

Responsibility sharing and resettlement of refugees

Did you know?

-It can take up to **10 years** for refugees to be resettled in a third country.

-UNHCR has developed 7 prioritisation categories to identify refugees with more serious or urgent protection needs: legal and/or physical protection needs; survivors of violence and/or torture; medical needs; women and girls at risk; family reunification; children and adolescents at risk; lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions. Refugees cannot pick their country of resettlement.

-**A paradox of President Trump's pledge** to introduce "extreme vetting" is that refugees are already subjected to more extreme vetting by the US than any other group.

-The US is one of the **top resettlement** country with Canada, Australia and the Nordic countries. The US has a long history of welcoming Somali refugees. In 2003-2004 for instance, the U.S. resettled more than 11,000 Somali Bantu refugees. It was at the time, the biggest resettlement operation to take place.

- **The principle of non-refoulement**, a core principle of international refugee law under [article 33 of the UN 1951 Refugee Convention](#), prohibits the expulsion, deportation, return or extradition of a victim of persecution to his state of origin or another state where there is a risk that his life or freedom would be threatened for discriminatory reasons.

Facts and figures

- There are currently over [21 million refugees worldwide](#), with **86% of this total hosted in low and middle income countries in Africa, Middle East and South Asia** and the majority living in protracted displacement for 17 years.
- **8 % of the global refugee population is in need of resettlement. However, less than 1 per cent of this total are ever resettled globally.** Only 30 countries currently accept refugees for resettlement. The number of refugees in need of **resettlement for 2017 was projected at 1.19 million** which marks a **40% increase** in the needs projected for 2016. The [UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs for 2017](#) highlights that the number of places being made available for resettlement is vastly disproportionate to global needs.
- **The responsibility sharing of helping the world's forcibly displaced people is greatly uneven.** Recent actions by [Europe](#) and the [new US administration](#) for instance, represent a [drastic setback to have a fair system of responsibility sharing](#) between states. This comes merely months after the adoption of the New York Declaration at the 19 September 2016 Summit for Refugees and Migrants, which reaffirmed the [principle of 'responsibility sharing'](#) to ensure that global resettlement needs are met by a broader constituency.
- The **principle of non-refoulement**, which prohibits the forceful return of refugees, legally binds nations to resolve the refugee crisis under the **global obligation to protect people**. [Europe](#), [North America](#), and [Australia's](#) responses in an aim to control border management have thereby violated the foundation of this principle. In addition, these restrictive policies have caused [a 'ripple effect'](#) as low-income countries such as Kenya have enacted similar policies towards refugees.
- **The purpose of resettlement is specified with surprising vagueness.** It is defined as a protection tool, a durable solution, a means to strategically leverage other durable solutions, and a form of burden sharing and international solidarity. Yet the impact of resettlement is almost never measured relative to any of these putative purposes. There are **no benchmarks or metrics to hold governments accountable for their resettlement practices or to measure what resettlement actually achieves.**
- Over the last 4 years, resettlement needs in the [East and Horn of Africa have increased](#) steadily. [Some 13,000 Somali refugees](#) who had already completed their resettlement vetting process with the US Citizen and Immigration Services this year for instance, are directly affected by President's Trump temporary ban on refugees. In addition, the US government had also scheduled and [additional 3,000 refugees](#) from the Dadaab camp to be resettled in 2017.

- Increasing restrictive refugee policies by several governments in developed countries have slowed down resettlement case processing for Somalia refugees as applicants are not able to meet certain requirements for case processing. And at the same time, several countries are returning Somali refugees back to Somalia on the grounds that Somalia is safe enough and so they are not in need of international protection anymore¹.
- Refugee populations such as the Somali population that has remained in protracted displacement for decades continue to face 'exclusion' as third-country resettlement countries set priority on certain populations such as [Congolese and Syrian refugees](#).
- The [resettlement processes for Somali refugees](#) continues to be a challenge as those in Dadaab camp had to be temporarily relocated to Kakuma camp for resettlement processing purposes and those in Eritrea were evacuated to Emergency Transit Facilities which impacts the length and cost of resettlement.

Recommendations:

- **Ensure that refugees' rights are respected and that they have a chance [to seek protection](#) and begin new lives in third countries**, safe from persecution, discrimination, xenophobia and racism.
- **Improve the evidence base on resettlement:** There has been a [striking lack of evidence-based research on resettlement](#). The politics and economics of resettlement have rarely been examined. Its aims and objectives are therefore poorly specified and outcomes poorly measured. For resettlement to be effective, it needs a much stronger evidence base to contest empirically unsubstantiated claims.
- **Development of responsibility sharing criteria:** In order to support the [global compact of refugees](#), the creation of clear responsibility- sharing guidelines enforced within a global system is crucial. At the moment, individual governments determine their resettlement priorities and UNHCR supports them in meeting these objectives. A UNHCR-led strategic vision for resettlement as a key part of comprehensive responses to specific refugee situations is fundamental.
- **Advocacy for more resettlement slots/quotas and resettlement countries:** Due to increased political resistance and public concern about the resource and security implications, resettlement countries remain reluctant to take in more cases or choose to decrease their resettlement quotas. [Advocacy](#) should be geared towards urging countries to either maintain or increase their resettlement slots/ quotas and to have more countries joining the resettlement process.
- **Improve international coordination on resettlement:** Good resettlement policies require international collaboration if they are to be effective. Within a comprehensive refugee response, [improved coordination on resettlement](#) means enhanced cooperation and coordination between states and UNHCR in three inter-related spheres: operational planning and experience-sharing between resettlement states, both traditional and new or emerging; increasing the numbers of resettlement places; and enhanced dialogue with hosting countries.
- **Strengthen engagement with host countries to deepen understanding of resettlement processing** and to sensitise host governments to the role that resettlement plays as part of a broader refugee response: This engagement should recognise host governments' current contribution to refugee protection (for example, by keeping open borders or facilitating registration or providing access to schools or hospitals). It should also raise awareness of the scale of resettlement and the resources involved, while gaining crucial support from the host country in order to help facilitate the resettlement process.

¹ Refer to ReDSS paper on Shrinking asylum space and protection of refugees.