an integration context require additional skills in the areas of second language acquisition, adult learning approaches and cross-cultural education, as well as in teaching adults with special educational needs (e.g. those with limited mother-tongue literacy, trauma and torture survivors.).

In countries with well established refugee and immigrant programs, specialist qualifications have been established for target language teachers working in adult settings (either as a speciality within a teaching qualification or as a post graduate course of study). While this may not be viable in emerging countries or those with small refugee intakes, other arrangements for providing professional development to





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Hastening learning through first language instruction

<p>EIGHTY per cent of adult refugees arriving in New Zealand since 1995 have never completed a primary school education. A study completed by Jeannie Martin Blaker from the West Auckland ESOL Home Tutor Service found that after five years none of the refugees and migrants would meet the accepted definition of a literate person. An Australian study completed in 1992 found that low level literacy learners need around 18-24 months of full-time tuition to reach a basic level of competency in English.</p> <p>In New Zealand resettled refugees commonly receive about three hours of language tuition per week through the home tutor scheme. A small number may secure a place in a government sponsored course. Access to more comprehensive language training, however, is more commonly on a fee-for-service basis. Fees for courses are usually beyond an affordable level for resettled refugees.</p> <p>In response to these studies and the recognition of the need for refugees to</p>	<p>be able to integrate more speedily into New Zealand society, a new model was developed and piloted by the national ESOL Home Tutor Service. The program was developed in the belief that resettled refugees, in particular, those with low literacy levels in their first language, would learn more rapidly if their tutor were bilingual and they were offered more extensive language training.</p> <p>A proposal was submitted for employment training of skilled refugees as tutors, and bilingual African refugees were identified who could teach literacy to other people speaking their language. WINZ (the government employment agency) funded a training course for 10 bilingual tutors. Potential tutors needed to have a good standard of English and have at least a secondary education. Identifying and recruiting women from the target communities who met this criteria proved challenging. The course started with two Somali women and eight males – five of whom had a teaching background prior</p>	<p>to arrival in New Zealand. With tuition hours secured from the government's Adult Literacy Strategy, the trained bilingual tutors offered classes for learners with low levels of literacy, for between two and 12 hours duration, for Amharic, Somali and Oromo speaking resettled refugees. In total, 118 learners attended the classes.</p> <p>Student evaluation of the new tutors was very positive, the most consistent comment being that the tutors could explain concepts to them in their own language.</p> <p>A concurrent research study on developing measures of literacy gain was undertaken by a collaborative research team from a local polytechnic and university, which examined the bilingual tutors' classes and other literacy classes for refugee learners taught by native English speaking tutors. The research project was completed in March 2002. Due to the success of the program there are plans to replicate the model in other major resettlement centres.</p>
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## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Learning about health through language training**

IN THE Australian state of Victoria, the Adult Multicultural Education Service formed a partnership with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture to produce a curriculum workbook aimed at enhancing resettled refugees' understanding of and access to health care in Australia.	communities, it focuses on the issues of direct concern to resettled refugees. Recognising the importance of dual language instruction, the workbook is accompanied by booklets in eight community languages. Titled <i>Making a Healthy Start in Australia</i> , these enable new arrivals to learn more complex conceptual information in their own language while at the same time learning the language of accessing health services through related exercises in the workbook.	own understanding of health and health care based on their experiences in their countries-of-origin. This is used as the point of departure for exploring differences in the Australian health care system. This approach recognises the importance of acknowledging, affirming and drawing on the culture and past experiences of resettled refugees. Providing background information for teachers, the workbook also serves as a vehicle for enhancing awareness and understanding of the refugee experience among teaching professionals.
The workbook, <i>HealthWays</i> , contains a range of individual and group language learning exercises and can be used in a classroom context or for self guided learning. Since it was based on extensive consultation with refugee	Each exercise in the workbook begins by exploring resettled refugees'	

LANGUAGE  
TRAINING

**Consider providing the following information to assist teaching professionals and volunteers to provide effective language training to resettled refugees:**

- background on the countries from which refugees come;
- the likely level and nature of educational experience of relevant communities;
- the languages spoken by refugee groups;
- the impact of the refugee experience, in particular torture and trauma, on the learning process;
- the personal impact on teachers of working with traumatised students and ways in which they can help to prevent and deal with this;
- social and resettlement supports available to resettled refugees in the receiving country;
- how to refer students requiring further support;
- specific curriculum and other resources available to teachers;
- cross-cultural training.



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### More than language training in Australia

MIGRANTS and refugees settling in Australia are entitled to 510 hours of English language instruction through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The program is offered to support the successful settlement of migrants and refugees and their equal participation in all aspects of Australian society. Accordingly, it is not restricted to those requiring language skills for work and study purposes. While the program is voluntary, over 90% of new arrivals participate <sup>5</sup> .	are eligible for income support while attending classes. The AMEP is funded by the Australian government and is delivered on a contractual basis by various providers in each state and territory. In the Australian state of Victoria, the AMEP is provided by Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) and its partners. AMES offers a range of study options including full or part-time courses in either a formal classroom environment or community based setting. A home based tutor program (provided by trained volunteers) and distance learning options are available to those clients who are unable to attend formal classes because of class location, timing or personal, cultural or work related reasons. The distance learning course comprises texts, audio and video tapes,	backed by regular telephone contact with a qualified tutor. Clients can also choose a self paced learning option, again supervised by a teacher. Before commencing their AMEP, clients undergo an assessment of their language skills and are placed in a class appropriate to their learning level. Refugee and humanitarian program entrants who have limited literacy in their own language, who are struggling with settlement challenges, or who have severe refugee-related trauma are invited to participate in the Special Preparatory Program (SPP). This program provides an additional 100 hours of free language instruction designed to prepare clients for entry into the mainstream AMEP. Through a partnership with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, teachers are also offered special training to support
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teaching professionals might be considered (for example, through a technical support agency or a teacher training institution).

A learning environment offers unique opportunities for adult participants to build relationships with one another and with teaching personnel and volunteers. Disclosures of both past traumatic experiences or current difficulties are not uncommon in these contexts. Both volunteer and professional teachers require support to respond sensitively to participants and to deal with the personal consequences of working with a client group affected by trauma (see Chapter 3.1).

survivors of trauma.

AMES programs are delivered by qualified teachers with additional specialist qualifications in teaching English as a second language in an adult education setting. Classes are taught to a set of competencies outlined in the national Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE). Students achieving the competencies in the CSWE are awarded a certificate. Program quality is maintained through regular monitoring of CSWE benchmarks by an experienced AMES teacher.

AMES, however, offers more than a program for language acquisition. Clients participating in the AMEP are introduced to a range of settlement services via information and visits as well as being taught the language required to access these services.

In the SPP program particular emphasis is placed on supporting clients to recover from the negative effects of their refugee experiences. The SPP builds in extra supports such as bilingual information and instruction and home tutoring. It is offered in close consultation with other settlement services so that participants can secure assistance with emotional or resettlement issues.

Language learning is tailored to the needs of individual resettled refugees and is focussed on addressing issues in the resettlement process.

The SPP is complemented by other innovative programs developed to support resettled refugees with additional learning and employment needs (see p. 288).

AMES ensures that there are sound links between its

AMEP program and further education, vocational training and employment. As their English language skills improve, clients who wish to pursue these options are assigned a counsellor who assists them to plan their particular pathway. Students are taught English for job search and occupational purposes and are offered placements in Australian industry to gain work experience.

AMES seeks to affirm and respect the linguistic and cultural heritage of its clientele through a range of strategies including cross-cultural teaching approaches, bilingual instruction and support, catering for particular cultural needs (e.g. the provision of prayer rooms), providing cultural diversity training for teachers and offering opportunities for students to share their cultural experiences.

Arrangements for delivering professional development and teacher debriefing can be made through either a technical assistance agency or through a partnership with a refugee support service.

To enhance opportunities for bilingual instruction, consideration also needs to be given to building a work force of bilingual teachers or teacher aides.





## TARGET LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND TRAINING

### OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- incorporate target language training as an integral component of a refugee resettlement program;
- ensure that language training programs receive adequate, stable and ongoing funding;
- establish mechanisms for the central coordination, planning and monitoring of language programs;
- develop national standards for language training programs;
- have strategies in place to build work force capacity for the delivery of language programs;
- offer a range of options in program type and instructional format recognising the diversity in capacities, competencies and aspirations among resettled refugees;
- provide income and other supports to enable participation in language training;
- ensure linkages between language training and other integration processes, in particular, orientation, social support, vocational counselling, further education and training and employment placement;
- promote language training as a socially and economically valuable but voluntary activity;
- ensure that resettled refugees have continued access to interpreters until they have acquired communicative competence (and thereafter in matters requiring more technical language proficiency).

### LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS WOULD:

- operate on adult learning principles;
- respect and value the learner's first language and culture by promoting opportunities for multi/dual language use and incorporating the history, literature and cultural experiences of refugees into curricula and in the classroom;
- ensure that second language learners have equitable access to facilities and resources;
- have individualised assessment procedures to ensure that training opportunities are tailored to the competencies and aspirations of resettled refugees, including those with additional language training needs;
- reflect the social context of the language taught and the importance of experiential learning;
- provide or facilitate access to culturally appropriate childcare;
- be provided by staff with appropriate technical teacher training in second language acquisition and adult learning as well as professional development in identifying and responding to the additional needs of refugees in a learning context;
- take care to counter any signs of racism and discrimination in the learning environment.



## CHAPTER 2.7


# Making Sense of a New Country:


## Orientation Programs and Processes



## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind



## Chapter 2.7

# Making Sense of a New Country: Orientation Programs and Processes

The focus of this Chapter is on strategies for orienting new arrivals to the culture, systems and resources of the receiving community.

Since orientation may be offered in the context of various other social support or language training programs, this chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapters 2.3 and 2.6. More detail on orientation to specific issues, such as health care and employment, is dealt with in relevant individual Chapters.

Orientation, like integration, is a ‘two-way’ street. It is equally as important for receiving communities to understand the culture and backgrounds of resettled refugees as it is for newcomers to understand the cultural norms and mores of the receiving community. Strategies for enhancing receiving communities’ understanding of the backgrounds of resettled refugees are discussed throughout this Handbook, and are the focus of Chapter 2.II.





## CHECKLIST

### Planning orientation programs and processes

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ offering orientation in the context of early case-management and social support;
- ✓ preparing a brief written statement on the country and its resettlement program;
- ✓ offering pre-arrival information sessions to those offered resettlement;
- ✓ incorporating 'hands-on' orientation into reception support;
- ✓ recruiting and training local volunteers to assist with orientation;
- ✓ obtaining translated information materials from other resettlement countries;
- ✓ preparing a list of key support services with contact details;
- ✓ obtaining cultural and country-specific information on refugee populations from other resettlement countries for orientation providers.

In the longer term, aim for:

#### FOR ORIENTATION PROVIDERS

- ✓ course outlines, resources, information and manuals to guide orientation providers and enhance the capacity of personnel in other systems to provide orientation;
- ✓ training courses;
- ✓ technical support (e.g. websites, help-desk facilities);
- ✓ teaching resources (e.g. audio tapes, videos, games);
- ✓ curricula and resources to promote orientation through language training programs.

#### FOR RESETTLED REFUGEES

- ✓ providing information in refugee languages in written, audio or video formats;
- ✓ websites providing orientation information;
- ✓ formal pre- and post arrival orientation programs;
- ✓ engaging volunteer and professional social support providers in orientation delivery;
- ✓ making use of other settings to provide orientation to specific services and programs (e.g. health care providers, schools);
- ✓ tailored orientation programs for groups with special needs (e.g. refugee youth, single parents, women-at-risk) or focussing on particular integration issues (e.g. domestic violence, intergenerational conflict).

#### GENERAL

- ✓ systems for monitoring and evaluating orientation programs;
- ✓ regular updating of information provided to resettled refugees by maintaining links with service and program providers.

## Orientation as a resource for rebuilding

Many resettled refugees come from countries with very different religious, cultural and political values than those in the resettlement country. A large number are from developing countries but are settling in industrialised and urbanised societies.

Upon arrival resettled refugees will need to learn a range of new tasks (such as using public transportation and automated banking) and to secure resources such as health care, employment and income support. Refugees are often required to accomplish these tasks at a time when they are facing the stresses of adjusting to their new country and in some cases, dealing with prior trauma.

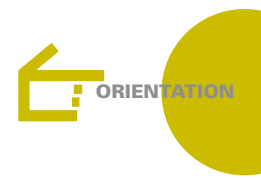
Effective orientation can assist resettled refugees to:

- develop a realistic picture of the receiving society and understand its values and culture. Many resettled refugees have high expectations, particularly regarding housing and employment opportunities;
- develop an understanding of the receiving society's expectations of them;
- identify their individual resettlement needs and priorities in order to make informed choices;
- access the resources needed for successful resettlement;
- develop problem solving skills;
- achieve independence (this is particularly important for refugees who have lived for long periods in refugee camps. A sound orientation program can help break the cycle of 'learned helplessness' that can result from this dependency);
- restore control and reduce anxiety;
- learn about common problems they may encounter in the resettlement process, since being able to anticipate these and to understand them as 'normal' can help to reduce their negative impact;
- form positive first impressions of the receiving society.

Orientation programs help to prevent misunderstandings and conflict, thereby promoting social harmony. Resettled refugees who understand the receiving society are also less likely to become marginalised and will be better placed to contribute their skills and attributes. If it is a 'two-way' process, orientation can help to enrich receiving societies by providing them with opportunities to learn about the culture and experiences of resettled refugees. The early independence fostered by a sound orientation program reduces the costs which would otherwise be involved in providing ongoing support.



**Resettlement is like trying to walk again only you are a lot heavier.**  
Resettled refugee





## **Factors affecting orientation and the development of orientation programs**

While refugees have very diverse backgrounds, factors which may influence the way in which orientation is provided include:

- the extent to which social and economic conditions differ between the refugee's country-of-origin and the receiving country. Generally speaking, more intense orientation will be required for refugees from rural and pastoral communities settling in urbanised and industrialised communities;
- the refugees' literacy levels and educational backgrounds;
- whether the refugees have prior experience in the paid labour force;
- cultural learning styles. For example, in some cultures, formal instruction is valued. Others may learn better with interactive approaches;
- refugees' existing knowledge of the resettlement country's language, culture and customs;
- gender and age;
- the level of family and community support available to resettled refugees;
- the presence of pre-migration trauma. Learning may be impeded in refugees suffering severe psychological symptoms such as impaired concentration or flashbacks.

Also influential are factors in receiving countries, including:

- the existing infrastructure for refugee selection, reception and integration (including the opportunities for providing information in countries of departure);
- the receiving country's resettlement objectives. For example, if the country has a high expectation of economic self-sufficiency, this will influence both the way in which orientation is delivered and the emphasis placed on finding employment;
- prior contact with, and understanding of, the culture and background of resettled refugees among orientation providers and in the wider community.

## **Issues to consider in planning orientation programs**

Methodology and approach

Information and skills imparted in the orientation process are more likely to be retained by resettled refugees if orientation:

- is delivered in the language of the resettled refugee. Ideally this should be someone sharing the language of the refugee

**TAKE  
CARE****Orientation and refugee women**

ORIENTATION will be particularly important for refugee women, who play a pivotal role in the integration of families and who face a host of particular issues in the integration process. More detailed strategies for engaging refugee women in orientation are discussed in Chapter 3.2.

- group. Where this is not possible interpreters will need to be used;
- is provided in a safe, risk-free and stress-free learning environment;
  - is based on adult learning principles. (These are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.6);
  - is competency based, that is, focussed on fostering participants' skills in addressing day-to-day needs and challenges;
  - emphasises learning through showing or doing;
  - adopts other interactive learning techniques such as discussions, group work and role plays;
  - involves a range of communication media, to provide varied learning experiences and to accommodate those without mother-tongue or target language literacy;
  - is confined to issues relevant to resettled refugees' stage of resettlement.



Wherever possible, the use of signs and symbols should be avoided. While these may have meaning in a western context, they may be incompatible with the frame of reference of some resettled refugees.

While one of the primary purposes of orientation is to assist resettled refugees to understand the culture and systems of the receiving society, programs should also reflect an understanding and respect of the culture and past experiences of resettled refugees. As well as assisting orientation providers to tailor programs to the needs of specific refugee groups, experience suggests that resettled refugees will be more receptive to learning about their new society in an environment in which they feel their own culture is respected and understood. Resettled refugees may have not previously analysed their own cultures and values in a systematic way. Awareness of one's own culture often comes about through exposure to a new culture.

Mutual understanding and respect can be promoted by:

- using resettled refugees' country-of-origin experience as a





## Why are interactive learning approaches important?

HOW INFORMATION is imparted in an orientation program is equally as important as the content. Emphasis should be placed on interactive learning methodologies (such as group discussions and role plays) and providing a range of learning experiences (such as videos, audio tapes).

Prominent psychologist William Glasser noted that we learn:

- 5% of what we hear
- 10% of what we see
- 20% of what we see and hear
- 50% of what we discuss with others
- 75% of what we experience
- 95% of what we teach others.

Adapted from WMD Glasser, *Control Theory in the Classroom*, Harper and Row, New York, 1986

### INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

#### Hands-on orientation in Sweden

IN UMEA, Sweden, municipal resettlement workers orient new refugee arrivals to the local community through field trips to the key facilities they will need to use, including the post office, medical centre and social insurance centre. This method has proven particularly effective for resettled refugees with limited literacy in their own language.

starting point for learning about the receiving society. For example, an Australian program designed to orient refugee parents to the education system begins by exploring with parents how education was organised in their countries-of-origin;

- consulting with refugee communities when designing orientation programs;
- deploying members of refugee communities to deliver orientation programs (see box, p. 147);
- ensuring that orientation providers have relevant background information about the culture and experiences of resettled refugees. A list of sources is included on page xi.

When should orientation be delivered?

All existing resettlement countries offer some form of face-to-face orientation to basic systems and resources (such as income support, banking and school enrolment) as part of the initial reception process. However, orientation should be understood as an ongoing process which occurs both formally and informally and which:

- commences in the country of departure or in the immediate post arrival period;
- extends from the reception period into the early resettlement period (often in the context of language learning and relationships with professional and volunteer support providers);
- continues through resettled refugees' ongoing contacts with systems such as health, education, social services and employment placement services.

## Former refugees in orientation roles

A NUMBER of countries have sought to involve people from refugee and ethno-cultural communities in delivering orientation programs. In the USA, for example, former refugees who have worked in integration settings at the domestic level may be engaged to deliver pre-departure orientation.

These personnel bring a number of unique skills,

including:

- detailed knowledge of the integration environment in the receiving society;
- language skills;
- an appreciation of the resettlement process based on their own experiences;
- a capacity to mediate between the world-view of the resettled refugee and the prevailing attitudes of the country of resettlement;

- credibility with resettled refugees who share a common cultural or religious heritage.

In other countries, former refugees offer orientation through their participation in volunteer or sponsorship programs. It is vital that orientation be provided by individuals who are appropriately trained and supported.

This approach recognises that resettled refugees have different needs at different stages as well as different capacities to retain and contextualise information. In the early resettlement period, the focus is therefore generally on information required to accomplish the immediately necessary tasks of resettlement. This is a period when resettled refugees have numerous demands on their time and attention and a limited capacity to absorb material which is peripheral to their immediate needs.

Orientation to some aspects of the receiving society may be more meaningful to resettled refugees later when they have a frame of reference and an experiential base to draw on. For example, resettled refugees may be better able to make sense of information about teaching approaches in the receiving society once they have some first-hand experience of the education system and a link with a particular school setting.

If orientation is provided at the onset and continues in resettled refugee's interactions with social support providers, language training programs and other systems, there are also greater opportunities for 'learning by doing'.

From which settings should orientation be delivered?

In many countries, orientation commences with a formal group program offered prior to or soon after arrival. This is usually followed by 'hands-on' orientation to basic systems such as accessing social services, school enrolment and



**I have learned more about my own culture over the past five days through learning about yours. It is only through understanding my own culture that I can learn to accept the positive aspects of the new culture I am about to join.**

Resettled refugee





## ▶ What about pre-departure orientation?

CANADA, Sweden, the USA and more recently, Australia, have offered pre-departure orientation to refugees whom they have accepted for resettlement. These programs may be provided by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on behalf of resettlement governments. Some of these programs focus on travel and reception arrangements. Others use this opportunity to begin orientation to the receiving society.

Experience suggests that these programs are useful in assisting resettled refugees to develop a very clear picture of conditions in the receiving community and of the expectations placed on them.

By enabling refugees to ask questions or clarify any misunderstandings, pre-departure orientation programs can help to reduce anxiety in the first weeks in a new country.

Some countries have also used pre-departure orientation as an opportunity for resettled refugees to acquire information and skills to prevent, or deal more constructively with, difficulties in the

resettlement country.

In those countries where placement sites are known prior to departure, information will help refugees know what to expect. Where refugees are able to choose their placement site, pre-departure information will help them to participate in decision-making.

The extent to which resettled refugees are able to learn and retain information prior to departure is unclear. Unlike the early resettlement period, other resettlement and adjustment tasks do not compete for the time and attention of refugees waiting to travel. However, the experience of the Swedish pre-departure programs suggests that it may be quite difficult for people to integrate information about a vastly different country without having first experienced it<sup>1</sup>.

### **The importance of pre-departure information for emerging resettlement countries**

Pre-arrival orientation is particularly important in the case of emerging

banking services conducted as part of the reception process. In some countries this is offered routinely to all new arrivals and is relatively standardised (see Chapter 2.3). In others, the level of support provided is tailored to the needs of the individual or family.

Group approaches to orientation are an efficient way of dealing with large refugee intakes, where the volume of new entrants may make it difficult to offer a more individualised approach.

Arrangements for orientation following the immediate reception period vary. While some may be offered by the resettlement or sponsoring agencies, others may be linked to language training programs and/or professional or voluntary social support programs.

Recognising the importance of ongoing orientation, particularly to wider systems and resources (such as health



resettlement countries as little information about these countries is available to refugees. This may contribute to anxiety on the part of the refugee.

Resettled refugees may have formed their expectations of resettlement through information about traditional resettlement countries. These expectations may not necessarily be met in emerging resettlement countries, many of which have developing economies and limited infrastructure to support resettlement. The experience of emerging resettlement countries is that unmet expectations can lead to disappointment, and ultimately hamper integration.

Emerging resettlement countries may consider:

- providing pre-arrival information sessions to refugees offered resettlement;
- preparing basic written information about the receiving country;
- providing information to UNHCR field staff involved in identifying refugees for resettlement;

- developing a 'country chapter' for inclusion in the UNHCR *Resettlement Handbook*. This Handbook is distributed to UNHCR offices and is used by field staff involved in refugee resettlement.

When providing and developing information it is important to:

- strike a balance between welcoming newcomers and promoting the country's assets, while being realistic about its limitations;
- outline the country's prior involvement in refugee resettlement. The formal program may be new, but many emerging countries have a wealth of experience in settling asylum seekers;
- ensure that information is regularly updated to accommodate changes in conditions in the receiving country (both positive and negative) and developments in the resettlement program.



care and education), a number of countries have developed strategies for engaging personnel from these systems in the process of orienting new arrivals.

Providing orientation through specific settings can also help reach refugee sub-populations that may not otherwise participate in more formal programs (for example, refugee young people may be more readily reached through school settings or youth clubs).

### Ensuring consistency of information

It is important that there is consistency both in the level of information available to resettled refugees and in the information given at different stages of the resettlement process. Some countries aim to achieve this through the development of structured group programs delivered by specially trained providers.


**INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE**
**Community education for arriving refugees**

WHEN refugees arrive in New Zealand the legal rights available to them in areas of everyday life are often very different from those they have experienced in their countries-of-origin or asylum.	responsibilities of both landlords and tenants); and consumer law (including the role of the consumer and his/her legal protection in relation to fair trading and the purchase of goods). Simple, illustrated written materials have been translated into the main ethnic languages of arriving refugees. The key to the success of these programs, however, is that they are delivered informally in small groups – often in refugees’ homes. The information is presented by cross-cultural workers. These workers understand the refugees’ cultural norms, and the adaptation that will be required for successful	integration. The program assists refugees to understand their rights and responsibilities in New Zealand and to identify behaviours which are unacceptable. It makes people aware of the laws available to protect them in their daily experiences. These legal concepts are first introduced during the six week orientation program at the refugee reception centre run by New Zealand’s Immigration Service. The program described above is then used to expand upon and reinforce knowledge, once resettled refugees are settled in their own homes and community.
In New Zealand, a program of legal education has been developed by the Refugee and Migrant Service in conjunction with the Legal Services Board and other charities. This program addresses issues of family law (e.g. domestic violence, the rights of children, marriage and divorce, the role of the police); tenancy law (including the rights and		

While consistency is more difficult to achieve in those contexts in which orientation occurs less formally (e.g. in the context of language learning or social support), it can be promoted through effective training and ongoing support of orientation providers.

How intensive should orientation be?

There are variations in the duration and goals of the orientation process. For example, in the USA, resettled refugees participate in a pre-departure orientation program (usually of 5–25 hours duration) and a brief practical orientation as part of the reception process (from one to three weeks). Thereafter the emphasis is very much on ‘learning by doing’.

In contrast, in the Netherlands, resettled refugees are offered a practical orientation to basic systems such as banking and income support programs, after which they are obliged to participate in a 12-month course, funded by the government,

## The advantages of delivering orientation in the context of language training, reception and social support programs

SOME COUNTRIES use language training programs as a place for imparting information about the receiving society. Sessions can be provided on specific orientation topics in class time in resettled refugees' mother-tongue, or information can be imparted through curricula in the context of language learning exercises.

This approach has a number of advantages:

- where participation rates are high, a large number of resettled refugees can be reached;
- it enables resettled

refugees to learn about the receiving society in the course of accomplishing another resettlement task;

- instruction is usually provided in a group context allowing interactive learning approaches;
- where curriculum approaches are used, refugees are able to learn simultaneously both conceptual information and the language they will require to negotiate systems and resources in the receiving society.

There are also advantages for language learning, with

studies suggesting that adults learn a second language more readily if it is taught in a context which is relevant to their day-to-day lives (see Chapter 2.6).

Meanwhile, orientation provided in the context of a reception program or social support relationship enables refugees to learn in a 'hands-on' environment by either doing or being shown. Social support providers may also be better placed to deal with sensitive issues that are difficult to address through group orientation programs.

which incorporates cultural orientation and target language instruction. This approach is taken in the belief that resettled refugees will integrate more successfully if they have had the opportunity to learn about the culture and systems of the receiving society.

### Content of orientation programs

Table Nine (see p. 154) identifies some of the broad areas addressed in refugee orientation programs and materials. It is intended as a guide only. The information included in specific programs and materials will depend on a range of factors, including the setting in which orientation is being delivered, the stage of the selection and resettlement process, the needs of refugee participants, and conditions in and expectations of the receiving country.

Where possible, orientation programs and materials should be developed in close consultation with refugee communities in the receiving society. It is also important that close links are maintained between refugee service providers and other agencies involved in orientation as this will help to ensure that





## MAKING SENSE OF A NEW COUNTRY: ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND PROCESSES



**If refugees hear something only once, the likelihood of their remembering and applying these new concepts may be minimal at best. However, if efforts are made to spiral information and to echo concepts over and over again the chances of successful integration can be increased.**  
Resettlement worker



orientation programs are updated in response to changes in service systems and entitlements.

Key messages are likely to be ‘heard’ and retained, if they are repeated both within formal pre-departure orientation programs and later in the post arrival orientation process.

From time-to-time it may be necessary to develop special programs to meet the needs of specific refugee intakes. For example in 1999, the USA offered resettlement to some 3,500 unaccompanied refugee young people from Sudan. A special program was developed for this group recognising that they had special orientation needs as a result of their age, limited prior parenting, and lack of exposure to an industrialised society.

Special programs may also be useful to address integration issues (such as family violence, and child welfare) or to reach populations that, while facing particular integration challenges, may not be effectively reached by programs designed for the wider refugee intake. For example, a number of countries have programs for refugee youth addressing such issues as peer pressure, cultural conflict, consumerism and legal rights.

### Initiatives to support and promote orientation

#### Written materials

Some countries have developed booklets in key refugee languages conveying information about the receiving society to distribute to resettled refugees prior to, or soon after, arrival. Examples include Canada’s bilingual *Newcomer’s Introduction to Canada* and the USA’s *Welcome to the United States: A Guidebook for Refugees*. This Guidebook is available in a wide range of languages, including Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, English, Farsi, French, Russian, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Written materials provide a reliable source of information that resettled refugees can access prior to arrival in their new home, but are expensive to produce especially in a variety of language versions. They are of limited use for new arrivals without mother-tongue literacy.

## Programs and instructional guides for orientation providers

Prescribed programs have been developed in those countries in which formal pre-departure or reception orientation programs are offered.

Instructional guides to support those providing orientation in the context of a less formal social support relationship have also been developed. For example, volunteers in Canada's Host Program, established to provide orientation and support to new arrivals, are given a handbook to guide them in their roles.

Instructional guides have also been used as a vehicle for enhancing the capacity of those in the wider service network to offer orientation to new arrivals (see box).

### INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

#### Using practice wisdom to build capacity in the wider service system

RESETTLED refugees have contact with a range of service providers in the course of their resettlement, including schools, lawyers, health care providers and housing and employment services. Professionals in these areas have opportunities to inform newcomers about these systems, both by developing formal orientation programs and by taking opportunities to impart information informally in the course of their contact with them.	to prepare for this role. Recognising this, COSTI Immigrant Services in Ontario, Canada sought funds from the Canadian government to develop a resource manual, <i>Linking Paths: A Guide for Orienting Newcomers to Canada</i> . The Guide draws on the practical experience of settlement workers who have worked extensively with newcomers. As well as identifying the key messages, concepts and information that will be required by new arrivals, the Guide documents learning approaches and issues and provides practical instruction on planning and delivering	formal orientation programs. The Guide helps to minimise the preparation time that might otherwise be involved for professionals keen to orient resettled refugees to their particular settings. The Guide covers a range of integration topics, including housing, employment, transportation, health care, finance and shopping, law, education, childcare and employment. It is also a training tool for inducting new settlement workers and helps to ensure that resettled refugees receive consistent information.
In many of these fields, however, workers have a number of demands on their time and resources, and may have limited time		





## Table Nine: Orientation programs and materials: Suggested content areas

Content	Suggested areas
Orientation to travel arrangements and reception process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• documents required for departure</li> <li>• transit arrangements</li> <li>• in-flight arrangements</li> <li>• airport pick-up arrangements</li> <li>• reception accommodation</li> <li>• basic household orientation (e.g. use of plumbing, gas and electrical appliances)</li> <li>• material assistance available on arrival (furniture, appliances, clothing)</li> </ul>
Orientation to basic characteristics, systems and resources of the receiving society	<p><b>CHARACTERISTICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic conditions (especially housing and employment availability)</li> <li>• ethnic composition, population diversity, migration history</li> <li>• public safety</li> <li>• languages spoken</li> <li>• climatic conditions</li> <li>• cost of living</li> <li>• media, including ethnic media</li> <li>• governance and legal systems</li> <li>• expectations of economic self-sufficiency</li> </ul> <p><b>SYSTEMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public transportation</li> <li>• private vehicle licence and insurance requirements</li> <li>• banking (automatic teller machines, cheque accounts, loans)</li> <li>• income support, including programs for those participating in further education and training</li> <li>• health care</li> <li>• housing</li> <li>• law enforcement</li> <li>• education (including post-secondary, and re-certification opportunities)</li> <li>• child care</li> <li>• support for elders</li> <li>• shopping (e.g. purchasing conventions, ethnic food markets, second-hand outlets)</li> <li>• labour unions and professional and trade associations</li> </ul>

Content	Suggested areas
	<p>RESOURCES – HOW TO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apply for reunification with family members</li> <li>• seek assistance to trace family members</li> <li>• secure resettlement and social support, including specific services for resettled refugees</li> <li>• access job placement programs</li> <li>• find a job</li> <li>• make contact with ethno-cultural organisations and services</li> <li>• access language assistance</li> <li>• find a house</li> <li>• secure income support</li> <li>• enrol children in school</li> <li>• qualify for health care</li> <li>• access family support and counselling services</li> <li>• gain accreditation, certification or registration to practise a trade or profession</li> <li>• apply for citizenship</li> <li>• enrol in a target language training program</li> <li>• budget</li> </ul> <p>RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• obligations of sponsors/proposers</li> <li>• legal rights and responsibilities of refugees (as consumers, health care users, employees, etc)</li> <li>• services available to assist in protecting rights</li> <li>• family, marital and parenting relationships (e.g. family violence, child discipline and welfare)</li> <li>• female genital mutilation</li> </ul>
Socio-cultural orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expectations of the receiving country</li> <li>• rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• culture, norms and values of the receiving society (e.g. family relationships, gender roles)</li> <li>• stereotyping, racism, discrimination and xenophobia</li> <li>• approach and attitudes to cultural diversity in the receiving country</li> </ul>
Orientation to the process of integration, and problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• critical thinking and skills building</li> <li>• identifying skills and attributes</li> <li>• the process of adaptation (see p. 25)</li> <li>• stresses associated with different rates and processes of adaptation experienced by family members (e.g. children, women, elders)</li> <li>• information on possible responses to prior experiences (especially trauma and torture) and how to deal with these</li> </ul>





## MAKING SENSE OF A NEW COUNTRY: ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND PROCESSES



Formal programs and resources to guide orientation providers help to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information provided and are an efficient way of transferring skills and information to a wider pool of orientation providers. However, it is important that these materials are flexible enough to accommodate the needs of different refugee communities.

### Training courses and ongoing support for orientation providers

Providing orientation requires skills in adult learning and cross-cultural communication on the part of the orientation provider. It also requires an understanding of the refugee and resettlement experience, the resettlement policy of the receiving country, the rights and responsibilities of resettled refugees and the resources available to them in the receiving society.

Those providing orientation will require appropriate training and support for their roles.

Countries offering structured pre-departure or post arrival orientation programs, such as the USA, have developed formal training courses and accompanying manuals for orientation program providers.

Training is equally important in settings where orientation is provided in the context of social support programs and provides governments with a way of ensuring that resettled refugees receive consistent and accurate information.



## ▶ Orienting providers to the backgrounds and culture of resettled refugees

TO COUNTER inaccurate or stereotyped perceptions of resettled refugees, orientation providers should have relevant cultural and country background information. This is particularly important in countries with limited prior experience of resettling particular refugee populations. A list of sources of cultural and country background profiles is included on page xi. Alternatively, emerging resettlement countries may be able to obtain this information from their counterparts in other countries.

In some countries, technical support is available to orientation providers. For example, in Australia, private individuals who propose (sponsor) resettled refugees have access to a non-government resettlement agency which provides information on resettlement resources and assists with more complex issues.

### Resources to enhance the learning experience

As indicated above, interactive and varied learning experiences are important strategies for ensuring that information is retained.

Resources have been developed to promote this. For example, in the USA the *Welcome to the USA* video is used as a tool to supplement and re-enforce that country's reception orientation program.

In the Australian state of New South Wales, a board game, *Families in Cultural Transition*, provides a fun way to engage families and small groups in learning about the receiving society.

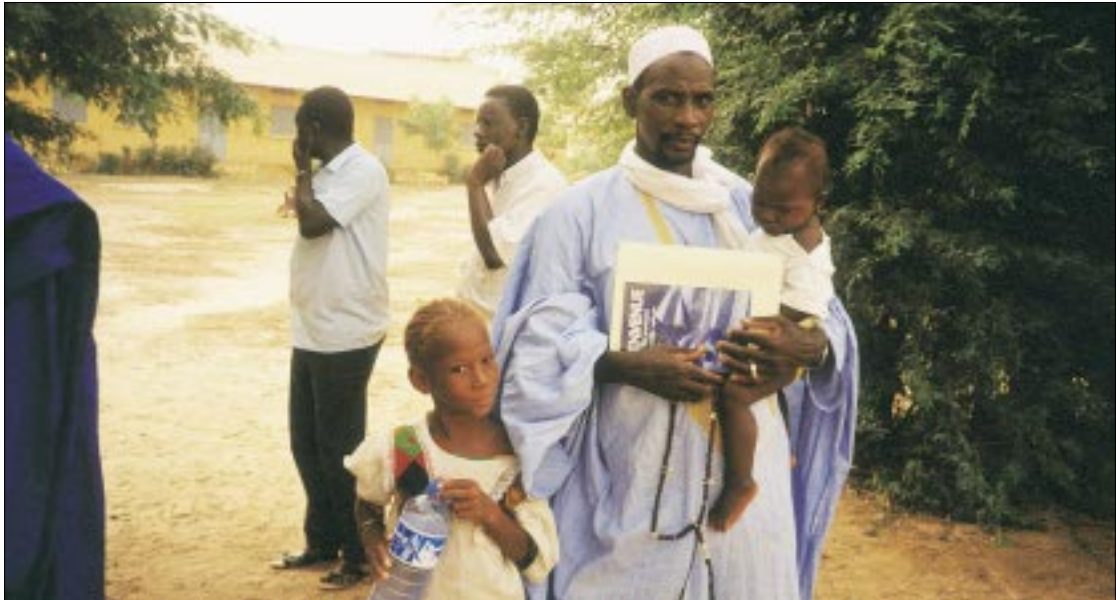
### Web technology

A number of countries, among them Canada, the USA and Australia, have developed websites providing information about the receiving country, the rights and responsibilities of newcomers and integration resources available to them. These





**MAKING SENSE OF A NEW COUNTRY:  
ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND PROCESSES**



**Selected useful websites: Information for resettled refugees and orientation providers on the World Wide Web**

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada **[www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)**
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Australia **[www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)**
- Immigration and Naturalisation Service, USA **[www.ins.usdoj.gov](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov)**
- International Organisation for Migration **[www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)**
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants **[www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org)**
- Cultural Orientation Resource Center, USA **[www.culturalorientation.net](http://www.culturalorientation.net)**

are a useful source of information both for resettled refugees and those providing orientation. Websites can also be accessed by refugees to assist them in making choices regarding specific placement communities.

The Cultural Orientation Resource Center in the USA has developed a website to support those providing cultural orientation (see box). The website provides relevant country background information, promotes communication and linkages among orientation providers and promotes best-practices, which have been submitted by orientation programs worldwide.

## Information for orientation providers

Consider incorporating the following into training programs for orientation providers:

### Planning and organisational skills

- planning for resettled refugees with particular needs;
- making sure the program is accessible (transport, child care, snacks);
- venue (non-threatening, risk-free, private).

### Interpersonal and group work skills

- establishing rapport;
- group dynamics;
- cross-cultural communication;
- listening skills;
- adult learning techniques and principles;
- the impact of trauma and torture;
- the possible personal consequences of working with traumatised

individuals and how to prevent and deal with these.

### Cross-cultural skills

- information about the culture, beliefs and past experiences of resettled refugees;
- information about cultural learning styles (e.g. some groups may have an assertive style which is perceived as demanding by others. In contrast, resettled refugees from autocratic regimes may have internalised a passive approach to those in authority);
- exploring one's own cultural beliefs;
- background information on relevant refugee source countries and countries of

asylum and refugees' likely experiences in those countries;

- dealing with sensitive cross-cultural issues, such as female genital mutilation, polygamy, domestic violence (spouse, elder and child abuse), and rights of the individual, including gay rights.

### Resource skills

- information about the rights and responsibilities of refugees;
- resources available;
- information on support systems available to orientation providers;
- identification and referral mechanisms for individuals requiring more intensive, professional support.



## Language training curricula and resources

In those countries where cultural orientation is built into language training programs, governments have sought to ensure that relevant areas are addressed through the development of national curricula. In others teacher resource materials have been developed to serve the dual purposes of orientation and facilitating language acquisition (see Chapter 2.6).



## ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

### OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- support, plan coordinate and resource orientation as a critical component of an integration program;
- deliver an appropriate level of orientation support based on the needs of individual resettled refugees;
- incorporate mechanisms for monitoring and updating orientation programs in consultation with refugee communities and service providers;
- have arrangements in place for orientation of resettled refugees with different needs (e.g. youth, unaccompanied minors, victims of violence, women at risk, elders);
- incorporate means of orientating the receiving society to the beliefs, cultural practices and past experiences of resettled refugees;
- foster opportunities to integrate orientation into other resettlement processes (e.g. language learning, accessing health care);
- engage relevant systems in the orientation process;
- plan to ensure that orientation is an ongoing process;
- recognise that resettled refugees have different information needs and different capacities to absorb and contextualise information at different stages of the resettlement process.

### SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR ORIENTATING RESETTLED REFUGEES WOULD:

- ensure that the orientation process actively engages women as critical players in family integration;
- be based on adult learning principles;
- be voluntary;
- respect and value the culture, beliefs and past experiences of resettled refugees;
- be experientially based and use interactive learning methodologies;
- be delivered by personnel who are appropriately trained and supported;
- be delivered (where possible) by people from the same cultural and language backgrounds as resettled refugees;
- engage skilled interpreters where first language delivery is not possible.




## CHAPTER 2.8


# A Place to Call Home:

## Access to Secure and Affordable Housing

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 2.8

# A Place to Call Home: Access to Secure and Affordable Housing

The focus of this Chapter is on strategies for supporting resettled refugees to obtain long term, safe, secure and affordable housing. Issues involved in meeting household establishment costs are discussed in Chapter 2.1.

Accommodation arrangements prior to permanent housing being secured are discussed in Chapter 2.2.

Recognising that few resettled refugees are likely to be in a position to purchase a home in their early years in a new country, this Chapter focuses on rental housing options.



HOUSING





**A PLACE TO CALL HOME:  
ACCESS TO SECURE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

## CHECKLIST

### Planning safe, secure and affordable housing

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ developing partnerships with governmental and private sector housing providers;
- ✓ providing support for resettled refugees to access long term housing in the context of assessment and early settlement support;
- ✓ planning permanent housing options in advance of refugee arrivals.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ the inclusion of information about accessing long term housing in orientation programs;
- ✓ the involvement of volunteer and professional social support providers in assisting resettled refugees to secure housing;
- ✓ initiatives to build the capacity of ethno-cultural services, resettlement and non-government agencies and housing advocacy services to support resettled refugees to access housing;
- ✓ professional development to officers responsible for allocating public sector housing, including training in cultural diversity and access and equity issues;
- ✓ housing developments that meet the needs of resettled refugees with special housing needs;
- ✓ legislation and programs to counter discrimination against resettled refugees in the housing market;
- ✓ rental subsidies and grants to meet the up-front and ongoing costs of rental accommodation.

### Safe, secure and affordable housing as a resource for rebuilding

As well as being a fundamental human right, safe, secure and affordable housing plays a critical role in determining overall health and well-being and provides a base from which resettled refugees can seek employment, re-establish family relationships and make connections with the wider community.

Most resettled refugees will have experienced forced displacement from their homes. Many will have spent a prolonged period in countries of asylum where their shelter was unsafe, substandard or overcrowded and where they may have lacked security of tenure. Setting up a home and establishing a 'sense of place' in the receiving society, is therefore a critical part of the rebuilding process.



## Factors affecting access to housing

Resettled refugees' capacity to secure housing is influenced by a range of factors, including their:

- earning capacity in the early resettlement period, with many being on low and fixed incomes. This affects both the ability to meet the initial costs associated with establishing a housing tenancy as well as ongoing rental payments;
- knowledge of the housing market in the receiving country, particularly affecting the capacity to search for housing;
- knowledge of rights and responsibilities as tenants;
- capacity to meet requirements for securing a housing tenancy (for example, prospective tenants are usually required to furnish personal references and to have an established employment record);
- ability to communicate in the language of the receiving country;
- access to accommodation support from family and friends;
- family composition and housing needs. Large families, extended families, singles and refugees with disabilities may experience greater difficulties in securing appropriate accommodation;
- cultural views of various housing types. For example, in some cultures, wooden housing may be perceived as inferior.

Also relevant are factors in the receiving society, including:

- the structure of the housing sector, in particular, the extent of private home ownership and the mix of government and private sector involvement in the rental housing market. For example, in countries such as Denmark and Sweden, government plays a significant role in housing provision for nationals, while in others such as the USA and Australia, there is limited public sector involvement and public housing is targeted to nationals with special needs;
- the existing infrastructure to support populations with more intensive housing needs (e.g. housing advocacy services);
- the cost of housing and in particular the availability of low cost housing;
- the availability of appropriate housing. For example, in a number of resettlement countries, the trend in the wider population is toward smaller family size. These countries have experienced some difficulties in providing housing for large and extended refugee families. For some resettled



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**A PLACE TO CALL HOME:  
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refugees, privacy may be important, particularly those who have spent prolonged periods in a refugee camp or in other forms of collective housing;  
—the preparedness of private renting agents and landlords to rent to resettled refugees and existing provisions to prevent discrimination in the housing market.

Studies conducted in a number of resettlement countries indicate that resettled refugees tend to be over-represented in insecure and substandard housing, to suffer discrimination in the housing market, and to be relatively mobile in the early resettlement period<sup>1</sup>.

Advance planning to meet the housing needs of resettled refugees, particularly in emerging resettlement countries, is important to avoid resettled refugees spending a prolonged period in reception accommodation (see Chapter 2.2).

### **Issues to consider in planning housing options**

Are special housing programs required for resettled refugees?

Ensuring that resettled refugees have access to secure and affordable permanent housing is perhaps one of the most challenging and complex problems facing countries of resettlement. Recognising the critical role of housing in the integration process, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands all allocate long term housing to resettled refugees soon after their arrival. Their capacity to do so is influenced by both the structure of housing provision in those countries (with government playing a significant role in providing housing to nationals), and the fact that resettled refugees are allocated to specific municipalities according to a quota system. This enables a greater degree of advance planning than is the case in countries where refugee placement is governed by other factors (see Chapter 2.1).

In other receiving countries, however, there are significant barriers to allocating subsidised housing to resettled refugees, with many having minimal public sector housing, an unmet demand for low cost dwellings among nationals, and significant homeless populations.

In this context, governments risk generating antipathy toward resettled refugees if they give them preference over nationals for subsidised government housing. While in some of these

countries, public housing authorities agree to allocate units for resettled refugees, in others newcomers are required to secure housing on the same basis as nationals and are subject to the same eligibility requirements and waiting periods for public housing.

Nevertheless, almost all countries recognise that resettled refugees face disadvantage in the housing market and hence offer them additional support to access permanent housing.

### Identifying key players in housing provision

The involvement of a number of players will be critical in ensuring that resettled refugees have secure and affordable accommodation, in particular:

- private sector landlords and renting agents;
- government housing authorities;
- community based resettlement agencies, ethno-cultural support services and non-government agencies. In many countries, these agencies provide housing advocacy, advice and support and may also be involved in providing subsidised housing to populations with special needs;
- volunteers. In many countries, volunteers provide 'hands-on' support in the process of searching for a house;
- refugee communities and family and friends.

### Initiatives to facilitate access to safe, secure and affordable housing

#### Housing information and support

Most countries incorporate information about housing into orientation programs and offer individual support to secure long term housing as part of reception and early settlement support.

Some resettled refugees will require housing support, information, advocacy and advice later in the resettlement period in relation to tenancy matters or when searching for a house in the event that further relocations are required. Varying arrangements are in place in established resettlement countries for providing this support, including:

- providing funding to ethno-cultural, resettlement support and non-government agencies serving immigrants and refugees to offer housing advice and support;
- promoting resettled refugees' access to housing support, advocacy and information services established for nationals who experience disadvantage in the housing market (e.g. by





## → To access affordable, quality housing new arrivals will need to know:

- whether housing is provided to resettled refugees by the receiving country;
- about the key features of the housing market (e.g. the mix of public and private housing, home ownership);
- the costs of housing in the receiving country;
- the availability of housing (how difficult will housing be to secure?);
- realistic information about the quality of affordable housing and the characteristics of the neighbourhood in which it is likely to be available;
- the rights and obligations of housing tenants;
- the availability of services providing advice and support in locating and securing housing;
- the availability of financial assistance to meet the costs of housing (e.g. rental subsidies, refundable loans, assistance with 'up-front' costs);
- how to find and apply for rental accommodation;
- how to apply for government subsidised housing.

providing information about these services to resettled refugees; sensitising services to the experiences and needs of resettled refugees; and establishing partnerships between integration support services and specialist housing agencies);  
—establishing special housing information, support and advocacy services for immigrants and refugees.

### Addressing possible objections to renting to resettled refugees

Private renting agents may be reluctant to rent to resettled refugees because they lack familiarity with them and because few resettled refugees have an established rental or employment record in the receiving country. They may also be concerned about the potential for existing tenants to be intolerant of newcomers (e.g. different cooking smells or music). A number of strategies have been adopted by receiving countries to address this, including:

- building relationships between resettlement agencies and individual renting agents. Through this relationship, it can be demonstrated that resettled refugees are provided the support of the resettlement agency to maintain a sound and secure tenancy;
- awareness raising activities among private landlords and rental agents;
- promoting resettled refugees' access to mediation and advocacy services through ethno-cultural services and non-



government agencies or housing advocacy services established for nationals;

- brokerage services. For example, the British Refugee Council offered a scheme whereby the council provided (among other things) a written guarantee against an agreed inventory on behalf of refugee tenants. In Benin, rent is paid to landlords on resettled refugees' behalf by the settlement support agency six months in advance, with resettled refugees' income support payments being reduced accordingly. In Spain, a non-government agency rents houses from private landlords and subsequently sub-lets them to resettled refugees. Through positive experiences with refugee tenants, landlords participating in brokerage programs may be more willing to enter future tenancies with resettled refugees without third party intervention;
- legislation to prevent discrimination in the housing market on the grounds of race, culture or ethnicity (see Chapter 2.11).

### Enhancing access to public housing

Government subsidised housing is an important option for resettled refugees, many of whom are likely to be on low and fixed incomes in the years following their arrival. Resettlement countries have sought to enhance resettled refugees' access to public housing by:



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**INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE**

**Flexibility in housing in Chile and Sweden**

- In 2001, a group of Afghan and Iraqi refugees were offered resettlement in Chile. The government housing authority offered them a choice of two locations. The families chose apartments in a small community with access to the city.
- While Swedish houses have been designed for small families, some landlords have enabled larger families to live together by allocating two adjoining apartments.

- providing information to resettled refugees about public housing. In many countries, resettled refugees are routinely supported to apply for public housing as part of the reception and orientation process. This is important given the long waiting times for public housing in many countries;
- ensuring that systems for allocating public housing on an urgent or priority basis are responsive to resettled refugees, particularly those with special needs;
- providing professional development to housing officers to ensure that an understanding of the experiences and needs of resettled refugees is reflected in placement decisions and administrative processes;
- making specific housing allocations for resettled refugees. For example, in Chile, the Housing Ministry agrees to allocate a set number of housing units per year for refugees settling through that country's integration program;
- encouraging housing authorities to plan for resettled refugees with special housing needs (e.g. large and extended families, refugees with disabilities).

**Subsidies to meet the costs of housing**

A number of countries offer rental subsidies and grants and refundable loans to meet the 'up-front' costs of private rental (e.g. rent in advance, bonds). While in some cases, these programs are targeted specifically to resettled refugees, in many they are part of a broader income support program available to nationals.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Secure and affordable housing in Baltimore, USA**

IN THE course of establishing a new resettlement site in Baltimore in 1999, refugee resettlement agencies formed a partnership with a Community Development Corporation (CDC), the aim of which was to secure safe, clean and affordable housing for resettled refugees.	the expectation that renters would eventually become owners, the CDC purchased the vacant homes. Following renovation, the homes were in turn rented, at a fair-market price, to refugees. The settlement agencies used refugee assistance funds and rental subsidies to guarantee rental payments for the first three–four months of the refugee’s lease. In turn the CDC agreed to waive the typical two-month security deposit on short-term leases and to reduce the lease term from one year to six months.	were able to advocate to the CDC on behalf of those families who had difficulties making their rent payments in the post subsidy period. Rent payments were rescheduled while the settlement agencies re-doubled their support to resettled refugees to obtain employment. The settlement agencies also offered orientation to refugee families on occupant responsibilities, appliance operation, the concept of a lease, and the benefits, in the long term, of home ownership.
Supported by funds from the federal government and foundations, the CDC’s goal was to revitalise a previously stable lower to middle class community. The centrepiece of the revitalisation strategy was a substantial housing stock north of a city park, built in typical Baltimore ‘row-house’ style. Fully occupied in the past, many residents had moved out over the course of the past decade and family-owned homes were interspersed among vacancies. Some of these vacancies were being used for criminal activity.	While there were some teething problems, the partnership overall proved to be beneficial to the refugees and led to a positive resettlement and acculturation experience. The success of this approach was due in large part to the fact that the resettlement agencies supported resettled refugees to adjust to the legal responsibilities of lease based tenancy. Maintaining routine contact with them, the agencies	The supportive partnership between the settlement agencies and the CDC eased the stress and trials that accompany refugee resettlement and provided a comfortable environment for the refugees to settle into their new life in Baltimore. A transitional neighbourhood is being transformed and revitalised, to the ultimate benefit of the refugees, their community, and the city of Baltimore.
Assured by the resettlement agencies that there would be a steady stream of resettled refugees requiring housing, and with		



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## **ENSURING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, GOOD QUALITY, AND SAFE HOUSING**

### **OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD ENSURE THAT:**

- there are appropriate protocols and resources in place to provide or facilitate access to long term, affordable, secure and good quality housing as soon as possible after arrival;
- relevant players are engaged in the planning process, in particular, refugee communities, non-government organisations, government housing authorities and the private sector;
- the needs of resettled refugees with particular housing needs are addressed (e.g. large and extended families, single people, resettled refugees with disabilities).

### **SPECIFIC HOUSING SERVICES AND PROGRAMS WOULD:**

- provide language assistance;
- provide housing advice and support recognising the importance of other resettlement factors such as income and social support;
- recognise and seek to redress the relative housing disadvantage experienced by people from refugee backgrounds.







## CHAPTER 2.9

# Building Bridges to Economic Self- Sufficiency: Employment and Training

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 2.9 Building Bridges to Economic Self-sufficiency: Employment and Training

This Chapter focuses on strategies to support resettled refugees to secure economic self-sufficiency through employment and training. It should be read in conjunction with Part Three which examines particular planning issues of concern to refugee women, elders and young people.





## CHECKLIST

## Planning for economic self-sufficiency

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ identifying and developing partnerships with key public and private sector partners (e.g. job placement providers, employers, employer associations);
- ✓ making arrangements for individualised assessment and job placement (where possible through an existing provider);
- ✓ incorporating information about employment conditions, services and processes in orientation;
- ✓ resettlement community selection and placement policies which optimise employment opportunities.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ strategies to ensure that job assessment and placement services are responsive to the needs of resettled refugees (e.g. language assistance, professional development and awareness raising among providers);
- ✓ specialised job placement and support programs and services for resettled refugees;
- ✓ programs for providing more intensive job search assistance and support to resettled refugees or strategies to promote their access to specialist programs targeted to nationals experiencing labour force disadvantage;
- ✓ strategies to support resettled refugees to have prior learning, qualifications and experience recognised;
- ✓ strategies to address barriers to work force participation (e.g. child care, transportation);
- ✓ programs to support resettled refugees to establish micro-economic enterprises;
- ✓ strategies to facilitate access to the work force (e.g. mentor programs);
- ✓ measures to promote equal employment opportunity among, and prevent discrimination against, resettled refugees;
- ✓ engaging labour unions, employers, job placement services and the refugee and wider communities in initiatives to promote refugee employment;
- ✓ strategies and programs for job advancement and retraining.

## Economic self-sufficiency and employment as resources for rebuilding

Economic self-sufficiency is one of the most important factors in successful integration, with earning capacity influencing the ability to ‘purchase’ many of the other resources required to rebuild life in a new country, among them, housing, health care and education.

Employment is also important for long term economic stability, especially in times of difficulty or crisis. This is particularly the case in those countries where entitlement to other benefits, such as health care, retirement income, and sickness and unemployment benefits, are tied to participation in paid work.

As well as providing the means for economic stability, employment has a powerful influence on one's capacity to participate equally in the receiving society. Without employment, refugees risk becoming trapped in a cycle of social and economic marginalisation affecting not only them but possibly future generations.

As one of the primary sources of contact between adult new arrivals and their new country, the workplace provides a focus for learning about the culture and practices of the receiving society. Providing day-to-day opportunities for communicating in the language of that society, it also speeds the process of achieving language proficiency, with obvious benefits for reducing social isolation and increasing the overall competence, control and independence of new refugee arrivals. The workplace is also a major site for the development of friendships and social support networks.

Meaningful work is a primary source through which we define ourselves and our role both in the wider society and in the family. This is particularly important for refugee arrivals, many of whom will have struggled to maintain a positive identity in the context of disruption and dependency. Being able to realise their personal potential in the labour force is a significant factor in successful integration. This is particularly the case for men, with studies indicating that being unable to obtain work commensurate with their skills and experience is a significant risk factor for depression in this group<sup>1</sup>.

Promoting opportunities for refugee employment also has benefits for receiving countries. As well as helping to minimise dependency on social support payments, through employment, refugees are able to contribute to the tax base and, through their purchasing power, to the broader economic good.

The workplace is a primary avenue through which refugees can contribute to the economy and broader social fabric of the receiving country.

Measures to ensure that refugees gain access to employment are an integral element of an integration program. Ideally, these should aim to ensure that refugees are able to compete with nationals for jobs which are both commensurate with their skills and experience and through which they are able to optimise their contribution to receiving countries.



**Integration means for me to be part of Canadian society, to learn English and find a job as soon as possible.**

Resettled refugee





## Laying the groundwork in emerging resettlement countries

WHILE steps to promote refugees' economic self-sufficiency are critical to the success of any integration program, they are particularly important in emerging countries, especially those with a limited capacity to fund income support programs. In these countries, resettled refugees need to secure employment at a very early stage in their resettlement.

For this reason, it is important that emerging countries begin at an early

stage to plan measures to support early economic self-sufficiency, including:

- awareness raising among employers, training providers and job placement programs;
- establishing partnerships in both the public and private sectors necessary to create a range of employment and training opportunities;
- developing short term professional and vocational training opportunities;
- micro-economic enterprise initiatives;
- supports to complete formal education and training;
- engaging the co-operation of local networks who might provide links to employment opportunities (e.g. business associations, voluntary organisations, labour unions, faith-based communities).

## Factors affecting economic self-sufficiency

While there is variability in the skills and attributes of refugees, there are a number of factors influencing their capacity to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Among these are:

- proficiency in the language of the receiving country;
- their knowledge of and capacity to access recruitment and job placement services and processes;
- the transferability of, and demand for, their skills in the labour market of the receiving country;
- the extent of disruption to education, training and employment experienced in their countries-of-origin and asylum;
- competing demands associated with resettlement, adjustment to a new society and culture and, for many, the process of dealing with the trauma, grief and guilt associated with forced movement;
- cultural and religious practices and beliefs and the extent to which these are accommodated in the labour force and workplaces of the receiving society;
- their access to the resources required to support work force participation, among them child care, transportation and 'tools-of-trade' (e.g. in some receiving countries, tradespeople may be expected to supply their own tool-box);
- their access to resources for self employment such as loans and knowledge of the business sector in the receiving society;



—their motivation and openness to exploring new employment possibilities, making it essential that resettled refugees are fully involved in and have ownership of the employment search process.

Also influential are conditions in receiving countries, including:

- attitudes toward, and experience of, employing people from other countries;
- economic conditions, with refugees tending to experience particular difficulty competing in the labour market in countries where unemployment rates are high among nationals;
- whether refugees are able to have qualifications and experience gained in countries-of-origin recognised in the receiving country;
- the availability of support to enable participation in language training, and if necessary further education and training in preparation for employment or advancement in the labour market. Some countries have an extensive system for education and training of nationals and access is both free and universal or is promoted through loans, subsidies or scholarships. In others, however, these systems may not be well developed or are available on a ‘user-pays’ basis only;
- existing infrastructure for supporting access to the labour market, such as national job placement networks and programs to support disadvantaged workers;
- expectations of refugee economic self-sufficiency and the availability of income support and safety net services for those





who are outside of the labour market. The issues associated with this are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.4;

- expectations of participation in language training programs;
- the existence of legislative frameworks and programs to prevent discrimination against and exploitation of refugees as a vulnerable group within the labour market.

### **Initiatives to promote and support economic self-sufficiency**

Individualised assessment and job placement assistance

In order to access employment in receiving societies, recent refugee arrivals will need to familiarise themselves with:

- recruitment services and systems in place in the receiving country;
- labour force conditions and the demands for their skills within it. This may involve defining and interpreting their previous work experience and skills in the jargon of the receiving country. For example, job titles are generally specific to a given labour market and may be misleading when transferred to another. Similarly, skills and experience acquired informally through, for example, work in a refugee camp may not be recognised either by employers or refugees themselves;
- education and training options in the event that employment prospects in their former careers are poor or their education has been disrupted;
- processes for re-certification and accreditation.

Those wishing to establish economic self-sufficiency through micro-economic enterprise will require information about programs available to assist them.

Provision for individualised assessment and job placement in the early resettlement period is an integral component of an integration program. Some countries of resettlement have job placement programs in place for nationals. Where this is the case, new arrivals may be linked with these services as part of the reception and orientation process.

However, in most of these countries, it is recognised that additional initiatives are required to ensure that these programs are responsive to the needs of new arrivals. These include:

- providing interpreting and translating services to support refugees to access job placement services and to participate in job search activity;



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Working for refugees**

IN THE USA, non-	offer employers a free
government agencies are	translation service to
contracted to provide job	assist with an initial
placement services for	training and induction
newly arrived refugees.	period and inform them
Refugees are referred to	about any special
these services where an	subsidies and tax credits
individual assessment is	that may be available to
conducted and assistance	them when hiring the
in preparing a resume	person. They may also be
offered. The service then	available to 'trouble-shoot'
approaches individual	in the event of any
employers looking for	problems (such as safety
workers that 'match' the	issues or cultural
skills of the refugee. Many	misunderstanding).
employment programs	

- offering more intensive support to refugees in the early resettlement period. In some countries this is offered through existing programs established for job seekers with special needs. In others, special programs have been established for refugees;
- providing information and professional development programs to job placement officers to enhance their awareness of the past experiences and current concerns of new arrivals. This may be particularly important in those countries where participation in job search activity through a government job placement service is a condition of receiving social support payment;
- recruiting bilingual and bi-cultural staff to job placement services;
- making provision for regular review of job placements in the early resettlement period with a view to identifying and addressing any problems experienced by refugee arrivals or their employers.

In other countries special job placement services have been established for refugees or assessment and job placement is formally incorporated into the reception and orientation process. For example, in Denmark, where reception and integration occur at the municipal level, individually tailored 'introduction plans' are developed in consultation with new refugee arrivals. These include, among other things, an



**Integration in the labour market is...about appropriate and sustainable employment, not just work full stop.**

European Council for Refugees in Exile Integration Task Force,  
*Good practice guide on the integration of refugees in the European Union: Employment*





## What level of support should refugees be offered to resume former careers or regain a position in the labour force comparable to that held in their countries-of-origin?

SOME refugees will have achieved very high degrees of education and high level professional and vocational qualifications. However, these skills may not necessarily be immediately transferable to the labour market of the receiving country. This may be due to a number of factors:

- There may be limited or no demand for the particular skills held by the new arrival.
- There may be an over-supply of the skills held by new arrivals, creating stringent competition and in some cases, leading to specific bars or barriers to entry of personnel trained in other countries.
- Proof of highly specialised knowledge may be required in order to have prior qualifications recognised and to practise their profession or trade. This may be the case, for example, with the

professions of medicine and law and with trades in the telecommunications industry.

Resettled refugees in these circumstances may require some assistance to assess whether it is possible to reclaim their former careers, or whether indeed their long term interests would be better served by exploring an alternative career path.

In some countries specific steps are taken to support refugees to either resume their former careers or to retrain for work commensurate with their aptitude and aspirations (e.g. through the provision of mentoring programs, training subsidies and social support payments to enable participation in retraining). In others, however, this remains the responsibility of the individual entrant.

There are a number of factors weighing against

refugees regaining the position held in the labour force in their countries-of-origin. In some countries it may be neither economically viable nor politically sustainable, to support refugees to realise this goal. This is particularly the case in those countries in which nationals have limited access to education and training initiatives. In these circumstances, it may be necessary for resettled refugees to adopt a career plan which involves securing employment for immediate economic survival, while at the same time enrolling in language and career training for employment in the longer term.

The extent to which support is offered will be dependent on prevailing labour force and economic conditions in the receiving country and the circumstances of individual refugee entrants.

assessment of the refugee's individual skills and qualifications with a view to facilitating their entry into either the labour market or education and training.

Enhancing job readiness, job-search skills and resources

People from refugee backgrounds may require some additional assistance in participating in job search activity and preparing themselves for employment in the receiving country. Having only recently arrived they are unlikely to have access to

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Providing intensive tailored job placement support to refugees**

IN HAMBURG, Germany, a non-government agency providing support to refugees (AWO) has entered an agreement with the Public Employment Service (PES) to provide intensive job assessment and placement support to refugees. The program was introduced recognising that officers of the PES had neither the time nor expertise to offer refugees	an appropriate service. Refugees registering for unemployment assistance are referred to AWO rather than the PES. There, they are assisted by an officer experienced in working with refugees and who, in many cases, is able to speak their language. Assessment of their language, training and employment needs is offered followed by referrals	to appropriate services or employment positions. A contrasting approach has been taken in the Australia state of Victoria. There, refugees are assisted through the mainstream employment service. However, settlement agencies provide training courses for employment professionals to sensitise them to the particular needs of refugees.
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resources such as word-processing and Internet facilities. Many will be unfamiliar with job search conventions in the receiving country, such as those relating to the preparation of job applications and resumes and to participation in job interviews.

While refugees are generally very motivated to seek employment in the receiving country, some may have never worked in the paid labour force or may have endured a prolonged period of economic dependency in a refugee camp. Further, workplace culture and values may be very different in the receiving country from those in refugee source countries.

Recognising this, in a number of countries refugees are offered intensive programs designed to orient them to the labour force of the receiving country, prepare them for work and support them with job-search resources. Again, arrangements for providing this support differ between countries, with some establishing programs targeted to refugees and others linking refugees with services provided to nationals with special job-search needs.

Job vacancies in receiving countries are often filled informally through professional and personal networks, based on prospective applicant's established reputation or 'track-record' in their field (as opposed to formalised competitive recruitment processes). With networks and professional identity taking some time to build and nurture, new arrivals may be at a significant disadvantage in this regard.



**I want to continue my education in theatre because I write good stories and I would love to be an actor.**

Resettled refugee



INTEGRATION  
IN PRACTICE**Migrant Information  
Technology Centre,  
London, UK**

A NUMBER of non-government agencies collaborated with refugee communities to establish a 'drop-in' centre for refugees and migrants settling in London. Among other services, the centre provides access to the Internet to support job search activity and to word processing facilities for the preparation of resumes and job applications.

In an attempt to improve the job prospects of new arrivals, a number of countries have developed mentor programs, whereby refugees are linked with peers in their profession (either nationals or established members of refugee communities). Mentors support the new arrival by orienting them to their field in the receiving country, assisting them with the preparation of applications and resumes and linking them with employers and other peers.

In those countries in which faith-based communities have been actively engaged in supporting refugee resettlement (see Chapters 2.3 and 2.11), these have served as an important link between resettled refugees and employment opportunities in the wider society.

Internship programs have also been successfully established in a number of countries. These give new arrivals the opportunity to gain work experience in their field, build networks, and demonstrate their skills and experience.

Promoting recognition of prior learning, qualifications and experience

As indicated above, not all resettled refugees will be in a position to resume their former careers. However, those who wish to do so may need to have professional or trade qualifications (e.g. in nursing, engineering, commercial driving, or hairdressing) gained elsewhere re-certified or re-accredited in the receiving country before commencing practice.

Similarly, those wishing to resume tertiary or other post secondary education or training will need to have prior learning formally evaluated by education or training authorities. There may be a number of barriers to this in receiving countries:

- In most countries, no single body is responsible for certifying credentials gained overseas. Rather, this is the responsibility of individual institutions, professional associations and trades. Accessing these systems may, therefore, be a complex undertaking for new arrivals.
- Formalised processes for certification or accreditation of overseas trained professionals may not have been established for all trades and professions and/or there may be a limited understanding among relevant bodies of how to assess the qualifications and prior experience of overseas trained personnel.
- In some professions, re-certification processes are very

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Internships for refugee employment**

IN THE Netherlands, an internship program has been developed offering refugees with qualifications and experience a period of paid work experience in a relevant government department. Refugees are employed for a 12-month period, during which time they are offered personal support from a workplace mentor. While ongoing employment is not guaranteed, in practice, a large proportion of those participating in the program have been able to secure this in the internship or other employment settings.

expensive, stringent and protracted, often involving a period of further study. The time, cost and effort involved for refugees may compete with the need for employment for immediate economic survival. In some countries, stringent re-certification, accreditation or registration processes may be imposed by trade and professional associations to restrict the entry of overseas trained personnel who may be viewed as competitors.

- Documentation of qualifications and prior experience may have been lost, stolen or destroyed in the course of the refugee experience, making it difficult to provide proof to employers and accrediting authorities.

As a first step toward enhancing refugees' access to accreditation and re-certification processes, refugee employment services in a number of countries have compiled information for new arrivals and those working with them on requirements and contact details for relevant trades and professionals. Others have developed resources to assist bodies responsible for re-certification and accreditation to better understand and assess the qualifications and prior experience of refugee arrivals. For example, in Denmark, a Handbook was produced for universities to support their assessment of the prior learning of refugees from those main regions represented in the Danish resettlement program.

Consideration may also need to be given to advocating on behalf of or in co-operation with refugees, to secure re-certification processes that are more responsive to the needs of refugees while at the same time maintaining appropriate standards. For example, a refugee employment service in Kentucky, USA

INTEGRATION  
IN PRACTICE**Refugees mentoring refugees**

A PROGRAM was developed to support doctors trained in other countries to prepare for practice in the UK. Through a weekly group program, convened by a re-qualified refugee doctor, refugees with medical qualifications were offered information about the requirements of registration, language coaching, clinical placements and support through the system of re-qualifying exams.



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Enhancing access to transport in the USA**

ACCESS TO transportation has been identified as a major obstacle to refugee employment in the USA.	provides loans to refugees to purchase a car which is repayable 'in-kind' through the provision of transportation services to other refugee families.	refugees offers low cost transport to refugees for their journey to work.
A number of innovative programs have been developed to address this:	• In Maryland, a large steel company employing significant numbers of	• In Vermont, a refugee support service provides financial assistance and language support to refugees to obtain a driver's licence.
• In Florida, a non-government agency		

worked with the professional engineers' association in that state to establish processes for re-accrediting resettled refugees who had qualified as engineers in their country-of-origin.

Internships and mentoring programs may also be useful, with the former providing the local experience sometimes required as part of a process of re-certification or accreditation, and the latter ensuring that refugees have relevant peer support.

## Addressing practical barriers to employment

While employment yields obvious economic benefits, a number of resources may be required for work force participation, such as a transport and a driver's licence and in some cases 'tools-of-trade'. As they have only recently arrived, refugees are unlikely to have acquired these resources and may need some support in accessing them.

Refugees with child care responsibilities are likely to have limited access to family and informal support, yet may be unaware of the existence of private and government child care agencies. Some families may be reluctant to have their children cared for outside of the family. This may be because they are unfamiliar with child care services, because they or their children are experiencing particular difficulties associated with past trauma, or because existing services are not culturally responsive.

The costs of child care may also serve as a disincentive to employment, particularly for very low wage earners.

For these reasons, refugees with child care responsibilities may need additional information on the role of child care in the



**My English was funny at that time and I took a job as a cleaner in a hairdressers. No-one believed that back home I was an engineer.**  
Resettled refugee



receiving country, child care services and costs, as well as any child care subsidies that may be available to them.

### Promoting economic self-sufficiency through micro-economic enterprise

Micro-economic enterprise can provide an important alternative route to economic self-sufficiency for some new arrivals, in particular:

- those who owned small businesses such as grocers, restaurants or beauty shops or derived income from small home based enterprises, such as dressmaking in their countries-of-origin;
- those whose skills are not readily transferable to the labour market of the receiving country (e.g. doctors, lawyers) or who may not fit well into more traditional jobs (e.g. artists);
- women, since some small or home based businesses may be more compatible with their child care and domestic responsibilities. This is particularly the case for women originating from cultures where it is unacceptable for women to work outside of the home (see Chapter 3.2);
- those resettled in countries with a small formal labour force, but a strong tradition of self employment through business ownership and income generating activity (e.g. Burkina Faso).

If successful, small businesses can assist integration through economic self-sufficiency. Those involving extensive contact with customers or other business networks also provide opportunities for language learning and social connection.

However, in some enterprises (e.g. home based garment construction) these opportunities may be limited, isolating refugee arrivals from the wider community. In a number of resettlement countries, home based producers have also been subject to exploitation by wholesalers and retailers<sup>2</sup>.

There are also some inherent financial risks in establishing small business ventures and some may involve a significant amount of personal investment and organisational effort on behalf of new arrivals, many of whom may already be struggling with other resettlement issues.

Refugees wanting to establish a small business may require some support, including:

- assistance with initial capital outlay or in accessing credit facilities;
- assistance in preparing a business plan;



**I love to make money with my own hands. I always worked hard and helped my family and my children above all.**

Resettled refugee





INTEGRATION  
IN PRACTICE

### The Business Enterprise Adviser, Refugee Council, London, UK

THE ADVISER was established recognising that refugees were having difficulties in accessing existing government enterprise advice agencies. This was due to language difficulties as well as to a lack of appreciation by mainstream services of some of the different business ideas presented by refugee applicants.

The service, staffed by people who are themselves from refugee backgrounds, offers:

- advice on starting a business;
- orientation to the practices and cultures of the market in Britain;
- language assistance to access credit providers. Business plans can be developed in their first language, with translations being provided to enable people to communicate with credit providers.

- information on taxation, accounting and other regulatory frameworks in the receiving country;
- information relating to market conditions in the receiving country;
- an alternative source of income or social support while the business is in its establishment phase.

In some countries, this assistance may be secured through small business enterprise schemes already established for nationals. For example, in Ireland non-refundable allowances are available to people wishing to establish a small business (subject to the viability of the proposal being approved). This allowance, which is gradually reduced, is available for up to three years. In the Netherlands, people starting their own businesses are eligible for a refundable grant for 18 months. Refugees have made extensive use of these programs in both countries.

Some additional assistance may be required to facilitate access to these schemes, given language issues and the fact that in many countries they are often governed by strict and complex eligibility criteria.

In other countries, such as Burkina Faso and Benin, targeted small business enterprise schemes have been established for refugees. Loans with favourable terms are made available to those interested in pursuing this path to economic self-sufficiency.

Marketing the skills and attributes of refugees to employers and promoting cultural accommodation

Engaging employers is a vital strategy in promoting refugee self-sufficiency. As well as exercising control over recruitment, employers have a powerful influence over workplace conditions and culture, and in some industries may be in a position to support refugees with other resources such as child care and transportation. Some employers may be unfamiliar with resettled refugees and this may contribute to a reluctance to hire them. Integration services in existing resettlement countries have sought to foster employer support and overcome potential employer objections by:

- active ‘marketing’ of the skills and attributes of refugees in general or of individual refugees, including, where necessary, information to counter erroneous views about refugees or particular refugee communities or to assist employers in accommodating cultural or religious practices;
- making arrangements to brief key industry and employer bodies about current and projected refugee intakes;



**TAKE  
CARE****Communicating with employers**

WHEN COMMUNICATING with employers and job-placement personnel in the receiving country, refugees should be presented as normal people in extraordinary circumstances. Market research conducted among employers in the United Kingdom in 1998<sup>3</sup> indicates that it is important to avoid:

- inflating the skills and attributes of refugees;
- defining refugee arrivals as 'needy', thereby risking them being perceived as burdens to prospective employers;
- engendering guilt by using shock tactics;
- creating the impression that refugees are the only, or most important, group experiencing labour force disadvantage.

While employers and job placement personnel may require some awareness of the past experiences of refugees, evidence from around the globe suggests that the single most compelling reason for hiring them is the valuable contribution they make to the workplace. Consider communicating some of the following messages:

- Resettled refugees generally have high levels of employer loyalty.
- Owing to their past experiences, resettled refugees are generally highly adaptable and hence are likely to settle readily into a new job.

- While resettled refugees may not have worked in the receiving country before, many have sound work histories in their countries-of-origin and asylum.
- A culturally diverse work force can contribute to a positive company profile.
- Different cultural practices can generally be accommodated in the workplace without compromising safety, hygiene or efficiency.

Also think about providing information about:

- any language or other assistance which may be available to employers hiring resettled refugees;
- particular skills refugees or refugee groups bring with them;
- factors associated with the refugee and resettlement experience that might affect job-search skills and the capacity to retain employment;
- employer obligations under relevant discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation;
- special incentives available to employers engaging refugees (e.g. language support, subsidies, tax concessions);
- special programs and supports available to employers to assist them in orientating and training new arrivals in the workplace.

- providing language assistance to employers to assist with initial induction and training;
- providing subsidies and tax-relief to employers hiring refugees. In those countries where refugees qualify for programs established for nationals with special employment needs, steps may need to be taken to promote these programs to employers;
- soliciting the co-operation of key corporations to routinely notify refugee support and reception programs of vacancies.



## Accommodating culture

SOME refugees have religious or cultural practices that may compromise their employment prospects or, if not accommodated in the workplace, may exclude them from some employment opportunities. For example, practising Muslims will need flexibility in their work schedule and space to participate in designated prayer times. They may be forbidden to work in positions involving the sale or handling of pork or alcohol.

Some employers may be concerned about employing

Muslim women who wear the veil (or *hajib*) believing that it will compromise safety or hygiene or affect corporate image.

Many companies have been very successful in accommodating these cultural practices. Indeed, a visible commitment to a culturally diverse work force may assist in enhancing a positive company profile. Refugee employment services can take steps to ensure that the cultural practices of refugees do not give rise to difficulties, including:

- the inclusion of relevant

cultural information in professional development programs for job placement personnel;

- awareness raising programs to assist employers to accommodate cultural practices;
- advocacy on behalf of individual refugees who have experienced lack of understanding or active discrimination. In some cases this may involve invoking the authority provided by existing anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation.



**Fortunately I have a good boss who understands me, who knows about the situation in my country. He was also really kind to me and helped me a lot.**

**Initially I had real difficulties in understanding this new system of work.**

Resettled refugee



### INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

#### Engaging employers

IN FRANCE, a non-government refugee support agency, France Terre d'Asile (FTDA), enters into agreements with major French employers who agree to make FTDA branches aware of job vacancies. Refugees selected for positions are employed on the same basis as other workers. However, FTDA maintains contact with them to monitor the arrangement and to receive feedback from both employer and employee. This arrangement is relatively inexpensive.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Enhancing cultural accommodation**

REFUGEEWORKS, the US Office of Refugee Resettlement's national technical assistance office for employment, was aware that both Muslim workers and their employers harboured misconceptions about whether it was possible for	Muslim women to work while at the same time observing their prayer times and their traditional practice of wearing the headscarf. Working closely with advisers from the Muslim community, Refugeeworks has developed a campaign	aimed at raising awareness of the needs of Muslim workers, the ways these can be accommodated in the workplace and employer's obligations under anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation.
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## Placement practices as tools for promoting employment

From time-to-time, countries of resettlement have offered resettled refugees placement in communities where unemployment rates are low or there is an unmet demand for labour in specific industries. In others resettled refugees have been offered financial and practical support to relocate from their initial placement site to communities where they have specific employment opportunities or where unemployment rates are lower.

While these are effective strategies for promoting economic self-sufficiency, it is important that they are considered in the context of community capacity to meet other integration goals, such as ethnic community and social support and the costs and benefits of secondary migration in the early resettlement period (see Chapter 2.1).

## Addressing racism, discrimination and exploitation in the workplace

Refugees, in particular those with characteristics (such as accent, racial features or cultural practices) that distinguish them from the dominant culture of the receiving society, may be vulnerable to racism and discrimination. This may affect their prospects of securing employment in the first instance, their opportunities for advancement within the work force and the degree to which they are accepted by fellow workers. Particular hostility may be directed to refugees settling in areas or seeking employment in industries where unemployment is high as they may be viewed as unwelcome competitors for scarce jobs.





## The advantages of special employment programs for resettled refugees

THE NEEDS of people from refugee backgrounds are better served in the long term by ensuring that they have access to the mainstream labour market and to labour force programs provided for nationals. However, in most countries it is recognised that intensive support will be required in the early resettlement period and this is often best provided through a program tailored to the needs of refugees.

Special refugee employment services and programs may also have a role in ensuring that refugees have access to mainstream labour market programs and employment opportunities by:

- advocating on behalf of individual new arrivals to employers and education and training institutions;
- providing language and translation assistance;
- providing information on culture and employment practices;

- raising awareness of the skills and attributes of refugee arrivals to employers;
- working with employers, labour unions, education and training institutions and labour market program providers to enhance employment opportunities for new arrivals and to address barriers to equal employment opportunity.



**I was lucky, I only have good memories but I was always very active. I was willing to work more and I was always looking for more opportunities.**

Resettled refugee



Poor alternative employment prospects, language differences and lack of knowledge of their rights as workers may also make new refugee arrivals particularly vulnerable to exploitation by employers<sup>4</sup>. Mature aged refugees, women and refugees with disabilities may face the compounding effects of discrimination on the grounds of their age, gender and ability (see Part Three).

In countries with a long history of culturally diverse migration there are legislative frameworks in place aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting equal opportunity in the workplace. Services established to support refugee resettlement have used this framework as a basis for both raising awareness among employers of their obligations to refugee applicants and workers and for advocating the rights of individual refugees. Labour unions are also important partners in protecting the industrial rights of refugee workers.

### The role of labour unions

Labour unions have an important role in protecting the rights of refugees; in promoting a hospitable environment in the workplace; and in ensuring that refugees have access to opportunities for employment, retraining and advancement. In many countries wages and conditions are generally better in unionised sections of the labour force.



Some unions may be difficult to engage, seeing refugees as competitors for scarce jobs and as potentially undermining hard won wages and conditions, by offering a cheaper or more compliant labour source. However, in many countries, they have been powerful integration partners, recognising the contribution refugees make not only to the work force and economy of the receiving country, but to the membership base of labour unions themselves.

For those new arrivals originating from countries with a strong union heritage, labour unions can also provide an important avenue for making social connections and developing skills in civic participation.

It is important that resettled refugees are provided information about labour unions and their role in the receiving society. Unions in a number of countries of resettlement have conducted education programs targeted to ethno-cultural communities.

The political leverage of labour unions may make them important partners in garnering broader government and community support for integration programs. For example, in 1999, trade unions in Denmark collaborated with employers and non-government agencies to conduct the *See Difference as an Advantage* campaign. The aim of the campaign was to draw the attention of other workers and prospective employers to the resources ethnic minorities – among them refugees – bring to the labour market and to promote equal opportunity and counter discrimination. The campaign involved a number of strategies including media promotion, a work based stand-up comedy show, resources to assist employers to develop ethnically inclusive workplace policies, lobbying and network formation.



**New arrivals from every continent have contributed their energy, talent and commitment to making the USA richer and stronger. Likewise the American Union Movement has been enriched by the contributions and courage of immigrant workers. Newly arriving workers continue to make indispensable contributions to the strength and growth of our unions. These efforts have created new unions and strengthened and revived others, benefiting all workers, immigrants and native born alike.**

Resolution of the American Federation of Labour,  
July 2001




**BUILDING BRIDGES TO ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY:  
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING**

More recently unions in the USA conducted a series of rallies aimed at securing change in immigration laws applying to immigrants without valid entry documentation. Unions in that country have also played a significant role in placing refugees in jobs and in offering formalised retraining programs.


**ACHIEVING ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY**
**OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:**

- offer a program for providing individualised assessment and job placement assistance for refugees which is sensitive to the refugee and resettlement experience;
- have strategies to prevent discrimination against and promote equal employment opportunity among refugees, targeted to both employers and refugees themselves;
- offer support for refugees wishing to establish small businesses;
- aim to support refugees to compete on an equal basis with nationals in the labour market and to advance in the labour market commensurate with their skills, experience and aptitude;
- incorporate strategies to promote and support employment opportunities for refugee women, refugee young people and refugee elders (see Part Three).

**SPECIFIC PROGRAMS ESTABLISHED TO SUPPORT REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT WOULD:**

- foster a partnership approach with resettled refugees to ensure that they play an active role in and have a sense of ownership of the job search process;
- support resettled refugees to represent themselves to employers by assisting them to accurately assess their abilities and job possibilities;
- provide language assistance;
- provide support which is sensitive to the needs of refugee women, elders and young people (see Part Three);
- engage employers and labour unions;
- engage refugee communities in planning and implementation;
- promote refugees as assets to employers in receiving countries;
- provide or facilitate access to support with practical barriers (child care, transport, tools of trade);
- promote access to meaningful and sustainable employment.



## CHAPTER 2.10


# A Healthy Start:


## Access to Health Care



## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind



## Chapter 2.10

# A Healthy Start: Access to Health Care

This Chapter explores arrangements for providing health assessment for resettled refugees and for ensuring that they have access to the health care system in the receiving society for their long term health needs.

While health care is important, health status is also influenced by one's access to social and economic resources such as meaningful employment, secure housing, family and community support and a safe and welcoming environment<sup>1</sup>. Ensuring that resettled refugees have access to these 'health promoting' resources is the subject of other relevant Chapters in this Handbook.

Strategies for supporting resettled refugees suffering psychological responses to trauma and torture are discussed in Chapter 3.1.





**CHECKLIST**

## Planning a healthy start

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ arrangements for offering communicable disease screening and an overall health assessment on arrival;
- ✓ identifying health care providers who have interest and expertise in health issues of particular concern to resettled refugees (e.g. infectious disease and mental health professionals);
- ✓ interpreters for health care consultations;
- ✓ arrangements for resettled refugees to meet the costs of health care in the resettlement country prior to achieving economic self-sufficiency.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ strategies for ensuring that the wider health care system is sensitive to the needs of resettled refugees;
- ✓ strategies for building work force capacity in providing health care to resettled refugees;
- ✓ strategies for providing new arrivals information on and orientation to the health system of the receiving country and practical support to access health care;
- ✓ community awareness strategies aimed at promoting understanding of the health concerns of refugee populations, countering negative perceptions and enhancing community capacity to provide support.



**We were refugees in Thailand for a long time and there were not many doctors. I had all my teeth knocked out when I was tortured. Because I couldn't speak properly, I couldn't start my English classes until they were fixed.**

Resettled refugee



## Health and health care as resources for rebuilding

As well as being a fundamental human right, optimal physical and mental health is a vital resource for integration, enhancing people's capacity to meet the inevitable challenges and stresses of the resettlement process. In contrast, poor health may act as a significant barrier to integration. For example, post traumatic stress symptoms experienced by many torture survivors, such as poor concentration and 'flash-backs', can interfere with the process of learning a new language, undeniably a pivotal task in the integration process<sup>2</sup>.

Sensitively delivered, health care can help to rebuild trust in others, the motivation to care for oneself and one's feeling of self-respect and dignity. Thorough health care can also provide reassurance to those who fear that they have been irreparably harmed by their refugee experiences.

Through their encounters with health care providers, new arrivals can learn about other resources required for successful integration, such as social support networks and services providing assistance with housing and employment. Health care services may provide an acceptable point of entry to

services which new arrivals may otherwise be reluctant to access (e.g. counselling and support services).

In many areas of physical and mental health, there are significant advantages in identifying and treating health problems at an early stage, when they are generally less complex to treat<sup>3</sup>. Ensuring that new arrivals have access to health care as soon as possible after arrival optimises the opportunities for early intervention, with obvious benefits for the budgets of receiving countries as well as for new arrivals themselves.

### Factors affecting health and access to health care

Resettled refugees experience a relatively high rate of both physical and mental health problems<sup>4</sup>, the result of deprivation of the resources required for good health, exposure to trauma and poor access to health care prior to arrival. Many will not have had access to high quality patient orientated health care for years and hence may have health problems which either have not been diagnosed or have been poorly treated in the past.

With refugee producing countries struggling to meet acute health care needs, many new arrivals will have had limited access to preventative health care programs now well established in many countries of resettlement (e.g. immunisation, breast and cervical screening).

In the early resettlement period resettled refugees may be exposed to further influences now known to have an adverse influence on both physical and mental health, among them unemployment, discrimination and lack of family and social support<sup>5</sup>.

This does not mean that resettled refugees are inherently less healthy than the population of receiving countries. Indeed the fact that they have survived often horrific experiences, yet ultimately settle successfully, is evidence of their enormous survival strengths. Most of the health problems affecting resettled refugees can be addressed by sensitive, intensive 'catch-up' care in the early period of resettlement.

While health issues of concern to individual resettled refugees and to particular refugee communities clearly vary depending on their region-of-origin and the nature and duration of their refugee experience, common patterns identified by health care



**The early intervention worker mentioned all of the problems we had here and the problems we had in Somalia. She showed that she was interested in us.**  
Resettled refugee





## A HEALTHY START: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

providers and researchers in countries of resettlement are documented in Table Ten. It is not uncommon for resettled refugees to have multiple and complex problems at the time of arrival.

Resettled refugees may require additional support to access and make the best use of health services particularly in the early resettlement period, including:

- access to affordable or ‘fee-free’ services;
- assistance in communicating with health care providers;
- information about and orientation to the health care system of the receiving country. This is important as there is considerable variation in health systems globally;
- information about the relationship between health and residency status. Resettled refugees may resist contact with health care services for all but acute health problems fearing that their permanent residence will be compromised if they are found to have a health problem;
- practical support to access health care services (e.g. transport and child care). This is particularly important for resettled refugees who have multiple health care problems requiring numerous follow-up appointments; those struggling with other resettlement tasks; and women, for whom family responsibilities may take precedence over self care;
- an approach to patient care which accommodates religious beliefs, different cultural understandings of health or health care, and lack of familiarity with the structure and culture of health care in the receiving country;
- an approach to patient care that accommodates the impact of past traumatic experiences, such as a loss of trust in figures of authority, reduced capacity for self care, and reduced capacity to concentrate and engage in the organisational effort required to participate in health care. Those who have survived torture and other traumatic events may find health care consultation a painful reminder of those experiences.

Additional steps may need to be taken by receiving countries to ensure that these needs are met, as:

- resettled refugees may not be readily identified by health care providers in the wider health care system, particularly in communities which are already very culturally diverse;
- most health care providers in refugee receiving countries are unaccustomed to dealing with a patient group with limited or disrupted access to health care and may be unaware of the need to offer more comprehensive catch-up care;
- many health care providers in receiving countries, having gained their professional experience in an environment of

**Table Ten:  
Health problems to be aware of in resettled refugees**

Health concern	Key issues
Mental health, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• post traumatic stress disorder symptoms</li> <li>• depression</li> <li>• anxiety</li> <li>• grief</li> <li>• guilt</li> <li>• somatic disorders</li> <li>• culture bound illness*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• associated with exposure to traumatic events and other antecedents in the course of the refugee experience;</li> <li>• may persist long after arrival in a safe country;</li> <li>• can be exacerbated by stresses in the period of resettlement.</li> </ul>
Nutritional deficiencies, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iron</li> <li>• Folate</li> <li>• Vitamin A</li> <li>• Vitamin D – settlers with dark skin where climatic, lifestyle and cultural factors (e.g. skin coverage) in country of resettlement lead to reduced exposure to sunlight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may result from prolonged food deprivation and/or sub-optimal diet;</li> <li>• potentially serious health implications (e.g. maternal Vitamin D deficiency associated with bony rickets in offspring);</li> <li>• early identification important as some deficiencies are asymptomatic, but may have serious long term health consequences (e.g. Vitamin D deficiency associated with early onset osteoporosis in adults; folate deficiency associated with neural tube defects in the offspring of affected mothers).</li> </ul>
Intestinal parasitic disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• endemic in developing countries;</li> <li>• often asymptomatic;</li> <li>• may be associated with iron deficiency;</li> <li>• can be life threatening if immuno-suppressed.</li> </ul>
Infectious diseases, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AIDS/HIV</li> <li>• Tuberculosis</li> <li>• Hepatitis B and C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some infectious diseases endemic in developing countries;</li> <li>• public health programs (e.g. tuberculosis control) difficult to implement and maintain in emergency situations such as refugee camps;</li> <li>• identification of entrants with infectious disease is important for both public and individual patient care purposes.</li> </ul>
Injuries sustained in the course of trauma and torture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may be untreated or poorly managed.</li> </ul>
Chronic disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may be due to poor or disrupted access to health care;</li> <li>• may not be diagnosed or be inadequately managed, particularly in countries with poorly developed health care infrastructure;</li> <li>• stress and deprivation associated with the refugee experience may be a factor in the onset of some chronic disease (e.g. diabetes militus).</li> </ul>
Childhood development	Relatively high incidence of childhood developmental problems due variously to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deprivation and trauma;</li> <li>• poor antenatal and birth care;</li> <li>• prior exposure to infectious disease;</li> <li>• poor management of common infant and childhood diseases (e.g. febrile illness);</li> <li>• poor child health surveillance in some countries.</li> </ul>





## Table Ten: Health problems to be aware of in resettled refugees (continued)

Health concern	Key issues
Dental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the result of poor diet and limited access to the resources required for dental hygiene in the course of the refugee experience;</li> <li>• damage to teeth and gums sustained through torture and other traumatic experiences.</li> </ul>
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited access to screening;</li> <li>• misplaced, damaged or stolen prescription glasses.</li> </ul>
Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• possibility of hearing impairment due to exposure to explosive activity in conflict zones;</li> <li>• limited access to screening.</li> </ul>
Immunisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low rates of immunisation against vaccine-preventable disease in many countries;</li> <li>• immunisation programs often disrupted by war and conflict;</li> <li>• acceptance of immunisation in resettlement countries may be affected by past negative experiences of immunisation programs (e.g. coercive practices, inadequate follow-up of complications of immunisation).</li> </ul>
Women's health care (e.g. breast and cervical screening, family planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited or disrupted participation;</li> <li>• accorded a low priority in countries struggling to meet acute health care needs;</li> <li>• female genital mutilation prevalent in some countries-of-origin – has implications for gynaecological and obstetric care (see Chapter 3.2).</li> </ul>

\* Culture bound illnesses are illnesses commonly recognised within a cultural group whose explanatory models may differ from that of a bio-medical paradigm.

Sources: see Endnotes, p. 293.



## Adjusting to an unfamiliar health care system

RESETTLED refugees will require practical information on the health care system of the receiving country (see p. 204). However, there are also a number of more subtle cultural differences which may affect the ways in which new settlers access and use health care services.

Resettled refugees may be:

- less likely to raise health concerns, having learned to live with sub-optimal health in the context of prolonged deprivation;
- unfamiliar with the concept of illness prevention and the role of doctors in treating emotional problems and

offering referral for social support, with these concerns having had a low priority in refugee source countries;

- unaware of the possibilities for treatment in resettlement countries;
- less inclined to play an active or assertive role in their own health care with more traditional and hierarchical relationships between doctor and patient prevailing in some refugee source countries;
- unfamiliar with the roles of mental health and social support professionals such as social workers and psychologists. This may

be exacerbated in some communities by the stigma attached to mental illness.

At the same time, however, it is important to note that some refugees come from countries which, prior to conflict occurring, had very well developed, free and universally accessible health care. There may be some adjustment involved for these entrants as they settle in countries where health care is provided on a fee-for-service basis or where there are long waiting times for government funded programs.

relative peace and affluence, will have limited skills in addressing health problems associated with exposure to refugee related deprivation and trauma;

- financial and workload constraints in receiving countries may work against the longer consultation times, multiple consultations and extra-consultation activity which is often required when providing early health care to resettled refugees. These are necessary due to the additional time taken in communicating with an interpreter, the complexity of the health issues concerned and other patient care needs such as establishing rapport, explaining unfamiliar concepts and making referrals to specialists and allied health professionals;
- in many countries, professional interpreters are not readily available to health care providers, in particular, those in private practice. Resource constraints may work against deployment of interpreters in publicly funded facilities;
- early health care for resettled refugees often requires the input of allied health and social support professionals, general medical practitioners and professionals with mental health and communicable disease expertise. In receiving countries linkages between these services may not be well developed.



**We Somali have come to Australia from war – we have injuries and other health problems. We need services, but we are afraid to go.**

Resettled refugee



HEALTH



## A HEALTHY START: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

### Issues to consider in planning a healthy start

Overall planning goals – promoting access to the wider health care system

While many countries make special provision for early health assessment, there is a consensus that the overall emphasis in planning should be on ensuring that resettled refugees have access to the same health care services provided to nationals. However, given the barriers many new arrivals face in accessing services, most countries recognise the need to take specific steps to ensure that resettled refugees understand and are able to make the best use of services and that the wider health system is responsive to their needs.

#### Payment for health services

In some receiving countries the costs of health care and pharmaceuticals are met by the service user on a fee-for-service basis, through participation in a private health insurance scheme, or through a work-based health care program (for which a qualifying period may be involved). In these cases, consideration will need to be given to arrangements for ensuring that resettled refugees have access to fee-free or affordable health care, at least in the early resettlement period when they face particular financial constraints.

Of particular concern in this regard are access to dental and optical care. As indicated in Table Ten, many resettled refugees have poor oral health and have lost or misplaced prescription spectacles. In some resettlement countries, these services are available to nationals on a ‘fee-for-service’ basis only or there may be long waiting periods for government funded services. Recognising the critical role oral health and visual capacity play in the integration process, a number of countries have made specific provision for resettled refugees. For example, in New Zealand, dental care is provided as part of a reception health care program.

#### Health assessment or a ‘health check’

Many countries offering refugee resettlement recognise the importance of making formal arrangements for resettled refugees to participate in a thorough health assessment or a ‘health check’ either prior to or soon after their arrival. There are a number of reasons for this:

— Resettled refugees have intensive health care needs in the



early period of resettlement that may not be readily met through general health care services.

- Formalised health assessment offers a means of detecting and treating communicable disease. This is important both to protect the health of the individual and to prevent the spread of disease in receiving countries. It also helps to maintain broader political and community support for refugee resettlement programs in the receiving community.
- If offered routinely through a formal system, health assessment can help to avoid unnecessary repeat investigations that might otherwise occur if it is provided on an opportunistic basis through the general health system.
- Provision for formal health assessment enhances the prospects for early identification and treatment, particularly of diseases and conditions that are asymptomatic.
- Formal health assessment can provide important information to assist in the resettlement of new arrivals with additional needs, such as resettled refugees with disabilities and women-at-risk.
- Formalised health assessment, if offered in the receiving country, provides an opportunity to introduce new arrivals to specific treatment and illness prevention services (such as dental and child health surveillance programs), to link them with other resources required for successful integration, and to orient the new arrival to the health care system and to build their trust in it.

In this context it is important to distinguish health *assessment* from health *screening*. Screening is typically a standardised process that is both limited and selective. While it may have benefits for the individual, in an integration context, screening is performed primarily to meet public health goals (in particular, prevention of the spread of communicable diseases in receiving communities). In contrast, assessment is a thorough, holistic process that is tailored to the needs of the individual patient and performed with their ongoing management in mind. It is important to consider incorporating communicable diseases screening into health assessment, particularly in those countries where pre-departure medical examinations are not performed or are limited to certain diseases.

Health assessment is offered with differing degrees of formality in existing countries of resettlement. In some integration programs, it is offered through a dedicated program (either prior to departure or on reception), with resettled refugees being routinely required or invited to participate. Others use outreach and capacity building





## A HEALTHY START: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

strategies to ensure that new arrivals are able to access this care through the wider health system. In other countries, limited health assessment may be offered in the country of departure with other aspects being provided on reception.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provides a program of pre-departure health assessment on behalf of resettlement governments, along with treatment of certain diseases. Pre-departure screening can provide information to assist receiving countries to plan for resettled refugees in advance of their arrival. Treatment of some conditions (e.g. immunisation, parasitic infection) may also be cheaper in countries of departure. However, pre-departure health assessment is not a substitute for post arrival health care as it tends to be limited and selective. Further conditions of a more chronic and complex nature will require long term follow-up in the resettlement country. It is not uncommon for there to be a prolonged period between the pre-departure health check and the resettled refugee arriving in the resettlement country. Post arrival health care is important to identify and treat any problems that have developed in this period.

In some countries, participation in health screening is mandatory (often being part of the refugee selection process), while in others it is voluntary. Although there are clear public health benefits in requiring mandatory screening, it may work against the principle of providing resettled refugees the same rights as those offered nationals.

While health assessment should be offered as soon as possible after arrival, in practice, resettled refugees may find it difficult to prioritise health care over other resettlement tasks. For this reason it is prudent to offer a generous period for participation in health assessment. In countries with no or limited provision for pre-departure or reception communicable disease screening, measures to ensure that assessment is offered early in the resettlement period will be of greater importance.

Procedures for obtaining informed consent, conducting pre- and post test counselling and for adequate follow-up of problems identified are important considerations in health assessment programs.

### Preventing and treating communicable disease in refugee communities

Considerable social stigma is attached to communicable diseases in many countries. Confidentiality will be particularly

important when treating resettled refugees with these diseases, as many will be reluctant to disclose their disease status even to close family members. Some resettled refugees may have contracted a communicable disease such as HIV/AIDS as the consequence of rape in the course of their refugee experience and this may be a source of considerable pain and shame.

In planning for the prevention and treatment of communicable disease in refugee communities it will be important to consider:

- communicable diseases screening;
- engaging bilingual and bi-cultural workers to provide advice to planners and health professionals and direct support to affected resettled refugees;
- resources to ensure that relevant health professionals are aware of communicable diseases affecting refugee communities and are able to offer high quality and sensitive care. These may include access to technical assistance, written resources and professional development programs;
- prevention of blood-borne viruses in refugee communities. Prevention, education and treatment programs are poorly developed in refugee source countries and resettled refugees may have limited knowledge of the transmission, prevention and treatment of blood-borne viruses. Where practical, refugee communities should have access to culturally sensitive multilingual information;
- intensive settlement support for resettled refugees with communicable diseases requiring complex and long term treatment regimens (e.g. HIV, TB). Resettled refugees may need some support to understand the need for ongoing treatment; practical assistance to ensure their compliance with treatment regimens and psychological support to deal with the consequences of a positive diagnosis. Recent advances in treatment of HIV/AIDS mean that those diagnosed have enhanced long term survival prospects. Intensive settlement support will help ensure that this group realises their integration potential.

Marital or relationship breakdown may sometimes occur where one partner is detected with a serious communicable disease such as HIV/AIDS and it may be necessary to arrange alternative accommodation to enable the couple to live separately.

## Initiatives to support a healthy start

Support and advocacy to access health services

Those supporting resettled refugees in the reception period play an important role in assisting them to undertake early



HEALTH



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Preventing HIV/AIDS in refugee communities in New Zealand

HEALTH SERVICES in New Zealand consulted with African community leaders to seek their advice on how to collaboratively develop an effective refugee HIV/AIDS community education campaign and their support to recruit and	train refugees to provide education to their communities. Using the training as a basis, the educators developed their own health promotion programs and began undertaking HIV education, including safer	sex and destigmatisation activities. The educators also contributed to the development of culturally appropriate resources, handbooks, flip charts and videos for use by refugees and health care providers in New Zealand.
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### The importance of communication in a health care context

THE ROLE of language assistance in refugee integration has been discussed in Chapter 2.5. It is particularly important in health care given the sensitivity of the issues involved and the high level of

technical language proficiency required to communicate medical terminology. There may also be medico-legal risks associated with poor communication in a health care context.

health assessment and in linking them with services in their community for ongoing management. This may involve providing information about services, promoting the importance of early health care, briefing health care providers about the person's special needs, arranging appointments and interpreters and negotiating transport and other practical matters (e.g. child care).

While support to access health services can be provided either in place of, or in addition to, a dedicated clinical service, it is particularly important in those countries where refugee settlers are reliant on the wider health care system for early health care. A particular advantage of this approach is that support is delivered in the local communities in which new arrivals settle.

In many countries support to access health services is provided as part of the reception process, either by private sponsors or proposers, reception or resettlement support providers or by volunteers (depending on how reception is organised in the

receiving country). In others, it is provided through a special health program provided by allied health care workers. For example, in Australia, the national government funds an Early Health Assessment and Intervention Program. The program provides information about health and health care to resettled refugees through group information sessions and by developing and distributing multilingual materials. Individual support is offered to those with more intensive needs. Support workers also seek to enhance resettled refugees' access to health services through broader developmental activities such as the provision of professional development, professional and community education and advocacy to encourage services to adopt approaches that are sensitive to the needs of new arrivals.

The experience of existing integration programs is that providing individualised support to resettled refugees to access health care is highly effective. A recent Australian study involving general practitioners providing early health assessment to resettled refugees found that those supported by an allied health care worker were more likely to participate in and complete post arrival health assessment than those accessing services independently<sup>6</sup>.

### Provision of information to new arrivals

A number of strategies have been implemented by existing integration programs for providing health information, including

- the development of multilingual written and audio materials for direct distribution to new arrivals or for use in orientation programs;
- incorporating orientation to the health care system in pre-departure and post arrival orientation programs;
- offering special orientation sessions on the health care system;
- incorporating health information in training and support materials for professional and volunteer social support providers (e.g. settlement workers, private sponsors, or participants in mentor and befriending programs);
- through avenues accessed by new arrivals in the course of accomplishing other tasks of resettlement. For example, a program developed in Australia incorporates information about health and health care into Adult English as Second Language curriculum;
- community education programs targeted to refugee communities (e.g. through ethnic media, group support programs provided through primary health care services).



**When we arrived here, we had lots of needs. We had been in a refugee camp for a long time. One of my children had a serious health problem. I had a back injury that needed treatment. But we knew nothing. We did not know where to start.**

Resettled refugee



HEALTH



## What information will new arrivals need to access reception health assessment and early health care?

CONSIDER incorporating the following into both pre-departure and post arrival information for new arrivals and those providing support to them:

- the benefits of making contact with a doctor as soon as possible after arrival;
- information about the relationship between health and residency status;
- whether appointments are important; how they can be made; and whether it is important to be 'on time' (health care is accessed on an ad hoc basis in many refugee producing countries. Failure to attend, or being late for, appointments can be a source of conflict between resettled refugees and health care providers);
- how to find a doctor and the importance of returning to the same doctor. New arrivals accustomed to accessing health care through large centrally located clinics, may find public hospital emergency departments more familiar and acceptable. However, this may not be appropriate in those countries where the trend is toward providing general medical care through community based general practice;
- how services are paid for or accessed (e.g. fee-for-service, insurance or registration arrangements);
- programs to assist people on low incomes, to meet the costs of health care and pharmaceuticals;
- information about specialist refugee health services where relevant;
- arrangements for interpreters for health care consultations;
- information on services for people with special health care needs (e.g. those with disabilities);
- the culture of the health care system of the receiving country (e.g. confidentiality, the concept of informed consent, doctor-patient relationships);
- any features of the structure or culture of the health system that contrast with those in country-of-origin (e.g. pharmaceuticals tend to be more stringently regulated in receiving countries);
- arrangements for dental health care, immunisation, child health surveillance (with these differing markedly between countries), hearing, optometry and women's health care;
- how specialists are accessed (e.g. in some countries this might be through referral from a general practitioner, while in others specialists can be accessed directly);
- the role of allied health professionals such as social workers and psychologists;
- the importance and role of illness prevention programs and the concept of illness prevention (which may not be a feature of health care in some refugee source countries).

### Building capacity in the wider health system

A number of initiatives have been developed in existing resettlement countries to enhance the capacity of the wider health system to respond to the needs of resettled refugees, including:

- formal partnerships between health services to provide coordinated, multi-disciplinary care either within a



- community or from a specific service setting;
- multi-disciplinary service provider networks to enhance communication, mutual understanding, coordination and referral between providers (e.g. infectious disease and mental health professionals, settlement workers, general practitioners);
- referral protocols between health care providers;
- agency level protocols to ensure that resettled refugees are identified and that they are offered sensitive support (e.g. interpreters);
- funding programs and financial incentives to enable general health care services to meet additional costs associated with providing care to resettled refugees (e.g. to employ bilingual workers, to offer longer consultations);
- partnerships between health services and other settings such as schools to enhance identification and referral of resettled refugees with particular health needs;
- the development of ‘help-desk’ services for health professionals requiring assistance in the management of more complex health issues.

### Work force development and support

There are a number of ways in which existing integration programs have successfully built work force capacity in refugee health. These include:

- identifying professionals with skills and interest in refugee health care (e.g. health professionals from refugee or ethnic communities, nationals with overseas aid experience) and



**When I was pregnant I used to visit the doctors, but it was not always the same doctor. I had to explain all the time my situation. I was feeling alone and helpless.**

Resettled refugee



HEALTH





## A HEALTHY START: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE



### Using existing resources in emerging resettlement countries

IN BENIN, which has a relatively new resettlement program and a small refugee intake, a doctor is employed to provide general medical care. Some resettled refugees, however, have more complex health needs, sometimes related to past trauma. In these cases the program has approached traditional healers in the community and mental health professionals working in a local non-government agency. These health care providers have worked as a team with the settlement worker, so that health, psychological, emotional and social support can be provided in a coordinated fashion.

recruiting them to work in specialist services or in areas where a large number of refugees settle. These professionals may also be deployed on a sessional basis or in an advisory capacity;

- designing and delivering professional development programs, particularly for those health professionals involved in formalised early assessment or in areas where a large number of new arrivals settle;
- developing resource materials for health professionals;
- providing health professionals with access to cultural consultants/cultural mediators;
- providing health professionals, particularly those in the wider health care system, with access to consultation with a more experienced practitioner to support them in dealing with complex and difficult issues;
- providing debriefing and peer support to health professionals who see many resettled refugees or who have limited peer support, such as medical practitioners in solo practices (see Chapter 3.1).

#### Capacity building in refugee and wider communities

The refugee and wider communities have an important role in both providing practical support to people accessing health services and in assisting them to understand and negotiate the health care system and to act as their advocates within it.





## Information for professional education and development

CONSIDER incorporating information on the following in professional education and development programs:

- country background information. A list of sources can be found on page xi;
- how refugee patients can be identified;
- protocols for the identification and management of communicable disease;
- what, if any, investigations have been performed in the context of formal pre-departure or reception health assessment or screening;
- the importance of offering overall health assessment (particularly in countries where this is not offered through a formalised program);
- the impact of trauma and

torture and how this can be addressed in care (e.g. dealing with a disclosure, making referrals);

- allied health services available to resettled refugees, in particular, specialist services for survivors of trauma and torture;
- booking and working with interpreters;
- cultural and religious factors affecting relationships with health care providers;
- cultural views of health and illness. For example, some resettled refugees are from cultures where explanatory models of illness differ from the bio-medical approach advocated in many resettlement countries;
- cultural and religious factors that may affect

health care provision. For example, the bruises left by 'cupping', a traditional healing method in some Asian cultures, may be mistaken for abuse in children. Some resettled refugees use traditional remedies which may result in adverse reactions if taken in conjunction with bio-medicines;

- key features of the structure and culture of the health care system in countries-of-origin (e.g. the relative importance of appointment systems, doctor-patient relationships, the role of traditional healing methods);
- the importance of self care (including peer support and debriefing) to avoid stress and burn-out.

This potential has been tapped in a number of countries of resettlement through capacity building activities such as befriending and volunteer programs. In some countries these programs have a specific focus on health. In others, health issues have been built into broader social support programs.

### Special health services for resettled refugees

The overall goal in planning post arrival health services should be to ensure that resettled refugees have access to the same range and quality of services provided nationals.

Nevertheless, specialist services and programs do have a critical role in an overall strategy of ensuring that the wider health care system is responsive to resettled refugees.





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### The Victorian Mosque project

“  
**At home when we are shy to talk to a male doctor we have the opportunity to go to a female. But here we don't have that choice. We also have difficulty with the language...of course you want to explain yourself and so maybe he doesn't understand what you want to say.**  
 Resettled refugee

“  
**We are used to a doctor who touches us, listens to our chest, but here it's just conversation. And because we are foreigners and they are not touching us we think that maybe they are afraid to get infectious diseases like AIDS. We have all these things in our minds.**  
 Resettled refugee

THROUGH its trauma counselling service, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) in the Australian state of Victoria became aware of the particularly horrific experiences new arrivals from Iraq had been subject to prior to fleeing. Accordingly it decided that intensive efforts would be made to reach this community.

Initial contact was made through a Mosque in the area in which many entrants from Iraq settle. In

the course of delivering information sessions about health care in Australia, it became apparent that in addition to health concerns, many were experiencing problems with resettlement, which the community was struggling to address (e.g. immigration matters, housing and employment).

In collaboration with the Red Cross, the VFST developed a training program to assist established members of the Mosque community to offer advocacy and support to new arrivals. The Red Cross contributed its expertise in resettlement related matters, while the VFST assumed responsibility for the health components.

One of the significant barriers to accessing resources faced by the Iraqi

community was a reluctance to assert their needs to service providers. As a result of their past experiences of persecution, they feared that they would suffer reprisals if they did. Accordingly the emphasis in the training program was on developing an understanding of the Australian health care system, the rights of service users within it and strategies for ensuring access to appropriate support.

This project has made a significant contribution to the Iraqi community's capacity to support resettled refugees. The Mosque now has a team of volunteer advocates trained to assist new arrivals to access both health and resettlement services. This helps to reduce dependency on specialist services and to normalise their experiences.

In addition to developing the skill base of the community, this project has been instrumental in increasing the resources available to address resettlement concerns, with the Red Cross and a local support agency continuing to offer a service at the Mosque. It also demonstrates the ways in which health and resettlement concerns can be addressed in an integrated fashion.

## The advantages of specialist refugee health services

IN SOME COUNTRIES, initial health assessment may be provided through a specialist service or program, with arrangements for ongoing support being arranged through a community based provider. The advantage of this system is that management can be structured and resourced to accommodate the intensive patient care needs typically experienced by new arrivals at the time of reception (e.g. longer consultations, interpreters). If provided by a multi-disciplinary team from the one premises, this system also minimises the organisational effort that would otherwise be involved in accessing multiple health care providers in different venues.

Through their contact with a large volume of resettled refugees, specialist services are in a position to identify and document trends and issues; to explore and model appropriate responses to these and to develop specialist expertise. This information, together with their particular focus on refugee health care, provides a basis for:

- developing and delivering professional development programs and resources for health care providers in the wider health care system;
- providing secondary consultation to other health care providers;
- planning appropriate responses to care in the wider health care system;
- raising awareness of and advocating the needs of resettled refugees to other health care providers, government and refugee and wider communities.

Specialist services may also play an important role in providing support to resettled refugees with particularly complex needs.

However, there are a number of problems associated with establishing special refugee health services as a sole response to their needs:

- Specialist services seldom attract sufficient resources to meet the needs of all new arrivals.
- Specialist services alone may work against providers in the wider health care system developing skills and

confidence in caring for resettled refugees and in assuming responsibility for their support.

- In those countries where refugee resettlement programs struggle for legitimacy, there is the risk that specialist services will become health care 'ghettos' with poor staffing and facilities.
- In many countries of resettlement, resettled refugees are placed across a broad geographic area, making it difficult to ensure access to a specialist service.
- Unless specialist services can be provided in local communities, their capacity to develop relationships with, and subsequently link new arrivals to, resources and services at the local level is limited.
- Specialist services may serve to pathologise the refugee experience and cast resettled refugees as different.
- Health care providers caring for large numbers of people with complex needs may be vulnerable to burn-out.





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

## The Canadian bridge program

The Bridge Community Health Clinic was established in Vancouver, Canada in 1994 as a collaborative venture of a major hospital; an agency providing resettlement support to new immigrants; a health promotion service; Vancouver's health authority; and other agencies providing mental health, family and resettlement support to culturally diverse communities.	immunisation, cervical screening) and links them with resettlement and mental health services where required. From the outset, however, the collaborators were of the view that it would be neither possible nor in the interests of refugee communities to establish a clinic for refugees as an alternative to health care services provided in the general community. Not only would such a clinic struggle to meet the needs of all new arrivals settling in Vancouver, new arrivals would continue to experience difficulties in accessing health care in their local communities. Accordingly, the service plays an important role in enhancing the capacity of the wider health system to meet the needs of new arrivals. It does this by:	accrued in the course of its direct service and liaison with health care providers to raise awareness of the needs of resettled refugees among service providers, government and the wider community; • providing formal training opportunities for medical, nursing and other health professionals as well as professional development programs to practising health care providers. A significant factor in the success of the clinic has been its collaborative orientation and its emphasis on building partnerships with other health services in the community. Through collaboration the clinic has been able to draw on the combined skills and resources of a number of agencies and to adopt a holistic approach, incorporating both health and resettlement concerns as well as both curative and preventative approaches. Through partnership the clinic has been able to facilitate clients' access to the range of specialist and allied health care services required by new arrivals in the early resettlement period (e.g. dental care).
The clinic was established recognising that refugees settling in Vancouver were struggling to access health services, the result of language and cultural barriers and difficulties in either paying for care or securing health insurance.		
The Bridge Community Health Clinic offers a health assessment service to resettled refugees, which is free-of-charge. On-site interpreters speaking nine community languages between them are available to clients unable to speak English. As well as screening for communicable disease and addressing obvious physical health concerns, the clinic introduces new arrivals to preventative health care programs (e.g.	• developing partnerships with other health and resettlement support providers to ensure coordinated service delivery to new arrivals; • referring clients to services in their local community following initial assessment and management; • using the information	

## Provision of information to the wider community

Antipathy toward refugee communities in resettlement countries can be fuelled by a perception that resettled refugees carry diseases which pose a threat to the receiving community or that are a burden on the health care system.

Integration personnel can ensure that receiving communities are accurately and appropriately informed about health matters affecting resettled refugees by:

- emphasising the survival strengths of resettled refugees;
- indicating that many of the health problems experienced by refugee settlers are the result of past deprivation and poor prior health care, most of which can be addressed by intensive but time limited ‘catch-up’ support in the early resettlement period;
- describing measures in place to identify and treat communicable disease.

When providing information, there is a need to strike a balance between identifying the health care needs of refugee settlers while at the same time being careful not to reinforce negative stereotypes of refugee settlers.



**I came at the lowest point in my life. I had been heavily humiliated, eight years of humiliations and I was a ruin. I now feel I am brought back to the level of a human being.**

Resettled refugee



**I suffered torture in my country. So I asked if they could at least examine me. I actually had many problems with my health but now I feel very well. There are no problems. Bravo!**

Resettled refugee





## SUPPORTING A HEALTHY START FOR RESETTLED REFUGEES

### OVERALL HEALTH PROGRAMS WOULD:

- be planned and monitored with input from refugee communities;
- take account of the needs of refugees while at the same time serving public health goals;
- ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place for new arrivals to access early health assessment;
- incorporate means of monitoring and documenting overall trends and issues for the purposes of professional development and ongoing service improvement;
- make provision for health care providers to access fee-free interpreter services for conducting health consultations with new arrivals;
- incorporate means of informing new arrivals about and orienting them to the health care system of the receiving country and providing them with support and practical assistance to access it;
- have developed a work force development strategy.

### SPECIFIC HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDED TO RESETTLED REFUGEES WOULD:

- be voluntary and confidential;
- be free-of-charge or affordable;
- offer new arrivals choice of gender of treating practitioner;
- offer resettled refugees extended consultation time, multiple consultations (where required) and relevant extra-consultation follow-up;
- offer accredited interpreters;
- be delivered by or involve input from a multi-disciplinary team involving expertise in mental health, communicable disease, allied health and general medical care;
- be delivered by health care professionals with expertise in responding to the special health care needs of resettled refugees, including those determined by cultural differences;
- have well developed links with other health care services involved in refugee health care as well as with services, networks and resources required by new arrivals in the integration process (e.g. employment and housing services);
- provide debriefing and professional support to health care providers, particularly those caring for many refugee patients.







## CHAPTER 2.11

# Creating Welcoming and Hospitable Communities and Restoring Faith in Government

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind



## Chapter 2.11

# Creating Welcoming and Hospitable Communities and Restoring Faith in Government

Welcoming and extending hospitality to resettled refugees and restoring their faith in government are critical goals of a refugee resettlement program and themes discussed throughout this Handbook. Strategies for promoting hospitality in key systems such as health care and employment placement services, as well as in specific components of an integration program, such as reception and orientation, are discussed in other relevant Chapters.

The focus of this Chapter, however, is on ways in which countries of resettlement can foster a broader social climate so that resettled refugees feel welcome, safe and understood in their day-to-day interactions in the communities, workplaces, schools and other institutions of the receiving society and so that receiving societies benefit from the attributes of resettled refugees. It is concerned with steps that can be taken to achieve these objectives at both the community and governmental levels and through the media.





## CHECKLIST

## Planning and supporting the development of welcoming and hospitable communities

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ soliciting the support of community leaders in local integration sites;
- ✓ developing a media strategy;
- ✓ preparing a media information kit;
- ✓ identifying integration experts in relevant ministries;
- ✓ making provision to grant resettled refugees permanent residency;
- ✓ citizenship provisions.

In the longer term, aim for:

- ✓ strategies to engage and build the capacity of key local constituencies to support integration (e.g. employers, labour unions, faith-based communities, local authorities);
- ✓ strategies to strengthen ethno-cultural communities and cultural and religious institutions;
- ✓ planning and legislative frameworks to promote integration and cultural diversity;
- ✓ developing pre- or post arrival cultural orientation programs;
- ✓ strategies to counter racism and xenophobia;
- ✓ strategies to promote community awareness and understanding of refugee resettlement in the media;
- ✓ strategies to protect and monitor human rights.

## What is a welcoming and hospitable community?

THERE IS a broad consensus in existing countries of resettlement that a welcoming and hospitable community is one which:

- accepts and embraces diversity of culture, race, ethnicity and religion;
- promotes diversity as an asset to receiving societies;
- extends support to newcomers to ensure that they have equitable access to the resources of the receiving society and are

able to participate equally in it;

- supports newcomers to maintain and build their connections with their culture-of-origin as well as the receiving community;
- promotes freedom from xenophobia, racism and discrimination;
- promotes an understanding of the nature and consequences of the refugee and resettlement experience at governmental, institutional and

community levels;

- has a commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights at domestic and international levels.

In an integration context, however, it is important that hospitality is viewed as a 'two-way street' with resettled refugees also being offered opportunities to understand and negotiate the culture of the receiving country. Strategies for achieving this are discussed in Chapter 2.7.

## Hospitable communities as resources for integration and rebuilding

A welcoming and hospitable environment can support the integration of resettled refugees by:

- assisting them to re-establish and maintain a feeling of security in their new country, since fear and anxiety resulting from traumatic experiences often persists long after arrival;
- assisting them to feel a sense of belonging;
- ensuring that resettled refugees are able to access the resources they require for their resettlement and participation in the communities and institutions of the receiving society;
- strengthening cultural communities, thereby enhancing new arrivals' access to social support and enabling them to reconnect with cultural and religious institutions and practices;
- fostering a climate of understanding, acceptance and tolerance of people from refugee backgrounds, enhancing the prospects of them developing meaningful connections with individuals and institutions in the receiving society;
- restoring the trust often lost in others in the course of their refugee experiences, particularly in government officials and others in a position of authority (see p. 20);
- affirming that they are believed and that they have the right to the protection of the receiving country and to be treated with respect and dignity.

In an environment in which they are made welcome resettled refugees are not only better placed to contribute their skills and attributes, but will have a higher level of motivation to do so. Facilitating access to resources and fostering the conditions in which resettled refugees can engage with systems and individuals in the receiving society also helps to prevent their social and economic marginalisation. Mutual understanding and respect between resettled refugees and the wider community helps to build a socially cohesive and harmonious society. This has benefits not only for resettled refugees, but also for other distinct groups, such as indigenous communities and people with disabilities.

### Factors affecting welcoming and hospitality

Many resettled refugees originate from countries where government officials and professionals are involved in perpetrating violence and persecution. For these reasons resettled refugees may have a heightened sensitivity to injustices in the receiving society or a fear or lack of trust of



**If the (social) 'climate' is not right, the resettlement is so much harder.**

Resettlement worker



COMMUNITY



**CREATING WELCOMING AND HOSPITABLE COMMUNITIES  
AND RESTORING FAITH IN GOVERNMENT**



those in positions of authority (such as teachers or law enforcement officers). These factors may have an impact on the extent to which they feel safe, on their capacity to form relationships within the receiving society, and on their interactions with key systems such as schools and social service authorities.

Limited proficiency in the language of the receiving society is another significant factor.



**When people welcome you  
and you feel good, you  
share your own ideas.**

Resettled refugee



Also influential are conditions in the receiving society, including:

- the extent to which there are communities with an interest in human rights, refugee issues and democracy building (e.g. faith-based communities, human rights groups);
- the existence of established ethno-cultural communities and their capacity to contribute to building a welcoming and hospitable environment;
- existing legislative frameworks and policies and programs for managing cultural diversity;
- the extent of understanding at community and governmental levels of the reasons for resettled refugees leaving their countries-of-origin;
- the extent to which cultural and racial diversity and tolerance is promoted at government and community levels;

## Media, community and governmental attitudes

IN MOST societies there is a diverse range of views about refugee issues at the governmental and community levels.

When they are given practical expression in individual interactions and governmental and institutional practices or in the media, negative attitudes can make resettled refugees feel unwelcome in the receiving society.

Racism and xenophobia are a particular concern in this regard. As well as compromising the safety of resettled refugees, racism and xenophobia may contribute to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression; affect access to integration resources (such as housing and employment); and

hamper their participation in the receiving society<sup>1</sup>.

There are a number of factors which may contribute to indifference or hostility toward resettled refugees, and which may need to be managed by governments and others with an interest in refugee resettlement and human rights. Among these are:

- a general antipathy toward migration, held in the belief that refugees and immigrants will compete for scarce resources or threaten the way of life of the receiving country. This is a particular concern for those resettled refugees whose racial features or cultural and religious practices distinguish them from the dominant culture;
- perceptions that resettled

refugees are offered better government support than is available to nationals;

- public confusion about who refugees are and the nature of the refugee experience. Negative attitudes toward asylum seekers may also be extended to resettled refugees. The questioning of the motives and credibility of asylum seekers can serve as a painful reminder of resettled refugees' own experiences of not being believed or thought worthy of protection. Perceptions that asylum seekers are being treated unjustly can undermine their faith in the compassion of the receiving society.

- attitudes toward migration and resettlement at community and governmental levels;
- the approach taken by the media in the receiving society;
- the extent of support for the protection and promotion of human rights at both community and governmental levels;
- the extent to which the country has a tradition of making newcomers welcome.

### Issues to consider in facilitating the development of hospitable communities

The importance of partnership and local engagement

Government has an important role in fostering hospitality by setting overall legislative and planning frameworks and providing funding to support capacity building activities in the refugee and wider communities.





## CREATING WELCOMING AND HOSPITABLE COMMUNITIES AND RESTORING FAITH IN GOVERNMENT

However, the integration of resettled refugees occurs at a highly localised level in the communities, workplaces and institutions of the receiving society. The experience of resettlement countries is that it is critical to engage the co-operation and involvement of key local constituencies, in particular:

- employers and labour unions;
- local neighbourhoods;
- faith-based communities;
- school communities;
- local governments (in some countries referred to as authorities or municipalities);
- ethno-cultural groups and services;
- the media;
- human rights organisations.

Community engagement is important not only for extending hospitality to newcomers, but because it can help to build a basis of understanding and support for refugee resettlement.

### Managing conflicting cultural practices

As indicated above, it is important that resettled refugees are encouraged to retain their culture-of-origin. Nevertheless there may be instances where differences in cultural practices between resettled refugees and the wider community raise cause for concern or conflict:

- Certain cultural practices may be considered either life- or health-threatening or be abhorrent to the receiving country. For instance, in some countries, laws to prohibit the practice of female genital mutilation have been introduced on these grounds (see Chapter 3.2).
- Certain cultural practices may be in the interests of some members of refugee communities, but may be considered by the receiving society to be contrary to the interests of others. For example, child discipline practices in some refugee communities may be considered harsh in resettlement countries. Similarly, some refugee source countries have views about gender relations which would be regarded in receiving societies as placing women at social and economic disadvantage.
- Some practices may depart so much from the ‘norms’ of the receiving society that they place resettled refugees in a position where the resulting conflict or isolation from the receiving society is not in their interests.

How conflicts of this nature are managed will depend both on the issue concerned and on the receiving country. As indicated

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Promoting social inclusion and understanding in Denmark and Ireland**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • A Danish local authority has funded refugee subscriptions or memberships to join local sporting clubs and community gardens (allotments). This scheme enables resettled refugees to meet with Danes with a common interest on equal terms. | • In the Shannon area in Ireland, refugees visit schools and local rural associations to talk about their past experiences, giving many Irish people their first experience of meeting people from different cultural and ethnic origins. |
|--|---|

elsewhere in this Handbook, integration is a two-way street, with resettled refugees adapting to the ways of their new country and receiving societies learning about and adapting to the practices of refugee communities. Consistent with this notion, most receiving societies manage conflicting cultural practices with a continuum of strategies, encompassing:

- educating the wider community to increase tolerance and to accommodate the values, beliefs and practices of newcomers;
- mediation and bridge building between the refugee and wider communities;
- awareness raising and education in refugee communities.

**Initiatives to support the development of hospitable communities**

## Engaging the wider community

In many countries community based groups and institutions (such as faith-based communities and unions) have played an important part in fostering welcoming and hospitality by:

- developing awareness raising activities and strategies to combat racism and xenophobia among their constituencies and in the wider community;
- fostering the participation of refugees in local institutions and organisations such as schools, clubs, associations and places of worship;
- ensuring that resettled refugees are represented in administrative and decision-making positions. For example, labour unions in a number of countries have sought to encourage the active participation of refugees and immigrants;
- taking measures to ensure that local institutions and organisations are responsive to resettled refugees;
- supporting cultural events such as festivals and special days;
- contributing to volunteer social support and sponsorship programs.







## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Community involvement in refugee resettlement in Canada**

<p>CANADA has a long history of community participation in refugee resettlement, with the people of Canada being awarded the Nansen Refugee Award in 1996, in recognition of their humanitarian and compassionate response to refugees.</p> <p>This involvement is demonstrated in the work of the Manitoba Inter-faith Immigration Council, which was formally established in 1968 to provide social and moral support to newcomers. This work is undertaken by both volunteers and paid staff, many of whom are themselves immigrants or former refugees. Membership of the Council is open to all faith groups, with the Anglican, Baha'i, Hindu, Jewish, Lutheran, Mennonite, Muslim, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Sikh and United Church faiths currently being represented.</p> <p>The Council provides orientation, settlement support and housing to resettled refugees as well as information on, and referral to, health care and other services. Through a volunteer program, resettled refugees are offered friendship, informal language training and basic practical support and are linked with other social and recreational activities in Manitoba.</p>	<p>In the Saskatoon area, a coalition of volunteers works with newcomers to educate, enable and equip local residents to respond to the needs and concerns of refugees. The Coalition has established a drop-in centre providing information to newcomers and facilitating their connections with the broader Saskatoon community. The drop-in centre provides employment assistance, opportunities for social interaction and both formal and informal language learning activities.</p> <p>The Coalition also provides professional development to health, teaching and other front-line workers on issues affecting refugees, such as the impact of torture and trauma. Through alliances with other government and non-government services, it helps to ensure that important programs and systems, such as schools and employment services are responsive to the needs of newcomers.</p> <p>Regular public and community information events are held to celebrate the contributions of both newcomers and volunteers and to raise awareness of global refugee issues as well as those facing refugees resettling in Canada.</p> <p>Both the Council and the Coalition play an active role in supporting Canada's private sponsorship</p>	<p>program (see p. 89) by promoting the program in their communities and offering training and support to sponsors.</p> <p>The success of both these networks has been due largely to their capacity to engage broader community constituencies in their work. While both receive some funding from government and non-government sources, much of their work continues to be undertaken by volunteers. These constituencies bring a wealth of human capital and other resources to the task of refugee sponsorship and resettlement and provide a direct link between resettled refugees and the wider community.</p> <p>Through their personal contact with refugees, citizens gain an appreciation of the experiences and cultures of resettled refugees. This in turn helps to foster tolerance and understanding, with benefits for both resettled refugees and their new communities.</p> <p>The fact that both the Coalition and the Council have broad and informed constituencies also strengthens their capacity to contribute to government policy and to play an advocacy role on refugee resettlement issues when required.</p>
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## Capacity building in ethnic communities

In Chapter 2.3 some of the ways in which receiving countries can support the development of ethno-cultural communities, and, in particular, ethno-cultural organisations and services, for the purpose of enhancing social support for resettled refugees, are explored.

These communities and their organisations also have an important role in building hospitable and welcoming communities. They can:

- undertake public advocacy and awareness raising activities to promote understanding of refugee communities;
- act as mediators in the event of cultural conflicts between refugee communities and the receiving society;
- support refugees to become involved in decision making at the workplace, community and broader political levels;
- provide cultural advice to governments, service providers and other institutions so that they are able to respond sensitively to resettled refugees;
- support the development of programs and facilities for new arrivals to promote cultural retention and identification (e.g. support groups, cultural events, community arts projects, ethnic community centres and places of worship, ethnic radio and television programs, ethnic newspapers and newsletters);
- provide opportunities for civic participation. In this respect they provide a relatively ‘safe’ context in which resettled refugees can gain confidence and skills in participatory processes. Lessons learned in these contexts can be transferred to their participation in forums in the wider community;
- enable refugee communities to participate on a more equal footing in the receiving society through collective action.

Within refugee communities leadership styles and dynamics may have developed which were functional in persecutory and corrupt regimes (e.g. mistrust, suspicion, leadership gate-keeping), but which work against facilitating broad participation in receiving societies. Capacity building initiatives can help to address this.

## Working with the media

The media has a powerful role in shaping community attitudes to a range of issues, among them refugee resettlement<sup>2</sup>. In a number of countries, integration personnel have worked closely with the media with a view to enhancing broader community understanding of the refugee experience and to



### Fostering hospitality in emerging countries of resettlement

THE experience of emerging countries of resettlement is that priority should be given to securing the support of community leaders and ‘opinion setters’.

In Benin, for example, once local sites had been selected, information sessions were held with district and traditional chiefs, mayors and neighbourhood leaders with the aim of promoting tolerance and understanding of refugee issues as well as seeking their collaboration and support.



**My neighbours are very kind people. One day I was very sick, I had a pain in my kidneys, so my husband asked the neighbours for help. Not only they called for a doctor, but they also paid him because we didn't have enough money.**

Resettled refugee



COMMUNITY



## Key messages to convey when communicating with receiving communities and the media

THE TONE and key messages communicated to the media and receiving communities will need to be tailored to the country concerned.

Consider:

- placing resettlement in a global context, demonstrating that the receiving country is one of a number of countries sharing the global refugee burden;
- emphasising that refugees were compelled to leave their home countries for their own safety;
- providing information on the procedures used by the UNHCR and the receiving country to select resettled refugees. This will help to counter the

erroneous view that resettled refugees are primarily 'economic migrants' and provide reassurance that careful health and character checks are undertaken;

- emphasising what the country can offer resettled refugees (e.g. hospitality, freedom from persecution);
- explaining what supports are available to resettled refugees to help counter perceptions that resettled refugees are offered preferential treatment over nationals;
- emphasising the benefits that resettled refugees offer to receiving societies. Consider using examples of prominent refugees as well as international

research on the social and economic benefits of migration and resettlement (see Chapters 1.1 and 1.2);

- providing relevant country background information (see p. ix for sources);
- providing information on how individuals and communities can contribute to refugee resettlement.

While these messages are concerned specifically with refugee resettlement, consideration may also need to be given to addressing broader issues such as challenging myths about certain cultures or questioning racial stereotypes.

raising awareness about the benefits of resettlement for both resettled refugees and the receiving society.

Equally, however, the media can reflect negative attitudes held in some sections of the wider community, which may not only fuel anti-refugee sentiment, but also generate feelings of fear and anxiety among resettled refugees. As their primary source of information in the early resettlement period, the media will have a powerful influence on resettled refugees' perceptions of the receiving society and the extent to which they are welcome in it. This is an important factor to bear in mind when working with the media and highlights the need for integration personnel to monitor media reporting of refugee issues.

The experience of resettlement countries is that while it is not possible to control the way in which the media covers refugee issues, those supporting integration at both governmental and community levels can be prepared by:  
—having accurate, succinct information prepared in advance

## Working with the media to promote a welcoming and hospitable environment for resettled refugees

### THINK ABOUT:

- cultivating relationships with journalists;
- strategies to build the capacity of those in key integration roles at both the governmental and community levels to work effectively with the media (e.g. providing training, developing resource manuals);
- securing the co-operation of prominent or respected individuals to act as 'spokespeople' for refugee resettlement (e.g. by preparing opinion pieces on refugee resettlement for daily newspapers; participating in radio and television interviews);
- monitoring newspaper 'letters-to-the-editor' sections and talk-back radio for opportunities to promote refugee resettlement or counter erroneous views;
- approaching training institutions to have refugee issues addressed in undergraduate curricula and professional development courses for journalists;
- using popular media such as women's magazines and television serials to communicate about refugee issues;
- providing grants to support the development of documentaries, films and drama addressing refugee issues;
- establishing awards to recognise excellence in reporting on refugee and resettlement issues.

to make available to the media. In some countries formal media kits have been developed;

- thinking carefully before soliciting media coverage of specific refugee intakes, particularly in emerging countries where the novelty value of resettlement may mean that it attracts intense interest. Resettled refugees themselves do not always welcome this coverage, particularly in countries with relatively small refugee intakes where they may be readily identified. New arrivals are ill-equipped to represent themselves in the media, especially if they are not fluent in the language of the receiving country. There is also the risk that any small problems which subsequently emerge will attract intense and possibly sensationalised media coverage and compromise long term government and community support;
- developing a media strategy. This is particularly important at the governmental level. Typically this involves establishing a committee or working group of relevant government ministries and the identification of key personnel to serve as media spokespeople. To ensure consistency in communication with the media, it is wise to secure agreement on key messages. Regular monitoring of the strategy will enable it to be adjusted in response to changing circumstances.

**It's hard to overcome the sense that people see you as handicapped because of your refugee background and you constantly feel that you have to prove who you are.**

Resettled refugee



COMMUNITY



## Issues to be aware of in media reporting of refugee issues

JOURNALISTS are often working under tight time lines and are under pressure to prepare stories which are 'newsworthy'. Some may reflect negative attitudes held in the receiving community, or may be under pressure from media owners or editors to present refugee issues in a certain way. This may lead to:

- sensationalist reporting of

refugee related issues, often provided without a wider context;

- inaccurate and negative stereotyping of ethnic minorities;
- attributing problems in refugee communities to ethnicity without regard for other factors such as structural unemployment, social exclusion or past experiences<sup>3</sup>.

Positive reporting, meanwhile, may often be relegated to 'human interest' segments focusing on cultural contributions such as ethnic foods, music, costumes and festivals. While these are important, they are often emphasised at the expense of the economic, civic and intellectual contributions made by resettled refugees.



## Understanding and welcoming through ethnic media

MANY COUNTRIES OF resettlement have supported ethno-cultural communities to develop ethnic media, such as radio and television stations or programs and newspapers and magazines.

These are an important source of information about events in other countries, promote cultural retention and provide an avenue for resettled refugees to learn about their rights and the resources available to them in the receiving country, in their own language.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

**Using popular media**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The popular Australian drama series <i>Neighbours</i> featured several episodes where child cast members offered support to a refugee. In the context of this relationship the show explored conditions in the character's country-of-origin, his reasons for flight and his conditioned fear of authorities.</li> <li>Similarly, the British police drama <i>The Bill</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>screened episodes exploring racial harassment of Kosova refugees and the dilemmas facing those unable to have their professional qualifications recognised in the receiving society.</li> <li>Women's magazines in a number of countries have run articles based on 'case studies' of refugee women.</li> </ul>	<p>These approaches not only reach a wider audience but also enable issues, myths and prejudices to be explored at a deeper and more personal level. Integration personnel can play a role in encouraging television, radio and magazine producers to address resettlement issues and can provide relevant research and background materials</p>
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**Building capacity at the governmental level**

Resettlement countries have implemented a number of initiatives to ensure that government services and programs are responsive to refugee and immigrant communities. Among these are:

- planning documents or strategies which reflect a formal government commitment to integration and/or cultural diversity and define the ways in which this will be implemented across government. Examples include Australia's *New Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* and Sweden's *Integration Policy*;
- advisory committees at senior government levels to assist in the planning, implementation and monitoring of integration and the acceptance of diversity. In many countries these committees include representation from refugee and immigrant communities;
- special policy and program units within government departments to ensure that the policies and activities of government are responsive to the needs of refugee and immigrant communities. In some cases, these units may also provide technical support and assistance to governmental officers involved in service delivery (e.g. many police departments have ethnic liaison units). In emerging countries, or countries with small refugee intakes, an alternative may be to identify and support 'integration experts' within relevant government ministries;

INTEGRATION  
IN PRACTICE**Building media skills in Britain**

The British national lottery periodically engages a media adviser to provide training to ethno-cultural organisations and non-government organisations to develop skills in presenting to the media. Its focus is on promoting positive images of refugees and refugee issues.



COMMUNITY

INTEGRATION  
IN PRACTICE**Refugee voice  
in Sweden**

THE Municipality of Lulea in Sweden has established an immigrant council through which refugees and immigrants can have their say. Their meetings are attended by local commissioners and its proposals and comments are submitted to the full council executive.

- initiatives to ensure that people from refugee and immigrant backgrounds are represented in the public sector work force (e.g. equal opportunity programs, internships). These demonstrate the receiving society's commitment to the inclusion of resettled refugees (as well as providing employment opportunities and an avenue for refugees to contribute);
- legislation to promote equal opportunity among or prevent discrimination against individuals on the grounds of their race, ethnicity, religion or country-of-origin. Typically this legislation is concerned with access to a wide range of resources, including public places, vehicles, employment, housing, goods and services, education and land. In some countries, particular rights of refugees and immigrants are enshrined in legislation. For example in the USA the *Civil Rights Act* establishes the right of people with limited language proficiency to an interpreter when accessing federally funded services. A number of countries have also introduced legislation to promote racial and religious tolerance and prevent racism and xenophobia. Commonly, legislation in these areas also provides for the establishment of an independent body to investigate individual breaches of the legislation, review other government legislation to ensure compliance, and conduct awareness raising activities;
- becoming signatories to key international instruments to promote and protect human rights. Others have also established bodies to monitor government legislation, and activities to ensure that human rights are observed at the domestic level. Examples include Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and New Zealand's Human Rights Commissioner;
- programs to promote wider understanding of resettlement and global refugee issues, and the value of cultural diversity and/or to challenge negative community attitudes toward migration and resettlement. These have used a variety of strategies, among them television and radio advertisements, posters and pamphlets, resource materials and websites.

## Permanent residency and citizenship provisions

Security of residency and legal equality in the receiving country is especially important in the early resettlement period. Recognising this, most countries grant resettled refugees permanent residence and confer upon them most of the same rights and responsibilities as nationals. Common exceptions are the right to hold a passport, to vote, to be employed in certain public sector positions or to hold public office.



## How does legislation contribute to creating a welcoming and hospitable community?

LEGISLATION can serve as an effective deterrent, set standards for appropriate behaviour and provide resettled refugees with recourse in the event that they are subject to unfair treatment.

Legislation also has important symbolic value, being a practical expression of the receiving society's commitment to the protection and promotion of the rights of resettled refugees and demonstrating its abhorrence of discrimination and violence against them. The experience of established countries of resettlement, however, is that legislation is more likely to be effective if complemented by community education and other initiatives.

If resettled refugees are to have recourse to remedies provided by legislation, it is important that these are accessible (for example, through the simplification of procedures, translated materials, and individual support to access remedies).

### INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

#### Informing the community

EACH YEAR the Australian government produces a booklet documenting the government's response to refugee and humanitarian issues. The booklet describes the Australian resettlement program in the context of the global refugee issue and other measures being adopted by the government to promote refugee protection.

The process of becoming a citizen of the receiving society is an important practical and symbolic milestone in the integration process, particularly given that resettled refugees have lost citizenship of their countries-of-origin. It affirms that resettled refugees 'belong' in the receiving society and allows them full participation in political life. Importantly, it accords them the right to consular protection in the event that they encounter difficulties while overseas and to travel on the passport of the receiving country.

The process of securing citizenship also allows resettled refugees to state formally their obligations to the receiving society.

At the same time, however, some resettled refugees may experience some ambivalence about the process of becoming a citizen, particularly if they hold hopes that circumstances in their countries-of-origin will one day change to allow their safe return.

Significant factors to consider in relation to citizenship are:—residency requirements. While these currently range from between two to eight years in countries of resettlement, there is a general consensus that, for the reasons above, it is in the best interests of refugees and receiving countries to



COMMUNITY



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

## Citizenship in Australia and Canada

AS PART of their commitment to welcoming refugees and immigrants to full participation in their societies both Australia and Canada actively promote, support and facilitate the process of citizenship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exempt refugee and immigrant elders from the language requirements of citizenship;</li> <li>• actively promote citizenship through community campaigns and other government funded programs for refugees and immigrants, including orientation programs provided prior to and following arrival;</li> <li>• use the process of becoming a citizen as an opportunity to extend</li> </ul>	welcome to newcomers. For example, Canada's recent <i>Welcome Home</i> campaign to promote citizenship welcomed newcomers into the Canadian family with messages from school children. In Australia, at citizenship ceremonies, new citizens are given an Australian native plant and information on how they can participate in Australian civic society.
Both countries:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have relatively short residency requirements for eligibility for citizenship, this being three years in Canada and two years in Australia;</li> </ul>		

enable them to seek citizenship as early as possible in the resettlement process;

- citizenship requirements. In almost all countries, resettled refugees (like other migrants) are obliged to demonstrate that they are of good character. In some countries they are also required to be fluent in the language of the receiving country and to complete either a written or oral test demonstrating their understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens. The stringency of these requirements varies between countries and will clearly influence how soon after arrival resettled refugees can apply for citizenship. In some countries, more flexible arrangements are made for refugee elders, recognising that they face particular difficulties in acquiring a new language (see Chapter 3.4).





## PROMOTING WELCOMING AND HOSPITABLE COMMUNITIES

### A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- have an overall framework for implementing and monitoring integration and promoting diversity across society;
- have legislative frameworks in place to promote equal opportunity, prevent discrimination and promote racial and religious tolerance;
- have measures in place to ensure that human rights are observed;
- involve resettled refugees in the planning and monitoring of integration and cultural diversity programs and strategies;
- have strategies in place to engage employers, labour unions, and local communities (in particular, faith-based communities and human rights organisations) in building hospitable communities;
- have measures in place to raise community awareness and understanding of, and support for, refugee resettlement;
- have measures in place to strengthen ethno-cultural communities and to build their capacity to provide opportunities for new arrivals to participate in cultural and religious activities and to serve as a bridge between refugee communities and the receiving society;
- offer resettled refugees permanent residence and its associated rights and responsibilities (including the right to travel) and enable them to seek citizenship at the earliest possible stage.





# PART THREE

## Planning for All








# CHAPTER 3.1


## Planning for Optimal Mental Health:

### Responding to Refugee-related Trauma

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

# Chapter 3.1

## Planning for Optimal Mental Health: Responding to Refugee-related Trauma

Owing to their past experiences, resettled refugees are at risk of developing mental health problems. As indicated in Chapter 1.3, it is important that integration programs are provided in ways that support emotional and personal rebuilding. As well as promoting the optimal well-being required to deal with the stresses and adjustments involved in resettlement, this approach can help to prevent the development of more serious mental health difficulties. This goal underlies planning of the individual components of an integration program in Part Two of this Handbook.

This Chapter, however, is concerned with identifying and supporting those with more complex psychological problems. The impact of trauma and torture on physical health is addressed in Chapter 2.10.


**CHECKLIST**

## Taking account of survivors of trauma

**Integration program component (see relevant Chapter in Part Two for more detailed information)**

**Think about:**

Placement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> availability of social support, health services and specialist trauma and torture services.
Settlement and social support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> more intensive early settlement support; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> support for survivors to access family reunification provisions.
Income support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> whether existing income support provisions for those outside of the paid labour force for reasons of disability, accommodate those affected by severe trauma.
Language training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> outreach and flexible delivery options; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> more intensive tuition for survivors of torture and trauma; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> offering a generous 'window period' for participation, as survivors of trauma and torture may not be able to benefit from language training soon after arrival.
Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> reviewing protocols guiding the allocation of housing on a priority or urgent basis to ensure that refugee-related trauma is considered in assessment criteria.
Employment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> intensive job search support for resettled refugees affected by trauma and torture.
Health care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> specialist services for trauma and torture survivors; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> culturally relevant approaches to addressing trauma and torture; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> professional development and awareness raising among mental health services concerning the needs of trauma and torture survivors with acute mental illness.
Welcoming and hospitable communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> promoting understanding in the wider community of the effects of refugee-related trauma and the role of a welcoming environment in recovery; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the need to take into account the impact of trauma on refugee communities in refugee community capacity building.
General	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> professional development, training and awareness raising activities for key personnel and professionals to enhance their capacity to identify and support survivors; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> debriefing for relevant personnel; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> service provider networks to promote information exchange and coordinated support.



## How common is exposure to traumatic experiences?

- It is estimated that up to 35% of the world's refugee population have been subject to severe physical torture and/or psychological violation<sup>1</sup>.
- Routine assessment of refugees settling in the Victorian state of Australia in 1999 indicated that seven in 10 had experienced psychological or physical violence of some kind<sup>2</sup>.
- A study of refugee and humanitarian entrants settling in the Australian state of New South Wales found that one in four had been subject to severe trauma and torture<sup>3</sup>.

## Why plan for resettled refugees with refugee-related trauma?

In the course of their refugee experiences, many resettled refugees will have been exposed to traumatic events. These may have included torture and/or trauma of a more generalised nature such as indiscriminate violence, forced displacement from their homes and communities, civil conflict and extended periods of deprivation. As a result of these exposures, resettled refugees are at higher risk of developing psychological problems, in particular, post traumatic stress disorders, depression, anxiety and grief<sup>4</sup>.

This does not mean that all newcomers will develop mental health problems. As indicated elsewhere in this Handbook, resettled refugees generally have well developed personal survival skills and most go on to lead healthy and emotionally fulfilling lives in receiving societies.

However, for some, psychological symptoms will be sufficiently severe as to interfere with their day-to-day functioning<sup>5</sup>. This may be due to a number of factors, including the severity of the trauma to which they were exposed, individual predisposing factors and/or stresses in the resettlement environment<sup>6</sup>. Symptoms often persist after arrival in a safe country and in some newcomers may last for many years<sup>7</sup>.

Studies have shown that a significant factor influencing psychological responses to trauma and recovery from its negative effects is the quality of the environment following traumatic experiences. While a supportive, stable environment

## Is refugee trauma a mental health risk factor?

MANY of the effects of exposure to trauma and torture are difficult to measure and vary between refugee groups, depending on the nature and severity of their exposure and a range of individual and environmental factors. However, clinical studies have found:

- rates of post traumatic stress disorder ranging from between 39% and 100%<sup>8</sup> (compared with 1% in the general population)<sup>9</sup>;
- rates of depression of between 47% and 72%<sup>10</sup>.



## Are refugee children affected by trauma?

UNTIL recently it was commonly assumed that children were psychologically resilient and hence did not suffer long term effects from exposure to trauma. However, there is now a considerable body of

evidence to show that children often experience a psychological reaction not dissimilar to that found in adults. There may also be important and far-reaching impacts on social, cognitive and neurological

development, for instance, affecting the early formation of the capacity for attachment, sense of self, affect modulation, learning capacities and development of the child's social framework<sup>11</sup>.



**Reflecting on how I was a few years ago, I had practically lost trust and belief for anything in life, or even in myself...I knew that if I could get help, if people could understand and care for my experiences, I would start the belief again.**  
Resettled refugee

can help to prevent mental health difficulties, in contrast, exposure to further stresses in the resettlement period, such as housing problems, financial difficulties, isolation from family and community support or exposure to prejudice and hostility, can precipitate psychological symptoms or make them worse<sup>12</sup>.

While countries of resettlement clearly have very little control over conditions immediately following exposure to trauma, they can both promote optimal conditions for refugee mental health in the early resettlement period and minimise exposure to further negative impacts. Strategies for achieving this in other components of an integration program are addressed in each of the Chapters in Part Two of this Handbook and are highlighted in the checklist on p. 232.



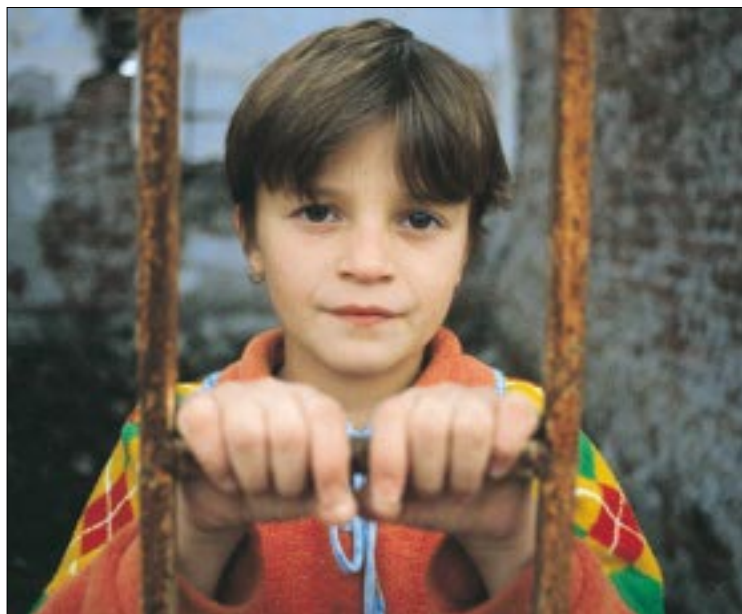
However, resettlement countries can also support those with more complex psychological problems by ensuring that they are identified and offered appropriate support at an early stage, when the prospects of recovery are generally better<sup>13</sup>. In an integration context, there are particularly compelling reasons for an early intervention approach, since psychological difficulties can serve as significant barriers to resettlement (see Table Eleven below).

Early intervention also has benefits for receiving countries helping to avoid the 'down-stream' social and health care costs which would otherwise be associated with addressing mental health problems which become more complex.

Supporting psychological rebuilding is important for future generations, with studies indicating that refugee-related trauma has effects on the mental well-being of the children of survivors which may persist into adulthood<sup>14</sup>.

## Table Eleven: The impact of trauma on resettlement

Possible behavioural and psychological responses to trauma	May impact on resettlement tasks by:
Guilt (particularly related to inability to secure the safety of other family members)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>undermining resettled refugees' capacity for self care and their belief in their worthiness of the support of others;</li> <li>acting as a barrier to seeking support and to developing relationships with formal and informal support providers.</li> </ul>
Lack of trust/disrupted attachments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>undermining supportive relationships within families;</li> <li>affecting the formation of supportive relationships;</li> <li>affecting relationships in the workplace and community;</li> <li>increasing resettled refugees' vulnerability to anxiety, anger and suspicion when interacting with public officials, such as teachers, law enforcement officers, and personnel in government departments.</li> </ul>
Impaired concentration, anxiety, flash-backs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interfering with the process of learning new tasks, especially language acquisition;</li> <li>increasing vulnerability to stress and anxiety when performing new tasks, having an impact on securing basic resettlement resources and participation in employment and education;</li> <li>increasing vulnerability to stress during medical consultation, particularly if invasive procedures are involved.</li> </ul>





## **Planning for survivors of trauma and torture: Overall considerations**

### Identification through early assessment and settlement support

The processes of conducting assessment and offering early settlement support provide opportunities for early identification. Formal psychological assessment can be incorporated into these processes or resettled refugees can be provided with information for self identification and referral. In some countries, a formal psychological assessment is routinely offered. In others, identifying resettled refugees requiring more intensive psychological assistance is incorporated into the role of social support providers (see Chapter 2.3).

In several countries, specialist psychological support is made available to resettled refugees as part of the reception process. For example, in New Zealand, the Ministry of Health and the Refugees as Survivors (RAS) Centre offer a service at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre where all resettled refugees are accommodated in the first six weeks following their arrival. In Australia, all resettled refugees are eligible for trauma and torture counselling in the first 12 months following their arrival and are informed about this service as part of assessment and early settlement support (see Chapter 2.3).

It is important to maximise opportunities for early intervention in the reception period. However, this is also a time when symptoms may be masked by the effects of the 'honeymoon' phase (see p. 25); suppressed in the context of other practical pressures; or given a lower priority while resettled refugees accomplish other tasks which are fundamental to their survival. It is not uncommon for psychological difficulties to be precipitated by the stresses associated with the confrontation and adjustment phases as resettled refugees begin to face the realities for the challenges before them (see p. 25).

For this reason, psychological support services will need to be made available well beyond the reception phase. Others who have contact with resettled refugees later in their resettlement (e.g. doctors, child care workers, teaching professionals, volunteer social support providers) should also be supported to identify and refer those requiring more intensive support and to deal sensitively with a disclosure of refugee-related trauma.

Support services may also be needed by resettled refugees as they age in the receiving society. The experience of countries with a long history of refugee resettlement has been that resettled refugees without a prior history of psychological problems may be vulnerable to developing symptoms as they age. The reasons for this are not well understood. However, they may be due to the increasing physical, social and psychological vulnerability associated with advancing age, age-related adjustment stress (in particular, adjustment to retirement) and the diminishing importance of other responsibilities (such as child care and career) which may serve as psychological defences in younger adults.



### Approaches to providing support

While approaches to the treatment of refugee-related trauma have been the subject of considerable debate in receiving societies in recent decades, a broad consensus has developed among mental health researchers and practitioners that the optimal approach is one which combines:

- individual, family or group therapeutic approaches;
- support to address adverse environmental conditions which may exacerbate psychological symptoms (e.g. housing, lack of social support);
- pharmacological approaches where required.

In many countries, therefore, psychological support is usually provided in the context of an integrated approach, involving assistance with resettlement concerns, and in some cases general medical care.

Typically, support is provided by a multi-disciplinary team involving counsellors, social support providers, psychiatrists, general medical practitioners and in some cases other professionals such as natural therapists, physiotherapists and massage therapists. In some countries, this team operates from the one premises. In others, a team approach has been fostered through strategies to build co-operative relationships between support providers in existing generalist services (e.g. provider networks, referral protocols).

Counselling, which focuses on the individual, may be unacceptable in some cultures where greater emphasis is placed on whole families or communities working through a problem together<sup>15</sup>. For some resettled refugees this may be addressed by explaining the role and purposes of individual approaches to psychological support. However, a number of


**INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE**
**Men supporting men in Sweden**

IN LULEA, Sweden, municipal social workers collaborated with the local psychiatry clinic to form the Neptune Group for refugee men affected by war-related trauma. Drawing on the fact that many of the men came from cultures with a strong bath-house tradition, the men were invited to join the	group at the local public baths for a swim and sauna followed by coffee and discussion. The group enabled the men to share experiences that others might find difficult to understand. This was important as many of the men had previously felt they were alone with their	problems. By discussing common symptoms such as forgetfulness and loss of concentration, the men came to recognise and understand these symptoms as common responses to torture. The men have also developed supportive links with one another through their participation in the group.
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**A good friend of mine, somehow noticing that I had reached that desperate stage, persuaded me to meet a group of women. It was a good beginning...**  
Resettled refugee



countries have developed alternative interventions such as the use of music, singing or dancing, art, natural and tactile therapies or traditional healing approaches (e.g. engaging faith healers). These have often developed in consultation with refugee communities.

Psychological support may also be more acceptable to some resettled refugees if it is provided in the context of activities, such as craft or recreational groups. This may involve partnership arrangements between psychological support professionals and providers of other services.

#### Enhancing the availability of psychological support

In many countries psychological support may only be available on a fee-for-service basis (at a cost which is prohibitive for many resettled refugees) or there may be long waiting times for publicly funded services.

While the demand for support may be met to some extent by specialist services, most countries also recognise the importance of building the capacity of existing psychological support providers to work with resettled refugees. This has been achieved by:

- developing networks of professionals prepared to offer fee-free or affordable services to resettled refugees (e.g. psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors);
- strategies to build the capacity of professionals in publicly funded primary health care services, such as counsellors and general practitioners, to provide psychological support to resettled refugees.

## Specialist services for survivors of trauma and torture

A NUMBER of countries have established special services for survivors of trauma and torture.

Most of these services provide direct support to resettled refugees. However, for reasons outlined in Chapter 2.10, it is not intended that they will serve all resettled refugees requiring psychological assistance. Rather, most have the broader strategic objectives of:

- building an environment that promotes the psychological well-being of all resettled refugees;
- assisting others who have contact with resettled refugees to identify and refer those with more

severe psychological problems;

- enhancing the capacity of existing psychological support providers in receiving countries to support resettled refugees.

They do this by:

- conducting awareness raising activities;
- providing professional development to raise awareness of the psychological consequences of the refugee and resettlement experiences and ways in which workers can contribute to psychological rebuilding;
- providing professional development and practice resources to workers who

have contact with resettled refugees to assist them in identifying and referring those requiring more intensive support;

- supporting other psychological support providers through secondary consultation, professional development and debriefing;
- fostering partnerships with other services serving resettled refugees to enable psychological support to be provided in the context of other activities (e.g. craft groups) or settings (e.g. schools);
- network building.

Effective capacity building will depend on the identification of a lead agency with appropriate professional skills. In some countries of resettlement, specialist services for survivors of trauma and torture have been established for this purpose (see box).

### Supporting resettled refugees to access psychological support services

A number of factors may influence resettled refugees' capacity to access and make use of psychological support, including:

- their perceptions of mental health services. Resettled refugees may lack familiarity with the role of mental health services in receiving societies or be fearful of contact with them. Mental health services are poorly developed in some refugee source countries. Conditions in in-patient care may be harsh and treatment options limited<sup>16</sup>;
- their knowledge that their confidentiality will be respected;
- their familiarity with psychological support, in particular, counselling, and its benefits;




**INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE**
**An integrated approach to supporting survivors of trauma and torture**

<p>THE CANADIAN Council for the Victims of Torture (CCVT) offers an integrated approach to supporting the rehabilitation of survivors of torture and refugee-related trauma. A range of services are provided to clients and their families, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support with resettlement issues such as housing and employment;</li> <li>• crisis intervention counselling, often focussing on family issues;</li> <li>• individual and group therapy;</li> <li>• referral to medical, legal and social service professionals. This is facilitated through a network of professionals in the community developed and supported by the CCVT;</li> <li>• a befriending program whereby survivors are linked with volunteers. The aim of this program is to assist survivors to rebuild their connections to other individuals and</li> </ul>	<p>the wider community;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a program linking survivors with volunteers who provide moral and practical support to attend appointments for medical, legal, health or settlement related matters;</li> <li>• a language instruction and training program for survivors with trauma symptoms, such as impaired concentration or depression, which impede their participation in general classes.</li> </ul> <p>The service emphasises the role of the wider community and service networks in supporting survivors. As well as engaging these networks through its volunteer programs and professional referral network, the CCVT provides public education to school communities, service clubs and other community groups to raise their awareness of the impact of torture and the ways in which communities can</p>	<p>provide a supportive environment. Professional development programs are provided to personnel who have contact with survivors, along with secondary consultation to support them in their work with individual clients.</p> <p>This approach recognises that while torture often has an impact on the physical health of survivors, it also affects the psychological, spiritual, and social domains. Consequently, a range of resources are required to support survivors and their families, including basic settlement resources such as housing and health care, as well as activities to build supportive social relationships between survivors and both the refugee and wider communities. It is based on the premise that a ‘therapeutic bond’ between survivors and these communities is essential for rehabilitation.</p>
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- their acceptance of western style approaches to psychological support;
- attitudes to seeking psychological support in refugee communities. There may be a stigma attached to mental health problems in some refugee communities;
- their trauma symptoms and the extent to which these impact on help-seeking (see Table Eleven);
- the availability of language assistance;
- whether psychological support is geographically and practically accessible to them.





Various strategies have been adopted in resettlement countries to address these issues, including:

- building bilingual work force capacity in key clinical and client contact positions, particularly in mental health and support services;
- deploying bilingual workers to undertake individual and community outreach and provide cultural consultancy to mental health professionals;
- providing language assistance (see Chapter 2.5).  
Professionally trained interpreters will be particularly important to overcome resettled refugees' fears that their privacy will not be respected;
- awareness raising and education in refugee communities to enhance mental health literacy, understanding of mental health issues and knowledge of the role and purpose of mental health services;
- awareness raising and professional development activities to support settlement and other workers to assist resettled refugees to better understand and access mental health services;
- developing models which enable psychological support to be provided in the context of other group or individual activities;



## Resettled refugees with underlying mental illness

Exposure to refugee-related trauma may complicate the condition of those resettled refugees with existing mental illness, such as schizophrenia. Underlying mental illness may also serve as an additional barrier to

accessing care. It is important that professional development and work force development and awareness raising activities are also targeted to professionals providing acute mental health care.

- service level strategies to support access (e.g. home visiting, appointment reminder calls, flexible appointment systems, assistance with child care and transport);
- exploring alternative approaches in consultation with refugee communities (e.g. spirits, faith healing, natural and tactile therapies).

Building capacity in the wider resettlement environment to support refugees affected by trauma

As indicated above, many symptoms commonly experienced by trauma survivors may interfere with important resettlement tasks and hence more intensive assistance may be required.

If services are sensitively provided this can have a powerful therapeutic effect. For example, a sensitive consultation with a health care provider can help to re-establish resettled refugees' trust in others, affirm their worthiness to receive care and provide reassurance to those who fear that they have been irreparably harmed by their experiences.

Professionals and volunteers also have an important role in identifying resettled refugees requiring more intensive support and offering to assist them with a referral to a psychological support agency.

The checklist outlined on page 232 outlines steps that can be taken to ensure that the needs of those affected by trauma are taken into account by personnel in integration services and in the wider society.

## Caring for children and young people affected by trauma and torture

Capacity building initiatives will be particularly important in those settings serving refugee children and young people, such as child care centres and schools. Early intervention offers this group the benefits of assisting both at an early stage of resettlement as well as early in their development (see Chapter 3.3).

'One-to-one' therapeutic assistance may not always be possible or appropriate for refugee children and young people (see Chapter 3.3). However, child care and school facilities can be supported to adopt strategies to respond sensitively to affected children and young people, strengthen family support and offer an environment which offers the very best prospects for rebuilding.





## → The role of professional debriefing

CARING FOR highly traumatised clients can evoke emotional reactions in workers, which may influence the provision of appropriate support as well as leading to personal stress. Experience suggests that those working with resettled refugees are better able to deal with this stress if they have opportunities to talk with others<sup>17</sup>.

The need for professional debriefing will be influenced by:

- the nature and level of professionals' contact with resettled refugees. More structured arrangements will need to be made for those seeing large numbers of refugee clients or in roles which involve a high level of disclosure of trauma;

- the extent of access to day-to-day peer support. Particular efforts will need to be made for sole practitioners such as general practitioners;
- whether the professional is from a refugee background themselves. Interpreters and bilingual workers may share many experiences in common with refugee clients or may have friends and relatives in unsafe circumstances in their countries-of-origin or refuge. This can be a source of additional stress.

Consider making arrangements for professional debriefing for the following professionals and volunteers who have extensive contact with resettled refugees:

- interpreters and translators;
  - teaching professionals in adult and basic education settings;
  - health care providers;
  - specialist trauma and torture counsellors and other practitioners;
  - child care professionals;
  - social support professionals and volunteers, in particular, those from refugee communities.
- Established resettlement countries have adopted a number of approaches to providing professional debriefing, including:
- building case discussion and review into the work practices of relevant providers;
  - offering regular professional debriefing on an individual or group basis.




# CHAPTER 3.2

## Taking Account of Gender

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind





## Chapter 3.2 Taking Account of Gender

This Chapter explores factors that will need to be taken into account in integration planning to support the adjustment in gender roles, identity and relationships that often accompany settlement in a new country. It also outlines gender related differences in the refugee and resettlement experiences that need to be considered when planning integration programs in receiving societies.

Why consider gender in integration planning?

While refugee men and women share many needs in common, gender role and status differences (which characterise societies across the globe, albeit in different ways and to different degrees)<sup>1</sup> produce differences in their refugee and resettlement experiences which need to be considered in integration planning.

While some refugees will be settling in countries with gender relations comparable to those in their countries-of-origin and asylum, many will have come from societies where gender roles are more clearly defined and gender inequality and segregation is more marked. Both men and women may require some support to deal with the gender role and identity adjustment involved in resettlement.

The impact of gender role adjustments on relationships between men and women will also need to be considered. In some refugee source countries, greater authority is vested in men as household heads and community leaders. In contrast, in receiving societies women may have access to a greater range of rights and freedoms, particularly in family and relationship matters such as property rights, divorce and marital concerns. They may be more likely than is the case in refugee source countries to be in paid employment and to be engaged in civic life. This may result in tensions between men and women in refugee families and communities as women secure greater economic independence and embrace new possibilities in the receiving society.



## CHECKLIST

### Taking account of gender

**Integration program component (see relevant Chapter in Part Two)**

**Think about:**

Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> family and ethnic community support services, public transportation and trauma counselling for at-risk women;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> child care services for refugee families.</li> </ul>
Early settlement and social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> individual and family based assessment and settlement support;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> identifying and offering more intensive settlement support to 'at-risk' refugees;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community support networks, especially for women not in paid employment;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> culturally responsive services for refugee families affected by family violence and female genital mutilation (FGM).</li> </ul>
Income support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> income support for single parents.</li> </ul>
Language training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> strategies to foster the participation of refugee women.</li> </ul>
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> as for language training;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> providing information relevant to the family and domestic sphere (e.g. child care services, child welfare issues, FGM, health services and programs for women, family violence, family relationships, customs and laws);</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> providing child care to promote participation.</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> safety and security issues, especially for women.</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> intensive job search assistance for women experiencing employment disadvantage;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the adequacy of existing legislative frameworks to prevent discrimination against women in the work force;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> home based micro-economic enterprises, especially for families with child care responsibilities;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> safety and security issues affecting women accessing employment (e.g. transport arrangements, working hours);</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> availability of child care.</li> </ul>
Health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> support for refugee families to access hospital based obstetric care.</li> </ul>
Welcoming and hospitable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> providing information about family relationships and the strengths, customs and practices of refugee women to receiving societies;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fostering opportunities for refugee women's civic and community participation;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> gender sensitive community and recreation services (e.g. 'women only' swimming sessions).</li> </ul>
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> facilitating choice of gender of service provider for both men and women;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> professional development, training and awareness raising activities for key personnel and professionals to enhance their capacity to provide gender sensitive support.</li> </ul>



Gender inclusive planning will also be important for family economic self-sufficiency. Most refugee families, like families in the wider community, will depend on the wage earning capacity of both men and women. However, since many refugee women originate from societies where women's role is more clearly defined in the home, they may require additional support in the transition to paid employment.

Refugee men and women bring different but equally valuable resources to both receiving societies and the tasks of integration. Efforts will need to be made to ensure that the contributions of both are adequately supported. As indicated below this is a particular concern for women, who often assume primary responsibility in the domestic and family sphere, areas which are at risk of being neglected in integration planning when the principal emphasis is on economic self-sufficiency.

In recent decades, many countries of resettlement have adopted strategies to support gender equality in access to public resources such as employment, education and recreation; the equal participation of both men and women in civic life; and women's freedom from violence in both the public and private realms. Gender sensitive integration planning can help to enhance understanding of these goals in refugee communities and ensure that both refugee men and women have access to the same rights and opportunities as their counterparts in the receiving society.

The extent to which gender issues influence integration will vary, depending on:

- resettlement category. Women resettled as 'women-at-risk' may have particularly intensive needs;
- the extent of difference in gender roles and relations between refugee source countries and the receiving society;
- family status on arrival and in the early resettlement period. Women who do not have family or partner support, and single men may have more intensive resettlement needs.

## **Gender sensitive planning: Overall considerations**

### Role and identity adjustment

Resettlement in a new country may involve substantial changes in gender roles and identity. Refugee men, for whom identity is integrally linked with their paid work, their roles as providers



GENDER



## Appreciating the strengths and contributions of refugee women

REFUGEE women offer unique and valuable qualities to receiving societies and bring important resources to the process of integration. As well as having educational, vocational and professional skills, refugee women, like their counterparts in receiving societies, commonly assume primary responsibility in the domestic and family sphere. Hence, they are a major vehicle through which refugee communities contribute unique cultural perspectives and family and

community relational skills to resettlement countries.

The experience of international aid organisations is that refugee women are key contributors to community and economic development initiatives in refugee and other emergency situations. This involvement testifies not only to the skills and attributes of refugee women, but also to their survival skills and motivation in conditions of adversity.

In receiving societies, refugee women have

demonstrated a preparedness to organise both with one another and with women in the wider community around their common experiences as partners, mothers and home-makers or to address their shared vulnerability to violence and gender inequality. In many countries this has been an important force for promoting mutual understanding and harmony within and between refugee communities and between them and the wider society.

and their civic participation, may have particular difficulties in adjusting to the loss of social status that often accompanies resettlement, especially if they are unemployed or unable to work in their former professions.

Many resettled refugees are young single men from traditional societies where they will have been accustomed to having domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning performed for them by female relatives. They may require additional support to learn the tasks of independent living. Men in these circumstances may also face the adjustment associated with the loss of emotional support and natural male role models (such as fathers and uncles) that would otherwise have been available to them in the context of the extended family in their countries-of-origin. Particular efforts may be required to link men in these circumstances with alternative sources of support and guidance. In Canada, for example, a Somali community supported the integration of young male resettled refugees by linking them with older Somali family men who had been in Canada longer. The older men served as mentors, imparting important social and cultural values as well as providing practical and emotional support.



## The particular needs of 'women-at-risk'

'WOMEN-AT-RISK' are considered by the UNHCR as refugee women who have particular protection problems and find themselves without traditional support mechanisms. The special needs of refugee women in these circumstances could derive from persecution as well as from particular hardships sustained in either their country-of-origin, during their flight or in their country-of-refugee<sup>2</sup>. The objectives of the UNHCR's assistance to 'women-at-risk' are to:

- provide international protection through

resettlement of refugee women who are particularly at risk in their country-of-refugee;

- ensure that 'women-at-risk' receive specialised care, if needed, and intensive support upon arrival in their country of resettlement, with a view to achieving successful socio-economic integration and self-sufficiency.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand have special 'women-at-risk' programs as part of their broader refugee and humanitarian resettlement programs.

Other countries resettle 'women-at-risk' as part of their general refugee intake.

'Women-at-risk' are likely to have experienced a high degree of refugee-related trauma and may lack personal integration resources such as literacy, education and prior formal work experience. Most will be without family support.

Specific efforts should be made to identify women in these circumstances through early assessment and to ensure that they are offered more intensive support (see Chapter 2.3).

Refugee women, meanwhile, face multiple role adjustments in receiving societies. In many refugee source countries, greater communal responsibility is taken for domestic tasks and the care of children, the elderly and those with disabilities. This is in stark contrast to women's experience in many receiving societies where they are likely to have limited access to family and community support; where the nuclear family is the dominant family form and where far greater emphasis is placed on individual responsibility. For these reasons, social and community support will be particularly important to refugee women in the early resettlement period.

As indicated above, many women will be entering paid work for the first time and may require some support in this transition.

Single, separated or widowed refugee women may have to make particular adjustments since they may be assuming the role of household head for the first time. The difficulties involved in sole parenting are now well documented in studies in receiving societies<sup>3</sup>. For refugee women these are compounded by the stresses associated with their refugee and resettlement experiences<sup>4</sup>.





**In Ottawa, high tech companies hire women assemblers, and women were successful in finding employment before their husbands did. This meant that roles were reversed in the home. The husbands could not take the extra stress on top of everything else: being a refugee and then being a foreigner in a strange, new culture and now losing the dignity of being the provider in the family. The women would arrive late, there would be no food prepared, this would lead to a row...**

Resettlement worker

**Women in Somalia are shy and cannot do that (ask for a divorce) because of the customs and traditions.**

Resettled refugee



Adjustment may also be a challenge for women from certain traditional societies in which women's identity is linked to her relationship with a male family member, whether a father, husband or brother.

### Family centred integration planning

While it is important that integration planning addresses the needs of refugee men and women in their own right, the whole family unit will need to be taken into account. Changes in women's roles in the early resettlement period can have a significant impact on family dynamics as refugee men come to terms with the demands on women outside of the home and women's greater social and economic power.

Equally, role status changes affecting refugee children and young people have an impact on both men and women (see Chapter 3.3). The authority vested in refugee parents, and in particular, refugee men as traditional household heads, may be undermined as children and young people exercise the greater rights and freedoms often available to them in receiving societies. Women, especially those who remain in the home, may be affected by the role reversal that often occurs as children and young people integrate more rapidly than their parents (see p. 265).

This suggests the importance of receiving societies adopting strategies to support the adjustment of both refugee men and women to gender role expectations, family relationships and women's and children and young people's rights and responsibilities in receiving societies. These will be particular considerations in the provision of early settlement support (see p. 81). Orientation programs also provide an opportunity to provide resettled refugees with information about gender and family issues in receiving societies (e.g. laws relating to family violence and marital and property rights).

### Supporting the integration of refugee women in holistic terms

Integration planning should reflect and embrace women's diverse roles as partners, carers, members of communities and paid workers. In many refugee families (as is the case in receiving societies), women assume primary responsibility for domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning and food preparation, for the care of children and other dependants, and for monitoring the physical and mental health of partners and other family members<sup>5</sup>. In these roles they will be required to

mediate between the family and other services and systems, such as health care providers, schools and child care facilities, as well as to nurture relationships between their families and social networks in the wider community.

Particular efforts will need to be made to ensure that support is provided in these areas as well as those concerned with promoting economic self-sufficiency.

Without support, women who remain outside of the labour force may struggle to integrate into receiving societies. Women in these circumstances are not only vulnerable to personal and psychological problems such as social isolation, depression and anxiety, but will be less able to support children and other family members in their integration<sup>6</sup>.

In a number of countries, efforts have been placed into bringing home based refugee women together, with the aim of reducing isolation, fostering mutual support and engaging women in addressing barriers to their integration.

### Addressing barriers to participation in integration activities

In some refugee source countries women are socialised to play a role that is subservient to men. They may feel uncomfortable participating in a mixed gender environment or may be prohibited from doing so. Women from gender segregated societies and those who have been subject to male violence in the course of their refugee experience may feel unsafe or uncomfortable discussing issues in the presence of men, particularly those of a gender sensitive nature.

The experience of established resettlement countries has been that, as a consequence, some refugee women may be less likely to participate in language training and orientation programs, and in a mixed gender environment, may be difficult to engage in interactive learning processes. Similar issues apply in engaging women in relationships with male service delivery staff, a particular concern in the areas of health care, social support, language assistance, language training and orientation.

Owing to cultural expectations, participation in employment, language training and orientation programs may not be seen as a priority, by women themselves, their families or refugee communities. In some cultures there may be specific religious or cultural prohibitions on women's employment outside of the home.

## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Engaging home-based women in Toronto

A CENTRE for survivors of trauma and torture in Toronto brought together a group of Somali women whose common concern was the level of social isolation they experienced in their new country. While the primary focus of the group was mutual support, it became apparent in group discussions that women often stayed at home because they did not feel safe in the streets of their new city. As it developed the group began to explore practical strategies for addressing these concerns.



GENDER



**I looked after the children, nothing else. Women are allowed to go out to work here but not there.**

Resettled refugee





## Supporting women's equal participation in language training and orientation programs

COUNTRIES of resettlement have attempted to ensure that language training and orientation programs are sensitive to the needs of women by:

- holding separate 'women-only' sessions or classes, where women may feel more comfortable to speak and participate;
- delivering orientation and language training on an outreach basis through established women's support or social groups; As well as providing a focus for engagement, these programs may attract women for whom it may be culturally unacceptable to participate in a dedicated orientation or language training program;
- engaging ethno-cultural

communities in planning and delivering programs. For example, in Canada language instruction is contracted to community based providers, among them ethno-cultural service agencies. These agencies have been able to tailor programs to meet the specific needs of refugee communities and offer a learning environment that is more acceptable to refugee women and their communities;

- ensuring that orientation and language training programs address issues of particular relevance to women such as sexual harassment, family violence and gender discrimination in the workplace;

- developing orientation programs on issues of particular concern to women;
- organising programs so that they are accessible to women (e.g. scheduling sessions in daylight hours, offering transport and child care, offering home tutor options for women with responsibility for the care of young children);
- taking steps to actively engage women participants in group discussion (e.g. providing structured opportunities for all group members to speak, using gender inclusive language);
- fostering awareness of gender issues in training programs for orientation and language training providers.

Work force development in all areas of integration planning will need to take into account the fact that many women will require or prefer a female service provider. Similarly, gender issues will need to be addressed in professional development activities for both settlement support personnel and workers in the wider community who have contact with resettled refugees.

### Redressing past disadvantage

As a consequence of gender inequality in refugee source countries and countries of refuge, refugee women may be less likely than their male counterparts to be literate, to be educated or to have an established work history (see Table Twelve).

This may put them at some disadvantage when accessing integration resources and is a factor which will need to be taken into account when assessing the level of integration



**Table Twelve:  
Gender differences in selected refugee countries-of-origin**

Country	Adult literacy rate (%)		Education gross enrolment ratio (%)		Estimated annual income (US\$)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Burundi	40.4	56.2	16	21	490	698
Sudan	46.3	69.5	31	36	847	2736
Angola	*	*	21	25	*	*
Dem. Rep. of Congo	50.2	73.1	26	37	548	986
Vietnam	91.4	95.5	64	69	1635	2360
Eritrea	44.5	67.3	24	29	571	1107

\*Data not available

Source: United Nations Development Program *Human Development Report, 2002. Deepening democracy in a fragmented world*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

support required. Low literacy levels and lack of prior educational and work force experience will also need to be considered in the design of language training, orientation and employment placement programs. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that many refugee women will have gained a wealth of experience through their informal participation in labour in refugee camps and other emergency situations. They may require assistance to recognise and evaluate the relevance of this experience for the purposes of accessing employment in the receiving society.

#### Economic self-sufficiency and refugee families

Most countries recognise the advantages of supporting women's participation in paid employment. These efforts are particularly important for the long term economic stability of female-headed refugee families. Participation in paid work can speed the process of integration for refugee women (through language acquisition and social contact) and prevent their isolation in the home.

In countries with high expectations of early economic self-sufficiency, the earning potential of both parents in two parent families is formally factored into assessment and settlement support processes and both are encouraged to seek paid



**My students didn't even look up. Our gazes never met at first, and the women in particular spoke so quietly that you could hardly hear them. It was as though they didn't dare take up a space in the room...**

Language teacher







employment as soon as possible after their arrival. In some countries, there are high expectations that refugee sole parents will be economically self-sufficient. In others, resettled refugees may have access to income support programs established for sole parent nationals.

There are a number of factors to consider in determining expectations of participation in paid employment in both two and sole parent refugee families:

- adjusting to paid work may be stressful for some women at a time when they are already facing adjustments in other aspects of their role. This may be particularly the case if they have not worked outside of the home in the past. Further, studies conducted in a number of countries suggest that the burden associated with child care and domestic tasks is seldom redistributed equitably within the family when women enter paid employment<sup>7</sup>. Managing the ‘double day’ of paid and unpaid work may be an additional stress for refugee women in the early resettlement period;
- domestic and child care roles undertaken in the family have an economic value and contribute to family economic self-sufficiency;
- the participation of both parents (or sole parent women) in paid employment in the early resettlement period may compromise their capacity to support children in adjusting to their new circumstances;
- the involvement of both parents in paid work may involve placing children in child care. As discussed in Chapter 2.9 this may generate some anxiety for refugee families;
- women with limited prior formal participation in paid employment may require more intensive job placement support;
- economic self-sufficiency planning can involve the couple as a unit. For example, one partner may work in an entry level job to enable their spouse to participate in further study or training and subsequently to support them to upgrade their training or qualifications.

### Refugee-related trauma

Resettlement countries may need to invest additional thought and effort into gender sensitive approaches to engaging refugee men and women with services and programs offering psychological and resettlement support (see Chapters 3.1, 2.3).





## Domestic violence and refugee families

DOMESTIC violence occurs across cultural, racial and socio-economic lines<sup>8</sup>.

However, refugee women who are subject to domestic violence are a particularly vulnerable group as they may:

- lack family and community support;
- be unaware of laws prohibiting domestic violence in receiving societies;
- have a heightened tolerance of their partner's violent behaviour if he has been subject to trauma in the course of his refugee experience;
- be unable to communicate in the language of the receiving country and have limited knowledge of the resources available to them to leave a violent relationship (e.g. housing, income support);
- encounter difficulties in accessing legal and social support owing to

language and cultural differences;

- be wary of involving the police and legal personnel in family matters given their negative experiences of law enforcement authorities in their countries-of-origin;
- be unaware of the consequences of involving law enforcement authorities<sup>9</sup>.

Many refugee women come from traditional societies where there are strong cultural prohibitions against separation and divorce. The pressure on women to 'keep the family together' may also be particularly strong given the degree of trauma and dislocation to which refugee women have been subject.

Women who are experiencing psychological difficulties associated with their traumatic experiences may also fear being alone. For some women, an

unsatisfactory union may be better than having no adult relationship.

It is beyond the scope of this resource to explore broader strategies for preventing and addressing domestic violence in culturally diverse communities. However, in an integration context, both refugee women and men should be provided information in orientation programs about the law as it relates to family violence and the services and supports available to affected families. Domestic violence issues of relevance to refugee communities should also be addressed in professional development activities targeted to both settlement support workers and workers in the wider community who have contact with resettled refugees, particularly the police.



## Supporting refugee women and communities affected by female genital mutilation

FEMALE genital mutilation (FGM) is defined by the World Health Organisation as 'comprising all procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons'<sup>10</sup>.

FGM is practised in approximately 28 countries in Africa and in some countries in Asia and the Middle-East. These include a number of refugee countries-of-origin<sup>11</sup>.

While not all women experience long term complications associated with FGM, pelvic, urinary and menstrual difficulties are not uncommon<sup>12</sup>. Affected women will require special care antenatally, during child birth and in the postnatal period. Some women may not associate complications of FGM with the procedure, but rather see them as a normal part of being a woman. Psychological effects may include reactions to the trauma of FGM, anxiety and depressive symptoms and effects on sexuality<sup>13</sup>. However, there is some debate as to whether these are attributable to FGM or to

resettlement issues (e.g. the reactions of receiving communities, inter-generational issues).

FGM is supported in affected communities as a rite of passage, as a fundamental part of being a woman and in the mistaken belief that it has health benefits for women.

Some families may want their daughters to undergo FGM. This may pose a dilemma for receiving countries who are committed to respecting the cultural practices of refugee communities while at the same time being concerned about the practice of FGM.

The World Health Organisation, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the United Nations Population Fund issued a joint statement in 1997 confirming the universally unacceptable harm caused by female genital mutilation<sup>14</sup>, or female circumcision, and calling for the unqualified elimination of this practice in all its forms. While noting that FGM continues as a deeply rooted traditional practice, the statement maintained that culture is in constant flux, capable of adapting and reforming. This

statement follows a number of existing international agreements in place to support the elimination of the practice of FGM.

FGM (whether it is anticipated that it will be performed in the receiving country or elsewhere) is prohibited in a number of resettlement countries, under child welfare and/or criminal assault legislation. However, some resettled refugees may not be aware of this.

The prevention of FGM in receiving societies has been a complex and sensitive issue. Affected communities may oppose this, believing that it represents a lack of respect for their cultural practices. It has also been argued that prohibitive legislation may simply drive the practice 'underground' where it is likely to be performed in unsafe conditions. Proponents of this view argue that positive change is more likely to be achieved through education in refugee communities. Others, however, point to the effects for women and girls and to the international commitment to eradicate the practice. Some countries have adopted a dual strategy involving both



legislation and education in refugee communities, in the belief that legislation communicates an important symbolic and practical message that the practice is unacceptable.

The following are factors to consider when planning integration programs:

- Intensive settlement support may be required for affected women to ensure that they have access to appropriate and sensitive health services, particularly when requiring gynaecological and obstetric care.
- Steps may need to be taken to prevent the practice of FGM in the receiving society.
- Affected refugee communities will require culturally sensitive information in their own languages regarding services available, the physical and psychological effects of FGM on women and girls and, where relevant, any laws relating to FGM.
- Some receiving societies have developed support programs for women affected by the practice of FGM.
- Bilingual and bi-cultural workers in receiving

countries have played an important role in supporting affected women and in providing advice to health care providers and settlement support workers.

- Written resources and professional development will be useful for health care providers to ensure that they are aware of the issue, respond sensitively to affected women and their families, provide appropriate care and understand the legal situation and their obligations (if any) in relation to this.
- Health care providers in the wider community will require access to technical assistance on appropriate management of the physical, social and psychological implications of FGM. A lead agency should be identified to provide this (e.g. a specialist tertiary referral hospital for women, the relevant professional college of obstetrics and gynaecology).

It is vital that receiving countries engage affected refugee communities when developing strategies to prevent FGM and support those affected by it.



## TAKING ACCOUNT OF GENDER



Women may be reluctant to disclose experiences of sexual violence owing to the level of shame and a fear of being ostracised by their partners and communities. In their roles as carers of others, they may feel unable to attend to their own psychological problems, particularly if their partners or children are experiencing difficulties in their resettlement.

Many women, especially those entering under ‘women-at-risk’ criteria or programs, will have spent a period in the course of their refugee experiences without the ‘protection’ of a male partner. Studies suggest that women in these circumstances will have been particularly vulnerable to trauma and have faced additional physical hardships as refugees<sup>15</sup>. The incidence of rape and other forms of sexual assault perpetrated against refugee women is now well documented<sup>16</sup>. The grief associated with forced movement may also have a particular significance for refugee women, with the home and family and community networks being integral to their roles as home-makers and carers<sup>17</sup>.

Refugee men, for whom emotional strength is more integrally linked with masculine identity, may be reluctant to acknowledge psychological problems for fear that this may be construed as a sign of weakness. Like their counterparts in receiving societies, refugee men may also be less likely than women to seek ‘talk-based’ solutions to emotional difficulties through either their informal support networks or professional providers.

### Safety and security for refugee women

In receiving societies, refugee women, particularly those who are single, separated or widowed, may feel a heightened vulnerability to threats to their personal safety due to lack of familiarity, language difficulties, hostility in the receiving community and limited access to resources such as secure housing, private transport and telecommunications.

The personal safety of refugee women will be important considerations in placement decisions, in supporting women’s participation in paid employment, and in planning times and venues for language training and orientation programs.




## CHAPTER 3.3

# Investing in the Future: Refugee Children and Young People

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 3.3

# Investing in the Future: Refugee Children and Young People



CHILDREN/  
YOUNG PEOPLE

Refugee children and young people share with their adult counterparts many of the same exposures and impacts of the refugee and resettlement experiences (see Chapter 1.3). However they also have particular needs which should be taken into account in integration planning. These are outlined in this Chapter.

Support provided by refugee families will be critical to the integration of children and young people. Many of the strategies proposed in Part Two of this Handbook have the broader effect of strengthening families (i.e. by supporting access to employment and housing). The focus of this Chapter is on measures to enhance refugee families' understanding of the impact of resettlement on children and young people and their capacity to support them in dealing with the adjustment process.

This Chapter also addresses factors that need to be considered when planning language training and education programs for refugee children and young people and when supporting the integration of separated or unaccompanied refugee minors.



**CHECKLIST**

## Taking account of children and young people:

Integration program component (see relevant Chapter in Part Two)	Think about:
Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> access to ethnic peer support;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the availability of specialist education support.</li> </ul>
Early settlement and social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> family sensitive assessment and settlement support</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> intensive settlement support and alternative care arrangements for separated or unaccompanied refugee minors;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> family tracing and reunion provisions for separated minors.</li> </ul>
Income support and establishment resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> provisions for separated minors;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> provisions for refugee young people approaching or over the age of majority with disrupted education.</li> </ul>
Language assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> availability of language assistance in key systems serving refugee families;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> strategies to avoid children and young people being used to interpret on behalf of other family members.</li> </ul>
Language training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> culturally sensitive school based target language programs;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> alternative language training programs for refugee young people approaching or over the age of majority who wish to resume basic education.</li> </ul>
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> targeted orientation programs for young people;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> school-based orientation programs;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> information on matters concerned with parenting (e.g. peer pressure, changing family relationships, the effects of trauma, torture and resettlement on children, drug use, bullying and racism).</li> </ul>
Employment and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> job search and career planning programs for refugee young people (see Chapter 2.9).</li> </ul>
Health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> capacity building for health workers who have contact with refugee children and young people (e.g. child health nurses, school nurses).</li> </ul>
Welcoming and hospitable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> access to recreational and cultural activities;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> capacity building initiatives in school communities and child care facilities.</li> </ul>
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fostering partnership arrangements;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> arrangements for providing technical support to key professionals serving refugee children and young people and their families;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work force development initiatives (e.g. bilingual and bi-cultural teaching and child care professionals, cultural advisers, aides);</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> professional development, training and awareness raising activities for key personnel to enhance their capacity to support refugee children and young people (e.g. teachers, child welfare professionals, nurses, youth workers).</li> </ul>



## Why plan for refugee children and young people?

Refugee children and young people bring with them a wealth of life experience and creativity and often have an extraordinarily high motivation to succeed.

As the future adult generation of both refugee and wider communities, their successful resettlement is particularly vital. If accomplished in a way which promotes intergenerational understanding and harmony, it can also help to enhance the integration prospects of other family members and refugee communities.

### The importance of early intervention

Childhood is a time of rapid intellectual, social, emotional and physical development, and a period during which personality and identity begin to be formed. It is a time when the developmental foundations are laid for adolescence and adulthood. Studies have shown that the environment children grow up in has a major influence on their mental health and well-being as adults. Children who have secure attachments to family and supportive relationships with other adults, and whose families are harmonious and well connected with their community, generally fare better as adults than those without these resources<sup>1</sup>. In contrast, children with poor attachment, family disharmony and conflict, poor connections with community and limited access to socio-economic resources tend to be at greater risk of developing problems in adolescence and later life<sup>2</sup>.

Adolescence is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, from schooling to employment and from financial and emotional dependence to interdependence. It is also a time when young people begin to develop an adult identity involving their own values and beliefs. While most young people make this transition successfully, it may be stressful, involving rapid change in physical, emotional and intellectual development and in the expectations of the family and wider society. This transition has been associated with increased vulnerability to mental health and behavioural difficulties<sup>3</sup>.

The benefits of providing integration support early in the resettlement period have been discussed elsewhere in this Handbook (see Chapter 2.3). Providing this support to children and young people has the dual benefits of intervening not only at an early stage of resettlement, but at an early stage of their



CHILDREN/  
YOUNG PEOPLE



**I go to the doctor with my grandmother who is very sick and the doctor asks me to interpret for him. I don't like to be an interpreter. I am afraid that I will make a mistake and that my grandmother will suffer.**

Resettled young refugee





development. A positive and supportive resettlement environment will be particularly important for those children and young people who have been exposed to trauma in the course of their refugee experiences. Studies suggest that the quality of the environment children encounter at this time, particularly in the family and in school or child care settings, has a critical influence on their recovery from these experiences<sup>4</sup>.

Resettlement planning for children and young people typically has a dual emphasis, involving support for individuals and their families as well as strategies to foster a welcoming and supportive environment.

A range of settings will need to be considered, including early childhood and pre-school facilities, primary and secondary level schools and employment and training programs.

The impact of the refugee and resettlement experiences on children and young people

Refugee children and young people will have been exposed to many of the same experiences as their adult counterparts (see Chapter 1.3). All will have experienced some degree of dislocation, deprivation, disruption and loss<sup>5</sup>. This may have included the loss of home and friendships as well as the more profound losses of parents, siblings and others through death or separation. Refugee children and young people are likely to have endured changes unheard of in the lives of children in resettlement countries.

Like their parents, refugee children and young people will be required to adjust to a new set of cultural norms and in many cases, to learn a new language. Resettlement will also involve the challenge of a new and unfamiliar school system<sup>6</sup>. The culture and structure of the education system may be very different from that in their country-of-origin. For instance, in many resettlement countries, teaching styles are less formal, relationships between teachers and students are less hierarchical and there is a greater emphasis on experiential learning than is the case in refugee source countries.

Adaptation to school may be particularly taxing for children who have had no or limited prior school experience. These children may be facing the intellectual and behavioural requirements of a structured learning environment for the first time. Some may never have been separated from their parents previously, with the result that commencing school, pre-school or child care may involve considerable anxiety.



**I dreamt about continuing my education. Now this is possible.**

Resettled young refugee



Depending on their age, refugee young people may face multiple transitions in the early resettlement period (for example, upper primary aged children will face the further transition to secondary level schooling, while older adolescents will make the transition from school to work or further study).

When seeking employment, refugee young people face many of the same challenges as their adult counterparts (see Chapter 2.9). However, these may be compounded for those who, by virtue of their age, have had disrupted education and limited work experience.

These refugee and resettlement experiences coincide and may interfere with critical stages of the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of refugee children and young people. For some, this may result in acute physical and emotional problems requiring intervention (see Chapter 3.1), or will to some extent have compromised the conditions required for healthy progress in each of the key developmental domains<sup>7</sup>.

Refugee children and young people are likely to have experienced some degree of disruption in their education. Schools are one of the first casualties of war. In some conflicts, teachers have been the specific targets of violence. In many refugee camps there is little basic education available and refugee families may have experienced limitations on their entitlements to education in their countries of refuge. Intellectual progress may be further compromised by the effects of trauma (see Chapter 3.1).

The loss of or disruption to significant relationships in the family and community, meanwhile, may affect attachment behaviours, and in particular, children and young people's capacity to trust and to form the meaningful and supportive relationships known to be critical to healthy development<sup>8</sup>.

The anxiety associated with exposure to traumatic events and the adjustments and change involved in resettlement can have an impact on children and young people's mastery over basic developmental tasks. Diminished competence in these tasks may in turn have an impact on their self esteem.

The loss of place, culture, and in many cases secure and stable relationships means that children and young people may have a limited basis upon which to build a positive sense of identity and belonging. This process may be further compromised if they face a lack of understanding in the school or community, or if they experience xenophobic or racist behaviour.



**My religion does not stop me from participating in sports. But some times sports need to be more culturally sensitive and flexible to the needs of Muslim young women.**

Resettled young refugee





The process of identity formation which is part of adolescence may be particularly complex for young people being affected by the overlay of the refugee experience, cultural adjustment and the practical demands of resettlement. Moreover, those with highly disrupted experiences prior to resettlement may have had limited or poor early parenting and hence may not have developed the personal and coping skills required to deal with these challenges.

The process of identity formation also involves the additional challenge of reconciling the competing values of their culture-of-origin with those of their new peers. Intergenerational conflict may result as they question or reject the values of their parents in a bid to gain acceptance among their peers.

### **Planning for children and young people: Overall considerations**

#### Strengthening family support

Families play a vital role in supporting children and young people. However, a number of factors may compromise the support available to refugee children and young people in the family (see box p. 265).

Providing support to refugee families and parents is a vital strategy to facilitate the integration of refugee children and young people. It is important to be aware, when developing programs for refugee families, that child welfare practices and services for children and youth in receiving societies are sometimes perceived by refugee families as contributing to intergenerational division and conflict.

The wishes of refugee parents and communities may not always coincide with the best interests of children and young people. However, it is important wherever possible, for refugee families and communities to be engaged in supporting children and young people in their resettlement since, for most, family and community will be their primary and most enduring sources of support.

#### Technical assistance and specialised planning resources

A number of countries with large refugee and immigrant populations have established organisations which provide technical assistance (e.g. consultation and professional

## Factors affecting family support for refugee children and young people

- The effects of trauma and the practical and emotional demands of settlement on adult care-givers may compromise their capacity to provide support.
- Parents may lack the language skills and knowledge to support children in their adjustment to a new society and school system, and to act as their children's advocates.
- Parents may lack an understanding of the refugee and resettlement experiences on their children and/or may be unaware of how they can support them. They may share the commonly held belief that children and young people will forget their experiences. Others may be unable to deal with the painful realisation that their children continue to suffer, with the result that the children may be inadvertently left alone to deal with fear, grief and guilt.
- There may be significant differences in child rearing practices between countries-of-origin and resettlement, particularly in the areas of child welfare and discipline. These differences may affect parents' understanding of, and interactions with, systems in the receiving society, such as child care facilities and schools. Inter-generational conflict may occur as children and young people seek to exercise the greater range of rights and freedoms available to them in their new country.
- Children and young people tend to acquire the language and learn the ways of the receiving society more rapidly than adults and may be called upon to interpret and mediate with systems in the receiving society on behalf of their parents. As well as adding to the pressures on children and young people, this 'role reversal' can affect the power and dependency dynamics that form the basis of a supportive relationship between children and their adult care-givers. Children and young people's more rapid adaptation may also contribute to inter-generational conflict.
- Despite the fact that they may face educational disadvantage, refugee children and young people often face expectations from their parents that they will achieve high levels of educational and vocational success. These expectations may be a source of anxiety and tension between refugee children and young people and their parents.

CHILDREN/  
YOUNG PEOPLE

development) to teachers, child care workers and social support agencies serving refugee children, young people and their families.

Similarly, special planning units have been established in government education and child welfare departments to ensure that broader planning processes accommodate the needs of refugee and immigrant children and young people.

In many receiving societies, there is a rapid turnover in child welfare agencies, making for shallow 'institutional memory'.



## Schools, pre-schools and child care facilities as settings for supporting the integration of refugee children and young people

A NUMBER of resettlement countries have focussed on school and child care settings for delivering integration support to refugee children and their families. Typically, this support is delivered as a collaboration between these settings and refugee families and communities and mental health and settlement support services. There are a number of advantages in this approach:

- The pre-school and school environments are a primary source of contact between refugee families and the receiving society. The school environment, in particular, has been identified as second only to the family in determining children and young people's capacity to
  - resettle successfully<sup>9</sup>.
  - Teaching and child care professionals will have had limited contact with children and families affected by war and trauma and may require support to provide an optimal environment.
  - Settings-based interventions allow for schools and child care facilities to explore ways in which they can create a supportive environment for refugee families.
  - By facilitating access to the wider refugee population (not only those with identified difficulties), very early in the resettlement period, they enable an early intervention approach.
  - Refugee families may be reluctant to access one-to-one professional support.
- Providing support through schools and child care facilities offers families the opportunity to form relationships with supportive professionals in a non-stigmatising and non-threatening way.
- Schools are a natural part of the day-to-day experience of children and families, enabling interventions to be delivered in ways which normalise their otherwise disrupted lives.
  - It may be difficult to deliver 'one-to-one' therapeutic interventions to children with more severe emotional or behavioural difficulties at certain stages of their development. However, there is some potential to support teachers and child care professionals to

In this context specialised agencies are important since they can help to build the capacity of systems to respond to the needs of refugee children and their families in an ongoing manner. Moreover, as new refugee groups arrive, they can ensure that appropriate programs are developed for refugees themselves and the professionals working with them.

### Settings and partnership approaches

Planning for refugee children and young people needs to take account of a range of issues, including their physical and mental health and development, educational progress, social support and, in the case of older adolescents, employment and training opportunities.





provide an optimal environment for psychological rebuilding.

Established resettlement programs have implemented a number of strategies to promote integration of refugee families through school, pre-school and child care settings, including:

- orientation programs for children and parents;
- target language programs for children and young people;
- befriending or mentoring programs for children and young people and/or their parents and guardians;
- professional development programs for relevant personnel;
- developing systems and resources to enhance access by refugee families

(e.g. translated materials, providing interpreters);

- work force development initiatives (e.g. recruiting bilingual teaching and child care personnel, bilingual aides, cultural advisers);
- curriculum resources designed for both refugee young people and the wider school community;
- awareness raising activities aimed at valuing and affirming cultural diversity and countering racism;
- specific cultural programs (e.g. arts projects, community theatre). These can provide an important vehicle for refugee young people to express themselves and for sharing their skills and perspectives with the wider community. In

Sweden, for example, a youth worker worked with refugee young people to make a film which described their experiences of social exclusion;

- fostering refugee children and young people's involvement in recreational and sporting activities;
- homework clubs.

Child care and pre-school facilities tend to be on a smaller scale and are less likely to have the resources available to the school sector. For this reason, professional development and technical assistance support will be particularly important for facilities serving pre-school children.

Reflecting this, most countries of resettlement have employed partnership approaches to address the needs of children and young people, to ensure that the skills and resources of a range of communities, professionals and systems are engaged in delivering support.

### Offering the best possible conditions for educational success

Most refugee children and young people will require a period of intensive and targeted support to assist them in adjusting to a new school system, to learn the language of the receiving society and, in some circumstances, to redress the effects of disrupted education and intellectual or developmental delay.



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

## Easing the transition into a new education system

IN THE <b>CANADIAN</b> city of Ottawa, Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) are placed in schools and work in partnership with teaching professionals and administrators, settlement agencies and other community service providers to support the integration of refugee children and young people and their families. The program does this by assisting refugee students to adapt to their new school environment and providing information, orientation, settlement support and referral to other services to refugee families. Activities are also offered to help parents to participate in their children's education. MLOs promote a positive and sensitive school environment by supporting positive race relations and providing training to teaching and other	professionals. The program has been operational for over ten years and is jointly funded by School Boards of Education and the Ottawa Immigrant Services Organisation. In the <b>AUSTRALIAN</b> state of Victoria, refugee children of school age are offered support through the <i>New Arrivals Program</i> in the first 12 months following their arrival. Through this program children and young people receive intensive English language instruction and orientation to schooling in Australia. English Language Schools and Centres are located in key locations throughout Victoria, some co-located with a mainstream school. Outposts are established in schools which are distant from an established centre but which enrol a large number of refugee children. A visiting teacher service is offered to those children	and young people who do not have ready access to either a school centre or out-posted service. The schools and centres work in close partnership with settlement and other specialist services so that they can respond to the needs of refugee children and young people and assist refugee families to adjust to life in Australia. Students are offered support when moving from an English language school or centre to a mainstream school. The <i>Youth Immersion Program</i> , developed by Lutheran Social Services in Florida, <b>USA</b> , is targeted to refugee young people aged 16-20, particularly those with disrupted education or experiencing difficulties with their schooling. The program involves daily intensive English language and cultural adjustment classes taught by qualified
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Many of the principles for delivering language training programs to adults from refugee and immigrant backgrounds (see Chapter 2.6) are of equal, if not greater, importance in school settings.

A range of approaches have been developed to delivering intensive support to refugee children in the early resettlement period, including:

- providing them with a period of language training and orientation via a special program to prepare them for entry into the general school system;



English language and health sciences teachers. Classes are kept small and efforts are made to maintain a safe and nurturing environment in which students can prepare themselves for mainstream schooling. The curriculum comprises basic English, coordinated with cultural adjustment topics. Art therapy, conflict resolution and self esteem building activities are also offered. The students remain in the program until they are ready to enter mainstream schooling, with this transition being timed to coincide with the beginning of a school semester. At that time, they are linked with a refugee liaison officer who provides orientation to the school, helps with course and class placement, tracks their progress and provides ongoing support. However, they may return to the	<i>Immersion Program</i> for additional assistance should they require it. Since class participants often develop as a cohesive group, they are usually registered in the mainstream school as a cohort, so that they have the ongoing support of their peers. For younger children and their families, Lutheran Social Services offers the <i>Summertime Express Program</i> , the core of which is a four week summer day camp for children aged 8-14 years. The camp features all the activities of a normal summer day camp, such as sports, games, excursions and arts and crafts, with the addition of daily English classes and activities to build team and conflict resolution skills and promote cultural adjustment and self esteem. It is a safe and supportive setting in which refugee children can play and learn.	The camps are staffed by professionals with expertise in working with refugee children and are supported by volunteers. Recent high school graduates, who are themselves from refugee backgrounds, are employed to provide the program with language and cultural support, while at the same time giving them paid work experience and the opportunity to reflect on their own cultural adjustment. Parents are involved through a festival held at the end of the camp. This provides a forum for children to share skills learned at the camp with their parents, and camp staff an opportunity to inform parents about the school system and to discuss any concerns they might have.
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- ‘pull-out’ arrangements, whereby refugee children and young people divide their time between the general class and intensive language and orientation classes prior to full-time entry into general education;
- providing additional technical support to general class teachers. This is a particularly useful strategy when refugee children are geographically dispersed;
- providing additional support to children and young people in the general classroom environment through the use of bi-cultural aides, bilingual instruction and other capacity building initiatives.



## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Focussing on child care and pre-school

IN AUSTRALIA, the Free Kindergarten Association has established the <i>Casual Bilingual Workers Program</i> which recruits and trains consultants from ethno-cultural communities to work with child care and pre-school services. The program employs over 130 workers and covers 100 languages and dialects. These workers are available to support parents during their interviews with staff and their orientation to a pre-school facility. The workers provide translated materials and assist families to exchange information with staff about their family life. In their contact with children, the workers help them to settle into their new centre, to develop pride in their own culture and to maintain and develop their first language. The workers also support staff by providing cultural information and advice about	parenting, teaching simple words and phrases in relevant languages and assisting them to develop a multicultural perspective for all children. This program represents a cost effective way of meeting the needs of small and emergent communities. It is invaluable for pre-school and child care facilities, many of which are small and can ill-afford to employ staff with the range of cultural and linguistic skills. It has been particularly important for rural and regional communities, many of which are distant from ethno-cultural support services based in Australian cities. In the Canadian province of Ontario, Inter-cultural Neighbourhood Services has established a program designed for families with children from 18 months to two years of age. The program operates on a drop in basis for two-and-a-half	days each week. Both the set up of the centre and its programming are very similar to that of a regular child care centre. However, parents remain with their children throughout the sessions. Activities are offered for children to build social, motor and developmental skills, thereby enhancing their readiness for pre-school. Parents, meanwhile, are able to socialise and make friends with other families in their neighbourhood and to share their experiences. Regular parenting workshops are also run, addressing such issues as street safety and discipline. As well as acclimatising children and their families to pre-school in Canada, the program promotes cultural sensitivity and integration by bringing children from many cultural and racial backgrounds together.
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These approaches are not mutually exclusive and are used in a complementary fashion in many countries.

Children and young people with particularly disrupted education may require additional assistance. This can be provided through a special program or, refugee children and young people may qualify for supplementary assistance through programs provided to nationals with special educational needs. In a number of countries, special grants are given to schools with a large enrolment of refugee children and young people.

The availability of specialist educational support for refugee children and young people will be an important consideration in placement decisions.

## Should refugee children and young people be offered separate classes in the early resettlement period?

WHILE MOST countries aim to support children's integration into the general school system as soon as practical, there are different approaches.

Some countries place greater emphasis on children and young people's entry into the general education system from the outset. This is supported through capacity building strategies such as deploying bilingual teaching professionals, culturally inclusive curricula and bilingual instruction. In others, separate programs are provided to refugee children to prepare them for entry into the wider school system.

In practice, the differences are a matter of emphasis, with many countries having a dual strategy involving both specialist programs and broader capacity building initiatives. This reflects an understanding that those children participating in specialist programs will ultimately enter the general school system.

There are a number of factors to consider when planning approaches to supporting refugee children

in their integration into the school system:

- If a capacity building approach is adopted as sole strategy, it is important that adequate resources are invested in this task. If done well, this is not necessarily a more cost-effective approach.
- Specialist programs may be necessary where children and young people are enrolling in schools with very small numbers of resettled refugee students, since comprehensive capacity building approaches may not be economically viable in these environments.
- A capacity building approach reflects the 'two-way' street notion of integration, enabling both refugee children and the wider school system to learn from and adjust to each other.
- By separating them from their peers, specialist programs may compound perceptions held by refugee children themselves and by the wider community of refugees as outsiders. However, in separate programs refugee children and young people can

build supportive relationships with one another that endure after their entry into the general education system

- Early interaction with the general education system provides refugee children and young people opportunities to learn the target language and about the culture of the receiving society.
- Separate programs can serve as a place for delivering other specialist integration support (e.g. orientation programs) which may be difficult to deliver in a class environment involving both refugees and nationals.
- While the aim of separate programs is to prepare refugee children and young people for entry into the wider school system and to empower them to interact within it, some newcomers may find the transition from the relatively protected environment of a specialist program to the wider system stressful. This transition needs to be carefully managed.



## Factors to consider in key program areas

### Early assessment and settlement support

Early assessment and settlement support processes offer the opportunity to assess the need for and provide support to refugees as parents. Early assessment and settlement support often focus on economic self-sufficiency and basic practical concerns. Conscious efforts are required to ensure that the needs of children and young people are not overlooked. This is important, as there may be a number of barriers to parents acknowledging and disclosing difficulties experienced by their children.

In some countries, separate assessment is routinely offered to children and young people. In Sweden, for example, individual introduction plans are developed and aim, among other things, to link children and young people with leisure and recreational pursuits. In others, they are offered individualised assessment when they commence school, to identify their particular educational and social support needs.

It is important to obtain parental consent prior to conducting separate assessment with children.

### Language assistance

As children and young people tend to learn a second language more rapidly than adult refugees they are often called upon to interpret and liaise with systems in the receiving country on behalf of other family members. Steps will need to be taken to avoid this, since it may have negative consequences for refugee children and young people and their families. This suggests the importance of ensuring that adequate provision is made for language assistance and adult language training (see Chapters 2.5, 2.6).

Training and awareness raising activities for professionals and other key personnel in the receiving society should also stress the importance of utilising professional language assistance providers, rather than refugee children or young people.

Key settings serving refugee children and young people will also require access to translation services to ensure optimal communication with refugee parents.

### Orientation

Parents will be better placed to assist children and young people in their resettlement if they have an understanding of the systems



**People automatically assume that I can't speak English and speak to me really slowly, just because I wear a hijab.**

Resettled young refugee



and culture of the receiving society. This understanding can help to prevent intergenerational conflict. Accordingly, orientation programs for refugee parents should include information to support them in their roles as parents (e.g. peer pressure, the education system, changing family relationships, the effects of trauma and resettlement on children, drug use, child rearing practices, bullying and racism).

An understanding of child rearing practices in the receiving society, particularly those relating to discipline and supervision, will be particularly important. Conflicts in these areas can often render refugee families vulnerable to intervention by child welfare authorities. Parenting programs for refugees will need to be designed to reflect different cultural approaches to parenting.

As indicated above, in many countries schools offer some formal means to orient refugee children, young people and their families to the education system.

A number of countries have also developed special orientation programs for refugee young people addressing such issues as peer pressure, drug use, HIV/AIDS and intergenerational conflict.

### Language training and employment

Particular planning considerations apply to refugee young people approaching or over the age of majority. In many receiving countries they will be considered too old for school and may not be eligible for income support to participate in basic education. At the same time they may not have had the opportunity to acquire the educational qualifications and experience required for paid work.

Language training programs designed for adults typically concentrate on language for day-to-day survival (see Chapter 2.6). They may be inadequate for young people who wish to resume their education, since they will require advanced language competence.

There may also be higher expectations on resettled refugees in this age group to make an economic contribution to their families than is the case for their local peers.

In some countries special income support and language training provision is made for this group. In circumstances where young people are required or need to work, there may be a need to explore part-time language training and study options.



### Planning for children and young people in emerging resettlement countries

WHEN establishing an integration program it will be necessary to meet with the relevant education authorities in the planning stages, to identify mechanisms for assisting refugee children and young people in their enrolment, language training and integration into the classroom.

CHILDREN/  
YOUNG PEOPLE



**My hope for the future is that people are happy and can be with their families**

Resettled young refugee





## Separated refugee minors

A SEPARATED minor is a child or young person under the age of 18 who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or by custom, has the responsibility to do so. Often the term 'unaccompanied minor' is used to designate such children. However, the UNHCR and many NGOs prefer to use the term 'separated' minor to describe this group, since the designation of a minor as 'accompanied' can sometimes mask the fact that they are actually separated from parents or guardians.

The following are important considerations in the integration of refugee minors who arrive in the resettlement country without parents or guardians:

- While children account for close to half of the world's refugee population, those who are separated from their parents or legal or customary guardians, comprise a small proportion of all refugees (around 3–5%), and an even smaller proportion of those who are resettled.
- Supporting the resettlement of separated minors may sometimes involve a number of complicated legal and social issues. National guidelines can help to ensure a uniform and sensitive approach.
- Close co-operation and coordination among

government authorities responsible for child welfare and refugee resettlement will be critical to ensure an appropriate standard of care for such children.

- In most countries, child welfare systems and laws have been developed to meet the needs of local children, while those relating to refugee resettlement have usually been developed with adults and families in mind. Accordingly, there may be a need to review laws and procedures relating to child welfare and refugee resettlement, to ensure that they address the particular circumstances of refugee minors who arrive without adult support.
- Very often, separated children want to undertake or to continue efforts to locate missing family members. It will be important to have procedures in place to help them to trace family members, both within the country of resettlement and elsewhere. Procedures for this are outlined on page 87 of this Handbook. Additional steps may be required to ensure that child welfare services are aware of the importance of family tracing and have the expertise and resources to undertake this. While family reunification may not be achievable for many refugee children and young people, contact with relatives can help to ease

the anxiety and guilt feelings which may be involved in ongoing separation, and strengthen cultural and religious integrity and identity. The promotion of family unity is the basis of the child welfare systems of many countries and is consistent with international instruments relating to the rights of the child.

- Some countries have specific procedures for assessing care arrangements for refugee minors who arrive with adults who are neither parents nor legal or customary guardians, to ensure that they are provided an appropriate standard of care. This may also include ongoing assessment and monitoring as well as support for care-givers (e.g. orientation to their roles as a parent in the receiving society). These steps are important since such arrangements are sometimes unsuitable and may be vulnerable to breaking down. In Sweden, for example, child welfare authorities conduct routine assessment of families caring for separated minors, to ensure that they are aware of, and have the capacity to fulfil, parental responsibilities. An assessment of this nature should take place as soon as possible after arrival, so that refugee children and young people can begin



their lives in a new country in an optimal environment and to avoid the transition to an alternative care arrangement should this be required.

- Appropriate care arrangements will be required both for minors who are resettled alone and for those whose care arrangements are unsuitable or have broken down. A flexible range of options will be required. For example, in Sweden and the USA, options include foster care, a family group model and supervised independent living.
- Alternative care arrangements should aim to promote the religious and cultural integrity and identity of refugee minors. This may involve placing children with care providers who share their religious or cultural backgrounds, placing young people from the same cultural group together in group facilities, providing opportunities for minors to participate in cultural and religious activities and linking minors with other members of their ethnic communities.
- Intensive settlement support is usually required for minors in alternative care arrangements at least until they reach the age of majority, or the age at which alternative care arrangements would usually cease for nationals.

- Early settlement support will need to include life skills training, basic material needs, assistance in dealing with the effects of trauma and torture, recreation, education and language training needs, identity formation, peer group issues and cultural adjustment.
- Professionals and volunteers, particularly child welfare professionals and those providing alternative care, will require appropriate training and support.
- Provision will need to be made for income support and assistance with other important services which are commonly only available on a 'fee-for-service' basis in receiving societies (e.g. medical coverage, counselling, career guidance and legal assistance).

In some circumstances refugee children and young people may arrive with a parent or guardian but subsequently are separated from them. There may be a number of reasons for this, including:

- abuse;
- conflict between the refugee minor and the parent or guardian;
- the parent or guardian may be unable or unwilling to provide care, sometimes due to their own resettlement difficulties,

illness, or the demands of caring for other children in the family, a particular concern for sole parents;

- secondary migration of the care-giver. For example, an adult sibling may decide to move without making alternative arrangements for the minor sibling. In other cases, adolescents may themselves decide to move on their own without realising how difficult this might be;
- relationships may have been inaccurately described. That is, a minor may be more loosely attached to the adults he or she arrived with than was understood when the selection process took place.

Children and young people in these circumstances may need to be reclassified and receive services as if they were unaccompanied. In some cases, it may be appropriate to license other members of the minor's family or individuals in the community as foster care providers through the child welfare system, or the minor may be placed in alternative care arrangements.

Consistent with the standards of the UNHCR, most countries discourage the adoption of unaccompanied refugee minors, at least until the possibility of family tracing and reunification has been definitively ruled out.





## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

### Supporting separated refugee minors in the USA

<p>IN THE USA, programs for children and young people who cannot be cared for by their families are the responsibility of state governments. The experience of the USA has been that a specialised response is required for separated refugee minors, since existing domestic programs have developed largely to meet the needs of nationals. Foster families and other alternative care providers for refugee minors need to be carefully selected and trained, and placements require the support of a social worker with specialist expertise in the areas of family tracing, refugee trauma, cultural and identity adjustment, educational adjustment and language acquisition. Further, alternative care placements need to be made with regard for the cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds of minors, their special health, educational and emotional needs and their personality, temperament and views.</p>	<p>which have extensive expertise in refugee resettlement and affiliates providing state-based foster care programs. These agencies, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the USA Catholic Conference Migration and Refugee Services, offer 13 specialist foster care programs for refugee minors throughout the USA.</p> <p>Foster families come from a range of backgrounds. Some are from the same ethnic communities as minors requiring care. Others, while being from a different cultural background, may nonetheless have a shared refugee history.</p> <p>Families from the same cultural backgrounds as refugee children and young people provide important placement options, particularly for very young children, and are an important resource to other families and program staff on cultural issues and practices.</p> <p>Foster families participate in specialised training on the adjustment needs of refugee children and young people, and placements are supported by a specially trained social worker.</p>	<p>Despite these distinguishing features, refugee foster care programs follow the same state or county laws and regulations governing domestic foster care, and are both licensed and regularly monitored by their state child welfare authority.</p> <p>While foster care is usually the most appropriate form of care for young children, the USA experience suggests that supervised, semi-supervised or independent living arrangements may be more suitable options for older adolescents and young adults. Resettled refugee minors in these placements are offered intensive social work assistance in learning the life skills they will need to live independently.</p> <p>In the USA separated refugee minors are eligible for foster care and other alternative arrangements if they are under the age of 18. They can remain in a program until they have finished high school or have reached 20 or 21 years (depending on the emancipation guidelines in force in the particular state in which they have settled).</p>
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# CHAPTER 3.4

## Engaging Refugee Elders

## GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

-  **ONE** To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
-  **TWO** To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
-  **THREE** To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.
-  **FOUR** To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.
-  **FIVE** To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
-  **SIX** To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.
-  **SEVEN** To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
-  **EIGHT** To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.
-  **NINE** To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

## Chapter 3.4

# Engaging Refugee Elders

This Chapter discusses some of the factors that need to be taken into account to ensure that integration planning processes and programs support the integration of refugee elders.

### Why plan to support the integration of refugee elders?

Refugee elders' contribution to receiving societies and refugee families

Many refugee elders make important economic contributions to receiving societies through their participation in paid and voluntary work. Elders also support the integration of refugee families through their involvement in child care and domestic tasks.

As holders of the cultural heritage of their communities, refugee elders transmit important cultural knowledge to the receiving community and to younger generations. This role is particularly important for refugee children and young people since, as discussed elsewhere in this Handbook, engagement with their culture-of-origin is important in the process of developing their identity in the receiving society.

In many refugee source countries, refugee elders are revered for their wisdom and life experience and are a source of advice and support to their children and grandchildren. If refugee elders are supported in their integration, they will be better equipped to play this role in receiving societies.

### Particular planning needs

In many resettlement countries, ageing is associated with increased vulnerability to poverty, poor health and social isolation<sup>1</sup>. As resettled refugees may be at particular risk in this regard, appropriate planning is critical to ensure that both their human rights and dignity are safeguarded.



ELDERS



## CHECKLIST

## Taking account of refugee elders:

**Integration program component (see relevant Chapter in Part Two)**

**Think about:**

Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> family support;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ethnic community networks;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> health and social services;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> neighbourhood safety and security;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public transportation.</li> </ul>
Early settlement and social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> offering separate assessments for the family and individual elder;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fostering linkages between refugee elders and community support services (e.g. meals services, domestic assistance);</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> partnerships between aged services and refugee communities to develop culturally relevant social and recreational programs for refugee elders.</li> </ul>
Income support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> whether refugee elders are eligible for retirement income under national retirement laws and provisions and the sustainability of current income provisions.</li> </ul>
Language assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the importance of assistance as elders may take longer to acquire the target language;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> target language maintenance as resettled refugees age.</li> </ul>
Language training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> flexible language training options;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> whether participation in language training/orientation programs should be obligatory for the aged (an important concern in those countries where this is the case for resettled refugees generally);</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> curriculum relevant to refugee elders that emphasises socialisation and community connections.</li> </ul>
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> information on services and supports available to elders in the receiving country, including ethno-cultural groups and services;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> life skills focussed orientation;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> information about target language publications (newspapers, magazines) and radio and television programs.</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> availability of housing stock suitable for extended families;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> physical accessibility of housing, particularly for elders with disabilities;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> culturally sensitive, long term supported accommodation options for frail refugee elders.</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> intensive job search support programs and career planning assistance for resettled refugees over the age of 45;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the adequacy of existing legislative frameworks to prevent discrimination against elders.</li> </ul>
Health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> capacity building activities in programs serving refugee elders (e.g. nursing homes, hospitals).</li> </ul>
Welcoming and hospitable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> promoting elder involvement in ethnic community events;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> whether more flexible requirements should apply for citizenship for elders.</li> </ul>
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> professional development, training and awareness raising activities for key personnel and professionals to enhance their capacity to support refugee elders.</li> </ul>

For younger refugees, the success of integration is usually measured in terms of their acquisition of the target language and achievement of economic self-sufficiency. While for some elders these may be appropriate goals, for others, integration objectives need to be considered in the context of their physical and mental abilities. Success may need to be measured in terms such as their independence in day-to-day tasks or their social connections with other elders in the refugee community.

Since refugee elders have a role in supporting the integration of other family members and in transmitting important cultural values, another indicator of success will be the extent to which they are respected and valued in their own families and communities and the wider society.

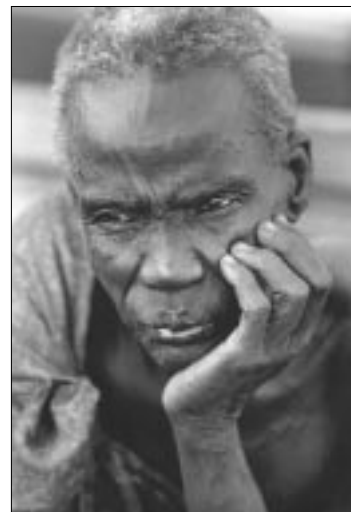
Refugee elders are a small proportion of resettled refugees. They are a highly diverse group and may also be geographically dispersed. As a consequence, their needs can often be overlooked. This may be particularly the case in receiving societies with high expectations of early economic self-sufficiency where the focus in integration planning tends to be on employable adults.

The implications of the refugee and resettlement experiences for refugee elders

In most societies, ageing is a life cycle stage of adjustment. It is a time of coming to terms with a gradual loss of independence, of retirement from paid employment and of looking for alternative sources of practical and emotional support. Ultimately ageing involves coming to terms with, preparing for and coping with death. Refugee elders face some unique challenges in the processes of both ageing and resettlement.

Elder nationals and longer term residents of the receiving society will have had the opportunity gradually to plan for advancing age and to acquire the skills and resources for dealing with it. In contrast, refugee elders are required to make these adjustments in an unfamiliar environment and with few material resources. Many will have to come to terms with very different social conditions for ageing than they may otherwise have anticipated in their countries-of-origin.

Refugee elders have very few years available to them to rebuild their lives and regain their former status and financial position. In view of the time needed to retrain or have qualifications gained elsewhere recognised, they may be forced to accept a labour force position well below that occupied in their countries-of-origin.



ELDERS



**...regarding student motivation ... we have found that it is sometimes not enough to speak only with the person concerned. Several of the students belong to larger families that have preserved their home traditions including the practice of treating ones' elders with particular respect. His views carry weight when the family discusses right and wrong, should and must, tradition and innovation. Both the school and the refugee officers have learned to consult with the family elder when important matters of principle are to be decided.**

Language teacher





## ENGAGING REFUGEE ELDERS



Some of the challenges resettled refugees face in seeking employment are discussed in Chapter 2.9. These may be compounded for refugee elders by the reluctance of some employers to hire older workers. Further, the higher rate of chronic and disabling conditions among resettled refugees may make them appear older than they are.

Refugee elders may also have to adjust to very different concepts of retirement. In some countries-of-origin, the retirement age is lower than in many resettlement countries and retirement from paid employment may be a more gradual process. As a consequence they may be ambivalent about employment. While they may be conscious of the need for economic self-sufficiency, they may also yearn for the tranquil retirement they might otherwise have had in their home countries.

In refugee source countries, elders are generally valued for their wisdom and life experience, and authority and status is vested in them. In receiving societies, however, this position is likely to be reversed. Given their age and greater contact with the receiving society, children and younger adults tend to learn the language of and adjust to the receiving society at a faster rate than elders. Refugee elders may become dependent on children and grandchildren for the most basic of tasks such as paying bills or reading correspondence. As well as undermining their traditional authority, this can be a cause of humiliation and shame.

The traditional role of elders may be further compromised if children and young people reject their beliefs and values in their own bid to find acceptance in their new country. Also of concern are negative attitudes toward ageing in many receiving societies. These have the potential to affect the self esteem of refugee elders as well as the esteem in which they are held by other family members. Without their traditional role and authority, refugee elders may struggle to find an alternative meaning and purpose to their lives.

Resettled refugee elders are also vulnerable to social isolation in the receiving society. Families struggling with their own integration may find it difficult to find the time to spend with elder relatives. While in established refugee communities support networks for elders are generally well developed, in small and emerging communities this may not necessarily be the case.

Refugee elders may also have limited access to social and recreational programs (e.g. day centres, communal meal services). This may be due to language difficulties, discomfort as minorities in the company of elders from the dominant culture, and the fact that these programs may not readily accommodate the dietary requirements and religious and cultural practices of refugee elders.



Social isolation and dependence of refugee elders may be further compounded by lack of access to, or difficulties in using, public transportation.

While age can be a period of great vitality, it is also associated with increased vulnerability to health problems and increasing dependence on others. In many refugee source countries, frail and sick elders are cared for in the home by the extended family. Refugee families in receiving societies facing their own integration challenges may struggle to provide this support.

At the same time, both families and refugee elders may be reluctant to access services established for the elderly in the receiving society. This may be due to fear or distrust of outsiders, in particular government agencies, and/or a strong cultural belief that responsibility for the support of the elderly lies with the family.

Preparing for death involves particular challenges for refugee elders. For religious and cultural groups with strong links to ancestry, burial in one's homeland is important. Refugee elders from these groups may fear what will happen to their souls if they are buried in their country of resettlement<sup>2</sup>. In others, particular procedures and rites need to be observed in order to ensure appropriate burial and resting. For example, burial may need to take place within a prescribed time or the deceased (as is the case for practising Muslims) may need to be placed in a certain direction. In some cultures there are specific taboos on talking with the sick and elderly about impending death, making it difficult for them to discuss their fears and ensure that practical preparations are made.

In many refugee source countries the dying remain in the home surrounded by relatives, friends and in some cases religious leaders. In contrast, in receiving societies elders may well spend their last days in a hospital where the involvement of family and friends may be limited.



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## ENGAGING REFUGEE ELDERS



## Planning for refugee elders: Overall considerations

### Service and program responsiveness

The small, diverse and geographically dispersed nature of the refugee elder community presents particular challenges for integration planners, and resource constraints may work against establishing special programs for them. Accordingly, a highly targeted approach to planning is required.

A number of methods have been adopted to improve the responsiveness of services and programs to refugee elders, including:

- securing the co-operation of services providing programs for national elders to offer programs in refugee community venues such as community centres or places of worship;
- ethno-cultural agencies working with established service providers to develop programs for refugee elders in existing facilities for national elders;
- providing support to established services to enhance their capacity to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive programs to refugee elders (e.g. bilingual and bi-cultural staff, technical support).

The success of these approaches is highly dependent on effective partnerships between refugee agencies, refugee communities and established services and programs for elders in the receiving society.

Effective models of service delivery for refugee elders have also tended to be multi-faceted, addressing a range of resettlement objectives in an integrated way. For example, in the USA, some success has been achieved by combining language training, orientation and social support.

The experience of receiving societies is that refugee elders do require more intensive integration support<sup>3</sup> and that this needs to be recognised in funding and contractual arrangements, particularly for services providing early assessment and settlement support (see Chapter 2.3).

### Refugee community support and capacity building in refugee communities

Chapter 2.11 discusses strategies to strengthen refugee communities and to build their capacity to support resettled

## Refugee elders

FRESNO Inter-denominational Refugee Services (FRIS), a non-profit organisation based in California, USA, was aware that elders in the local Lao and Hmong refugee communities were not accessing local services for the aged. This was despite high levels of poverty in these communities.

With funding from the local county, FRIS approached a local government service for the aged, requesting that it enter a partnership to provide a culturally appropriate congregate meal program and case-

work services in a neighbourhood centre already used by Lao and Hmong elders, along with a transportation service.

The local authority was initially resistant, believing that the Lao and Hmong elders should access existing programs. However, following a deputation from the elders themselves, it supported the proposal, recognising that existing programs were inaccessible due to cultural, language and other barriers.

Through this initiative, Lao and Hmong elders are now able to enjoy communal meal services in

a familiar environment, while at the same time being assisted to access resources available to them in the wider community through the casework service. FRIS contributes language and cultural interpretation services to the partnership.

This partnership has provided the basis for further initiatives, including the development of a new neighbourhood centre and classes to strengthen the role of elders in caring for children in their communities.



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refugees. These efforts will be particularly important for refugee elders as:

- in the face of dislocation and the stresses of resettlement, connection with their traditional culture can provide a source of continuity and comfort;
- strong ethno-cultural communities provide access to religious institutions. The ability to practise their faith may be particularly important for refugee elders;
- for those struggling to acquire the language of the receiving country, contact with their own community may be their only opportunity, outside of the family, to communicate in a meaningful way;
- refugee communities play an important role in supporting the development of special services for refugee elders and in providing advice and support to general services to assist them in providing culturally and linguistically relevant services. They are also an important source for recruiting bilingual and bi-cultural workers to programs for refugee elders.



## Factors to consider in key program areas

### Placement

The following will be important factors to consider in the placement of refugee elders:

- personal safety and security. The experience of resettlement countries is that refugee elders may feel particularly vulnerable to threats to their personal safety, contributing to anxiety and social isolation;
- ethno-cultural community and family support;
- health and support services, in particular, services established for elders;
- public transport. Refugee elders are less likely to own a motor vehicle owing to financial and language difficulties and health issues (e.g. visual impairment). Access to public transportation reduces elders' dependence on others and enables them to participate in social activities.

“  
**It is difficult to find the society where I really fit in because I'm old and not the same race as others.**  
 Resettled refugee



### Settlement and social support

The particular needs of refugee elders will have to be considered in early assessment and settlement support (see Chapter 2.3). In circumstances where refugee elders are dependent on family support, it is important that the whole family is involved in assessment and that social support interventions are developed to strengthen the functioning of the family and thereby its capacity to support refugee elders. Families will also need to be informed about the services and supports available to them in the event of the refugee elder experiencing a health crisis.

There is the risk that if energies focus on employable adults, the needs of refugee elders will be overlooked. For this reason social support providers in some resettlement countries conduct a separate interview with refugee elders, following the family assessment.

Through early settlement support refugee elders can be offered information and help to make linkages with their ethno-cultural communities, and with social and recreational programs in both the refugee and wider communities.

Health care and social support providers may also need to be aware of the possibility of elder abuse which, while occurring across cultures, may be a particular concern as refugee

families struggle to adjust to a new country. While in some cases this may take the form of physical abuse, in others, elders may suffer exploitation, being expected to take undue responsibility for domestic and child care tasks, or may be isolated in the home.

### Income support

In some receiving societies, eligibility for retirement income may be dependent on a history of participation in the labour force or being a citizen. In these circumstances, there may be a need to review income support provisions or to support refugee elders to meet prevailing eligibility requirements.

### Language assistance

Refugee elders are less likely to speak the language of the receiving society on arrival and may be slower to acquire a new language<sup>4</sup>. Accordingly, language assistance will be critical for this group, particularly in key services and systems (e.g. income support, health care) and specialist services for elders.

Elders may be unable to understand written information in either their own language or that of the receiving society. Many will depend on others to explain written information or explain or affirm information provided orally. For this reason information provided directly to elders should, wherever possible, be supplemented with written materials.

Experience suggests that refugees and immigrants begin to lose the capacity to speak their second language as they age, indicating the need for target language maintenance programs.

### Language training

The importance and benefits of language training for resettled refugees are discussed in Chapter 2.6 of this Handbook and apply equally to refugee elders. In addition, language programs can give elders a focus for re-establishing routine, for socialising with others and for learning about the receiving society.

Some countries offer dedicated language training programs for refugee elders and have developed specialist curricula. In many cases these are delivered in services for the elderly, often in the context of a broader social and recreational program or as part of a communal meal program.



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## Factors to consider in planning language training programs for refugee elders

- Learning a new language becomes increasingly difficult with advancing age. Refugee elders may require more intensive language support, or learning objectives may need to be set in accordance with their aspirations and abilities.
- Refugee elders may experience some embarrassment participating in a class with younger people, particularly if they are struggling to learn. For this reason elder-specific classes, if possible taught by older teachers, may be more acceptable.
- As indicated in Chapter 2.6, if adult language learning is to be effective, it is important that it is related to the day-to-day needs and concerns of adult learners. Since these will be very different for refugee elders than for employable-age adults, a tailored curriculum will be of benefit.
- Past negative experiences of education and negative images of ageing in the receiving society can affect elders' self esteem and self worth and act as barriers to learning. Curricula can help to address this by reflecting positive images of ageing.
- Refugee elders may face additional health barriers to language learning (hearing loss, vision impairment, dental problems, depression, dementia and arthritis). Awareness of these among program providers, and sound referral links between language training programs and health services will therefore be important.

## Orientation

Orientation programs and processes are important vehicles for providing assurance to refugee elders that they and their families are safe in the receiving society and for providing information about the supports and services available to them. Helping elders to establish a sense of control can reduce their dependence on other family members. Orientation programs can also help refugee elders to understand the lifestyle, practices, values and beliefs of the receiving society, thereby assisting them to retain their advice-giving roles in refugee families. This in turn can help to reduce the potential for inter-generational conflict.

As indicated above, orientation is more likely to be effective if provided as part of an integrated program of social support and/or language training. Many refugee elders will benefit from 'hands-on' orientation aimed at helping them to learn basic skills such as dialling telephone numbers and using public transport.

## Housing

While refugee elders and their families may prefer to be housed together, in many receiving societies there is a limited housing supply suitable for extended families. Where appropriate housing is not available, consideration may need to be given to housing elders close to family members and other community supports.

## Employment

Refugees who are approaching but have not reached retirement age, or who wish or need to work beyond that age may require more intensive employment counselling and job placement support. For planning purposes this group is generally understood to include those aged 45 years and over.

In the USA, some economic self-sufficiency initiatives targeted to elder refugees have built on and affirmed their roles as advisers and supporters of children and grandchildren. These have included working with refugee elders to establish child care co-operatives and offering them training to work as bi-cultural assistants in social support agencies. Through their participation in these programs, participants are also able to build their understanding of the receiving society, thereby bridging the gap between them and younger generations. Some countries have achieved particular successes with mentoring programs for refugee elders.

## Health

Care will need to be taken when offering post arrival health assessment to refugee elders. They may be particularly reluctant to disclose information about their health prior to or following resettlement, either because they fear that this may jeopardise their application for resettlement or their residency status or because they do not wish to worry or burden other family members.

Elders may be particularly receptive to traditional models of health care and these have been utilised by health services serving refugee elders in a number of countries.

In those receiving societies in which health care is funded through work-related or private health insurance schemes, consideration will need to be given to ensuring that refugee elders who are beyond employment age have access to an appropriate and affordable standard of health care.



**When adult care-givers are secure in their housing, health, employment, education and literacy, there is ample time and energy to see that the most vulnerable, elders and children, are well attended.**

Resettlement worker



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## INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

## Supporting older workers in Australia

<p>IN THE Australian state of Victoria, Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) established the <i>Tool Shed</i>, an initiative providing the opportunity for older refugee men with low levels of formal education to access and participate in vocational skills acquisition programs that would otherwise be out of their reach. The aim was to develop a tool shed as a base for providing</p>	<p>alternative pathways to economic independence for people unable to find employment in the mainstream. AMES has supported a group of older men to develop a company around the <i>Tool Shed</i>. A business partnership with the St Vincent de Paul Society was developed and the <i>Tool Shed</i> is now the provider of tables and chairs offered to newly arrived refugee families as</p>	<p>part of the Australian Government's Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (see p. 41). From this relatively modest business base, it is hoped that the <i>Tool Shed</i> will expand its role in providing ongoing training and business development opportunities for people who would otherwise face difficulties in entering paid employment.</p>
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Health care providers and refugee advocates will need to familiarise themselves with relevant religious and cultural observances, including those related to the process of dying, treatment of the deceased, and processes for sending remains back to countries-of-origin (where this is possible) for burial.

As indicated in Chapter 3.1 resettled refugees may be particularly vulnerable to psychological problems as they age in the receiving society. This will need to be taken into account in professional development and other capacity building initiatives targeted to health and social support workers serving elders.

Welcoming and hospitable communities:  
Citizenship requirements

In some countries of resettlement a certain level of language proficiency is required to qualify for citizenship. Recognising that elders may find it difficult to learn a new language, some countries have more flexible criteria for them. Efforts to support elders to qualify for citizenship will be particularly important in countries where citizenship is a condition of eligibility for government-provided retirement income.





# Endnotes



# Endnotes

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