

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
17 – 19 JUNE 2014 - International Conference Center Geneva**

THEMATIC SESSION

BACKGROUND PAPER

**Refugee resettlement as an international protection tool in
humanitarian emergencies: Syria and beyond**

Thursday 19 June 2014, 11h15 – 13h15 – Room 3

Brief Description of Issue:

Unprecedented in their size and scope, humanitarian emergencies around the world are resulting in tremendous outflows of refugees at a pace not seen in decades. It is undeniable that for many who have fled humanitarian emergencies, return to their home countries will not be possible for years. Furthermore, for the most vulnerable, including women-at-risk (UNHCR referrals of refugee women and girls for resettlement represented 12.1% of all submissions in 2013), unaccompanied refugee minors, refugees with health emergencies, and those that have other protection needs, return might never be possible. Therefore, as the number of displaced as a result of emergencies in places like Syria, South Sudan and CAR reach into the millions, the time is right for the community of NGOs concerned with refugee protection issues to reexamine the role that resettlement can play in response to humanitarian emergencies. Given the sheer numbers involved, and the limited opportunities for the most vulnerable to either repatriate or successfully integrate in their country of first asylum, the displacement crises also warrant the utilization of creative and non-traditional solutions, including humanitarian admission programs.

Under “typical” circumstances, there are never enough resettlement spots available for all of those that need it. In 2014 alone, UNHCR estimates that 691,000 people should be resettled, but there are only around 80,000 resettlement places available globally. These figures do not include the resettlement needs of refugees from Syria, including both Syrian nationals and refugees from other countries who initially sought protection in Syria as their country of asylum. UNHCR is seeking 30,000 resettlement spots for Syrians in 2014, and an additional 100,000 in 2015 and 2016. Thus far, with European countries taking the lead, including countries that do not normally participate in resettlement schemes, more than 20,000 pledges have been made to offer protection to those fleeing the conflict in Syria, with more than half of these pledges comprised of opportunities for humanitarian admission. These numbers do not reflect the tremendous number of Syrians who are seeking asylum, or have already been granted asylum in European countries.

While resettlement and humanitarian admissions programs will never be an option for the vast majority of those displaced by humanitarian emergencies, the importance of these alternatives should not be diminished. They offer lifesaving opportunities and they also are a concrete example of international burden sharing. However, the use of resettlement and humanitarian admission programs also require significant strategic planning and analysis among all of the actors involved, including NGOs. This session will raise important questions about the role these

programs can play in response to humanitarian emergencies and how NGOs can engage in the process.

Format of Session and Highlighted Issues:

The session will consist of brief opening remarks by the moderator and the three panelists. This will be followed by facilitated “interviews” with the panelists, leaving ample time for dialogue with the session participants. Sample key questions that will be addressed during the session discussions include:

- How has resettlement been used as a lifesaving protection tool for refugees in humanitarian emergencies?
- How are resettlement and humanitarian admission programs being utilized in response to the Syrian refugee crisis? What has worked well and what are the challenges?
- What steps can be taken to ensure that as a protection tool, resettlement is flexible enough to address emergencies as well as protracted refugee situations?
- How can NGOs advocate for a resettlement system that is closer to true burden sharing? What obstacles exist to more resettlement opportunities, and how can they be addressed?
- What impact could the widespread use of humanitarian admission programs have on resettlement? Do issues connected to the long-term status of those admitted under humanitarian admission programs have an impact on refugee protection? Can successful humanitarian admission programs lead to increased resettlement opportunities?

Resources:

- *Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement*
<http://www.unhcr.org/524c31666.html>
- *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2014*
<http://www.unhcr.org/51e3eabf9.html>
- *Finding Solutions for Syrian Refugees: Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission and Family Reunification*
<http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.html>
- St. Andrew’s Refugee Services
<http://stars-egypt.org/>
- Refugee Council USA
<http://www.rcusa.org/syria-crisis>
- *Welcome to Europe-A Comprehensive Guide to Resettlement*
(http://www.icmc.net/system/files/publication/icmceurope_welcometo europe_pdf_63663.pdf)
- European Resettlement Network website/*Focus on Syria*
<http://www.resettlement.eu/news/crisis-syria>

- Factsheets on resettlement, humanitarian admission and relocation, in various languages and downloadable from - <http://www.resettlement.eu/page/resettlement-relocation-or-humanitarian-admission-we-explain-terminology>
- April 2014 *SHARE Network Magazine*, (special feature on Syria)
<http://www.resettlement.eu/page/second-edition-share-network-magazine-now-available>
- Information about refugee arrivals to Europe <http://www.resettlement.eu/page/refugee-arrivals-europe>