

New Directions for Refugee Resettlement

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Pathways to Prosperity

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Purpose

- To look at the past and present to inform the future, recognizing differences in context
- To stimulate discussion in government and RAP, SPO, and sponsorship sectors about potential new directions in refugee resettlement
- To identify a series of questions that could frame new directions for refugee resettlement to meet Canada's humanitarian goals in innovative and cost-effective ways

Background

- Significant differences between the Indochinese and Syrian refugee movements but we can learn from both going forward
- Common to both:
 - Where there is political will and political leadership, anything can be done
 - The Canadian public is remarkably generous and willing to assist in response to particular crises identified in the media if they are provided with options for involvement
 - This interest needs to be nurtured and sustained by quick responses, training and supports

...Background

- Differences:
 - **Selection abroad:** Visa officers vs UNHCR
 - **Selection criteria:** GAR vs PSR vs BVOR/JAS
 - **Matching of refugees and sponsors:** VORs vs Named
 - **Support for GARs:** Government/Host families vs RAP/ SPO sectors
 - **Support for sponsored refugees:** Sponsors/ Government vs Sponsors/SPOs
 - **Support for sponsors:** Government /SAHs vs SAHs and Ad hoc groups
 - **Family reunification:** Overseas selection/ODP vs PSR/one year rule
- Are new models possible that borrow the best from each refugee movement?

Challenges

- Findings of past evaluations of refugee resettlement program:
 - Multi year planning should be implemented
 - PSRs do better in terms of employment, income, and reliance on social assistance
 - RAP funding is too low
 - RAP period is too short
 - Repayment of TLs is particularly difficult for GARs
 - Processing times and backlogs are having negative impact on sponsor interest
 - Distinctions between some refugee categories is unclear

...Challenges

- Extensive paperwork required
- Inconsistent training and support for sponsors
- Lack of monitoring of sponsorships
- Under-resourced SAHs
- Some PSRs never access SPO services
- Groups of Five and Community Sponsors have little access to networks
- More vulnerable refugees taking longer to become self sufficient
- Public and political support difficult to sustain

- Are new models possible that address these challenges?

Assumptions

1. Canada will be better able to expand and improve its humanitarian commitments in a cost effective manner by making adjustments to its refugee resettlement program
2. Meaningful change will depend on action by both civil society and government. A multi-pronged approach will be necessary

...Assumptions

3. Refugees in need of protection and resettlement span the continuum of complexity, health/ social needs, and skill levels
 - Some are job-ready while others are far more vulnerable and need comprehensive health and social interventions.
 - All need protection and resettlement in order to be safe.
 - Family reunification is fundamental to the refugee settlement and integration process.

...Assumptions

4. The involvement of members of the public committed to the plight of refugees is of enormous benefit to Canada in meeting its humanitarian goals and obligations.
 - In addition to creating public support for refugees and bearing some costs, sponsors/hosts provide personal support for refugees in need, inter-cultural learning, and improved integration outcomes
 - A sustainable refugee resettlement program should aim to make engagement with refugees an integral and broadly supported aspect of our civil society and not limited to faith communities and ethno-cultural groups.

5. Principles of “additionality” and named refugees, must remain as key features of private sponsorship.

Questions for New Directions

1. How can all resettled refugees have access to both the professional support of SPOs and the additional involvement of a sponsor group?
 - Incremental vs radical options
2. Should keeping refugee families (broadly defined) intact and facilitating family reunification be a primary criteria for selection?
 - Priorities to UNHCR, broader definition of family, priority for named refugees
 - Distinct refugee family reunification program

...Questions for New Directions

3. How can RAP income support be complemented by additional support from sponsors or family members or employers to ensure adequate income for the refugees?
4. How can multi-year levels be developed that allow for responses to emergency situations, sponsor demand and additionality, and the need for family reunification?

...Questions for New Directions

5. Should there be a relationship between the level of vulnerability of selected refugees and the numbers admitted?
6. How can sponsor groups be recruited, trained, supported, monitored, and represented more effectively?

... Questions for New Directions

7. How can provincial, municipal and employer roles in refugee resettlement be enhanced?
8. How can paperwork and processing times be minimized?
9. How can the matching process be improved?

...Questions for New Directions

10. How can programs be re-designed, created or eliminated to more effectively respond to the needs of refugee populations?

Cautions

- Interconnectedness of questions
- Devil is in the details
- But lots of expertise in this room and others to start grappling with these questions and others in a courageous way

Conclusion

- Ideas to respond to questions still at 20,000 feet
- Opportunity to transform Canada's refugee resettlement policy and substantially increase the numbers of refugees resettled
- Partnership between government and all sectors will be essential