

ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
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THEMATIC SESSION

BACKGROUND PAPER

**Refugee resettlement: expanding its reach and effectiveness through
broader NGO participation**

Thursday, 13 June 2013, 09h00 – 10h45 - Room 3

UNHCR currently has the capacity to submit some 91,000 persons for resettlement out of the nearly 181,000 refugees estimated to be in need of resettlement in 2013. This means that out of the 10 million refugees of concern to UNHCR worldwide, less than 1% of the total global refugee population is able to benefit from resettlement in a given year. With so few resettlement opportunities available to refugees, it is crucial that there are consistent and transparent methods used to identify which refugees to prioritize for resettlement.

In the majority of operations, case identification mechanisms are primarily based on UNHCR's registration data on specific needs, protection assessments, the use of the Heightened Risk Identification Tool (HRIT), and referrals from UNHCR's Protection and Community Services units and NGO partners.

However, in some locations, systems for identifying and referring refugees for resettlement consideration may be limited due to a shortage of dedicated resettlement capacity. As a result, the unfortunate reality in these operations is that a number of extremely vulnerable refugees who could benefit the most from resettlement risk being overlooked. In these operations, NGOs can play a valuable role in ensuring that refugees with compelling protection needs and vulnerabilities are identified and considered for resettlement.

NGOs, which are often immersed in the refugee communities they serve, are uniquely positioned to identify highly vulnerable individuals from among their clients who might benefit from resettlement. Around the world, medical NGOs are aware of countless refugees in need of advanced healthcare; agencies working with displaced children know numerous unaccompanied and separated children struggling to take care of themselves; and agencies counseling victims of sexual and gender-based violence know many women and girls still trying to

escape exploitation. NGOs can be more flexible than larger organizations and can act quickly to meet the urgent needs of their most vulnerable clients. They tend to have very focused mandates and are often the first to recognize emerging protection needs among their client populations, and hence are a valuable, even necessary, source of resettlement referrals.

NGOs can also be important partners in using tools and guidance developed by UNHCR to assist in the identification of refugees with specific needs and vulnerabilities who may benefit from resettlement. For example, the HRIT is an invaluable tool for identifying refugees at risk by linking community-based participatory assessments and individual assessment methodologies. By using such approaches to identifying and referring such acutely vulnerable refugees to UNHCR for resettlement consideration, NGOs can support UNHCR's efforts to identify the refugees most in need of resettlement while simultaneously facilitating a durable solution for their own most vulnerable clients.

This session will focus on how international and local NGOs can partner effectively with UNHCR to ensure that the refugees in greatest need of resettlement have access to this life-saving intervention. It will highlight the programmes and best practices of three NGOs that, alongside providing assistance to refugees, actively seek to refer their most vulnerable clients to UNHCR for resettlement consideration. These NGOs will discuss both the benefits of being involved in resettlement identification and also the strategies they have used to address some of the challenges associated with it. Ultimately, the goal of the session is to demystify resettlement so that more NGOs globally feel empowered and capacitated to collaborate with UNHCR to identify refugees for resettlement.

Panelists in this session will first address questions related to establishing an effective identification and referral system with UNHCR:

- How can NGOs and UNHCR offices jointly put in place a system for referrals for resettlement based upon mutually agreed criteria and procedures?
- How can NGOs work effectively with local UNHCR offices to establish a new channel of resettlement referrals, particularly if the NGO is new to resettlement?

Panelists will then discuss their respective approaches to addressing the challenges they have encountered in identification and referral of cases to UNHCR for resettlement consideration:

- How should NGOs prioritize their clients for resettlement consideration, knowing that only a small number of them can benefit from resettlement and that the resettlement process may take a long time?
- What techniques can NGOs use to manage their clients' expectations about the availability and pace of resettlement?
- What techniques can NGOs use to protect their resettlement programmes from fraud and buffer their other programmes from the pressure that resettlement can create?
- How can NGOs continue to protect and assist refugees with serious security risks after they enter the lengthy resettlement process and await approval and eventual departure?

Despite these and other challenges, NGOs around the world still choose to make resettlement referrals because they recognize that doing so may be the only way to protect their most vulnerable clients. While it may not be an option for a large percentage of the world's refugees, resettlement is the only durable solution that is consistently available as a protection tool for vulnerable refugees nearly everywhere.