



**CHURCH WORLD SERVICE**

## How Refugee Resettlement Works

Historically, the U.S. Refugee Program has been characterized as an effective model of public-private partnership. Through private and government funding, and with the help of concerned individuals and voluntary organizations, refugees are properly resettled, adjust to their new homes, and achieve early self-sufficiency.

Church World Service is one of 10 U.S. voluntary agencies upon which the U.S. Refugee Program depends to welcome refugees to America. For its part, CWS works with local resettlement affiliates in 21 states to help welcome some 8,000 new refugee arrivals and Cuban and Haitian entrants to U.S. communities each year.

CWS affiliate agencies work hand-in-hand with seven participating denominations, local congregational cosponsors, and volunteers to ensure that the newcomers have food, clothing, and other essentials as they help refugees learn English, find their way around town, enroll their children in school, look for work, and quickly become self-sufficient.

### Who are refugees?

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 or her nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail herself or himself of the protection of that country. According to estimates from the 2009 *World Refugee Survey*, there are more than 13.6 million refugees and asylum seekers 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.



*Burundian refugees Albert and Dorokasi Sinzumunsi, foreground; their mother, Consolata, and baby sister Julienne arrive in Grand Rapids, Michigan. CWS, PARA Refugee Services, and cosponsor Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church and helping the Sinzumunsi get established in the United States. Photo: Jeremy DeRoo*

## How do refugees get to the United States?



*The eight-member Eh Hso family, Karen ethnic refugees from Burma, are met at the Phoenix, Arizona, airport by members of Orangewood Presbyterian Church, their cosponsor. Photo: Donna Buckles, Lutheran Social Ministry of the Southwest*

Each year, the President of the United States establishes the U.S. refugee admissions ceiling in consultation with Congress and the State Department. Individuals may be referred for U.S. Refugee Program consideration by the UNHCR (the United Nations refugee agency), a non-governmental organization, or a U.S. embassy. In addition, qualifying family members from designated nationalities may be referred by a close relative in the United States. Other refugees are referred as a member of a group of special humanitarian concern to the United States.

Candidates 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. Those approved for admission are allocated among 10 U.S. voluntary resettlement agencies, including Church World Service (CWS).

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. These local faith-based and other resettlement agencies operate throughout the country. They receive referrals from the national agencies and coordinate the resettlement of refugees in local communities.

### More about the cosponsors' role

Often local organizations, such as faith groups and local voluntary organizations in the community, agree to serve as cosponsors for newly arriving refugees. Generally, cosponsors are asked to make a three-month commitment to assist refugees with core services, including transportation to appointments and job interviews; help with job applications, interview skills and work practices; school enrollment; English training; cultural orientation, and emotional support.

Individuals who are not a part of a cosponsoring organization are encouraged to volunteer one-on-one with a refugee. Typical needs include English tutoring, mentoring, translation, help navigating the health care system, and employment advocacy.

The emphasis of cosponsorship is transitioning refugees to independence, especially economically and occupationally, as quickly as possible. As a refugee ceases to be a refugee and becomes a neighbor and friend, we are all enriched.

### What is the denominations' role?

CWS's participating denominations work in partnership with local affiliate offices to determine a sponsor for each refugee case, seeking to involve their congregations to the maximum extent possible. Once the refugees arrive, the denominations stand ready to assist the local affiliate offices if any emergency situations develop.

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*For media inquiries, contact: Lesley Crosson, [lcrosson@churchworldservice.org](mailto:lcrosson@churchworldservice.org), 212-870-2676, or Jan Dragin, [jdragin@gis.net](mailto:jdragin@gis.net), 781-925-1526. All others please contact Carol Fouke-Mpoyo, CWS/IRP, 212-870-2673; [cfouke@churchworldservice.org](mailto:cfouke@churchworldservice.org).*