

CHAPTER EIGHT





CHAPTER EIGHT

PARTNERSHIP, LIAISON AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Introduction

The resettlement of refugees relies on cooperation and evolving partnerships between UNHCR, States, NGOs, international organizations, civil society, community-based organizations and other partners.

Refugee resettlement is *by definition* a partnership activity, and strengthening these partnerships enhances resettlement. While UNHCR identifies refugees in need and submits their cases, resettlement is dependent on States to provide refugees admission and support to integrate, and relies on NGOs and international organizations to play crucial roles throughout the resettlement continuum.

Working with the news media can be an effective way to mobilize support and increase public awareness of the plight of refugees. A well-informed, welcoming and receptive community is invaluable to the integration process for the remaining partner in the process – the refugee.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- provide an overview of UNHCR's cooperation with governments, NGOs, international organizations, and other partners in the field of resettlement;
- highlight some specific elements of this collaboration along the resettlement continuum and describe the role of some of the key partners; and
- provide guidance on working with the media.

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8.1 RESETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Resettlement is by definition a partnership activity, and the effective collaboration between resettlement partners is essential to being able to offer refugees the opportunity to rebuild their lives in a third country. In the climate of finite resources and increasing resettlement needs it is vital to optimize cooperation to better address these needs.

Collaboration between resettlement partners extends across the resettlement continuum, from identification and referral in the field, to processing, acceptance and travel, and to reception and integration in a third country.

UNHCR continues to improve access to resettlement for refugees by diversifying resettlement activities across operational contexts, enhancing operational standards and improving the coordination of activities. Strengthening partnerships is not only a policy priority for UNHCR; it is also a protection imperative in order to achieve these goals and to facilitate equitable access of refugees to durable solutions.

It is important for resettlement partners to be fully aware of the range of constraints involved in the resettlement process, including the competing demands for scarce quota places, and the need for particular attention on emergency and urgent priority cases. It must be borne in mind that while Governments and/or NGOs may intervene to promote resettlement of certain groups of specific interest to them, UNHCR must consider resettlement on the merits of the circumstances in relation to refugee protection and durable solutions for refugees.

As described in [Chapter 2.1.3](#), the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) and the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) process provides a unique and dynamic forum for collaborative efforts between UNHCR, Governments, NGOs, and international organizations to enhance the use of resettlement, identify and address challenges, and shape joint strategies and directions for the future.

The host country

The host country plays an invaluable role in supporting the provision of protection and assistance to refugees on their territory and facilitating UNHCR's work in its search for durable solutions for refugees.

Host countries are encouraged to **collaborate in developing and implementing comprehensive solutions strategies**, which includes facilitating access of refugees to possibilities for voluntary return or, most importantly, self-reliance and local integration, as well as **facilitating access to resettlement processing** of those refugees who are not able to return or integrate. In certain circumstances, and with due respect to the safeguards set out in [Chapter 5.4](#), the host country may be involved in drawing UNHCR's attention to refugees potentially in need of resettlement, due to heightened risk or need for specialized services.

In all circumstances, the cooperation of the host country is essential to **authorize the entry of interviewing and selection missions**, and to facilitate refugee departures including the **issuance of exit visas**.

8.2 PARTNERS

8.2.1 Resettlement States

Governments have the essential role of establishing and maintaining effective resettlement programmes, including services and supports to assist resettled refugees to integrate into their new communities.

Resettlement States have established regular refugee resettlement programmes, and agree to consider a certain number of submissions by UNHCR each year. Other countries may not have a yearly programme, but also resettle refugees on an *ad hoc* basis and some maintain special resettlement programmes benefiting refugees with specific needs. Resettlement States are full members of the WGR/ATCR process, whereas countries resettling on an *ad hoc* basis are considered observer States.

UNHCR promotes the establishment of resettlement programmes which are:

- **predictable** in terms of admissions levels including multi-year commitments, budgets, and eligibility criteria;
- **diverse** in terms of the refugee beneficiaries, to include protection cases as well as refugees with specific needs;
- **responsive** to urgent needs, emerging needs and appeals for responsibility sharing;
- **non-discriminatory** in selecting refugees for resettlement on the basis of their needs, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, family size or other factors;
- **proactive** in addressing domestic considerations linked especially to budget constraints and problems related to integration: there is a unique challenge for Governments and NGOs to take active steps to lead, inform all domestic resettlement partners and assist them to make resettlement function properly at all levels;
- **holistic** and comprehensive in approach, in using resettlement to ensure protection, a durable solution, and effective sharing of burdens and responsibilities within the broader protection strategy; and
- open to the **strategic use of resettlement**, e.g. through group resettlement as a means of providing a durable solution in protracted refugee situations where prospects for voluntary repatriation to the country of origin or local integration in the country of asylum are remote.

Municipalities

In a number of resettlement countries, the municipalities play a **direct role in receiving resettled refugees**, and taking responsibility for **coordinating services** aimed at their integration. Receiving municipalities find accommodation for the new arrivals, organize the provision of essential services, and coordinate the delivery of integration programmes including language classes and employment preparation.

Municipal **capacity and preparedness**, including access to appropriate housing, specialized services, and labour market opportunities has a strong impact on the implementation of resettlement programmes in some countries. The engagement of municipalities constitutes a cornerstone of these countries' integration policies and practices. Building, and maintaining, support in municipalities to engage in resettlement is therefore key to the successful integration of resettled refugees.

8.2.2 Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

UNHCR's NGO partners

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are the single largest group of UNHCR's partners. They play an essential role in meeting the basic needs of persons of concern to UNHCR.

Implementing partnerships are those in which UNHCR provides financial support to an NGO that performs specific services to help refugees under a formal project agreement subject to UNHCR financial rules and regulations. Seventy-five per cent of these organizations are local or national organizations.

Operational partnerships involve the voluntary close coordination between UNHCR and NGOs, but not financial support by UNHCR.

NGOs play a significant role in providing resettlement support, both in countries of asylum, and in countries of resettlement. NGO partners are involved in a wide range of operational, outreach and advocacy activities including:

- joint planning and information-sharing;
- providing legal assistance and counselling;
- disseminating information to refugees and the wider community;
- identifying refugees in need of protection interventions, including resettlement;
- preparing and referring resettlement cases;
- conducting assessments including Best Interests Determinations;
- delivering specialized services;
- processing and transferring refugees to a resettlement country;
- providing cultural orientation sessions to departing refugees;
- implementing reception and integration programmes post-arrival; and
- conducting training and capacity building of local authorities and communities where refugees will be received.

UNHCR continues to strengthen partnerships with NGOs across the continuum of resettlement activities, including through sub-agreements and the deployment of NGO personnel to UNHCR operations.

The specific role and function of NGOs within a country's resettlement programme varies from country to country. In many cases, NGOs provide a liaison function to the refugee, UNHCR and the receiving Government and community. Some resettlement countries involve NGOs intimately in case preparation, and pre-departure processing, as well as reception and integration. Others involve their NGOs in programme planning, selection missions, or dossier screening.

It is often through the work of NGOs and their community volunteers that the public first gets to know about refugees and the work of UNHCR. This aspect of NGO work has a positive impact on fundraising, advocacy for various refugee groups, and fulfilling public information functions.

UNHCR and NGOs are encouraged to explore creative partnerships, and develop specific activities, projects or programmes to enhance the protection and assistance to refugees. To support and encourage strengthened cooperation, UNHCR and NGOs have developed the *UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement*.¹ This Toolkit also assists in developing consistency and predictability in the way UNHCR offices engage NGO partners in the field of resettlement.

UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement

A repository for exchanging ideas and sharing good practices on resettlement partnerships

What is the toolkit?

The toolkit is a resource to help UNHCR and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) strengthen their partnership and cooperation on resettlement. It is a collection of tools that provides practical guidance for the UN refugee agency and NGOs to cooperate in various areas: operational activities; community outreach; information sharing, planning and advocacy; and reception and integration. It is also an assemblage of examples of such partnerships in action, both historical and current, to elicit best practices and build on earlier efforts. It should be noted that the toolkit is not a "how to" manual and does not attempt to provide step-by-step guidance, but rather aims to simply collect and share useful tools.

Why have the toolkit?

The purpose of the toolkit is to raise awareness about the potential for collaboration and the good practices in place as well as to provide the tools for supporting enhanced partnerships on resettlement. UNHCR and NGOs recognize the importance of strengthening partnerships to identify refugees in need of solutions, including resettlement, and they acknowledge the need for balanced protection delivery among regions and within countries, including urban, camp and other operational contexts. Such partnerships are necessary to bridge protection gaps, including capacity and resource challenges.

¹ The Toolkit was developed jointly by UNHCR, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and Mapendo International with input from other NGOs.

Who should use the toolkit?

UNHCR field offices, interested NGOs and governments are encouraged to use and contribute to the resources in this toolkit. We encourage joint exploration and development of activities, projects or programmes to enhance the protection and assistance to refugees and other persons in need of protection and to seek durable solutions for them.

How to use the toolkit?

This toolkit is a living repository for exchanging ideas on resettlement partnerships, available online at <http://www.unhcr.org/ngotoolkit>. NGOs and UNHCR staff are encouraged to submit relevant additional materials (templates, tools, field examples and commentaries on any of the tools) to make the toolkit useful to various resettlement operational contexts.

8.2.3 Inter-agency cooperation: the International Organization for Migration

An important part of the International Organization for Migration's mandate is to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people. That makes the IOM a natural partner for UNHCR.

The UNHCR–IOM partnership is long-standing, and together the organizations promote integrated policies and comprehensive approaches to displacement, and have forged models of cooperation in many areas.²

Founded in 1951 in Brussels, IOM was set up to ensure the orderly movement of persons in need of international migration assistance, and to promote the cooperation of Governments and international organizations in the field of migration. Services IOM can provide include pre-screening, counselling, documentation, medical processing, training, transport, reception and integration.

According to its Constitution, IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. It acts to assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration, to advance understanding of migration issues, to encourage social and economic development through migration and to work towards effective respect for human dignity and the well-being of migrants.

IOM and UNHCR's Memorandum of Understanding³ is aimed at facilitating systematic, cooperative action between the two organizations. With this agreement, the two organizations seek to build on each other's recognized expertise and to establish operational cooperation.

² One example is the development of a Joint IOM and UNHCR internal reference tool: *Developing Standard Operating Procedures to Facilitate the Protection of Trafficked Persons*, December 2009, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/4b5876442.html>

³ UNHCR/IOM/39/97-FOM/44/97 of 27 May 1997 on cooperation between UNHCR and IOM. This document governs the relations between the two institutions and provides the broad framework for achieving complementarity of the activities of UNHCR and IOM worldwide. UNHCR, *Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration*, 15 May 1997, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b31a70.html>

IOM has always worked closely with UNHCR to assist resettlement, principally with respect to travel, and also in the context of the provision of language training and cultural orientation which can help lay the basis for successful integration. It also plays a significant role in the facilitation of the reunification of refugee families.

8.3 DEPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

UNHCR continues to be dependent for its resettlement activities on additional staff provided as an “affiliate workforce”. Seconding NGO staff to UNHCR operations strengthens UNHCR’s capacity for protection delivery and resettlement. Staff deployed or seconded to UNHCR field offices assist in identifying the most vulnerable refugees, assessing their resettlement needs, and preparing resettlement cases. Many deployees also possess specific expertise in refugee status determination, child protection (e.g. conducting Best Interests Determinations), working with women and girls, or with survivors of violence.

The most prominent among these arrangements is the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme. Resettlement operations also benefit from deployments from the protection roster administered by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and from deployment agreements UNHCR concludes with other organizations such as Mapendo International (to be renamed RefugePoint).

NGOs interested in working with UNHCR to explore resettlement deployment arrangements are encouraged to contact the Resettlement Service at UNHCR Headquarters. Individuals interested in participating in deployment arrangements should contact the relevant agency.

8.3.1 UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme

Since 1998, ICMC has been working in partnership with UNHCR globally to provide protection and durable solutions to refugees through resettlement to a third country. The UNHCR-ICMC Deployment Scheme, which heads an active roster of more than 300 skilled professionals,⁴ stands as one of UNHCR’s largest affiliated workforce partners, playing a vital role in supporting resettlement activities in UNHCR field offices throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, and thereby tangibly increasing the number of refugees who are identified and submitted for resettlement to third countries.

In 2010, ICMC deployees interviewed and assessed more than 80,000 refugees. Of these, more than 55,000 persons were subsequently submitted for resettlement. In conjunction with boosting UNHCR’s resettlement submission capacity, the Deployment Scheme allows for an increased exchange of expertise and capacity building between NGOs and UNHCR. The temporary placement of professionals from diverse backgrounds within UNHCR field offices gives

⁴ The total roster numbers more than 500 individuals.

them an increased understanding of how the UNHCR resettlement programme functions. In turn, UNHCR benefits from the experience of people grounded in community work in refugee-receiving or refugee-hosting countries, as well as from the prior experience of people who have worked in government ministries in their home countries.

8.3.2 Surge Protection Capacity Project

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) administers the Surge Protection Capacity Project as a joint initiative with UNHCR. With an active roster of more than 300 qualified protection professionals, IRC enhances UNHCR's staffing capacity in the areas of general protection, statelessness, local integration, durable solutions, prevention and response to gender-based violence. The employees possess the protection skills and knowledge to be immediately active in the field, which enables the project to address temporary and sudden increases in staffing needs.

8.3.3 Other deployment and secondment programmes

Other partnership agreements may be signed to support UNHCR's resettlement staffing needs.

For example, under a partnership agreement to enhance resettlement out of Africa, staff from Mapendo International (to be renamed RefugePoint) are assigned to UNHCR field offices for various lengths of time. The "Experts-on-Loan" carry out targeted projects aimed at accessing specific populations in need of resettlement, or generally increasing resettlement capacity in sites where it has been limited.

8.4 PARTNERSHIPS ALONG THE RESETTLEMENT CONTINUUM

Partnership assists in bridging protection gaps, including capacity and resource challenges which can be mitigated by fostering coherent and complementary approaches to addressing the needs of refugees. This recognition of partnership between UNHCR and NGOs along the resettlement continuum reaffirms the particular expertise that exists within UNHCR and among NGOs, and the shared concerns for integrity, objectivity and professionalism in the search for durable solutions for refugees.

Resettlement cooperation may be incorporated into existing implementing agreements, or may constitute the basis for memoranda of understanding between UNHCR and operational or implementing partners.

Creative partnerships encouraged through the UNHCR-NGO Toolkit

Practical cooperation in the following areas of UNHCR – NGO engagement are among the creative partnerships being encouraged through the UNHCR-NGO Toolkit, as they have proven effective and mutually reinforcing in delivering protection and resettlement outcomes for refugees.

- operational and implementing **partnerships involving both UNHCR and NGOs in the identification and referral of refugees** at heightened risk or in need of specific protection interventions;
- **partnerships supporting resettlement processing**, e.g. by conducting psychosocial assessments and assisting in determining the best interests of the child;
- **participation of NGOs in referral of refugees to UNHCR** for resettlement consideration.

See *Chapter 8.2.2* for details on the UNHCR-NGO Toolkit on Practical Cooperation on Resettlement.

8.4.1 Identification and referral

UNHCR and NGOs recognize the importance of strengthening partnerships to identify vulnerable refugees in need of protection solutions, including resettlement. *Chapter 5* of this *Handbook* addresses identification tools and methodologies, including the involvement of external referral partners.

In some contexts, NGOs collaborate with UNHCR as operational partners to conduct participatory assessments, or work as UNHCR's implementing partners to help screen cases needing resettlement. Partnerships may involve: joint training and involvement in participatory assessments or assessments using the *Heightened Risk Identification Tool*; development of integrated referral mechanisms and procedures to strengthen the reach and integrity of protection, including resettlement; or, building linkages between such identification methodologies and individual case management.

NGOs also provide counselling services to refugees needing assistance. In many cases this extends UNHCR's reach into smaller and more diverse urban refugee populations.

In other circumstances, specific refugee groups within a camp population are identified as in need of resettlement, based on considerations such as their ethnic background, social composition, or religious affiliation. NGOs may help field office staff in the early assessment and identification of potential resettlement cases, as well as in the processing of documents needed to constitute a resettlement dossier. NGOs may also assist in resettlement processing under the group methodology.

Direct NGO referral

Resettlement countries usually give first priority to cases submitted by UNHCR. Some countries also process and admit other groups for resettlement in parallel

to UNHCR submissions. These groups or individuals may be referred directly by NGOs. In these circumstances, UNHCR, the relevant resettlement State and NGO are encouraged to establish procedures to ensure effective information-sharing, compliance with protection and solutions strategies and operational integrity and efficiencies in referral and processing.

Eligibility criteria and admission requirements are determined by countries of resettlement, and the NGO working to assist in the processing and pre-screening for such cases is bound by laws and regulations in this regard. *For details on an individual resettlement State's programmes, see their Country Chapter available at <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlementhandbook>.*

8.4.2 Counselling and processing of refugees

UNHCR field offices will often have well-established relationships with NGOs to help facilitate counselling and assistance to refugees who may be eligible for resettlement. Some resettlement countries, notably the United States of America, utilize NGOs in the pre-screening and processing of cases before the immigration officials determine eligibility of cases for resettlement. This role of NGOs can help facilitate the work of UNHCR field offices where applicable, as in many circumstances close cooperation on specific cases and groups can be arranged between the UNHCR Field Office and the NGO (in the context of resettlement to the USA, usually the Resettlement Support Center – previously known as Overseas Processing Entity).



It is important for UNHCR field offices to work closely with NGOs and diplomatic representations (missions, etc.) of Governments to understand the specific and unique features of each country's resettlement programme, and to advocate for refugee populations identified as in need of resettlement by UNHCR. NGOs entrusted by their respective Governments with pre-screening and processing can, in this role, often help to advocate for specific groups or individuals.

8.4.3 Medical screening

Specific medical examination and documentation requirements exist in most countries that accept refugees for resettlement. Based on agreements with these countries, IOM often performs such examinations or screens the documentation prepared by other medical authorities, and arranges medical escorts as required.

8.4.4 Cultural orientation

Resettlement States frequently partner with IOM and NGOs to deliver cultural orientation classes prior to departure. The length of classes, and information and training provided varies by context and by resettlement State. *See Chapter 7.11.3 for more details. For information about the programmes offered by individual resettlement States, see the Country Chapters of this Handbook available at <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlementhandbook>.*

8.4.5 Transportation

Responsibility for the transfer of refugees lies primarily with IOM, which has negotiated special tariff agreements with the airline industry on a worldwide basis. These special IOM fares benefit all categories of persons assisted under the auspices of the Organization, allow for considerable concessions on the air tariffs and also provide an increased free baggage allowance.

When travel is not arranged within the framework of an ongoing resettlement operation, individuals should be advised of the possibility to procure air tickets at reduced fares under subsidized migration schemes maintained by IOM. Under these schemes, IOM helps refugees and other persons in need of assistance, in particular through the handling of pre-departure and transport arrangements.

Transport is normally provided on scheduled airline services on an individual basis or on group flights, although charter flights may also be arranged. IOM may also provide transport by bus, truck, rail or ship when required.⁵

8.4.6 Reception and integration

NGOs can also be actively involved in promoting UNHCR resettlement policy and increasing understanding of UNHCR resettlement goals, policies, and practices. A good example of this is the “Joint IOM, UNHCR and ICMC project – Promotion of resettlement in the European Union through practical cooperation by EU Member States and other stakeholders”, funded by the European Refugee Fund (ERF). This joint project promotes cooperation between civil society and municipality partners in ten EU member states to enhance their capacity around the reception and integration of resettled refugees and to improve stakeholder cooperation with the aim of improving links between the pre- and post-arrival phases.

NGO services to refugees in resettlement countries

In many resettlement countries, NGOs are the primary providers of services to arriving refugees. These services are usually funded by the host Government and/or local resources raised independently by the NGO. Depending on the system of social welfare services in each country, NGO services to refugees may encompass comprehensively addressing the needs of the resettled refugee, including services relating to housing, language training and the search for employment. NGOs usually provide a counselling role for refugees, often working with specific communities and contracting staff from these communities to provide same-language and culturally sensitive assistance.

NGOs often coordinate the contributions of volunteers and direct private donations to refugees who have been resettled. These contributions are an added value to the services to which refugees are eligible in each country of resettlement. The level of support provided by these mentors, buddies, hosts, cultural interpreters or sponsors varies between resettlement countries and communities.

⁵ UNHCR, *Guidance Note on Co-operation Between IOM and UNHCR in the Transportation Sector*, May 2000, (Internal) <http://swigea56.hcrnet.ch/refworld/docid/4a54bco2o.html>

Most importantly, NGOs not only contribute in cash and with in-kind donations to the resettlement of refugees, but help the refugee and family make new friends and contacts necessary for their successful integration. Such arrangements utilize local resources of religious groups, community organizations or business associations to help meet the needs of refugees and their families.

Additionally, NGOs are often at the forefront of culturally sensitive mental health and specialized adjustment services. Working in close cooperation with professional associations, universities, hospitals and health centres, NGOs seek to assure that specific needs of refugees (e.g. trauma due to torture or rape, etc.) are addressed. In some cases such services are provided free of charge, on a sliding fee basis, or funded by governmental and nongovernmental sources. UNHCR Field offices should always consult with Headquarters when questions arise on specialized mental health and medical needs for specific refugees.

In some resettlement countries, NGOs are also the primary provider of training services related to employment. Many innovative services have been designed to include direct partnerships with large and small employers, who look upon newly resettled refugees as an important resource in the labour market. In some resettlement countries, there are incentives for refugees to quickly enter into the labour market. UNHCR field offices should inform refugees that there will be high expectations on them to enter the job market at any available level, including early employment into positions which may be below their professional training and qualifications.

NGOs also work with governments to help resettled refugees reunite with their families still abroad. The practice of NGOs in this field varies significantly among countries, and NGOs will be bound in their family reunification work by the laws and regulations of each resettlement country. In particular, when special cases arise that are outside normal immigration or refugee resettlement procedures, NGOs may still be able to facilitate family reunification under temporary protection schemes, specialized “leave to remain” programmes, and other forms of humanitarian admissions. UNHCR offices in resettlement countries should be contacted when such cases arise to activate NGO networks.

8.5 ADVOCACY AND LIAISON

Advocacy for refugees

In many resettlement countries, NGOs are at the forefront of advocating for refugee protection and assistance with their Governments, the public and other organizations. This is evident in the advocacy which NGOs at times undertake for specific refugee groups of concern to their constituencies and communities. This may take the form of public education campaigns on behalf of specific refugee groups that have close ties to the community or are of interest because of historical connections to the countries of origin. In other cases, NGOs work more broadly with officials and politicians to promote positive admission decisions and expedited movement of cases.

Many NGOs engage in lobbying activities on behalf of refugees, including specific groups needing protection. Such lobbying activities vary with the

political systems of each country, but in many cases involve extensive grassroots networks of dedicated activists who respond to calls for action on refugee needs.

Advocacy also takes the form of individual casework for specific refugees, using the tools of public education and contacts with Government officials to expedite the resettlement of specific individuals or families.

NGOs, legislative representatives, family members of refugees, legal representatives and members of the public in resettlement countries are all encouraged to communicate with UNHCR operations **through the UNHCR office covering their country**. Contact details for UNHCR offices are available from <http://www.unhcr.org>.



Advocacy in many resettlement countries is also evident in NGO efforts to assure that Governments dedicate sufficient funding for refugee assistance and resettlement activities. This includes support for overall UNHCR identified budgetary needs, as well as support for the national social service budgets with special attention to refugee services.

In some cases, advocacy activities by NGOs also include lobbying for or against specific legislation, thereby seeking to promote the principles of refugee protection and provision of asylum. Such legislation may be national in character, or may have regional and international implications as Governments seek to harmonize their laws and practices.

NGOs also often have an important role in policy formulation regarding admission criteria, priorities and quotas. Many Governments maintain a close working relationship with NGOs in the formulation of policy and consult with NGO experts to design and implement new programmes and resettlement strategies. In the same manner, NGOs are at the forefront not only of providing settlement (integration and adjustment) services, but also of designing integration and adjustment programmes at the community level that will assist refugees to start a new life and become productive members of their new societies.

UNHCR frequently works with NGOs to promote specific resettlement needs and to meet public education and information needs.

Care should be exercised by field office staff to coordinate such needs for advocacy with UNHCR Headquarters and the appropriate UNHCR Office in the resettlement country.⁶ In the same manner, requests by NGOs lobbying with field offices should be coordinated with UNHCR Headquarters and other pertinent offices, so that communication is effective and appropriate to the situation.



⁶ The following UNHCR offices cover resettlement States: Regional Office Canberra (Australia and New Zealand), Branch Office Brasília (Brazil), Regional Office Buenos Aires (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay), Regional Office Washington (United States of America), Branch Office Ottawa (Canada), Regional Office Stockholm (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden), Branch Office London (United Kingdom), Liaison Office Dublin (Ireland), Liaison Office The Hague (The Netherlands), Branch Office Paris (France), Branch Office Madrid (Spain), Regional Office Rome (Portugal), Regional Office Budapest (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania) and Branch Office Tokyo (Japan).

In the spirit of Partnership in Action (PARinAC), UNHCR and NGOs can effectively help promote the addressing of international refugee protection needs, regional solutions for refugee crises, and a durable solution for specific refugee groups who are in need of resettlement.⁷

In many countries, resettlement and other NGOs work hand in hand through umbrella organizations or networks to help coordinate their activities and public voice. UNHCR often consults with these umbrella organizations and individual members in each of the resettlement countries.

8.6 MEDIA RELATIONS

8.6.1 Responding to the media

News media can provide an effective way to mobilize support and increase public awareness of the plight of refugees. UNHCR uses the most popular online tools to talk with its supporters and promote its cause. Discussion on UNHCR's work can be easily found on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or Flickr.

Used effectively, cooperation with the media can have a positive impact on public and Government support to refugees, and can help promote understanding of UNHCR, its protection concerns, and its mandate. In turn, this can spark essential funding for refugee programmes. However, care must also be taken to sensitize the media to the risk of endangering individual refugees and their families through public attention. Managing the messaging is an important component of refugee resettlement.

8.6.2 Guidance on interacting with the media



Although Public Information Officers generally handle media queries, UNHCR's public information policy permits and encourages staff members to speak to the press on their areas of responsibility. Media interest in resettlement operations needs to be handled in close consultation with the Head of Office and the Accountable Officer. In some situations, it will not be appropriate to air specific concerns in public, particularly when individuals may be at risk. Consult the Public Information Section based at Headquarters regarding any concerns about potential implications.

The *UNHCR Manual* Chapter 10, Section 7 - General Media Guidelines for Field Staff (available on the UNHCR Intranet) provides useful general guidance and tips on interacting with the media. Some of these tips include:

⁷ Recommendation 32 of the PARinAC Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action called on UNHCR to collaborate with resettlement NGOs and NGOs in the field, specifically to increase resettlement quotas established by governments. *Partnership in Action (PARinAC), Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action*, 9 June 1994, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae68f3d.html>

- **Be yourself**, relaxed and friendly; remain professional and patient.
- **Be open** about problems and difficulties, which are inevitable in the nature of UNHCR's work, and be willing to admit mistakes.
- **Be factual**: give facts and figures about the operation and humanitarian needs in your area as you would brief traditional partners, and be frank about problems encountered and efforts to overcome them.
- **Be accurate**: if you do not know the answer to the question, say so, offer to follow up, and get back to the journalist with a reply.
- **Be flexible**: while you may wish or need to lay down ground rules for some interviews, interviews should in general be on the record. Interviews not for attribution/on background/on deep background should be used rarely and with great caution.
- **Be interesting**: being factual does not mean you have to be boring, and colorful human interest stories can bring to life dry facts and statistics.
- **Be positive**, and do not criticize colleagues or other UN organizations and NGOs.
- **Be smart** and use common sense, leave sensitive topics and policy issues of a general nature to responsible senior officers, leave areas of specialty or outside of your direct responsibility to the appropriate colleague, and do not pass political judgment.
- **Be protection-minded**: beware of using refugees' names and personal details, and use particular sensitivity for survivors of torture, sexual violence, etc., and children (particularly unaccompanied). Be mindful of risks for family members remaining in the country of origin or asylum.
- **Be conversational**, and avoid jargon or internal language; be personal and personable, look directly at the interviewer and use their name once or twice.
- **Be concise**, and mindful that your comments (will need to) be reduced to a shorter statement, quote or sound bite.
- **Be aware**: do not get sidetracked, do not argue with or attack the media, and do not let the interviewer put words in your mouth.
- **Be photogenic**, mindful of what you are wearing and what will be in the background.

Positive relationships with journalists are crucial for successful public information. Journalists should be briefed on protection concerns and on the possible risks to refugees being interviewed. There should be basic ground rules for camp visits, but beware of trying to block access or issuing rules. This can seem like UNHCR is hiding something and can spark even greater (negative) media interest.

8.6.3 The refugee story

It is the nature of the news media to be at least as interested in the details of a personal story as they are in facts and figures. Focusing on a refugee's personal story can be beneficial to that person, to UNHCR and to the work of the Resettlement Service. This media interest can bring with it enormous advantages; but it can also warrant sensitive protection considerations.

Resettlement work is about moving the individual refugee from the overcrowded refugee camp, difficult urban situation or detention centre, directly to a safe third country removed from the dangers, misery and suffering of the first asylum country. In many countries, particularly developed countries which are distant from major crisis areas and which directly receive few asylum-seekers, contacts with resettlement workers and resettled refugees represent virtually their only direct exposure with refugee issues and UNHCR. In the words of one Government representative, resettlement represents “a window to UNHCR”. Interest along these lines should be encouraged. Every effort should be made to provide an accurate and positive view through that “window”.

8.6.4 Sensitizing the media without losing the story

In order to minimize the risks associated with publicizing individual refugee problems, every opportunity should be taken to encourage journalists to respect the confidentiality of certain information. Journalists must also be cautioned to avoid releasing the individual's identity, or details which could permit identification, such as specific references to the refugee's political involvement in the country of origin and dates and places where political activity took place. While the publication of photographs may complement a story, this should not occur without the agreement – on an informed basis – of the refugee.

8.6.5 Being protection-minded

Resettlement involves the processing of individual refugee cases, and it is therefore important to be protection-minded when dealing with this information and the media. The first priority of UNHCR is the protection of the individual refugee. The particulars of personal experience which individual refugees have provided to UNHCR are privileged information and should not be shared with persons who are not authorized by UNHCR unless the refugees have specifically agreed to that information being released on the basis of an informed and free choice.

It is important to be aware that the publication of detailed personal information from the refugee's story, such as the names, age, sex, family situation, villages/cities of origin, or the political activities of refugees might increase the vulnerability of the persons concerned or of members of the family still in the country of origin. It may increase the risk of retaliatory measures by national authorities, either in the asylum country or in the event the refugee decides to repatriate. Working closely with the Protection Officer will help raise awareness of the potential risks for certain individuals.

If the media requests an interview which will highlight a refugee's story, ensure that the refugee is:

- fully counselled as to the purpose and the possible impact of the interview;
- advised that he or she has the right to refuse the interview;
- advised that he or she has the right to use an assumed name, or to have their identity masked (e.g. for high-profile cases, survivors of sexual violence, and others concerned about family members still in the country of origin);

- advised that they have the right to refuse to answer questions, or discontinue the interview if they do not feel comfortable.

Careful consideration must also be given to the emotional and psychological well-being of the refugee and his or her family before they are encouraged to relate and repeat stories of violence, rape, torture or other atrocities. Remember that the first concern must be for the safety and best interests of the individual sharing the story. A UNHCR officer should offer to be present during media interviews, if the refugee so wishes. The media should be discouraged from interviewing refugee children, particularly when they have undergone trauma.



If the outcome of the story is unfavourable or inaccurate or if the journalist failed to respect clearly stated ground rules, do not immediately complain to the journalist concerned or the editor. Instead, inform the Representative or the Public Information Section at UNHCR Headquarters as soon as possible.

8.6.6 Photos

Images are one of the most powerful ways to tell the refugee story. However, refugee subjects need special consideration. They may be traumatized, may not feel safe having their photo taken, or may simply not wish to have their photos taken.

Refugees must be approached with sensitivity, and always asked for permission to take their photos. Let them know they can say no. Be sensitive to their body language and do not take the photo if they seem very uncomfortable, even if they have given permission.

Photo techniques for sensitivity and confidentiality

- no flash;
- take shots from a distance, rather than in close-up;
- limit number of shots;
- shoot from behind, not face on;
- avoid humiliating, exploitative shots;
- consider focusing on UNHCR staff member, leaving refugees unfocused;
- use lighting (backlighting, shadows or silhouettes can mask a face);
- use creative shots showing just part of a subject – this can convey emotion without showing the face;
- focus on hands, feet, body posture, etc.

These approaches require finesse for a good image. Consider using well-briefed professional photographers, and contact the UNHCR Photo Editor for assistance.

8.6.7 Social Media

Through **Twitter**, UNHCR discusses the latest news, participates in conversations about refugees and gives followers an insight into life at UNHCR. Follow UNHCR and join in the rapid debates about UNHCR's work. www.twitter.com/refugees

UNHCR's **Facebook** page is the hub of UNHCR's online community. Become a fan to receive regular updates to UNHCR's newsfeed. www.facebook.com/unhcr

Flickr is a photo-sharing website which allows anyone to upload and share images. UNHCR has one of the most popular Flickr accounts of any non-profit organization. Visit the Flickr account to see UNHCR's work around the world. www.flickr.com/unhcr

YouTube is a video-sharing website. UNHCR uploads the latest refugee videos on to YouTube for supporters to watch, share with their friends and leave their thoughts. Visit UNHCR's YouTube Channel to watch the latest videos. www.youtube.com/unhcr