



## CHAPTER 1.2

# Introducing this Handbook



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In recent decades, 10 countries have developed formal refugee resettlement programs. A further eight countries have newly established programs, or are in the process of establishing them. Many other countries, such as France and Germany, have offered resettlement on an ad hoc basis in response to specific humanitarian crises.

Both the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its resettlement partners in these countries recognise that if resettlement is to be both a tool of international protection and a durable solution, it does not end at the point of the acceptance of refugees for resettlement and the provision of safe passage to a receiving country.

Unlike other migrants, refugees are compelled to leave their countries-of-origin. Their departure is often hurried and unplanned; many have endured deprivation and trauma prior to their arrival.

The fact that refugees have survived these events is a testament to their skills and strengths. The great majority of those offered resettlement establish productive lives in receiving societies. However, if their full potential is to be realised refugees will require some support to overcome the negative consequences of their refugee experiences and to rebuild their lives in a new country. Taking steps to optimise integration potential also has benefits for receiving societies, ensuring that refugees are well placed to contribute the skills and attributes they bring.

However, it is important that resettlement be understood as a process beginning with the identification and assessment of applicants, extending to reception on arrival in a resettlement country and including longer term integration into the receiving community.

### Table Three: Countries of refugee resettlement

#### Countries with established refugee resettlement programs

Australia  
Canada  
Denmark  
Finland  
The Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Norway  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
USA

#### Countries with emerging\* refugee resettlement programs

Benin  
Brazil  
Britain  
Burkina Faso  
Chile  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Spain

\*Emerging resettlement countries are those that may have been accepting refugees in various capacities for many years and are now formalising their resettlement programs.



## INTRODUCING THIS HANDBOOK

**The RESETTLEMENT HANDBOOK sets out UNHCR's policies and procedures relating to resettlement. It is available on the UNHCR website (see p. xi).**

## The purpose of the Handbook

While UNHCR's *Resettlement Handbook* articulates policy and procedures for identifying and documenting refugees in need of resettlement, it does not discuss reception and integration of refugees in countries of resettlement. To this end the *Integration Initiative* was launched in 1999. This Handbook has been developed as part of this initiative.

The Handbook has been developed as both a planning and professional development resource for those with responsibility for, or an interest in, planning, promoting, developing, implementing and monitoring programs and strategies to facilitate the integration of resettled refugees.

It is anticipated that it will:

- contribute to supporting new and strengthening established integration programs;
- enhance understanding of the processes and benefits of resettlement and integration at governmental and community levels and among international organisations with an interest in refugee protection and resettlement;
- serve as a source of information for those countries considering resettling refugees.

The Handbook has been written with a broad audience in mind, recognising that refugee integration is typically a partnership of government and non-government organisations and the refugee and wider communities.

It is not intended as a guide to practice for those in direct support roles with resettled refugees. However, many of the principles and approaches outlined in it may be useful in a direct service setting.

The emphasis in the Handbook is on the integration of refugees offered resettlement through a formal program. However, many of the ideas presented in it may also be useful in planning program responses for the settlement of refugees arriving spontaneously.

## Accommodating and respecting global diversity

Refugee resettlement programs exist in a diverse global context. Countries offering resettlement have very different governmental structures and social and economic environments and varying levels of prior experience in supporting culturally diverse migration and resettlement.

In the interests of respecting this diversity this Handbook does not set out to provide detailed instruction on the procedures and processes involved in establishing an integration program, nor does it seek to prescribe ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways of going about the task of refugee resettlement. Rather, its aim is to provide information and ideas to guide integration practice. It does this by articulating the broad conditions required for successful resettlement and by identifying some of the critical issues that need to be considered in the planning process.

The Handbook draws extensively on the experience of countries of resettlement and presents a number of specific ideas and approaches developed in these countries. Alternative perspectives are presented, along with discussion about their costs and benefits. Readers are encouraged to evaluate the applicability of these approaches to their local environment.

Given that the global refugee population is both diverse and changing, the Handbook does not provide information on specific refugee groups. However, a list of resources providing this information is included on page ix.

### How was the Handbook developed?

The Handbook was developed on the basis of materials developed in the context of the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* held in Sweden in April 2001, hosted by the Swedish Integration Board (see p. viii). These included a set of principles to guide integration of resettled refugees (see p. 12). Further input was sought from an international Task Force and international integration experts (see p. x).





## Reception and Integration: Guiding Principles

THIS HANDBOOK is based on the following principles developed and endorsed at the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* held in Sweden April 2001:

### Preamble

Refugees strengthen societies through their cultural diversity and the contributions, which they bring. We affirm that resettlement of refugees works. Most refugees integrate successfully into their host communities and most of the support and services provided by governments, refugee communities, non-governmental organisations and the public makes a difference.

Resettlement is an important tool of refugee protection and a durable solution for many refugees. It is not a substitute for asylum, but rather a complementary way of providing protection to people in need. Resettlement offers refugees the possibility to begin new lives and to become fully participating members of society. Given global needs and the success of resettlement as a durable solution, we believe that the use of resettlement should be expanded in the future.

The challenge for states and for UNHCR is to ensure that resettlement selection is carried out in a fair, transparent, and equitable manner based on refugee needs for protection and for durable solutions. A particular challenge for states is to be inclusive in their resettlement criteria and not automatically to exclude groups or countries from consideration. While we acknowledge that resettlement may not be appropriate in every situation, it should be

seen as an integral component of a comprehensive international response.

Experience with resettlement varies from country to country. Some countries have long resettlement histories while others are new to the process. But all resettlement countries are committed to facilitating refugee integration, to nurturing a hospitable environment for refugees, and are willing to learn from one another. While integration occurs within a framework of national policy and in a particular cultural context, it is fundamentally a personal process through which refugees develop a sense of belonging, make friendships, and enjoy mutual respect in their new society.

The following general principles will serve as a guide to our efforts to promote refugee integration.

### Integration

- Integration is a mutual, dynamic, multi-faceted and on-going process. "From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population."<sup>a</sup>
- Integration is "multi-dimensional in that it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees' own perceptions of, acceptance by and membership in the host society."<sup>b</sup>

- Opportunities for resettled refugees to become citizens and to enjoy full and equal participation in society represent an overarching commitment by governments to refugee integration.
- Family reunification is crucial to refugee integration. Similarly, relatives and ethnic community networks can play key roles in successful refugee integration.
- A multi-dimensional, comprehensive and cohesive approach that involves families, communities and other systems can help refugees to restore hope and to re-build their lives.

#### **Refugees at the centre**

- Refugees bring resources and skills to the countries in which they resettle. Host societies are strengthened and enriched by the contributions of refugees.
- Refugee participation and leadership are essential in the development, implementation and evaluation of both refugees' own individual resettlement and integration programs.
- Underlying the practical, tangible needs which refugees have are more fundamental needs for dignity, security, social connectedness, and identity. Both these more fundamental needs and immediate material needs must be addressed.
- Enabling refugees to use their own resources and skills to help each other is a priority.

- Responding to the range of needs specific to the refugee experience will improve resettlement programs and enhance integration.

#### **Strengthening receiving communities**

- Building community capacity for equitable partnership in refugee reception and integration involves all sectors of the community.
- Refugees integrate themselves. The responsibility of the public, private and community sectors is to work alongside refugees as facilitators to create an environment in which people can be empowered.
- The public should receive accurate and timely information about refugee situations. Receiving communities require additional specific information in preparing for the arrival of refugees in their communities. In both cases, the media have an important role to play.

#### **Strengthening partnerships**

- Multi-faceted partnerships need to be continually developed and strengthened among governments, refugees, communities, non-governmental organisations, and volunteers.
- Strengthening relationships between those working to identify refugees in need of resettlement and the communities where they will be resettled is important to the resettlement process.

a. Adapted from the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), *Policy on Integration*, 1999.

b. ECRE, *Policy on Integration*, 1999.

