




CHAPTER 3.3

Investing in the Future: Refugee Children and Young People

GOALS FOR INTEGRATION (SEE CHAPTER 1.3)

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

 The focus of this Chapter

 To keep in mind

Chapter 3.3

Investing in the Future: Refugee Children and Young People



CHILDREN/
YOUNG PEOPLE

Refugee children and young people share with their adult counterparts many of the same exposures and impacts of the refugee and resettlement experiences (see Chapter 1.3). However they also have particular needs which should be taken into account in integration planning. These are outlined in this Chapter.

Support provided by refugee families will be critical to the integration of children and young people. Many of the strategies proposed in Part Two of this Handbook have the broader effect of strengthening families (i.e. by supporting access to employment and housing). The focus of this Chapter is on measures to enhance refugee families' understanding of the impact of resettlement on children and young people and their capacity to support them in dealing with the adjustment process.

This Chapter also addresses factors that need to be considered when planning language training and education programs for refugee children and young people and when supporting the integration of separated or unaccompanied refugee minors.



CHECKLIST

Taking account of children and young people:

Integration program component (see relevant Chapter in Part Two)	Think about:
Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> access to ethnic peer support; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the availability of specialist education support.
Early settlement and social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> family sensitive assessment and settlement support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> intensive settlement support and alternative care arrangements for separated or unaccompanied refugee minors; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> family tracing and reunion provisions for separated minors.
Income support and establishment resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> provisions for separated minors; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> provisions for refugee young people approaching or over the age of majority with disrupted education.
Language assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> availability of language assistance in key systems serving refugee families; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> strategies to avoid children and young people being used to interpret on behalf of other family members.
Language training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> culturally sensitive school based target language programs; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> alternative language training programs for refugee young people approaching or over the age of majority who wish to resume basic education.
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> targeted orientation programs for young people; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> school-based orientation programs; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> information on matters concerned with parenting (e.g. peer pressure, changing family relationships, the effects of trauma, torture and resettlement on children, drug use, bullying and racism).
Employment and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> job search and career planning programs for refugee young people (see Chapter 2.9).
Health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> capacity building for health workers who have contact with refugee children and young people (e.g. child health nurses, school nurses).
Welcoming and hospitable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> access to recreational and cultural activities; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> capacity building initiatives in school communities and child care facilities.
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fostering partnership arrangements; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> arrangements for providing technical support to key professionals serving refugee children and young people and their families; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work force development initiatives (e.g. bilingual and bi-cultural teaching and child care professionals, cultural advisers, aides); <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> professional development, training and awareness raising activities for key personnel to enhance their capacity to support refugee children and young people (e.g. teachers, child welfare professionals, nurses, youth workers).

Why plan for refugee children and young people?

Refugee children and young people bring with them a wealth of life experience and creativity and often have an extraordinarily high motivation to succeed.

As the future adult generation of both refugee and wider communities, their successful resettlement is particularly vital. If accomplished in a way which promotes intergenerational understanding and harmony, it can also help to enhance the integration prospects of other family members and refugee communities.

The importance of early intervention

Childhood is a time of rapid intellectual, social, emotional and physical development, and a period during which personality and identity begin to be formed. It is a time when the developmental foundations are laid for adolescence and adulthood. Studies have shown that the environment children grow up in has a major influence on their mental health and well-being as adults. Children who have secure attachments to family and supportive relationships with other adults, and whose families are harmonious and well connected with their community, generally fare better as adults than those without these resources¹. In contrast, children with poor attachment, family disharmony and conflict, poor connections with community and limited access to socio-economic resources tend to be at greater risk of developing problems in adolescence and later life².

Adolescence is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, from schooling to employment and from financial and emotional dependence to interdependence. It is also a time when young people begin to develop an adult identity involving their own values and beliefs. While most young people make this transition successfully, it may be stressful, involving rapid change in physical, emotional and intellectual development and in the expectations of the family and wider society. This transition has been associated with increased vulnerability to mental health and behavioural difficulties³.

The benefits of providing integration support early in the resettlement period have been discussed elsewhere in this Handbook (see Chapter 2.3). Providing this support to children and young people has the dual benefits of intervening not only at an early stage of resettlement, but at an early stage of their



CHILDREN/
YOUNG PEOPLE



I go to the doctor with my grandmother who is very sick and the doctor asks me to interpret for him. I don't like to be an interpreter. I am afraid that I will make a mistake and that my grandmother will suffer.

Resettled young refugee





INVESTING IN THE FUTURE: REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



development. A positive and supportive resettlement environment will be particularly important for those children and young people who have been exposed to trauma in the course of their refugee experiences. Studies suggest that the quality of the environment children encounter at this time, particularly in the family and in school or child care settings, has a critical influence on their recovery from these experiences⁴.

Resettlement planning for children and young people typically has a dual emphasis, involving support for individuals and their families as well as strategies to foster a welcoming and supportive environment.

A range of settings will need to be considered, including early childhood and pre-school facilities, primary and secondary level schools and employment and training programs.

The impact of the refugee and resettlement experiences on children and young people

Refugee children and young people will have been exposed to many of the same experiences as their adult counterparts (see Chapter 1.3). All will have experienced some degree of dislocation, deprivation, disruption and loss⁵. This may have included the loss of home and friendships as well as the more profound losses of parents, siblings and others through death or separation. Refugee children and young people are likely to have endured changes unheard of in the lives of children in resettlement countries.

Like their parents, refugee children and young people will be required to adjust to a new set of cultural norms and in many cases, to learn a new language. Resettlement will also involve the challenge of a new and unfamiliar school system⁶. The culture and structure of the education system may be very different from that in their country-of-origin. For instance, in many resettlement countries, teaching styles are less formal, relationships between teachers and students are less hierarchical and there is a greater emphasis on experiential learning than is the case in refugee source countries.

Adaptation to school may be particularly taxing for children who have had no or limited prior school experience. These children may be facing the intellectual and behavioural requirements of a structured learning environment for the first time. Some may never have been separated from their parents previously, with the result that commencing school, pre-school or child care may involve considerable anxiety.



I dreamt about continuing my education. Now this is possible.

Resettled young refugee



Depending on their age, refugee young people may face multiple transitions in the early resettlement period (for example, upper primary aged children will face the further transition to secondary level schooling, while older adolescents will make the transition from school to work or further study).

When seeking employment, refugee young people face many of the same challenges as their adult counterparts (see Chapter 2.9). However, these may be compounded for those who, by virtue of their age, have had disrupted education and limited work experience.

These refugee and resettlement experiences coincide and may interfere with critical stages of the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of refugee children and young people. For some, this may result in acute physical and emotional problems requiring intervention (see Chapter 3.1), or will to some extent have compromised the conditions required for healthy progress in each of the key developmental domains⁷.

Refugee children and young people are likely to have experienced some degree of disruption in their education. Schools are one of the first casualties of war. In some conflicts, teachers have been the specific targets of violence. In many refugee camps there is little basic education available and refugee families may have experienced limitations on their entitlements to education in their countries of refuge. Intellectual progress may be further compromised by the effects of trauma (see Chapter 3.1).

The loss of or disruption to significant relationships in the family and community, meanwhile, may affect attachment behaviours, and in particular, children and young people's capacity to trust and to form the meaningful and supportive relationships known to be critical to healthy development⁸.

The anxiety associated with exposure to traumatic events and the adjustments and change involved in resettlement can have an impact on children and young people's mastery over basic developmental tasks. Diminished competence in these tasks may in turn have an impact on their self esteem.

The loss of place, culture, and in many cases secure and stable relationships means that children and young people may have a limited basis upon which to build a positive sense of identity and belonging. This process may be further compromised if they face a lack of understanding in the school or community, or if they experience xenophobic or racist behaviour.



My religion does not stop me from participating in sports. But some times sports need to be more culturally sensitive and flexible to the needs of Muslim young women.

Resettled young refugee





The process of identity formation which is part of adolescence may be particularly complex for young people being affected by the overlay of the refugee experience, cultural adjustment and the practical demands of resettlement. Moreover, those with highly disrupted experiences prior to resettlement may have had limited or poor early parenting and hence may not have developed the personal and coping skills required to deal with these challenges.

The process of identity formation also involves the additional challenge of reconciling the competing values of their culture-of-origin with those of their new peers. Intergenerational conflict may result as they question or reject the values of their parents in a bid to gain acceptance among their peers.

Planning for children and young people: Overall considerations

Strengthening family support

Families play a vital role in supporting children and young people. However, a number of factors may compromise the support available to refugee children and young people in the family (see box p. 265).

Providing support to refugee families and parents is a vital strategy to facilitate the integration of refugee children and young people. It is important to be aware, when developing programs for refugee families, that child welfare practices and services for children and youth in receiving societies are sometimes perceived by refugee families as contributing to intergenerational division and conflict.

The wishes of refugee parents and communities may not always coincide with the best interests of children and young people. However, it is important wherever possible, for refugee families and communities to be engaged in supporting children and young people in their resettlement since, for most, family and community will be their primary and most enduring sources of support.

Technical assistance and specialised planning resources

A number of countries with large refugee and immigrant populations have established organisations which provide technical assistance (e.g. consultation and professional

Factors affecting family support for refugee children and young people

- The effects of trauma and the practical and emotional demands of settlement on adult care-givers may compromise their capacity to provide support.
- Parents may lack the language skills and knowledge to support children in their adjustment to a new society and school system, and to act as their children's advocates.
- Parents may lack an understanding of the refugee and resettlement experiences on their children and/or may be unaware of how they can support them. They may share the commonly held belief that children and young people will forget their experiences. Others may be unable to deal with the painful realisation that their children continue to suffer, with the result that the children may be inadvertently left alone to deal with fear, grief and guilt.
- There may be significant differences in child rearing practices between countries-of-origin and resettlement, particularly in the areas of child welfare and discipline. These differences may affect parents' understanding of, and interactions with, systems in the receiving society, such as child care facilities and schools. Inter-generational conflict may occur as children and young people seek to exercise the greater range of rights and freedoms available to them in their new country.
- Children and young people tend to acquire the language and learn the ways of the receiving society more rapidly than adults and may be called upon to interpret and mediate with systems in the receiving society on behalf of their parents. As well as adding to the pressures on children and young people, this 'role reversal' can affect the power and dependency dynamics that form the basis of a supportive relationship between children and their adult care-givers. Children and young people's more rapid adaptation may also contribute to inter-generational conflict.
- Despite the fact that they may face educational disadvantage, refugee children and young people often face expectations from their parents that they will achieve high levels of educational and vocational success. These expectations may be a source of anxiety and tension between refugee children and young people and their parents.

CHILDREN/
YOUNG PEOPLE

development) to teachers, child care workers and social support agencies serving refugee children, young people and their families.

Similarly, special planning units have been established in government education and child welfare departments to ensure that broader planning processes accommodate the needs of refugee and immigrant children and young people.

In many receiving societies, there is a rapid turnover in child welfare agencies, making for shallow 'institutional memory'.



Schools, pre-schools and child care facilities as settings for supporting the integration of refugee children and young people

A NUMBER of resettlement countries have focussed on school and child care settings for delivering integration support to refugee children and their families. Typically, this support is delivered as a collaboration between these settings and refugee families and communities and mental health and settlement support services. There are a number of advantages in this approach:

- The pre-school and school environments are a primary source of contact between refugee families and the receiving society. The school environment, in particular, has been identified as second only to the family in determining children and young people's capacity to
 - resettle successfully⁹.
 - Teaching and child care professionals will have had limited contact with children and families affected by war and trauma and may require support to provide an optimal environment.
 - Settings-based interventions allow for schools and child care facilities to explore ways in which they can create a supportive environment for refugee families.
 - By facilitating access to the wider refugee population (not only those with identified difficulties), very early in the resettlement period, they enable an early intervention approach.
 - Refugee families may be reluctant to access one-to-one professional support.
- Providing support through schools and child care facilities offers families the opportunity to form relationships with supportive professionals in a non-stigmatising and non-threatening way.
- Schools are a natural part of the day-to-day experience of children and families, enabling interventions to be delivered in ways which normalise their otherwise disrupted lives.
 - It may be difficult to deliver 'one-to-one' therapeutic interventions to children with more severe emotional or behavioural difficulties at certain stages of their development. However, there is some potential to support teachers and child care professionals to

In this context specialised agencies are important since they can help to build the capacity of systems to respond to the needs of refugee children and their families in an ongoing manner. Moreover, as new refugee groups arrive, they can ensure that appropriate programs are developed for refugees themselves and the professionals working with them.

Settings and partnership approaches

Planning for refugee children and young people needs to take account of a range of issues, including their physical and mental health and development, educational progress, social support and, in the case of older adolescents, employment and training opportunities.



provide an optimal environment for psychological rebuilding.

Established resettlement programs have implemented a number of strategies to promote integration of refugee families through school, pre-school and child care settings, including:

- orientation programs for children and parents;
- target language programs for children and young people;
- befriending or mentoring programs for children and young people and/or their parents and guardians;
- professional development programs for relevant personnel;
- developing systems and resources to enhance access by refugee families

(e.g. translated materials, providing interpreters);

- work force development initiatives (e.g. recruiting bilingual teaching and child care personnel, bilingual aides, cultural advisers);
- curriculum resources designed for both refugee young people and the wider school community;
- awareness raising activities aimed at valuing and affirming cultural diversity and countering racism;
- specific cultural programs (e.g. arts projects, community theatre). These can provide an important vehicle for refugee young people to express themselves and for sharing their skills and perspectives with the wider community. In

Sweden, for example, a youth worker worked with refugee young people to make a film which described their experiences of social exclusion;

- fostering refugee children and young people's involvement in recreational and sporting activities;
- homework clubs.

Child care and pre-school facilities tend to be on a smaller scale and are less likely to have the resources available to the school sector. For this reason, professional development and technical assistance support will be particularly important for facilities serving pre-school children.

Reflecting this, most countries of resettlement have employed partnership approaches to address the needs of children and young people, to ensure that the skills and resources of a range of communities, professionals and systems are engaged in delivering support.

Offering the best possible conditions for educational success

Most refugee children and young people will require a period of intensive and targeted support to assist them in adjusting to a new school system, to learn the language of the receiving society and, in some circumstances, to redress the effects of disrupted education and intellectual or developmental delay.



INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Easing the transition into a new education system

IN THE CANADIAN city of Ottawa, Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) are placed in schools and work in partnership with teaching professionals and administrators, settlement agencies and other community service providers to support the integration of refugee children and young people and their families. The program does this by assisting refugee students to adapt to their new school environment and providing information, orientation, settlement support and referral to other services to refugee families. Activities are also offered to help parents to participate in their children's education. MLOs promote a positive and sensitive school environment by supporting positive race relations and providing training to teaching and other	professionals. The program has been operational for over ten years and is jointly funded by School Boards of Education and the Ottawa Immigrant Services Organisation. In the AUSTRALIAN state of Victoria, refugee children of school age are offered support through the <i>New Arrivals Program</i> in the first 12 months following their arrival. Through this program children and young people receive intensive English language instruction and orientation to schooling in Australia. English Language Schools and Centres are located in key locations throughout Victoria, some co-located with a mainstream school. Outposts are established in schools which are distant from an established centre but which enrol a large number of refugee children. A visiting teacher service is offered to those children	and young people who do not have ready access to either a school centre or out-posted service. The schools and centres work in close partnership with settlement and other specialist services so that they can respond to the needs of refugee children and young people and assist refugee families to adjust to life in Australia. Students are offered support when moving from an English language school or centre to a mainstream school. The <i>Youth Immersion Program</i> , developed by Lutheran Social Services in Florida, USA , is targeted to refugee young people aged 16-20, particularly those with disrupted education or experiencing difficulties with their schooling. The program involves daily intensive English language and cultural adjustment classes taught by qualified
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Many of the principles for delivering language training programs to adults from refugee and immigrant backgrounds (see Chapter 2.6) are of equal, if not greater, importance in school settings.

A range of approaches have been developed to delivering intensive support to refugee children in the early resettlement period, including:

- providing them with a period of language training and orientation via a special program to prepare them for entry into the general school system;

English language and health sciences teachers. Classes are kept small and efforts are made to maintain a safe and nurturing environment in which students can prepare themselves for mainstream schooling. The curriculum comprises basic English, coordinated with cultural adjustment topics. Art therapy, conflict resolution and self esteem building activities are also offered. The students remain in the program until they are ready to enter mainstream schooling, with this transition being timed to coincide with the beginning of a school semester. At that time, they are linked with a refugee liaison officer who provides orientation to the school, helps with course and class placement, tracks their progress and provides ongoing support. However, they may return to the	<i>Immersion Program</i> for additional assistance should they require it. Since class participants often develop as a cohesive group, they are usually registered in the mainstream school as a cohort, so that they have the ongoing support of their peers. For younger children and their families, Lutheran Social Services offers the <i>Summertime Express Program</i> , the core of which is a four week summer day camp for children aged 8-14 years. The camp features all the activities of a normal summer day camp, such as sports, games, excursions and arts and crafts, with the addition of daily English classes and activities to build team and conflict resolution skills and promote cultural adjustment and self esteem. It is a safe and supportive setting in which refugee children can play and learn.	The camps are staffed by professionals with expertise in working with refugee children and are supported by volunteers. Recent high school graduates, who are themselves from refugee backgrounds, are employed to provide the program with language and cultural support, while at the same time giving them paid work experience and the opportunity to reflect on their own cultural adjustment. Parents are involved through a festival held at the end of the camp. This provides a forum for children to share skills learned at the camp with their parents, and camp staff an opportunity to inform parents about the school system and to discuss any concerns they might have.
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- ‘pull-out’ arrangements, whereby refugee children and young people divide their time between the general class and intensive language and orientation classes prior to full-time entry into general education;
- providing additional technical support to general class teachers. This is a particularly useful strategy when refugee children are geographically dispersed;
- providing additional support to children and young people in the general classroom environment through the use of bi-cultural aides, bilingual instruction and other capacity building initiatives.



INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Focussing on child care and pre-school

IN AUSTRALIA, the Free Kindergarten Association has established the <i>Casual Bilingual Workers Program</i> which recruits and trains consultants from ethno-cultural communities to work with child care and pre-school services. The program employs over 130 workers and covers 100 languages and dialects. These workers are available to support parents during their interviews with staff and their orientation to a pre-school facility. The workers provide translated materials and assist families to exchange information with staff about their family life. In their contact with children, the workers help them to settle into their new centre, to develop pride in their own culture and to maintain and develop their first language. The workers also support staff by providing cultural information and advice about	parenting, teaching simple words and phrases in relevant languages and assisting them to develop a multicultural perspective for all children. This program represents a cost effective way of meeting the needs of small and emergent communities. It is invaluable for pre-school and child care facilities, many of which are small and can ill-afford to employ staff with the range of cultural and linguistic skills. It has been particularly important for rural and regional communities, many of which are distant from ethno-cultural support services based in Australian cities. In the Canadian province of Ontario, Inter-cultural Neighbourhood Services has established a program designed for families with children from 18 months to two years of age. The program operates on a drop in basis for two-and-a-half	days each week. Both the set up of the centre and its programming are very similar to that of a regular child care centre. However, parents remain with their children throughout the sessions. Activities are offered for children to build social, motor and developmental skills, thereby enhancing their readiness for pre-school. Parents, meanwhile, are able to socialise and make friends with other families in their neighbourhood and to share their experiences. Regular parenting workshops are also run, addressing such issues as street safety and discipline. As well as acclimatising children and their families to pre-school in Canada, the program promotes cultural sensitivity and integration by bringing children from many cultural and racial backgrounds together.
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These approaches are not mutually exclusive and are used in a complementary fashion in many countries.

Children and young people with particularly disrupted education may require additional assistance. This can be provided through a special program or, refugee children and young people may qualify for supplementary assistance through programs provided to nationals with special educational needs. In a number of countries, special grants are given to schools with a large enrolment of refugee children and young people.

The availability of specialist educational support for refugee children and young people will be an important consideration in placement decisions.

Should refugee children and young people be offered separate classes in the early resettlement period?

WHILE MOST countries aim to support children's integration into the general school system as soon as practical, there are different approaches.

Some countries place greater emphasis on children and young people's entry into the general education system from the outset. This is supported through capacity building strategies such as deploying bilingual teaching professionals, culturally inclusive curricula and bilingual instruction. In others, separate programs are provided to refugee children to prepare them for entry into the wider school system.

In practice, the differences are a matter of emphasis, with many countries having a dual strategy involving both specialist programs and broader capacity building initiatives. This reflects an understanding that those children participating in specialist programs will ultimately enter the general school system.

There are a number of factors to consider when planning approaches to supporting refugee children

in their integration into the school system:

- If a capacity building approach is adopted as sole strategy, it is important that adequate resources are invested in this task. If done well, this is not necessarily a more cost-effective approach.
- Specialist programs may be necessary where children and young people are enrolling in schools with very small numbers of resettled refugee students, since comprehensive capacity building approaches may not be economically viable in these environments.
- A capacity building approach reflects the 'two-way' street notion of integration, enabling both refugee children and the wider school system to learn from and adjust to each other.
- By separating them from their peers, specialist programs may compound perceptions held by refugee children themselves and by the wider community of refugees as outsiders. However, in separate programs refugee children and young people can

build supportive relationships with one another that endure after their entry into the general education system

- Early interaction with the general education system provides refugee children and young people opportunities to learn the target language and about the culture of the receiving society.
- Separate programs can serve as a place for delivering other specialist integration support (e.g. orientation programs) which may be difficult to deliver in a class environment involving both refugees and nationals.
- While the aim of separate programs is to prepare refugee children and young people for entry into the wider school system and to empower them to interact within it, some newcomers may find the transition from the relatively protected environment of a specialist program to the wider system stressful. This transition needs to be carefully managed.





Factors to consider in key program areas

Early assessment and settlement support

Early assessment and settlement support processes offer the opportunity to assess the need for and provide support to refugees as parents. Early assessment and settlement support often focus on economic self-sufficiency and basic practical concerns. Conscious efforts are required to ensure that the needs of children and young people are not overlooked. This is important, as there may be a number of barriers to parents acknowledging and disclosing difficulties experienced by their children.

In some countries, separate assessment is routinely offered to children and young people. In Sweden, for example, individual introduction plans are developed and aim, among other things, to link children and young people with leisure and recreational pursuits. In others, they are offered individualised assessment when they commence school, to identify their particular educational and social support needs.

It is important to obtain parental consent prior to conducting separate assessment with children.

Language assistance

As children and young people tend to learn a second language more rapidly than adult refugees they are often called upon to interpret and liaise with systems in the receiving country on behalf of other family members. Steps will need to be taken to avoid this, since it may have negative consequences for refugee children and young people and their families. This suggests the importance of ensuring that adequate provision is made for language assistance and adult language training (see Chapters 2.5, 2.6).

Training and awareness raising activities for professionals and other key personnel in the receiving society should also stress the importance of utilising professional language assistance providers, rather than refugee children or young people.

Key settings serving refugee children and young people will also require access to translation services to ensure optimal communication with refugee parents.

Orientation

Parents will be better placed to assist children and young people in their resettlement if they have an understanding of the systems



People automatically assume that I can't speak English and speak to me really slowly, just because I wear a hijab.

Resettled young refugee



and culture of the receiving society. This understanding can help to prevent intergenerational conflict. Accordingly, orientation programs for refugee parents should include information to support them in their roles as parents (e.g. peer pressure, the education system, changing family relationships, the effects of trauma and resettlement on children, drug use, child rearing practices, bullying and racism).

An understanding of child rearing practices in the receiving society, particularly those relating to discipline and supervision, will be particularly important. Conflicts in these areas can often render refugee families vulnerable to intervention by child welfare authorities. Parenting programs for refugees will need to be designed to reflect different cultural approaches to parenting.

As indicated above, in many countries schools offer some formal means to orient refugee children, young people and their families to the education system.

A number of countries have also developed special orientation programs for refugee young people addressing such issues as peer pressure, drug use, HIV/AIDS and intergenerational conflict.

Language training and employment

Particular planning considerations apply to refugee young people approaching or over the age of majority. In many receiving countries they will be considered too old for school and may not be eligible for income support to participate in basic education. At the same time they may not have had the opportunity to acquire the educational qualifications and experience required for paid work.

Language training programs designed for adults typically concentrate on language for day-to-day survival (see Chapter 2.6). They may be inadequate for young people who wish to resume their education, since they will require advanced language competence.

There may also be higher expectations on resettled refugees in this age group to make an economic contribution to their families than is the case for their local peers.

In some countries special income support and language training provision is made for this group. In circumstances where young people are required or need to work, there may be a need to explore part-time language training and study options.



Planning for children and young people in emerging resettlement countries

WHEN establishing an integration program it will be necessary to meet with the relevant education authorities in the planning stages, to identify mechanisms for assisting refugee children and young people in their enrolment, language training and integration into the classroom.

CHILDREN/
YOUNG PEOPLE



My hope for the future is that people are happy and can be with their families

Resettled young refugee





Separated refugee minors

A SEPARATED minor is a child or young person under the age of 18 who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or by custom, has the responsibility to do so. Often the term 'unaccompanied minor' is used to designate such children. However, the UNHCR and many NGOs prefer to use the term 'separated' minor to describe this group, since the designation of a minor as 'accompanied' can sometimes mask the fact that they are actually separated from parents or guardians.

The following are important considerations in the integration of refugee minors who arrive in the resettlement country without parents or guardians:

- While children account for close to half of the world's refugee population, those who are separated from their parents or legal or customary guardians, comprise a small proportion of all refugees (around 3–5%), and an even smaller proportion of those who are resettled.
- Supporting the resettlement of separated minors may sometimes involve a number of complicated legal and social issues. National guidelines can help to ensure a uniform and sensitive approach.
- Close co-operation and coordination among

government authorities responsible for child welfare and refugee resettlement will be critical to ensure an appropriate standard of care for such children.

- In most countries, child welfare systems and laws have been developed to meet the needs of local children, while those relating to refugee resettlement have usually been developed with adults and families in mind. Accordingly, there may be a need to review laws and procedures relating to child welfare and refugee resettlement, to ensure that they address the particular circumstances of refugee minors who arrive without adult support.
- Very often, separated children want to undertake or to continue efforts to locate missing family members. It will be important to have procedures in place to help them to trace family members, both within the country of resettlement and elsewhere. Procedures for this are outlined on page 87 of this Handbook. Additional steps may be required to ensure that child welfare services are aware of the importance of family tracing and have the expertise and resources to undertake this. While family reunification may not be achievable for many refugee children and young people, contact with relatives can help to ease

the anxiety and guilt feelings which may be involved in ongoing separation, and strengthen cultural and religious integrity and identity. The promotion of family unity is the basis of the child welfare systems of many countries and is consistent with international instruments relating to the rights of the child.

- Some countries have specific procedures for assessing care arrangements for refugee minors who arrive with adults who are neither parents nor legal or customary guardians, to ensure that they are provided an appropriate standard of care. This may also include ongoing assessment and monitoring as well as support for care-givers (e.g. orientation to their roles as a parent in the receiving society). These steps are important since such arrangements are sometimes unsuitable and may be vulnerable to breaking down. In Sweden, for example, child welfare authorities conduct routine assessment of families caring for separated minors, to ensure that they are aware of, and have the capacity to fulfil, parental responsibilities. An assessment of this nature should take place as soon as possible after arrival, so that refugee children and young people can begin

their lives in a new country in an optimal environment and to avoid the transition to an alternative care arrangement should this be required.

- Appropriate care arrangements will be required both for minors who are resettled alone and for those whose care arrangements are unsuitable or have broken down. A flexible range of options will be required. For example, in Sweden and the USA, options include foster care, a family group model and supervised independent living.
- Alternative care arrangements should aim to promote the religious and cultural integrity and identity of refugee minors. This may involve placing children with care providers who share their religious or cultural backgrounds, placing young people from the same cultural group together in group facilities, providing opportunities for minors to participate in cultural and religious activities and linking minors with other members of their ethnic communities.
- Intensive settlement support is usually required for minors in alternative care arrangements at least until they reach the age of majority, or the age at which alternative care arrangements would usually cease for nationals.

- Early settlement support will need to include life skills training, basic material needs, assistance in dealing with the effects of trauma and torture, recreation, education and language training needs, identity formation, peer group issues and cultural adjustment.
- Professionals and volunteers, particularly child welfare professionals and those providing alternative care, will require appropriate training and support.
- Provision will need to be made for income support and assistance with other important services which are commonly only available on a 'fee-for-service' basis in receiving societies (e.g. medical coverage, counselling, career guidance and legal assistance).

In some circumstances refugee children and young people may arrive with a parent or guardian but subsequently are separated from them. There may be a number of reasons for this, including:

- abuse;
- conflict between the refugee minor and the parent or guardian;
- the parent or guardian may be unable or unwilling to provide care, sometimes due to their own resettlement difficulties,

illness, or the demands of caring for other children in the family, a particular concern for sole parents;

- secondary migration of the care-giver. For example, an adult sibling may decide to move without making alternative arrangements for the minor sibling. In other cases, adolescents may themselves decide to move on their own without realising how difficult this might be;
- relationships may have been inaccurately described. That is, a minor may be more loosely attached to the adults he or she arrived with than was understood when the selection process took place.

Children and young people in these circumstances may need to be reclassified and receive services as if they were unaccompanied. In some cases, it may be appropriate to license other members of the minor's family or individuals in the community as foster care providers through the child welfare system, or the minor may be placed in alternative care arrangements.

Consistent with the standards of the UNHCR, most countries discourage the adoption of unaccompanied refugee minors, at least until the possibility of family tracing and reunification has been definitively ruled out.





INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Supporting separated refugee minors in the USA

<p>IN THE USA, programs for children and young people who cannot be cared for by their families are the responsibility of state governments. The experience of the USA has been that a specialised response is required for separated refugee minors, since existing domestic programs have developed largely to meet the needs of nationals. Foster families and other alternative care providers for refugee minors need to be carefully selected and trained, and placements require the support of a social worker with specialist expertise in the areas of family tracing, refugee trauma, cultural and identity adjustment, educational adjustment and language acquisition. Further, alternative care placements need to be made with regard for the cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds of minors, their special health, educational and emotional needs and their personality, temperament and views.</p> <p>Accordingly, the United States Office for Refugee Resettlement (the federal body responsible for refugee resettlement) has contracted two non-government organisations</p>	<p>which have extensive expertise in refugee resettlement and affiliates providing state-based foster care programs. These agencies, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the USA Catholic Conference Migration and Refugee Services, offer 13 specialist foster care programs for refugee minors throughout the USA.</p> <p>Foster families come from a range of backgrounds. Some are from the same ethnic communities as minors requiring care. Others, while being from a different cultural background, may nonetheless have a shared refugee history.</p> <p>Families from the same cultural backgrounds as refugee children and young people provide important placement options, particularly for very young children, and are an important resource to other families and program staff on cultural issues and practices.</p> <p>Foster families participate in specialised training on the adjustment needs of refugee children and young people, and placements are supported by a specially trained social worker.</p>	<p>Despite these distinguishing features, refugee foster care programs follow the same state or county laws and regulations governing domestic foster care, and are both licensed and regularly monitored by their state child welfare authority.</p> <p>While foster care is usually the most appropriate form of care for young children, the USA experience suggests that supervised, semi-supervised or independent living arrangements may be more suitable options for older adolescents and young adults. Resettled refugee minors in these placements are offered intensive social work assistance in learning the life skills they will need to live independently.</p> <p>In the USA separated refugee minors are eligible for foster care and other alternative arrangements if they are under the age of 18. They can remain in a program until they have finished high school or have reached 20 or 21 years (depending on the emancipation guidelines in force in the particular state in which they have settled).</p>
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