

## **Part Two – Implementing the Framework in Key Program Areas**

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## 2.1 Matching People with Communities: Placement in the Receiving Society

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<b>Rebuilding Goals for Integration</b>
<b>Integration Goal One</b> To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.
<b>Integration Goal Two</b> To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.
<b>Integration Goal Three</b> To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.
<b>Integration Goal Four</b> To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support
<b>Integration Goal Five</b> To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.
<b>Integration Goal Six</b> To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity
<b>Integration Goal Seven</b> To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.
<b>Integration Goal Eight</b> To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.
<b>Integration Goal Nine</b> To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender.

## 2.2 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 very best prospects for successful resettlement. It is concerned both with the selection of specific placements sites or communities as well as with processes for ensuring that individual resettled refugees are matched with communities that best suit their needs.*

*It is important to note that there are wide variations internationally in placement practices. In some countries, the specific local communities to which resettled refugees are assigned is consciously planned by governments prior to their arrival 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 Quebec), attempts may be made by governments or non-government settlement organisations to plan placement and develop specific placement communities. In others, the specific communities refugees ultimately settle in is determined by them usually with the assistance of social support providers or family and friends. While these programs may have broader capacity building initiatives, they are not consciously applied, at least within the context of the integration program, to prepare specific geographically defined communities for refugee resettlement.*

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

### **A checklist for building resettlement communities and facilitating sound placement choices.**

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Selecting and developing destinations for refugee resettlement (see also chapter 2.2)</li><li>▪ Developing brief information on resettlement destinations for refugees offered resettlement.</li></ul>
In the longer term aim to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Develop information for refugees offered resettlement on possible resettlement destinations.</li><li>▪ Develop a placement protocol which is disseminated to relevant officers involved in the refugee selection and resettlement process</li><li>▪ Provide training to personnel involved in refugee selection and placement, including cultural diversity training.</li><li>▪ Utilise existing data and communication systems to ensure that placement choices are effectively communicated to officers at all stages of the selection and resettlement pathway</li></ul>

### **The placement community as a resource for rebuilding**

*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.*

Norman Levine, International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees

The challenge in placement is to ensure that there is an appropriate match between the needs of resettled refugees and available resources in the receiving community. In the longer term, resettled refugees, like nationals and longer-term residents, may make a positive choice to move in search of employment opportunities or housing and social conditions which better meet their needs as established members of the receiving society.

However, careful planning of initial placement processes and the involvement of resettled refugees in placement decisions can help to ensure that they have the very best prospects of commencing their integration process in their first destination. The first placement site is particularly critical since this is a time when resettled refugees are more likely to need more intensive assistance from both formal and informal sources of support.

Where refugees are placed in communities where they are unable to secure basic resources required for integration such as employment or social support, they may be compelled to move soon after arrival to a community, state or province in which they are able to secure these.

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 refugees (reference). Nevertheless, if occurring in the early settlement period it can also be a disruptive process, 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 income.

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 number of secondary migrants. For instance, in 1989 the Canadian Province of Ontario, planned its integration program on the basis of an intake of some 2,432 resettled refugees and this was reflected in its financial agreements with the Canadian government. However, in practice this province attracted some 1271 additional resettled refugees in that year who were originally destined to other Canadian provinces.

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 both the characteristics, attributes and wishes of individual 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 studies indicating that this is among the most important placement priorities for resettled refugees (reference)
- 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 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 origin (reference).

- 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 (reference).
- Employment skills and educational background
- Whether they have special needs (eg; 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 speaking and Francophone 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.

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, courtesy 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

**Municipal settlement worker, Sweden**

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

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

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Consider</b>
Availability of secure and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rental costs relative to the earning potential of resettled refugees</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compatibility between housing supply and common family formations (eg singles, large families)</li> </ul>
Access to employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Initial employment opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for advancement in the labour force</li> </ul>
Presence of appropriate cultural and religious supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Established ethno-cultural communities and ethno-cultural institutions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ethno-cultural support organisations</li> </ul>
Commitment of community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Existence of local leaders willing to serve as advocates for refugee resettlement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Willingness of the local community to provide support through mentor, volunteer and other support programs</li> </ul>
Sufficient capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Existence of infrastructure to resettle sufficient numbers of refugees to make the site viable in both human and economic terms</li> </ul>
Availability of key resettlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Existence of requisite infrastructure including adequately funded, readily accessible and linguistically and culturally appropriate services such as language instruction, medical care, employment</li> </ul>

	<p>counselling and training and services for survivors of trauma and torture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Local workforce capacity (ie: do local personnel have the requisite expertise or will intensive work force development and/or transfer of personnel to the placement community be required?)</li> </ul>
Partnership potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Existence of NGOs, local service agencies and civic or religious organisations to serve as partners in supporting newly arrived refugees.</li> </ul>
Attitude and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Extent to which the community exhibits an openness to strangers and a respect for religious and cultural diversity</li> </ul>

## **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 (eg 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 by a commitment to humanitarian values, a commitment which does not end at the point of selection. Given the powerful influence of initial placement decisions on the course of the integration process, most countries give weight to the needs of resettled refugees.

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

The reality in most receiving societies 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 choice given that they have very little advance knowledge of the receiving society.

Nevertheless, involving resettled refugees in placement decision making 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 (see above).

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 placement decision making 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 those countries, such as Denmark, where quotas are set to define the number of resettled refugees settling in a municipality in any given year. Similarly, freedom of movement is a more complex process in those countries in which

integration is funded through specific funding transfers from national governments to provinces, municipalities or communities, for whom 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 conscious 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).

As indicated below, a number of established resettlement countries have also endeavoured to identify and develop specific placement communities to increase the range of placement possibilities, and in many cases to meet other social and economic objectives. In the Canadian Province of Quebec 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 (for example employment and ethnic community support) but lacks others (eg social support services). In these cases, investing in social support may be in the interests of long term efficiency and of expanding available placement options for resettled refugees. In some countries, specific interventions have also been targeted to resettled refugees to enhance 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), due regard needs to be given to careful selection of communities, to advance preparation and to ensuring that resettled refugees play an active role in placement decisions.

“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”. **Settlement worker in Canada**

### **Should Geographic Dispersal of Resettled Refugees be Promoted?**

In many established 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 over-crowding, 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 for some categories of refugees and by implication positively influences subsequent placement in favour of 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 Quebec, 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 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 with existing communities in which ethno-cultural communities are well established.

- The importance of 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
- The importance of freedom of choice and movement (see above)
- Evidence suggesting that family and ethno-community support play a critical role in the resettlement process (reference). 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 (eg: child care and transport).
- The fact that family and ethnic community support cannot be readily substituted by other support networks.
- The fact that increased contact with nationals may not necessarily equate with improved integration outcomes. For example, studies of resettled refugees in the Netherlands indicate that while those settling in placement communities without established ethno-



cultural communities did indeed have more contact with nationals, this did not result in increased access to other integration resources such as employment and social support (reference).

When supporting the development of ethno-cultural communities in new placement sites or building the capacity of established ethno-cultural communities, it is important that steps are taken to support cultural diversity. This enables refugees and immigrants to maintain their community and cultural identity and benefit from the social and economic support offered by their communities without suffering discrimination in their access to the resources of the mainstream society. Some strategies for achieving this are discussed in chapters 2.3 and 2.10.

#### **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 placing groups of resettled refugees together at the same site (particularly if friendship bonds have formed between them prior to arrival).

#### **Placement Matching processes and protocols**

Most countries endeavour to match resettled refugees with communities which 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 (eg 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.

“...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 on 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”.

#### **Refugee resettling in Canada**

Destination matching is particularly important for resettled refugees who have additional needs which need to be considered in placement and destination matching decisions (eg resettled refugees requiring intensive medical and rehabilitative support).

***Issues to consider in planning sound placement practices and processes***

The experience of established countries of resettlement is that 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 the anxiety that would otherwise be associated with the unknown and enables resettled refugees to obtain information to prepare themselves for resettlement in a particular community.
- ❑ Finalising placement decisions after selection (rather than as part of the selection interview). Resettled refugees may be reluctant to assert placement preferences or share information on contacts in the country of resettlement for fear that this may prejudice their application for resettlement
- ❑ Providing appropriate training to officers responsible for discussing placement options and finalising placement choices (eg 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 between personnel at all stages of the selection and placement pathway

**Selecting and developing placement communities and supporting sound placement choices:  
Good Practice Features**

**Overall a sound integration program would:**

- Be clearly planned, with clear protocols for assessment and ongoing monitoring of resettlement communities, taking into account relevant criteria (see p-)
- Incorporate specific protocols to engage individuals and families in placement decision making
- Be flexible to changing domestic and global 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 any other member 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

## 2.2 The first weeks and months: Reception arrangements

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### Rebuilding Goals for Integration

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender.

**Notes to Reviewers Regarding Promising Practices**

**Examples currently included**

- New Zealand and Spain (reception centre models)
- Australia (reception direct to community approach)

**Examples forwarded during review process (to be incorporated after ATC)**

- Danish reception program (involvement of former refugees)

**Examples still required**

- None

**Please note that in most chapters practices from other countries are also referred to in the text.**

## 2.2 The first weeks and months: Reception arrangements

*This chapter defines the basic elements of a program for welcoming refugees to the receiving country and for supporting them prior to their placement in the receiving community. More detailed information on these elements (eg orientation, social support) are described in other relevant chapters of this handbook.*

*While the emphasis in this Chapter is on reception arrangements for resettled refugees funded by government, many of the principles and processes described in it apply equally to resettled refugees received by private sponsors or proposers (see chapter 2.3).*

### A checklist for welcoming and receiving resettled refugees

Think about:
<input type="checkbox"/> Airport reception and transit arrangements
<input type="checkbox"/> Reception accommodation
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic practical orientation
<input type="checkbox"/> Linkages between reception care and settlement support
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrangements for identifying resettled refugees with intensive needs, in particular acute health problems

### Welcoming and Reception as resources for rebuilding

While the first weeks and months in a receiving society have the potential to be among the most overwhelming for resettled refugees, they can also be a time when the foundations are laid for positive and successful resettlement.

On arrival, resettled refugees may be suffering the effects of their recent experiences of trauma, displacement and loss. At the same time, knowing little about the receiving society, they may be anxious about their future and how they will cope. The reception period is also one of intense adjustment to a very unfamiliar environment, a time when resettled refugees will be coming to terms with a range of changes from different climatic conditions and daily routines to new foods, shopping conventions and currency.

Given the circumstances surrounding their migration, many resettled refugees will not have family and friends in the receiving society, nor access to the basic resources required for day-to-day survival.

This is also a time when resettled refugees must undertake a range of practical tasks to ensure their immediate survival in the receiving society, such as opening a bank account, registering for income support and health care and enrolling children in school.

It is on the basis of their first days and weeks that resettled refugees form their first impressions of the receiving society. To the extent that these impressions are long lasting, they will have a bearing on the course of the resettlement process.

The reception phase provides resettlement countries with their first opportunity to welcome resettled refugees and to assist them in re-establishing a sense of safety and security.

While volunteers and refugee communities have an important role in refugee reception, it is typically funded by government as an integral part of an integration program (though often delivered by non-governmental agencies).

“When I arrived here, I first had a feeling of security, relief, peace in general, that permitted me to be calm in the first place, to be calm psychologically. I am grateful for this, I must be grateful” **Refugee resettling in Spain**

### Issues to consider in planning welcoming and reception

### **Defining the elements of the reception process**

While there are some differences in the reception process internationally, common elements include:

- A process for meeting resettled refugees at the airport. As well as serving obvious practical purposes, this is an opportunity to extend welcoming to refugees. In some countries, among them Sweden and Iceland, volunteers and members of refugee communities are engaged in this process. These countries have found that this not only enables resettled refugees to communicate directly in their own language, but enhances their sense of safety and security. However caution should be taken not to overwhelm resettled refugees, many of whom may be suffering the effects of a long air flight.
- Transit arrangements between the airport and either reception accommodation or the first placement community

“How can you describe how it feels to leave hell and enter paradise? Living in a small room and then being able to walk out into the sunshine and meet people”  
**Refugee resettling in Sweden**

In some countries (such as Norway and Sweden), the reception phase is very short with resettled refugees being placed in permanent housing in the community within days of their arrival. They are linked with municipal support providers who are responsible for conducting assessment in cooperation with the resettled refugee and for providing both immediate and long term resettlement support.

More commonly, however, the following is also included as part of the reception phase:

- Temporary accommodation until such time as permanent accommodation can be arranged
- Basic practical orientation including orientation to financial systems, registering with relevant government programs (eg income support, health care, public housing) and school enrolment.
- Initial assessment and the establishment of linkages with a resettlement agency to provide ongoing settlement support.

In others the reception process may also be utilised to:

- Offer post arrival health care (see chapter 2.10)
- Provide language instruction
- Provide more intensive orientation

### **How should reception be organised?**

As indicated above, most countries have a period during which resettled refugees are offered temporary accommodation and early practical support, prior to settling in the community. This period varies internationally from several weeks to up to 12 months. There are a number of advantages in this approach:

**The advantages of supported reception accommodation arrangements**

A supported reception accommodation arrangement can

- Provide a safe environment in which resettled refugees can deal with the immediate tasks of resettlement. If permanent housing takes some time to secure, this can create considerable instability at this time.
- Allow other services such as health care and basic orientation to be delivered more efficiently before resettled refugees settle in the wider community
- Allow resettled refugees to play a more active role in choosing permanent housing, as they are able to draw on their experience of the resettlement country.
- Allow permanent housing to be selected taking work-travel arrangements into account (in circumstances where employment is obtained in the reception period).

However, supported reception housing arrangements have the potential to foster dependence with resettled refugees being reluctant to leave them to secure permanent housing. This suggests the importance of active settlement support at this time, particularly in relation to securing long term housing.

In those countries where reception housing is provided in institutional settings such as reception centres and hostels, they are readily identifiable to the wider community. This may in turn lead to the stigmatisation of resettled refugees. Where resettled refugees spend an extended period in a reception centre with others from their community, their day-to-day opportunities to connect with and practice the language of the receiving country are limited. For these reasons, a number of countries have established individual reception houses in the general community.

**Some International Examples...**

**Easing the way: Reception arrangements in Spain, New Zealand and Australia**

In Spain, resettled refugees are met at the airport by representatives of the UNHCR, government and the main resettlement non-government organisation. The Spanish Red Cross is responsible for transporting them to a reception centre where they are offered accommodation, medical care and basic orientation.

In New Zealand, resettled refugees spend their first six weeks in a refugee reception centre where they are offered a comprehensive medical and dental check-up and psychological support, where required, by personnel from the Ministry of Health. The New Zealand Government funds the Auckland University to coordinate an adult English language training and orientation program and a special program for children and young people to prepare them for entry into mainstream schooling. The Refugees as Survivors Centre provides a trauma counselling service as well as therapeutic activities for children and adults. The Refugee and Migrant service offers immediate social support and links resettled refugees with specially trained volunteers for longer term resettlement support.

In Australia, resettled refugees are met at the airport by an Initial Information and Orientation Assistance Contractor (funded by the Australian Government). If the person does not have temporary accommodation of their own, they are referred to an Accommodation Support Contractor whose role it is to provide initial accommodation and to assist them to secure longer term housing. The Initial Information and Orientation Assistance Contractor is responsible for conducting a comprehensive assessment of their resettlement needs and for coordinating resettlement support in the first six months following their arrival. All resettled refugees have access to specialist support to access health services and, where required trauma and torture counselling, for the first twelve months in Australia.

**Welcoming and Reception Arrangements:  
Good Practice Features**

**A sound integration program would:**

- Have arrangements in place to ensure that resettled refugees are met and welcomed on arrival at the airport
- Provide resettled refugees temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation has been secured.
- Provide resettled refugees assistance in securing longer term accommodation
  - Have arrangements in place for basic practical orientation as part of the reception process
  - Have sound linkages between reception support providers and services providing longer term resettlement support
  - Have measures in place for the identification and treatment of health problems which may serve as barriers to integration
  - Have measures in place to identify and offer additional support to resettled refugees with complex needs.

**Reception services would:**

- Be provided in the language of the resettled refugee or arrangements made for interpreters

“I had mixed feelings, but I was happy. When we arrived at the airport I knew my friends were waiting outside”

**Refugee resettling in Canada**



## 2.3 Promoting integration through early settlement and social support

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### Rebuilding Goals for Integration

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender.

**Notes to Reviewers Regarding Promising Practices**

**Examples currently included:**

- Sponsorship program (Canada)
- Volunteer Program (Denmark)
- Capacity building in refugee communities (Britain)

**Examples forwarded during review process (to be incorporated after ATC)**

- Individual Integration Plans (Sweden)
- The Host Program (Canada) (or could be included in “Welcoming and Hospitable communities chapter)
- Family Reunion (Benin) second degree relatives
- Family Reunion (Canada) – de facto relatives and concurrent processing

**Examples still required**

- None

**Please note that in most chapters practices from other countries are also referred to in the text.**

## 2.3 Promoting integration through early settlement and social support

*The focus of this chapter is on ways in which receiving countries can promote the development of supportive relationships within refugee families and between resettled refugees, professional support providers and members of the refugee and wider communities.*

*These relationships are important to provide emotional and practical support to individual refugees; to enhance their access to integration resources; to promote their understanding of the culture and conventions of the receiving society; and to foster their connections with broader social networks in both the refugee and wider communities.*

### A check list for planning settlement support and building social connection

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishing processes and services for individualised assessment 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--)</li><li>• Developing a Family Reunion program</li><li>• Identifying opportunities for resettled refugees to participate in local cultural, community and recreational events.</li><li>• Placement policies to enhance social support</li></ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Incorporating information about family reunion provisions and settlement support programs in orientation information provided to resettled refugees</li><li>• Private sponsorship or like arrangements, along with appropriate training, support and monitoring</li><li>• Support for the development of volunteer social support programs in the refugee, immigrant and the wider communities.</li><li>• Professional development and support for settlement support workers and volunteers</li><li>• Strategies to build the capacity of general services to support resettled refugees</li><li>• Activities to maintain, build and support the capacity of refugee and immigrant communities to support resettled refugees</li></ul>

### Settlement support and connection as resources for rebuilding

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 emotional support offered in the context of a supportive relationship can also serve as a buffer against the stresses often associated with the refugee and resettlement experiences.

Early positive relationships in the receiving society have other psychological benefits, such as restoring refugees' sense of belonging and helping to rebuild their sense of 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.

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.

The emotional support provided by an intimate family relationship is perhaps one of the most effective buffers against the stress associated with the refugee and resettlement experiences. In general, the more intact a family is, the better are its prospects of dealing with the practical demands of resettlement and of achieving economic self sufficiency, (particularly if there is more than one adult breadwinner).

Anxiety and guilt about the fate of family members left behind can also be significant barriers to successful integration (reference).

The benefits of social support are well established. Studies conducted in a number of countries indicate that individuals who have access to supportive relationships in their family and community have better physical and mental health than those who have limited or poor quality support (reference). Social support is especially important for resettled refugees suffering psychological difficulties associated with pre-migration experiences and for those facing particular integration issues, 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.

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 also 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.

Providing settlement and social support does involve some 'up-front' costs. However, the experience of established countries of resettlement has been that this support is not only an important factor in successful resettlement but also helps to 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
- Whether they are experiencing psychological responses to their pre-migration experiences. 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. As indicated in chapter 3.3, 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

Factors in the receiving society are also influential including:

- 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).
- The extent to which support services, in particular those familiar with working with refugees and immigrants, are developed.
- Whether the country has a tradition of voluntary participation in the support of people with special needs
- The existence of established refugee and other ethno-cultural communities and their capacity to provide support

“At first we were very isolated. We didn’t know that there were other Kurdish families here. My wife cried a lot”

**Refugee resettling in Sweden**

## **Issues to consider in planning social support programs**

### **What social support is required?**

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

- Receive a basic welcome at the time of their arrival in the receiving society (strategies for providing this are described in greater detail in chapter 2.2).
- Are offered individualised assessment and support to access basic integration resources and systems
- Have access to some form of personalised emotional and social support and assistance to build supportive relationships in the receiving society

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

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

In a number of countries specialist services have been established – often serving both refugee and immigrant communities – in recognition of the fact that some new arrivals will require longer term integration support. In most cases, the primary objective of these services remains to facilitate access to support 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 (eg 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 specialist services. This can contribute to isolating refugees from support systems and resources in the wider community.

### **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 (see box). 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 as:

- 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 (eg 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, existing social support services may not be well developed.
- Resettled refugees experiencing 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.

For example in both Finland and Sweden, where integration occurs at the municipal level, an individualised integration plan is developed by a municipal officer in partnership with the resettled refugee taking into account issues such as age, family composition and prior education and employment experience. The municipality then works with the refugee to implement the plan.

In the US, resettled refugees are assigned to one of 10 non-government agencies one month prior to arrival. The NGOs (funded by the US 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 a non-government organisation funded by the Australian government who is responsible for conducting an assessment and supporting their access to 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 supportive 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 secure 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 Part One of this Handbook).

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**

Most resettlement countries have formal provision for resettled refugees to apply to have family members join them in the receiving country. These programs are mutually beneficial for both the resettled refugee and family member needing resettlement, with their primary purposes being to enhance emotional support and relieve the anxiety that would otherwise be involved in ongoing separation.

In most countries, very few obligations are placed on applicants in recognition of the fact that they have themselves only recently arrived and have a limited capacity to provide support. For the same reason, those entering through family reunion provisions are usually entitled to the same range of integration supports available to other resettled refugees.

Countries with a long history of migration may have Family Reunion provisions as part of their general migration programs. However in most cases, those nominating family members are required to assume a high level of financial and practical responsibility for the resettlement of those sponsored. This may make such provisions inaccessible to resettled refugees, particularly early in their resettlement.

While family reunification affords clear benefits, the experience of existing resettlement countries is that families reuniting after many years of separation, and consequently at very different stages of the integration process, may require some support in the adjustment process.

**Factors to consider when planning family reunion programs**

Existing resettlement countries have very different approaches to family reunion programs, particularly in relation to:

- Which relatives can be nominated (ie some confine family reunion to immediate family members while other also allow members of the extended family)
- Whether individuals offered resettlement for the purposes of family reunion are part of, or in addition to the annual intake set for the refugee or humanitarian program.
- Whether family reunion provisions are confined to resettled refugees wishing to sponsor family members who also qualify for entry on humanitarian grounds.

It is important that resettled refugees are given clear information about the resettlement government's policy on family reunion.

**Think about family tracing services**

Some resettled refugees may have become separated from family members in the course of their refugee experiences which is inevitably a source of considerable anxiety and grief. The capacity to locate family members is an important part of a family reunion program. 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 affiliates use a variety of means to undertake this process and services may include:

- Tracing services – location of missing relatives when contact is lost
- Message services – facilitating communication of personal or family news to a conflict zone
- Services to unaccompanied children including registration, identification and tracing
- Internet linkage and lists; radio broadcasts and mobile or satellite phones
- Certification and advice of captivity and/or death of a family member

While tracing and reunification services may vary across each of the resettlement countries, the national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in each country is almost always the first point of contact.



### **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 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 formally engaging members of the wider community (in particular 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.

Through its Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program (JAS), the Canadian government has also used private sponsorship to complement the resources available to government for resettling refugees with more complex or 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.

### **Engaging the community in refugee resettlement in Canada**

Canada currently offers resettlement to around 10,000 refugees annually with responsibility for their support being primarily that of government in partnership with government funded organisations and volunteers. However, Canada has been able to expand the number of places offered to resettled refugees through a program enabling private organisations, mainly refugee and faith based communities, to sponsor resettled refugees. In some cases a group sponsors a specific refugee known through overseas contacts or through friends or relatives in Canada. In others a refugee in need of resettlement may be referred 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 to assist them in their resettlement. Its benefits are demonstrated by the fact that sponsored refugees obtain employment somewhat faster than those assisted by government.

Private sponsors agree to assume responsibility for all aspects of the refugees resettlement, including:

- Financial support for food and clothing and other material needs
- Housing and furnishings
- Orientation to life in Canada
- Assistance in accessing services and resources (eg 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

Private sponsors agree to provide this support usually for a period of 12 months or until such time as the resettled refugee is independent. Private sponsorship is carefully monitored and supported by government. Responsibility for managing private sponsorships lies with the individual sponsorship groups. There are three types of sponsorship groups that may privately sponsor refugees: Groups of five persons, Community sponsors (corporations, organisations, or associations), and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH). The majority of private sponsorship is conducted by SAH which are generally community groups and humanitarian organisations that have signed a sponsorship agreement with the Minister for Citizenship and Immigration. As well as considering and approving applications for sponsorship, these organisations offer ongoing support to sponsorship groups.

Each SAH sets its own criteria for recognising groups who may sponsor refugees. Sponsoring groups are required to develop a plan detailing what they will do to orient the newcomers in the period of the sponsorship; who will assume responsibility for the various aspect of the plan; and how the costs associated with integration will be met.

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

### **Refugee resettling in Australia**

#### **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 community.

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 (eg providing transport, accompanying new arrivals to medical

appointments). Volunteer programs may be particularly valuable for supporting refugees with more intensive needs (for example refugee elders, sole parents with large families).

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 processes and training to ensure that volunteers have an opportunity to explore their motivations, that they fully understand their obligations and 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-)
- 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.

#### **An International Example...Engaging the Community in Refugee Resettlement in Denmark**

There has been increasing recognition in Denmark 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 resettled refugees and potentially undermining long term support for integration.

Denmark has 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. Volunteers supplement the role played by municipal social workers in providing social support. 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 providing coaching about certain aspects of Danish society (such as how to use public transport), and home visits, to attending appointments with resettled refugees and introducing them to local recreational and leisure activities.

The Danish experience suggests that there are a range of factors motivating volunteers, from a concern about racism and xenophobia in their communities and a desire to support resettlement, through to a commitment to broader human rights issues. Most volunteers also see their work as personally beneficial since they are able to learn about other societies and cultures and gain personal satisfaction from the relationships they develop with resettled refugees.

One of the keys to the success of the program has been the support offered both by the Danish Refugee Council and the municipalities in the development of the groups and in training and supporting their members. Volunteers work closely with municipal social workers ensuring that their role supplements, rather than replaces the role of funded professionals.

To date most volunteers have been Danish born. However, the Danish Refugee Council is currently piloting a program to be offered by former refugees. Refugee communities are not well developed in Denmark and there are significant political, religious and clan differences within them. Recognising this, this pilot plans to use the refugee experience as its point of departure, rather than matching volunteers and newcomers on the basis of their shared cultural origins.

### **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 a range of important skills and attributes including:

- 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 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 (eg 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 be 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 bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff
- Providing funding and technical support to facilitate the development of ethnic support services and associations

### **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 section 2.1, the following criteria are important:

- The existence 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 (eg trauma and torture counselling).

There are a number of ways in which existing countries have sought to enhance the capacity of systems of support in the receiving society to extend support to resettled refugees including:

- Providing professional development programs to professionals working in key social support positions (eg teachers, health care professionals).
- Work force development initiatives aimed at enhancing the 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.

**Communicating with providers of social support**

Consider incorporating the following when communicating with support providers:

- That while resettled refugees may experience their pre-migration and resettlement experiences as stressful, 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 (eg 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 the resettled refugee, support providers and the receiving society
- Information about resettled refugees entitlements in the receiving society (employment assistance, income support, housing subsidies)
- Information about special programs and supports available to resettled refugees (eg trauma and torture services; translating services, family tracing services).

**Building on existing assets**

In those countries where ethnic communities and or social support infrastructure are not well developed, other groups who have experience of living across two cultures, of being part of a minority or who have prior 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 refugee experiences have played a similar role in other countries.

**An International Example: Technical support to build capacity**

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

**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 above). The experience of existing countries of resettlement suggests that there are a number of factors that need to be taken into account when encouraging this support:

- Providing training and ongoing support to former refugees in social support roles is important. As people who share a common language, culture and life experience with their clients, they 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 worker's understanding of their roles and their ability to convey this to clients; outline agency policy and routines designed to place boundaries around their relationships with clients; and affirm their right to privacy and their personal and family life.
- Former refugees may bring language and cultural skills. However they may need some support to acquire the skills and knowledge required to fulfil other aspects of a social support role (eg dealing with complex cross cultural and interpersonal issues; providing information about the systems and resources available to resettled refugees in the receiving society)
- Access to debriefing (see p-) will be particularly important for these workers since exposure to client's traumatic histories may serve as painful reminders of their own pre-migration 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 integration personnel in the receiving community. This will help to ensure that integration support is provided in a manner which is broadly consistent with the objectives and values of the receiving society and that the resettled refugee's integration into the wider community is encouraged.
- Expectations of the contribution which can be made by former refugees need to be considered in light of the fact that they may themselves be in the process of their own resettlement. This will influence the extent to which they have the personal resources and energy required to extend support to others.
- Having themselves 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 this good will, 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. Their status as former refugees should not oblige them to life long involvement in supporting other resettled refugees.

There may be circumstances when refugee community support may not be the best form of support for resettled refugees. 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 for those 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.

### **Mutual Support Programs**

A number of support services in resettlement countries have sought to foster support between resettled refugees at comparable stages of their integration either through formalised support groups or linking people with similar needs and experiences with one another. As well as providing the opportunity for people to build supportive relationships, the chance to share experiences with someone in a similar situation can have other therapeutic benefits (see chapter 3.1).

#### **Fostering social support and connection: Good Practice Features**

##### **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 with practical barriers (child care, transport)
- Promote access to support systems and services available to nationals in the wider community
- Provide culturally sensitive support.

## 2.4 Meeting immediate material needs: Income support and establishment resources

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### Rebuilding Goals for Integration

**Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

**Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

**Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

**Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

**Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

**Integration Goal 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

**Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

**Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

**Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender.



**Notes to Reviewers Regarding Promising Practices**

**Examples currently included**

- Early economic self sufficiency model/income support as special payment (USA)
- Establishment loans (Sweden)
- Household establishment costs/material assistance (Australian, Spain, Iceland, Benin)

**Examples forwarded during review process (to be incorporated after ATC)**

- Income support paid to enable participation in language training, training etc. New program paid through special system to allow ‘tailoring’ to special needs of resettled refugees (Sweden)

**Examples still required**

- None

Please note that in most chapters practices from other countries are also referred to in the text.

## 2.5 Meeting immediate material needs: Income support and establishment resources

*This chapter focuses on programs for resettled refugees to meet basic living costs prior to becoming economically self sufficient (eg rent, utilities) as well as the costs of establishing themselves in a new country (eg household furniture and clothing).*

*It also addresses income support issues of concern to resettled refugees outside of the labour market (eg refugees of retirement age, those with severe disabilities).*

*Assistance to meet health care costs is discussed in chapter 2.11. Strategies for assisting resettled refugees with the cost of securing a housing tenancy are outlined in chapter 2.8.*

*The term ‘income support’ is used herein to describe those payments made to resettled refugees to meet basic living costs. These payments may be described in various countries of resettlement by different terms such as cash assistance, welfare payments, pensions or benefits.*

*The term ‘establishment costs’, meanwhile is used to describe a one-off payment made to resettled refugees to meet the costs of establishing life in a new country (eg household furniture, clothing)*

*In some countries some basic living needs may be met through other components of an integration program. For example housing and food may be provided directly as part of a reception program.*

### A check list for planning income support and establishment resource programs

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Funding for income support payments (through government or an external source)</li><li>▪ Determining the length and amount of support required</li><li>▪ Arrangements for the payment of income support</li><li>▪ Defining expectations of economic self sufficiency</li><li>▪ Establishing links between income support and job placement programs</li></ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Conducting professional development and awareness raising activities with personnel responsible for administering income support programs to enhance their understanding of the refugee and resettlement experiences.</li><li>▪ Strengthening links between income support and job placement programs</li><li>▪ Reviewing existing income support arrangements for those outside of the labour force to ensure that resettled refugees are eligible for programs provided to nationals (eg provisions for retirees, those with severe disabling conditions)</li></ul>

### Income and establishment support as resources for rebuilding

Income support payments for resettled refugees prior to their achieving economic self sufficiency are a vital part of an integration program. Searching for employment or other income generating activities inevitably takes some time. Moreover, in most countries of resettlement it is recognised that resettled refugees will require a period of respite from the demands of searching for and participating in employment to adjust to both their past experiences and new country; acquire basic language skills and participate in formal orientation. This time may be particularly important for resettled refugees suffering refugee related trauma.

Some refugees will arrive with cash reserves large enough to obviate the need for income support. However, owing to the circumstances surrounding their migration, most are likely to have few if any financial reserves and limited personal effects. In the early resettlement period they will face the expenses involved in establishing a life in a new country, including the costs of accommodation and food (if not covered under separate programs), clothing, household goods, furniture, transportation, educational expenses and other out-of-pocket costs.

### **Factors affecting income support**

The duration of income support required by resettled refugees will depend upon:

- The level of trauma experienced prior to migration and stress associated with resettlement
- Their employment skills and attributes
- Their individual choices about their process of resettlement (see chapter 1.4)

Also relevant are factors in receiving countries including:

- Whether the country has income support programs for nationals who are outside of the labour market and their nature and structure.
- The capacity of government to meet the cost of funding income support
- Expectations of early economic self sufficiency, for both resettled refugees and nationals
- Employment opportunities and the effectiveness of employment programs in assisting refugees to become employed
- How cultural orientation and language training are delivered (see chapters 2.6 and 2.7).

### **Issues to consider in planning income support and establishment resources**

#### **The level and duration of income support payments**

The challenge facing countries of resettlement is to set income support payments at a level which allows resettled refugees to live in dignity and to meet their immediate material needs while at the same time discouraging long term economic dependency.

In countries of resettlement with established income safety net programs, resettled refugees are generally entitled either to the same benefit as nationals or to a benefit set at a comparable rate. In other countries, the national minimum wage is used as a benchmark with additional payments made available for other family members. Essentially, it is important that these payments enable resettled refugees to meet basic housing, food, transportation and educational expenses for their children.

The period for which payments are made varies markedly among existing resettlement countries, and is dependent on the range of factors identified above and discussed elsewhere in this handbook. Ideally, however, they should be made available for a period which is long enough to allow resettled refugees to adjust to and orient themselves to their new country; attend to basic practical post arrival tasks, prepare for and search for employment or other income generating activities and, if necessary, go some way toward recovering from traumatic pre-migration experiences.

“He (a resettled refugee) understands that being in Canada requires hard work and flexibility. Although optimistic, he is critical of an immigration system which is insensitive to the difficulties families face when they must attend classes, take care of children and work to make ends meet, all at one time”.

**Integration researcher, Canada**

In the interests of ensuring that resettled refugees achieve economic self sufficiency as soon as is practical, in most countries, there are close linkages between income support and vocational counselling and job placement programs. (see chapter 2.9) Commonly, this involves making continued income support contingent upon active job seeking or co-operation

with a job placement program. In doing so, a co-ordination approach can be adopted to supporting resettled refugees to become economically self sufficient.

Payment levels and eligibility criteria should also bear some relationship to income support policies pertaining to nationals. Resettled refugees do face additional costs in the early resettlement period (see above) and are engaged in other personal and practical tasks which affect their capacity to search for and participate in paid employment. While these need to be reflected in income support programs, if there are significant disparities between the benefits paid to nationals and resettled refugees, this may become a source of antipathy toward refugees and ultimately compromise broader acceptance of resettlement.

A factor to consider when using national income support programs as a benchmark, however, is whether these are adequate to meet the needs of resettled refugees. In countries with very high expectations of economic self-sufficiency among nationals, income support payments may have been kept intentionally low. In those with developing economies, these programs may not exist or may not be well established.

“Actually working here takes all my thinking...my wife is good because she has a better opportunity than me, because I have to work, I have two children. Now she is studying computer science. Here you and your wife cannot study at the same time. You have to let her or him finish, get a job and after that you can study”  
**Refugee resettling in Canada**

#### **How should income support be administered?**

Although integration is normally funded by national governments, it is commonly implemented at a more localised level. Further, in many countries, responsibility for administering income support payments lies with other tiers of government (for example the states in the US). Reflecting this, in many countries funding for income support payments is made by national governments to other tiers of governments, or as is sometimes the case in the US, to NGOs, who subsequently pass the money through to the refugee. In those emerging countries that do not have well established income support programs, payments are typically administered by the coordinating NGO (see chapter 1.5) as UNHCR’s implementing partner.

In many countries with established income support programs, resettled refugees are given money through the same administrative processes as nationals who are outside of the labour market. As well as offering administrative efficiencies, this approach establishes at a very early stage that resettled refugees have the same privileges and responsibilities as nationals.

Nevertheless, special programs have been established in some countries to allow tailoring to the particular needs of resettled refugees (see box below). Special allowances may also be necessary where the basis or mode for payment differs from that available to nationals or where there are no established income support programs.

In countries where it may take some time for an application for income support to be processed, a special transitional benefit is given to resettled refugees while their application is pending.

While income support is commonly paid as one inclusive payment, in some countries some living costs are covered through payments made direct to vendors on the refugee’s behalf (eg for rent or utilities).

“Actually working here takes all my thinking...my wife is good because she has a better opportunity than me, because I have to work, I have two children. Now she is studying computer science. Here you and your wife cannot study at the same time. You have to let her or him finish, get a job and after that you can study”  
**Refugee Resettling in Canada**

## Initiatives for providing income support and establishment resources

### **An International Example...Tailoring Cash Assistance in the US**

Under US law, resettled refugees are eligible for an allowance for the first 8 months following their arrival to meet their basic needs prior to securing employment. Called *Refugee Cash Assistance*, this allowance is commonly administered by state government departments of human services.

Non-governmental organisations play a very prominent role in supporting resettled refugees in the US. Prior to arrival, refugees are assigned to one of 10 NGOs operating across the US, for assistance with individual settlement support, housing, community orientation, and sometimes job placement assistance and language training.

Several states in the US have formed partnerships with resettlement NGOs, whereby the administration of *Refugee Cash Assistance* is transferred to the NGO who in turn passes the money through to its refugee clients. Experience in the US suggests that this arrangement has a number of advantages. First, NGOs have greater flexibility than government to structure the model of disbursement. For example, in some instances, it may be appropriate to 'front-load' assistance and taper it toward the end of the qualifying period as resettled refugees approach self sufficiency. In contrast, where it is apparent that resettled refugees are likely to face barriers to employment, payments can be spread over a longer period of time while these barriers are addressed. Second, it enables income support payments to be closely linked with the provision of settlement support in other areas of the refugees' resettlement, most particularly employment placement. Third, it allows income support payments to be administered by resettlement staff with sensitivity to resettled refugees and expertise in supporting their resettlement. There is also a belief in the US that if resettled refugees do not have contact with the mainstream welfare system early in their resettlement, they are less likely to become reliant on it in the longer term.

As indicated in chapter 1.4, when responsibility for administering integral components of an integration program is delegated to a non-government agency, it is important that this is carefully monitored by government.

### **Income support payments for those with additional barriers to economic self sufficiency**

Resettlement countries will need to ensure that appropriate income support provisions are available to those who have additional reasons for being either temporarily or permanently outside of the labour market including:

- Refugees of retirement age
- Unaccompanied minors
- Sole parents with responsibility for young children
- Those with severe disabilities
- Those with acute physical or psychological health problems

In countries where income support is made available for those with disabilities and people of retirement age, there may be residency or prior employment requirements. These will need to be reviewed to ensure that resettled refugees are eligible for support on a similar basis to nationals

### **Awareness raising and professional development**

As indicated above, in most countries income support payments will be administered through large government welfare departments, many of which carry a diverse case load. Activities to sensitise personnel in these departments will be particularly important given that:

- Some resettled refugees may have a conditioned fear of authorities (see chapter 1.3)
- In many countries the administration of income support is closely allied to job placement. Officers need to be aware of some of the barriers resettled refugees face to active job search (eg: trauma and torture symptoms, language barriers, resettlement demands, lack of family support, and constraints on their access to transportation and child care).
- Some resettled refugees may be unable to work for an extended period and hence may need to be assessed for alternative forms of income support (such as disability or sickness allowances). Those responsible for assessment will require some understanding of the physical and psychological consequences of the refugee experience.

### **Establishment costs**

Most existing countries of resettlement provide some form of 'one-off' cash or material assistance to resettled refugees to meet the costs of establishing themselves in a new country, in particular household costs. This is made either as a direct cash payment or in the form of goods. Cash payments enable resettled refugees to exercise some choice over the goods purchased. On the other hand pre-purchasing goods enables resettled refugees to avoid the organisational effort which would otherwise be involved in shopping for major household items in an unfamiliar environment. In Sweden this assistance is made available in the form of a loan (see box)

#### **Some International Examples...Moving In**

- In **Australia**, a Household Formation Support worker assesses the refugee's needs for household items and delivers them to the accommodation before they move in.
- In **Benin**, resettled refugees receive assistance from a resettlement non-governmental organisation, to find an apartment and receive a grant to purchase essential household items.
- Before refugees arrive in **Iceland**, Red Cross volunteers collect furniture, kitchen utensils and clothes and prepare the apartments rented to resettled refugees by local authorities.
- In **Spain**, resettled refugees are accommodated in reception centres (established for both refugees and asylum seekers) where they can stay for up to six months, depending on their level of need. During this time they are provided with accommodation, meals, clothes, shoes, medicines and transportation and a small grant for out-of-pocket expenses. Upon leaving the reception centre, they receive a benefit for renting a flat and a food allowance.

#### **An International Example...Setting up a house in Sweden**

Refugees settling in Sweden are entitled to a special loan for home furnishing and equipment. The amount is set according to family composition, with larger loans being available to families with children. The loans are interest free for two years, after which time interest is charged at a fixed annual rate.

The loan scheme enables refugees to establish a household without entering costly private lending contracts. As a generous window period for repayment of the loan is allowed, it can be repaid at a time when refugees are more likely to be economically self sufficient.

As it is a repayable loan, resettled refugees can be offered larger amounts of money than would be the case if assistance was made available in the form of a grant.

**Programs providing income support and establishment resources:  
Good Practice Features**

**Overall a sound integration program would:**

- Provide income support for a period following arrival which is long enough for refugees to adjust to their refugee and resettlement experiences, acquire basic language skills and receive adequate orientation.
- Provide income support during this period at a rate that is sufficient to meet basic living costs (housing, food, transportation, educational expenses, etc.)
- Provide some form of “one off” cash or material assistance to meet household and personal establishment costs.
- Foster formal linkages between income support and job placement services
- Ensure that refugee elders have access to government provided retirement income
- Ensure that appropriate income support arrangements are made for resettled refugees who have physical or psychological difficulties that impede their participation in paid work, sole parents and unaccompanied minors.

**Income support programs would:**

- Be provided by personnel who have received appropriate training on the needs and circumstances of resettled refugees
- Have processes for assessing entitlement to income support payments which are sensitive to the past experiences and current stresses of resettled refugees
- Communicate with resettled refugees in their language.

“...right away you are thinking, you have to start looking for work to try to pay back your (travel) loan, So you have to think about the place to find work”. **Refugee resettling in Canada**

## 2.5 Easing early communication: Language assistance

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### **Rebuilding Goals for Integration**

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender.



**Notes to Reviewers Regarding Promising Practices**

**Examples currently included**

- Legislation to mandate the use of interpreters (Spain, USA and Sweden)

**Examples forwarded during review process (to be incorporated after ATC)**

- Interpreting services in Finland (variety of communication media, incorporates training, standards etc)

**Examples still required**

- None

Please note that in most chapters practices from other countries are also referred to in the text.

## 2.5 Easing early communication: Language Assistance

*This chapter focuses on strategies for ensuring that resettled refugees are provided language assistance both in the context of reception and early settlement support and in their interactions with programs and services in the receiving society.*

### A check list for planning language assistance

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identifying interpreters and translators speaking relevant languages</li><li>▪ Recruiting bilingual settlement support workers</li><li>▪ Providing basic training to professional and volunteer language assistance providers on refugees and resettlement issues; roles and confidentiality</li></ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Establishing centralised interpreting and translating services or 'banks'</li><li>▪ Establishing interpreting services in key government departments (education, income support)</li><li>▪ Formal training, accreditation and standards for professional interpreters</li><li>▪ Strategies to promote the use of interpreters among government and community based service and program providers.</li></ul>

### Language assistance as a resource for rebuilding

In the early resettlement period, many resettled refugees will have a limited grasp of the language of the receiving society (herein referred to as the target language). While they will begin to acquire this through their participation in language training programs (see chapter 2.6) and their day-to day interactions in the receiving society, it will be some time before they achieve survival language competence and longer still before they are technically proficient (see p-). Even if functional in the target language, resettled refugees may require assistance when communicating about matters requiring a high level of technical proficiency or in circumstances they experience as stressful (eg health care or legal matters).

Some groups, such as refugee elders, who may have language learning difficulties, will require ongoing access to interpreter support (see chapter 3.4).

Providing access to language assistance helps to:

- ❑ Promote clear communication. This is particularly important as language difficulties may be further complicated by refugee and resettlement related anxiety or different cultural communication patterns.
- ❑ Foster rapport, trust and a sense of safety in relationships between resettled refugees and others in the receiving society. This is particularly important for resettled refugees, with trust being a common casualty of traumatic pre-migration experiences (see chapter 1.3)
- ❑ Facilitate resettled refugee's access to the services and resources they will require for integration
- ❑ Ensure that resettled refugees have equitable access to the resources of the receiving society and that their rights are respected
- ❑ Foster resettled refugee's understanding of the receiving society

Care should be exercised when using family, friends and staff who are not in formal language assistance, professional or settlement support roles (eg cleaners) to interpret as:

- ❑ They may be placed in a position where they are exposed to information of a sensitive or traumatic nature
- ❑ Communication with the resettled refugee may be impaired if there are issues they feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about discussing in the presence of people known to them

- ❑ This may place undue stress on these relationships and, if involving children, may impose an unfair burden of responsibility
- ❑ They may lack the proficiency in both languages to accurately interpret information, particularly in matters requiring technical language proficiency (eg legal and health care matters)
- ❑ Confidentiality is particularly important when working with resettled refugees

In the course of their resettlement, refugees will also require access to translated materials including information about services and entitlements as well as forms and questionnaires. From time to time they may also need to have important documents translated into the language of the receiving country (eg medical records, professional qualifications).

### **Factors affecting language assistance**

A number of factors will influence the planning and provision of language assistance in receiving societies including:

- ❑ The extent to which there are established refugee and ethnic communities speaking languages represented in contemporary refugee intakes.
- ❑ Whether there is an established workforce to provide language assistance (eg bilingual professionals, bilingual support workers, interpreters and translators)
- ❑ The existing infrastructure for supporting work force development, support and quality assurance for language assistance providers. In particular, it is important that language assistance providers are offered training and support to deal with the effects of past traumatic experiences on the communication process (see above)
- ❑ Other languages spoken in the receiving society which may be shared by refugee communities (eg common European languages)
- ❑ Funding arrangements for language assistance

### **Issues to consider in meeting language assistance needs**

#### **Planning language assistance for reception and early settlement support**

Resettlement agencies responsible for reception, early settlement support of resettled refugees (see chapters 2.1 and 2.2) will need to make provision for language assistance, both to communicate with resettled refugees and to facilitate their access to services and programs in the wider community. In most countries formal provision is made for this in funding arrangements or service agreements. For example in Australia resettlement services have access to the centralised government interpreter service (see below). In Spain interpreters are provided by government either directly or by agreement with a local non-government organisation. In the US, meanwhile, funding agreements between government and the resettlement NGO require that assistance is provided in the refugee's own language for the first 90 days following arrival. This is achieved by employing bilingual settlement workers and, for smaller language groups, accessing centralised interpreter services (see below)

#### **Language assistance for long term integration**

As resettled refugee's link with resettlement support agencies is necessarily time limited, strategies will also need to be adopted to improve the provision of language assistance by mainstream service and program providers (eg government income support programs, health care services).

#### **Approaches to providing language assistance**

There are three primary ways in which existing resettlement countries currently endeavour to meet language assistance needs:

- ❑ By recruiting bilingual staff in resettlement support roles and in key professional positions in mainstream agencies located in areas with significant refugee populations (eg bilingual doctors, bilingual teachers).

- By building a workforce of professionally trained interpreters and translators.
- By using volunteers, primarily from ethno cultural communities

These are not mutually exclusive, with many countries using these different approaches in a complementary fashion. Some of the issues to consider in building language assistance capacity are discussed in the Table below.

**Table ####: Factors to consider in planning to meet language assistance needs**

<b>Mode of assistance</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>	<b>Limitations and cautions</b>
Professional interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical linguistic competence is assured</li> <li>- Trained in ethics, approaches, role etc</li> <li>- Bound by professional code of ethics (eg concerning confidentiality)</li> <li>- Role boundaries clear</li> <li>- Particularly important for ensuring access to services and programs in the wider society that do not have bilingual professional and client contact personnel</li> <li>- If provided as part of a 'bank' or contractual arrangement (see below) assistance can be provided to a diverse range of language groups and across geographic areas relatively efficiently and cost effectively.</li> <li>- Modern telecommunications systems can be used to facilitate geographic access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training and qualifying periods may create delays in making interpreters available for emerging refugee communities</li> <li>- If training and accreditation requirements are too stringent they may serve as a disincentive to trainees particularly those in emerging refugee communities and communities with limited formal education.</li> <li>- Relatively resource intensive</li> </ul>
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resource efficient</li> <li>- Advantages associated with engaging community in integration (see chapter 2.3)</li> <li>- Has possibilities for providing language assistance and social support in one relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not bound by a professional code of ethics, confidentiality may be compromised</li> <li>- Need to consider general issues involved in engaging former refugees in voluntary support roles (see 2.3)</li> <li>- Training and support critical</li> <li>- Untrained personnel may not necessarily be technically bilingual. Should be used with care in contexts requiring technical language proficiency</li> <li>- Possibility of blurring of interpreting and support roles</li> </ul>
Bilingual integration support providers and professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rapport building eased by eliminating three way communication</li> <li>- Resource efficiencies result from building integration support and language assistance into one role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As above</li> <li>- Difficult to meet the needs of all language groups by establishing staff positions, especially if refugee intake is diverse</li> <li>- Resource inefficiencies and professional boundary issues may result from using bilingual professionals to undertake interpreting tasks on behalf of resettled refugees (ie as opposed to practicing their own profession bilingually).</li> <li>- Settlement workers recruited for</li> </ul>

		<p>their language skills may require training in other aspects of their job role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some resettled refugees may not wish to consult with a professional from their community</li> </ul>
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**Promoting access to interpreters in emerging resettlement countries**

Resettlement programs in their founding years may experience some difficulties in providing language assistance, particularly if they have relatively small refugee intakes or a limited capacity to fund training and employment of interpreters. Existing emerging countries have sought to address this by:

- ❑ Recruiting bilingual volunteers.
- ❑ Employing bilingual settlement support workers
- ❑ Prioritising the use of interpreters and translators (eg for first or more complex appointments)
- ❑ Communicating in a third shared language. For example, many of the Iraqi, Iranian and Afghan refugees recently settled in Chile are fluent in Russian having studied in that country. The resettlement NGO in Chile was able to secure the support of a retired Russian language professor to assist with communication.
- ❑ Selecting refugees who speak a second language also spoken in the receiving country. For example in Chile where many nationals speak a second major European language (eg French or German) refugees who spoke one of these languages were selected.
- ❑ Placing particular emphasis on target language training for resettled refugees to facilitate early independence
- ❑ Securing assistance with translations through the government ministry responsible for foreign affairs
- ❑ Aiming for linguistic homogeneity in early caseloads and placing resettled refugees from the same language group in one resettlement community.
- ❑ Facilitating communication on very basic concepts through the use of language dictionaries (see Box)

**An International Example...Responding to urgent need in Spain**

In 1999 Spain accepted nearly 1,500 Kosovo Albanian refugees as part of the UNHCR’s humanitarian evacuation program. As this country did not have the capacity to provide language assistance to all evacuees, the local Kosova Albanian community developed a practical Kosovo-Spanish dictionary for use by both evacuees and Spanish settlement workers covering key words and concepts.

**Initiatives to support access to language assistance**

**Centralised Interpreter Services or ‘interpreter banks’**

Given that most countries have a highly diverse refugee intake, it is difficult, even for specialist resettlement services, to employ interpreters or bilingual staff to meet the needs of all language groups. This is particularly the case given that the need for language assistance at any point in time cannot always be readily predicted.

In countries with large and established refugee and immigrant programs this has been addressed by establishing centralised interpreting and translating services (either by government, voluntary organisations or the private sector) through which interpreter and translators are booked by agencies serving resettled refugees.

Generally these services offer interpreters who attend appointments ‘on-site’ (or face-to-face) as well as via three way telephone communication. Examples include the Canadian province

of Manitoba's Language Bank, a program staffed by trained volunteers and the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), established by the Australian government which provides free interpreting services to facilitate access to government funded services.

In the US, some smaller agencies meet language assistance needs through contracts with larger facilities (such as hospitals) to secure interpreters on a sessional basis.

While in most countries, centralised interpreter services can only be accessed by service providers on behalf of resettled refugees, in some they can be accessed free-of-charge by resettled refugees themselves.

In some countries dedicated interpreter services may also be established in larger government departments.

### **Promoting use of interpreting and translating services**

The experience of resettlement countries, is that even with well established and relatively accessible interpreter services, there is a need to ensure that professionals and personnel in the wider community utilise them. Professional development and awareness raising activities may be required to ensure that relevant personnel are

- Able to identify clients requiring an interpreter
- Understand the importance and advantages of communicating through an interpreter, despite the additional time and costs involved.
- Aware of booking arrangements
- Understand the basic skills involved in communicating through an interpreter.
- Aware of any legislative requirements to provide language assistance

Strategies that have been used by resettlement countries to promote the use of interpreters include

- Simplifying booking procedures at both the agency and interpreter service level
- Developing cards held by the resettled refugee which identify the language they speak and interpreter service details
- Activities among refugee communities to promote awareness of the right to an interpreter (eg multilingual posters in health care waiting rooms)
- Funding agreements between government and agencies serving refugees obliging services to provide language assistance to clients who are not proficient in the target language.
- Legislation to mandate the use of interpreters (see box).

#### **Some International Examples...Promoting the Right to Language Assistance**

Several jurisdictions have legislation which mandates the use of language assistance. The Office of Civil Rights in the US has issued policy guidance based on a title in the 1964 Civil Rights Act which prohibits discrimination in federal government programs on the basis of race, colour or national origin. Under the guidance, all services in receipt of any federal government funding are required to provide assistance to persons with limited English language proficiency (LEP). This includes anyone unable to speak, read, write or understand English at a level that permits effective interaction with health and social service agencies and providers.

Other examples include the US State of Massachusetts where all hospital emergency rooms are compelled to use interpreters; the Swedish Integration Act and the Spanish Law of Asylum which oblige services to provide language assistance.

The experience of these countries is that while this is a highly effective strategy, legislation needs to be complemented with awareness raising, professional development and enforcement activities (see above)

**Workforce development, quality assurance and professional support**

In resettlement countries with large and established immigrant and refugee populations, interpreting and translating has become increasingly professionalised. This has occurred in recognition of the fact that these are roles which require skill not only in the area of technical language proficiency, but in interpersonal communication, ethics and cross cultural issues.

This has been achieved through the development of:

- ❑ Formal training, credentials and accreditation for interpreters and translators. In some countries, interpreters have also been offered specialist training in particular areas (such as mental health interpreting, legal interpreting).
- ❑ Professional standards for interpreters and translators
- ❑ Professional codes of ethics for interpreters and translators.

Like other professionals working closely with resettled refugees (see chapter 3.1) interpreters require professional debriefing and support.

**Promoting Access to Language Assistance:**

**Good Practice Features**

**Overall, a sound integration program would:**

- ❑ Take steps to ensure that government programs and services in receipt of government funding provide appropriate language assistance
- ❑ Take steps to ensure that reception and early settlement support services provide appropriate language assistance
- ❑ Support the development of centralised interpreter and translating services
- ❑ Have ongoing strategies for planning and building an interpreter workforce in response to changing needs and intake patterns.
- ❑ Have systems for screening and training volunteers language assistance providers
- ❑ Support the development of appropriate training, accreditation and standards for professional interpreters
- ❑ Provide funding and technical support for professional development programs for bilingual resettlement support workers who do not have requisite human service qualifications.
- ❑ Have arrangements for the translation of key integration documents at minimal or no cost to resettled refugees (eg prior professional qualifications, medical records).

**Specific settlement services and other programs and services serving resettled refugees would:**

- ❑ Have a formal written language assistance plan
- ❑ Inform resettled refugees of their rights in relation to language assistance
- ❑ Provide language assistance in a timely fashion
- ❑ Have key information, forms and other documents translated into relevant community languages
- ❑ Have protocols to ensure the sensitive management of incoming telephone calls from people who are not proficient in the target language
- ❑ Provide training to staff on booking and using interpreters and the importance of communicating through them
- ❑ Have hands free telecommunications technology to promote the use of telephone interpreters
- ❑ Have some means of identifying and recording resettled refugees requiring an interpreter and the language they speak for the purpose of their ongoing support
- ❑ Wherever practical, recruit bilingual staff in key professional and client contact positions
- ❑ Avoid the use of untrained personnel to interpret
- ❑ Identify a senior employee to coordinate and monitor the agency level language assistance program

*Adapted from (insert details)###*

## 2.6 Fostering independent communication: language training programs for resettled refugees

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### Rebuilding Goals for Integration

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender.



**Notes to reviews regarding Promising Integration Practices**

**Examples in this draft:**

- Curriculum resource (Australia)

**Examples forwarded during review process (to be incorporated after the ATC**

- Adult Multicultural Education Service (Australia)
- Linkages between language training and employment (Sweden)

**Examples still required**

- None

The Canadian LINC program is referred to throughout the text along with others.

## 2.6 Fostering independent communication: language training programs for resettled refugees

*The focus of this chapter is on strategies to support resettled refugees' acquisition of the language of the receiving society (herein called the target language). While, it is concerned with adult resettled refugees, many of the principles and strategies outlined in this chapter apply to language learning programs for refugee children and young people. Further detail on programs for this group can be found in chapter 3.3. Additional considerations apply in developing language training programs for non-literate and semi-literate learners. These are discussed in Chapter 3.5. Strategies for enhancing women's participation in language training are addressed in Chapter 3.2.*

### A checklist for planning target language training programs

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about giving priority to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A basic post arrival language instruction program</li> <li>▪ Professional development for language instructors to enhance their capacity to teach and support resettled refugees.</li> <li>▪ Incorporating informal language training into the role of volunteer support providers (see chapter 2.3)</li> <li>▪ Identifying and building relationships with existing adult education facilities with a view to developing more advanced language training options</li> </ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing and providing information on language training options and how they can be accessed as part of refugee orientation.</li> <li>▪ Developing a flexible range of delivery options (eg specialist class based programs, on-line and distance learning, work and community based options, full and part time study)</li> <li>▪ Coordinating, monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms (eg benchmarking; national curricula)</li> <li>▪ Standardised pre-course analysis</li> <li>▪ Advanced language training options for those wishing to advance to further education and training</li> <li>▪ Technical support for language training program providers.</li> <li>▪ Linkages between post arrival language training programs and vocational counselling and education</li> <li>▪ Supporting the capacity of volunteer social support providers to contribute to language acquisition (see chapter 2.3)</li> <li>▪ Learning options for those with low levels of participation in, or high rates of attrition from, formal language training programs</li> <li>▪ Building a workforce of bilingual teaching professionals and teacher aides</li> <li>▪ Establishing specialist teacher qualifications in second language learning for both adults and children</li> <li>▪ Liaising with relevant teacher training facilities to develop and maintain a teacher workforce with skills in adult education, cross cultural learning and second language acquisition</li> <li>▪ Professional development and debriefing for language training providers to enhance their capacity to support learners affected by refugee related trauma.</li> </ul>

### Target language competence as a resource for rebuilding

Target language competence is a basic requirement for achieving independence in day-to-day matters such as shopping, banking and driving a motor vehicle as well as for negotiating systems such as health care and education. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate in the language of the receiving country have better prospects for achieving

economic self sufficiency. They generally have access to a wider range of employment opportunities and are better equipped to participate in further education and training.

Language is the vehicle through which resettled refugees come to feel 'part' of the receiving society. It enables them to engage with its broader social milieu through exposure to its media and community life; to participate in informal interactions in neighbourhoods, shopping centres and community facilities and ultimately to form meaningful social connections with others.

Competence in the target language also has psychological benefits, helping resettled refugees to re-gain a sense of autonomy, dignity and self worth. Struggling to communicate, or depending on others (in particular children) to communicate on their behalf, meanwhile can be a source of shame and embarrassment.

Having the ability to comprehend basic safety instructions (such as traffic warnings or labels on medicines and appliances) and to contact an emergency service in the event of a health or security crisis, provides reassurance to resettled refugees, helping them to re-attain a sense of safety.

Facilitating language acquisition also helps to promote the human and civil rights of resettled refugees in receiving societies, enhancing their capacity to act as self advocates in commercial transactions and in their dealings with employers, law enforcement personnel and government agencies.

As indicated in chapter 3.3 of this Handbook, language acquisition is particularly important for resettled refugees in parenting or guardianship roles. It can help to both avoid the negative family dynamics which may result from dependency on children (who generally acquire a new language more rapidly) and optimise parents' capacity to support children and young people in their resettlement.

While language training programs require careful planning and adequate resourcing, they are an investment that reaps long term benefits for receiving societies. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate independently are better placed to contribute their skills and attributes and will require fewer long term resettlement supports, in particular interpreter services. By facilitating integration, target language acquisition helps to promote the social and economic integration of resettled refugees into receiving societies. Studies of refugee communities whose integration has been slow to occur, suggest that limited opportunities for language acquisition are a significant contributing factor (reference)

“Communication is an important thing, because it is important to speak the language, otherwise you cannot talk of integration”

**Refugee resettling in Sweden**

## **Factors affecting target language acquisition and participation in language training**

Factors which affect a resettled refugee's capacity to acquire a second language include:

- Their level of literacy in their own language. In general, people who are literate in their own language learn a second language more readily (reference). Second language acquisition depends in part on learners having grasped basic communicative and numeracy concepts in their first language. However, some resettled refugees may not have learned these concepts, especially if they have had limited formal education.
- Their fluency in languages other than their mother tongue.
- Their prior familiarity with the language of the receiving country or a variation thereof. Many resettled refugees come from countries of origin or asylum where, owing to historical factors, languages of some resettlement countries are spoken.
- age, with learning another language becoming more difficult with advancing age
- The extent to which they are experiencing psychological responses to torture and other traumatic refugee experiences (anxiety about family members left behind or trauma)

symptoms such as flash-backs may interfere with the learning process. Resettled refugees experiencing severe trauma symptoms may find a classroom environment overwhelming)

There are a number of factors which may affect resettled refugees' participation in language training programs including:

- Their familiarity with a classroom environment. Some resettled refugees will not have participated in formal education for some time and some may never have done so.
- Family responsibilities and the availability of appropriate child care options. Refugee families may have limited access to informal child care through the family yet may be unaware of, uncomfortable with or unable to afford formal child care services.
- Other resettlement demands. Some resettled refugees may find it difficult to give priority to language learning over other tasks of resettlement (eg finding employment)
- Economic factors. Resettled refugees may wish or need to give priority to employment over language learning
- Gender. In many cultures it is unacceptable for women to participate in a mixed-gender setting. Further, in cultures where the role of women is seen to be primarily in the home, language learning may not be seen as a priority for refugee women. It is important for resettlement countries to address this since as indicated in chapter 3.2 the integration of refugee women is vital both for women themselves and their families and communities.
- Their physical and mental health status.

“If he started learning the language he would lose his job. The working plan changed all the time so he couldn't follow a regular class”

**Refugee resettling in Denmark**

Factors in the receiving society affecting language acquisition and training include:

- Whether formal language training programs are offered and their accessibility. This will depend in part on the size and composition of the resettlement program and the geographic distribution of new refugee arrivals
- The availability of an appropriately qualified and experienced workforce to support language training, including teaching professionals with target language and adult education expertise, interpreters and bilingual support staff.
- Whether income support payments are made available to resettled refugees while they participate in language training programs. This is usually influenced by the expectations of the resettlement country in relation to economic self sufficiency (see chapter 1.4).
- The availability of supports to enable resettled refugees to participate in language training (eg child care, transport)
- Opportunities to practise the target language
- The relative need to speak the target language in order to 'survive' (eg employment opportunities for individuals with limited target language proficiency, access to bilingual family support)
- Languages spoken. In some countries a number of local dialects may be spoken in addition to the official language. It may be equal, if not greater importance for resettled refugees to learn these languages if they are to manage and participate in the receiving society.

***An International example***

While resettled refugees in Benin are offered classes in French, the country's official language, a local dialect, FON, is spoken in the community in which many settle. Recognising that it would be important for resettled refugees, in particular those starting small businesses to communicate in the local language, classes were also offered in FON.

“Sometimes I learn a bit of Swedish from my eldest daughter, but it's difficult as she has already forgotten her Kurdish” **Refugee resettling in Sweden**

## **Issues to consider in planning target language programs**

### **Should resettled refugees be offered formal language training programs on arrival?**

While most countries make some provision for post-arrival language training, there are significant differences internationally in the duration of language training programs and their role in the integration process.

Three approaches can be distinguished internationally. In some countries, such as the US, language training is offered via a basic and time limited program, conducted as part of the refugee reception process. The focus of these programs is on imparting the language skills required to accomplish basic survival tasks such as banking and using public transportation. Ongoing opportunities for language training are offered. However the emphasis is on resettled refugees accessing these concurrently with paid employment, either through programs provided in the work place (see below) or community based programs offered outside of working hours.

This approach is promoted in the belief that resettled refugees will learn the language of the receiving society more readily in the context of their day-to-day interactions in the receiving society, and in particular through their participation in paid employment. In some of these countries, it is thought that overall integration goals are better served through early economic self sufficiency (see chapter 1.4), a process which would be delayed by extended participation in a dedicated language training program.

A second approach is that adopted in Canada and Australia where extended specialist language training programs are a core component of an integration program. They are funded by central governments and are provided on a fee-free basis, with resettled refugees being offered income support to meet basic living costs to enable their participation. Newcomers have a right to these programs, but are not obliged to participate in them.

In these countries it is thought that given a grounding in the target language, resettled refugees will have better prospects for achieving economic self sufficiency in the long term; accomplish other integration tasks more independently, and participate on a more equal footing in the receiving society. It is also recognised that the process of acquiring a new language as an adult is a difficult one which is further complicated for refugees by pre-migration and resettlement stress. Income support is provided in the belief that resettled refugees will acquire the target language more readily if they do not face the additional demands of searching for and participating in paid employment.

A third approach is that adopted in a number of the Nordic countries. As is the case in Australia and Canada, resettled refugees are offered language instruction free-of-charge and have access to social support payments to enable their participation. However in these countries, language training is more formally linked with vocational counselling, further education and employment placement through individualised integration plans (see chapter 2.3) and participation is obligatory. In some of these countries, resettled refugees in receipt of income support payments may have their payments reduced if they do not participate.

It is important that the circumstances and priorities of individual resettled refugees are respected in relation to language training. Resettled refugees suffering severe psychological responses to their pre-migration and resettlement experiences may need time to attend to these before they can make meaningful use of language training opportunities.

While many resettled refugees will see language training as a vital first step in their resettlement pathway, others will see their integration goals as being better served through early employment. Even in those countries offering relatively generous conditions for participation, the reality is that income support payments typically cover basic living costs only. While in most cases this is to ensure parity with income support paid to nationals outside of the labour market (see chapter 2.4), they may be prohibitively low for resettled refugees who face additional costs involved in building a life in a new country. Some may

also be supporting relatives overseas. Resettled refugees in these circumstances may have no choice but to give priority to employment over language training. Nevertheless, experience in those countries offering specialist language programs suggest that the majority of refugees elect to participate. In the Australian state of Victoria, for example, 80% of resettled refugees enrol in the Adult Migrant English Program (reference).

Resettlement countries can seek to support resettled refugees in balancing language learning with other resettlement objectives by ensuring that they have access to flexible language learning options (see below). In some countries, a generous window period is allowed for participation in language training programs. For example in Australia, resettled refugees are allowed up to three months before they enrol; can commence study at anytime in the first twelve months following their arrival and are allowed up to three years to complete their program. Under deferral provisions the timeframe to completing the program can be extended out to five years.

### **Language acquisition as a process not a program**

While as indicated above there are very different perspectives of the role of language training internationally, there is a broad consensus that language acquisition is an ongoing process. Even where relatively generous provision is made for language training, many resettled refugees will only achieve partial language proficiency through their participation in a post arrival program (reference). For this reason, it is important that there are ongoing opportunities for resettled refugees to participate in language training. Ongoing and adequate provision will also need to be made for interpreting and translating services, particularly for communicating about matters requiring a high level of technical language proficiency, such as health care or legal concerns (see chapter 2.5).

### **Language training as a resource for resettlement**

Language training programs delivered in an integration context are distinguished from those which may be offered to nationals in a traditional educational environment, in that one of their primary goals is to support refugees to resettle in their new country.

In most countries the emphasis in language training programs is on language learning for social and communicative competence, rather than on achieving formal technical linguistic proficiency. Typically post arrival language training programs combine language training with learning about practical resettlement tasks and the laws, customs and practices of the receiving society. In some countries, language training programs are also used as a forum for formally linking new arrivals with other resettlement services, either by inviting support services to deliver first language information sessions in class time or conducting excursions (or field trips) to key services and institutions.

This approach has been adopted on the basis of evidence suggesting that target language training is more likely to be effective if it is based on adult learning principles (see box) and is meaningful to the every day lives and needs of adult learners in their roles as shoppers, parents, citizens and so on. It also offers obvious efficiencies for resettlement countries, enabling other integration goals to be served in the context of language training.

In many countries, there are also formal linkages between language training and vocational education, training and employment placement. For example, as indicated above, language training is provided as part of a larger integration plan in many of the Nordic countries.

**Developing language training on the basis of adult learning principles**

Research and practice experience suggests that adult education is more likely to be effective if:

- Learners are involved in planning and implementing learning activities
- It draws upon learner's experiences as a resource. These provide a foundation for learning new things, enhance readiness for learning and draw on participants' experiences as a source for learning.
- It cultivates self direction in learners as an important characteristic of adulthood. This may need to be encouraged as many participants may be more familiar with teacher directed learning environments
- It is delivered in a climate that encourages and supports learning, one characterised by trust and mutual respect and in which conflict is effectively managed.
- A spirit of collaboration is fostered in the learning setting, in recognition of the fact that both teachers and learners have something to contribute to a learning environment
- It uses small groups to promote team work and encourage cooperation and collaboration
- It is based on an understanding of learner's experiences and communities (eg taking into account such factors as gender, migration experience)
- It involves adult learners in identifying and establishing their own evaluation techniques.

Adapted from Imel S (1998) *Using Adult Learning Principles in Adult Basic and Literacy Education* from the website of the Adult, Career and Vocational Educational Clearinghouse [ericave.org/docs](http://ericave.org/docs).

**Language training and cultural adaptation**

Language training programs enable resettled refugees to acquire the target language and learn about the receiving society. However there should also be opportunities for bilingual instruction and the history, literature and cultural experiences of resettled refugees should be reflected in the curricula and classroom environment.

The merits of rebuilding and maintaining cultural connection and exchange have been discussed elsewhere in this Handbook (see chapter 1.3). Similar considerations apply in the use of resettled refugees' first languages. The process of learning a second language is more likely to be effective if individuals have ongoing opportunities to use their mother tongue (reference). Further, as indicated above, there are some concepts that need to be learned in a first language before they can be grasped in a second (reference).

**Funding and planning of language training programs**

In most resettlement countries responsibility for funding, planning, coordinating and monitoring language training programs lies with National governments. However, in recognition of the importance of implementing integration at a more localised level, programs are generally delivered by community based providers such as educational institutions, community based agencies, non-government organisations and municipal governments.

For example Canada's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC) is funded by the National government which assumes responsibility for funding, setting broad curriculum goals and guidelines and monitoring. However, programs are delivered by some 80 providers across Canada, including ethno-cultural agencies, non-government agencies and educational institutions.

**Initiatives for facilitating target language acquisition**

**Flexible Delivery Options**

There is a broad consensus internationally that there is a need to aim for a flexible range of delivery options (see box) as

- Some options may be more suited to those with special learning needs (for example home tutoring may be more accessible to women with child care responsibilities, trauma and torture survivors or those with disabilities)
- More formalised learning options will be important for those wishing to participate in advanced language training and further education and training
- Language acquisition is an ongoing process. By accessing flexible learning options such as on-line instruction and home tutor schemes, resettled refugees can hone the language skills learned in a more formal class based program
- In those countries where resettled refugees are placed outside of large urban centres it may be difficult to offer all new arrivals a group based program.
- Flexibility allows integration planners and providers to explore opportunities for learning in a range of social contexts such as the work place, school communities and in social support relationships.
- Resettled refugees may have a limited capacity to participate in formal class based programs, particularly if they are in paid employment.

**The Importance of flexibility: Delivery options for language training programs**

A range of models have been developed for delivering language training in receiving societies, including:

- Specialist group-based programs
- Work based programs (see box)
- Home based tutor schemes (delivered either by paid teachers or trained volunteers)
- 'distance' education programs
- On-line learning. For example refugees resettling in Canada can access instruction under that country's LINC program on line.
- Offering instruction both within and outside of conventional working hours as well as on both a full and part time basis.

While language training programs should be delivered by personnel with appropriate training, informal language learning objectives can be built into the roles of sponsors, be-frienders and volunteer support providers (see chapter 2.3).

**Building language training capacity in emerging countries**

Language training programs take some time to build and are a cost consideration in integration program development. It may not be possible for emerging countries and those with developing economies to offer a comprehensive program, particularly in the founding years of a refugee resettlement program. However, consider

- Establishing a task force or working group of specialists (such as adult education experts and language teachers) who can assist in identifying appropriate language programs, placement options and other strategies for the longer term development of language training.
- Developing a long term plan for building language training capacity (3 to 5 years and beyond), aimed at linking early language training with other existing formal or specialised courses.
- Liaising with existing educational institutions to offer advanced language training
- Placing resettled refugees in sites with other linguistically diverse communities (eg immigrant or asylum seeker populations) where there may be established training programs or where there are greater possibilities to benefit from economies of scale
- Tutor programs (offered by paid or trained volunteer teachers), an option where numbers do not warrant a more formal program
- Identifying and developing specific integration communities for resettlement (see chapter 2.1). If resettled refugees are dispersed it will be both more logistically difficult and costly to deliver language training programs
- Incorporating informal language training into the roles of volunteer support providers.



### **Providing language training in the work place**

Language training providers in the US and other established resettlement countries have placed some emphasis on developing work-based language training programs. These are offered either in work time or immediately prior to or following working hours, thus eliminating travel time and transportation problems.

In some cases work based language training is provided as a discrete program. In others, language instruction may be tailored to enable resettled refugees to perform their job roles more effectively.

As indicated in chapter 2.9, work based language instruction can also be offered to prospective employers where limited language proficiency might otherwise serve as a barrier to employing resettled refugees.

Employers may be prepared to support work-based language training, either by allowing resettled refugees to withdraw from work to participate or by contributing to the costs of the program. One of the disadvantages of 'withdrawal' programs however is that the time available for instruction may be limited.

Work-based language training, particularly where it is tailored to the requirements of particular job roles, can be highly effective, enabling refugees to acquire language skills that have immediate application and meaning for them and which they have ongoing opportunities to practice in their job roles. By increasing their language competence resettled refugees may also have increased prospects for advancement within their workplace.

At the same time, however, programs that are workplace driven, may not necessarily enhance resettled refugees' communicative competence in other settings, suggesting the importance of participants having access to other language training opportunities.

Work based programs have been particularly important in the US where resettled refugees are required to access language training concurrently with paid employment. However, in other countries they can be used to provide ongoing opportunities for language acquisition, thereby complementing dedicated post arrival programs.

### **Individualised pre-course Needs Analysis**

Formal pre-course needs analysis is conducted with resettled refugees in a number of countries prior to their entry into a language training program, with some having developed standard assessment instruments for this process. Needs analysis helps to:

- Assess resettled refugees' mother tongue literacy and their level in the target language so that they can be placed in a course at an appropriate level. This is important to avoid the attrition which may result from learners being required to learn at too fast a pace or alternatively being under-challenged in the classroom.
- Enable language training providers to establish with resettled refugees their language learning goals. That is, whether they are learning primarily to manage day-to-day life in the receiving society or for the purposes of further training and study. In some countries, pre-course needs analysis is specifically linked with vocational orientation and counselling to support resettled refugees to plan appropriate learning and training pathways.
- Help to identify participants with special language learning needs (eg pre-literate learners, trauma and torture survivors, resettled refugees with disabilities)

### **Quality Assurance**

Since language training programs are typically provided by a range of community based providers, it is important that strategies are developed to ensure an appropriate standard of program delivery and that the objectives of language training programs are broadly consistent both with one another and with national integration goals. Specific initiatives in established resettlement countries include:

- Language Benchmarking (or scales of communicative proficiency). As well as providing a basis for conducting pre-course needs assessment, benchmarks can also be useful tools for setting standards for language training programs, for teacher training and for promoting clear communication between language training personnel and between them and funding bodies, employer organisations, assessors and licensing bodies. At the time of writing both Canada and Ireland have developed national benchmarks for language training programs
- National Curriculum. For example in Canada and Australia, providers of language programs have developed a National curriculum. Recognising the need for flexibility to particular groups, the curriculum is not highly prescriptive, but outlines broad content areas, objectives and competencies.
- Technical assistance bodies and resources. For example in the US the Office of Refugee Resettlement funds the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. The Institute supports community based language training programs through the provision of professional development programs, curriculum development and advice on program design. In Canada, teachers have access to a National website which provides specific curriculum guidelines, lessons plans and further resources.
- Quality Assurance systems. For example in the US the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. (see above) has developed the *English Language Training Program Self Review*. Designed as a tool for self improvement for use by language training programs, the self review identifies quality indicators in a range of key areas such as curriculum and professional development, against which programs assess themselves.

### **Language Training for Resettled refugees with additional or more intensive needs**

As indicated above, some resettled refugees have additional language learning needs, particularly refugee elders, those who have limited mother tongue literacy, originate from societies with oral traditions or are experiencing psychological difficulties associated with pre-migration experiences. Targeted approaches may also be required to ensure the participation of refugee women.

Strategies for supporting language learning among these groups are explored in greater detail in Part Three.

### **Supports to participate in language training programs**

In a number of countries, formal funding provision is made by national governments to meet the cost of child care to enable resettled refugees with family responsibilities to participate in language training. Where formal funding is not available for this purpose, volunteer programs may provide an important source of child care.

Other issues that need to be considered when planning childcare for resettled refugee families are discussed in Chapter 2.9.

### **Curriculum Resources**

Curriculum resources (see box below) have been developed in a number of countries both to facilitate language acquisition and to provide a vehicle for learning about the receiving society and other resettlement services. Curriculum resources enable practice wisdom to be documented and made available to a wider range of language training providers and, by reducing class preparation time, enable more efficient use of teacher time.

**An International Example: Learning about health through language training**

In the Australian state of Victoria, the Adult Multicultural Education service formed a partnership with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture to produce a curriculum work book aimed at enhancing resettled refugee's understanding of and access to health care in Australia.

The workbook *HealthWays* contains a range of individual and group language learning exercises and can be used in a classroom context or for self guided learning. Since it was based on extensive consultation with refugee communities, it focuses on the issues of direct concern to resettled refugees.

Recognising the importance of dual language instruction, the workbook is accompanied by booklets in 8 community languages. Titled *Making a Healthy Start in Australia* these enable new arrivals to learn more complex conceptual information in their own language while at the same time learning the language of accessing health services through related exercises in the workbook.

Each exercise in the workbook begins by exploring resettled refugees own understanding of health and health care based on their experiences in their countries-of-origin. This is used as the point of departure for exploring differences in the Australian health care system. This approach recognises the importance of acknowledging, affirming and drawing on the culture and past experiences of resettled refugees.

Providing background information for teachers, the workbook also serves as a vehicle for enhancing awareness and understanding of the refugee experience among teaching professionals.

**Workforce development and support**

Teaching professionals working in an integration context require additional skills in the areas of second language acquisition, adult learning approaches and cross cultural education as well as those involved in teaching adults with special educational needs (eg those with limited mother-tongue literacy, trauma and torture survivors.).

In countries with well established and large refugee and immigrant programs, specialist qualifications have been established for target language teachers working in adult settings (either as a speciality within a teaching qualification or as a post graduate course of study). While this may not be viable in emerging countries or those with small refugee intakes, other arrangements for providing professional development to teaching professionals might be considered (for example through a technical support agency or a teacher training institution).

A learning environment offers unique opportunities for adult participants to build relationships with one another and with teaching personnel and volunteers. Disclosures of both past traumatic experiences or current difficulties are not uncommon in these contexts. Both volunteers and professional teachers in language training programs require support to respond sensitively to participants and to deal with the personal consequences of working with a client group exposed to a relatively high degree of stress (see chapter 3.1). In a number of countries arrangements have been made for delivering both professional development and debriefing to teaching professionals and volunteers through either a technical assistance agency (see above) or through a partnership with an agency providing social and psychological support to resettled refugees.

To enhance opportunities for bilingual instruction consideration will also need to be given to building a workforce of bi-lingual teachers or teacher aides.

**What information will teaching professionals require to provide effective language training to resettled refugees?**

- Background information on the countries from which relevant refugee communities originate
- Information on likely level and nature of educational experience of relevant communities
- The languages spoken by refugee groups
- The impact of the refugee experience, in particular torture and trauma, on the learning process
- The personal impact of working with traumatised students for teachers and ways in which they can help to prevent and deal with this
- Social and resettlement supports available to resettled refugees in the receiving country
- How to refer students requiring further support
- Specific curriculum and other resources available to teachers.
- Cross cultural training

**Target Language Acquisition and Training:  
Good Practice Features**

**Overall a sound integration program would:**

- Incorporate target language training as an integral component of a refugee resettlement program
- Ensure that language training programs receive adequate, stable and ongoing funding
- Establish mechanisms for the central coordination, planning and monitoring of language programs
- Develop national standards for language training programs
- Have strategies in place to build work-force capacity for the delivery of language programs
- Offer a range of options in program type and instructional format recognising the diversity in capacities, competencies and aspirations among resettled refugees
- Provide income and other supports to enable participation in language training
- Ensure linkages between language training and other integration processes, in particular orientation, social support, vocational counselling, further education and training and employment placement.
- Promote language training as a socially and economically valuable but voluntary activity
- Ensure that resettled refugees have continued access to interpreters until they have acquired communicative competence (and thereafter in matters requiring more technical language proficiency)

**Language training programs would:**

- Operate on adult learning principles (see box)
- Respect and value the learner's first language and culture by promoting opportunities for multi/dual language use and incorporating the history, literature and cultural experiences of refugees into curricula and in the classroom
- Ensure that second language learners have equitable access to facilities and resources
- Have individualised assessment procedures to ensure that training opportunities are tailored to the competencies and aspirations of resettled refugees, including those with additional language training needs
- Reflect the social context of the language taught and the importance of experiential learning
- Provide or facilitate access to culturally appropriate childcare
- Be provided by staff with appropriate technical teacher training in second language acquisition and adult learning as well as professional development in identifying and responding to the additional needs of refugee settlers in a learning context
- Take steps to counter racism and discrimination in the learning environment

**What information will new arrivals need to access and participate in language training programs?**

Consider incorporating the following information provided to resettled refugees prior to arrival or on reception:

- Why language training programs are offered and to whom
- Language training programs in place in the receiving country, including eligibility criteria, duration, enrolment procedures and arrangements for advanced level training
- Whether language training is obligatory
- The availability of programs for language learners with special needs
- Services available to assist people in accessing language services (eg child care, transport subsidies)
- Whether language training programs are formally accredited
- Vocational counselling services and their purpose

## 2.7 Making sense of a new country: Orientation programs and processes

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### **Rebuilding Goals for Integration**

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and pre-migration experience.

**Notes to Reviewers regarding promising practices**

**Examples currently included:**

- Pre-departure programs (Australia, US, Canada and Sweden)
- Capacity building in the wider service network (Canada)

**Others required**

- None

## 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 is offered in the context of other social support or language training programs in many countries, it should be read in conjunction with chapters 2.3 and 2.6. Similarly, more specific detail on orientation to specific systems, such as health care and employment placement programs, is dealt with in relevant individual chapters.*

*As indicated earlier in this Handbook, orientation is a ‘two-way’ street, meaning that it is equally important for receiving communities to understand the culture and backgrounds of resettled refugees as it is for newcomers to understand the cultural norms and societal mores of the receiving community. This understanding assists receiving communities to make resettled refugees welcome; to value their diverse attributes and to respond sensitively to their needs. Strategies for promoting this are the focus of chapter 2.11 of this handbook and are explored in relation to particular service systems in other relevant chapters.*

### A checklist for planning orientation programs and processes

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about giving priority to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offering orientation in the context of early case-management and social support</li> <li>▪ Preparing a brief written statement on the country and its resettlement program</li> <li>▪ Offering pre-arrival information sessions to those offered resettlement</li> <li>▪ Incorporating ‘hands-on’ orientation into reception support</li> <li>▪ Recruiting and training local volunteers to assist with orientation</li> <li>▪ Obtaining translated materials from other resettlement countries with language compatibility (e.g. on the process of stages of migration, common responses to trauma and torture)</li> <li>▪ Preparing a list of key support services with contact details</li> <li>▪ Obtaining cultural and country- specific information on refugee populations from other resettlement countries for orientation providers.</li> </ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<p><b>Orientation providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Course outlines, resources, information and facilitators’ manuals to guide orientation providers and enhance the capacity of personnel in other systems to provide orientation</li> <li>▪ Training courses (job-skills, technical, vocational, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Technical support (e.g. web-sites, help-desk facilities)</li> <li>▪ Teaching resources (e.g. audio tapes, videos, games)</li> <li>▪ Curriculum and curriculum resources to promote orientation through language training programs</li> </ul> <p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Systems for monitoring and evaluating orientation programs</li> <li>▪ Systems for updating information provided to resettled refugees through establishing links with information providers</li> </ul> <p><b>For resettled refugees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Providing information in refugee native languages in written, audio or video formats</li> <li>▪ Web-sites providing orientation information</li> <li>▪ Formal pre-arrival and post arrival orientation programs</li> <li>▪ Engaging volunteer and professional social support providers in orientation-delivery</li> <li>▪ Making use of other settings to provide orientation to specific service areas (e.g. health care providers, schools)</li> <li>▪ Tailored orientation programs for groups with special needs (eg</li> </ul>



refugee youth, single parents, women-at-risk) or focussing on particular integration issues (e.g. domestic violence, intergenerational conflict)

## **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 countries with developing economies who will be settling in highly complex, 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 the psychological consequences of pre-migration stress and trauma.

Effective orientation can assist resettled refugees to:

- develop a realistic picture of the receiving society. Many resettled refugees have very high expectations of resettlement countries, particularly in relation to housing and employment opportunities
- develop an understanding of the receiving society's expectations of them
- identify their individual resettlement needs and priorities and assist them to make informed choices about their resettlement options
- access the resources needed for successful resettlement
- develop skills in solving any problems encountered in the course of their resettlement
- understand the values and culture of the receiving society, thus promoting refugee adjustment
- achieve independence (this is particularly important for those resettled refugees who have been forced to rely on the UN and other agencies for a prolonged period. A sound orientation program can help break the cycle of 'learned helplessness' that often results from this dependence)
- restore control and reduce any fears and anxiety which may be associated with the unknown
- learn about common and predictable emotional and practical problems refugees may encounter in the resettlement process (being able to anticipate these and to understand them as 'normal' can help to reduce their negative impact)
- Assist newcomers to form positive first impressions of the receiving society

By fostering mutual understanding, orientation programs help to prevent misunderstandings and conflict, thereby promoting social cohesion. Resettled refugees who understand the receiving society are also less likely to become socially or economically 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 that would otherwise be involved in providing ongoing support.

"It's like trying to walk again only you are a lot heavier."

**Refugee in Australia speaking about the early stages of resettlement**

## **Factors affecting orientation and the development of orientation programs**

Refugees bring with them a diverse range of backgrounds including wide variations in the nature of their history of persecution and duration of their pre-migration experiences. 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 source country and receiving country--(more intense orientation may be required for resettled refugees originating from rural and pastoral communities settling in highly urbanised and industrialised communities)
- Literacy levels and the educational backgrounds of resettled refugees
- Whether resettled refugees have prior experience in the paid labour force
- Cultural learning styles. For example in some cultures highly formalised instruction is highly valued, while others may learn better with interactive approaches
- Existing knowledge of the resettlement country's language, culture and customs
- Gender and age (In particular special steps may need to be taken to involve refugee young people and women--see chapters 3.2 and 3.3)
- The level of family and community support available to resettled refugees in the receiving society
- The presence of pre-migration trauma. Learning may be impeded in refugees suffering severe psychological symptoms such as impaired concentration or flashbacks.

It is important that orientation programs reflect this diversity and adopt a range of approaches which are flexible to the needs of different refugee groups and communities.

Also influential are factors in receiving countries including:

- The existing infrastructure for refugee selection, reception and resettlement (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 economic self- sufficiency and job-seeking in the orientation process.
- Conditions in the receiving country. This will influence the information that will be required in order for refugees to resettle successfully in the environment concerned
- Prior contact with and understanding of the culture and background of resettled refugees among orientation providers and in the wider community

#### **Orientation and refugee women**

Orientation will be particularly important for refugee women as they play a pivotal role in the integration of refugee families and face a host of particular issues in the integration process. More detailed information on strategies for engaging refugee women in orientation is discussed in chapter 3.2.

### **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 group; where this is not possible interpreters will need to be used.
- Is provided in a safe, risk and stress-free learning environment
- Is based on adult learning principles. (These are discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.6 of this Handbook).
- Is competency based. That is, focussed on fostering participant's skills in addressing day-to-day needs and challenges
- Emphasises learning through showing or doing (through hands-on, participatory activities)
- Adopts interactive learning techniques such as discussions, group work and role plays
- Involves a range of communication media, both to provide varied learning experiences and to accommodate the needs of those without mother tongue or target language literacy

**Why are interactive learning approaches important?**

How information is imparted in an orientation program is equally 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, audios)

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; and
- 95% of what we teach others.

Glasser, William MD *Control Theory in the Classroom* Harper and Row, New York 1986

**An International Example**

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 access 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.

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. Self-awareness of one's own culture often comes about by being exposed to a new culture.

*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.*

**Somali refugee participant in a pre-arrival orientation program offered by the US**

Mutual understanding and respect can be promoted by:

- Using resettled refugees' country of origin experience as a point of departure 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)
- Ensuring that orientation providers have relevant background information about the culture and experiences of resettled refugees. A list of sources is included on p- ..

**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 US, 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 support through their participation in volunteer or sponsorship programs. As indicated below (see p--), however, it is vital that orientation be provided by individuals who are appropriately trained and supported.

**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 reception process. However orientation should be viewed as an ongoing process which occurs both formally and informally and which:

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

This approach recognises that resettled refugees have different needs at different stages of the refugee selection and resettlement processes as well as different capacities to retain and contextualise information. For example, in the early resettlement period, the focus is generally on information required to accomplish the immediate 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.

Further, orientation to some aspects of the receiving society may be more meaningful to resettled refugees later in the resettlement period 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 dealing with 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 in the receiving society, there are also greater opportunities for 'learning by doing'.

**What about pre-departure orientation?**

Canada, Sweden, the US and more recently, Australia, have offered resettled refugees formal orientation in their country of departure while they await resettlement. While some of these programs focus on travel and reception arrangements, others also use this opportunity to begin the process of orientation to the receiving society and the resettlement process.

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.

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 resettled refugees. However, the experience of the Swedish pre-departure programs suggests that it may be quite difficult for people to integrate information about a new country which is vastly different to their own without having first experienced it (reference).

In those countries where placement decisions are made after selection and refugees are able to choose their resettlement site, information provided prior to departure can assist them to take a more active role in placement decision making.

### **The importance of pre-departure information for emerging resettlement countries**

Pre-arrival orientation is particularly important for emerging resettlement countries as resettled refugees have very little access to information about these countries. This lack of information may contribute to anxiety on the part of the refugee.

Resettled refugees may have formed their expectations of resettlement through information about traditional and established 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 selection processes
- 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 selection. –

When providing and developing information it is important to:

- Strike a balance between welcoming newcomers and promoting the country's assets (see p-), 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 up-dated to accommodate changes in conditions in the receiving country (both positive and negative) and developments in the resettlement program.

### **From which settings should orientation be delivered?**

In many countries, orientation commences with a formal group program offered prior to or soon after arrival (see box and p-). This is usually followed by 'hands-on' orientation to basic systems such as accessing social services, school enrolment and banking services conducted as part of the reception or case-management 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 from country to country. 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 in relation to wider systems and resources (such as health care and education), a number of countries have developed strategies for engaging personnel from these systems in the process of orienting new arrivals (see p-).

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

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

In countries of resettlement where resettled refugees are routinely offered instruction in the language of the receiving country in the early resettlement period, these courses are used as a focus for imparting information about the receiving society. Sessions can be provided on specific orientation topics in class time in resettled refugees' native language, 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 as well as 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 (reference).

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.

#### **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 (see p-).

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 (see p-).

#### **How intensive should orientation be?**

There are significant differences of approach, from country to country, in the duration and goals of the orientation process. For example in the US, 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 (ranging from one to three weeks). After this time, the emphasis is very much on learning in the course of 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 time they are obliged to participate in a 12-month course, funded by the government, which incorporates both 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 Seven identifies some of the broad areas addressed in contemporary 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 characteristics 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 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.

*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.*  
**Pindie Stephen, Regional Cultural Orientation Coordinator, IOM Nairobi, Presentation to the ICRIRR.**

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 US offered resettlement to some 3,500 unaccompanied refugee youth 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 prior exposure to a highly industrialised society.

Special programs may also be useful to address particular integration issues (such as family violence, and child welfare) or to reach populations that, while facing special integration issues, 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.

### Orientation Programs and Materials: Suggested Content Areas

Content	<i>Suggested areas</i>
Orientation to travel arrangements and reception process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- documents required for departure</li> <li>- transit arrangements</li> <li>- in-flight arrangements</li> <li>- airport pick-up arrangements</li> <li>- reception /accommodation</li> <li>- basic household orientation (eg use of gas and electrical appliances)</li> <li>- material assistance available on arrival (furniture, appliances, clothing)</li> </ul>
<p>Orientation to basic characteristics, systems and resources of the receiving society.</p> <p>More detail is provided in relevant individual chapters</p>	<p><b>Characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- economic conditions (especially housing and employment availability)</li> <li>- ethnic composition; population diversity, migration history;</li> <li>- public safety</li> <li>- languages spoken</li> <li>- climatic conditions</li> <li>- cost of living</li> <li>- media, including ethnic media</li> <li>- legal systems</li> <li>- systems of and approach to governance</li> <li>- expectations of economic self sufficiency</li> </ul> <p><b>Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- public transportation</li> <li>- private vehicle licence and insurance requirements</li> <li>- banking (automatic teller machines, cheque accounts, loans)</li> <li>- income support, including programs for those participating in further education and training</li> <li>- health care</li> <li>- housing</li> <li>- law enforcement</li> <li>- education (including post-secondary, and re-certification opportunities)</li> <li>- child-care</li> <li>- support for elders</li> <li>- shopping (eg purchasing conventions, ethnic food markets, second hand outlets)</li> <li>- labour unions and professional and trade associations</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources- how to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- secure resettlement and social support, including specific services for early assessment and settlement support</li> <li>- access job placement programs</li> <li>- find a job</li> <li>- make contact with ethno-cultural organisations and services</li> <li>- access language assistance</li> <li>- find a house</li> <li>- secure income support</li> <li>- enrol children in school</li> <li>- qualify for health care</li> <li>- access family support and counselling services</li> <li>- gain accreditation, certification or registration to practice a trade or profession</li> <li>- apply for citizenship</li> <li>- enrol in a target language training program</li> <li>- budget</li> </ul> <p><b>Rights and responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- obligations of sponsors/proposers</li> <li>- legal rights and responsibilities (as consumers, health care users, employees, etc)</li> <li>- services available to assist in protecting rights</li> <li>- Family, marital and parenting relationships (eg; family violence, child discipline and welfare)</li> <li>- Female Genital Mutilation</li> </ul>
Socio-cultural orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expectations of the receiving country</li> <li>- rights and responsibilities</li> <li>- culture, norms and values of the receiving society (eg family relationships, gender roles)</li> <li>- stereotyping, racism, discrimination and xenophobia</li> <li>- approach and attitudes towards management of cultural diversity</li> </ul>
Orientation to the process of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- critical thinking and skills building</li> <li>- identifying skills and attributes</li> </ul>



integration streamlining and problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the process of adaptation (the stages of culture shock )</li> <li>- stresses associated with rates and processes of adaptation experienced by different family members (eg children, women, elders).</li> <li>- information on possible responses to pre-migration experiences (especially trauma and torture) and how to deal with these (adults and children)</li> </ul>
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## **Initiatives to support and promote orientation**

### **Multi-lingual written materials**

A number of countries have developed booklets in key community languages conveying information about the receiving society that are distributed to resettled refugees prior to or soon after arrival. Examples include Canada’s bilingual *Newcomer’s Introduction to Canada* and the US’ *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. However materials such as these may have limited application for refugee intakes with limited mother tongue literacy. Translated materials are relatively expensive to produce and require regular updating. While large scale publications may be prohibitive for resettlement countries with developing economies and/or small and diverse refugee intakes, a number have developed brief written statements providing basic information on the resettlement country and its programs.

### **Prescribed Programs and instructional guides for orientation providers**

In those countries in which formal pre-departure or reception orientation programs are offered, prescribed programs have been developed, ranging from half-day sessions to 25-hour programs. For example the U.S. has developed an orientation program which is delivered to resettled refugees prior to their departure and which provides information on the receiving country as well as a wide range of information about fundamental aspects of life in the U.S.

Instructional guides have been developed in a number of countries to support those providing orientation in the context of a less formal social support relationship. For example, volunteers in Canada’s *Host Program*, established to provide orientation and support to new arrivals, have access to a handbook to guide them in their role.

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).

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

Information on resources and systems in the receiving society will need to be regularly updated as these areas are subject to rapid change.

**An International Example: 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, by both developing formal orientation programs and by taking opportunities to impart information informally in the course of their contact with them.

In many of these fields, however, workers have a number of demands on their time and resources, and may have limited time to prepare for this role.

Recognising this, COSTI Immigrant Services in Ontario, Canada, sought funds from the Canadian Government to develop a resource manual *Linking Paths: A Guide for Orienting Newcomers to Canada*. 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.

In this way 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 also serves as an important training tool for inducting new settlement workers and helps to ensure that resettled refugees receive consistent information.

**Training courses and ongoing support for orientation providers**

Providing orientation to resettled refugees is a relatively complex undertaking. It requires skills in adult learning and cross cultural communication as well as an understanding of the refugee and resettlement experiences, the resettlement policy of the receiving country, the rights and responsibilities of resettled refugees and the range of 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 US, have developed formal training courses and accompanying manuals for orientation program providers. In addition, videos, facilitator guides and activity workbooks have been developed for use in training orientation 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.

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

In the US a web site has been developed to support those providing cultural orientation. The web site provides relevant country background information, promotes communication and linkage among orientation program providers and promotes best- practices, which have been submitted by orientation programs worldwide.

**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 emerging countries with limited prior experience in resettling particular refugee populations. A list of sources of cultural and country background profiles is included on p- of this Handbook. Alternatively, emerging resettlement countries may be able to obtain this information from their counterparts in established countries.

***Information for orientation providers***

Consider incorporating the following into training programs for orientation providers

**Planning and organisational skills**

- planning for groups of resettled refugees with different or additional needs
- accessing and targeting issues (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 and child abuse), and rights of the individual including gay rights

**Resource skills**

- Information about rights, responsibilities of refugees
- Resources available
- Information on support systems available to orientation providers
- Identification and referral mechanisms for individuals requiring more intensive, professional support

***Web-site technology***

A number of countries, among them Canada, the US and Australia, have developed web sites providing information about the receiving country, the rights and responsibilities of newcomers and integration resources available to them. These are a useful source of information both for resettled refugees and those providing orientation.

Web sites can also be accessed by refugees offered resettlement, to assist them in making choices regarding specific placement communities once offered resettlement.

***Resources to enhance the learning experience***

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

A number of resources have been developed for use by orientation providers to promote this. For example in the US the *Welcome to the US* 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 called *Families in Cultural Transition* provides a fun way to engage families and small groups in learning about systems and resources in the receiving society.

***Language training curriculum and curriculum materials***

In those countries in which 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 curriculum materials have been developed to serve the dual purposes of orientation and facilitating language acquisition (see chapter 2.6).

**Orientation Programs:  
Good Practice Features**

**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 (eg youth, unaccompanied minors, victims of violence, women at risk, the elderly)
- 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 (eg language learning, accessing health care)
- engage relevant systems in the integration 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

## 2.8 A place to call home: promoting access to secure and affordable permanent housing

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### Rebuilding Goals for Integration

#### Integration Goal One

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### Integration Goal Two

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### Integration Goal Three

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### Integration Goal Four

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### Integration Goal Five

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### Integration Goal 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

#### Integration Goal Seven

*To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.*

#### Integration Goal Eight

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### Integration Goal Nine

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and pre-migration experience.

**Notes to reviewers Regarding Promising Integration Practices**

**Examples currently included**

- Public Housing and Choice (Chile)
- Housing large families (Sweden)
- Brokerage arrangements (Britain, Benin)

**Further examples required**

This chapter still lacks good examples to illustrate the key approaches presented such as

- Rental subsidies or grants to establish a tenancy
- Housing cooperatives
- Public housing authority involvement in integration housing
- Alliances with private sector letting agents

## 2.8 A place to call home: promoting access to secure and affordable permanent housing

*The focus of this chapter is on strategies for supporting resettled refugees to obtain long term, safe, secure and affordable housing. Issues involved in meeting household establishment costs (such as furniture and whitegoods) are discussed in chapter 2.4.*

*Accommodation arrangements prior to permanent housing being secured are discussed in chapter 2.2.*

*Recognising that few resettled refugees are likely to be in a position to purchase a home in their early years in a new country, this chapter focuses on rental housing options.*

### A check list for planning safe, secure and affordable housing

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about giving priority to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Developing partnerships with governmental and private sector housing providers</li><li>▪ Providing support for resettled refugees to access long term housing in the context of assessment and early settlement support</li><li>▪ Planning permanent housing options in advance of refugee arrivals</li></ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Incorporating information about accessing long term housing in orientation programs</li><li>▪ Engaging volunteer and professional social support providers in supporting resettled refugees to secure housing</li><li>▪ Initiatives to build the capacity of ethno-cultural services, resettlement and non-government agencies and housing advocacy services to support resettled refugees to access housing</li><li>▪ Providing professional development to officers responsible for allocating public sector housing, including training in cultural diversity and access and equity issues</li><li>▪ Supporting housing developments to meet the needs of resettled refugees with special housing needs</li><li>▪ Legislation and programs to counter discrimination against resettled refugees in the housing market</li><li>▪ Rental subsidies and grants to meet the up-front and ongoing costs of rental accommodation</li></ul>

### Safe, secure and affordable housing as a resource for rebuilding

As well as being a fundamental human right, safe, secure and affordable housing influences the capacity of refugees to accomplish a range of other resettlement tasks. Housing plays a critical role in determining overall health and well-being and provides a base from which resettled refugees can seek employment, re-establish family relationships and make connections with the wider community.

Most resettled refugees will have experienced forced displacement from their homes. Many will have spent a prolonged period in countries of asylum where their shelter was unsafe, substandard or overcrowded and where they may have lacked security of tenure. Setting up a home and establishing a 'sense of place' in the receiving society, is therefore a critical part of the rebuilding process.

## **Factors affecting access to housing**

Resettled refugees' capacity to secure housing is influenced by a range of factors including their:

- Earning capacity in the early resettlement period, with many resettled refugees being on low and fixed incomes. This affects both their ability to meet the initial costs associated with establishing a housing tenancy as well as ongoing rental payments
- Knowledge of the housing market in the receiving country, particularly effecting their capacity to search for housing
- Knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as housing tenants
- Capacity to meet requirements for securing a housing tenancy (for example, prospective tenants are usually required to furnish personal references and to have an established employment record)
- Ability to communicate in the language of the receiving country
- Access to accommodation support from family and friends
- Family composition and housing needs. Large families, extended families, singles and refugees with disabilities may experience greater difficulties in securing appropriate accommodation.
- Cultural views of various housing types. For example in some cultures, wooden housing may be perceived as inferior.

Also relevant are factors in the receiving society including:

- The structure of the housing sector, in particular the extent of private home ownership and the mix of government and private sector involvement in the rental housing market. For example in countries such as Denmark and Sweden, government plays a significant role in housing provision for nationals, while in others such as the US and Australia, there is limited public sector involvement and public housing is targeted to nationals with special needs.
- The existing infrastructure to support populations with more intensive housing needs (eg housing advocacy services)
- The cost of housing and in particular the availability of low cost housing
- The availability of appropriate housing. For example, in a number of resettlement countries, the trend in the wider population is toward smaller family size. These countries have experienced some difficulties in providing housing for large and extended refugee families. For some resettled refugees privacy may be important, particularly those who have spent prolonged periods in a refugee camp or in other forms of collective housing.
- The preparedness of private renting agents and landlords to rent to resettled refugees and existing provisions to prevent discrimination in the housing market.

Studies conducted in a number of resettlement countries indicate that resettled refugees tend to be over represented in insecure and substandard housing and to be relatively mobile in the early resettlement period (reference).

Advance planning to meet the housing needs of resettled refugees particularly in emerging resettlement countries is important to avoid resettled refugees spending a prolonged period in reception accommodation (see chapter 2.2).

## **Issues to consider in planning housing options**

### **Are special housing programs required for resettled refugees?**

Ensuring that resettled refugees have access to secure and affordable permanent housing is perhaps one of the most challenging and complex problems facing countries of resettlement. Recognising the critical role of housing in the integration process, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands all allocate permanent housing to resettled refugees soon after their arrival. Their capacity to do so is influenced by both the structure of housing provision in



those countries (with government playing a significant role in providing housing to nationals), and the fact that resettled refugees are allocated to specific municipalities according to a quota system. This enables a greater degree of advance planning than is the case in countries where refugee placement is governed by other factors (see chapter 2.1).

In other receiving countries, however, there are significant barriers to allocating subsidised housing to resettled refugees, with many having minimal public sector housing, an unmet demand for low cost dwellings among nationals and significant homeless populations.

In this context, governments risk generating antipathy toward resettled refugees if they give them preference over nationals for subsidised government housing. While in some of these countries, public housing authorities agree to allocate units for resettled refugees, in others newcomers are required to secure housing on the same basis as nationals and are subject to the same eligibility requirements and waiting periods for public housing.

Nevertheless almost all countries recognise that resettled refugees face disadvantage in the housing market and hence offer them additional support to access permanent housing.

### **Identifying key players in housing provision**

The involvement of a number of players will be critical in ensuring that resettled refugees have secure and affordable accommodation, in particular

- Private sector landlords and renting agents
- Government housing authorities
- Community based resettlement agencies, ethno-cultural support services and non-government agencies. In many countries, these agencies provide housing advocacy, advice and support and may also be involved in providing subsidised housing to populations with special needs.
- Volunteers. In many countries, volunteers provide 'hands-on' support in the process of searching for a house.
- Refugee communities and family and friends.

### **Initiatives to facilitate access to safe, secure and affordable housing**

#### **Housing information and support**

Most countries incorporate information about housing into orientation programs and offer individual support to secure long term housing as part of reception and early settlement support.

#### **What information will new arrivals require to access affordable, quality housing?**

- Whether housing is provided by the receiving country
- The key features of the housing market (eg the mix of public and private housing, home ownership)
- The costs of housing in the receiving country
- The availability of housing (how difficult or otherwise will housing be to secure?)
- Realistic information about the quality of affordable housing and the characteristics of the neighbourhood in which it is likely to be available
- The rights and obligations of housing tenants
- The availability of services providing advice and support in locating and securing housing
- The availability of financial assistance to meet the costs of housing (eg rental subsidies, refundable loans, assistance with 'up-front' costs)
- How to find and apply for rental accommodation
- How to apply for government subsidised housing

Some resettled refugees will require housing support, information, advocacy and advice later in the resettlement period in relation to tenancy matters or when searching for a house, in the event that further relocations are required. Varying arrangements are in place in established resettlement countries for providing this support including:

- Providing funding to ethno-cultural, resettlement support and non-government agencies serving immigrants and refugees to offer housing advice and support
- Promoting resettled refugees' access to housing support, advocacy and information services established for nationals who experience disadvantage in the housing market (eg by providing information about these services to resettled refugees; sensitising services to the experiences and needs of resettled refugees; establishing partnerships between integration support services and specialist housing agencies)
- Establishing special housing information, support and advocacy services for immigrants and refugees

### **Addressing possible objections to renting to resettled refugees**

Private renting agents may be reluctant to rent to resettled refugees because they lack familiarity with them and because few resettled refugees have an established rental or employment record in the receiving country. They may also be concerned about the potential for existing tenants to lack tolerance of newcomers (eg different cooking smells or music). A number of strategies have been adopted by receiving countries to address this including:

- Resettlement agencies building relationships with individual renting agents. Through this relationship, it can be demonstrated that resettled refugees are provided the support of the resettlement agency to maintain a sound and secure tenancy.
- Awareness raising activities among private landlords and rental agents who may have reservations about renting houses to resettled refugees
- Promoting resettled refugees' access to mediation and advocacy services through ethno-cultural services and non-government agencies or housing advocacy services established for nationals.
- Brokerage services. For example the British Refugee Council offered a scheme whereby the Council provided (among other things) a written guarantee against an agreed inventory on behalf of refugee tenants. In Benin, rent is paid to land lords on resettled refugee's behalf by the settlement support agency six months in advance, with resettled refugees income support payments being reduced accordingly. In Spain a non-government agency rents houses from private landlords and subsequently sub-lets them to resettled refugees. Through positive experiences with refugee tenants, landlords participating in brokerage programs may be more willing to enter future tenancies with resettled refugees without third party intervention.
- Legislation to prevent discrimination in the housing market on the grounds of race, culture or ethnicity (see chapter 2.11).

### **Enhancing access to public housing**

Government subsidised housing is an important option for resettled refugees, many of whom are likely to be on low and fixed incomes in the years following their arrival. Resettlement countries have sought to enhance resettled refugees' access to public housing by:

- Providing information to resettled refugees about public housing. In many countries, resettled refugees are routinely supported to apply for public housing as part of the reception and orientation process. This is important given the long waiting times for public housing in many countries.
- Ensuring that systems for allocating public housing on an urgent or priority basis are responsive to resettled refugees, in particular those with special needs
- Providing professional development to housing officers to ensure that an understanding of the experiences and needs of resettled refugees is reflected in placement decisions and administrative processes
- Making specific housing allocations for resettled refugees. For example in Chile, the Housing Ministry agrees to allocate a set number of housing units per year for refugees settling through that country's integration program.
- Encouraging housing authorities to plan for resettled refugees with special housing needs (eg large and extended families, refugees with disabilities)

**Some International Examples**

**Choice of housing in Chile**

In 2001, a group of Afghan and Iraqi refugees were offered resettlement in Chile. The government housing authority offered them a choice of two locations. The families chose apartments in a small community with access to the city.

**Keeping larger families together in Sweden**

While Swedish houses have been designed for small families, some landlords have enabled larger resettled refugee families to live together by renting two adjoining apartments

**Subsidies to meet the costs of housing**

One of the significant barriers facing resettled refugees in securing private rental accommodation is meeting the initial costs associated with entering a rental agreement and ongoing rental payments. A number of countries offer rental subsidies, grants and refundable loans to meet the 'up-front' costs of private rental (eg rent in advance, bonds)

While in some cases, these programs are targeted specifically to resettled refugees, in many they are part of a broader income support program available to nationals.

**Ensuring access to affordable, quality, and safe housing:  
Good Practice Features**

**Overall a sound integration program would ensure that:**

- There are appropriate protocols and resources in place to provide or facilitate access to long term, affordable, secure and quality housing as soon as possible after arrival
- Relevant players are engaged in the planning process, in particular refugee communities, non-government organisations, government housing authorities and the private sector.
- The needs of resettled refugees with particular housing needs are addressed (eg large and extended families, single persons, resettled refugees with disabilities).

**Specific housing services and programs would:**

- Provide language assistance
- Provide housing advice and support recognising the importance of other resettlement factors such as income and social support
- Recognise and seek to redress the relative housing disadvantage experienced by people from refugee backgrounds

## 2.9 Building Bridges to Economic Self Sufficiency: Employment and training

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### Rebuilding Goals for Integration

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and pre-migration experience.

**Notes to reviewers regarding Promising integration practices.**

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**Currently included**

- US Job placement program
- UK Job search support
- UK Mentoring
- Netherlands Internship
- US transport
- France –employer collaboration
- US cultural accommodation
- UK Business advice

**Forwarded during review period (to be incorporated after ATC)**

None sought

**Still required**

None

## **Building Bridges to Economic Self Sufficiency: Employment, adult education and training**

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*This chapter focuses on strategies to support resettled refugees to secure economic self sufficiency through employment, education and training. It should be read in conjunction with Part Three which examines particular planning issues of concern to refugee women, elders and young people.*

### **A checklist for planning for economic self sufficiency**

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about giving priority to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identifying and developing partnerships with key public and private sector partners (eg job placement providers, employers, employer associations)</li><li>▪ Making arrangements for individualised assessment and job placement (where possible through an existing provider)</li><li>▪ Incorporating information about employment conditions, services and processes in orientation</li><li>▪ Resettlement community selection and placement policies which optimise employment opportunities</li></ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategies to ensure that job assessment and placement services are responsive to the needs of resettled refugees (eg. language assistance, professional development and awareness raising among providers)</li><li>• Specialised job placement and support programs and services for resettled refugees</li><li>• Programs for providing more intensive job search assistance and support to resettled refugees or strategies to promote their access to specialist programs targeted to nationals experiencing labour force disadvantage</li><li>• Strategies to support resettled refugees to have prior learning, qualifications and experience recognised</li><li>• Strategies to address barriers to work force participation (eg child care, transportation)</li><li>• Programs to support resettled refugees to establish micro-economic enterprises</li><li>• Strategies to facilitate access to the workforce (eg mentor programs)</li><li>• Measures to promote equal employment opportunity among, and prevent discrimination against, resettled refugees.</li><li>• Engaging labour unions, employers, job placement services and the refugee and wider communities in initiatives to promote refugee employment</li><li>• Strategies and programs for job advancement and retraining</li></ul>

### **Economic self sufficiency and employment as resources for rebuilding**

Economic self sufficiency is one of the most important factors in successful integration, with earning capacity influencing the ability to 'purchase' many of the other resources required to rebuild life in a new country, among them housing, health care and education.

Employment is also important for long term economic stability, especially in times of difficulty or crisis. This is particularly the case in those countries where entitlement to other benefits such as health care, retirement income, sickness and unemployment benefits, are tied to participation in paid work.

As well as providing the means for economic stability, employment has a powerful influence on one's capacity to participate equally in the receiving society. Without employment, refugees risk becoming trapped in a cycle of social and economic marginalisation affecting not only them but possibly future generations.

As one of the primary sources of contact between adult new arrivals and their new country, the workplace provides a focus for learning about the culture and practices of the receiving society. Providing day-to-day opportunities for communicating in the language of that society, it also speeds the process of achieving language proficiency, with obvious benefits for reducing social isolation and increasing the overall competence, control and independence of new refugee arrivals. The work place is also a major site for the development of friendships and social support networks.

Meaningful work is a primary source through which we define ourselves and our role both in the wider society and in the family. This is particularly important for refugee arrivals, many of whom will have struggled to maintain a positive identity in the context of disruption and dependency in the course of their refugee experiences. Being able to realise their personal potential in the labour force is a significant factor in successful integration. This is particularly the case for men, with studies indicating that being unable to obtain work commensurate with their skills and experience is a significant risk factor for depression in this group (reference).

Promoting opportunities for refugee employment also has benefits for receiving countries. As well as helping to minimise dependency on social support payments, through employment, refugees are able to contribute to the tax base of the receiving country and, through their purchasing power, to the broader economic good.

The workplace is a primary avenue through which refugees can contribute the unique skills and attributes they bring to the economy and broader social fabric of the receiving country (see chapter 1.1).

Measures to ensure that refugees gain access to employment are an integral element of a sound integration program. Ideally, these should aim to ensure that refugees are able to compete with nationals for jobs which are both commensurate with their skills and experience and through which they are able to optimise their contribution to receiving countries.

“Integration means for me to be part of Canadian society, to learn English and find a job as soon as possible”

**Refugee resettling in Canada**

### **Laying the Groundwork in emerging resettlement countries**

While steps to promote refugee economic self sufficiency are critical to the success of any integration program, they are particularly important in emerging countries, especially those with a limited capacity to fund income support programs. In these countries, resettled refugees will be required to secure employment at a very early stage in their resettlement.

For this reason, it is important that emerging countries begin at an early stage to plan a diversity of measures to support early economic self sufficiency including:

- Awareness raising among employers, training providers and job placement programs
- Establishing partnerships in both the public and private sectors necessary to create a range of employment and training opportunities
- Developing short term professional and vocational training opportunities
- Micro-economic enterprise initiatives
- Supports to complete formal education and training
- Engaging the cooperation of local networks who might provide links to employment opportunities (eg business associations, voluntary organisations, labour unions, faith based communities)

## **Factors affecting economic self-sufficiency**

While there is considerable variability in the skills and attributes of individuals and groups of refugees and in conditions in receiving countries, there are a number of factors influencing their capacity to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Among these are:

- Proficiency in the language of the receiving country
- Their knowledge of and capacity to access recruitment and job placement services and processes
- The transferability of, and demand for, their skills in the labour market of the receiving country
- The extent of disruption to education, training and employment experienced in their countries of origin and asylum
- Competing demands associated with resettlement, adjustment to a new society and culture and for many, the process of dealing with the trauma, grief and guilt associated with forced migration
- Cultural and religious practices and beliefs and the extent to which these are accommodated in the labour-force and work places of the receiving society
- Their access to the resources required to support work-force participation, among them child care, transportation and 'tools-of-trade' (eg in some receiving countries, trades people may be expected to supply their own tool-box).
- Their access to resources for self employment such as loans and knowledge of the business sector in the receiving society
- Their motivation and openness to exploring new employment possibilities, making it essential that resettled refugees are fully involved in and have ownership of the employment search process.

Also influential are conditions in receiving countries including:

- Attitudes toward, and experience of, employing people from other countries
- Economic conditions, with refugees tending to experience particular difficulty in competing in the labour market in countries where unemployment rates are high among nationals
- Whether they are able to have qualifications and experience gained in countries of origin recognised in the receiving country
- The availability of supports to enable participation in language skills training, and if necessary further education and training in preparation for employment or advancement in the labour market. Some countries have an extensive system for education and training of nationals and access is both free and universal or is promoted through loans, subsidies or scholarships. In others, however, these systems may not be well developed or are available on a 'user-pays' basis only.
- Existing infrastructure for supporting access to the labour market, such as national job placement networks and programs to support disadvantaged workers
- Expectations of refugee economic self-sufficiency and the availability of income support and safety net services for those who are outside of the labour market. The issues associated with this are discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.4.
- Expectations of participation in language training programs
- The existence of legislative frameworks and programs to prevent discrimination against and exploitation of refugees as a vulnerable group within the labour market.

## **Initiatives to promote and support economic self sufficiency**

### **Individualised assessment and job placement assistance**

In order to access employment in receiving societies, recent refugee arrivals will need to familiarise themselves with:

- Recruitment services and systems in place in the receiving country;



- Labour force conditions and the demands for their skills within it. This may involve defining and interpreting their previous work experience and skills in the jargon of the receiving country. For example job titles are generally specific to a given labour market and may be misleading when transferred to another. Similarly, resettled refugees may not recognise skills and experience acquired informally through, for example, their work in a refugee camp.
- Education and training options in the event that employment prospects in their former careers are poor or their education has been highly disrupted
- Processes for re-certification and accreditation (see below).

Those wishing to establish economic self sufficiency through micro-economic enterprise (see below) will require information about programs available to assist them in this endeavour.

Provision for individualised assessment and job placement in the early resettlement period, therefore, is an integral component of an integration program. Some countries of resettlement have existing job placement programs in place for nationals. Where this is the case, new arrivals are linked with these services as part of the reception and orientation process.

However, in most of these countries, it is recognised that additional initiatives are required to ensure that these programs are responsive to the needs of new arrivals. These include:

- Providing interpreting and translating services to support refugees to access job placement services and to participate in job search activity
- Offering more intensive support to refugees in the early resettlement period. In some countries this is offered through existing programs established for job seekers with special needs. In others, special programs have been established for refugees (see box).
- Providing information and professional development programs to job placement officers to enhance their awareness of the past experiences and current concerns of new arrivals. This may be particularly important in those countries where participation in job search activity through a government job placement service is a condition of receiving social support payments.
- Recruiting bilingual and bi-cultural staff to job placement services
- Making provision for regular review of job placements in the early resettlement period with a view to identifying and addressing any problems experienced by refugee arrivals or their employers.

In other countries special job placement services have been established for refugees (see box) or assessment and job placement is formally incorporated into the reception and orientation process. For example in Denmark, where reception and integration occur at the municipal level, individually tailored 'action plans' are developed in consultation with new refugee arrivals. These include, among other things, an assessment of the refugee's individual skills and qualifications with a view to facilitating their entry into either the labour market or education and training.

**What level of support should refugees be offered to resume former careers or re-attain a position in the labour force comparable to that held in their countries of origin?**

Some refugees will have achieved very high degrees of education and high level professional and vocational qualifications. However these skills may not necessarily be immediately transferable to the labour market of the receiving country. This may be due to a number of factors:

- There may be limited or no demand for the particular skills held by the new arrival.
- There may be an over supply of the skills held by new arrivals, creating stringent competition and in some cases, leading to specific bars or barriers to entry of personnel trained in other countries.
- Proof of highly specialised knowledge may be required to have prior qualifications recognised and to practice their profession or trade. This may be the case for example

with the professions of medicine and law and with trades in the telecommunications industry.

Resettled refugees in these circumstances may require some assistance to assess whether it is possible to reclaim their former careers, or whether indeed their long term interests would be better served by exploring an alternative career path.

In some countries specific steps are taken to support refugees to either resume their former careers or to retrain for work commensurate with their aptitude and aspirations (eg through the provision of mentoring programs, training subsidies and social support payments to enable participation in retraining). In others, however, this remains the responsibility of the individual entrant.

There are a number of factors weighing against refugees reattaining the position held in the labour force in their countries of origin. In some countries it may be neither economically viable nor politically sustainable, to support refugees to realise this goal. This is particularly the case in those countries in which nationals have limited access to education and training initiatives. In these circumstances, it may be necessary for resettled refugees to adopt a career plan which involves securing employment for immediate economic survival, while at the same time enrolling in language and career training for employment in the longer term. Clearly, the extent to which support is offered will need to be considered in the context of prevailing labour force and economic conditions in the receiving country and the circumstances of individual refugee entrants.

“Integration in the labour market is .... about appropriate and sustainable employment, not just work full stop”. (p15 European Council for Refugees in Exile)

**Some International Examples...Providing intensive tailored job placement support to refugees (p18 ECRE)**

In Hamburg, Germany, a non-government agency providing support to refugees (AWO) has entered an agreement with the Public Employment Service (PES) to provide intensive job assessment and placement support to refugees. The program was introduced recognising that officers of the PES had neither the time nor expertise to offer refugees an appropriate service.

Refugees registering for unemployment assistance are referred to AWO rather than the PES. There, they are assisted by an officer experienced in working with refugees and who, in many cases, is able to speak their language.

Assessment of their language, training and employment needs is offered followed by referrals to appropriate services or employment positions.

A contrasting approach has been taken in the Australia state of Victoria. There, refugees are assisted through the mainstream employment service. However the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture provides training courses for employment professionals to sensitise them to the particular needs of refugees.

“I want to continue my education in theatre because I write good stories and I would love to be an actor.” **Refugee resettling in Sweden**

**An International Example: Working for Refugees**

In the United States, non-government agencies are contracted to provide job placement services for newly arrived refugees. Refugees are referred to these services where an individual assessment is conducted and assistance in preparing a resume offered. The service then approaches individual employers looking for workers that ‘match’ the skills of the refugee. Many employment programs offer employers a free translation service to assist with an initial training and induction period and inform them about any special subsidies and tax credits that may be available to them when hiring the person. They may also be available to ‘trouble-shoot’ in the event of any problems (such as safety issues or cultural misunderstanding).

### **Enhancing job readiness, job-search skills and resources**

People from refugee backgrounds may require some additional assistance in participating in job search activity and preparing themselves for employment in the receiving country. Having only recently arrived they are unlikely to have access to resources such as word-processing and Internet facilities. Many will be unfamiliar with job search conventions in the receiving country, such as those relating to the preparation of job applications and resumes and to participation in job interviews.

While refugees are generally very motivated to seek employment in the receiving country, some may have never worked in the paid labour force or may have endured a prolonged period of economic dependency in a refugee camp. Further, work place culture and values may be very different in the receiving country from those in refugee source countries.

Recognising this, in a number of countries refugees are offered intensive programs designed to orient them to the labour force of the receiving country, prepare them for work and support them with job-search resources. Again, arrangements for providing this support differ between countries, with some establishing programs targeted to refugees and others linking refugees with services provided to nationals with special job-search needs.

#### **An International Example...Migrant Information Technology Centre, London UK**

A number of non-government agencies collaborated with refugee communities to establish a 'drop-in' centre for refugees and migrants settling in London. Among other services, the centre provides access to the Internet to support job search activity and to word processing facilities for the preparation of resumes and job applications.

Studies indicate that a large proportion of vacancies in receiving countries are filled informally through professional and personal networks, often based on prospective applicant's established reputation or 'track-record' in their field (as opposed to formalised competitive recruitment processes (reference). With networks and professional identity taking some time to build and nurture, new arrivals may be at a significant disadvantage in this regard.

In an attempt to improve the job prospects of new arrivals, a number of countries have developed mentor programs, whereby refugees are linked with peers in their profession (either nationals or established members of refugee communities). Mentors support the new arrival by orienting them to their field in the receiving country, assisting them with the preparation of applications and resumes and linking them with employers and other peers.

In those countries in which faith based communities have been actively engaged in supporting refugee resettlement (see chapters 2.3 and 2.11), these have served as an important link between resettled refugees and employment opportunities in the wider society.

#### **An International Example: Refugees mentoring refugees**

In the UK a program was developed to support doctors trained in other countries to prepare for practice in the United Kingdom. Through a weekly group program, convened by a requalified refugee doctor, refugees with medical qualifications were offered information about the requirements of registration, language coaching, clinical placements and support through the system of requalifying exams.

Internship programs have also been successfully established in a number of countries. These provide new arrivals the opportunity to gain work experience in their field, build networks, and demonstrate their skills and experience.

**An International Example...Internships for refugee employment (p28)**

In the Netherlands, an internship program has been developed offering refugees with qualifications and experience, a period of paid work experience in a relevant government department. Refugees are employed for a twelve month period, during which time they are offered personal support from a work place mentor. While ongoing employment is not guaranteed, in practice, a large proportion of those participating in the program have been able to secure this in the internship or other employment settings.

**Promoting recognition of prior learning, qualifications and experience**

As indicated above (see box), not all resettled refugees will be in a position to resume their former careers. However, those who wish to do so may need to have professional or trade qualifications (eg in nursing, engineering, commercial driving, or hairdressing) gained elsewhere re-certified or re-accredited in the receiving country before commencing practice.

Similarly those wishing to resume tertiary or other post secondary education or training will need to have prior learning formally evaluated by education or training authorities. There may be a number of barriers to this in receiving countries:

- In most countries, no single body is responsible for certifying credentials gained overseas. Rather, this is the responsibility of individual institutions, professional associations and trades. Accessing these systems may, therefore, be a complex undertaking for new arrivals.
- Formalised processes for certification or accreditation of overseas trained professionals may not have been established for all trades and professions and/or there may be a limited understanding among relevant bodies of how to assess the qualifications and prior experience of overseas trained personnel.
- In some professions, re-certification processes are very expensive, stringent and protracted, often involving a period of further study. The time, cost and effort involved for refugees may compete with the need for employment for immediate economic survival. In some countries, stringent re-certification, accreditation or registration processes may be imposed by trade and professional associations to restrict the entry of overseas trained personnel who may be viewed as competitors.
- Documentation of qualifications and prior experience may have been lost, stolen or destroyed in the course of their refugee experiences making it difficult to provide proof to employers and accrediting authorities.

As a first step toward enhancing refugees' access to accreditation and re-certification processes, refugee employment services in a number of countries have compiled information for new arrivals and those working with them on requirements and contact details for relevant trades and professionals. Others have developed resources to assist bodies responsible for re-certification and accreditation to better understand and assess the qualifications and prior experience of refugee arrivals. For example in Denmark, a Handbook was produced for universities to support their assessment of the prior learning of refugees from those main regions represented in the Danish resettlement program.

“My English was funny at that time and I took a job as a cleaner in a hairdressers. No-one believed that back home I was an engineer”.

**Refugee resettling in Denmark**

Consideration may also need to be given to advocating on behalf of, or in co-operation with refugees, to secure re-certification processes that are more responsive to the needs of refugees while at the same time maintaining appropriate standards. For example a refugee employment service in Kentucky, US worked with the professional engineer's association in that state to establish processes for re-accrediting resettled refugees who had qualified as engineers in their country-of-origin.

Internships and mentoring programs (see above) may also be useful, with the former providing the local experience sometimes required as part of a process of re-certification or accreditation, and the latter ensuring that refugees have relevant peer support.

### **Addressing practical barriers to employment**

While employment yields obvious economic benefits, a number of resources are required for work-force participation, such as a transport and a driver's licence and in some cases 'tools-of-trade'. Given the recency of their arrival, refugees are unlikely to have acquired these resources and may need some support in accessing them.

#### **An International Example: Enhancing access to transport in the US**

Access to transportation has been identified as a major obstacle to refugee employment in the US. A number of innovative programs have been developed to address this:

- In Florida, a non-government agency provides loans to refugees to purchase a car which is repayable 'in-kind' through the provision of transportation services to other refugee families;
- In Maryland, a large steel company employing significant numbers of refugees offered low cost transport to refugees for their journey to work.
- In Vermont, a refugee support service provides financial assistance and language support to refugees in order that they can obtain a driver's licence.

Refugees with child care responsibilities are likely to have limited access to family and informal support, yet may be unaware of the existence of private and government child care agencies. Some families may be reluctant to have their children cared for outside of the family. This may be because they are unfamiliar with formal child care services; because they or their children are experiencing particular difficulties associated with past trauma (eg difficulties in entrusting their children to the care of others, separation anxiety) or because existing services are not culturally responsive.

The costs of child-care may also serve as a disincentive to employment, particularly for very low wage earners.

For these reasons, refugees with child care responsibilities may need additional information on the role of child care in the receiving country, child care services and costs as well as any child care subsidies that may be available to them (see chapter 2.7).

### **Marketing the skills and attributes of refugees to employers and promoting cultural accommodation**

Engaging employers is a vital strategy in promoting refugee self sufficiency. As well as exercising control over recruitment, employers have a powerful influence over work place conditions and culture, and in some industries may be in a position to support refugees with other supports such as child care and transportation. Some employers may be unfamiliar with resettled refugees and this may contribute to a reluctance to hire them. Integration services in existing resettlement countries have sought to foster employer support and overcome potential employer objections by:

- active 'marketing' of the skills and attributes of refugees in general or of individual refugees, including where necessary, information to counter erroneous views about refugees or particular refugee communities or to assist employers in accommodating cultural or religious practices (see below)
- making arrangements to brief key industry and employer bodies of current and projected refugee intakes
- providing language assistance to employers to assist with initial induction and training (see box)
- providing subsidies and tax-relief to employers hiring refugees. In those countries where refugees qualify for programs established for nationals with special

employment needs, steps may need to be taken to promote these programs to employers.

- Soliciting the co-operation of key corporations to routinely notify refugee support and reception programs of vacancies (see box)

**Take Care**

When communicating with employers and job-placement personnel in the receiving country, refugees should be presented as normal people in extraordinary circumstances. Market research conducted among employers in the United Kingdom in 1998 indicates that it is important to avoid (p32):

- inflating the skills and attributes of refugees
- defining refugee arrivals as 'needy', thereby risking them being perceived as burdens to prospective employers
- engendering guilt by using shock tactics
- Creating the impression that refugees are the only, or most important, group experiencing labour force disadvantage.

While employers and job placement personnel may require some awareness of the past experiences of refugees, evidence from around the globe suggests that the single most compelling reason for hiring them is the valuable contribution they make to the workplace. Consider communicating some of the following messages:

- Resettled refugees generally have high levels of employer loyalty.
- Owing to their past experiences, resettled refugees are generally highly adaptable and hence are likely to settle readily into a new job.
- While resettled refugees may not have worked in the receiving country before, many have sound work histories in their countries of origin and asylum.
- A culturally diverse workforce can contribute to a positive company profile.
- Different cultural practices can generally be accommodated in the work place without compromising safety, hygiene or efficiency.
- Information about any language or other assistance which may be available to employers hiring resettle refugees.
- Any particular skills refugees or refugee groups bring with them.
- Factors associated with the refugee and resettlement experience that might affect job-search skills and the capacity to retain employment.

Also think about providing information:

- about employer obligations under relevant discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation.
- about special incentives available to employers engaging refugees (eg language support, subsidies, tax concessions).
- about special programs and supports available to employers to assist them in orientating and training new arrivals in the work place.

"Fortunately I have a good boss who understands me, who knows about the situation in my country. He was also really kind to me and helped me a lot. Initially I had real difficulties in understanding this new system of work."

**Refugee resettling in the Netherlands**

**Accommodating culture**

Some refugees have religious or cultural practices that may compromise their employment prospects, or if not accommodated in the workplace, may exclude them from some employment opportunities. For example practicing Muslims will need flexibility in their work schedule and space to participate in designated prayer times. They are forbidden to work in positions involving the sale or handling of pork or alcohol.

Some employers may be concerned about employing Muslim women who wear the veil (or *hajib*) believing that it will compromise safety or hygiene or effect corporate image.

While cultural requirements may serve as disincentives to hire Muslim workers, in practice many companies have been very successful in accommodating these. Indeed, a visible commitment to a culturally diverse workforce may assist in enhancing a positive company profile. Refugee employment services in existing resettlement countries have taken a number of steps to ensure that cultural practices of refugees do not give rise to difficulties including:

- The inclusion of relevant cultural information in professional development programs for job placement personnel.
- Awareness raising programs to assist employers to accommodate cultural practices, without compromising workplace performance in other key areas.
- Advocacy on behalf of individual refugees who have experienced lack of understanding or active discrimination. In some cases this may involve invoking the authority provided by existing anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation.

**An International Example: Engaging employers (P34 ECRE)**

In France, a non-government refugee support agency (FTDA) enters agreements with major French employers who agree to make branches of the FTDA aware of job vacancies. Refugees selected for positions are employed on the same basis as other workers. However an FTDA maintains contact with them to monitor the arrangement and receive feedback from both employer and employee. This arrangement is relatively inexpensive to set up and administer.

**An International Example: Enhancing cultural accommodation**

Refugeeworks, the US Office of refugee resettlement's national technical assistance office for employment, was aware that both Muslim workers and their employers harboured misconceptions about whether it was possible for Muslim women to work while at the same time observing their traditional prayer times and their practice of wearing the traditional veil (see above).

Working closely with advisers from the Muslim community, Refugeeworks has developed a campaign aimed at raising awareness of the needs of Muslim workers, the ways these can be accommodated in the work place and employer's obligations under anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation.

**Placement Practises as tools for promoting employment**

From time-to-time, countries of resettlement have offered resettled refugees placement in communities where unemployment rates are low or there is an un-met demand for labour in specific industries. In others resettled refugees have been offered financial and practical support to relocate from their initial placement site to communities where they have specific employment opportunities or where unemployment rates are lower.

While, these are effective strategies for promoting economic self sufficiency, it is important that they are considered in the context of community capacity to meet other integration goals, such as ethnic community and social support (see chapter 2.1).

### **Addressing racism, discrimination and exploitation in the workplace**

As indicated in Chapter 2.11, refugees, in particular those with characteristics (such as accent, racial features or cultural practices) that distinguish them from the dominant culture of the receiving society, may be vulnerable to racism and discrimination. This may affect their prospects of securing employment in the first instance, their opportunities for advancement within the workforce and the degree to which they are accepted by fellow workers. Particular hostility may be directed to refugees settling in areas or seeking employment in industries where unemployment is high as they may be viewed as unwelcome competitors for scarce jobs.

Poor alternative employment prospects, language differences and lack of knowledge of their rights as workers may also make new refugee arrivals particularly vulnerable to exploitation by employers (reference). Mature aged refugees, women and refugees with disabilities may face the compounding effects of discrimination on the grounds of their age, gender and ability (see Part Three).

In countries with a long history of culturally diverse migration there are legislative frameworks in place aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting equal opportunity in the work place. Services established to support refugee resettlement have used this framework as a basis for both raising awareness among employers of their obligations to refugee applicants and workers and for advocating the rights of individual refugees. Labour unions are also important partners in protecting the industrial rights of refugee workers (see below).

### **Promoting economic self sufficiency through micro-economic enterprise**

Micro-economic enterprise can provide an important alternative route to economic self sufficiency for some new arrivals in particular:

- Those who owned small businesses such as grocers, restaurants or beauty shops or derived income from small home based enterprises, such as dressmaking in their countries of origin.
- Those whose skills are not readily transferable to the labour market of the receiving country (eg doctors, lawyers) or who may not fit well into more traditional jobs (eg artists).
- Women, since some small or home based businesses may be more compatible with their child care and domestic responsibilities. This is particularly the case for women originating from cultures where it is unacceptable for women to work outside of the home. (see chapter 3.2)
- Those resettled in countries with a small formal labour force, but a strong tradition of self employment through business ownership and income generating activity. (eg Burkina Faso)

If successful, small businesses can assist integration through economic self sufficiency. Those involving extensive contact with customers or other business networks, also provide opportunities for language learning and social connection.

However in some enterprises (eg home based garment construction for the garment industry) these opportunities may be limited, isolating refugee arrivals from the wider community. In a number of resettlement countries, home based producers have also been subject to exploitation by wholesalers and retailers (reference).

There are also some inherent financial risks in establishing small business ventures and some may involve a significant amount of personal investment and organisational effort on behalf of new arrivals, many of whom may already be struggling with other resettlement issues.

Refugees wanting to establish a small business may require some support including:

- Assistance with initial capital outlay or in accessing credit facilities
- Assistance in preparing a business plan



- Information on taxation, accounting and other regulatory frameworks in the receiving country
- Information relating to market conditions in the receiving country
- An alternative source of income or social support while the business is in its establishment phase.

In some countries, this assistance may be secured through small business enterprise schemes already established for nationals. For example in Ireland non-refundable allowances are available to people wishing to establish a small business (subject to the viability of the proposal being approved). This allowance, which is gradually reduced, is available for up to three years. In the Netherlands, people starting their own businesses are eligible for a refundable grant for eighteen months (p42). Refugees have made extensive use of these programs in both countries.

Some additional assistance may be required to facilitate access to these services, given language issues and the fact that in many countries these schemes are often governed by strict and complex eligibility criteria.

In other countries, such as Burkina Faso and Benin, targeted small business enterprise schemes have been established for refugees. Loans with favourable terms are made available to those interested in pursuing this path to economic self sufficiency.

“I love to make money with my own hands. I always worked hard and helped my family and my children above all”

**Refugee resettling in Ireland**

**An International Example: The Business Enterprise Adviser, Refugee Council, London U.K.**

The Adviser was established recognising that refugees were having difficulties in accessing existing government enterprise advice agencies. This was due to language difficulties as well as to a lack of appreciation by mainstream services of some of the different business ideas presented by refugee applicants.

The service, staffed by people who are themselves from refugee backgrounds, offers:

- Advice on starting a business
- Orientation to the practices and cultures of the market in Britain
- Language assistance to access credit providers. Business plans can be developed in first language, with translations being provided to enable people to communicate with credit providers (p43)

**The role of Labour Unions**

Labour unions have an important role in protecting the rights of refugees; in promoting a hospitable environment in the work place and in ensuring that refugees have access to opportunities for employment, retraining and advancement. In many countries wages and conditions are generally better in unionised sections of the labour force.

Some unions may be difficult to engage, seeing refugees as competitors for scarce jobs and as potentially undermining hard won wages and conditions, by offering a cheaper or more compliant labour source. However, in many countries, they have been powerful integration partners, recognising the contribution refugees make not only to the work force and economy of the receiving country, but to the membership base of labour unions themselves.

For those new arrivals originating from countries with a strong union heritage, labour unions can also provide an important avenue for making social connections and developing skills in civic participation.

It is important that resettled refugees are provided information about labour unions and their role in the receiving society. Unions in a number of countries of resettlement have conducted education programs targeted to ethno-cultural communities.

The political leverage of labour unions may make them important partners in garnering broader government and community support for integration programs. For example in 1999, Trade Unions in Denmark collaborated with employers and non-government agencies to conduct the *See Difference as an Advantage Campaign*. The aim of the campaign was to draw the attention of other workers and prospective employers to the resources ethnic minorities – among them refugees – bring to the labour market and to promote equal opportunity and counter discrimination. The campaign involved a number of strategies including a media campaign, a work based stand-up comedy show, resources to assist employers to develop ethnically inclusive work place policies, lobbying and network formation.

More recently unions in the US conducted a series of rallies aimed at securing change in immigration laws applying to immigrants without valid entry documentation. Unions in that country have also played a significant role in placing refugees in jobs and in offering formalised retraining programs.

New arrivals from every continent have contributed their energy, talent and commitment to making the US richer and stronger. Likewise the American Union Movement has been enriched by the contributions and courage of immigrant workers. Newly arriving workers continue to make indispensable contributions to the strength and growth of our unions. These efforts have created new unions and strengthened and revived others, benefiting all workers, immigrants and native born alike.

**Resolution of the American Federation of Labour, July 2001.**

Following to be placed in text as 'break-out boxes'

**The advantages of special employment programs for people from refugee backgrounds**

There is a general consensus among countries offering resettlement that the needs of people from refugee backgrounds are better served in the long term by ensuring that they have access to the mainstream labour market and to labour force programs provided for nationals. However in most countries it is recognised that intensive support will be required by refugees in the early resettlement period and that is often best provided through a program tailored to the needs of refugees.

Special refugee employment services and programs may also have a role in ensuring that refugees have access to mainstream labour market programs and employment opportunities by:

- Advocating on behalf of individual new arrivals to employers and education and training institutions
- Providing language and translation assistance
- Providing information on culture and employment practices
- Raising awareness of the skills and attributes of refugee arrivals to employers
- Working with employers, labour unions, education and training institutions and labour market program providers to enhance employment opportunities for new arrivals and to address barriers to equal employment opportunity.

**Achieving Economic Self Sufficiency:  
Good Practice Features**

**Overall a sound integration program would:**

- Offer a program for providing individualised assessment and job placement assistance for refugees which is sensitive to the refugee and resettlement experiences
- Have strategies to prevent discrimination against and promote equal employment opportunity among refugees, targeted to both employers and refugees themselves.
- Offer support for refugees wishing to establish small businesses
- Aim to support refugees to compete on an equal basis with nationals in the labour market and to advance in the labour market commensurate with their skills, experience and aptitude.
- Incorporate strategies to promote and support employment opportunities for refugee women, refugee young people and refugee elders (see Part Three).

**Specific programs established to support refugee employment would:**

- Foster a partnership approach with resettled refugees to ensure that they play an active role in and have a sense of ownership of the job search process.
- Support resettled refugees to represent themselves to employers by assisting them to accurately assess their abilities and job possibilities.
- Provide language assistance
- Provide support which is sensitive to the needs of refugee women, elders and young people (see Part Three).
- Engage employers and labour unions
- Engage refugee communities in planning and implementation
- Promote refugees as assets to employers in receiving countries
- Provide or facilitate access to support with practical barriers (child care, transport, tools of trade)
- Promote access to meaningful and sustainable employment

“I was lucky, I only have good memories but I was always very active. I was willing to work more and I was always looking for more opportunities”

**Refugees resettling in Netherlands**

## 2.10 A Healthy Start: Promoting access to health care

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### **Rebuilding Goals for Integration**

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and pre-migration experience.

**Notes to reviewers regarding case studies**

**Currently included:**

- Canadian Bridge Program
- Capacity building in refugee communities (Australia)

**Forwarded during review process (to be incorporated after ATC)**

HIV AIDs prevention program for African communities (New Zealand)

**Still required**

- A case study of a country offering routine post arrival health assessment in a manner consistent with the good practice features outlined in this chapter (eg holistic, language assistance etc)
- A case study of a country where health care for nationals is financed through private or work related health insurance, but special provision is made for resettled refugees pending their achievement of economic self sufficiency

## 2.10 A Healthy Start: Promoting access to health care

*The focus of this chapter is on providing health screening and assessment for resettled refugees and on strategies for ensuring that they have access to the health care system in the receiving society for their long-term health needs.*

*While health care is important, health status is also influenced by one's access to social and economic resources such as meaningful employment, secure housing, family and community support and a safe and welcoming environment (reference). Ensuring that resettled refugees have access to these other 'health promoting' resources is the subject of other relevant chapters in this Handbook.*

*Strategies for supporting resettled refugees suffering psychological responses to trauma and torture are discussed in chapter 3.1.*

### A check list for planning a healthy start

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Arrangements for offering communicable disease screening and an overall health assessment on arrival</li><li>▪ Identifying health care providers who have an interest in health issues of particular concern to resettled refugees (eg infectious disease and mental health professionals)</li><li>▪ Arrangements for resettled refugees to meet the costs of health care in the resettlement country prior to achieving economic self sufficiency</li></ul>
In the longer term aim for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Interpreters for health care consultations</li><li>▪ Strategies for ensuring that the wider health care system is sensitive to the needs of resettled refugees</li><li>▪ Strategies for building work-force capacity in providing health care to resettled refugees</li><li>▪ Strategies for providing new arrivals information on and orientation to the health system of the receiving country and practical support for accessing health care</li><li>▪ Community awareness strategies aimed at promoting understanding of the health concerns of refugee populations, countering negative perceptions and enhancing community capacity to provide support.</li></ul>

### Health and health care as resources for rebuilding

As well as being a fundamental human right, optimal physical and mental health is a vital resource for integration, enhancing people's capacity to meet the inevitable challenges and stresses of the resettlement process. In contrast, poor health may act as a significant barrier to integration. For example, post traumatic stress symptoms experienced by many torture survivors, such as poor concentration and 'flash-backs', can interfere with the process of learning a new language undeniably a pivotal task in the integration process (reference).

'We were refugees in Thailand for a long time and there were not many doctors. I had all my teeth knocked out when I was tortured. Because I couldn't speak properly, I couldn't start my English classes until they were fixed'.

#### **Burmese refugee resettling in Australia**

Sensitively delivered, health care can help to rebuild trust in others, the motivation to care for oneself and one's feeling of self-respect and dignity. Thorough health care can also provide reassurance to those who fear that they have been irreparably harmed by their refugee experiences.

Through their encounters with health care providers, new arrivals can learn about other resources required for successful integration such as social support networks and services providing assistance with housing and employment. Health care services may provide an

acceptable point of entry to services which new arrivals may otherwise be reluctant to access (eg mental health services).

Large scale studies have indicated that in many areas of physical and mental health, there are significant advantages in identifying and treating health problems at an early stage when they are generally less complex to treat (reference). Ensuring that new arrivals have access to health care as soon as possible after arrival optimises the opportunities for early intervention, with obvious benefits for both the budgets of receiving countries as well as for new arrivals themselves.

“The early intervention worker mentioned all of the problems we had here and the problems we had in Somalia. She showed that she was interested in us.”  
**Refugee resettling in Australia**

### **Factors affecting Health and Access to Health Care**

Resettled refugees experience a relatively high rate of both physical and mental health problems (reference), the result of deprivation of the resources required for good health, exposure to trauma and poor access to health care prior to arrival. Many will not have had access to high quality patient orientated health care for years and hence may have health problems which either have not been diagnosed or have been poorly treated in the past.

With refugee producing countries struggling to meet acute health care needs, many new arrivals will have had limited access to preventative health care programs now well established in many countries of resettlement (eg immunisation, breast and cervical screening).

In the early resettlement period resettled refugees may be exposed to further influences, now known to have an adverse influence on both physical and mental health, among them unemployment, discrimination and lack of family and social support (reference).

This does not mean that resettled refugees are inherently less healthy than the population of receiving countries. Indeed the fact that they have survived often horrific experiences, yet ultimately settle successfully, is evidence of their enormous survival strengths. Most of the health problems effecting resettled refugees can be addressed by sensitive, intensive ‘catch-up’ care in the early period of resettlement.

While health issues of concern to individual resettled refugees and to particular refugee communities clearly vary depending on their region of origin and the nature and duration of their refugee experience, common patterns identified by health care providers and researchers in countries of resettlement are documented in Table One. It is not uncommon for resettled refugees to have multiple and complex problems at the time of arrival.

**Table Eight: Health problems to be aware of in resettled refugees**

Health Concern	Key Issues
<p>Mental health, in particular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• post traumatic stress disorder symptoms</li> <li>• depression</li> <li>• anxiety</li> <li>• grief</li> <li>• Guilt.</li> <li>• Somatic disorders</li> <li>• Culture bound illness#</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associated with exposure to traumatic experiences and other antecedents in the course of the refugee experience.</li> <li>• May persist long after arrival in a safe country</li> <li>• Can be exacerbated by stresses in the period of resettlement</li> </ul>
<p>Nutritional deficiencies, in particular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iron</li> <li>• Folate</li> <li>• Vitamin A</li> <li>• Vitamin D – settlers with dark skin where climatic, lifestyle and cultural factors (eg skin coverage) in country of resettlement lead to reduced exposure to sunlight.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May result from prolonged food deprivation and/or sub-optimal diet</li> <li>• Potentially serious health implications (eg maternal Vitamin D deficiency associated with bony rickets in offspring)</li> <li>• Early identification important as some deficiencies are asymptomatic, but may have serious long-term health consequences (eg vitamin D deficiency associated with early onset osteoporosis in adults; folate deficiency is associated with neural tube defects in the offspring of affected mothers).</li> </ul>
<p>Intestinal parasitic disease</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Endemic in developing countries.</li> <li>• Often asymptomatic.</li> <li>• May be associated with iron deficiency.</li> <li>• Can be life threatening if immuno-suppressed</li> </ul>
<p>Infectious diseases in particular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AIDS/HIV</li> <li>• Tuberculosis</li> <li>• Hepatitis B and C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some infectious diseases endemic in developing countries</li> <li>• Public health programs (eg Tuberculosis control) difficult to implement and maintain in emergency situations such as refugee camps</li> <li>• Identification of entrants with infectious disease is important for both public and individual patient care purposes (eg people with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C will require long term monitoring as they are at increased risk of developing cirrhosis and cancer)</li> </ul>
<p>Injuries sustained in the course of trauma and torture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be untreated or poorly managed</li> </ul>
<p>Chronic disease</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to poor or disrupted access to health care</li> <li>• May not be diagnosed or be inadequately managed, particularly in countries with poorly developed health care infrastructure</li> <li>• Stress and deprivation associated with the refugee experience may be a factor in the onset of some chronic disease (for example diabetes militus)</li> </ul>
<p>Childhood development</p>	<p>Relatively high incidence of childhood developmental problems due variously to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation and trauma</li> <li>• Poor antenatal and birthing care</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior exposure to infectious disease</li> <li>• Poor management of common infant and childhood diseases (eg febrile illness)</li> <li>• Poor child health surveillance in some countries</li> </ul>
Dental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The result of poor diet and limited access to the resources required for dental hygiene in the course of the refugee experience</li> <li>• Damage to teeth and gums sustained through torture and other traumatic experiences</li> </ul>
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited access to screening</li> <li>• Misplaced, damaged or stolen prescription glasses</li> </ul>
Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility of hearing impairment due to exposure to explosive activity in conflict zones</li> <li>• Limited access to screening</li> </ul>
Immunisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low rates of immunisation against vaccine preventable disease in many countries (see Table above)</li> <li>• Immunisation programs often disrupted by war and conflict.</li> <li>• Acceptance of immunisation in resettlement countries may be past negative past experiences of immunisation programs (eg coercive practices, inadequate follow-up of complications of immunisation).</li> </ul>
Women’s health care (eg breast and cervical screening, family planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited or disrupted participation</li> <li>• Accorded a low priority in countries struggling to meet acute health care needs</li> <li>• Female genital mutilation prevalent in African countries. Has implications for gynaecological and obstetric care (see chapter 3.2).</li> </ul>

# Culture bound illnesses are illnesses commonly recognised within a cultural group whose explanatory models may conflict from that of a bio-medical paradigm.

**Sources: to be included in final draft**

Resettled refugees may require additional support to access and make the best use of health services particularly in the early resettlement period, including:

- Access to affordable or ‘fee-free’ services.
- Assistance in communicating with health care providers
- Information about, and orientation to the health care system of the receiving country. This is important as there is considerable variability in health systems globally (see box).
- Information about the relationship between health and migration status. Resettled refugees may resist contact with health care services for all but acute health problems fearing that their permanent residence will be compromised if they are found to have a health problem.
- Practical support to access health care services (eg transport and child care). This is particularly important for resettled refugees who have multiple health care problems requiring numerous follow-up appointments; those struggling with other resettlement tasks; and women for whom family responsibilities may take precedence over self care.

- An approach to patient care which accommodates religious beliefs; different cultural understandings of health or health care and lack of familiarity with the structure and culture of health care in the receiving country.
- An approach to patient care that accommodates the impact of past traumatic experiences, such as a loss of trust in figures of authority, reduced capacity for self care, and reduced capacity to concentrate and engage in the organisational effort required to participate in health care. Those who have survived torture and other traumatic events may find health care consultation a painful reminder of those experiences.

Additional steps may need to be taken by receiving countries to ensure that these needs are met as:

- Resettled refugees may not be readily identified by health care providers in the wider health care system, particularly in communities which are already very culturally diverse
- Most health care providers in refugee receiving countries are unaccustomed to dealing with a patient group with limited or disrupted access to health care and may be unaware of the need to offer more comprehensive catch-up care.
- Many health care providers in receiving countries, having gained their professional experience in an environment of relative peace and affluence, will have limited skills in addressing health problems associated with exposure to refugee related deprivation and trauma.
- Financial and workload constraints in receiving countries may work against the longer consultation times, multiple consultations and extra-consultation activity which is often required when providing early health care to resettled refugees. These are necessary due to the additional time taken in communicating with an interpreter, the complexity of the health issues concerned and other patient care needs such as establishing rapport, explaining unfamiliar concepts and making referrals to specialists and allied health professionals.
- In many countries, professional interpreters are not readily available to health care providers, in particular those in private practice. Resource constraints may work against deployment of interpreters in publicly funded facilities.
- Early health care for resettled refugees often requires the input of allied health and social support professionals, general medical practitioners and professionals with mental health and communicable disease expertise. In receiving countries linkages between these services may not be well developed.

“We Somali have come to Australia from war – we have injuries and other health problems. We need services, but we are afraid to go”.

**Refugee resettling in Australia**

### **Adjusting to an unfamiliar health care system**

Resettled refugees will require practical information on the health care system of the receiving country such as how appointments are made and their importance, how to pay for health care, and the role of general practitioners (see p-). However, there are also a number of more subtle cultural differences which may affect the ways in which new settlers access and use health care services.

In the health care systems of many receiving countries, increasing emphasis is placed on illness prevention and promoting optimal health. Health has also come to be more broadly defined as encompassing both mental and social well being. This is reflected in health care provision with doctors playing an increasing role in psychosocial support, as well as in the growth of the allied health care professions of social work and psychology. Relationships between doctor and patient have also become more democratic, with increasing emphasis being placed on confidentiality and informed decision-making.

This is in stark contrast with health care provision in refugee generating countries, few of which have the resources for large-scale illness prevention, mental health and social support programs. Health care providers, struggling to treat acute physical health concerns, may have little time to address other issues. Further, in many countries from which new arrivals originate, more traditional and hierarchical relationships between doctor and patient prevail.

These differences may have an impact on the help seeking behaviour of new arrivals who may be:

- less likely to raise health concerns, having learned to live with sub-optimal health in the context of prolonged deprivation
- unfamiliar with the concept of illness prevention
- unaware of the possibilities for treatment in resettlement countries
- less inclined to play an active or assertive role in their own health care
- unaware of the role of doctors in treating emotional problems and offering referral for social support
- unfamiliar with the roles of mental health and social support professionals such as social workers and psychologists. This may be exacerbated in some communities by the stigma attached to mental illness.

At the same time, however, it is important to note that some refugees come from countries which prior to conflict occurring, had very well developed, free and universally accessible health care. There may be some adjustment involved for these entrants as they settle in countries where health care is provided on a fee-for-service basis or where there are long waiting times for government funded programs.

## **Issues to consider in planning a healthy start**

### **Overall planning goals – promoting access to the wider health care system**

While many countries make special provision for early health assessment, there is a consensus that the overall emphasis in planning should be on ensuring that resettled refugees have access to the same health care services provided to nationals. However, given the barriers many new arrivals face in accessing services, most countries recognise the need to take specific steps to ensure that resettled refugees understand and are able to make the best use of services and that the wider health system is responsive to their needs.

### **Payment for health services**

In some receiving countries the costs of health care and pharmaceuticals are met by the service user on a fee-for-service basis; through participation in a private health insurance scheme or through a work-based health care program (for which a qualifying period may be

involved). In these cases, consideration will need to be given to arrangements for ensuring that resettled refugees have access to fee-free or affordable health care, at least in the early resettlement period when they face particular financial constraints.

Of particular concern in this regard are access to dental and optical care. As indicated in Table One, many resettled refugees have poor oral health and have lost or misplaced prescription spectacles. In some resettlement countries, these services are available to nationals on a 'fee-for-service' basis only or there may be long waiting periods for government funded services. Recognising the critical role oral health and visual capacity play in the integration process, a number of countries have made specific provision for resettled refugees. For example, in New Zealand, dental care is provided as part of a reception health care program.

### **Communicable Diseases Screening**

Identification and treatment of communicable disease is important both to protect the health of the individual and to prevent the spread of disease in receiving countries. Conducting screening for communicable disease also helps to maintain broader political and community support for refugee resettlement programs in the receiving community.

In this context it is important to distinguish health *screening* from health *assessment*. Screening is typically a standardised process that is both limited and selective. While it may have benefits for the individual, in an integration context, screening is performed primarily to meet public health goals (in particular prevention of the spread of communicable diseases in receiving communities). In contrast, assessment (discussed in greater detail below) is a thorough, holistic process that is tailored to the needs of the individual patient and performed with their ongoing management in mind. In many countries, communicable diseases screening is incorporated into health assessment.

#### **The advantages of incorporating infectious diseases screening into overall health assessment**

A number of countries currently offering refugee resettlement conduct communicable diseases screening as part of an overall health assessment. There are a number of advantages to doing so:

- People are more likely to participate in a health assessment process that treats the range of health issues of concern to them. In some resettlement countries, programs focussing on screening for communicable disease have had difficulties in securing compliance (reference)
- Investigations can be tailored to the needs of the person taking into account individual risk factors
- Investigations can be offered as part of a patient guided process with adequate provision for informed consent, pre and post test counselling and appropriate follow-up
- It contributes to a public perception that resettled refugees, like the wider community, have a range of health needs, thus working against the common perception that they are carriers of infectious disease.

As is the case with health assessment (see below), screening can be offered either in countries of departure or soon after arrival.

In developing screening programs, it is important to consider arrangements for securing informed consent; conducting pre and post test counselling and for adequate follow-up of problems identified.

In some countries, participation in health screening is mandatory (often being part of the refugee selection process), while in others it is voluntary. Although there are clear public health benefits in requiring mandatory screening, it may work against the principle of providing resettled refugees the same rights as those offered nationals.

### **Formalised health assessment or a ‘health check’**

Many countries offering refugee resettlement recognise the importance of making formal arrangements for resettled refugees to participate in a thorough health assessment or a ‘health check’ either prior to or soon after their arrival. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Resettled refugees have intensive health care needs in the early period of resettlement owing to their relatively poor health status and limited access to health care. These may not be readily met through general health care services provided to nationals
- Formalised health assessment offers a means of detecting and treating communicable disease, thus meeting public health goals (see above).
- If offered routinely through a formal system, health assessment can help to avoid unnecessary repeat investigations that might otherwise occur if it is provided on an opportunistic basis through the general health system.
- Provision for formal health assessment enhances the prospects for early identification and treatment, particularly of diseases and conditions that are asymptomatic. These problems may not otherwise be identified either by new arrivals themselves or health care providers who are unfamiliar with the particular health concerns of refugee populations (eg some vitamin deficiencies; intestinal parasitic infections).
- Formal health assessment can provide important information to assist in the resettlement of individual new arrivals, in particular those with additional needs, such as resettled refugees with disabilities and women-at-risk.
- Formalised health assessment, if offered in the receiving country, provides an opportunity to introduce new arrivals to specific treatment and illness prevention services (such as dental and child health surveillance programs); to link them with other resources required for successful integration and to orient the new arrival to the health care system and to build their trust in it.

Health assessment is offered with differing degrees of formality in existing countries of resettlement. In some integration programs, it is offered through a dedicated program (either prior to departure or on reception), with resettled refugees being routinely required or invited to participate. Others use outreach and capacity building strategies to ensure that new arrivals are able to access this care through the wider health system.

In other countries, limited health assessment may be offered in the country of departure (see below) with other aspects being provided on reception.

While health assessment should be offered as soon as possible after arrival, in practice resettled refugees may find it difficult to prioritise health care over other resettlement tasks. For this reason it is prudent to offer a generous window period for participation in health assessment. In countries with no or limited provision for pre-departure or reception communicable disease screening, measures to ensure that assessment is offered early in the resettlement period will be of greater importance.

**Should health screening and assessment be conducted in countries of departure or following arrival?**

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provides a program of pre-departure medical examinations to countries offering formal refugee resettlement programs. Follow-up treatment in respect to certain diseases and conditions is also offered through this program (eg; treatment of parasitic disease; immunisation).

The advantages of pre-departure health assessment and screening are that:

- It can assist receiving countries to plan to meet needs thus optimising the opportunities for early identification and treatment of health problems that may otherwise become barriers to integration
- Treatment of some conditions in countries-of- departure may be less expensive than in the receiving community (eg; immunisation, treatment for intestinal parasites)
- Treatment in country-of-departure can help to avoid the need to implement complex tracing of individuals with certain infectious diseases following their arrival.

The effectiveness of pre-departure health screening and assessment is dependent on a report of the medical examination being made available to health care providers in receiving countries. If it is not, receiving countries not only fail to gain benefits from assessment, there is also the risk of unnecessary repeat testing being conducted.

Patient confidentiality and consent are important considerations in transferring pre-departure health reports to receiving countries. While resettled refugees should be advised of the purpose and benefits of sharing the report with health care providers in receiving countries, the report should be given to them and they should exercise discretion over whom it is given to.

In resettlement programs where pre-departure assessment is offered to all entrants, unnecessary repeat testing can be avoided by ensuring that health care providers in the receiving countries have information on the standard investigations performed as part of the examination.

A significant concern associated with pre-departure screening and assessment is the extent to which entrants are able to make an informed decision to participate. This is particularly the case for people seeking entry to those countries that require a medical examination as part of the resettlement selection process.

The implications for the individual of a serious disease (such as HIV/AIDS) being detected in the pre-departure period also warrant consideration. Such a diagnosis can have major psychological implications that, if not appropriately managed, may have a long-term impact on the integration process. This is a particular issue given that in many countries of departure services for medical management and psychological support are not well developed.

It is important to note that while there are some clear advantages associated with pre-departure health screening and assessment, it is not a substitute for sound, routine post arrival health care.

Due to the complexity of resettlement selection processes, pre-departure medical examinations are often performed some time prior to the departure date, with periods of up to twelve months being common. Consequently, there is a risk that the refugee might develop a health problem in the intervening period.

Pre-departure health screening is necessarily limited and selective. While it offers the possibility of follow-up for those health problems amenable to immediate management (eg parasitic infection), others are of a more complex or chronic nature and require long term follow-up. Pre-departure assessments can provide important information to assist the receiving country in planning to address these problems. However, there is still the need to ensure systems are in place for their identification and ongoing management in the receiving country. Finally, as noted above, if health assessment is offered in the receiving country, it can serve as a vehicle for introducing new arrivals to the health care system and building their understanding of and trust in it.

### **Preventing and treating communicable disease in refugee communities**

As indicated above (see Table Eight) communicable diseases such as Hepatitis, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are prevalent in some refugee source countries. Considerable social stigma is attached to these diseases in many countries. Confidentiality will be particularly important when treating resettled refugees with infectious diseases, as many will be reluctant to disclose their disease status even to close family members. Some resettled refugees may have contracted a communicable disease such as HIV/AIDS as the consequence of rape in the course of their refugee experience and this may be a source of considerable pain and shame.

In planning for the prevention and treatment of communicable disease in refugee communities it will be important to consider:

- Communicable diseases screening (see above)
- Engaging bilingual and bi-cultural workers to provide advice to planners and health professionals and to provide direct support to affected resettled refugees.
- Resources to ensure that relevant health professionals are aware of communicable diseases affecting refugee communities and are able to offer high quality and sensitive care. These may include access to technical assistance, written resources and professional development programs.
- Prevention of blood borne viruses in refugee communities. Prevention, education and treatment programs are poorly developed in refugee source countries and resettled refugees may have limited knowledge of the transmission, prevention and treatment of blood borne viruses. Where practical, refugee communities should have access to culturally sensitive multi lingual information
- Intensive settlement support for resettled refugees with communicable diseases requiring complex and long term treatment regimens (eg HIV, TB). Resettled refugees may need some support to understand the need for ongoing treatment; practical assistance to ensure their compliance with long term treatment regimens and psychological support to deal with the consequences of a positive diagnosis. Recent advances in treatment of HIV/AIDS mean that those diagnosed have enhanced long term survival prospects. Intensive settlement support will be particularly important to ensure that this group realises their integration potential.

Marital or relationship breakdown may sometimes occur where one partner is detected with a serious communicable disease such as HIV/AIDS and it may be necessary to arrange alternative accommodation to enable the couple to live separately.

### **The importance of Communication in a Health Care Context**

The role of language assistance in refugee integration has been discussed in chapter 2.5. It is particularly important in health care given the sensitivity of the issues involved and the high level of technical language proficiency required to communicate medical terminology. There may also be medico-legal risks associated with poor communication in a health care context.

### ***Initiatives to support a healthy start***

#### **Support and advocacy in accessing services**

Those supporting resettled refugees in the reception period play an important role in assisting them to undertake early health assessment and linking them with services in their community for ongoing management. This may involve providing information about services, promoting the importance of early health care, briefing health care providers about the person's special needs, arranging appointments and interpreters and negotiating transport and other practical matters (eg child care). In some countries individual support is provided to all new arrivals. In others, the level of support provided is determined on the basis of need with most new arrivals being provided a minimum level of information (often through group information

sessions), and those identified as having more complex needs being offered intensive individual support.

While health access initiatives can be provided either in place of, or in addition to, a dedicated clinical service, they are particularly important in those countries where refugee settlers are reliant on the wider health care system for early health assessment and care. A particular advantage of this approach is that support is delivered in the local communities in which new arrivals settle.

In many countries support to access health services is provided as part of the reception process, either by private sponsors or proposers, reception or resettlement case managers or by volunteers (depending on how reception is organised in the receiving country). In others, it is provided through a special health program provided by allied health care workers. For example, in Australia, the national government funds an Early Health Assessment and Intervention Program. The program provides information about health and health care to resettled refugees through group information sessions and by developing and distributing multi-lingual materials. Individual support is offered to those with more intensive needs. Support workers also seek to enhance resettled refugees access to health services through broader developmental activities such as the provision of professional development, professional and community education and advocacy to encourage services to adopt approaches that are sensitive to the needs of new arrivals.

The experience of existing integration programs is that providing individualised support to resettled refugees to access health care is highly effective. A recent Australian study involving general practitioners providing early health assessment to refugee settlers found that those supported by an allied health care worker were more likely to participate in and complete post arrival health assessment than those accessing services independently (reference)

#### **Provision of information to new arrivals**

When we arrived here, we had lots of needs. We had been in a refugee camp for a long time. One of my children had a serious health problem. I had a back injury that needed treatment. But we knew nothing. We did not know where to start.

#### **Refugee resettling in Australia**

New arrivals will require information about the culture and structure of the health care system of the receiving country, the services they are entitled to and how they can be accessed. The benefits of early health care may also need to be promoted.

A number of strategies have been implemented by existing integration programs for providing this information, including

- The development of multilingual written and audio materials for direct distribution to new arrivals or for use in orientation programs
- Incorporating orientation to the health care system in pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programs
- Offering special orientation sessions on the health care system
- Incorporating health information in training and support materials for professional and volunteer social support providers (eg settlement workers, private sponsors, or participants in mentor and befriending programs).
- Through avenues accessed by new arrivals in the course of accomplishing other tasks of resettlement. For example a program currently being developed in Australia incorporates information about health and health care into Adult English as Second language curriculum.
- Community education programs targeted to refugee communities (eg through ethnic media, group support programs provided through primary health care services)



**What information will new arrivals need to access reception health assessment and early health care?**

Consider incorporating the following into both pre-departure and post arrival information for new arrivals and those providing support to them:

- The benefits of making contact with a doctor as soon as possible after arrival
- Information about the relationship between health and migration status
- Whether appointments are important; how they can be made; and whether it is important to be 'on time' (health care is accessed on an ad hoc basis in many refugee producing countries. Failure to attend, or being late for, appointments can be a source of conflict between resettled refugees and health care providers)
- How to find a doctor and the importance of returning to the same doctor. New arrivals accustomed to accessing health care through large centrally located clinics, may find public hospital emergency departments more familiar and acceptable. However, this may not be appropriate in those countries where the trend is toward providing general medical care through community based general practice.
- How services are paid for or accessed (eg fee-for-service, insurance or registration arrangements)
- Programs to assist people on low incomes, to meet the costs of health care and pharmaceuticals
- Information about specialist refugee health services where relevant
- Arrangements for interpreters for health care consultations
- Information on services for people with special health care needs (eg those with disabilities)
- The culture of the health care system of the receiving country (eg confidentiality, the concept of informed consent, doctor patient relationships)
- Any features of the structure or culture of the health system that contrast with those in country of origin (eg pharmaceuticals tend to be more stringently regulated in receiving countries)
- Arrangements for dental health care, immunisation, child health surveillance (with these differing markedly between countries), hearing, optometry and women's health care.
- How specialists are accessed (eg in some countries this might be through referral from a general practitioner, while in others specialists can be accessed directly)
- The role of allied health professionals such as social workers and psychologists
- The importance and role of illness prevention programs and the concept of illness prevention (which may not be a feature of health care in some refugee source countries)

"When I was pregnant I used to visit the doctors, but it was not always the same doctor. I had to explain all the time my situation. I was feeling alone and helpless."

**Refugee resettling in Netherlands**

**Building capacity in the wider health system**

A number of initiatives have been developed in existing resettlement countries to enhance the capacity of the wider health system to respond to the needs of resettled refugees including:

- Formal partnerships between health services to provide coordinated, multi-disciplinary care either within a community or from a specific service setting (see the *Canadian Bridge Program* below)
- Multi-disciplinary service provider networks to enhance communication, mutual understanding, coordination and referral between providers (eg infectious disease and mental health professionals, settlement workers, general practitioners)
- Referral protocols between health care providers
- Agency level protocols to ensure that resettled refugees are identified and that they are offered sensitive support (eg interpreters)

- Funding programs and financial incentives to enable general health care services to meet additional costs associated with providing care to resettled refugees (eg to employ bilingual workers, to offer longer consultations)
- Partnerships between health services and other settings such as schools to enhance identification and referral of resettled refugees with particular health needs
- The development of 'help-desk' services for health professionals requiring assistance in the management of more complex health issues

#### **Using existing resources in Emerging Resettlement Countries**

In Benin, which has a relatively new resettlement program and a small refugee intake, a doctor is employed to provide general medical care. Some resettled refugees, however, have more complex health needs, sometimes related to past trauma. In these cases the program has approached traditional healers in the community and mental health professionals working in a local non-government agency. These health care providers have worked as a team with the settlement worker, so that health, psychological, emotional and social support can be provided in a coordinated fashion.

#### **Workforce development and support**

As indicated above many health professionals in the general health care system of receiving countries will be unfamiliar with the special health and patient care needs of resettled refugees.

There are a number of ways in which existing integration programs have successfully built work force capacity in refugee health. These include:

- Identifying professionals with skills and interest in refugee health care (eg health professionals from refugee or ethnic communities, nationals with overseas aid experience) and recruiting them to work in specialist services or in areas where a large number of refugees settle. These professionals may also be deployed on a sessional basis or in an advisory capacity.
- Designing and delivering professional development programs, particularly for those health professionals involved in formalised early assessment or in areas where a large number of new arrivals settle.
- Developing resource materials for health professionals
- Providing health professionals with access to cultural consultants/cultural mediators
- Providing health professionals, particularly those in the wider health care system, with access to consultation with a more experienced practitioner to support them in dealing with complex and difficult issues
- Providing de-briefing and peer support to health professionals who see a large volume of resettled refugees or who have limited peer support, such as medical practitioners in solo practices (see chapter 3.1).

**Information for professional education and development**

Consider incorporating information on the following in professional education and development programs:

- Country background information (including information on the history and causes of conflict, the nature of the refugee experience). A list of sources can be found on page – of this Handbook.
- How refugee patients can be identified
- Protocols for the identification and management of communicable disease
- What, if any investigations have been performed in the context of formal pre-departure or reception health assessment or screening
- The importance of offering overall health assessment (particularly in countries where this is not offered through a formalised program)
- The impact of trauma and torture and how this can be addressed in care (eg dealing with a disclosure, making referrals)
- Allied health services available to resettled refugees, in particular specialist services for survivors of trauma and torture
- Booking and working with interpreters
- Cultural and religious factors effecting relationships with health care providers. For example, devout Muslim women may need to see a female doctor. Those from cultures where doctors are particularly revered may be reluctant to ask questions or participate more actively in their own health care.
- Cultural views of health and illness. For example some resettled refugees are from cultures with different explanatory models of illness differ from the bio-medical approach advocated in many resettlement countries.
- Cultural and religious factors that may effect health care provision. For example the bruises left by ‘cupping’, a traditional healing method in some Asian cultures, may be mistaken for abuse in children. Many resettled refugees use traditional remedies which may result in adverse reactions if taken in conjunction with bio-medicines.
- Key features of the structure and culture of the health care system in countries of origin (eg the relative importance of appointment systems, doctor patient relationships, the role of traditional healing methods)
- The importance of self-care (including peer support and debriefing) to avoid stress and burn out.

“At home when we are shy to talk to a male doctor we have the opportunity to go to a female. But here we don’t have that choice. We also have difficulty with the language...of course you want to explain yourself and so maybe he doesn’t understand what you want to say.”

**Refugee resettling in Norway**

**Capacity building in refugee and wider communities**

The refugee and wider communities have an important role in both providing practical support to people accessing health services and in assisting them to understand and negotiate the health care system and to act as their advocates within it.

This potential has been tapped in a number of countries of resettlement through capacity building activities such as peer mentor and volunteer programs (see case example *The Victorian Mosque Program*). In some countries these programs have a specific focus on health. In others, health issues have been built into broader social support programs.

Capacity building is a mutual process, since it also enhances understanding of the needs of refugee communities among service providers as well as their access to communities for the purposes of cultural consultancy.

### **An International Example**

#### **The Victorian Mosque Project**

Through its trauma counselling service, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) in Melbourne Australia became aware of the particularly horrific experiences new arrivals from Iraq had been subject to prior to their migration. Accordingly it decided that intensive efforts would be made to reach this community.

Initial contact was made through a Mosque in the area in which many entrants from Iraq settle. In the course of delivering information sessions about health care in Australia, it became apparent that in addition to health concerns, many were experiencing problems with resettlement, which the community was struggling to address (eg: immigration matters, housing and employment).

In collaboration with the Red Cross, the VFST developed a training program to assist established members of the Mosque community to offer advocacy and support to new arrivals. The Red Cross contributed its expertise in resettlement related matters, while the VFST assumed responsibility for the health components.

One of the significant barriers to accessing resources faced by the Iraqi community was a reluctance to assert their needs to service providers. As a result of their pre-migration experience of persecution, they feared that they would suffer reprisals if they did. Accordingly the emphasis in the training program was on developing an understanding of the Australian health care system, the rights of service users within it and strategies for ensuring access to appropriate support.

This project has made a significant contribution to the Iraqi community's capacity to support resettled refugees. The Mosque now has a team of volunteer advocates trained to assist new arrivals to access both health and resettlement services. This helps to reduce dependency on specialist services and to normalise their experiences.

In addition to developing the skill base of the community, this project has been instrumental in increasing the resources available to address resettlement concerns, with the Red Cross and a local Migrant support agency continuing to offer a service at the Mosque. It also demonstrates the ways in which health and resettlement concerns can be addressed in an integrated fashion.

#### **Special Health services for resettled refugees**

The overall goal in planning post arrival health services should be to ensure that resettled refugees have access to the same range and quality of services provided nationals.

Nevertheless, specialist services and programs do have a critical role in an overall strategy of ensuring that the wider health care system is responsive to resettled refugees.

### **The advantages of specialist refugee health services**

In some countries, initial health assessment may be provided through a specialist service or program, with arrangements for ongoing support being arranged through a community based provider. The advantage of this system is that management can be structured and resourced to accommodate the intensive patient care needs typically experienced by new arrivals at the time of reception (eg longer consultations, interpreters). If provided by a multi-disciplinary team from the one premises, this system also minimises the organisational effort that would otherwise be involved in accessing multiple health care providers in different venues.

Through their contact with a large volume of resettled refugees, specialist services are in a position to identify and document trends and issues; to explore and model appropriate responses to these and to develop specialist expertise. This information, together with their particular focus on refugee health care, provides a basis for:

- Developing and delivering professional development programs and resources for health care providers in the wider health care system
- Providing secondary consultation to other health care providers
- Planning appropriate responses to care in the wider health care system
- Raising awareness of and advocating the needs of refugee settlers to other health care providers, government and refugee and wider communities.

Specialist services may also play an important role in providing support to resettled refugees with particularly complex needs.

However, there are a number of problems associated with establishing special refugee health services as a sole response to their needs:

- Specialist services seldom attract sufficient resources to meet the needs of all new arrivals.
- Specialist services alone may work against providers in the wider health care system developing skills and confidence in caring for resettled refugees and in assuming responsibility for their support
- In those countries where refugee resettlement programs struggle for legitimacy, there is the risk that specialist services will become health care 'ghettos' with poor staffing and facilities
- In many countries of resettlement, resettled refugees are placed across a broad geographic area, making it difficult to ensure access to a specialist service.
- Unless specialist services can be provided in local communities, their capacity to develop relationships with, and subsequently link new arrivals to resources and services at the local level is limited
- Specialist services may serve to pathologise the refugee experience and cast resettled refugees as different.
- Health care providers caring for large numbers of people with complex needs may be vulnerable to burnout.

**An international example  
The Canadian Bridge Program**

The Bridge Community Health Clinic was established in Vancouver, Canada in 1994 as a collaborative venture of a major hospital; an agency providing resettlement support to new immigrants; a health promotion service; Vancouver's health authority; and other agencies providing mental health, family and resettlement support to culturally diverse communities.

The clinic was established recognising that refugees settling in Vancouver were struggling to access health services, the result of language and cultural barriers and difficulties in either paying for care or securing health insurance.

The Bridge Community Health Clinic offers a health assessment service to resettled refugees, which is free-of-charge (with some 70% of clients being without health insurance). On-site interpreters speaking 9 community languages between them are available to clients unable to speak English. As well as screening for communicable disease and addressing obvious physical health concerns, the clinic introduces new arrivals to preventative health care programs (eg immunisation, cervical screening) and links them with resettlement and mental health services where required.

From the outset, however, the collaborators were of the view that it would be neither possible nor in the interests of refugee communities to establish a clinic for refugees as an alternative to health care services provided in the general community. Not only would such a clinic struggle to meet the needs of all new arrivals settling in Vancouver, new arrivals would continue to experience difficulties in accessing health care in their local communities in the long term.

Accordingly, the service plays an important role enhancing the capacity of the wider health system to meet the needs of new arrivals. It does this by:

- ❑ Developing partnerships with other health and resettlement support providers to ensure coordinated service delivery to new arrivals
- ❑ Referring clients to services in their local community following initial assessment and management
- ❑ Using the information accrued in the course of its direct service and liaison with health care providers to raise awareness of the needs of resettled refugees among service providers, government and the wider community
- ❑ Providing formal training opportunities for medical, nursing and other health professionals as well as professional development programs to practicing health care providers.

A significant factor in the success of the clinic has been its collaborative orientation and its emphasis on building partnerships with other health services in the community. Through collaboration the clinic was able to draw on the combined skills and resources of a number of agencies and to adopt a holistic approach, incorporating both health and resettlement concerns as well as both curative and preventative approaches. Through partnership the clinic has been able to facilitate client's access to the range of specialist and allied health care services required by new arrivals in the early resettlement period (eg dental care).

**Provision of information to the wider community**

Antipathy toward refugee communities in resettlement countries can be fuelled by a perception that resettled refugees carry diseases which pose a threat to the receiving community or that are a burden on the health care system.

Integration personnel can ensure that receiving communities are accurately and appropriately informed about health matters effecting resettled refugees by:

- ❑ Emphasising the survival strengths of resettled refugees

- Indicating that many of the health problems experienced by refugee settlers are the result of past deprivation and poor prior health care, most of which can be addressed by intensive but time limited ‘catch-up’ support in the early resettlement period
- Describing measures in place to identify and treat communicable disease

When providing information, there is a need to strike a balance between identifying the health care needs of refugee settlers while at the same time being careful not to reinforce negative stereotypes of refugee settlers as ‘disease ridden’.

“We are used to a doctor who touches us, listens to our chest, but here it’s just conversation. And because we are foreigners and they are not touching us we think that maybe they are afraid to get infectious diseases like AIDS. We have all these things in our minds.”  
**Refugee resettling in Spain**

### **Supporting a healthy start for resettled refugees: Good Practice Features**

#### **Overall health programs would:**

- Be planned and monitored with input from refugee communities
- Take account of the needs of individual settlers while at the same time serving public health goals
- Ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place for new arrivals to access early health assessment
- Incorporate means of monitoring and documenting overall trends and issues for the purposes of professional development and ongoing service improvement
- Make provision for health care providers have access to fee free interpreter services for conducting health consultations with new arrivals.
- Incorporate means of informing new arrivals about and orienting them to the health care system of the receiving country and providing them with support and practical assistance to access it.
- Have developed a workforce development strategy

#### **Specific health services provided to resettled refugees would:**

- Be voluntary and confidential
- Be free-of-charge or affordable
- Offer new arrivals choice of gender of treating practitioner
- Offer resettled refugees extended consultation time, multiple consultations (where required) and relevant extra-consultation follow-up
- Offer accredited interpreters
- Be delivered by or involve input from a multidisciplinary team involving expertise in mental health, communicable disease, allied health and general medical care
- Be delivered by health care professionals with expertise in responding to the special health care needs of resettled refugees, including those determined by cultural differences
- Have well developed links with other health care services involved in refugee health care as well as with services, networks and resources required by new arrivals in the integration process (eg employment and housing services)
- Provide debriefing and professional support to health care providers, particularly those caring for a large volume of traumatised patients.

“I came at the lowest point in my life. I had been heavily humiliated, eight years of humiliations and I was a ruin. I now feel I am brought back to the level of a human being.”

**Refugee resettling in Australia**

“I suffered torture in my country. So I asked if they could at least examine me. I actually had many problems with my health but now I feel very well. There are no problems. Bravo!

**Refugee resettling in Australia**



## 2.11 Creating welcoming and hospitable communities and restoring faith in government

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### **Rebuilding Goals for Integration**

#### **Integration Goal One**

To restore safety, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Two**

To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.

#### **Integration Goal Three**

To promote the reunion of family members and restore supportive relationships within families.

#### **Integration Goal Four**

To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support

#### **Integration Goal Five**

To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and arms of government and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.

#### **Integration Goal 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

#### **Integration Goal Seven**

To support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and refugee leadership.

#### **Integration Goal Eight**

To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.

#### **Integration Goal Nine**

To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and pre-migration experience.

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**Notes to reviewers regarding Promising Integration practices**

**Currently included**

Denmark community gardens  
Ethnic Media (Australia)  
Popular Media (Australia and Britain)

**Still required:**

- Anti Racism work (US example possible)

**Forwarded during review period (to be incorporated after ATC)**

- Canadian Citizenship program
- An example of a post September 11 or similar campaign aimed at addressing racial stereotypes/hostility (US example possible)
- Manitoba Program, Canada (faith based community that has played a role in supporting refugee resettlement through public advocacy, community building etc)
- Host program (Canada)
- Community Resource Persons (Canada)

## 2.11 Creating welcoming and hospitable communities and restoring faith in government

*Extending hospitality and welcoming to resettled refugees and restoring their faith in government are critical goals of a refugee resettlement program and themes discussed throughout this handbook. Strategies for promoting hospitality in key systems such as health care and employment placement services, as well as in specific components of an integration program, such as reception and orientation, are discussed in other relevant chapters.*

*The focus of this chapter, however, is on ways in which countries of resettlement can foster a broader social climate so that resettled refugees feel welcome, safe and understood in their day-to-day interactions in the communities, workplaces, schools and other institutions of the receiving society. It is concerned with steps that can be taken to achieve this at both the community and governmental levels and through the media.*

### A check list for planning and supporting the development of welcoming and hospitable communities

When establishing a new resettlement program, think about:

- Soliciting the support of community leaders in local integration sites
- Developing a media strategy
- Preparing a media information kit
- Identifying integration experts in relevant ministries
- Making provision to grant resettled refugees permanent residency
- Citizenship provisions, as an essential element of an integration program

In the longer term aim for:

- Planning and legislative frameworks to promote integration and cultural diversity
- Developing pre or post arrival cultural orientation programs
- Becoming signatory to key international human rights instruments
- Strategies to counter racism and xenophobia
- Strategies to promote community awareness and understanding of refugee resettlement in the media
- Strategies to engage and build the capacity of key local constituencies to support integration (eg employers, labour unions, faith based communities, local authorities)
- Strategies to strengthen ethno-cultural communities and cultural and religious institutions

#### What is a welcoming and hospitable community?

There is a broad consensus in existing countries of resettlement that a welcoming and hospitable community is one which:

- Accepts and embraces diversity of culture, race, ethnicity and religion
- Promotes diversity as an asset to receiving societies
- Extends support to newcomers to ensure that they have equitable access to the resources of the receiving society and are able to participate equally in it
- Supports newcomers to maintain and build their connections with their culture of origin
- Promotes freedom from xenophobia, racism and discrimination
- Promotes an understanding of the nature and consequences of the refugee and resettlement experience at governmental, institutional and community levels
- Has a commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights at domestic and international levels

In an integration context, however, it is important that hospitality is viewed as a 'two way street' with resettled refugees also being offered opportunities to understand and negotiate the culture of the receiving country. Strategies for achieving this are discussed in chapter 2.7.

## **Hospitable communities as resources for integration and rebuilding**

A welcoming and hospitable environment can support the integration of resettled refugees by:

- Assisting them to re-establish and maintain a feeling of safety in their new country, since fear and anxiety resulting from traumatic pre-migration experiences often persists long after arrival.
- Assisting them to feel a sense of belonging
- Ensuring that resettled refugees are able to access the resources they require for their resettlement and participation in the communities and institutions of the receiving society.
- Strengthening cultural communities, thereby enhancing new arrival's access to social support and enabling them to reconnect with cultural and religious institutions and practices.
- Fostering a climate of understanding, acceptance and tolerance of people from refugee backgrounds, enhancing the prospects of them developing meaningful connections with individuals and institutions in the receiving society
- Restoring the trust often lost in others in the course of their refugee experiences, in particular in government officials and others in a position of authority (see p-).
- Affirming that they are believed and that they have the right to the protection of the receiving country and to be treated with respect and dignity;

In an environment in which they are made welcome resettled refugees are not only better placed to contribute their skills and attributes, but will have a higher level of motivation to do so. Facilitating access to resources and fostering the conditions in which resettled refugees can engage with systems and individuals in the receiving society also helps to prevent their social and economic marginalisation. Mutual understanding and respect between resettled refugees and the wider community helps to build a socially cohesive and harmonious society. This has benefits not only for resettled refugees, but also for other distinct groups, such as indigenous communities and people with disabilities.

### **Factors affecting welcoming and hospitality**

Many resettled refugees originate from countries where government officials and professionals are actively involved in perpetrating violence and persecution. For these reasons resettled refugees may have a heightened sensitivity to injustices in the receiving society or a fear or lack of trust of those in positions of authority (such as teachers or law enforcement officers). These factors may have an impact on the extent to which they feel safe; their capacity to form relationships within the receiving society and on their interactions with key systems such as schools and social service authorities.

Limited proficiency in the language of the receiving society is another significant factor.

Also influential are conditions in the receiving society including:

- The extent to which there are communities with an interest in human rights, refugee issues and democracy building (eg faith based communities, human rights groups).
- The existence of established ethno-cultural communities and their capacity to contribute to building a welcoming and hospitable environment
- Existing legislative frameworks and policies and programs for managing cultural diversity;
- The extent of understanding at community and governmental levels of the reasons for resettled refugees leaving their countries of origin
- The extent to which cultural and racial diversity and tolerance is promoted at government and community levels.

- Attitudes toward migration and resettlement at community and governmental levels (see box)
- The approach taken by the media in the receiving society
- The extent of support for the protection and promotion of human rights at both community and governmental levels
- The extent to which the country has a tradition of making newcomers welcome

“If the (social) ‘climate’ is not right, the resettlement is so much harder”  
**Settlement worker in Australia**

“When people welcome you and you feel good, you share your own ideas.”  
**Refugee resettling in Canada**

### **Media, Community and Governmental attitudes**

In most societies there is a diverse range of views about migration and refugee issues at the governmental and community levels.

When they are given practical expression in individual interactions and governmental and institutional practices or in the media, negative attitudes can make resettled refugees feel unwelcome in the receiving society.

Research conducted in a number of countries of resettlement indicates that active racism and xenophobia are a particular concern in this regard. As well as compromising the safety of resettled refugees, racism and xenophobia may contribute to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression; affect access to integration resources (such as housing and employment) and hamper their participation in the receiving society (reference).

There are a number of factors which may contribute to indifference or hostility toward resettled refugees, and which may need to be managed by governments and others with an interest in refugee resettlement and human rights. Among these are:

- A general antipathy toward migration, held in the belief that refugees and immigrants will compete for scarce resources or threaten the way of life of the receiving country. This is a particular concern for those resettled refugees whose racial features or cultural and religious practices distinguish them from the dominant culture.
- Perceptions that resettled refugees are offered better government support than is available to nationals
- Public confusion about who refugees are and the nature of the refugee experience. For example harassment of people from Muslim backgrounds burgeoned in the aftermath of the 2001 World Trade Centre aeroplane bombing. Many of the targets of this harassment, however, were themselves fleeing persecutory regimes.

Recent increases in global human movements have contributed to the growth of asylum seeker populations in countries of resettlement. Negative attitudes toward asylum seekers can fuel racism and xenophobia, which may be extended to others in the receiving society who share their cultural heritage. The questioning of the motives and credibility of asylum seekers can also serve as a painful reminder of resettled refugees’ own experiences of not being believed or thought worthy of protection. Perceptions that asylum seekers are being treated unjustly can undermine their faith in the compassion of the receiving society.

## **Issues to consider in facilitating the development of hospitable communities**

### **The importance of partnership and local engagement**

Government has an important role in fostering hospitality by setting overall legislative and planning frameworks and providing funding to support capacity building activities in the refugee and wider communities.

However, the integration of resettled refugees occurs at a highly localised level in the communities, work places and institutions of the receiving society. The experience of resettlement countries is that it is critical to engage the co-operation and involvement of key local constituencies, in particular:

- Employers and labour unions
- Local neighbourhoods
- Faith based communities
- School communities
- Local governments (in some countries referred to as authorities or municipalities)
- Ethno cultural groups and services
- The media; and
- Human rights organisations

Community engagement is important not only for extending hospitality to newcomers, but because it can help to build a basis of understanding and support for refugee resettlement.

### **Managing conflicting cultural practices**

As indicated above, it is important that resettled refugees are encouraged to retain their culture of origin. Nevertheless there may be instances where differences in cultural practices between the refugee and the wider community raise cause for concern or conflict. For example:

- Certain cultural practices may be considered either life or health threatening or be abhorrent to the receiving country. For instance in some countries, laws to prohibit the practice of Female Genital Mutilation have been introduced on these grounds (see chapter 3.2).
- Some cultural practices may be in the interests of some members of refugee communities, but may be considered by the receiving society to be contrary to the interests of others. For example, child discipline practices in some refugee communities may be considered harsh in resettlement countries. Similarly, some refugee source countries have views about gender relations which would be regarded in receiving societies as placing women at social and economic disadvantage.
- Some practices may depart so much from the 'norms' of the receiving society that they place resettled refugees in a position where the resulting conflict or isolation from the receiving society is not in their interests.

How conflicts of this nature are managed will depend both on the issue concerned and the receiving country. As indicated elsewhere in this handbook, integration is a two-way street with resettled refugees adapting to the ways of their new country and receiving societies learning about and accommodating refugee communities. Consistent with this notion, most receiving societies manage conflicting cultural practices with a continuum of strategies encompassing:

- educating the wider community to increase tolerance and to accommodate the values, beliefs and practices of newcomers;
- mediation and bridge building between the refugee and wider communities; and
- awareness raising and education in refugee communities.

## **Initiatives to support the development of hospitable communities**

### **Engaging the wider community**

In many countries community based groups and institutions (such as faith based communities and unions) have played an important part in fostering welcoming and hospitality by:

- Developing awareness raising activities and strategies to combat racism and xenophobia among their constituencies and in the wider community.
- Fostering the participation of refugees in local institutions and organisations such as schools, clubs, associations and places of worship
- Ensuring that resettled refugees are represented in administrative and decision making positions. For example, labour unions in a number of countries have sought to encourage the active participation of refugees and immigrants.
- Taking measures to ensure that local institutions and organisations are responsive to resettled refugees
- Supporting cultural events such as festivals and special days.

“My neighbours are very kind people. One day I was very sick, I had a pain in my kidneys, so my husband asked the neighbours for help. Not only they called for a doctor, but they also paid him because we didn’t have enough money.”

#### **Refugee resettling in Denmark**

### **An International Example...Promoting social inclusion in Denmark**

In Denmark a local authority funded refugee subscriptions or memberships to join local sporting clubs and community gardens (allotments). This scheme enabled resettled refugees to meet with Danes with a common interest on equal terms (p23 ECRE).

### **Fostering Hospitality in emerging countries of resettlement**

The experience of emerging countries of resettlement is that priority should be given to securing the support of community leaders and ‘opinion setters’. In Benin, for example, once local sites had been selected information sessions were held with district chiefs, mayors, neighbourhood leaders and traditional chiefs with the aim of promoting tolerance and understanding of refugee issues as well as seeking their collaboration and support.

### **Capacity building in Ethnic Communities**

In Chapter 2.3 some of the ways in which receiving countries can support the development of ethno-cultural communities, and in particular ethno-cultural organisations and services for the purposes of enhancing social support for resettled refugees are explored.

These communities and their organisations also have an important role in building hospitable and welcoming communities. They can:

- Undertake public advocacy and awareness raising activities to promote understanding of refugee communities
- Act as mediators in the event of cultural conflicts between refugee communities and the receiving society
- Support refugees to become involved in decision making at the work-place, community and broader political levels
- Provide cultural advice to governments, service providers and other institutions so that they are able to respond sensitively to resettled refugees.
- Support the development of programs and facilities for new arrivals to promote cultural retention and identification (eg support groups, cultural events, community arts projects, ethnic community centres and places of worship, ethnic radio and television programs, ethnic newspapers and newsletters)

- Provide opportunities for civic participation. In this respect they provide a relatively ‘safe’ context in which resettled refugees can gain confidence and skills in participatory processes. Lessons learned in these contexts can be transferred to their participation in fora in the wider community.

Leadership styles and dynamics may have developed within refugee communities which were functional in persecutory and corrupt regimes (eg mistrust, suspicion, leadership gate-keeping), but which work against ethno-cultural communities facilitating broad participation in receiving societies. Capacity building initiatives can help to address this.

#### **Promoting understanding in Ireland**

In the Shannon area in Ireland refugees visit schools and local rural associations to talk about their pre-migration experiences, giving many Irish people their first experience of meeting people from different cultural and ethnic origins.

#### **Key messages to convey when communicating with receiving communities and the media**

The tone and key messages communicated to the media and receiving communities will need to be tailored to the country concerned. For example in countries which pride themselves on their human rights record, the contribution resettlement makes to promoting human rights may be given greater emphasis than those in which welcoming newcomers or cultural diversity are more highly valued national ethics.

Consider the following:

- Placing resettlement in a global context, demonstrating that the receiving country is one of a number of countries sharing the global refugee burden.
- Emphasising that refugees were compelled to leave their home countries for their own safety
- Providing information on the procedures used by the UNHCR and the receiving country to select resettled refugees. This will help to counter the erroneous view that resettled refugees are primarily ‘economic migrants’ and provide reassurance that careful health and character checks are undertaken
- Emphasising what the country can offer resettled refugees (eg welcoming, freedom from persecution)
- Explaining what supports are available to resettled refugees to help counter perceptions that resettled refugees are offered preferential treatment over nationals.
- Emphasising the benefits that resettled refugees offer to receiving societies. Consider using examples of prominent refugees as well as international research on the social and economic benefits of migration (see chapters 1.1 and 1.2 for sources)
- Providing relevant country background information (see p- for sources).
- Providing information on how individuals and communities can contribute to refugee resettlement

While these messages are concerned specifically with refugee resettlement, consideration may also need to be given to addressing broader issues such as challenging myths about certain cultures or questioning racial stereotypes.

“It’s hard to overcome the sense that people see you as handicapped because of your refugee background and you constantly feel that you have to prove who you are.”

#### **Refugee resettling in Australia**

#### **Working with the media**

The media has a powerful role in shaping community attitudes to a range of issues, among them refugee resettlement (reference). In a number of countries, integration personnel have worked closely with the media with a view to enhancing broader community understanding of the refugee experience and to raise awareness about the benefits of resettlement for both resettled refugees and the receiving society



**Working with the media to promote a welcoming and hospitable environment for resettled refugees:**

Think about:

- Cultivating relationships with both senior and junior journalists
- Strategies to build the capacity of those in key integration roles at both the governmental and community levels to work effectively with the media (eg providing training, developing resource manuals)
- Securing the co-operation of prominent or respected individuals to act as ‘spokes people’ for refugee resettlement (eg by preparing opinion pieces on refugee resettlement for daily news papers; participating in radio and television interviews)
- Monitoring newspaper ‘letters-to-the-editor’ sections and talk back radio for opportunities to promote refugee resettlement or counter erroneous views
- Approaching training institutions to have refugee issues addressed in undergraduate curriculum and professional development courses for journalists
- Popular media such as women’s magazines and television serials as mediums for communicating about refugee issues. These media have the potential to reach a large and diverse audience and to deal with issues in a more complex and personally engaging way (see box)
- Providing grants to support the development of documentaries, films and drama addressing refugee issues
- Establishing awards to recognise excellence in reporting on refugee and resettlement issues.

Equally, however, the media can reflect negative attitudes held in some sections of the wider community which may not only fuel anti-refugee sentiment, but also generate feelings of fear and anxiety among resettled refugees. As their primary source of information in the early resettlement period, the media will have a powerful influence on resettled refugees’ perceptions of the receiving society and the extent to which they are welcome in it (see box). This is an important factor to bear in mind when working with the media and highlights the need for integration personnel to monitor media reportage of refugee issues.

**Issues to be aware of in media reportage of refugee issues:**

Journalists are often working under tight time lines and are under pressure to prepare stories which are ‘newsworthy’. Some may reflect negative attitudes held in the receiving community, or may be under pressure from media owners or editors to present refugee issues in a certain way. Research and experience in resettlement countries indicates that this may lead to:

- Sensationalist reportage of refugee related issues, often provided without a wider context
- Inaccurate and negative stereotyping of ethnic minorities
- Attributing problems in refugee communities to ethnicity without regard for other factors such as structural unemployment, social exclusion or pre-migration experiences
- Negative or misleading reportage (reference)

Positive reportage, meanwhile, may often be relegated to ‘human interest’ segments focusing on cultural contributions such as ethnic foods, music, costumes and festivals. While these are important, they are often emphasised at the expense of the economic, civic and intellectual contributions made by resettled refugees.

The experience of resettlement countries is that while it is not possible to control the way in which the media covers refugee issues, those supporting integration at both governmental and community levels can be prepared by:

- Having accurate, succinct information prepared in advance to make available to the media (see box). In some countries formal media kits have been developed.

- Thinking carefully before soliciting media coverage of specific refugee intakes. Experience suggests that resettled refugees themselves do not always welcome this coverage, particularly in countries with relatively small refugee intakes where they may be readily identified. New arrivals are ill-equipped to represent themselves in the media, especially if they are not fluent in the language of the receiving country. There is also the risk that any small problems which subsequently emerge will attract intense and possibly sensationalised media coverage and hence be counter-productive.
- Developing a media strategy. This is particularly important at the governmental level. Typically this involves establishing a committee or working group of relevant government ministries and the identification of key personnel to serve as media spokespeople. To ensure consistency in communication with the media, it is wise to secure agreement on key messages. Regular monitoring of the strategy will enable it to be adjusted in response to changing circumstances.

#### **The media and emerging countries of resettlement**

The novelty value of refugee resettlement in emerging countries may mean that it attracts intense media interest. This may be overwhelming for those in early refugee intakes and in small communities, may breach their right to confidentiality and anonymity. Moreover, while early media coverage may be positive, once the initial euphoria has dissipated, the small teething problems which are an inevitable feature of any new program may receive undue attention, ultimately compromising long term government and community support.

The experience of emerging countries is that while it is critical to be prepared for media coverage (see above) and to have information ready, it is wise to think very carefully before actively soliciting media coverage of specific intakes at this stage.

#### **Some International Examples: Using popular media**

- The popular Australian drama series *Neighbours* featured several episodes where child cast members offered support to a refugee. In the context of this relationship the show explored conditions in the character's country-of-origin, his reasons for flight and his conditioned fear of authorities.
- Similarly the British Police drama *The Bill* screened episodes exploring racial harassment of Kosova refugees and the dilemmas facing those unable to have their professional qualifications recognised in the receiving society.
- A number of women's magazines have run articles based on 'case studies' of refugee women.

These approaches not only reach a wider audience but also enable issues, myths and prejudices to be explored at a deeper and more personal level. Integration personnel can play a role in encouraging television, radio and magazine producers to address resettlement issues and provide relevant research and background materials

#### **An International Example: Building media skills in Britain**

The British national lottery periodically engages a media adviser to provide training to ethno-cultural organisations and non-government organisations to develop skills in presenting to the media. Its focus is on promoting positive images of refugees and refugee issues (p24 ECRE).

### **Understanding and welcoming through ethnic media**

Many countries of resettlement have supported ethno-cultural communities to develop ethnic media, such as radio and television stations or programs and newspapers and magazines.

These are an important source of information about events in other countries, promote cultural retention and provide an avenue for resettled refugees to learn about their rights and resources available to them in the receiving country in their own language.

In Australia, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) also has a role in promoting understanding of world events and multiculturalism in the wider community.

### **Building capacity at the governmental level**

Resettlement countries have implemented a number of initiatives to ensure that government services and programs are responsive to refugee and immigrant communities. Among these are:

- Planning documents or strategies which reflect a formal government commitment to integration and/or cultural diversity and define the ways in which this will be implemented across government. Examples include Australia's *New Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* and Sweden's *Integration Policy*.
- Advisory committees at senior government levels to assist in the planning, implementation and monitoring of integration and the acceptance of diversity. In many countries these committees include representation from refugee and immigrant communities

### **An International Example: Refugee voice in Sweden**

In the Municipality of Lulea in Sweden has established an immigrant council through which refugees and immigrants can have their say. Their meetings are attended by local commissioners and its proposals and comments are submitted to the full council executive

- Special policy and program units within government departments to ensure that the policies and activities of government are responsive to the needs of refugee and immigrant communities. In some cases, these units may also provide technical support and assistance to governmental officers involved in service delivery (eg many police departments have ethnic liaison units). In emerging countries or countries with small refugee intakes, an alternative may be to identify and support 'integration experts' within relevant government ministries.
- Initiatives to ensure that people from refugee and immigrant backgrounds are represented in the public sector workforce (eg equal opportunity programs, internships). These demonstrate the receiving society's commitment to the inclusion of resettled refugees (as well as providing employment opportunities and an avenue through which they can contribute their skills and attributes)
- Legislation to promote equal opportunity among or prevent discrimination against individuals on the grounds of their race, ethnicity, religion or country of origin. Typically this legislation is concerned with access to a wide range of resources including public places, vehicles, employment, housing, goods and services, education and land. In some countries, particular rights of refugees and immigrants are enshrined in legislation. For example in the US the Civil Rights Act establishes the right of people with limited language proficiency to an interpreter when accessing federally funded services. A number of countries have also introduced legislation to promote racial and religious tolerance and prevent racism and xenophobia. Commonly, legislation in these areas also provides for the establishment of an independent body to investigate individual

breaches of the legislation, review other government legislation to ensure compliance and conduct awareness raising activities.

- Becoming signatories to key international instruments to promote and protect human rights. Others have also established bodies to monitor government legislation and activities to ensure that human rights are observed at the domestic level. Examples include Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and New Zealand's Human Rights Commissioner. These measures can have important symbolic value, conveying to resettled refugees their new country's abhorrence of human rights abuses and providing reassurance of its commitment to ensure that human rights will be observed. This can help to restore faith in government often lost in the course of the refugee experience.
- Programs to promote wider understanding of resettlement and global refugee issues; the value of cultural diversity and/or to challenge negative community attitudes toward migration and resettlement. These have used a variety of strategies among them television and radio advertisements, posters and pamphlets, resource materials and web-sites.

#### **An International Example: Informing the Community**

Each year the Australian Government produces a booklet documenting the government's response to refugee and humanitarian issues. The booklet describes the Australian resettlement program in the context of the global refugee issue and other measures being adopted by the government to promote refugee protection

#### **How does legislation contribute to creating a welcoming and hospitable community?**

Legislation can serve as an effective deterrent, set standards for appropriate behaviour and provide resettled refugees with recourse in the event that they are subject to unfair treatment.

Legislation also has important symbolic value, being a practical expression of the receiving society's commitment to the protection and promotion of the rights of resettled refugees and demonstrating its abhorrence of discrimination and violence against them. The experience of established countries of resettlement, however, is that legislation is more likely to be effective if complemented by community education and other initiatives

If resettled refugees are to have recourse to remedies provided by legislation, it is important that these are accessible (for example through the simplification of procedures, translated materials, and individual support to access remedies)

#### **Permanent residency and citizenship provisions**

Security of residency and legal equality in the receiving country will be especially important to the early resettlement period. Recognising this, most countries grant resettled refugees permanent residence and confer upon them most of the same rights and responsibilities as nationals. Common exceptions are the right to hold a passport, the right to vote, to be employed in certain public sector positions or to hold public office.

The process of becoming a citizen of the receiving society is an important practical and symbolic milestone in the integration process, particularly given that resettled refugees have lost citizenship of their countries-of-origin. It affirms that resettled refugees 'belong' in the receiving society; awards them the same legal status as nationals and allows them full participation in political and democratic processes. Importantly, it usually accords them the right to the protection of its embassy in the event that they encounter difficulties while overseas and to travel on the passport of the receiving country (although resettled refugees normally hold convention travel documents).

The process of securing citizenship also allows resettled refugees to state formally their obligations to the receiving society.

At the same time, however, some resettled refugees may experience some ambivalence about the process of becoming a citizen, particularly if they hold hopes that circumstances in their county-of-origin will one day be changed to allow their safe return.

Significant factors to consider in relation to citizenship are:

- Residency requirements. While these currently range from between 2 to 8 years in existing countries of resettlement, there is a general consensus that, for the reasons above, it is in the best interests of refugees and receiving countries to enable them to seek citizenship as early as possible in the resettlement process.
- Citizenship requirements: In almost all countries resettled refugees (like other migrants) are obliged to demonstrate that they are of good character. In some countries they are also required to be fluent in the language of the receiving country and to complete either a written or oral test demonstrating their understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens. The stringency of these requirements varies between countries and will clearly influence how soon after arrival resettled refugees can apply for citizenship. In some countries, more flexible arrangements are made for refugee elders recognising that they face particular difficulties in acquiring a new language (see chapter 3.4).

**Promoting welcoming and hospitable communities:  
Good Practice Features**

**A sound integration program would:**

- Have an overall framework for implementing and monitoring integration and promoting diversity across government
- Have legislative frameworks in place to promote equal opportunity, prevent discrimination and promote racial and religious tolerance
- Be signatory to key international human rights instruments and have measures in place to ensure that human rights are observed at the domestic level.
- Involve resettled refugees in the planning and monitoring of integration and cultural diversity programs and strategies
- Have strategies in place to engage employers, labour unions, and local communities (in particular faith based communities and human rights organisations) in building hospitable communities
- Have measures in place to raise community awareness and understanding of, and support for refugee resettlement
- Have measures in place to strengthen ethno-cultural communities and to build their capacity to provide opportunities for new arrivals to participate in cultural and religious activities and to serve as a bridge between refugee communities and the receiving society
- Offer resettled refugees permanent residency and its associated rights and responsibilities (including the right to travel) and enable them to seek citizenship at the earliest possible stage.

