

INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION INTERSESSIONAL WORKSHOP

Moving to Safety: Migration Consequences of Complex Crisis

Cross-Border Displacement: Long-term Measures and Cooperation Mechanisms

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In today's brief presentation, I would like to talk about what resettlement is, and how is it used; and on some aspects of the durability of resettlement.

What is resettlement and how is it used

Resettlement is a complex inter- State process involving the selection and transfer of individuals from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them and to grant them permanent residency status.

Resettlement has been a form of response to forced population displacement over the past decades, and has come a long way since post Second World War. Historically, the mass resettlement schemes established for refugees after the Second World War had started as a form of labor migration schemes under the auspices of the International Refugee Organisation, the IRO. The IRO concluded resettlement agreements with European and Latin American countries to select refugees who were suitable, physically, mentally, as well as by way of ethnicity, nationality, and family composition, for the unskilled labor markets in the post war period, when there was major labor shortage. Protection was not a key consideration, and the schemes excluded many who were at risk.

Since then, resettlement had gone through tremendous transformation, from the large scale resettlement phenomenon of the Vietnamese boat people in the 1970's and 1980's, where cold war political interests predominated in favor of resettlement, to much smaller numbers in the post-cold war period of the 1990's, when the global response to refugee problem oriented toward voluntary repatriation.

In today's context, resettlement is one of three durable solutions for refugees pursued by UNHCR under its mandate, alongside voluntary repatriation and local integration. Resettlement also serves two other very important functions, first, it could operate as a tool to provide urgent protection, particularly in crisis situations, to meet the specific needs of individual refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country where they have sought refuge; and, second, it is also a form of international solidarity and responsibility sharing, allowing States to help share responsibility of hosting refugees, and reduce problems impacting the country of asylum.

Normally, only a refugee could benefit from resettlement, although there are a small number of countries which also offer so-called "in country" processing programs, but these are very limited. Resettlement is not a State obligation nor is it a right of the refugee. Resettlement is essentially humanitarian in character and, within the global refugee protection regime, is a form of international solidarity and cooperation in the response to resolving refugee problem while meeting international protection needs.

As a *durable solution*, resettlement sits squarely among the other solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration, and comprises a part of comprehensive approaches to refugee situations, in particular those of a protracted nature. For example, in the context of the Afghan refugee situation, resettlement forms a part of the overall regional solutions strategy. As a *protection tool* for refugees, resettlement enables the most vulnerable refugees in situations of serious risk in a country of asylum to be moved to a third country. The criteria for prioritizing those in need of resettlement includes legal and physical protection needs, survivors of violence and torture, women at risk, and those with medical needs. As a form of *international solidarity and burden sharing*, resettlement could help support asylum countries facing large scale influx, and keep asylum space open. As a recent example, in response to the non-Libyan refugee outflow from Libya, resettlement was used as a strategic tool to burden-share with Tunisia and Egypt, and supported the borders to be kept open. A more historical example, is the time of the Vietnamese boat people outflow in the 1970's and 80's to the countries of Southeast Asia, where resettlement had played a key role to support temporary protection in those countries.

UNHCR plays a unique role to coordinate and administer the global refugee resettlement scheme, working very closely with resettlement countries and the refugees concerned. An

important partner is the IOM, which also plays a key role in the process, ensuring departure arrangements and movement.

Resettlement, however, is very limited in terms of its applicability, and is a highly selective process. With an estimated 800,000 refugees in need of resettlement, and 80,000 resettlement places available globally, only one in ten refugees in need of resettlement, could potentially be resettled every year. Together with resettlement countries, UNHCR has developed criteria to guide the identification and prioritization of refugee groups and individual refugees for resettlement, based on protection risks, and the need for a durable solution. Priority refugee groups are those in protracted situations with no other foreseeable alternative durable solution, and among these groups, the most vulnerable are identified. UNHCR works closely with resettlement partners, including NGOs, to continuously enhance methodologies and tools for the identification and speedy movement of refugees who are at risk.

Today, there are twenty-five countries with regular refugee resettlement programs. The largest numbers are offered by three main countries, the US, Canada and Australia which together provide eighty percent of the places, while countries in Europe provide eight percent of the places. The latest country to establish a regular resettlement programme is Germany, offering 300 places a year. There are also five resettlement countries in Latin America, and one, namely, Japan in Asia.

2) Durability of Resettlement

For resettlement to be a truly **durable** solution in the long term, integration of resettled refugees is critical. The integration of resettled refugees cannot be taken for granted, particularly in today's environment. Failure to integrate could undermine ongoing resettlement programs.

Integration is a multi-faceted long term process; for integration to be a success, refugees and all relevant actors in the resettlement country must play a role. Local authorities and communities need to provide a welcoming and supportive environment, while refugees need to adapt and become contributing members of society. The integration process must also respond to specific needs of refugees, many of whom arrive from situations of trauma and violence. Without a proactive engagement of the authorities and civil society, refugees may fall into the cracks risking marginalization, and far more detrimental results, including radicalization.

Over the last five years, with an increasing number of new resettlement countries, some of which lack resources and capacity for integration, capacity building for supporting integration of refugees in emerging resettlement countries has become an important issue. In this context, UNHCR encourages twinning programs between advanced resettlement countries and emerging resettlement countries, and continue to support capacity building activities, such as through sharing of information and experience, and study visits.

Supporting the integration process needs to start even before the refugees arrive in the country of resettlement. UNHCR encourages resettlement countries to provide cultural orientation programs to refugees once they are accepted for resettlement; some resettlement countries even bring their municipalities officials to selection missions in refugee camps so that these officials could familiarize themselves with the profiles and specific needs of the refugees, and be prepared well in advance before the refugees arrive in the municipalities concerned. In this regard, UNHCR appreciates the key role played by IOM in providing cultural orientation programs to refugees who are selected for resettlement to the US and other countries in many operations worldwide.

While UNHCR promotes a proactive engagement to support the integration process, at the same time, UNHCR discourages resettlement countries from applying integration criteria in their selection profiles. The use of discriminatory and integration profile as a selection criteria, some of which includes family links, nationality and even religion, tends to limit the ability of the resettlement country concerned to respond to protection needs, and could undermine the protection foundation of resettlement. The issue remains a subject of ongoing advocacy.

Conclusion and key challenge

In conclusion, resettlement will remain an important protection and durable solution tool for refugees, including in large scale outflow situations. A key challenge is to enhance identification tools and methodologies, and streamline processing requirements, so that resettlement will operate more flexibly and responsively to refugees at risk.

Thank you.

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