



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

Facts about refugee resettlement

Facts about refugees

There are more than 14 million refugees and asylum seekers and 26 million internally displaced persons throughout the world in need of protection and assistance.*

Once they have fled to a neighboring country, refugees are interviewed by staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to determine their status. Those who meet the criteria are documented as refugees and allowed to remain in that country, usually in a refugee camp. Then they wait – for many months, even years, for a solution to their situation.

The first two options for refugees are to return to their home country or, if that is not possible, to stay in the country to which they have fled. Resettlement in a third country is considered for those who cannot return home and cannot be integrated in the country to which they fled. Resettlement is an option for less than one percent of the world's refugees.

How do refugees get to the United States?

Each year, the President of the United States establishes the U.S. refugee admissions ceiling in consultation with Congress and the State Department. For FY 2008 (Oct. 1, 2007-Sept. 30, 2008), the ceiling was set at 80,000, with 60,191 refugees actually arriving through the U.S. Refugee Program in FY 2008. The U.S. refugee admissions ceiling for FY 2009 has been set at 80,000, including large numbers of refugees from Burma, Bhutan and Iraq.

Refugees who desire to come to the United States must be interviewed and screened thoroughly by the U.S. State Department and by the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. They must prove that they have credible fear of persecution in their home country. Those approved for admission are allocated among nine national voluntary resettlement agencies, including Church World Service (CWS), and one state agency. In FY 2008, CWS resettled 4,833 refugees and 56 Iraqis and Afghans with Special Immigrant Visas from around the world.

The placement cities and numbers of refugees are proposed annually by each of those agencies, and are subject to approval by the U.S. Department of State. Each national voluntary agency maintains a network of affiliate refugee resettlement agencies in various U.S. cities. There are more than 450 local faith-based and other resettlement agencies operating throughout the country that receive referrals from the national agencies and coordinate the resettlement of refugees in local communities.

* Sources: *World Refugee Survey 2008* and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

ref·u·gee (ref'yoo jē') *n.*
A refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

*Defined at the 1951
United Nations
Convention on Refugees*

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