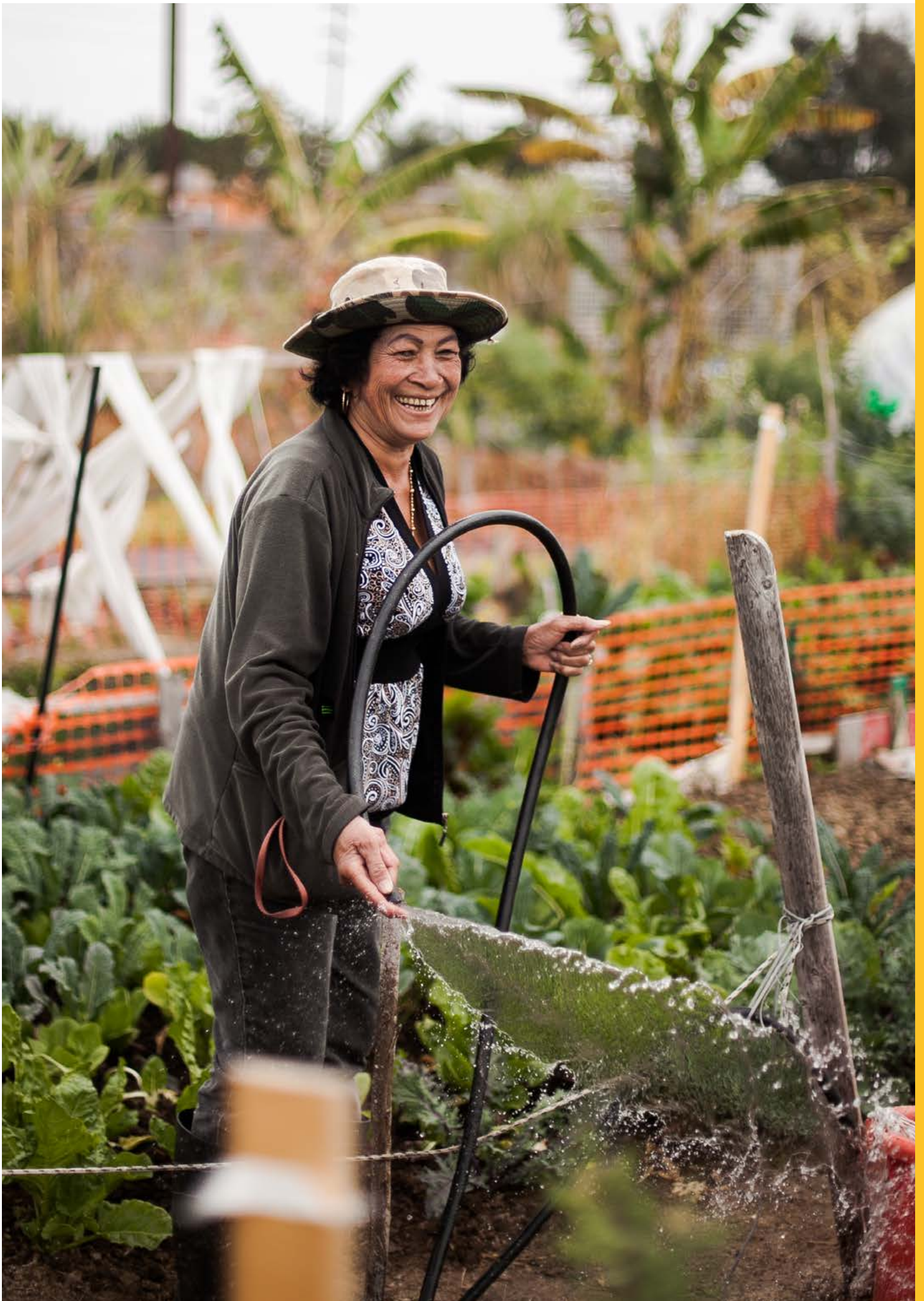




Rescuing Futures

Europe's Vital Role in Refugee Resettlement

International Rescue Committee | NOVEMBER 2016



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FRONT COVER: Makbola and her daughter, Turkiya, at the border camp in Idomeni, Greece, in March 2016. Before it closed, more than 12,000 people were stranded at the camp, waiting for the northern border to reopen.

Jodi Hilton/IRC

OPPOSITE PAGE: Resettled refugees work together on an IRC New Roots farm in San Diego, California, one part of the IRC's programmes to help them adjust to their new lives in the United States.

Shaun Boyte/IRC

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Executive Summary

Sixty-five million people in the world today have been forced from their homes. Increasing numbers of men, women and children continue to be displaced in precarious situations, unable to access protection and rebuild their lives. European Union (EU) member states bear a moral duty and – as signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention – also a legal duty to protect persons forcibly displaced by persecution, conflict, and violence. Resettlement provides a key legal pathway to such protection.

Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to a third country that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement.¹ As a vital route to legal protection, resettlement saves lives. Resettled refugees are often the most vulnerable: survivors of torture and violence, people living with complex medical needs including disabilities, and women and children at risk of exploitation and abuse. Resettlement's core aim is to ensure that the men, women and children most in need are expedited to safety and guaranteed permanent protection.

Within the wider set of tools to respond to the global refugee crisis, resettlement is also a mutually beneficial response with the potential to change the crisis into an opportunity. Integrated into receiving societies, resettled refugees bring key skills and diversity, which can enhance local economies and promote innovation and creativity. With an improved, targeted focus on employment as critical to integration, the initial costs of resettlement can lead to remarkable long-term economic gains. For example, the European Commission has forecast that the expected three million refugee arrivals by the end of 2016 will produce increases in annual GDP growth ranging from 0.2% – 0.5% in EU countries affected by the crisis, provided that labour market integration is successful.²

Evidence shows that integration programmes that prioritise economic self-sufficiency, reunite families, and involve the local community have the highest success rate and provide lasting solutions for refugees. If Europe is to realise the many benefits of resettlement, it must therefore not only increase the numbers of refugees it resettles, but focus its resources on providing permanent legal status and improving integration programmes. Resettlement must be scaled up in innovative, sustainable ways that rescue futures.

In this context, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) welcomes the European Commission's proposal for a Union Resettlement Framework and urges the Commission and the European Parliament to clearly call for EU member states to increase the numbers of refugees they resettle – to a minimum of 108,000 each year, meaning at least 540,000 refugees over the next five years.



OPPOSITE: Syrian refugees land on the shore of Lesbos, Greece, after making the treacherous journey from Turkey in October 2015.
Tara Todras-Whitehill/IRC

ABOVE: The Timsina family set out on their new life after being resettled in New York following years in a refugee camp in Nepal.
Misha Cohen/IRC

Executive Summary (continued)

The IRC recommends:

- **The EU should call for member states to increase the numbers of refugees they resettle,** evidencing the mutual benefits of resettlement and encouraging a fair distribution of resettled refugees. Member states must increase their resettlement pledges and fulfil their commitments.
- **The Union Resettlement Framework should ensure the provision of permanent legal status to refugees and proper assistance for the most vulnerable** as identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), including women at risk and unaccompanied children.
- **Resettlement must be recognised as complementary to, and not a replacement of, other legal routes to international protection, including asylum.** A comprehensive and bold revision of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is urgently needed alongside an increase in the quantity and quality of resettlement in the EU.
- **The EU should play a central role in improving integration across member states, taking advantage of its ability to coordinate, resource and manage national programmes.** This should include the development of guidelines on minimum standards for integration with a priority focus on economic self-sufficiency and the role of local communities.
- **Following resettlement, member states should commit to providing permanent protection, improving integration programmes with a clear focus on facilitating access to employment, reuniting families, and supporting community integration to give refugees a future.**

BELOW: In 2014, with violence raging in Syria and Iraq, Newroz, a makeshift refugee camp in the barren land along the border in Syrian Kurdistan, was the only place many Yazidis had to go.

Rachel Unkovic/IRC



Recommendations

To the EU:

- 1 The proposed Union Resettlement Framework should be prioritised, amended and adopted on a prompt timescale that is responsive to the urgency of the global refugee crisis.**
- 2 The Framework must form part of a comprehensive revision to the CEAS, and must not replace other legal pathways to protection including asylum.**
- 3 The Framework must include:**
 - i** No conditionality linked to third country cooperation on migration control;
 - ii** A clear call for member states to increase the numbers of refugees they resettle to equate to at least 108,000 refugees per year, meaning 540,000 refugees over the next five years through permanent legal resettlement;
 - iii** Incentives to encourage fair and proportionate resettlement across the EU, in accordance with the capacity of member states to receive and integrate resettled refugees;
 - iv** A permanent seat on the high level resettlement committee for civil society;
 - v** Provisions to ensure permanent legal status is afforded to refugees through resettlement and not dependent on skills or knowledge acquired; and
 - vi** Proper assistance for the most vulnerable, including women at risk and unaccompanied children.
- 4 The EU should play a central role in improving the integration of all refugees by coordinating, resourcing, and managing programmes across member states as well as by establishing EU-wide mechanisms of support and learning for integration. The development of guidelines on minimum standards for integration with a priority focus on economic self-sufficiency should be encouraged.**



RIGHT: The daughters of a family resettled in Baltimore from Syria, via Lebanon. With no relatives or friends in the US, the IRC became their lifeline. Six months after they arrived, the oldest daughter made her high school roll of honour, while the father and his wife attended English classes and, with support from the IRC, the father secured a job as a driver for a clothing retailer.

Camille Wathe/IRC

To EU member states:

- 1** EU member states which recognise resettlement as a critical tool for protection and opportunity should champion it on the political agenda, evidencing its value in the Council of Ministers to ensure an appropriate, humanitarian European response is reached.
- 2** Member states should increase their resettlement pledges in order to meet their humanitarian responsibility and better realise the many benefits offered by resettlement.
- 3** Integration should be improved with a clear focus on labour market integration and livelihoods support, reuniting nuclear families, and providing essential services to the most vulnerable.
- 4** Governments should explore partnerships with the private sector as a way of improving and resourcing integration.
- 5** Governments should facilitate and inspire a local response to the global crisis, partnering with voluntary organisations and community groups to find innovative legal routes to resettlement such as community sponsorship.
- 6** All resettlement approaches should be independently evaluated, seeking feedback from refugees themselves, as well as local communities, employers, and the voluntary and private sectors.

BELOW: Seven-year-old Mubarak, second from left, with her younger sister and cousins outside their shelter in the Kara Tepe refugee camp on Lesbos, Greece. Mubarak and her family nearly died making the treacherous voyage from Turkey to Lesbos. She remembers every terrifying detail as the tides took control of their flimsy craft. "First, there was a little fear, but my mama told me we're going on the boat for a better life," she says. "I can't swim, but I was learning at my grandparents' house. The waves were too big and then the boat was full of water. We lost everything – our money and clothes. I asked God to let me die on land and not in the sea."

Kulsoom Rizvi/IRC



Introduction

Every day 34,000 men, women and children are forced to leave their homes due to conflict, persecution, generalised violence and human rights violations.³ This figure has risen steadily year on year, resulting in more than 65 million people fleeing for their lives, split two to one between internally displaced people and refugees.⁴ An estimated 12.4 million people were newly displaced in 2015 alone. With ever-rising numbers and no pauses in the conflicts and violence responsible, there is an urgent need for more effective, permanent solutions on a global scale.

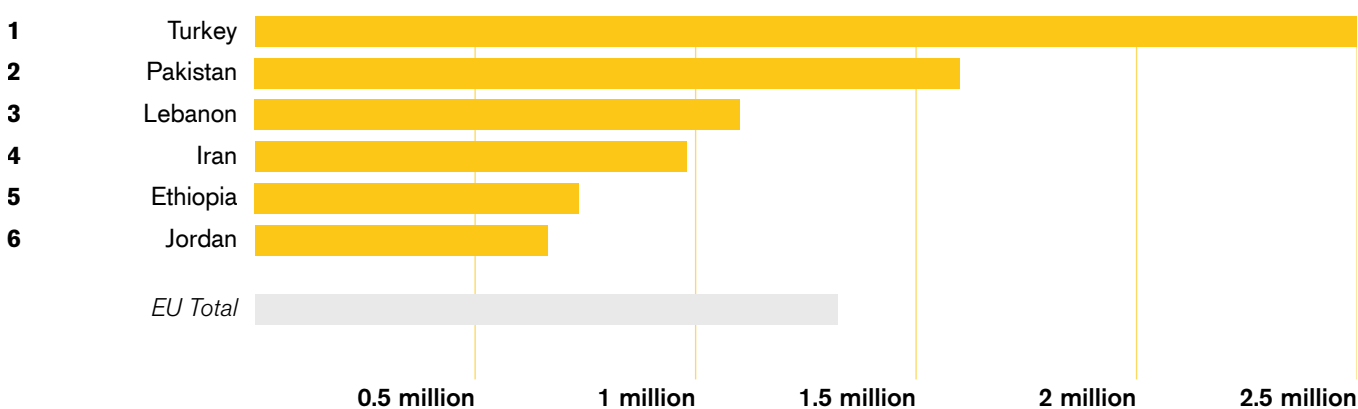
All people have the right to seek and enjoy asylum in other countries, and state signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention bear the primary responsibility to provide this protection. However, despite being a wealthy region, the EU currently hosts a relatively small number of refugees: Europe has 16.5% of the world's GDP, yet EU member states host only around 8% of the world's refugees.⁵ This places a disproportionate burden on developing countries, which host the vast majority.

In its May 2016 report *Pathways to Protection: A European Response to a Global Refugee Crisis*,⁶ the IRC called on the EU to adopt policy that directly addresses the global crisis of forced displacement, providing expanded legal routes to protection and offering the urgent safety sought by refugees. Resettlement must form a key component of the EU's response to the world's displaced, as it can play a significant part in providing permanent protection, complementing asylum, and supporting measures to tackle the causes of forced migration.

The IRC believes the EU should take in a minimum of 540,000 refugees over the next five years through permanent resettlement, at least 108,000 each year. These numbers – which are a fraction of the 65 million people displaced globally – have been calculated taking into account the population and GDP of each country and are easily within the capacity of EU member states.

While Europe must scale up its resettlement pledges if it is to meet its responsibility as a global region with the capacity to do so, it must also find innovative and sustainable ways to better realise the many benefits of resettlement. The IRC has many decades of experience helping refugees resettle and integrate in the United States (US), and believes that Europe can learn from existing best practice and tools used in this context. Some of these experiences are highlighted in this report.

Top Host Countries of Refugees in Absolute Numbers

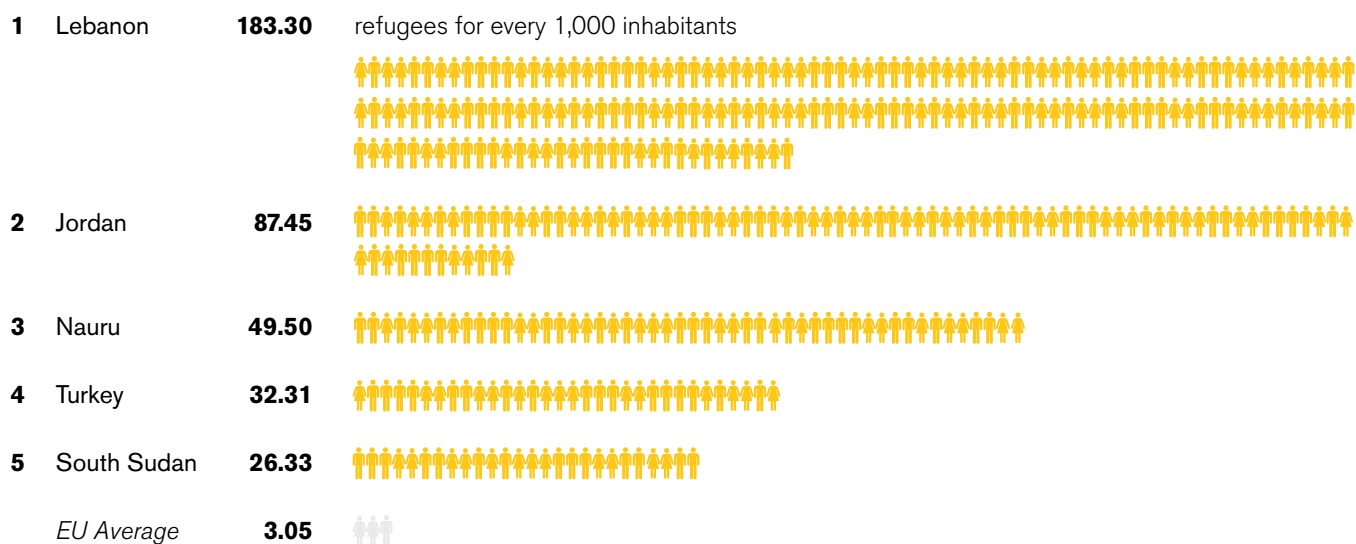


SOURCE: UNHCR year-end 2015 statistics:
<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

Note that these statistics include only UNHCR-registered refugees; asylum seekers and IDPs are not included.

See bottom of page 8.

Top Host Countries of Refugees Relative to Population Size



EU Member States

9	Sweden	17.33		53	Bulgaria	2.32		105	Slovakia	0.15
10	Malta	16.90		54	Finland	2.31		106	Slovenia	0.14
20	Austria	8.45		56	Italy	1.97		107	Romania	0.13
30	Cyprus	6.06		57	United Kingdom	1.90		109	Estonia	0.13
33	Netherlands	4.87		67	Ireland	1.31		110	Spain	0.13
34	Denmark	4.82		73	Greece	0.94		111	Croatia	0.12
39	France	4.24		89	Hungary	0.45		116	Latvia	0.11
43	Germany	3.92		91	Lithuania	0.38		127	Portugal	0.07
46	Belgium	3.13		92	Poland	0.36				
51	Luxembourg	2.35		93	Czech Republic	0.35				

SOURCE: UNHCR Year-end 2015 Statistics

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

Note that these statistics include only UNHCR-registered refugees; asylum seekers and IDPs are not included.

Palestinian refugees under the UNRWA's jurisdiction are also specifically excluded and both their numbers and location are hugely significant; there are over 450,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and over 2,110,000 in Jordan. As many Palestinians were displaced because of the war in Syria, there are now significant numbers of Palestinian refugees in countries outside the UNRWA's limited mandate, such as Egypt and Turkey, where the authorities do not allow them to register with the UNHCR.

See: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_le.html

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html>

<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-refugees-from-syria-stranded-on-the-margins-of-law/>

The Case for Resettlement: Providing Protection

Resettlement provides protection and rescues futures: it enables the most vulnerable people to reach safety, but also to bring their skills, knowledge and potential to contribute to host societies. It is considered to be a durable solution because it provides permanent legal status for vulnerable refugees who cannot return to their home countries or be adequately protected in the country in which they have sought asylum.

Resettlement must be regarded as complementary to other legal routes to international protection, such as asylum. While some EU member states have recently received large numbers of spontaneous arrivals, and must continue to offer this form of protection, Europe is lagging behind other, comparable regions in terms of resettlement. In 2015, EU member states resettled just 12% of the total number of resettlement admissions globally, compared with 13% resettled by Canada, and 64% by the US.⁷

When implemented alongside other legal routes to protection, resettlement also offers states more control while protecting the most vulnerable refugees. By allowing states to decide which refugees to accept, to conduct security checks, to manage refugees' journeys and plan their reception and integration, resettlement can contribute to well-managed migration which is safe and offers long-term opportunities for both host states and refugees.

Resettlement has been used strategically for decades, particularly in the US, Canada and certain European countries where it is recognised as a humanitarian solution that also serves to build and strengthen society. If done well, resettlement is a mutually beneficial response to the refugee emergency that has the potential to change a crisis into an opportunity.

Resettling refugees saves lives.

Providing alternative pathways to protection prevents further loss of life by reducing the pressure on those few, vital pathways currently available such as asylum. Last year alone, some 1,015,078 individuals made the dangerous journey to Europe across the Mediterranean, risking their lives to find safety.⁸ Of these, 3,771 are believed to have drowned, and 2016 is proving to be even deadlier. Whilst the number of people taking the risk to cross the Mediterranean is down by two thirds, at 334,174, the rate of deaths per crossing has more than tripled, with a death toll of 4,220 at the time of writing.⁹



ABOVE: Tha Thang stood waiting nervously in an airport near Baltimore for her fifteen-year-old son she had not seen in more than nine years. Because of persecution at the hands of the Burmese military in her native Chin state, after her husband died of cancer, Tha was forced to flee Burma to Malaysia, leaving her children, two girls and Venson, in the care of relatives. In Malaysia, she sent most of her meagre earnings back to Burma for their care. The International Rescue Committee helped in resettling Tha in Baltimore, Maryland. She started the paperwork with a lawyer to bring her children here. This was ultimately successful for her daughters. They arrived three years ago. But due to an error on his birth certificate, Venson was unable to come with them. The IRC was successful in filing an Affidavit of Relationship petition, a newly restarted refugee family reunification application, that ultimately led Tha and Venson to reunite.

Courtesy Still Life Project



Lok Nath's Story

Back home in Bhutan, Lok Nath was just starting his career as a veterinarian when he was forced to flee to Nepal with his family. For the next 18 years, their home was a refugee camp. He lived with 13 family members under one roof and worked as a voluntary teacher for a low wage. "I said to my friends, 'How long can we be in this situation?' We lived in despair," he says. To begin with he dreamed of being repatriated to Bhutan, but after many years of waiting he lost hope. "I began to long to be resettled," he says. "We thought that once we relocated to another country we would have better opportunities to sustain ourselves and become self-reliant." Five years later, the family are living in Greater Manchester in the UK. "When we landed it was really cold, we were shivering. We didn't know what life would be like, we didn't know what kind of home we would have." Since arriving, the family has worked hard to integrate into British life. All three of Lok Nath's sons are thriving at school and the oldest, Hassar, is in his second year at university. "Resettlement is really important for the future of the younger generation. My family have a bright future in the UK, so long as they work hard to achieve their goals."

Resettlement needs to be considered a viable, accessible option for protection by refugees in asylum countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon who have fled their homes, have yet to find a place of safety, and have specific needs that cannot be addressed where they have sought asylum. Resettlement is a vital solution that complements other routes to protection, and in its design as a permanent solution for the most vulnerable, must not replace or compete against such routes, including asylum.

Resettling refugees protects the most vulnerable.

UNHCR identifies the most vulnerable refugees for resettlement: unaccompanied children, children and adolescents at risk; women at risk; people living with disabilities and complex medical needs; those who have survived torture and violence; refugees at heightened risk of sexual violence and exploitation; and those who require resettlement to ensure family unity. Faced with the absence of life-saving medical care, a treacherous journey to seek asylum in Europe or the ongoing threat of violence and abuse, it is right that these men, women and children are expedited to safety and guaranteed permanent protection.

Resettling refugees rescues futures.

When resettlement fosters self-sufficiency, it can provide permanent, long-term protection as well as a sense of stability and perspective for the future. Rebuilding livelihoods is critical to rebuilding lives. Refugees bring key skills and diversity, which can enhance local economies and promote innovation and creativity. The IRC has resettled more than 370,000 people from 119 countries across the US over the past four decades. Helping people to rapidly establish financial stability, and supporting them to achieve upward economic mobility, increased financial resilience and assets, are all key activities within the IRC's economic empowerment approach that have a proven impact on integration success and long-term protection.

Countless studies have documented an entrepreneurial mind-set common amongst refugee populations, due in part to refugees' access to distinct networks and connecting markets, and their willingness to embrace risk as a result of their experiences.¹⁰ In the US, the Office of Refugee Resettlement reported that refugees had developed, expanded or maintained approximately 10,800 micro-businesses over the past 20 years, with a business survival rate of 88% and a loan repayment rate of nearly 98% – far higher than the average micro-enterprise

loan repayment rate in the US.¹¹ If Europe is to realise the many benefits of resettlement, it must not only increase the numbers of refugees it resettles, but focus its resources on providing permanent legal status and opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.

Resettling refugees strengthens society.

Living through poverty, conflict and violence is devastating. A shared experience of hardship can build empathy, responsiveness and a social consciousness within a community. Refugees are more likely to volunteer and engage in community groups, as well as create services to empower other refugees.¹² Current European systems of integration fail to encourage and benefit from this potential, and yet it is an obvious source of highly skilled and appropriate service provision to other refugees and asylum seekers.¹³ Volunteering can also play a vital role in accessing labour markets and integrating within host communities, creating social capital in the communities in which resettled refugees live. And when resettlement equates to showing solidarity between EU member states and sharing responsibility – a central component of EU asylum policy – the European community is stronger for it.

Innovation in Resettlement: Focusing Resources

Smaller countries within the EU can play a vital role by resettling just one vulnerability group and channelling their resources towards developing and delivering the specialised services necessary to fully support them. For example, the Czech Republic pledged to resettle 70 vulnerable medical cases in 2015 and the majority of refugees resettled by Finland in the same year were submitted under the 'survivors of torture and/or violence' submission category.⁸ If significantly scaled up and implemented in the long term, such an approach would enable smaller member states to meet their humanitarian responsibility by setting relatively modest resettlement quotas, providing quality specialist care and attention to some of the most vulnerable refugees whose special needs may be more difficult to attend to through national resettlement programmes designed to receive and integrate large numbers of refugees. A model such as this would also play to the EU's unique strengths, harnessing the diversity of individual member states to result in a comprehensive, coordinated, whole-of-Europe response.



ABOVE: IRC Voice Morena Baccarin visits programmes in Baltimore where the IRC works to support resettled refugees.

Logan Mock-Bunting/IRC



Europe's Response to the Crisis

The European response to the global refugee crisis has been woefully inadequate. European countries have closed their borders to asylum seekers, constructed fences and confined people to inhumane environments. They have challenged the rights of family members to reunite with their relatives, and where they have offered humanitarian assistance, have often done so with only temporary assurances of protection and in ways that foster state dependency and limit the rights of refugees. Europe's failure to accept responsibility has left approximately 60,000 people in Greece and over 12,500 across the Balkans stranded in often substandard living conditions.¹⁴

The EU is reviewing its CEAS. However, instead of using this opportunity to strengthen the system's humanitarian elements, the political agenda is focused on reducing the numbers of people allowed into Europe, despite the backdrop of a huge surge in global displacement. Growing Euroscepticism and the rising popularity of far-right parties have furthered the agenda of protecting member state authorities and the discord over control of borders. In this negative climate, it is easy to forget that there are clear benefits to be gained from well-managed asylum and resettlement, for host societies as well as refugees.

For example, while there is much concern over the secondary movement of refugees within the EU, at the policy level there is little understanding of the vital role that improved integration – which must form a core part of asylum and resettlement efforts going forward – plays in reducing such movement. People who feel valued, settled and empowered in one member state are less likely to want to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Member states also fear a perceived financial burden of resettling refugees. The simple fact – too often overlooked – is that after the initial costs of resettlement, it brings remarkable long-term economic gains. 82% of new refugee arrivals to the US who are assisted by the IRC end up in employment within 180 days, ultimately bringing benefit to the US economy. In the short run, the additional public spending as a result of the increase in refugee arrivals may act as a demand stimulus.¹⁵

The European Commission forecasts that the expected three million refugee arrivals by the end of 2016 will produce increases in annual GDP growth ranging from 0.2% – 0.5% in EU countries affected by the crisis, provided that labour market integration is successful.¹⁶

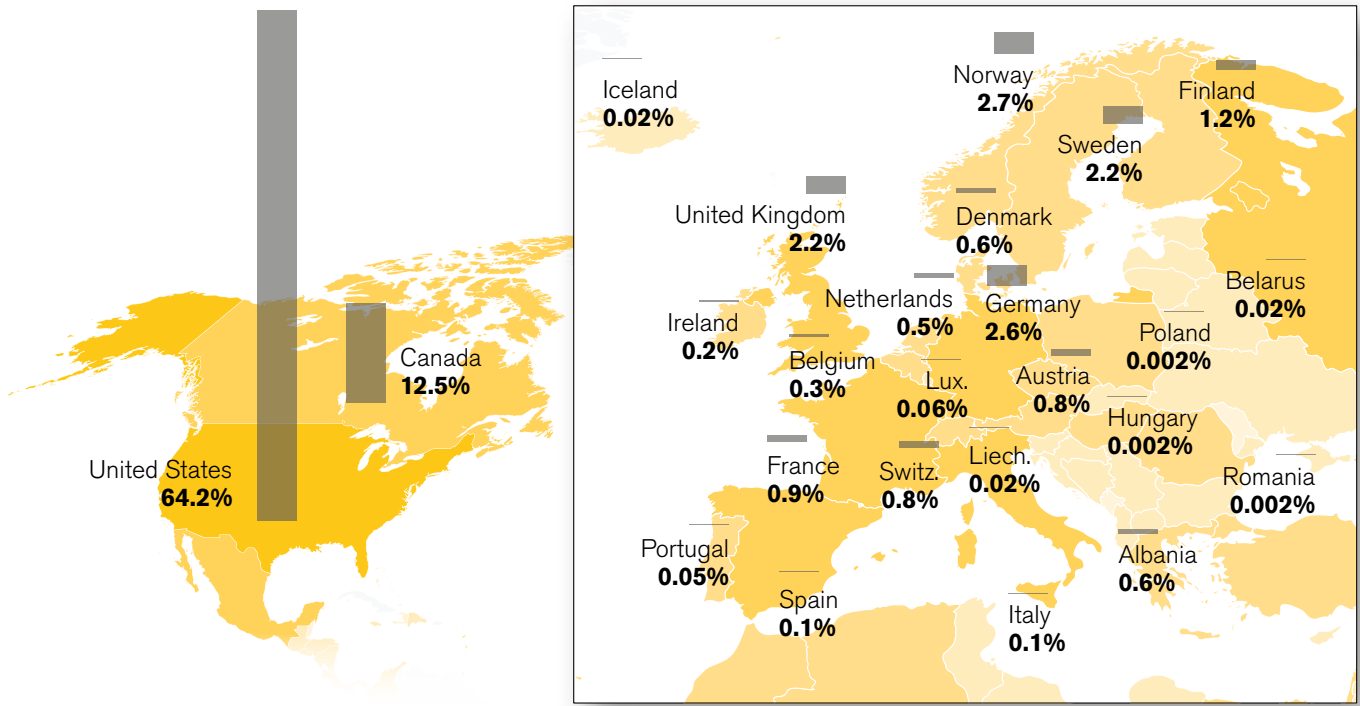
LEFT: On the Greek island of Lesbos, thousands of life jackets used by refugees on their journey from Turkey signify the scale of the crisis. Around half a million refugees and migrants arrived on the island in 2015.
Monique Jaques/IRC

The Union Resettlement Framework

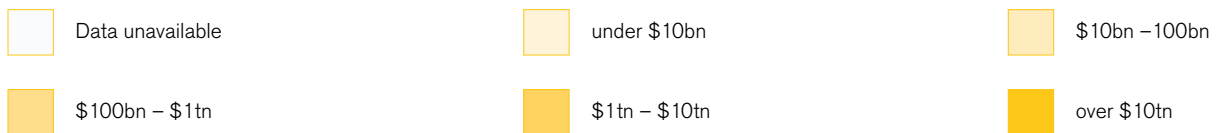
The Union Resettlement Framework proposed in July 2016 is a critical element of the CEAS review. The IRC welcomes the proposal. Resettlement must be championed in the Council by those member states that rightly recognise it as a tool for protection and opportunity. Coordination is also needed in the European Parliament to ensure an operational framework is adopted in a swift, efficient timeframe which is responsive to the needs of vulnerable refugees.

The Framework's objectives are to provide for a collective and harmonised approach, putting the EU in a stronger position to achieve its policy objectives globally.¹⁷ However, the current draft falls well short of its potential. Unless it leads to an increase in resettlement, the proposal will do nothing to challenge Europe's current failure to share responsibility to provide protection. Without amendments, the scheme risks jeopardising the humanitarian essence of resettlement in favour of state sovereignty. A step change is needed in political will towards resettlement if Europe is to scale up its collective efforts and fulfil its capacity and responsibility in providing protection to people displaced from their homes.

GDP Against Percentage of Global Resettled Refugees per Country in 2015



2015 Gross Domestic Product, US dollars (current value)



Bars are to the same scale throughout the diagram.

Countries not shown above which resettled refugees in 2015:

	GDP US\$ (current value)	% of global refugees resettled
Australia	1.34tn	6.4
New Zealand	173.8bn	0.9
Republic of Korea	1.38tn	0.05
Japan	4.12tn	0.02
Brazil	1.77tn	0.01

SOURCES: World Bank, International Comparison Program database, 2015 data, GDP (current US\$)

<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&series=NY.GDP.MKTP.CD&country=#>

UNHCR, Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017, 2015, p65

<http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html>

A comprehensive resettlement framework must include the following:

- The EU should clearly call for member states to increase the numbers of refugees they resettle to at least 108,000 per year, meaning a minimum total of 540,000 over the next five years.

UNHCR estimates global resettlement needs for 2017 to be over 1,190,000.¹⁸ In 2015, however, EU member states collectively resettled just 9,451 refugees through UNHCR's programme.¹⁹ While pledges exist from individual member states to scale up their commitment to resettlement, there is already doubt about whether or not these commitments will be fulfilled.²⁰ Europe's overall resettlement commitment can and must increase, using UNHCR global resettlement needs figures as a benchmark.

The Framework as a whole should induce, enable and empower member states to create or expand sustainable resettlement programmes. To this end, it must be accompanied by sound EU financial support mechanisms, guidelines and capacity-building programmes. A distribution key could further ensure proportionate and fair resettlement across the Union, and consideration should be given to developing one appropriate to member states' capacity to receive and integrate resettled refugees.

LEFT: A shopper from Liberia sorts through vegetables on sale at the New Roots stand run by the IRC at a farmers' market in the City Heights neighbourhood of San Diego, California. *Sandy Huffaker/IRC*



- Resettled refugees should receive permanent legal status.

Permanent legal status allows access to rights, such as the right to work and attend school that are imperative both to successful integration and to the durability of resettlement as a protection pathway. Unlike humanitarian admission, which is considered a temporary solution, resettlement replaces a state of limbo with the hope of a permanent future. Increasingly, refugees are being resettled in Europe under temporary legal status, sometimes for as short as six months.²¹ Permanent legal status is not guaranteed and can be dependent on country of origin, language, knowledge or other conditions at odds with humanitarian values.²² In some member states, access to employment support, vocational training and entrepreneurship opportunities is largely dependent on permanent legal status. Forcing people to face the threat of displacement yet again – often for as long as five years after arrival²³ – undermines the principles of protection and all efforts at long-term integration. Shifts in some member states to restrict access to permanent residence permits in favour of temporary legal status not only force refugees to depend on state support, but rob host societies of the many benefits refugees bring with them. This is a continuation of a state of disempowerment and must not be a part of resettlement programmes.

- The EU should not base its decisions to resettle vulnerable refugees on the cooperation of host countries with the Union on migration control.

The Union Resettlement Framework proposal establishes a link between the priority countries from which people would be selected for resettlement, and the cooperation of those countries with the EU on migration management, in line with the EU's Migration Partnership Framework. This is illogical and threatens the fundamental rationale behind resettlement based on need and vulnerability. Resettlement must be based on the needs of refugees and should be used strategically to ensure responsibility-sharing with those asylum countries bearing extraordinary burdens – and there is no reason to assume a correlation between the countries that have the closest relations with the EU and those that are under most pressure with regard to hosting refugees. Vulnerable people should not bear the brunt of the foreign policy choices made by the regimes that host them. Furthermore, resettlement must not become the pretext for promoting migration control measures in third countries that restrict the right to seek asylum.



- Should an EU member state decline to resettle a refugee, the Union Resettlement Framework must not restrict the ability of another member state to consider resettlement of that refugee.

The Framework should not impose arbitrary and disproportionate grounds for excluding otherwise eligible refugees from resettlement. The current proposal excludes any refugees who in the past five years have entered the EU irregularly or have been refused resettlement by one member state. By imposing a blanket ban these articles do not allow for consideration of individual cases and unduly restrict member states' ability to consider exceptions taking into account the national context.

- The proposal should include an amendment to give civil society organisations a seat on the high-level resettlement committee.

Civil society organisations such as the IRC have vast experience, both in providing emergency assistance to displaced people throughout the world and in the process of resettlement. They should have an institutionalised role in the establishment and implementation of the annual resettlement schemes to ensure their knowledge on global needs and expertise on implementation is taken into account. The Framework should therefore guarantee UNHCR, IOM and civil society a permanent seat on the high-level resettlement committee which is intended to shape and oversee annual and targeted resettlement schemes.

- Alongside the proposal, the EU should consider the development and implementation of Minimum Standards of Integration.

Integration is of critical importance to the success of resettlement. It is through a welcoming reception, appropriate placement and the support and resources necessary to build a self-sufficient life, that refugees are enabled to prosper. While the EU has the potential to play a key role in driving effective integration policies, it has to date lacked adequate focus on the implementation and potential benefits of such policies, due in part to its lack of competence on integration.

For example, the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPI)²⁴ found that integration in Europe was most successful in areas that are typically well covered by EU law, such as basic security, fundamental rights and protection from discrimination. On the contrary, the greatest obstacles to integration are found in areas where European policies are generally weaker and divergent, such as in employment, education and health support. A recent IRC survey showed that EU citizens were most concerned by the perceived economic cost of receiving refugees, making the need for concerted EU action to improve labour market integration particularly pressing.²⁵ In general, the differing MIPI scores across all eight integration policy areas²⁶ and between EU member states demonstrates the current ineffectiveness of the Common Basic Principles on Integration.²⁷

Looking ahead, holding member states accountable to the Common Basic Principles on Integration and strengthening EU policies on employment, education, and health are therefore essential to achieving widespread quality integration programmes and to realising the strategic benefits of resettlement for the EU.

ABOVE LEFT: Stella Giaga, right, an IRC Information and protection officer, holds Eman, an Afghani baby, 6 weeks old, while Khadija, the mother, stands next to her, at the Pikpa refugee camp, in Mytilene, on the island of Lesbos, Greece, in October 2015.

Khadijah says, "I was born in Iran and I'm Afghani. I came from Iran to Turkey to Greece. I decided to leave because of comments towards Afghanis and you can't get an education in Iran if you are Afghani. Here is better than Iran because they gave us documents. But I'd like to get as far from here as possible. I'd like to go to Finland because I have a friend there. I hope my children won't have the same problems I've had and that they will get an education and have a better life."

Tara Todras-Whitehill/IRC

Rescuing Futures: Resettlement that Provides Durable Protection

The EU has a responsibility not just to scale up resettlement, but to do so in new and innovative ways that rescue common futures. With over 30 years of experience in resettlement on a scale far larger than currently practiced anywhere in Europe, the North American approach has fostered learning on the principles and elements of good resettlement and successful integration that could be applied to the EU context.

At a policy level, political rhetoric around resettlement recognises humanitarian responsibility²⁸ and integration is underpinned by an acknowledgement of the value refugees bring to society. In practice, the focus of resettlement is on providing permanent protection through prioritising economic self-sufficiency, reuniting nuclear families, and involving the local community.

These key elements of the North American approach include:

- A priority focus on achieving self-sufficiency

For newly arriving refugees, the first step towards a thriving future is achieving financial stability. In the last financial year, the IRC's average self-sufficiency rate for employable refugees was 82% within 180 days of arrival.²⁹ Such a high rate of success can be attributed to a resettlement system focused on employment as integral to integration and the assumption that language skills, social cohesion and a mind-set of putting down roots are all outcomes resulting from economic independence.³⁰ In contrast, these are considered pre-requisites to employment in many European resettlement programmes.

If provided with permanent legal status and employment support, refugees have the ability to become self-sufficient quickly and begin contributing to the local economy. Across EU member states, national resettlement programmes have failed to build the human capital of refugees, resulting in their continued economic exclusion.



Employment Together: Overcoming the Language Barrier

The IRC has built strategic and broad networks across many industries within the US to enable employment for resettled refugees. When seeking employment for a refugee with limited or no English, IRC staff link him or her with someone of the same community who shares their language. Employment is sought in an industry where communication is primarily within the staff body and not public facing, such as in warehouses or laundry services. The bilingual refugee can act as a translator between management and other staff. In this way, it is possible to build a small nuclei of staff with varied levels of language and skills who are all accessing work experience and employment, while relying on the language ability of just one.

This approach, coupled with additional vocational and language training, allows refugees to quickly join the workforce while moving towards higher-skilled (and higher-paid) employment in the medium term as their language proficiency grows. Early employment is fundamental not only to self-sufficiency and economic contribution, but also to the restoration of a sense of purpose and psycho-social well-being of refugees and their families.

LEFT: Kefah and her husband Mustafa fled Iraq after ongoing violence made it too dangerous for them to live there. They relocated to Jordan, where they lived for several years, and were resettled in the US in April 2012. Upon arriving in the US, one of the biggest surprises for them was the high price of food. To cut costs, they planted a garden, starting with their favourite vegetable: okra. They also grow mint, which they brew into a flavourful tea.
Jacque Waite/IRC



The IRC's Self-Sufficiency Support in the US



Employment support



Vocational training



Financial literacy



Professional accreditation



Small business support



Micro-credit/loans



Initiatives promoting psychosocial recovery and enhanced self-reliance



Extended and intensive case management

Employment support is often not included in performance indicators for resettlement implementation and a priority focus on language learning delays access to the labour market. Integration goals for attaining economic self-sufficiency must be prioritised with designated funding and standards for accountability. These should include gaining key skills and experience through volunteering, apprenticeships and vocational training opportunities, and building on low-skilled work experience to achieve long-term skilled employment. European countries recognise the importance of job creation for refugees in places such as Jordan and Lebanon, as demonstrated by the commitments made on the global stage,³¹ yet these same links are not included in policy or practice in resettlement programmes within Europe.

EU member states should harness the assets of the private sector to improve the European response to the global refugee crisis while dispersing the task of doing so across their capable sectors. The US provides some innovative examples, which could be tailored to the European context, such as Partnership for Refugees, a White House initiative incentivising the private sector to take action, primarily through employment and enablement.³²

➤ Family reunification that enables integration

Resettlement may be used for the primary purpose of family reunification – however this should be the case only when no other legal mechanisms to reunite family members exist. In the EU context, this includes family reunification through the 2003 Council Directive on the right to family reunification, and member states should not be permitted to avoid their existing obligations under this legislation to the detriment of refugees in need of resettlement.

However, once a refugee has been selected for resettlement, family unity should be maintained and reunification promoted, as the separation of families is a significant barrier to integration. In the US, particular efforts are made to resettle refugees near relatives or members of the same communities. While the US context allows for this more easily than in Europe, family reunification of resettled refugees must be recognised as fundamental to integration and the separation of families – particularly of nuclear families, including those with children over 18 – as posing a major barrier to the decision to invest in futures. Family reunification is also critical to protecting and upholding children's rights.³³

➤ Inspiring a local response to the global crisis

Inspiring solidarity between refugees and their neighbours at a community level is critical to integration and protecting futures. The wave of public frustration across Europe recently peaked again in response to the photo of 5 year old Omran Daqneesh rescued from the wreckage of his Aleppo home.³⁴ Yet the role of the community is currently woefully underutilised in national resettlement programmes.

A key tool in harnessing this momentum is community sponsorship. Supporting a partnership between a refugee family and host community fosters a dynamic, two-way process of mutual learning and shared experience. In the US, the resettlement programme is founded on a public-private partnership, which mobilises local community volunteers as well as both secular and faith-based community groups to support the welcome of newly arrived refugees by providing a range of in-kind assistance, accompaniment and mentorship. Resettlement agencies also mobilise private funds to match government funding for specific programmes.

Canada's resettlement model, which includes a unique private resettlement component, is proven to enable more successful integration. More than 275,000 refugees have been resettled there under private sponsorship since 1979.³⁵ Sponsored refugees gain social access through community networks thereby improving integration, and achieve a higher level of income in a shorter timeframe than those resettled directly by the government.³⁶ The UK introduced a community sponsorship scheme in July 2016 modelled on the Canadian approach.³⁷ Although it could represent an additional operational method for resettlement, it will not result in an increase in refugees resettled as those sponsored will be included within the government's pledge to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees before 2020. A review of the scheme in 2017, including gathering feedback from refugees, communities and local authorities, will be critical to assessing its success.

OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: A resettled refugee takes part in the IRC's New Roots programme in San Diego, California

Shaun Boyte/IRC

BELOW: Somali Bantu refugees who have been resettled to the US harvest vegetables at an IRC New Roots farm outside San Diego, California.

Peter Biro/IRC





Conclusion

The scale and urgency of the global refugee crisis demands more safe and legal pathways for protection than are currently available or being utilised. Resettlement is one critical and operational route for providing the most vulnerable refugees with safety and a protected future. The EU can make a significant contribution to meeting the needs of these refugees by scaling up member states' resettlement programmes to respond proportionately to their capacity and resources. Resettling 108,000 refugees per year, or 540,000 refugees over the next five years, is an achievable, minimum target for the EU as a whole.

Not only should European countries scale up their resettlement pledges, they should also improve integration in order to better realise its many economic and social benefits. This requires new and innovative approaches to resettlement that focus on achieving self-sufficiency, reducing state dependence, building partnerships with the voluntary and private sector, reuniting families, and supporting community level involvement. The EU can add real value to these efforts by coordinating and resourcing best practice in integration programmes. In a political environment where fears over economic growth, security and state sovereignty define migration policy, improving integration standards must be evidenced and successful integration championed for its positive impact on both economic growth and strengthening the European social fabric.

Robust, practical and long-term solutions are needed to respond to the needs of the 65 million men, women and children forced from their homes. Innovative models of resettlement must play a critical part. The EU institutions and member states should seize the opportunity provided by the Union Resettlement Framework to agree a permanent resettlement scheme that focuses on protecting the most vulnerable and rescuing futures, turning the crisis into an opportunity for refugees as well as for Europe.

OPPOSITE: Ajmal Massoumy was resettled from Afghanistan to Oakland, California in October 2014. Ajmal had worked as an interpreter for the US Special Forces and for a US-run radio programme. After his real name was broadcast, he became a target of the Taliban. Scared, he applied for the US Special Immigration Visa. A year and a half later he was accepted and left for California.

Ethan, his caseworker from the IRC, met him at the airport with hot halal food and drove him to his new apartment. Over the next few months Ajmal took employment training and cultural orientation classes, created a new family with his two Afghan room-mates and found work at a restaurant. With the ongoing support of the IRC, Ajmal has set his sights on getting his high school graduation equivalency certificate so he can one day enrol in college to study construction engineering, hoping to return to Afghanistan to help rebuild his country.

Kathryn Rummel/IRC



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Germany	2,097	Belgium	276
Sweden	1,808	Italy	96
United Kingdom	1,768	Spain	92
Finland	964	Luxembourg	49
France	700	Portugal	39
Austria	642	Hungary	2
Denmark	486	Romania	2
Netherlands	428	Poland	2
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- OPPOSITE: In October 2015, Samira Ramoni, age 5, from Afghanistan, waits with her family for the ferry to Athens, in order to continue their journey into Europe, on the island of Lesbos, Greece. Tara Todras-Whitehill/IRC

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Acknowledgements

Written by Hannah Stevenson Doornbos,
Indira Kartalozzi and Lena Donner (ed.), November 2016

With thanks to Ellen Beattie, Imogen Sudbery,
Melanie Ward, Anna Greene, Laura Kyrke-Smith,
Ralph Achenbach, Anny Bhan, Robin Dunn Marcos,
Ellen Pettersson, Khusbu Patel, Elinor Raikes,
Ashleigh Lovett, Kris Warkentin, Mike Buckley,
Johanna Heil and Patricia Reineck (Caritas Germany),
Duncan Wells (Refugee Council), Rosalin Akar Grams
and Lucy Gregg (Freedom from Torture),
Jeremy Bernhau (Refugee Action), Mark Wiggin
(Caritas Salford), Magdalena Boehm (ICMC),
Chrysalis Family Futures and Faces of Another World.

Design by Ros Mac Thóim

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers life-saving care and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war, persecution or natural disaster. At work today in over 40 countries and 22 cities, we restore safety, dignity and hope to millions who are uprooted and struggling to endure. The IRC leads the way from harm to home.

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