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## **Progress report on resettlement**

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## **I. Introduction and objective**

1. Since the creation of the Resettlement Service by the High Commissioner in 2006, in recognition of the international community's renewed awareness of the strategic potential of resettlement, UNHCR has enhanced the positioning of this important tool within broader protection frameworks. The renewed attention on resettlement has presented both opportunities and challenges.

2. This report provides an update on the resettlement activities of UNHCR, undertaken in cooperation with its partners, since its June 2008 Progress Report on Resettlement (EC/59/SC/CRP.11). It examines measures implemented by UNHCR in order to strengthen the use of resettlement as a protection tool and durable solution, with particular regard to relevant Executive Committee Conclusions. The report also examines current efforts to expand the use of resettlement, and makes recommendations for the way forward.

## **II. Addressing the gap between resettlement places and existing needs**

3. Over the past four years, UNHCR has steadily increased its identification and submissions of persons in need of resettlement. In 2006, UNHCR made submissions for resettlement for over 54,000 persons, 17 per cent more than in the previous year. In 2007, the number of submissions grew to almost 99,000 persons. In 2008 and 2009, the number of submissions further increased to 121,000 and 128,000 persons respectively. This progressive increase in resettlement submissions by UNHCR corresponds with improvements in the identification of people in need of this solution. In parallel, the number of resettlement departures in 2009 increased by 28 per cent to about 84,100 refugees, from 65,900 in 2008.<sup>1</sup>

4. UNHCR estimates the global resettlement needs at about 747,000 persons, including populations where resettlement is envisioned over a period of several years. This represents a significant increase from estimates reported for 2009 (560,000 persons), which is partly explained by UNHCR's focus on multi-year planning, the strengthened role of resettlement in comprehensive solutions strategies and improvements in the identification of persons in need. In 2010 alone, UNHCR estimates that 203,000 persons will require resettlement.

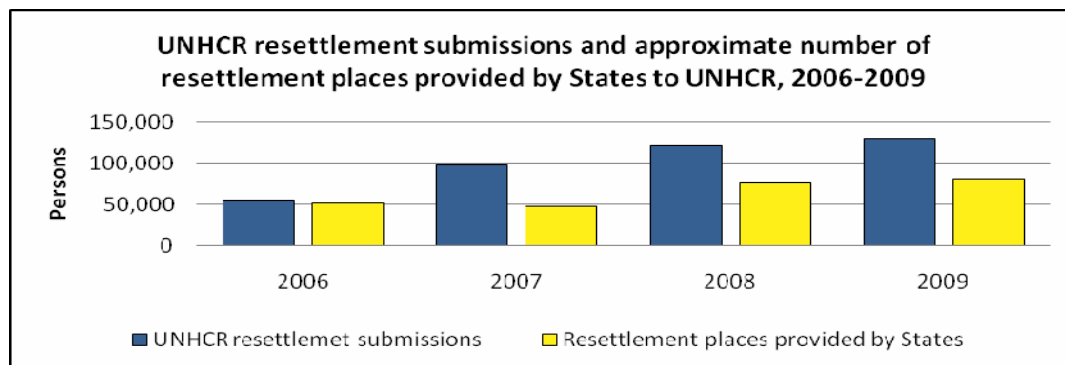
5. While the number of refugees in need of resettlement is growing, available resettlement places are not keeping pace. The available resettlement places in 2009 stood at approximately 80,000, including one-time allocations by some States in response to the resettlement needs of Iraqi refugees. This was a modest increase from the number of places available in 2008, but was not sufficient to meet the growing resettlement needs. The number of available resettlement places remains the same in 2010 and represents only about 40 per cent of the identified resettlement needs.<sup>2</sup> UNHCR alerted States to this challenge in

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are for UNHCR submissions and do not include refugees resettled through private sponsorship or family reunion programmes, which do not always involve UNHCR resettlement submissions / facilitation.

<sup>2</sup> The number of persons in need of resettlement in 2010 is approximately 203,000, whereas the number of places provided by resettlement countries for UNHCR submissions in 2010 is about 80,000.

its Progress Report to the Standing Committee in 2008. One of UNHCR's global strategic priorities foresees a 10 per cent increase in resettlement places, including for emergency resettlement, in 2010-2011. This objective will not be met, however, unless States initiate new resettlement programmes or expand those already existing.<sup>3</sup>



6. The Office's response to the gap between needs and places available has been threefold: (i) to encourage more countries to establish resettlement programmes or consider UNHCR submissions; (ii) to work with established resettlement countries to increase their intake of UNHCR-identified refugees; and (iii) to prioritize responses to resettlement needs and submissions, in light of the limited places available.

7. Since June 2008, 11 new countries<sup>4</sup> have indicated their readiness to receive a limited number of resettlement submissions from UNHCR. This includes countries that have formally announced the establishment of resettlement programmes: the Czech Republic, France, Japan, Portugal, Spain and Romania. The pool of resettlement countries now comprises 23 States worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Despite the welcome addition of these new resettlement countries, globally the expansion of resettlement remains limited. Whereas some States have yet to operationalize their resettlement activities, most established resettlement countries have not made any further significant increases in their annual resettlement targets to meet the global needs.<sup>6</sup> Also, while the majority of the emerging resettlement countries are in Europe, the number of resettlement places in Europe remains relatively low. UNHCR will continue exploring further opportunities to resettle refugees in other countries, consistent with its Global Strategic Priority 6.3 as well as Goal 5 of the *Agenda for Protection*.

<sup>3</sup> This number represents the places made available by resettlement countries for UNHCR submissions, including special annual programmes for refugees in need of resettlement, but does not include places allocated for refugees under separate family reunification or special humanitarian programmes.

<sup>4</sup> Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and the Czech Republic. A number of these countries previously had refugee resettlement programmes in the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>5</sup> Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and the United States of America.

<sup>6</sup> In 2008, the United Kingdom increased its annual resettlement intake by 250 places to a total of 750 persons. Australia increased its resettlement target for 2008-2009 by 500 places, a one-time increase only for the resettlement of Iraqi refugees.

8. In 2007, European countries provided only 9 per cent (6,200 places) of the overall global resettlement places. In 2009, this proportion rose to almost 13 per cent (10,100 places), largely owing to the one-time contributions by France and Germany in response to the resettlement needs of Iraqi refugees (1,200 and 2,500 places respectively).<sup>7</sup> It is hoped that the efforts of the European Commission to establish a Joint European Union Resettlement Programme will further enhance the capacity of EU States for resettlement. With financial support from the European Commission, UNHCR, in partnership with other stakeholders, has facilitated a number of technical cooperation arrangements between established resettlement countries and potential resettlement countries in Europe. The aim is to help States develop effective resettlement and integration programmes, allowing for greater expansion of resettlement to Europe.

9. The Philippines, Romania, and Slovakia have also established, in cooperation with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), evacuation transit facilities for persons with acute protection needs, pending their onward resettlement elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

### **III. Promoting the strategic use of resettlement**

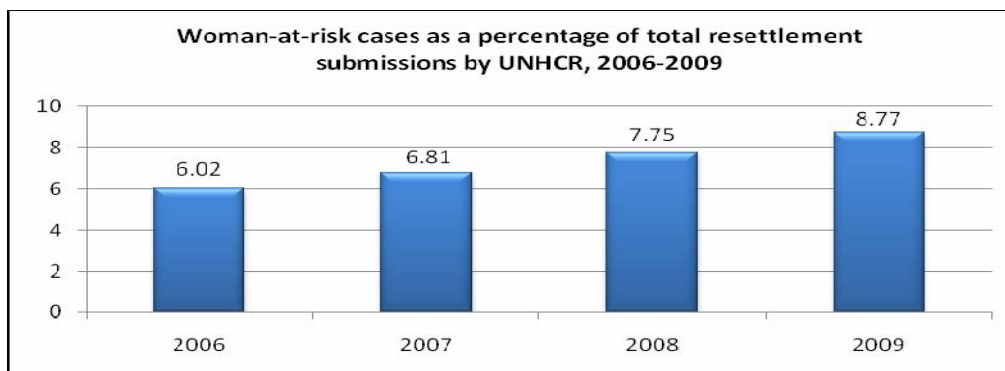
10. UNHCR continued its efforts to ensure that 10 per cent of its overall resettlement submissions are for women and girls at risk, in support of Executive Committee Conclusion 105 (2006). In 2008, 2,993 out of 38,605 refugee cases submitted for resettlement were for women at risk, representing 7.8 per cent of the overall resettlement submissions. The number of cases submitted under the same criterion increased by 818 cases, or about 38 per cent from 2,175 cases in 2007. Among the 80 operations where resettlement took place in 2008 and resettlement statistics are available, 34 operations (or 43 per cent) exceeded 10 per cent of resettlement places for women and girls at risk. The figures for 2009 are equally encouraging: 3,320 out of 37,853 refugee cases submitted for resettlement were for women at risk, representing 8.8 per cent of the overall resettlement submissions. In 2009, 34 operations (39 per cent) exceeded 10 per cent of resettlement submissions for women at risk and 26 operations exceeded 15 per cent.<sup>9</sup> This shows an improvement from previous years and strengthened attention to gender considerations. The Office encourages resettlement countries and partners to also align their policies and practices with Executive Committee Conclusion 105, which calls for “establishing measures to enable the speedier departure of refugee women at risk and their dependants”.

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to France and Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy also established special programmes for the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in 2009.

<sup>8</sup> In 2009, Burkina Faso provided for the evacuation and temporary stay of a limited number of refugees in the region pending their onward resettlement.

<sup>9</sup> The actual number of women and girls at risk resettled during 2008-2009 is under-reported as vulnerable women and girls are also resettled under other UNHCR resettlement criteria.



11. When used strategically, resettlement can bring about positive results that go well beyond the protection of individuals. With the active involvement of States, refugees and civil society, resettlement can open up avenues for international burden and responsibility sharing and, in combination with other measures, can unlock protracted refugee situations. UNHCR has used and will continue to systematically use resettlement in a strategic manner to enhance protection on a broader scale.

12. UNHCR continues to draw the attention of resettlement countries to the needs in priority protracted refugee situations, in line with Executive Committee Conclusion 109. While efforts have been made to better integrate resettlement in protection and solutions strategies, UNHCR's resettlement objectives and priorities do not always match those of States. Greater effort is required by the international community, including resettlement countries, to operationalize the relevant paragraphs of Executive Committee Conclusions in the area of resettlement. There is also a need for resettlement countries to forge greater cooperation within government structures and between ministries, particularly in raising awareness of the strategic value of resettlement, including its role in comprehensive solutions strategies for protracted refugee situations.

13. In 2009, the Swedish Chair of the Working Group on Resettlement, together with UNHCR, initiated a discussion on intensifying the strategic use of resettlement in seven refugee situations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East/North Africa region. These discussions were aimed at specifying strategic protection dividends and developing concrete next steps for the seven situations. UNHCR appreciates Sweden's leadership in engaging resettlement countries in these initiatives and its pledge to expand the commitment and capacity of resettlement on a global level.

14. Multi-year resettlement programmes, as opposed to annually conceived and implemented initiatives, have greater value and provide predictability which will allow for the sustained and phased implementation of comprehensive strategies. Multi-year resettlement planning is particularly valuable where diplomatic efforts and development assistance are linked to the strategic use of resettlement. UNHCR, therefore, encourages resettlement countries to consider adopting a multi-year planning approach.

#### **IV. Managing resettlement more effectively and addressing key challenges**

15. For countries hosting refugees, resettlement cooperation means granting UNHCR and delegations from resettlement countries access to refugees, as well as facilitating the exit formalities of refugees selected for resettlement. While such cooperation is generally positive and sometimes includes comprehensive solutions strategies, some host countries limit UNHCR's access to refugees in detention, refuse to let refugees depart for resettlement, impose restrictions such as exit fees or do not grant visas to staff of

resettlement countries involved in selection missions. Furthermore, there were a number of deplorable instances where refugees faced *refoulement* in 2009 even though they had been accepted for resettlement by a third country.

16. The average length of time to process cases for resettlement by States remains long, and is especially serious for persons in need of emergency resettlement. There is also a lack of predictability in processing times. The Office recognizes that States must undertake various measures (such as health and security checks) prior to granting resettlement. Extended or unpredictable waiting periods, however, can have an adverse impact on the well-being of refugees who often must wait in dangerous and difficult situations. In 2010 and 2011, UNHCR will continue to support resettlement countries in their efforts to accelerate procedures for emergency resettlement.

17. To enhance processing, UNHCR has provided regular training and policy guidance to its resettlement staff and integrated anti-fraud mechanisms into various operations. A pilot Resettlement Learning Programme was launched and successfully implemented in 2009, targeting UNHCR operations in the East and Horn of Africa, as well as in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Given the gap between resettlement needs and the intake capacity of resettlement countries, UNHCR has strengthened its identification methods, as well as the prioritization of the most vulnerable refugees in need of resettlement. Standard methodologies have been developed to estimate the number of persons in need of resettlement involving participatory assessments, tools to identify refugees at heightened risk, and the use of UNHCR's *proGres* registration database.

18. Through the meetings of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement and the Working Group on Resettlement, chaired by the United Kingdom in 2008-2009 and by Sweden in 2009-2010, UNHCR and resettlement countries have addressed a number of key policy and operational issues. The Office appreciates the participation and support of all involved States in responding to the global resettlement needs and priorities, focusing on the strategic use of resettlement, as well as in expanding cooperation on anti-fraud measures.

19. UNHCR continued to strengthen partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the area of refugee resettlement, including sub-agreements and the deployment of NGO personnel to UNHCR operations, in addition to the existing UNHCR- International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) resettlement deployment scheme. In order to enhance these partnerships in relation to the identification of refugees in need of resettlement in urban areas, UNHCR conducted training for 20 NGOs in Africa. A practical outcome of this training was the development of a joint UNHCR-NGO framework for cooperation on resettlement.

## **V. Recommendations on the way forward**

20. Measuring the success of resettlement as a protection tool and durable solution should be based not only on how many refugees have access to this solution and how many countries offer resettlement places but also on the way refugees are selected, received and supported, or in other words, the value of all of its components. To meet future challenges, UNHCR seeks support from resettlement countries and the international community at large with regard to the following:

- initiating or expanding resettlement programmes, including emergency and medical places, to meet the needs of vulnerable refugees, as well as ensuring flexible and efficient programme delivery while actively upgrading measures to protect procedural integrity (Global Strategic Priority 6.3);

- ensuring the thorough and flexible cooperation of host countries to facilitate the resettlement activities of UNHCR, its partners, and resettlement countries;
  - reducing barriers that limit access to resettlement for some refugees most at risk, such as discriminatory selection criteria set by some resettlement countries (e.g. integration potential, family size, age, health status, ethnicity, religion and nationality);
  - upholding international standards and mitigating selection processes that have a potentially negative impact on the welfare of refugees, notably with respect to HIV and DNA testing;
  - establishing an evacuation transit mechanism to be located in eastern Africa to address existing needs;
  - strengthening ways to deliver effective outcomes for resettled refugees, including ways to measure the success of resettlement programmes, such as through the acquisition of citizenship; and
  - improving refugee access to migration programmes, such as skilled labour migration, while ensuring migration channels are protection-sensitive.
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