




CHAPTER 2.7


Making Sense of a New Country:

Orientation Programs and Processes

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 2.7

Making Sense of a New Country: Orientation Programs and Processes

The focus of this Chapter is on strategies for orienting new arrivals to the culture, systems and resources of the receiving community.

Since orientation may be offered in the context of various other social support or language training programs, this chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapters 2.3 and 2.6. More detail on orientation to specific issues, such as health care and employment, is dealt with in relevant individual Chapters.

Orientation, like integration, is a ‘two-way’ street. It is equally as important for receiving communities to understand the culture and backgrounds of resettled refugees as it is for newcomers to understand the cultural norms and mores of the receiving community. Strategies for enhancing receiving communities’ understanding of the backgrounds of resettled refugees are discussed throughout this Handbook, and are the focus of Chapter 2.II.




CHECKLIST

Planning orientation programs and processes

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ offering orientation in the context of early case-management and social support;
- ✓ preparing a brief written statement on the country and its resettlement program;
- ✓ offering pre-arrival information sessions to those offered resettlement;
- ✓ incorporating 'hands-on' orientation into reception support;
- ✓ recruiting and training local volunteers to assist with orientation;
- ✓ obtaining translated information materials from other resettlement countries;
- ✓ preparing a list of key support services with contact details;
- ✓ obtaining cultural and country-specific information on refugee populations from other resettlement countries for orientation providers.

In the longer term, aim for:

FOR ORIENTATION PROVIDERS

- ✓ course outlines, resources, information and manuals to guide orientation providers and enhance the capacity of personnel in other systems to provide orientation;
- ✓ training courses;
- ✓ technical support (e.g. websites, help-desk facilities);
- ✓ teaching resources (e.g. audio tapes, videos, games);
- ✓ curricula and resources to promote orientation through language training programs.

FOR RESETTLED REFUGEES

- ✓ providing information in refugee languages in written, audio or video formats;
- ✓ websites providing orientation information;
- ✓ formal pre- and post arrival orientation programs;
- ✓ engaging volunteer and professional social support providers in orientation delivery;
- ✓ making use of other settings to provide orientation to specific services and programs (e.g. health care providers, schools);
- ✓ tailored orientation programs for groups with special needs (e.g. refugee youth, single parents, women-at-risk) or focussing on particular integration issues (e.g. domestic violence, intergenerational conflict).

GENERAL

- ✓ systems for monitoring and evaluating orientation programs;
- ✓ regular updating of information provided to resettled refugees by maintaining links with service and program providers.

Orientation as a resource for rebuilding

Many resettled refugees come from countries with very different religious, cultural and political values than those in the resettlement country. A large number are from developing countries but are settling in industrialised and urbanised societies.

Upon arrival resettled refugees will need to learn a range of new tasks (such as using public transportation and automated banking) and to secure resources such as health care, employment and income support. Refugees are often required to accomplish these tasks at a time when they are facing the stresses of adjusting to their new country and in some cases, dealing with prior trauma.

Effective orientation can assist resettled refugees to:

- develop a realistic picture of the receiving society and understand its values and culture. Many resettled refugees have high expectations, particularly regarding housing and employment opportunities;
- develop an understanding of the receiving society's expectations of them;
- identify their individual resettlement needs and priorities in order to make informed choices;
- access the resources needed for successful resettlement;
- develop problem solving skills;
- achieve independence (this is particularly important for refugees who have lived for long periods in refugee camps. A sound orientation program can help break the cycle of 'learned helplessness' that can result from this dependency);
- restore control and reduce anxiety;
- learn about common problems they may encounter in the resettlement process, since being able to anticipate these and to understand them as 'normal' can help to reduce their negative impact;
- form positive first impressions of the receiving society.

Orientation programs help to prevent misunderstandings and conflict, thereby promoting social harmony. Resettled refugees who understand the receiving society are also less likely to become marginalised and will be better placed to contribute their skills and attributes. If it is a 'two-way' process, orientation can help to enrich receiving societies by providing them with opportunities to learn about the culture and experiences of resettled refugees. The early independence fostered by a sound orientation program reduces the costs which would otherwise be involved in providing ongoing support.



Resettlement is like trying to walk again only you are a lot heavier.
Resettled refugee





Factors affecting orientation and the development of orientation programs

While refugees have very diverse backgrounds, factors which may influence the way in which orientation is provided include:

- the extent to which social and economic conditions differ between the refugee’s country-of-origin and the receiving country. Generally speaking, more intense orientation will be required for refugees from rural and pastoral communities settling in urbanised and industrialised communities;
- the refugees’ literacy levels and educational backgrounds;
- whether the refugees have prior experience in the paid labour force;
- cultural learning styles. For example, in some cultures, formal instruction is valued. Others may learn better with interactive approaches;
- refugees’ existing knowledge of the resettlement country’s language, culture and customs;
- gender and age;
- the level of family and community support available to resettled refugees;
- the presence of pre-migration trauma. Learning may be impeded in refugees suffering severe psychological symptoms such as impaired concentration or flashbacks.

Also influential are factors in receiving countries, including:

- the existing infrastructure for refugee selection, reception and integration (including the opportunities for providing information in countries of departure);
- the receiving country’s resettlement objectives. For example, if the country has a high expectation of economic self-sufficiency, this will influence both the way in which orientation is delivered and the emphasis placed on finding employment;
- prior contact with, and understanding of, the culture and background of resettled refugees among orientation providers and in the wider community.

Issues to consider in planning orientation programs

Methodology and approach

Information and skills imparted in the orientation process are more likely to be retained by resettled refugees if orientation:

- is delivered in the language of the resettled refugee. Ideally this should be someone sharing the language of the refugee

**TAKE
CARE****Orientation and refugee women**

ORIENTATION will be particularly important for refugee women, who play a pivotal role in the integration of families and who face a host of particular issues in the integration process. More detailed strategies for engaging refugee women in orientation are discussed in Chapter 3.2.

- group. Where this is not possible interpreters will need to be used;
- is provided in a safe, risk-free and stress-free learning environment;
 - is based on adult learning principles. (These are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.6);
 - is competency based, that is, focussed on fostering participants' skills in addressing day-to-day needs and challenges;
 - emphasises learning through showing or doing;
 - adopts other interactive learning techniques such as discussions, group work and role plays;
 - involves a range of communication media, to provide varied learning experiences and to accommodate those without mother-tongue or target language literacy;
 - is confined to issues relevant to resettled refugees' stage of resettlement.



Wherever possible, the use of signs and symbols should be avoided. While these may have meaning in a western context, they may be incompatible with the frame of reference of some resettled refugees.

While one of the primary purposes of orientation is to assist resettled refugees to understand the culture and systems of the receiving society, programs should also reflect an understanding and respect of the culture and past experiences of resettled refugees. As well as assisting orientation providers to tailor programs to the needs of specific refugee groups, experience suggests that resettled refugees will be more receptive to learning about their new society in an environment in which they feel their own culture is respected and understood. Resettled refugees may have not previously analysed their own cultures and values in a systematic way. Awareness of one's own culture often comes about through exposure to a new culture.

Mutual understanding and respect can be promoted by:

- using resettled refugees' country-of-origin experience as a





Why are interactive learning approaches important?

HOW INFORMATION is imparted in an orientation program is equally as important as the content. Emphasis should be placed on interactive learning methodologies (such as group discussions and role plays) and providing a range of learning experiences (such as videos, audio tapes).

Prominent psychologist William Glasser noted that we learn:

- 5% of what we hear
- 10% of what we see
- 20% of what we see and hear
- 50% of what we discuss with others
- 75% of what we experience
- 95% of what we teach others.

Adapted from WMD Glasser, *Control Theory in the Classroom*, Harper and Row, New York, 1986

INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Hands-on orientation in Sweden

IN UMEA, Sweden, municipal resettlement workers orient new refugee arrivals to the local community through field trips to the key facilities they will need to use, including the post office, medical centre and social insurance centre. This method has proven particularly effective for resettled refugees with limited literacy in their own language.

starting point for learning about the receiving society. For example, an Australian program designed to orient refugee parents to the education system begins by exploring with parents how education was organised in their countries-of-origin;

- consulting with refugee communities when designing orientation programs;
- deploying members of refugee communities to deliver orientation programs (see box, p. 147);
- ensuring that orientation providers have relevant background information about the culture and experiences of resettled refugees. A list of sources is included on page xi.

When should orientation be delivered?

All existing resettlement countries offer some form of face-to-face orientation to basic systems and resources (such as income support, banking and school enrolment) as part of the initial reception process. However, orientation should be understood as an ongoing process which occurs both formally and informally and which:

- commences in the country of departure or in the immediate post arrival period;
- extends from the reception period into the early resettlement period (often in the context of language learning and relationships with professional and volunteer support providers);
- continues through resettled refugees' ongoing contacts with systems such as health, education, social services and employment placement services.

Former refugees in orientation roles

A NUMBER of countries have sought to involve people from refugee and ethno-cultural communities in delivering orientation programs. In the USA, for example, former refugees who have worked in integration settings at the domestic level may be engaged to deliver pre-departure orientation.

These personnel bring a number of unique skills,

including:

- detailed knowledge of the integration environment in the receiving society;
- language skills;
- an appreciation of the resettlement process based on their own experiences;
- a capacity to mediate between the world-view of the resettled refugee and the prevailing attitudes of the country of resettlement;

- credibility with resettled refugees who share a common cultural or religious heritage.

In other countries, former refugees offer orientation through their participation in volunteer or sponsorship programs. It is vital that orientation be provided by individuals who are appropriately trained and supported.

This approach recognises that resettled refugees have different needs at different stages as well as different capacities to retain and contextualise information. In the early resettlement period, the focus is therefore generally on information required to accomplish the immediately necessary tasks of resettlement. This is a period when resettled refugees have numerous demands on their time and attention and a limited capacity to absorb material which is peripheral to their immediate needs.

Orientation to some aspects of the receiving society may be more meaningful to resettled refugees later when they have a frame of reference and an experiential base to draw on. For example, resettled refugees may be better able to make sense of information about teaching approaches in the receiving society once they have some first-hand experience of the education system and a link with a particular school setting.

If orientation is provided at the onset and continues in resettled refugee's interactions with social support providers, language training programs and other systems, there are also greater opportunities for 'learning by doing'.

From which settings should orientation be delivered?

In many countries, orientation commences with a formal group program offered prior to or soon after arrival. This is usually followed by 'hands-on' orientation to basic systems such as accessing social services, school enrolment and



I have learned more about my own culture over the past five days through learning about yours. It is only through understanding my own culture that I can learn to accept the positive aspects of the new culture I am about to join.

Resettled refugee





What about pre-departure orientation?

CANADA, Sweden, the USA and more recently, Australia, have offered pre-departure orientation to refugees whom they have accepted for resettlement. These programs may be provided by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on behalf of resettlement governments. Some of these programs focus on travel and reception arrangements. Others use this opportunity to begin orientation to the receiving society.

Experience suggests that these programs are useful in assisting resettled refugees to develop a very clear picture of conditions in the receiving community and of the expectations placed on them.

By enabling refugees to ask questions or clarify any misunderstandings, pre-departure orientation programs can help to reduce anxiety in the first weeks in a new country.

Some countries have also used pre-departure orientation as an opportunity for resettled refugees to acquire information and skills to prevent, or deal more constructively with, difficulties in the

resettlement country.

In those countries where placement sites are known prior to departure, information will help refugees know what to expect. Where refugees are able to choose their placement site, pre-departure information will help them to participate in decision-making.

The extent to which resettled refugees are able to learn and retain information prior to departure is unclear. Unlike the early resettlement period, other resettlement and adjustment tasks do not compete for the time and attention of refugees waiting to travel. However, the experience of the Swedish pre-departure programs suggests that it may be quite difficult for people to integrate information about a vastly different country without having first experienced it¹.

The importance of pre-departure information for emerging resettlement countries

Pre-arrival orientation is particularly important in the case of emerging

banking services conducted as part of the reception process. In some countries this is offered routinely to all new arrivals and is relatively standardised (see Chapter 2.3). In others, the level of support provided is tailored to the needs of the individual or family.

Group approaches to orientation are an efficient way of dealing with large refugee intakes, where the volume of new entrants may make it difficult to offer a more individualised approach.

Arrangements for orientation following the immediate reception period vary. While some may be offered by the resettlement or sponsoring agencies, others may be linked to language training programs and/or professional or voluntary social support programs.

Recognising the importance of ongoing orientation, particularly to wider systems and resources (such as health

resettlement countries as little information about these countries is available to refugees. This may contribute to anxiety on the part of the refugee.

Resettled refugees may have formed their expectations of resettlement through information about traditional resettlement countries. These expectations may not necessarily be met in emerging resettlement countries, many of which have developing economies and limited infrastructure to support resettlement. The experience of emerging resettlement countries is that unmet expectations can lead to disappointment, and ultimately hamper integration.

Emerging resettlement countries may consider:

- providing pre-arrival information sessions to refugees offered resettlement;
- preparing basic written information about the receiving country;
- providing information to UNHCR field staff involved in identifying refugees for resettlement;

- developing a 'country chapter' for inclusion in the UNHCR *Resettlement Handbook*. This Handbook is distributed to UNHCR offices and is used by field staff involved in refugee resettlement.

When providing and developing information it is important to:

- strike a balance between welcoming newcomers and promoting the country's assets, while being realistic about its limitations;
- outline the country's prior involvement in refugee resettlement. The formal program may be new, but many emerging countries have a wealth of experience in settling asylum seekers;
- ensure that information is regularly updated to accommodate changes in conditions in the receiving country (both positive and negative) and developments in the resettlement program.

care and education), a number of countries have developed strategies for engaging personnel from these systems in the process of orienting new arrivals.

Providing orientation through specific settings can also help reach refugee sub-populations that may not otherwise participate in more formal programs (for example, refugee young people may be more readily reached through school settings or youth clubs).

Ensuring consistency of information

It is important that there is consistency both in the level of information available to resettled refugees and in the information given at different stages of the resettlement process. Some countries aim to achieve this through the development of structured group programs delivered by specially trained providers.




INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE
Community education for arriving refugees

WHEN refugees arrive in New Zealand the legal rights available to them in areas of everyday life are often very different from those they have experienced in their countries-of-origin or asylum.	responsibilities of both landlords and tenants); and consumer law (including the role of the consumer and his/her legal protection in relation to fair trading and the purchase of goods). Simple, illustrated written materials have been translated into the main ethnic languages of arriving refugees. The key to the success of these programs, however, is that they are delivered informally in small groups – often in refugees’ homes. The information is presented by cross-cultural workers. These workers understand the refugees’ cultural norms, and the adaptation that will be required for successful	integration. The program assists refugees to understand their rights and responsibilities in New Zealand and to identify behaviours which are unacceptable. It makes people aware of the laws available to protect them in their daily experiences. These legal concepts are first introduced during the six week orientation program at the refugee reception centre run by New Zealand’s Immigration Service. The program described above is then used to expand upon and reinforce knowledge, once resettled refugees are settled in their own homes and community.
In New Zealand, a program of legal education has been developed by the Refugee and Migrant Service in conjunction with the Legal Services Board and other charities. This program addresses issues of family law (e.g. domestic violence, the rights of children, marriage and divorce, the role of the police); tenancy law (including the rights and		

While consistency is more difficult to achieve in those contexts in which orientation occurs less formally (e.g. in the context of language learning or social support), it can be promoted through effective training and ongoing support of orientation providers.

How intensive should orientation be?

There are variations in the duration and goals of the orientation process. For example, in the USA, resettled refugees participate in a pre-departure orientation program (usually of 5–25 hours duration) and a brief practical orientation as part of the reception process (from one to three weeks). Thereafter the emphasis is very much on ‘learning by doing’.

In contrast, in the Netherlands, resettled refugees are offered a practical orientation to basic systems such as banking and income support programs, after which they are obliged to participate in a 12-month course, funded by the government,

The advantages of delivering orientation in the context of language training, reception and social support programs

SOME COUNTRIES use language training programs as a place for imparting information about the receiving society. Sessions can be provided on specific orientation topics in class time in resettled refugees' mother-tongue, or information can be imparted through curricula in the context of language learning exercises.

This approach has a number of advantages:

- where participation rates are high, a large number of resettled refugees can be reached;
- it enables resettled

refugees to learn about the receiving society in the course of accomplishing another resettlement task;

- instruction is usually provided in a group context allowing interactive learning approaches;
- where curriculum approaches are used, refugees are able to learn simultaneously both conceptual information and the language they will require to negotiate systems and resources in the receiving society.

There are also advantages for language learning, with

studies suggesting that adults learn a second language more readily if it is taught in a context which is relevant to their day-to-day lives (see Chapter 2.6).

Meanwhile, orientation provided in the context of a reception program or social support relationship enables refugees to learn in a 'hands-on' environment by either doing or being shown. Social support providers may also be better placed to deal with sensitive issues that are difficult to address through group orientation programs.

which incorporates cultural orientation and target language instruction. This approach is taken in the belief that resettled refugees will integrate more successfully if they have had the opportunity to learn about the culture and systems of the receiving society.

Content of orientation programs

Table Nine (see p. 154) identifies some of the broad areas addressed in refugee orientation programs and materials. It is intended as a guide only. The information included in specific programs and materials will depend on a range of factors, including the setting in which orientation is being delivered, the stage of the selection and resettlement process, the needs of refugee participants, and conditions in and expectations of the receiving country.

Where possible, orientation programs and materials should be developed in close consultation with refugee communities in the receiving society. It is also important that close links are maintained between refugee service providers and other agencies involved in orientation as this will help to ensure that





MAKING SENSE OF A NEW COUNTRY: ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND PROCESSES



If refugees hear something only once, the likelihood of their remembering and applying these new concepts may be minimal at best. However, if efforts are made to spiral information and to echo concepts over and over again the chances of successful integration can be increased.
Resettlement worker



orientation programs are updated in response to changes in service systems and entitlements.

Key messages are likely to be ‘heard’ and retained, if they are repeated both within formal pre-departure orientation programs and later in the post arrival orientation process.

From time-to-time it may be necessary to develop special programs to meet the needs of specific refugee intakes. For example in 1999, the USA offered resettlement to some 3,500 unaccompanied refugee young people from Sudan. A special program was developed for this group recognising that they had special orientation needs as a result of their age, limited prior parenting, and lack of exposure to an industrialised society.

Special programs may also be useful to address integration issues (such as family violence, and child welfare) or to reach populations that, while facing particular integration challenges, may not be effectively reached by programs designed for the wider refugee intake. For example, a number of countries have programs for refugee youth addressing such issues as peer pressure, cultural conflict, consumerism and legal rights.

Initiatives to support and promote orientation

Written materials

Some countries have developed booklets in key refugee languages conveying information about the receiving society to distribute to resettled refugees prior to, or soon after, arrival. Examples include Canada’s bilingual *Newcomer’s Introduction to Canada* and the USA’s *Welcome to the United States: A Guidebook for Refugees*. This Guidebook is available in a wide range of languages, including Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, English, Farsi, French, Russian, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Written materials provide a reliable source of information that resettled refugees can access prior to arrival in their new home, but are expensive to produce especially in a variety of language versions. They are of limited use for new arrivals without mother-tongue literacy.

Programs and instructional guides for orientation providers

Prescribed programs have been developed in those countries in which formal pre-departure or reception orientation programs are offered.

Instructional guides to support those providing orientation in the context of a less formal social support relationship have also been developed. For example, volunteers in Canada's Host Program, established to provide orientation and support to new arrivals, are given a handbook to guide them in their roles.

Instructional guides have also been used as a vehicle for enhancing the capacity of those in the wider service network to offer orientation to new arrivals (see box).

INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Using practice wisdom to build capacity in the wider service system

RESETTLED refugees have contact with a range of service providers in the course of their resettlement, including schools, lawyers, health care providers and housing and employment services. Professionals in these areas have opportunities to inform newcomers about these systems, both by developing formal orientation programs and by taking opportunities to impart information informally in the course of their contact with them.	to prepare for this role. Recognising this, COSTI Immigrant Services in Ontario, Canada sought funds from the Canadian government to develop a resource manual, <i>Linking Paths: A Guide for Orienting Newcomers to Canada</i> . The Guide draws on the practical experience of settlement workers who have worked extensively with newcomers. As well as identifying the key messages, concepts and information that will be required by new arrivals, the Guide documents learning approaches and issues and provides practical instruction on planning and delivering	formal orientation programs. The Guide helps to minimise the preparation time that might otherwise be involved for professionals keen to orient resettled refugees to their particular settings. The Guide covers a range of integration topics, including housing, employment, transportation, health care, finance and shopping, law, education, childcare and employment. It is also a training tool for inducting new settlement workers and helps to ensure that resettled refugees receive consistent information.
--	---	--





→ **Table Nine: Orientation programs and materials: Suggested content areas**

Content	Suggested areas
Orientation to travel arrangements and reception process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documents required for departure • transit arrangements • in-flight arrangements • airport pick-up arrangements • reception accommodation • basic household orientation (e.g. use of plumbing, gas and electrical appliances) • material assistance available on arrival (furniture, appliances, clothing)
Orientation to basic characteristics, systems and resources of the receiving society	<p>CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic conditions (especially housing and employment availability) • ethnic composition, population diversity, migration history • public safety • languages spoken • climatic conditions • cost of living • media, including ethnic media • governance and legal systems • expectations of economic self-sufficiency <p>SYSTEMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public transportation • private vehicle licence and insurance requirements • banking (automatic teller machines, cheque accounts, loans) • income support, including programs for those participating in further education and training • health care • housing • law enforcement • education (including post-secondary, and re-certification opportunities) • child care • support for elders • shopping (e.g. purchasing conventions, ethnic food markets, second-hand outlets) • labour unions and professional and trade associations

Content	Suggested areas
	<p>RESOURCES – HOW TO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply for reunification with family members • seek assistance to trace family members • secure resettlement and social support, including specific services for resettled refugees • access job placement programs • find a job • make contact with ethno-cultural organisations and services • access language assistance • find a house • secure income support • enrol children in school • qualify for health care • access family support and counselling services • gain accreditation, certification or registration to practise a trade or profession • apply for citizenship • enrol in a target language training program • budget <p>RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • obligations of sponsors/proposers • legal rights and responsibilities of refugees (as consumers, health care users, employees, etc) • services available to assist in protecting rights • family, marital and parenting relationships (e.g. family violence, child discipline and welfare) • female genital mutilation
Socio-cultural orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expectations of the receiving country • rights and responsibilities • culture, norms and values of the receiving society (e.g. family relationships, gender roles) • stereotyping, racism, discrimination and xenophobia • approach and attitudes to cultural diversity in the receiving country
Orientation to the process of integration, and problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical thinking and skills building • identifying skills and attributes • the process of adaptation (see p. 25) • stresses associated with different rates and processes of adaptation experienced by family members (e.g. children, women, elders) • information on possible responses to prior experiences (especially trauma and torture) and how to deal with these





MAKING SENSE OF A NEW COUNTRY: ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND PROCESSES



Formal programs and resources to guide orientation providers help to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information provided and are an efficient way of transferring skills and information to a wider pool of orientation providers. However, it is important that these materials are flexible enough to accommodate the needs of different refugee communities.

Training courses and ongoing support for orientation providers

Providing orientation requires skills in adult learning and cross-cultural communication on the part of the orientation provider. It also requires an understanding of the refugee and resettlement experience, the resettlement policy of the receiving country, the rights and responsibilities of resettled refugees and the resources available to them in the receiving society.

Those providing orientation will require appropriate training and support for their roles.

Countries offering structured pre-departure or post arrival orientation programs, such as the USA, have developed formal training courses and accompanying manuals for orientation program providers.

Training is equally important in settings where orientation is provided in the context of social support programs and provides governments with a way of ensuring that resettled refugees receive consistent and accurate information.

▶ Orienting providers to the backgrounds and culture of resettled refugees

TO COUNTER inaccurate or stereotyped perceptions of resettled refugees, orientation providers should have relevant cultural and country background information. This is particularly important in countries with limited prior experience of resettling particular refugee populations. A list of sources of cultural and country background profiles is included on page xi. Alternatively, emerging resettlement countries may be able to obtain this information from their counterparts in other countries.

In some countries, technical support is available to orientation providers. For example, in Australia, private individuals who propose (sponsor) resettled refugees have access to a non-government resettlement agency which provides information on resettlement resources and assists with more complex issues.

Resources to enhance the learning experience

As indicated above, interactive and varied learning experiences are important strategies for ensuring that information is retained.

Resources have been developed to promote this. For example, in the USA the *Welcome to the USA* video is used as a tool to supplement and re-enforce that country's reception orientation program.

In the Australian state of New South Wales, a board game, *Families in Cultural Transition*, provides a fun way to engage families and small groups in learning about the receiving society.

Web technology

A number of countries, among them Canada, the USA and Australia, have developed websites providing information about the receiving country, the rights and responsibilities of newcomers and integration resources available to them. These





**MAKING SENSE OF A NEW COUNTRY:
ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND PROCESSES**



Selected useful websites: Information for resettled refugees and orientation providers on the World Wide Web

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada **www.cic.gc.ca**
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Australia **www.immi.gov.au**
- Immigration and Naturalisation Service, USA **www.ins.usdoj.gov**
- International Organisation for Migration **www.iom.int**
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants **www.settlement.org**
- Cultural Orientation Resource Center, USA **www.culturalorientation.net**

are a useful source of information both for resettled refugees and those providing orientation. Websites can also be accessed by refugees to assist them in making choices regarding specific placement communities.

The Cultural Orientation Resource Center in the USA has developed a website to support those providing cultural orientation (see box). The website provides relevant country background information, promotes communication and linkages among orientation providers and promotes best-practices, which have been submitted by orientation programs worldwide.

Information for orientation providers

Consider incorporating the following into training programs for orientation providers:

Planning and organisational skills

- planning for resettled refugees with particular needs;
- making sure the program is accessible (transport, child care, snacks);
- venue (non-threatening, risk-free, private).

Interpersonal and group work skills

- establishing rapport;
- group dynamics;
- cross-cultural communication;
- listening skills;
- adult learning techniques and principles;
- the impact of trauma and torture;
- the possible personal consequences of working with traumatised

individuals and how to prevent and deal with these.

Cross-cultural skills

- information about the culture, beliefs and past experiences of resettled refugees;
- information about cultural learning styles (e.g. some groups may have an assertive style which is perceived as demanding by others. In contrast, resettled refugees from autocratic regimes may have internalised a passive approach to those in authority);
- exploring one's own cultural beliefs;
- background information on relevant refugee source countries and countries of

asylum and refugees' likely experiences in those countries;

- dealing with sensitive cross-cultural issues, such as female genital mutilation, polygamy, domestic violence (spouse, elder and child abuse), and rights of the individual, including gay rights.

Resource skills

- information about the rights and responsibilities of refugees;
- resources available;
- information on support systems available to orientation providers;
- identification and referral mechanisms for individuals requiring more intensive, professional support.



Language training curricula and resources

In those countries where cultural orientation is built into language training programs, governments have sought to ensure that relevant areas are addressed through the development of national curricula. In others teacher resource materials have been developed to serve the dual purposes of orientation and facilitating language acquisition (see Chapter 2.6).



ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- support, plan coordinate and resource orientation as a critical component of an integration program;
- deliver an appropriate level of orientation support based on the needs of individual resettled refugees;
- incorporate mechanisms for monitoring and updating orientation programs in consultation with refugee communities and service providers;
- have arrangements in place for orientation of resettled refugees with different needs (e.g. youth, unaccompanied minors, victims of violence, women at risk, elders);
- incorporate means of orientating the receiving society to the beliefs, cultural practices and past experiences of resettled refugees;
- foster opportunities to integrate orientation into other resettlement processes (e.g. language learning, accessing health care);
- engage relevant systems in the orientation process;
- plan to ensure that orientation is an ongoing process;
- recognise that resettled refugees have different information needs and different capacities to absorb and contextualise information at different stages of the resettlement process.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR ORIENTATING RESETTLED REFUGEES WOULD:

- ensure that the orientation process actively engages women as critical players in family integration;
- be based on adult learning principles;
- be voluntary;
- respect and value the culture, beliefs and past experiences of resettled refugees;
- be experientially based and use interactive learning methodologies;
- be delivered by personnel who are appropriately trained and supported;
- be delivered (where possible) by people from the same cultural and language backgrounds as resettled refugees;
- engage skilled interpreters where first language delivery is not possible.