

ANNUAL TRIPARTITE CONSULTATIONS ON RESETTLEMENT
Geneva, 18-19 June 2002

Background Note for Agenda Item:
INTEGRATION INITIATIVE/INTEGRATION HANDBOOK

This document provides a background and update on the development of the *UNHCR Reception and Integration Handbook* and the process for its completion. A consultation is scheduled as part of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on 19 June at 10h00 in order to review the draft of the Handbook in advance of its preparation for publication. A draft of the Handbook and an agenda for the June 19 meeting are available at www.unhcr.org (go to Resettlement Section). A number of additional documents on the Handbook have been previously circulated to the Working Group on Resettlement. They are available on request.

Background

The *UNHCR Reception and Integration Handbook* is one of the outcomes of the Integration Initiative and is based on materials developed in the context of the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*. Both the conference and the broader Integration Initiative were made possible with the leadership and generous funding support provided by the Nordic countries. Additional funds and support were provided by the governments of the US and Canada, the German Marshall Fund and the Ford Foundation.

Drafting and production of the Handbook are supported by the Australian government which provided funding to deploy staff of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Melbourne Australia) to undertake this work in the context of a consultative process engaging integration experts in both established and emerging countries.

Under this agreement editorial direction remains with the UNHCR, with the final document to be published under its auspices.

The UNHCR contact person for the Integration Initiative was Ms Deborah DeWinter (integration initiative consultant, Geneva) until December 2001 when UNHCR Canada agreed to be the focal point until such time as a chair of the Integration Initiative Reference Group could be appointed.

Aims and Purpose of the Handbook

The Handbook is being developed as a tool for those involved in planning and developing programs to support the integration of resettled refugees, in particular those in emerging countries of resettlement.

Handbook Aims

The aims of the Handbook are to:

- (a) Promote an internationally endorsed set of principles and broad guidelines for the development of sound integration programs in countries of resettlement;
- (b) Provide a framework for program development for countries considering a formal role in resettlement as well as those with emerging integration programs;
- (c) Strengthen integration programs and practices in countries with an established role in resettlement

- (d) Provide information to assist countries in resolving dilemmas and difficulties in the planning and implementation of integration programs
- (e) Provide a resource for awareness raising, professional development and training programs on integration for relevant personnel in the UNHCR and other government, inter-governmental and non-government agencies

Handbook Objectives

Its specific objectives are to

- (a) Document and disseminate the principles for integration programs developed at the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*;
- (b) Draw on these principles to develop a broad framework to guide the development of resettlement programs internationally;
- (c) Articulate the application of these principles in key program areas pertaining to the resettlement of refugees (eg health, housing, social support) and in the support of those with particular needs (eg children and adolescents);
- (d) Draw on the practical experience of countries with an established or emerging role in refugee resettlement to document lessons learned and 'best practice' approaches;
- (e) Identify and document practical avenues for information exchange, co-operation and support between countries with established or emerging roles in refugee resettlement.

The Handbook is intended as a guide and resource for practice and as such does not seek to prescribe specific settlement policies and practices. Recognising the variability in integration programs internationally, it seeks to discuss a range of approaches and document broad guidelines.

Drafting Process

The Handbook was developed under the guidance of an International Task Force (formed in August 2001), according to a detailed brief. Individual chapters were developed in consultation with integration experts nominated by the Task Force and regional consultations were held on earlier draft materials in Canada and the Nordic countries.

In an update to the March meeting of the Resettlement Working Group it was reported that, given the Handbook's status as a guidance document and the extensive international involvement in its development, the following process would be used to finalise it for publication:

- Review by the member countries of the Working Group on Resettlement, the Handbook Task Force and integration experts, with Task Force members engaging wider constituencies at their discretion.
- A final review of the Handbook at the June ATC meeting
- A final editing process overseen by UNHCR Canada

Given the limited response to requests for case study material in the course of the drafting process the review period is also being utilised to solicit further case study materials to illustrate promising integration practices in the Handbook.

Review Process and Outcomes

The draft of the Handbook was completed and circulated to reviewers on the 21 April 2002 along with a questionnaire for reviewers to record their comments. Responses, due by May 21 2002 have now been received from, eleven non-government organisations, five resettlement governments, twelve individuals and four UNHCR personnel. Wider consultations on the

draft were facilitated in Canada (courtesy the Canadian Council for Refugees); Australia and New Zealand (courtesy UNHCR Canberra) and Spain (Courtesy of the Spanish Working Group on Resettlement).

Suggestions made in the course of the review which were of a minor nature have been incorporated onto the draft currently available on the UNHCR web-site (see above). The process has been successful in identifying a large number of additional case studies. These will be incorporated after the ATC since many were forwarded late in the review process and several remained outstanding at the time of writing.

Responses to the draft indicate that there is overall support for the direction and content of the Handbook. Issues of a more substantive nature have been identified in the document “Background Note for Agenda Item: Integration Handbook (Open Meeting Discussion)” along with an agenda for the meeting, on the UNHCR web-site. This meeting will be used to seek direction on outstanding issues, with the aim of a final publication in September 2002.

Translations

It is intended that the Handbook will be produced in four languages, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. The UNHCR has requested resettlement governments to consider donating the cost of translation. The Canadian Government has generously agreed to fund the translation of the document into French. The support of other resettlement countries is being sought to fund translations of the document into Spanish and Portuguese.