



## Key issues: Resettlement programmes and the UK Briefing – (Updated 2009)

Resettlement has been increasingly used in recent years as a means of providing international refugee protection, although the numbers involved are still relatively very small. The UK's main resettlement programme today, the Gateway Protection Programme, was first announced in 2002 and followed a number of one-off initiatives in previous decades.

There are distinct challenges to the development of this programme, not least how it co-exists with managed migration strategies and fluctuating flows of spontaneous asylum seeking. This Briefing identifies some of the issues that resettlement programmes raise and provides links to further reading and projects.

### **What is resettlement and how does it work?**

Resettlement involves the organised movement of selected refugees from their first country of asylum to a third country for settlement and integration. Resettlement is not the same as seeking refugee status through the asylum system - the two are complimentary approaches towards protection for those deemed to have a well-founded fear of persecution.

Along with integration in the first country of asylum and voluntary repatriation, resettlement is one of the three 'durable

solutions' used by the [United Nations High Commission for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) to aid refugees. It aims to provide protection for those whose safety is at immediate risk and allows them to rebuild their lives in a third country when the possibility of return to their country of origin is unlikely and when safety or support cannot be guaranteed in the first country of asylum. It also presents an opportunity for states to share responsibility for the world's refugees.

The process has two distinct phases: overseas processing and third country integration, which together can take several years. Overseas processing is normally conducted by the UNHCR<sup>1</sup> and those most at risk and least able to be repatriated or resettled locally are selected for resettlement. The cases are then referred to third countries that often implement their own screening process. Historical, cultural and language ties with the third country determine which cases are submitted where.

Third country integration attempts to return independence to resettled refugees and provide them with the capacity to build a positive future in the receiving society. Before the refugees arrive, the host government should, in collaboration with voluntary and

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<sup>1</sup> The USA, Canada and some other states carry out their own processing

refugee organisations, ensure the necessary services are in place and provide the public with information about the new arrivals. They are often received in designated centres and provided with key information about living in their new society. Upon leaving reception facilities, resettled refugees should be provided with affordable housing and other vital support to aid their integration.

### Who resettles refugees?

Top countries in 2007: USA (48,300 inc. family reunification), Canada (11,155), Australia (9,628), Sweden (1,845), Norway (1,106), New Zealand (739), Finland (657), Netherlands (569), UK (515), Denmark (474), Brazil (157), Chile (30).

Ref: UNHCR (2008) 2007 Global Trends

## Law and policy

The resettlement process is not defined in the Refugee Convention or in UK law, but does have the same intentions as both in terms of protection and assistance of refugees. The [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#) provides the legal context for resettlement and the UK. Section 59 indicates that the government may *'participate in a project which is designed to...arrange or assist the settlement of migrants'*.<sup>2</sup>

The Home Office White Paper, 'Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity' (2002)<sup>3</sup> announced the development of an annual resettlement programme to the UK known as the Gateway Protection

Programme, which constitutes the main programme currently in force. The process of integration envisaged by the programme is based on that set out in the Home Office's 2005 strategy paper [Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refuge Integration](#).

UK resettlement policy is now increasingly tied to European Union policy. In 2008 European Union Justice and Home Affairs ministers [agreed](#) on the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which counts among its objectives the promotion of voluntary resettlement within the EU of UNHCR-protected persons and harmonisation of resettlement practices across member states.

On a global scale the [Annual Tripartite Consultations](#) (ATC) provide the forum at which UNHCR together with world governments and NGO partners assess and shape resettlement strategy.

In the case of the UK, caseworkers from the UK Borders Agency (UKBA) interview those referred by UNHCR at refugee camps managed by the latter in the refugees' first country of asylum. They assess each individual's criteria for resettlement based on whether the applicant's human rights are at risk in the country of refuge or, where there is no immediate risk, whether resettlement can provide a durable solution for long term protection needs. The applicant is required to co-operate with UK officials and be committed to supporting himself or herself in the UK.

An applicant can be turned down if he or she has committed a "crime against peace", a serious non-political crime or acts contrary to

<sup>2</sup> Home Office (2002) Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act. London HMSO.

<sup>3</sup> Home Office (2002) Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity. London: HMSO.

the aims of the UN. Applicants referred by the UNHCR and then accepted by the UK are normally granted indefinite leave to remain allowing them free rights to live, work and claim benefits in the UK and travel abroad other than to the country they are seeking refuge from. After five years of living in the UK continuously resettled refugees are able to apply for citizenship.

### What is the UK's experience of resettling refugees?

The UK has a long history of resettlement, yet it has largely been on an ad hoc basis. Some examples include:<sup>4</sup>

- **210,000 Polish** Second World War exiles came to the UK from 1940 to 1950, during and after the Nazi invasion. Their integration was viewed as successful as they found both housing and employment with relative ease.
- **42,000 Ugandan Asians**, expelled from their country by Idi Amin, were resettled in Britain in 1972-4. The main focus of the resettlement strategy was to find the Ugandans secure housing, though many found their own accommodation through informal networks.
- **22,500 Vietnamese** displaced persons arrived in the UK between 1979 and 1992. The government's Joint Committee for Vietnamese Refugees co-ordinated a number of charities to implement this programme.

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<sup>4</sup> More detail on the UK's history of resettlement can be found in **Robinson, V.** (2003:3) 'An evidence base for future policy: reviewing UK resettlement policy' in Gelsthorpe, V. and Herlitz, L. (eds) *Listening to evidence: the future of UK resettlement. Conference proceedings.* London: Home Office.

The only formal resettlement programme has been the Gateway Protection Programme, in operation since 2004. Two other informal and small-scale programmes predate this: the Mandate Refugee Programme, aimed mainly at family members of persons already settled in the UK, and the currently suspended Ten or More programme, for refugees with disabilities or a serious medical condition.

#### A service provider's experience

Sandy Buchan, Chief Executive of Refugee Action, ran a residential centre in the 1980s for Vietnamese refugees in Osterley. It hosted a number of policy experiments:

- fast-track education for refugee children enabling them to gain 'O' levels
- social work training to build capacity within the Vietnamese community
- a reception model made up of 'learning villages' and high levels of Vietnamese staffing

Lessons from this programme were used in developing the strategy for the Bosnian and Kosovan programmes.

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From personal interview conducted for **Esterhuizen, L** (2004) *Making better use of refugee data and information.* London: ICAR

The Bosnian Evacuation Programme and the Kosovan Humanitarian Evacuation Programme, both in the late 1990s, were 'temporary protection' as opposed to resettlement programmes. Nevertheless they can help us to understand the development of targeted services for groups evacuated to the UK. Bosnian refugees were dispersed in 'clusters' in order to form ethnic

communities.<sup>5</sup> Similar strategies were used with the Kosovan programme and both were seen as relatively successful in integrating the refugees in UK society. These programmes have provided opportunities for learning for future resettlement programmes.

## Challenges for resettlement

The first phase of resettlement, overseas processing, faces a number of obstacles, examples include:

➤ **Interpretation of refugee definition**

There is often a discrepancy between how UNHCR and nation-states define a refugee, which means that some refugees are referred by UNHCR but are not accepted as such by some states.

➤ **Selectivity**

There is a tendency among some states to 'hand-pick' refugees by imposing additional criteria for those to be resettled, often accepting people with greater integration potential and leaving behind refugees at greater risk.

➤ **Resources**

The number of refugees under UNHCR's responsibility stands at over eleven million.<sup>6</sup> To prepare cases for resettlement is very time-consuming and the organisation is unable to cope with an expanding resettlement programme. There is a need for states offering

increased resettlement opportunities to provide UNHCR with more funding.<sup>7</sup>

The second phase of the resettlement process is third country integration and a number of lessons have been learnt from previous programmes. Examples of such lessons include:

➤ **Avoid front loading**

Previous programmes to resettle large numbers of people in the UK have been characterised by 'front loading', which involves focusing on providing all the information and integration 'tools' refugees need when they first arrive. This has been combined with a desire for the reception stage to remain short-term to avoid protracted welfare reliance. Consequently, in the past, resettled refugees have suffered from an absence of assistance beyond reception.<sup>8</sup> The structure of the Bosnian and Kosovan programmes learnt from this and provided mid-term support teams in dispersal areas and improved interaction with mainstream services.

➤ **Don't look overlook employment**

A focus on housing provision in many resettlement programmes has made it more difficult for refugees to find employment. Research suggests that dispersal strategies have not been

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<sup>5</sup> **Robinson, V. and C. Coleman** (2000) 'Lessons learned?: a critical review of the government programme to resettle Bosnian quota refugees in the United Kingdom'. *International Migration Review* 34 (4) pp. 1217-1244

<sup>6</sup> **UNHCR (2008)** 2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons. Geneva: UNHCR

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<sup>7</sup> These and other points raised in this section are covered in the 2008 [UNHCR-NGO Joint European Advocacy Statement on Resettlement](#)

<sup>8</sup> **Hale, S.** (1993) 'The reception and resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in Britain.' In V. Robinson (ed) *The international refugee crisis: British and Canadian responses*. London: Macmillan

based on thorough analysis of the local labour market. This is in contrast to other resettlement countries, where employment readiness is placed at the core of refugee independence.

➤ **Recognise the role of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs)**

When resettled refugees leave reception facilities, RCOs can act as a bridge into the new society help the refugee understand how things work. In past refugee programmes there have been examples of locating clusters of resettled populations near to pre-existing minority ethnic communities. There is debate as to whether this actually fosters community development or in fact creates a situation of resource competition between RCOs.<sup>9</sup>

➤ **Increase refugee engagement**

Research suggests that when services are delivered as part of a national programme they can sometimes be unresponsive and unable to adjust to local needs. This organisational schema does not appear to engage with refugees and their experiences in the process of their own integration. In contrast, research on Bosnian refugees in Italy shows that resettled refugees can develop meaningful social networks to aid their own integration.<sup>10</sup>

## The Gateway Protection Programme

This programme forms the basis of current resettlement policy in the UK. Between 2004

<sup>9</sup> Kelly, L. (2003) 'Bosnian refugees in Britain: questioning community'. *Sociology* 37 (1) pp. 35-49

<sup>10</sup> Korac, M. (2001) [Presentation at 'Bridging the information gaps: a conference of research on asylum and immigration in the UK'](#), 21 March 2001, London.

and 2008 it aimed to resettle up to 500 people a year, although this target was only reached in 2008 (see inset p. 7).<sup>11</sup> The target was raised to 750 for the fiscal year 2008/2009. In the first year of the programme refugees were taken from West Africa and South East Asia. In the ensuing years, most came from Africa, and particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo.

However in 2008-09 and 2009-10 it is envisaged that 500 of the 750 each fiscal year will be Iraqi refugees, in line with UK commitments to EU asylum resettlement policy.<sup>12</sup>

The Home Office maintains a central co-ordinating role in this programme through the UK Border Agency's Refugee Resettlement Programmes Unit, formed in 2007 to bring together pre and post arrival work under one umbrella. The Unit leads a steering group of key stakeholders involved in both policy advice and service delivery (see inset p. 6). Responsibility for its practical implementation is delegated to a lead agency in the resettlement area.

Prior to departure to the UK, refugees participate in a programme known as Cultural Orientation and English Language Training (COELT). On arrival they spend three days in

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/what-we-do/Resettlement.html>.

<sup>12</sup> See [Home Office asylum policy towards Iraqi refugees](#), Freedom of Information Act release (2008). See also [Five years on Europe is still ignoring its responsibilities towards Iraqi refugees](#) (ECRE 2008) for critique of the European resettlement programme for Iraqi refugees.

a hotel near the airport, where further orientation sessions are provided.<sup>13</sup>

Criteria for the areas to which resettled refugees are dispersed now include more than just the availability of housing: local NGO involvement, racial tolerance, employment opportunities and the presence of existing RCOs are some of the extra factors taken into account.

### UKBA Resettlement Steering Group members:

- UNHCR
- 15 local authorities
- Jobcentre Plus
- Department of Health
- International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- Housing Associations
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
- Major NGOs such as Refugee Action and the UK Refugee Councils

The Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership (RIAP) consists of NGOs responsible for service delivery under the Gateway programme. The Partnership is no longer funded by the Home Office, but exists separately. Members include Refugee Councils; Refugee Action; Migrant Helpline; British Red Cross.

Refugee Council and Refugee Action in the first two years of the programme, but has since extended to local authority asylum teams.

<sup>13</sup> COELT is managed by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Refugees are supported by a twelve month integration programme which combines mainstream welfare provision and individualised settlement plans. Housing is provided by the agency, and in their first few weeks refugees are referred to the Job Centre Plus and assisted with their most immediate needs.

In 2009 the Home Office's Immigration Research and Statistics (IRS) department published the results of longitudinal research into settlement and integration experiences of Gateway refugees in Sheffield, Bolton, Hull and Rochdale<sup>14</sup>. This involved all the adults - 53 men and 76 women – in the first two groups to arrive under the programme in 2004 and the two groups who arrived in 2006. Of these, half were from Liberia and half from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The research found that after 18 months in the case of the 2004 arrivals and 10 months in the case of the 2006 arrivals, the refugees' basic needs were being met and progress made against 'most' indicators of integration, but that lack of employment and language skills still constituted 'fundamental barriers' to integration, especially among married women with children.

The IRS research suggested eight strategies to improve integration:

- More and earlier language and other work-related training
- Interpreting support unless language training made "dramatically more effective"

<sup>14</sup> Home Office (2009) *The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation*. London: Home Office

- Better pre-arrival information on employment and training prospects
- Development of other strategies to assist in getting employment
- Integration strategies for specific groups like mothers, lone adults and children
- Social and cultural orientation throughout the 12 months
- More pre-arrival information on Family Reunion, including the delays involved
- Closer coordination with police to report harassment and improve safety

The authors recommend a follow-up study in five years.

## Resettlement statistics

Making international comparisons of resettlement data is a difficult task. Each resettlement country operates a number of different schemes, some through the UNHCR, some autonomously. As a result, a number of organisations collect resettlement data but it is difficult to aggregate as different countries use different procedures to collect the data.

For example some countries collect data across the fiscal year and others across the calendar year. Also, some countries focus on their annual quotas rather than the actual number of arrivals. Despite these difficulties, UNHCR does provide comprehensive comparative data on international resettlement.

### UK resettlement figures

The following numbers of refugees were resettled in the UK between 2004-2008.

The figure for the Gateway Protection Programme is given first, followed by the total number of resettled refugees: all GPP refugees plus those who came under the Mandate programme.

Year	GPP	Total
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Following an internal review of methodology aimed at harmonising its data, in 2007, it now separates resettled refugees from its figures for the refugee population in industrialised countries, and applied this change retroactively. This is justified on the basis that resettled refugees have found a 'durable solution'.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, resettled refugees are not included in UK asylum statistics as they do not go through the asylum system.

## Resources

**Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)** (2008), *Resettlement fact sheets*

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR (2008) P 3. For comparative data see Annexes: Table 3

**European Council on Refugees and Exiles** (2008) [UNHCR-NGO Joint European Advocacy Statement on Resettlement](#)

**Hale, S.** (1993) 'The reception and resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees in Britain.' In V. Robinson (ed) *The international refugee crisis: British and Canadian responses*. London: Macmillan.

**Home Office** (2004) *Understanding Gateway: the Gateway Protection Programme for refugees*. London: Home Office.

**Home Office** (2009) *The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation*. Research Report 12. London: Home Office.

**International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe (2007)**, [Welcome to Europe: A Comparative Review of Resettlement in Europe](#), Brussels 2007,

**Kerrigan, S.** (2003) 'Resettling Refugees' *InExile*, issue 28, November 2003.

**Patricia Hynes P. and Mon Thu, Y.** (2008) *To Sheffield with love in Forced Migration Review* 30

**Refugee Council** (2004) [The Gateway Protection Programme: Refugee Resettlement in the UK](#). London: Refugee Council.

**Refugee Council** (2004) *Understanding Resettlement in the UK*. London: Refugee Council.

**Refugee Council and Refugee Action** (2008) *Gateway Protection Programme: Good Practice Guide*. London: Refugee Action.

**Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership (RIAP)** (2004) *Welcome to the UK - A first step*. London: Refugee Council.

**Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership (RIAP)** (2005) *Evaluation of the Gateway Programme*

**Robinson, V.** (1999) 'The evolution of refugee resettlement policy in post-war Britain', in V. Robinson (ed.) *Migration and Public Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

**Robinson, V. and C. Coleman** (2000) 'Lessons learned? A critical review of the government programme to resettle Bosnian quota refugees in the United Kingdom'. *International Migration Review* 34 (4) pp.1217-1244.

**UNHCR** (2008) *2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons*. Geneva: UNHCR

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