

PART TWO

Applying the Framework in Key Program Areas





CHAPTER 2.1

Matching People with Communities:

Placement in the Receiving Society

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 2.1

Matching People with Communities: Placement in the Receiving Society

The focus of this Chapter is on strategies for ensuring that resettled refugees are placed in communities where they will have the best prospects for successful resettlement. It is concerned both with the selection of specific placement sites or communities as well as with processes for ensuring that individual refugees are matched with communities that best suit their needs.

It is important to note that there are wide variations in placement practices. In some countries, resettled refugees are assigned to specific local communities and strategies are undertaken to develop the integration potential of these communities.

In others, resettled refugees are destined or choose to go to a state or province within the receiving society prior to arrival. In some of these jurisdictions (such as the Canadian Province of Québec), governments or non-government settlement organisations may plan placement and develop specific placement communities. In others, the communities refugees settle in are determined by refugees themselves, usually with the assistance of social support providers or family and friends.

This Chapter has been written with this broad range of contexts in mind.



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CHECKLIST



Building resettlement communities and facilitating sound placement choices

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ selecting and developing destinations for refugee resettlement (see also Chapter 2.2);
- ✓ developing brief information on resettlement destinations for refugees offered resettlement.

In the longer term, aim to:

- ✓ develop more comprehensive information on possible resettlement destinations for refugees offered resettlement;
- ✓ develop a placement protocol which is disseminated to relevant officers involved in the refugee selection and resettlement process;
- ✓ provide training to personnel involved in refugee selection and placement, including cultural diversity training;
- ✓ ensure that placement choices are effectively communicated to those involved at all stages of the selection and resettlement pathway.

The placement community as a resource for rebuilding

The challenge in placement is to ensure that there is an appropriate match between the needs of resettled refugees and resources available in the receiving community. In the longer term, resettled refugees may choose to move in search of employment or housing and social conditions which better meet their needs.

Careful planning of placement and the involvement of resettled refugees in placement decisions can help to ensure that refugees start out with the best prospects. The first placement site is particularly critical since this is a time when resettled refugees are more likely to need intensive formal and informal assistance.

If refugees are placed in communities where they are unable to secure basic resources required for integration they may be compelled to move soon after arrival.

Experience suggests that this process, known as ‘secondary migration’, frequently results in significant long term improvements in the overall health and well-being and employment prospects of resettled refugees¹. Nevertheless, if it occurs early in the settlement period it can also be disruptive, a particular concern for a population whose recent life experience has been characterised by dislocation and displacement.

Early secondary migration also involves considerable costs for resettled refugees, such as transport and household establishment expenses, at a time when they are likely to be in receipt of a low or fixed income².

High rates of secondary migration in the early period of resettlement may also be problematic for receiving communities, involving both direct and indirect costs and creating planning dilemmas for communities receiving large numbers of secondary migrants. For instance, in 1989 the Canadian Province of Ontario planned its integration program on the basis of an intake of 2,432 resettled refugees and this was reflected in its financial agreements with the Canadian government. However, in practice this province attracted 1,271 additional resettled refugees in that year who were originally destined to other Canadian provinces³.

Inappropriate placement decisions leading to high levels of early secondary migration can also lead to a loss of community and official support for refugee resettlement in the primary site, in other communities and at governmental level.

Factors affecting settlement community planning and placement decisions

Placement and site selection are complex processes which need to take into account the characteristics, attributes and wishes of resettled refugees as well as conditions and practices in the receiving country. While salient factors differ markedly for both individual resettled refugees and refugee groups, they may include:

- the presence of friends and relatives in the receiving country, with experience indicating that this is among the most important placement priorities for resettled refugees⁴;
- their aspirations and priorities. For example, a recent Swedish study comparing placement issues in the Iranian and Kurdish refugee communities found that access to ethnic community support was a high priority for Kurdish refugees, many of whom had spent years in harsh



Once a refugee has been selected for resettlement, there is perhaps no decision more critical to the course of the resettlement process than the selection of the initial placement site. In its simplest terms, placement is the assignment of a newly arrived refugee to a specific resettlement program within a given community in the country-of-refuge. The importance of the decision cannot be over-emphasised for it is in this initial placement site that the newly arrived refugee first experiences his/her new environment; receives initial nesting and medical services; has the opportunity to develop a sense of safety and security and takes the first steps toward building a new life in a new land. And if, as in most human developmental processes, early experiences help shape future patterns of growth, then the nature of the refugee’s first settlement experiences play a central role in determining the ultimate course of the settlement process.

Resettlement worker





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Relatives help the refugees find their way around on the housing estate and in the town in general. They also familiarise them with hundreds of facts about housing, eating habits, daily routines, school, courtesies and consideration. There's a noticeable difference between people who have contact with relatives when they come here and those who arrive completely on their own.

Resettlement worker



conditions in refugee camps. In contrast, educational opportunities for children and placement in a more affluent environment were more important considerations for those from Iran, whose experiences in their countries of refuge had been somewhat shorter and who had been relatively affluent and well educated in their country-of-origin⁵;

- prior social conditions. For example, resettled refugees who lived in a rural community in their country-of-origin may feel more comfortable if they are placed in a rural environment. Where there is a large gap between the culture and prior life experience of resettled refugees and the receiving community, the presence of ethno-cultural community support will be particularly important;
- employment skills and educational background;
- whether they have special needs (e.g. access to transport and support services will be particularly important for groups such as sole parents and refugee elders);
- their language abilities. For example, Canada is a bilingual society with both English and French speaking communities;
- perceptions of safety, which may be influenced by pre-migration experiences. For example, while densely populated urban neighbourhoods may be perceived negatively in the receiving society, some resettled refugees may feel safer in them than a quieter rural community.

Factors in the receiving society also influence both site selection and individual placement decisions (see Table Seven).

Issues to consider in developing settlement communities and planning placement practices

Prioritising needs

In some countries the emphasis in site selection and placement practices is on the needs of resettled refugees, while in others the needs of the receiving community are also taken into consideration (e.g. labour demand; regional and rural development objectives).

In practice, there may be a need to balance these objectives since the long term success of refugee resettlement will depend at least in part on the extent to which it benefits receiving communities. Nevertheless, most countries recognise that their involvement in refugee resettlement is motivated primarily by a commitment to humanitarian values.

Table Seven: Factors influencing the selection of specific placement communities and placement of resettled refugees

Factors:	Consider:
Availability of secure and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rental costs relative to the earning potential of resettled refugees; compatibility between housing supply and common family formations (e.g. singles, large families).
Access to employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> initial employment opportunities; opportunities for advancement in the labour force.
Presence of appropriate cultural and religious support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> established ethno-cultural communities and ethno-cultural institutions; ethno-cultural support organisations.
Commitment of community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existence of local leaders willing to serve as advocates for refugee resettlement; willingness of the local community to provide support through volunteer and other support programs.
Sufficient capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existence of infrastructure to resettle sufficient numbers of refugees to make the site viable in both human and economic terms.
Availability of key resettlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existence of requisite infrastructure, including adequately funded, readily accessible and linguistically and culturally appropriate services such as language instruction, medical care, employment counselling and training and services for survivors of trauma and torture; local work force capacity (i.e. do local personnel have the requisite expertise or will intensive work force development and/or transfer of personnel to the placement community be required?).
Partnership potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existence of NGOs, local service agencies and civic or religious organisations to serve as partners in supporting newly arrived refugees.
Attitude and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extent to which the community exhibits an openness to strangers and a respect for religious and cultural diversity.

Adapted from N Levine, 'Placement strategies to enhance effective integration of resettled refugees', Paper presented to the International Conference for the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, Sweden, April, 2001.

Involvement in placement decision-making and freedom of movement

In some countries resettled refugees are actively involved in the process of deciding their placement community, while in others they are assigned to particular states, provinces, municipalities or communities. Similarly, while some countries allow resettled refugees to move from their initial destination without penalty,



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in others resettled refugees risk losing their entitlement to integration support in the event that they relocate.

The reality is that the range of initial placement sites available to resettled refugees is constrained by factors such as the availability of affordable housing and specialist settlement supports. Moreover, it is difficult for resettled refugees to make informed choices about their first placement given that they have little advance knowledge of the receiving society.

Nevertheless, involving resettled refugees in placement decisions can help them to re-establish control over their lives, reduce anxiety and prevent placement being perceived as something done to or for them. Importantly, it can also help to prevent secondary migration and its associated costs.

Involvement in placement decision-making and freedom of movement are particularly important to resettled refugees, many of whom will have experienced restrictions on their civil and political rights in countries-of-origin and asylum.

How placements and secondary migration are managed will depend in part on how resettlement is organised and financed in the receiving society. For example, the choice of placement communities may be limited in countries, such as Denmark, where quotas are set to define the number of resettled refugees settling in a municipality in any given year. Similarly, in countries in which integration is funded through specific funding transfers from national governments to provinces, municipalities or communities, there will be a need to address both the planning and financial issues associated with secondary migration.

Initiatives to support the development of resettlement communities and placement decision-making

New site development

The selection and development of communities for refugee resettlement are necessary processes in emerging countries with minimal prior experience in culturally diverse migration (see Chapter 1.5).

A number of established resettlement countries have also endeavoured to identify and develop specific communities to increase the range of placement possibilities, and in many cases to meet other social and economic objectives. In the

Canadian Province of Québec. for example, regional centres have been identified as potential communities for resettlement, with the provincial government entering partnerships with local authorities and non-government organisations to build integration potential in these areas.

Developmental initiatives may also be useful where a potential resettlement community offers some critical integration resources (e.g. employment and ethnic community support) but lacks others (e.g. social support services). In these cases, investing in social support may be worthwhile. In some countries, specific interventions have also enhanced the viability of placement communities. For example, in Burkina Faso and Benin, the main impediment to placement in otherwise highly suitable communities has been a lack of employment opportunities. In those countries, resettled refugees have been offered micro-economic enterprise loans to establish small businesses, as one of a range of supports to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Conscious selection and development of placement communities has some potential to promote integration by matching resettled refugees with communities with particular integration resources such as secure and affordable housing or employment. However, as noted below (see box, p. 64), due regard needs to be given to advance preparation and to ensuring that resettled refugees play an active role in placement decisions.

Placement matching processes and protocols

Most countries endeavour to offer resettled refugees placement in communities that best meet their needs and attributes. Matching is a highly individualised matter. While for some refugees, access to tertiary and post secondary education may be an important factor, for others social support may have higher priority.

Sound destination matching is a reciprocal process. It enables the resettlement country to develop an understanding of the needs and attributes of resettled refugees (e.g. education, life skills, language capabilities, resettlement priorities and existing supports in the resettlement country) and provides resettled refugees with information about potential resettlement communities and their advantages and disadvantages.

Destination matching is particularly important for resettled refugees who have additional needs such as intensive medical and rehabilitative support.



You see relatives like first cousins are also close in our culture. We don't get attachments and the attention we would get from family members from anyone else. For example my wife was hospitalised...it's not that she will be better taken care of if we had a sister or a brother here. The hospital does their job to the best of their ability and knowledge. But just a sister calling me saying 'Don't worry, I will take care of this part'. This is helpful and I don't know anybody here. My English is ok but my association outside my work environment is zero almost.

Resettled refugee





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Should geographic dispersal of resettled refugees be promoted?

IN MANY resettlement countries, resettled refugees have traditionally gravitated toward large urban centres, many of which have established ethno-cultural communities and well developed services to support refugees and immigrants. Some of these centres, however, are affected by overcrowding, housing shortages and high unemployment rates.

Some governments have sought to encourage more dispersed refugee resettlement by identifying and developing other communities, particularly in regional and rural areas (see above) and encouraging or mandating resettled refugees to settle in them. In contrast, in other countries, greater

emphasis is placed on strategies to build the capacity of existing ethno-cultural communities to support and welcome newcomers. Indeed in many countries the presence of family and community support is a criterion for selection for resettlement and therefore influences subsequent placement in areas with established ethno-cultural communities.

Promoting dispersed refugee resettlement and allowing freedom of placement choice are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, in the Canadian Province of Québec, resettled refugees are encouraged, but not compelled, to settle in regional communities outside of the city of

Montreal. They retain their right to integration assistance regardless of their ultimate choice of placement community.

Dispersed refugee placement can help to:

- prevent overcrowding in urban areas;
- reduce the costs of resettlement, with housing in particular being more affordable outside of major urban centres;
- promote refugee economic self-sufficiency, by matching refugees with communities with labour demand;
- promote a 'whole-of-country' approach to refugee resettlement by engaging a range of communities;
- provide placement communities which are



Enhancing placement in emerging countries and new communities

WHERE new sites are being developed in areas or countries without established ethno-cultural communities, support can be facilitated by offering groups of resettled refugees placement together at the same site (particularly if friendship bonds have formed among them prior to arrival).

more compatible with the needs of some resettled refugees;

- fulfil regional economic development and social goals in receiving countries.

It is important to consider the following when considering new site development in countries in which ethno-cultural communities are well established in specific areas:

- advance site assessment and development. The resources involved in this process will be a significant factor in considering the cost effectiveness of developing new communities;
- freedom of choice and movement;

- the critical role of family and ethno-community support in the resettlement process⁶. Through families and friends, resettled refugees receive not only day-to-day practical support in their own language, but valuable moral and emotional support from individuals with whom they share a common experience and culture. Strong ethno-cultural communities offer resettled refugees opportunities to participate in a range of cultural activities, from attending places of worship and participating in celebrations and festivities to shopping in traditional food outlets and accessing ethnic

newspapers and magazines;

- the role of family and ethno-cultural community support in contributing to refugee economic self-sufficiency. These communities can offer employment in industries compatible with the skills and experience of resettled refugees; link them with employment opportunities through informal social networks; and offer other resources required to achieve economic self-sufficiency goals (e.g. child care and transport);
- that family and ethnic community support cannot be readily substituted by other support networks.





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If the person understood the differences from the beginning that would make it less hard. If you're thinking always that your place is a problem and you are not succeeding because you are living there, you are going to blame that place or that part of the world whatever you cannot solve. You have to feel that you are stable and that this is your place.

Resettled refugee



Issues to consider in planning sound placement practices and processes

THE following are particularly important considerations in developing placement matching protocols and processes:

- providing adequate, accurate and realistic information to resettled refugees about potential placement communities and their advantages and disadvantages (see Chapter 2.8);
- finalising placement decisions prior to departure wherever possible. This helps to minimise anxiety and enables resettled refugees to prepare themselves for resettlement in a particular community;
- providing appropriate training to officers responsible for discussing placement options and finalising placement choices (e.g. interviewing techniques, assessment);
- developing clear protocols to guide the process of placement and ensuring that they are applied consistently and at all stages of the resettlement pathway;
- ensuring that adequate time is allocated for the interview at which placement choice is made. While this involves some initial investment of time in an already burdened system, it can help to prevent poor decisions which prove costly in the long term;
- ensuring that placement decisions are honoured through clear documentation and communication at all stages of the selection and placement pathway.



SELECTING AND DEVELOPING PLACEMENT COMMUNITIES AND SUPPORTING SOUND PLACEMENT CHOICES

OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- be clearly planned, with clear guidelines for assessment and ongoing monitoring of resettlement communities, taking into account relevant criteria;
- incorporate ways to engage refugees in placement decision-making;
- be flexible to changing domestic and external factors affecting refugee resettlement;
- where practical, have a range of placement options flexible to the needs of different groups of refugees;
- undertake advance assessment and preparation of communities in which resettled refugees are offered placement.

SPECIFIC PLACEMENT PROTOCOLS WOULD ENSURE THAT:

- resettled refugees are 'matched' with appropriate resettlement communities;
- resettled refugees are actively involved in placement decision-making;
- resettled refugees, like other members of the receiving society, are free to move from their initial placement community while retaining an appropriate level of resettlement support;
- resettled refugees have information about placement communities so that they can play an informed role in placement decisions;
- placement processes are well coordinated so that the preferences of resettled refugees are observed wherever possible.