



CHAPTER 1.4

Implementing Integration in Contrasting Global Settings

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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.
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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)

<p>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.</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>the community and other providers to enhance their responsiveness to resettled refugees.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p>
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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 integration¹. 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 multiculturalism². 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.