





CHAPTER 2.3

Promoting Integration through Early Settlement and Social Support

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 2.3

Promoting Integration through Early Settlement and Social Support

SOCIAL
SUPPORT

The focus of this Chapter is on ways in which receiving countries can promote resettled refugees' access to:

- individualised assessment of the newcomer's needs and assistance with the basic tasks in the period following their initial reception;
- the emotional and practical support of family and friends;
- supportive social connections in both refugee communities and the wider receiving community.



CHECKLIST

Planning settlement support and building social connection

When establishing a new resettlement program, give priority to:

- ✓ establishing processes and services for individualised assessment of the needs of resettled refugees and the coordination of their integration process in the first weeks and months after arrival. In those emerging countries in which there is an established and suitable NGO or ethnic support service, it is contracted to play this role (see p. 52);
- ✓ developing a Family Reunion program;
- ✓ identifying opportunities for resettled refugees to participate in local cultural, community and recreational events;
- ✓ placement policies to enhance social support.

In the longer term aim for:

- ✓ incorporating information about family reunion provisions and settlement support programs in orientation information provided to resettled refugees;
- ✓ private sponsorship or like arrangements, along with appropriate training, support and monitoring;
- ✓ support for the development of volunteer social support programs in the refugee, immigrant and the wider communities;
- ✓ professional development and support for settlement support workers and volunteers;
- ✓ strategies to build the capacity of general services to support resettled refugees;
- ✓ activities to maintain, build and support the capacity of refugee and immigrant communities to support resettled refugees.

Settlement and social support as resources for rebuilding

Most countries of refugee resettlement have arrangements in place to ensure that resettled refugees:

- are offered individualised assessment and support to access basic integration resources and systems;
- are able to reunite with family members from whom they have been separated in the course of their refugee experiences;
- have access to some form of personalised emotional and social support and assistance to build supportive relationships and connections in the receiving society.

In the early resettlement period, resettled refugees will need to access a range of resources such as housing, employment, income support payments and health care, as well as to learn about the culture, conventions and routines of the receiving society. They are required to accomplish these tasks in an unfamiliar environment, often with limited fluency in the language of the receiving country.

Providing support at this time can help to reduce anxiety and assist resettled refugees to gain a sense of control and independence. Importantly, support providers can help to ensure that resettled refugees have equitable access to the resources they will require for their resettlement.

The support provided by family is perhaps one of the most vital resources in the resettlement process. These relationships offer practical and emotional support and serve as a buffer against the stresses often involved in adjusting to a new country (see box p. 85). Anxiety and guilt about the fate of family members left behind, meanwhile, can be significant barriers to successful integration¹.

Supportive relationships with members of established refugee and wider communities can help resettled refugees to build their connections with the receiving society. Through these connections they can access other important integration resources such as employment and a wider social network, as well as opportunities to participate in cultural and civic life.

Social connections between resettled refugees and members of established ethno-cultural communities are particularly important in this regard. By enabling refugees to reconnect with the cultural and religious institutions of their culture-of-origin, these relationships can assist them to maintain their cultural integrity while building a new identity in the receiving society.

Early positive relationships in the receiving society have other psychological benefits, such as restoring refugees' sense of belonging and helping to rebuild their faith, hope and trust in others. Often, the lessons learned in these relationships can be transferred to the many other contacts resettled refugees will have in the course of their resettlement.

The benefits of social support are well established. Studies in a number of countries indicate that individuals with supportive relationships in their family and community have better physical and mental health than those with limited or poor quality support². Social support is especially important for resettled refugees suffering psychological difficulties and for those facing particular integration challenges, such as women at risk, refugee elders and refugee children and young people.

As indicated in Chapter 1.3, many resettled refugees will have experienced disruption to supportive relationships and to connections with their communities in the course of their pre-migration experiences.



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Attending to the social support needs of resettled refugees also has benefits for receiving societies. Resettled refugees whose needs have been understood, who believe that they belong, and who feel that they have been supported in their resettlement will have a greater sense of motivation to give back to their new communities. They will also be better prepared to contribute their skills and attributes to a society of which they feel a part.

Personal contact between resettled refugees and members of the wider community, meanwhile, helps to foster mutual understanding and empathy and to promote greater community understanding of and support for refugee resettlement. By serving as a vehicle through which resettled refugees can access wider social networks and other integration resources, supportive relationships also help to prevent the marginalisation of refugee communities and its attendant social and economic consequences.

Experience shows that settlement and social support can prevent problems occurring later in the resettlement period when they may be more complex and costly to address.

Factors affecting access to integration and social support and the development of support services and networks

A number of factors may influence the support available to resettled refugees, including:

- their fluency in the language of the receiving country;
- their psychological condition. For example lack of trust in others may serve as a barrier to accessing formal social support services as well as to developing supportive relationships with people in the refugee and wider communities. Guilt may affect the extent to which resettled refugees feel worthy of support;
- their family status, with many resettled refugees having lost or become separated from family members. The refugee and resettlement experiences can also compromise the quality of emotional and practical support provided within refugee families;
- whether they have family members in the receiving society or established links with support networks;
- prior social conditions. Resettled refugees from rural or pastoral communities in developing countries may require more intensive support to deal with the process of cultural adaptation, particularly if settling in highly urbanised and industrialised communities.

- Factors in the receiving society are also influential, including:
- the extent to which support services, in particular, those familiar with working with refugees and immigrants, are developed;
 - the existence of established refugee and other ethno-cultural communities and their capacity to provide support;
 - the broader social climate – in particular, the extent to which newcomers are welcomed; the level of understanding of the refugee experience; and the extent of support for refugee resettlement (note that strategies for promoting a hospitable social environment are discussed in Chapter 2.11);
 - whether the country has a tradition of voluntary participation in the support of people with special needs.

Issues to consider in planning social support programs

Are special services required to provide settlement support to resettled refugees?

The long term objective of integration programs is to ensure that resettled refugees have access to the same level and quality of services as nationals, and that refugees come to feel part of their new society. However, in most countries it is recognised that in the immediate post arrival period, refugees have particular and intensive support needs which are unlikely to be met by existing services. For this reason, in most countries, resettled refugees are offered individualised needs assessment and settlement support through a specialised program (see below). While arrangements differ, this support is generally time limited

In a number of countries specialist services have been established in recognition of the fact that some new arrivals will require longer term integration support. In most cases, these services, like those providing early settlement support, aim to support clients to access services in the wider community, rather than to create a special program stream to meet the needs of refugees and immigrants. As well as providing support to individuals, these services often have a strategic role in building the capacity of the refugee and wider communities to support new arrivals (e.g. through professional development and advocacy). This strategic approach is vital. Without it there is the very real risk that refugees will be perceived as having unique needs which can only ever be met by long term specialised services. This can contribute to isolating refugees from the wider community.



At first we were very isolated. We didn't know that there were other Kurdish families here. My wife cried a lot.
Resettled refugee





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What is the role of government in providing support to resettled refugees?

The role of government in funding, planning and monitoring refugee resettlement has been discussed elsewhere in this Handbook (see Chapter 1.3) and applies equally to social support, in particular, assessment and settlement support programs (see below).

There is a general consensus, however, that settlement and social support are areas in which it is particularly important to engage other partners, among them non-governmental agencies, ethnic support services and volunteers in both the refugee and wider communities, as governments tend to be centralised and to have few links with informal social networks. The experience of some countries in which settlement and social support have been the primary responsibility of government has been that social integration of resettled refugees has been slow to occur. In contrast, non-governmental agencies and community networks tend to be locally based and to bring with them a wider support network and a more intimate knowledge of local resources and systems.

Resettled refugees require personalised, flexible and very practical support which may be difficult to deliver from a government setting, particularly if it is highly regulated and professionalised.

Workers with bilingual and bi-cultural skills play a critical role in providing social support (see below), especially where access to interpreting services is limited. Non-government and ethnic support agencies may have greater flexibility to attract personnel who hold these skills but who do not necessarily have the professional qualifications required in a governmental human service setting or who do not wish to be employed in the government sector.



Initiatives to build social support

Individualised assessment and early settlement support

Individualised assessment and early settlement support are critical components of a refugee resettlement program for a number of reasons:

- Resettled refugees have particularly intensive support needs in the early resettlement period (see above).
- Existing services may have neither the expertise nor the resources to address the needs of resettled refugees in the early resettlement period (e.g. interpreting resources, cross-cultural expertise).
- In countries with a relatively large refugee intake and complex social service systems, there may be logistical difficulties in ensuring that resettled refugees are identified by service providers and that support is offered in a coordinated fashion.
- Routine assessment provides an opportunity to identify the supports and resources required for integration. It is particularly important for resettled refugees with special needs which, if not addressed, may become enduring barriers to resettlement.
- In countries with developing economies, social support services may not be well developed.
- Resettled refugees with psychological responses to trauma and torture may experience difficulties in accessing other forms of support (see Chapter 3.1) and may require a particularly sensitive approach.

While arrangements differ markedly between countries, assessment and early settlement support are usually the responsibility of a readily identifiable and single entity and are funded, though not necessarily provided, by government. The exception are refugees who are privately sponsored (see below), with their early settlement support being provided by the sponsoring group



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In the Nordic countries, where integration support is provided at the municipal level individualised introduction plans are developed and implemented by a municipal officer in partnership with the resettled refugee (see box, p. 83).

In the USA, resettled refugees are assigned to one of ten NGOs one month prior to arrival. The NGOs (funded by the government) are responsible for developing and coordinating an integration plan (dealing with such issues as housing and social support) and an economic self-sufficiency plan (identifying goals for economic self-sufficiency and the supports required to reach this).

On arrival in Australia all resettled refugees are referred to an NGO funded by the Australian government. This organisation is responsible for conducting an assessment and supporting refugees to access basic integration resources.

To ensure that assessment and early settlement support reflect the needs of resettled refugees these processes are conducted in partnership with resettled refugees themselves.

It is important that early settlement support programs are provided in ways that strengthen relationships within refugee families and between resettled refugees and informal social support networks in the refugee and wider communities. These are enduring and accessible sources of support and will be critical to resettled refugee's long term integration prospects. Important factors to consider in this regard are role and status adjustments often occurring in the resettlement period. These may have a particular impact on relationships between men and women, and between parents and children and young people (see p. 24 and Chapters 3.2 and 3.3).

The early resettlement period is also a time when families may have contact with a number of service providers and systems. Care will need to be taken to ensure that the efforts of those involved are carefully coordinated.

Family reunion provisions

When refugees leave their country-of-origin, family members may be left behind or dispersed during flight. Such separation leads to obvious hardship and may also have a negative impact on the integration process.

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Personalised introduction plans in Sweden

IN SWEDEN resettled refugees are offered placement in a municipality where they work with a municipal officer to develop and implement an individual introduction plan. The overall goal of the introduction plan is to support resettled refugees to become self-sufficient so that they no longer require government income and other specialist support. The plan is developed for implementation over a period of up to two-and-a-half years.	require different levels of support in their resettlement and have diverse motivations and goals. Plans take into account such factors as gender, age, pre-migration experience and prior participation in employment and education. Individual introduction plans are developed for all resettled refugees including children, refugee elders, refugees with disabling conditions and those without prior work or educational experience. In the case of resettled refugees for whom economic self-sufficiency goals are inappropriate (e.g. children and elders) planning is geared toward enabling them to participate in society based on their requirements and experience.	are being developed for each family member, the needs of the family as a whole are also considered. The municipal officer assumes responsibility for providing basic orientation to the municipality and its facilities and for coordinating the range of programs and services required to implement the plan. These include employment placement services and language training programs. An overall agreement has been developed between the Swedish Integration Board, the National Labour Market Board, the National Agency for Education and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities to strengthen coordination and cooperation between these agencies in the implementation of the introduction plans.
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Family reunification is a fundamental principle of refugee protection, and derives directly from the universally recognised right of the family to state protection. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that the family “is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by society and the State”. The same principle is embodied in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (Article 23), and in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Articles 9 and 10). Although the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* does not include provisions on family reunification, the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, which adopted the Convention, recommended that governments take the necessary measures for the protection of



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the refugee's family, especially with a view to ensuring that the unity of the family is maintained.

When refugees are resettled, they often do not know the whereabouts of all of their family members, or even whether some family members are still alive. For this reason, states need to make it possible for resettled refugees to be joined by their family members later in their country of resettlement. UNHCR urges states to take relations of dependency into account when interpreting family membership, and to adopt policies and procedures which will enable refugee families to reunite quickly. More detail on the principles and procedures pertaining to family reunification can be found in UNHCR's *Resettlement Handbook*, Section 4.6 (see web address, p. ix).

Family reunification is important not only for humanitarian reasons. It has numerous other benefits for both resettled refugees and receiving societies (see box, p. 85). Prolonged family separation, on the other hand, can have far-reaching negative social and economic consequences for resettled refugees, and can impede their integration.

Family reunion programs also help the UNHCR to fulfil its protection mandate, particularly where resettlement of the principal applicant leaves dependent family members at risk of destitution or threats to their personal safety and well-being in a country of first asylum.

Family reunion may be an especially important consideration where the resettled refugee or the relative awaiting resettlement is a minor, a woman alone, an elderly person or a people with a severe medical or disabling condition. These groups are more likely to be dependent on others for their welfare and may be particularly vulnerable.

While many resettlement countries have family reunion provisions as part of their general immigration programs, people who apply to have family members join them are often required to assume a high level of financial and practical responsibility for the resettlement of their relatives. This may be difficult for resettled refugees, particularly early in their resettlement. Further, as discussed below (see box, p. 86), a more liberal and flexible approach to family reunion is indicated for refugees than may be adopted for non-refugee applicants. For these reasons, specific provisions for family reunification of refugees and other humanitarian entrants will usually be necessary.

The benefits of family unity for resettled refugees, receiving societies and the system of international protection

- Intact families (particularly those with more than one breadwinner), generally have better prospects for achieving economic self-sufficiency. Families can pool and share their resources and support employment activity, for instance, by providing child care for employed family members. Family-based businesses are often the foundation for economic self-sufficiency.
- Family support has a positive influence on physical and mental health and can serve as a buffer against the stresses associated with resettlement (see above). Furthermore, family support can be a significant factor in promoting the recovery of resettled refugees from psychological trauma³.
- Families provide important practical and emotional support in the process of resettlement. As well as having obvious benefits for resettled refugees, this also helps to reduce the costs that would otherwise be incurred by governments in providing support.

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Supporting refugee family unity in Canada

WHEREVER possible, Canada supports concurrent processing abroad of the whole refugee family. This may include the processing of de facto dependants who are economically and emotionally dependent upon the principal applicant. However, Canada also recognises that family members may become separated due to circumstances beyond their control. Accordingly, when a refugee is accepted for resettlement and travels to Canada, separated family members can be included	on the same application. If the whole refugee family are not able to be resettled to Canada concurrently, resettled refugees may apply to be reunited with family members subsequently. The refugee must have identified all the separated family members prior to departure to Canada, and the separated family members are required to submit an application at a Canadian visa office within one year of the principal applicant's arrival in Canada. These family members will then also be	resettled to Canada as refugees under Canada's 'one year window of opportunity' policy and may benefit from the Canadian refugee resettlement programs. De facto family members cannot be processed under the one year window of opportunity, but may be considered for resettlement based on the merits of their own cases. Those not able to apply within one year, may still apply to be reunited under Canada's regular Family Class (immigration) program.
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Family reunion programs for resettled refugees: Factors to consider

- While the UNHCR gives priority to the unity of the nuclear family, more liberal and flexible definitions may need to apply in determining which individuals are considered part of the refugee's family. In many countries from which refugees come, a broader cultural definition of what constitutes immediate family prevails than in countries where the nuclear family is the dominant family form. Further, in precarious situations of conflict or other threat, "families may be reconstructed out of the remnants of various households who depend on each other for mutual support and survival"⁴. In some cultures, couples are united by custom rather than by formal marriage. De facto relationships may also be the cultural norm or have become more common as the result of war and conflict. Accordingly, the UNHCR encourages states to consider relationships of dependency when determining family reunion criteria. This means that "economic and emotional relationships between refugee family members should be given equal weight and importance ... as relationships based on blood, lineage or legally sanctioned unions"⁵.
- Information on family reunion provisions will need to be included in orientation materials given to resettled refugees, at the earliest possible stage. Assistance may also need to be provided with application procedures.
- Procedures will need to be in place for the prompt, efficient and transparent processing of family reunion applications. In this respect there will be a need to strike a balance between protecting the program against fraudulent claims, while at the same time ensuring that resettled refugees benefit from reunion as early as possible in their resettlement, thereby minimising the emotional harm associated with ongoing separation.
- In the early stages of resettlement, refugees will have a limited capacity to provide financial support to family members joining them. In some countries, family members being reunited with resettled refugees are therefore eligible for the same support and assistance as the resettled refugee.
- Consideration will need to be given to whether individuals offered admission for the purpose of reuniting with refugee family members are counted against the annual intake set for the refugee or humanitarian program. UNHCR recommends that they be additional to the annual resettlement intake, to the extent possible.
- While family reunification affords clear benefits, the experience of existing resettlement countries is that families reuniting after many years of separation may require some support in the adjustment process.

Sponsorship or proposer programs

A number of countries have programs whereby refugees needing resettlement are sponsored or proposed by an individual or group in the receiving community who agrees to assume responsibility for some, or all, aspects of their

Think about family tracing services

RESETTLED refugees may have become separated from family members during conflict or flight. Not knowing where relatives are is a source of constant anxiety and grief. Helping refugees to trace family members is important. Currently the International Committee of the Red Cross and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies present in 176 countries worldwide provide a range of services to assist in tracing individuals and

reuniting family groups. The ICRC and its Red Cross and Red Crescent affiliates use a variety of means for family tracing. The process and services may include:

- tracing services – efforts to locate missing relatives when contact has been lost;
- message services – facilitating communication of personal or family news to relatives in a conflict zone;
- services to unaccompanied children

including registration, identification and tracing;

- internet linkage and lists; radio broadcasts and use of mobile or satellite phones;
- advice and certification of captivity and/or death of a family member.

While tracing and reunification services may vary from one country to another, the national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in each country is almost always the first point of contact.



resettlement. Refugees may be identified by the sponsor or proposer (through family or other overseas contacts) or referred by the government.

Sponsorship and proposer programs are generally seen as complementing a broader refugee resettlement program, either by allowing a larger refugee intake than would otherwise be the case or enabling the responsibility for resettling individual refugees to be shared between government and the community.

In some cases (such as Canada's Private Sponsorship Program), sponsors agree to assume responsibility for all aspects of the refugee's resettlement, from income support through to orientation and emotional support. In others, (such as the Australian proposer program), responsibility for resettlement is shared between government and private sponsors or proposers.

Private sponsorship or proposer arrangements are a valuable way of engaging members of the wider community (such as faith-based communities and human rights groups), refugee communities and family members of refugees needing resettlement. They provide resettled refugees with immediate access to a support network and associated resources in the receiving community. Private sponsors or proposers are generally well placed to offer highly personalised and flexible assistance.



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The volunteer support group were there for us on the good days and the bad.

Resettled refugee



Through its Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program (JAS), the Canadian government has also used private sponsorship to complement the government resources available to refugees with more intensive support needs. In this program the Canadian government assumes primary responsibility for funding resettlement, with private sponsors offering logistical and personal support.

Private sponsorship and proposer arrangements, however, do require a level of investment by government. Supporting refugee resettlement is a complex task requiring an understanding of cultural and religious issues, the nature and consequences of the refugee and resettlement experience and a working knowledge of integration resources in the wider community. There is significant potential for arrangements to break down. In both Australia and Canada where these programs are well established, arrangements are in place so that sponsors or proposers:

- are carefully assessed to ensure that they have the capacity to provide an appropriate level and quality of support;
- are offered initial and ongoing training and information both about their role and integration resources in the community;
- are offered support, particularly to deal with difficult or more complex issues;
- participate in monitoring so that problems are identified and addressed at an early stage.

Volunteer programs

Volunteers are well placed to offer personalised, flexible and informal support and can serve as important role models for resettled refugees, particularly if they are themselves from a refugee or immigrant background. They also bring a broader social network and associated resources and help to foster mutual understanding between resettled refugees and the wider community⁶.

A number of countries have sought to tap this potential through befriending programs (sometimes known as mentoring programs) or through more formal initiatives where volunteers are actively engaged in some or all aspects of the orientation and support of resettled refugees (e.g. providing transport, accompanying new arrivals to medical appointments). Volunteer programs may be particularly valuable for supporting refugees with more intensive needs (e.g. refugee elders, sole parents with large families).

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Engaging the community in refugee resettlement in Canada

CANADA currently offers resettlement to around 10,000 refugees annually. This includes some 7,500 government sponsored refugees whose support is provided primarily by the government in partnership with government funded organisations and volunteers. The remainder are privately sponsored. The Private Sponsorship Program allows private organisations, mainly refugee and faith-based communities, to sponsor refugees for resettlement. In some cases a group sponsors a specific refugee known to it through overseas contacts or through friends or relatives in Canada. In others a refugee in need of resettlement may be suggested to a sponsoring group by the government. As well as providing an important vehicle for engaging volunteers in supporting resettled refugees and meeting the costs of early settlement support, sponsorship also offers newcomers an immediate link to networks	and resources in the receiving society. The benefit of private sponsorship is that it enables a larger number of refugees to be resettled. Sponsored refugees also tend to attain self-sufficiency faster than those assisted by government ⁷ . Private sponsors assume responsibility for certain aspects of the refugee's resettlement, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial support for food, clothing and other material needs; • housing and furnishings; • orientation to life in Canada; • assistance in accessing services and resources (e.g. medical services); • assistance in enrolling children in school; • assistance in accessing English or French language classes; • assistance in finding employment; • logistical support and friendship; • assistance in becoming independent. However, privately sponsored refugees remain	eligible for government funded services, including medical and newcomer services such as language training, interpretation and employment services. Private sponsors agree to provide support usually for a period of 12 months or until such time as the resettled refugee is self-sufficient, whichever is less. Private sponsorship is monitored and supported by government. There are three types of sponsorship groups that may privately sponsor refugees: groups of five people, community sponsors (corporations, organisations, or associations), and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) and their constituent groups. The majority of private sponsorship is conducted by SAH which are mainly faith-based or ethnic cultural community groups which have signed an agreement with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration allowing them to sponsor refugees.
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As is the case with sponsorship and proposer programs, however, volunteer programs are not 'cost neutral', requiring considerable investment in training, ongoing support and monitoring, including:

- screening and training to ensure that volunteers have an opportunity to explore their motivations; that they fully



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Engaging the community in refugee resettlement in New Zealand and Denmark

THE REFUGEE resettlement program in New Zealand has long relied on the goodwill of volunteers and a welcoming community, with faith-based communities assuming primary responsibility for coordinating and supporting resettlement in earlier days. Over the past 20 years, the sector providing services for refugees has widened to become an inclusive partnership between government, NGOs and former refugee communities. The volunteer contribution has remained central but the volunteer profile has broadened to include individuals in the wider society, including those from ethno-cultural communities.	of volunteers in refugee resettlement has a more recent history. In that country, there has been a strong tradition of voluntarism and community involvement in a range of issues, from the support of people with special needs, through to environmental and international development issues. In recent years, the Danish Refugee Council has sought to tap this resource to support refugee resettlement. In partnership with local communities it has established some 80 voluntary groups across Denmark. This development was in part motivated by a concern that, despite a well planned integration program, resettled refugees were continuing to live in isolation from the wider Danish community. Meanwhile, as is the case in many other countries, racism	and xenophobia were significant problems, having consequences for both resettled refugees and potentially undermining long term support for integration. In both countries, volunteers work alongside and complement the role played by settlement support professionals and, in the case of New Zealand, cross-cultural workers. In Denmark, municipal social workers assist resettled refugees to secure essential services such as housing and employment, while volunteers offer informal emotional and practical support. This may include coaching about certain aspects of Danish society (such as how to use public transport) and home visits, attending appointments with resettled refugees and introducing them to local recreational and leisure
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- understand their obligations; and that they are aware of the boundaries of their role. Many volunteer programs also require volunteers to undergo routine police clearances to optimise the safety of clients;
- ongoing training and support;
 - quality assurance and accountability measures;
 - debriefing (see p. 244);
 - public liability insurance.

Countries with established resettlement programs have also been mindful of the need to avoid exploitation of volunteers, particularly those from refugee communities (see below). In most countries volunteers fulfil supplementary rather than core integration functions.

<p>activities. In New Zealand, volunteers assist resettled refugees to furnish their new homes and have an ongoing role of advocacy, friendship and empowerment, supporting families to access resources and to function in the broader community.</p> <p>In both countries the key to the success of the programs has been the role of settlement support agencies in the recruitment, training and ongoing support of volunteers. For example, in New Zealand, the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) offers a training program for volunteers, including information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the refugee experience; • understanding health and education issues as they affect refugees; • respecting and valuing cultural diversity; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquiring knowledge about existing support services for refugees and understanding the resources available to support volunteers in their placements; • recognising issues that require referral to specialists and or professional staff. <p>The training also includes personal reflection on the motivations that have brought volunteers to this task, and the importance of setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries.</p> <p>The RMS Volunteer Program has been accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, and those who successfully complete it are awarded a nationally recognised certificate. After training, the volunteers are matched with an appropriate refugee family. They operate in teams of two</p>	<p>to four people – based on a variety of factors, including geographical location, personal preference, group dynamics and the size and special needs of their assigned family. Placement is made within a specific Job Description and a Volunteer Employment Agreement which recognises the value of the work of volunteers, even though they are not paid. Volunteers commit to this role for a six-month period.</p> <p>While these volunteer programs have obvious benefits for resettled refugees, the inter-cultural linkages and friendships that result from their work help to produce important social capital and contribute to the development of social harmony and cohesion in the increasingly multi-cultural societies of New Zealand and Denmark.</p>
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Capacity building in refugee and ethno-cultural communities

Members of established refugee and ethno-cultural communities have contributed to the social support of resettled refugees through their participation in sponsorship and proposer arrangements, as workers or volunteers in ethnic support services and non-government agencies and as volunteers in befriending or mentor programs. They bring with them:

- language skills – a particularly important resource in countries where formal interpreting and translating services are not well developed;
- cultural skills – as well as being important in supporting individual new arrivals, members of ethno-cultural



Respecting and building on diversity

SOME receiving countries have offered resettlement to refugees from a number of countries within the same continent or region (e.g. Africa, the Middle East). Refugees sharing a common region of origin have many similar experiences and

issues. However, as is the case in other world regions, there may also be significant differences between them. While in some areas resettled refugees will see benefits in a pan-community approach, in others separate responses will be more

appropriate. Some, though certainly not all, refugee groups may also be characterised by diversity in religious, political, ethnic and clan affiliations. These will be important factors to consider in integration planning.

communities can serve as ‘cultural consultants’ or ‘cultural interpreters’. ‘Cultural interpreters’ are people from an ethno-cultural community who use their knowledge of their community to assist services and groups in the receiving society to better understand and respond to the needs of resettled refugees;

- an understanding of the demands and requirements of resettlement borne of their own experience. Those who are well advanced in their own resettlement may also serve as role models to new refugee arrivals;
- links with established ethno-cultural communities, providing a bridge between new arrivals and ethnic social and business networks and religious and cultural institutions. In this respect, members of established communities may also play a mediating role around sensitive issues where there is the potential for cultural conflict or misunderstanding between social support providers and resettled refugees (e.g. female genital mutilation or child welfare practices).

Importantly, engaging refugee communities in the provision of social support is one way of ensuring refugee involvement in the planning and development of services.

Resettlement countries have sought to build the capacity of refugee communities to provide support by:

- offering training and professional development programs to members of refugee communities working in social support roles in either a paid or voluntary capacity. These can range from highly formalised, accredited programs through to relatively informal peer training;
- work force development initiatives aimed at enabling ethnic support services and non-government agencies to employ bilingual and bi-cultural staff;

—providing funding and technical support to facilitate the development of ethnic support services and associations.

Capacity building initiatives are particularly important for small and emergent refugee communities and some resettlement countries have made a conscious choice to give priority to them, recognising that they face particular challenges in their integration process.

Placement and destination selection policies

Social support can also be optimised through placement and site selection practices. While these are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.1, the following criteria are important:

- the presence of established refugee communities and family members;
- the availability of formal social support and ethnic services;
- the extent to which the site has a tradition of welcoming and supporting newcomers;
- whether the community has a tradition of voluntary involvement in supporting groups with special needs.

Building the capacity of existing support services

While most countries offer resettled refugees an intensive period of social support early in their resettlement, in the longer term resettled refugees, like nationals, will depend on services in the wider community to support their integration.

Moreover, at all stages of their resettlement, resettled refugees will have contact with professionals, such as teachers, child carers and health care providers, who have the capacity to offer support in the context of their professional roles.

Support providers in general services also have an important role in identifying and arranging referral for resettled refugees requiring more intensive or specialist assistance (e.g. trauma and torture counselling).

There are a number of ways in which countries have sought to enhance capacity to extend support to resettled refugees, including:

- providing professional development programs to people working in key social support positions (e.g. teachers, health care professionals);
- work force development initiatives aimed at enhancing the

INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Technical support to build capacity

THE BRITISH Refugee Council has a community outreach team which supports the development of smaller, community based refugee organisations. Advisers, many of whom are themselves former refugees, provide technical support to emerging groups (such as financial management and funding) as well as assisting with organisational development issues such as communication skills and conflict resolution.



SOCIAL
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Settlement support for small and emergent refugee communities

THE contemporary intakes of many resettlement countries are diverse and include groups not previously represented in resettlement or general migration programs. These groups may be small in number. It may take some time for settlement services to develop an understanding of the needs of new communities and to tailor approaches and programs. Ethno-cultural services may not be well developed and the pool of appropriately trained bilingual and bi-cultural staff is likely to be small. At the local level, the resource demands of developing linguistically and culturally

relevant services and programs for small communities can be prohibitive.

Established countries of resettlement have adopted a number of approaches to addressing these issues including:

- fostering national planning processes and program development activities, to avoid duplication of effort at the local level (e.g. training programs);
- placing concerted efforts into involving refugee communities in planning and implementation processes;
- ensuring that resources developed in the context

of small locally based projects are disseminated to other relevant service provider and community networks;

- establishing 'bank' style systems for providing language assistance and cultural consultancy to both integration and general services (see examples pp. 95 & 270);
- the establishment of service provider networks to facilitate information exchange and resource sharing;
- work force development initiatives to accelerate recruitment and training of bilingual and bi-cultural workers.

- number of personnel with bilingual and bi-cultural skills;
- the development of resource materials (such as videos and manuals) to enhance professionals' understanding of the refugee and resettlement experiences;
- special funding programs to support services and systems to build their capacity to meet the needs of refugee communities.

Mutual support programs

Supportive relationships between resettled refugees at comparable stages of their integration can be fostered either through formalised support groups or by linking people with similar needs and experiences with one another. This approach also provides refugees with the chance to share experiences with someone in a similar situation. This can have other therapeutic benefits (see Chapter 3.1).

INTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Building refugee community capacity in Canada

SMALL CITIES may receive refugees from many different countries. However, when the number of arrivals from each country is small, it may be difficult to warrant full time settlement staff with language and cultural skills to meet the needs of arrivals from all countries represented.	refugee communities, provides ongoing settlement training to them and then contracts them on an 'on-call' basis. The Community Resource Persons (CRPs) usually have identified leadership abilities or skills and training in a caring profession. They become the focal resource contact for newcomers to their community, delivering individual settlement services as well as group orientation training. The CRPs are also a resource for the receiving community. They deliver training to mainstream service organisations accessed by resettled refugees (e.g. employment and housing services, health services and schools) to build awareness	and sensitivity among service providers. The CRPs are a vital resource for newcomers. However, the experience of the program has been that there is a need to put safeguards in place to ensure that they are not subject to unduly high expectations from their communities and are supported to maintain boundaries between their work with the program and their family and personal life. In the Australian state of Victoria a similar model has been used in larger urban centres to meet the needs of people from small and emergent refugee communities accessing child care and pre-school centres (see p. 270).
The Thunder Bay Community Resource Program in the Canadian province of Ontario has developed a program model to meet the resource challenges in smaller cities and towns by offering culturally and linguistically appropriate settlement services to refugees and immigrants. The D.O.O.R.S. to New Refugee Life Centre recruits newcomers from		

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Communicating with providers of social support

CONSIDER incorporating the following when communicating with support providers:

- that while resettled refugees have faced considerable stress, they are survivors with generally high levels of motivation to settle well in their new country;
- factors associated with the refugee and resettlement experience that might affect relationships with

- both volunteer and professional support providers (e.g. undermining of trust);
- relevant cultural factors and how these can be accommodated when providing support;
- information about the obligations of those providing support, particularly under private sponsorship or proposer arrangements;
- the advantages of

providing support to

- resettled refugees;
- information about resettled refugees entitlements (employment assistance, income support, housing subsidies);
- information about special programs and supports available to resettled refugees (e.g. trauma and torture services; translating services, family tracing services).



Issues to consider in engaging refugee community support

MEMBERS of refugee communities have a critical role to play in providing social support to resettled refugees (see p. 91). Experience suggests that there are a number of factors to take into account when encouraging this activity:

- Training and ongoing support needs to be provided. As people who share a common language, culture and life experience with their clients, former refugees often face high expectations from their communities. They may be expected to be 'on-call' 24 hours a day and feel unable to refuse requests for help. This is particularly the case for those working in a voluntary capacity who lack the protection of agency policy and

routines and the peer support and supervision typically available to paid workers. Effective training and support can help to enhance workers' understanding of their roles and their ability to convey this to clients; to place boundaries around their relationships with clients; and to affirm their right to privacy and their personal and family life.

- Former refugees bring language and cultural knowledge. However, they may need some support to acquire the skills needed to fulfil other aspects of a social support role (e.g. dealing with complex cross-cultural and interpersonal issues or providing information about the systems and resources available to resettled refugees in the

receiving society).

- Access to debriefing (see p. 244) will be particularly important for these workers since exposure to clients' traumatic histories may serve as painful reminders of their own experiences or those of close relatives and friends.
- Efforts should be made to maximise mutual benefit, particularly when former refugees are engaged in voluntary roles. For example, in a number of countries, training programs for volunteers are accredited or voluntary work is given formal recognition, thereby enhancing future employment prospects for participants.
- Dialogue needs to be maintained between refugee communities and

Building on existing assets

IN COUNTRIES where ethnic communities and or social support infrastructure are not well developed, other groups with experience of living across two cultures, of being part of a minority or who themselves have had refugee experiences may be willing to extend support. For example, in Atlanta, Georgia an African-American church community provided support to resettling refugees, believing that they offered a personal understanding of what it was like to live bi-culturally and to feel like 'outsiders'. Indigenous communities and those with expatriate experiences have played a similar role.

integration personnel in the receiving community. This will help to promote integration as a two-way street; ensure that support is provided in a manner which is broadly consistent with the objectives and values of the receiving society and facilitate resettled refugees' integration into the wider community.

- Expectations of the contribution which former refugees can make need to be considered in light of the fact that they may themselves be in the process of resettlement. This will influence the extent to which they have the personal resources and energy required to extend support to others.
- Having survived difficult experiences and been offered the chance of a

new life, many resettled refugees have a high level of motivation to support others. It is important to avoid exploiting the goodwill, particularly of those working in a voluntary capacity. Equally, the wishes of former refugees who are unable, or who do not wish, to be involved in supporting newcomers should be respected. Like their counterparts in the wider community, former refugees will have different levels of motivation and interest in this regard.

Refugee community support may not always be the best form of support. This is because:

- There is significant religious, ethnic, political and clan-based diversity within refugee communities

which may influence their suitability to provide support to all newcomers.

- Those in established refugee and ethno-cultural communities may not have a well developed understanding of the contemporary refugee experience or resettlement process. This may be particularly the case in countries where refugees and migrants settling through earlier waves of migration did so at a time when support services were not well developed, but economic conditions were generally better. This may lead to a perception that contemporary refugees are receiving too much support and contribute to antipathy between established communities and new arrivals.

SOCIAL
SUPPORT



FOSTERING SOCIAL SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

OVERALL A SOUND INTEGRATION PROGRAM WOULD:

- offer individualised assessment and early settlement support conducted by an identifiable entity funded by government;
- conduct early assessment with the aim of facilitating resettled refugees' access to support services and systems provided to nationals;
- engage government, non-government agencies and the refugee and wider communities in social support;
- make provision for resettled refugees to apply to have family members join them;
- implement social support programs at the local level;
- develop strategies for enhancing the capacity of refugee communities to offer support to newcomers;
- develop strategies for ensuring that social support services provided to nationals are accessible to resettled refugees;
- have systems for ensuring ongoing monitoring of social support programs provided to resettled refugees.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS ESTABLISHED TO ENHANCE SOCIAL SUPPORT TO RESETTLED REFUGEES WOULD:

- provide language assistance;
- engage resettled refugees in developing and implementing settlement and social support or integration plans;
- engage refugee communities in planning and implementation;
- promote social support as having mutual benefits for both resettled refugees, the receiving society and individuals and volunteers providing support;
- provide or facilitate access to support by removing practical barriers (child care, transport);
- promote access to support systems and services available to nationals in the wider community;
- provide culturally sensitive support;
- take account of the needs of the whole family as well as individual family members;
- build connections and supportive relationships between resettled refugees and refugee and wider local communities.