Refugee Resettlement Ministry

A Call to Welcome the Stranger: Start-Up Information and Guidelines for Dioceses
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Dear Excellency,

As you are likely aware, the President has increased the refugee admissions ceiling for the United States from 70,000 to 85,000 for this fiscal year which began on October 1 and 100,000 refugees in FY 2017. While the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis is the primary impetus for this federal action, other refugee populations continue to rapidly grow as well.

Our existing diocesan refugee resettlement program network has been asked to increase its capacity to respond to this crisis and many diocesan agencies have generously indicated their willingness to do so under the leadership of the local bishop. We seek to grow our capacity in a deliberate manner, yet the need is greater than even our present network can adequately address. If the Church is to meet this challenge, we simply must expand its refugee resettlement ministry in dioceses across the country. For some dioceses, this would represent a re-engagement many years after a previous refugee resettlement program was ended. For others, it presents a first opportunity to help at least some refugees build new lives among us and bless us with the gifts they bring.

As you review this guide, I humbly ask that you prayerfully consider making a way to welcome refugees into your diocese. The staff of USCCB Migration and Refugee Services stands ready to provide the necessary assistance and resources to carry out this ministry of hospitality and welcome so close to the heart of our Holy Father. I invite you or your designated representative to contact Mr. Jim Kuh, USCCB/MRS Associate Director of Program Advancement and Evaluation, at jkuh@usccb.org or (202) 541-3220 to communicate your interest and continue a further discussion.

On behalf of the USCCB Committee on Migration, I express deepest appreciation for your kind consideration and offer prayers of support for your own ministry and the faithful you lead.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Eusebio Elizondo
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration
The United States Refugee Admission Program (USRAP)

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At the end of 2014, the estimated refugee population worldwide stood at 19.5 million, with 14.4 million under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This represents an increase of 2.7 million refugees under UNHCR mandate in one year. The United States actively supports efforts to provide protection, assistance, and durable solutions to these refugees, as these measures fulfill our humanitarian interests and further our foreign policy and national security interests.

Under the authority of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as amended, the United States contributes to the programs of UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other international and non-governmental organizations that provide protection and assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), victims of conflict, stateless persons, and other vulnerable migrants. These contributions are used to address the legal and physical protection needs of refugees and to furnish basic assistance such as water, sanitation, food, health care, shelter, education, and other services. The United States monitors these programs to ensure the most effective use of resources, maximizing humanitarian impact for the beneficiaries.
The United States and UNHCR recognize that most refugees desire safe, voluntary return to their homeland. Where opportunities for return remain elusive, the United States and partners pursue self-sufficiency and temporary, indefinite, or permanent local integration in countries of asylum. The U.S. Department of State encourages host governments to protect refugees and allow them to integrate into local communities, promotes local integration by funding programs to enhance refugee self-sufficiency, and supports community-based social services.

In addition, the Department of State seeks to use the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) to demonstrate leadership and encourage other countries to do more to help stateless people and refugees in protracted situations. The United States, like UNHCR, recognizes that resettlement in third countries is a vital tool for providing refugees protection and/or durable solutions in some particularly difficult cases. For some refugees, resettlement is the best and perhaps only alternative. For more than a decade, the U.S. government has provided financial support to expand and improve UNHCR’s resettlement capacity, principally by funding staff and constructing facilities. As a result, UNHCR has substantially increased referrals to the United States and other resettlement countries.
The United States has also supported UNHCR’s efforts to expand the number of countries active in resettlement. In 2014, UNHCR referred refugees to 30 countries for resettlement consideration. Over 90 percent were referred to the United States, Australia, and Canada. Smaller numbers of referrals were made to Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, and the United Kingdom.

While the overall number of refugees referred by UNHCR and the percentage resettled by various countries fluctuate from year to year, the United States aims to ensure at least 50 percent of all refugees referred by UNHCR worldwide are considered for resettlement in the United States, depending on the availability of funds. The United States is by far the largest single donor to UNHCR, providing over $1.28 billion in FY 2014. During the past few years, U.S. resettlement efforts in Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia have helped energize efforts by UNHCR and other countries to ensure that first asylum is maintained for larger refugee populations or that local integration or third country resettlement are options offered to those in need.
During its history, the USRAP has responded to changing circumstances. The end of the Cold War dramatically altered the context in which the USRAP operated. The program shifted its focus away from large groups concentrated in a few locations (primarily refugees from Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, and the former Yugoslavia) and began to admit refugees representing over 50 nationalities per year. Interviews of refugees by officials from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security are often conducted in remote locations and are focused on members of populations in greatest need of third country resettlement opportunities. While maintaining the United States’ leadership role in humanitarian protection, an integral part of this mission is to ensure that refugee resettlement opportunities go only to those who are eligible for such protection and who do not present a risk to the safety and security of our country.

Refugees resettled in the United States enrich our nation. The USRAP is premised on the idea that refugees should become economically self-sufficient as quickly as possible. The U.S. Department of State works domestically with private agencies participating in the Reception and Placement (R&P) program to ensure that refugees receive services in the first thirty to ninety days after arrival in accordance with established standards. During and after the initial resettlement period, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR) provides leadership, technical assistance, and funding to states, the District of Columbia, and nonprofit organizations to help refugees become self-sufficient and integrated into U.S. society.
HHS/ORR programs use formula and discretionary grants to provide cash and medical assistance, employment and training programs, and other services to newly arriving and recently arrived refugees. Upon arrival, refugees are potential Americans in waiting. Refugees are immediately eligible for lawful employment and after one year are required to apply for adjustment of status to that of lawful permanent resident. Five years after admission, a refugee who has been granted lawful permanent resident status is eligible to apply for citizenship.

A number of factors create challenges for resettlement agencies striving to meet the needs of refugees in the program. The refugee population is ever more linguistically diverse, with wide-ranging educational and employment histories. To better prepare refugees for arrival in the United States, the USRAP continues to improve overseas cultural orientation, including thorough curricula review and teacher training.
In most refugee processing locations, the U.S. Department of State engages a non-governmental organization, an international organization, or U.S. embassy contractors to manage a Resettlement Support Center (RSC) that assists in the processing of refugees for admission to the United States. RSC staff pre-screen applicants to determine if they qualify for one of the applicable processing priorities and to prepare cases for U.S. Department of Homeland Security adjudication. If an applicant is conditionally approved for resettlement, RSC staff guide the refugee through post-adjudication steps, including obtaining medical screening exams and attending cultural orientation programs. The RSC obtains sponsorship assurances and, once all required steps are completed, including all necessary security clearances, refers the case to the International Organization on Migration (IOM), a contractor funded by the U.S. Department of State for transportation to the United States.
United States Refugee Admission Program
Cultural Orientation

The U.S. Department of State strives to ensure that refugees who are accepted for admission to the United States are prepared for the profound life changes they will experience by providing cultural orientation programs prior to departure for the United States as well as upon arrival. It is critical that refugees have a realistic idea of what their new lives will be like, what services will be available to them, and what their responsibilities will be. Every refugee family is offered a copy of Welcome to the United States, a resettlement guidebook developed with contributions from refugee resettlement workers, resettled refugees, and government officials. Through this book, refugees have access to accurate information about the initial resettlement period before they arrive in the U.S.

In addition, the U.S. Department of State funds pre-departure orientation classes for eligible refugees at sites throughout the world. In an effort to further bridge the information gap for certain groups, brief video presentations featuring the experience of recently resettled refugees of the same ethnic group are made available to refugee applicants overseas.
The U.S. Department of State funds the international transportation of refugees resettled in the United States through a program administered by IOM. The cost of transportation is provided to refugees in the form of a no-interest loan. Refugees are responsible for repaying these loans over time, beginning six months after their arrival, although it is possible to request a deferral based on inability to begin paying at six months. The private resettlement agencies under agreement with U.S Department of State assist in the collection of these travel loans and retain 25 percent of the amount of the loans collected to augment their program operations.
United States Refugee Admission Program
Reception and Placement (R&P) Program

Each federal fiscal year, the U.S. Department of State enters into cooperative agreements with nine private resettlement agencies to provide initial resettlement services to refugees arriving in the United States under the Reception and Placement (R&P) Program. These agencies are responsible for providing initial reception and core services (including housing, furnishings, clothing and food, as well as assistance with access to medical, employment, educational, and social services) to arriving refugees. The nine organizations maintain a nationwide network of 312 affiliated offices in 185 locations to provide services. Two of the organizations also maintain a network of 24 affiliated offices through which unaccompanied refugee minors are placed into foster care, a program administered and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR).
Using R&P funds and cash and in-kind contributions generated from private and other sources, the participating agencies provide the following services, consistent with the terms of the R&P cooperative agreement:

- Sponsorship;
- Pre-arrival resettlement planning, including placement;
- Reception on arrival;
- Basic needs support (including housing, furnishings, food, and clothing) for at least 30 days;
- Cultural orientation;
- Assistance with access to health, employment, education, and other services, as needed; and
- Development and implementation of an initial resettlement service plan for each refugee.
United States Refugee Admission Program
Federal Government Refugee Assistance Programs

Through the Refugee Act of 1980, Congress established the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR) to provide refugees with resettlement assistance that includes employment training, English language training, cash assistance (in a manner that promotes early independence), and job placement. Their mission is to help refugees transition into the U.S. by providing benefits and assistance to achieve self-sufficiency and become integrated members of society as soon as possible. To this end, ORR funds and administers various programs, some of which are highlighted below.
State-Administered Wilson-Fish Programs

The Wilson-Fish program is an alternative to the traditional state-administered program, and is usually administered by local voluntary resettlement agencies. The program emphasizes early employment and economic self-sufficiency by integrating cash assistance, case management, and employment services, and by incorporating innovative strategies for the provision of cash assistance (e.g. financial bonuses for early employment). WF programs also serve as a replacement for the state when the state government declines to participate in the HHS/ORR-funded refugee assistance program. There are currently 13 such programs nationwide.

HHS/ORR also provides states with Refugee Social Services (RSS) and Targeted Assistance (TAG) funds and distributes these funds based on refugee arrival numbers and refugee concentration levels in counties with a high utilization of public assistance. Funding is time limited and refugees can only access RSS and TAG services up to five years after arrival. These services include: employability services, employment assessment services, on-the-job training, English language instruction, vocational training, case management, translation/interpreter services, social adjustment services, health-related services, home management, and if necessary to support employment, childcare and transportation.
Matching Grant Program

The HHS/ORR Matching Grant program is provided through the nine national resettlement agencies that provide initial resettlement services and their resettlement affiliates in 42 states. The objective of this program is to guide newly-arrived refugee households toward economic self-sufficiency through employment within four to six months of program eligibility. Self-sufficiency is defined as total household income from employment that enables a family unit to support itself without receipt of public cash assistance. For each program participant, HHS/ORR awards $2,200 per capita to participating national resettlement agencies, which then allocate funds to their local affiliates which provide a 50% match to every federal dollar received.

Matching Grant Program agencies ensure core maintenance services for a minimum of 120 days which include housing, transportation, food, and a cash allowance. Clients also receive intensive case management and employment services. Refugees who are unable to attain self-sufficiency by day 120 or 180 may access refugee cash assistance for the remainder of the eight-month eligibility period. Approximately 33% of refugees participate in the ORR Matching Grant Program.
United States Refugee Admission Program
Federal Government Refugee Assistance Programs

Refugee Health
HHS/ORR addresses the health and well-being of refugees through various initiatives including collaborating with states and partners in support of the expansion of Medicaid, administering the Survivors of Torture program; providing technical assistance on medical screening guidelines, mental health awareness and linkages, suicide prevention, emergency preparedness and other health and mental health initiatives.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program
HHS/ORR provides funds to 15 states that administer over 20 Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) programs. States contract with local licensed foster care agencies that provide specialized placements and services to unaccompanied refugee minors who live in various placements including traditional and therapeutic foster homes, group homes, semi-independent and independent living and residential treatment centers, and homes of relatives. Minors receive various services including English language training, educational and vocational training, cultural preservation, social integration, family tracing, permanency planning, independent living, medical care, and mental health care.
**United States Refugee Admission Program**

Federal Government Refugee Assistance Programs

*Other Discretionary Refugee Service Programs*

HHS/ORR also provides funding to non-profit agencies to focus on special initiatives or programs for refugees including case management, ethnic community development, home-based child care business development, individual development accounts, microenterprise development, and agricultural projects.

HHS/ORR has expanded its Preferred Communities Program to support long-term case management services to at-risk populations as the program is seeing an increasing number of women heads of household and refugees with significant medical and mental health needs.

*Technical Assistance*

HHS/ORR provides technical assistance to resettlement stakeholders through various organizations that have relevant expertise. Currently, providers assist stakeholders in the areas of community engagement/integration, employment, health, services to survivors of torture, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families state programs.
USCCB/MRS Reception and Placement (R&P) Program

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USCCB/ MRS R&P Program
Overview

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) is one of the nine voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) that manages the Reception and Placement Program (R&P) under agreement with the Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (DOS/PRM).

USCCB/MRS partners with local diocesan and Catholic Charities agencies and supports them in their work with refugees. These partnerships form the network of Catholic refugee resettlement programs. The terms and conditions of the R&P Program are outlined in a Cooperative Agreement signed annually by each VOLAG and PRM. USCCB/MRS also enters into signed agreements with each of the local programs to receive and serve refugees.

Purpose and Goals
The purpose of the R&P program is to promote the successful resettlement of all refugees admitted to the US under the US Refugee Admissions Program. DOS/PRM does this by providing financial support to partially cover the expenses of arranging for the reception and placement of refugees. The “reception and placement” of refugees allows for each refugee that is approved for admission into the US to be sponsored and provided assistance and support by a local resettlement agency for the first thirty to ninety days after their arrival. The goals during these first thirty to ninety days include, but are not limited to, providing refugees with basic necessities and core services, and assisting them in achieving economic self-sufficiency through employment as soon as possible after arrival in coordination with refugee service and assistance programs.
Local resettlement programs are responsible for providing resettlement services to refugees. This is done through a model of case management in which a case manager coordinates services, advocates for the refugee, arranges for the allocation of program resources and is the principal point of contact for the refugee regarding their services in the R&P program.

Core Services include:
• Sponsorship assurance
• Home visits
• Pre-arrival services
• Assist to enroll in employment services
• Reception
• Basic needs support
• Community and other orientation
• Health orientation and assistance accessing
• Case management, including enrollment in public benefits
• Resettlement plans, employment orientation and referrals
• Assist to enroll in education and training programs
• Assist to access physical and mental health services
USCCB/ MRS Resettlement and Placement Program
The Role of the Local Resettlement Program: Case Management

Basic needs support is to be provided by the resettlement agency for the refugee client during at least the first thirty days of resettlement. Basic needs support includes assurance of decent, safe and sanitary housing and essential furnishings, provision of food and clothing, assisting in accessing appropriate health programs and a health screening, assistance in applying for public benefits and a Social Security Card, registering for ESL and school as appropriate, and assistance in securing employment, including access to training and orientation.
Through partnerships with local diocesan and Catholic Charities agencies, USCCB/MRS ensures that certain services are administered to the refugees and that their basic needs are provided for. In coordination with local resettlement programs, USCCB/MRS provides case management and consultation during the pre-arrival period regarding the placement of refugees. USCCB/MRS also administers the federal funding for both administrative and direct assistance costs and provides training, technical assistance, case consultation, and a variety of resources and support tools. Additionally, USCCB/MRS reviews local resettlement programs to ensure the provision of quality services and financial compliance and to make recommendations for continued success.

The success of the program relies heavily on partnerships between USCCB/MRS, local resettlement programs, Catholic Charities and dioceses, and state and community partners and organizations. Because the R&P program is designed to be a gateway for refugees to resettle in the US, connection with other local and federal services and benefits is crucial for them to successfully begin their life anew in their new community.
USCCB/ MRS R&P Program
Program Funding: A Public-Private Partnership

The R&P program is designed to be a public-private partnership between the federal government and non-profit organizations that have experience resettling refugees. Participating resettlement programs are expected to supplement the partial federal funding with private resources, including both financial contributions and in-kind donations. Federal funding provides a per capita amount per refugee arrival, of which a portion is reserved for direct assistance for each client and an additional amount for local administrative costs. USCCB/MRS administers these funds on a per capita basis or via a budgeted system depending on the capacity of each local resettlement program. Capacity is determined for each program annually.
New Refugee Resettlement Agency
Exploration Procedures

The Partner Agency will need to:

1. If considering the resettlement of refugees with “no US Ties”, respond, in writing, to how the “no US Tie” placement criteria is being or will be satisfied.

2. In discussion with the USCCB/MRS Representative identify the number of proposed refugee placements and from what regions/ethnicities. Please consider drafting a statement of rationale. The statement of rationale should include a justification for placement of the proposed refugee groups including details on existing ethnic communities, staff and community language capacity, available affordable/low-cost housing, available English-as-a-Second Language resources, availability of public schools to absorb “newcomers/refugees,” and employment opportunities which are related to the resettlement of each proposed refugee group.

3. Identify and engage (via private meeting or call) community members to gauge and garner support for refugee resettlement. Recommended community members include: civic leaders, education officials, public benefit administrators (such as the state refugee coordinator), public health department/officials (such as the state refugee health coordinator), local social security administration/office, public safety officials, parish groups, etc. *USCCB/MRS staff is available to participate in these meetings/calls as requested.
4. Identify private support, including projected funding sources and levels.

5. Identify and put together a list of existing community resources available to refugee clients (e.g. food banks, thrift stores, emergency housing services, etc.), and as available, other support such as that from property manager associations for housing, business associates/chamber of commerce for employment, etc.

6. Review your department and/or agency organizational chart and identify the refugee resettlement operation and management structure.

7. In consultation with the USCCB/MRS Representative develop a detailed training plan for future refugee staff and volunteers which includes topics to be covered and timeframes.
New Refugee Resettlement Agency
Exploration Procedures

8. In consultation with the USCCB/MRS Representative develop a timeline for program opening and implementation of program activities.

9. Once it is determined that the appropriate foundation has been laid - via the steps included above - in collaboration with the USCCB/MRS Representative complete the program proposal Abstract. Letters of support from the following are also required: 1) agency’s governing entity, 2) the State Refugee Coordinator, and 3) the State Refugee Health Coordinator. USCCB/MRS can provide sample letters.

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U.S. State Department Reception and Placement (R&P) Program
Pass-Through Funding to Local Affiliates

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<th>Client Caseload (Start-up Program)</th>
<th>Local Administration ($900 per refugee)</th>
<th>Client Direct Assistance ($1,125 per refugee)</th>
<th>TOTAL SUPPORT</th>
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<td>50 Individuals</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$56,250</td>
<td>$101,250</td>
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Notes:

1. The R&P program is a public-private partnership and the expectation is that private (agency and other) contributions are necessary to sustain operations.
2. R&P federal funds are earned on a per capita basis, with $900 per refugee arrival for administration and $1,125 per refugee arrival for client direct assistance. The total per capita is $2,025. The fiscal year (FY) runs from October through September.
3. Client direct assistance is considered pass through funding and is required to be provided to or spent on behalf of the client.
4. USCCB/MRS provides fully funded training and technical assistance to programs in the form of a New Director Orientation held at the USCCB office in Washington DC, in addition to on-site training provided by USCCB/MRS staff and webinars.
5. Once an R&P program is operational agencies may be eligible to apply for state and/or other federally funded programs to support operations.
Considerations:

1. **POPULATIONS**
   a. Immigrants and refugees existing in the community
   b. Projected ethnic groups to arrive (Syrian; Congolese; Special Immigrant Visa Iraqi; Burmese; Bhutanese)
   c. Projected vulnerable groups to arrive (single-headed households; medical and mental health cases)

2. **SERVICE CAPACITY**
   a. Language and translation
   b. Staffing (case management and cultural orientation)
   c. Mobility/transportation
   d. Housing-relationships with renters
   e. Special services

3. **COMMUNITY SUPPORT/ENGAGEMENT**
   a. Schools
   b. Local governance
   c. Public benefits office
   d. Social Security office
   e. Medical department
   f. Affordable housing
   g. Employment opportunities
   h. ESL opportunities
Information on the Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) Program

Program Highlights

The Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) program’s goal is to develop long-term, sustainable programs. This initiative is currently offering small grants and technical assistance to 43 dioceses. The positive impact of the POWR program has been significant. Since its inception in 2010, participating agencies have recruited 10,000 volunteers who assist refugees adjust to life in the United States. With the help of so many new friends, thousands of refugee clients received pro bono legal counsel and medical services, learned English, found work, and achieved social integration. The USCCB Migration and Refugee Services refugee resettlement mission is rooted in the Gospel mandate that every person is to be welcomed by the disciple as if he or she were Christ Himself and in the right of every human being to pursue, without constraint, the call to holiness. Parishes are key to this welcome.

Sparking Innovation

The local POWR program in Portland, ME developed an innovative Refugee Cooking Class/Dinner concept that has resulted in an increase in donations, as well as media attention. In Indianapolis, IN, a partnership between POWR and high schools is another example for POWR’s energizing effects. Students serve as Refugee Ambassadors and receive service learning credits. In Nashville, TN, the POWR program has received training from its regional public television to train 15 staff members and clients to become videographers and tell stories about American life from a refugee perspective.

Increasing Resources

POWR’s strategy has been to provide seed funding that will intensify other resource development efforts by increasing cash and in-kind donations. As of October 31, 2015, POWR fundraising activities have generated $7.4 million in cash and in-kind donations. Examples of in-kind donations have included free dental services, donated meeting space, free direct mailing, and hundreds of winter coats. Many sites also report increased job opportunities due to POWR networking and publicity. Participating agencies recruited 10,000 new volunteers.

Gaining Visibility

POWR-sponsored activities have received visibility in local media that has resulted in a significant impact on calls from donors and volunteers. News outlets across the U.S. have carried POWR success stories. Live video streams covering our program have made it to YouTube (in English, Spanish and Arabic). All of this contributes to positive outcomes for refugee resettlement. The local POWR program in Louisville, KY organizes mock refugee camps to involve students in pro-refugee advocacy. It’s an effective tool to raise awareness and recruit future donors and volunteers.

Documenting Success

USCCB Migration and Refugee Services launched an electronic discussion list and monthly e-newsletter, The POWR Post, to document the successes of the program. This publication helps program participants (and other USCCB/MRS network affiliates) learn from one another, and thereby leverage new funding sources and improve upon their own programs. The electronic publication is accompanied by a series of workshops related to resource development and program oversight.

POWR Program Sites, 2010-2015

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<th>Albany, New York</th>
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Testimonials

Innovative Ways to Engage Parishes
“The engagement of our local Catholic community continues to surprise and humble. This is attributed to our POWR team, and I know that continued resources from USCCB/MRS will only increase our ability to refine and expand our efforts. This program has provided the foundation for strong working relationships in which our team continues to find innovative ways to engage parishes.”

Steven E. Bogus, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of Louisville, Inc.

POWR Breaks Historic Record
“During the past year of POWR funding, Catholic Charities garnered the highest level of diocesan and community support for refugee resettlement efforts in the history of the office. With much strategic planning, we have grown the $25,000 in POWR Program funding into $400,000 in support for refugee clients.”

Art Bennett, President and CEO, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Arlington

A Wonderful Concept
“I have had the pleasure of getting to know the refugee resettlement staff at Catholic Charities Jacksonville and am personally committed to providing my support and to encouraging the parishes and parishioners of the Diocese of St. Augustine to join them in their efforts. POWR is a wonderful concept and I commend the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services for their continued support of the program.”

Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez, S.T.D., Bishop of St. Augustine

POWR Program Accomplishments, 2010-2014:

- Recruited 10,000 new volunteers.
- Formed more than 200 new parish and community partnerships.
- Created new social service and parish mentorship programs tackling transportation, housing, jobs, food, language, legal and health care issues.

2010-2014 Highlights

Mock Refugee Camps
With support of the POWR program, Catholic Charities of Louisville published a Refugee Camp Simulation Guide, *Seeking Refuge: Forced To Flee*. Students participating in the immersion project walk through a simulated camp, station to station to get an idea of what life in a refugee camp is like. The project is aimed to engaging students in refugee work, raising awareness for the refugee cause and recruiting future donors and volunteers.

Volunteer Video
An excellent example of the empowering effects the Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees program is available on YouTube. Catholic Charities in Jacksonville produced a documentary film with support of the POWR program to intensify its volunteer recruitment efforts. This film does an excellent job showcasing the significance of volunteer work for nonprofits as well as refugee clients. The enthusiasm of the volunteers is evident, and the mix of volunteers, from college students, to former refugees, to parish community members, is wonderful.

Tea with Nurses
The local POWR program at Catholic Charities in Cleveland initiated a “Tea with Nurses” event series, in which Ursuline nurses come weekly to check in on refugees, who often suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or battle serious illnesses as a result of war. Ever since launching the volunteer health professional program, Cleveland has seen a significant reduction in emergency room visits.

Refugee Ambassadors
The Refugee Ambassador Project in Indianapolis created a new partnership between POWR and area Catholic high schools. During one academic school year, students served as Refugee Ambassadors and received service learning credits. The POWR-funded program provided students with information on refugees and the rich traditions of each participating culture. In turn, the students acted as liaisons for their high schools and home parishes.
Fact Sheets

TEN FACTS ABOUT REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

SECURITY SCREENINGS OF REFUGEES ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES

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Ten Facts about U.S. Refugee Resettlement

By Randy Capps and Michael Fix

As Europe struggles to absorb huge flows of asylum seekers and migrants from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, and elsewhere, there are calls for the United States, which runs the largest official resettlement program in the world, to welcome more Syrian refugees. Responding to these calls, the Obama administration has announced its intention to raise the annual ceiling on U.S. refugee admissions to 85,000 for the fiscal year that began October 1 and to 100,000 the following year, up from 70,000 for the year that ended September 30. Within that 85,000 cap, the administration has committed to resettle at least 10,000 Syrian refugees this fiscal year—a substantial increase from the approximately 2,000 Syrian refugees resettled in the United States since civil war broke out in 2011.

The proposed U.S. refugee ceiling of 85,000 is quite modest when compared to up to 800,000 migrants projected to seek asylum in Germany by the end of 2015. And the number of refugees worldwide is at a record high, with millions from Syria alone now housed in makeshift camps and other often tenuous arrangements in neighboring Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. The U.S. refugee ceiling has at times been much higher, for instance 231,700 in 1980 and 142,000 in 1993.

Figure 1. U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceiling, FY 1980 - 2016

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.
How many refugees should the United States take? How many can the country afford to resettle? How well will new groups of refugees—particularly from Syria—integrate? What are the risks—security or otherwise—of taking in more refugees from unstable regions such as the Middle East? These questions touch off intense policy discussions about the future of U.S. refugee resettlement policy and the capacity of the United States to help respond to Europe’s refugee crisis.

As policymakers address these questions, it is worth reviewing some basic facts about refugee resettlement in the United States that have often been overlooked in current debates. These facts are drawn from recent Migration Policy Institute (MPI) research, analysis of U.S. government policies, and other sources.

**Question: Are Refugees Mostly Working or Unemployed?**

**Fact:** The U.S. refugee resettlement system emphasizes self-sufficiency through employment, and most refugees are employed. In fact, refugee men are employed at a higher rate than their U.S.-born peers, with two-thirds of refugee men employed during the 2009-11 period, compared to 60 percent of U.S.-born men. More than half of refugee women were employed during the same period—the same rate as U.S.-born women. The high employment of refugees increases their tax payments and other economic contributions, while decreasing their dependency on public assistance and services over the long run.

**Question: Do Refugees Depend on Public Benefits?**

**Fact:** Although many refugees initially depend on public benefits, most quickly become self-sufficient. Unlike most other groups of immigrants, refugees are immediately eligible for public benefits such as cash welfare, food assistance, and health insurance coverage. During their first five years in the United States, refugees are more likely than other immigrants and the U.S. born to receive public benefits. But benefits usage declines with length of residence, and after ten years, most of this gap closes. During the 2009-11 period, less than one-quarter of refugee households with at least a decade of U.S. experience received food stamps, compared to 11 percent for the U.S. born; and only 3 percent of refugee households received cash welfare benefits, compared to 2 percent for the U.S. born. Fewer than 15 percent of refugee adults had public health insurance coverage after a decade in the United States, compared to 11 percent of U.S.-born adults.

**Question: Do Refugees Improve Their Economic Position After They Are Resettled?**

**Fact:** Refugees’ incomes rise over time, almost reaching parity with the U.S. born. Refugees generally arrive with very limited resources; many arrive penniless. Over time, however, they find jobs, advance economically, and become self-sufficient. The median household income for recent refugees—those arriving within the past five years—was just 42 percent of the median for U.S.-born population in the 2009-11 period. But for those who had arrived 10-20 years earlier, their median income was 87 percent of that for the U.S. born. Rising income and falling public benefit dependency demonstrate the increasing self-sufficiency of refugees and their increasingly positive fiscal contributions over time.

**Question: Is the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program a Conduit for Terrorists?**

**Fact:** Refugees are intensively vetted for security threats before being resettled in the United States. The U.S. government thoroughly screens refugees’ backgrounds—an intensive process involving the Departments of Homeland Security and State, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and national intelligence agencies. It takes 18 to 24
months for the checks for proposed refugees to the United States to be conducted (compared
to four months in Canada). Of the 784,000
refugees resettled in the United States since
September 11, 2001, three have been arrested
for planning terrorist activities—two of whom
were planning attacks outside the country.  

Question: Does the Federal Government
Absorb the Full Costs of Settling Refugees? Are
Costs Rising Rapidly?

Fact: Although the federal government
funds refugee resettlement assistance,
funding has been limited, and the program
is a public-private partnership by design.
As a result, private agencies, NGOs, and
community organizations offer substantial support
for refugees. Aside from the costs of public
benefits, the Office of Refugee Resettlement
spends approximately $600 million annually
on refugees, and another $350 million is spent
by the State Department Reception and Place-
ment (R&P) program. These budgets have not
increased sufficiently in recent years to account
for inflation or for increased resettlement
needs. Private resettlement agencies and other
community institutions step up to fill gaps in
assistance. One study by a resettlement agency
suggested that federal funding under the R&P
program covered just 39 percent of initial
resettlement costs, with the rest borne by the
agency and its community partners in the form
of other funding, volunteer labor, and in-kind
contributions.

Question: Do Refugees Come to the United
States with Low Levels of Education?

Fact: Refugees are more likely to have a high
school degree than other immigrants, and
just as likely as the U.S. born to have gradu-
ated from college. Seventy-five percent of re-

Question: Do Refugees Embrace Their New
Country?

Fact: Refugees are on a fast track for per-
mance residency and citizenship, and a
large majority becomes citizens. One year
after arrival, refugees are required to apply
for legal permanent residence; five years later,
they become eligible to naturalize. As a re-
sult, a relatively high share of legal permanent
residents entering as refugees were naturalized
citizens during the 2009-13 period: 59 percent
versus 44 percent for all other immigrants. 

Vietnamese refugees who came as refugees
were more likely to naturalize than those who
did not come as refugees (88 percent versus 63
percent), a pattern that holds after controlling
for length of U.S. residence.

Question: Do All Refugee Populations Fare
Well in the United States?

Fact: Outcomes vary substantially among
refugees depending on their origins and
other characteristics. While the process for
refugee resettlement is largely standardized,
self-sufficiency outcomes for both recent and
longer-term refugees vary. Some longer-term
groups such as Iranians, Russians, and Viet-
namese have educational attainment and
income on a par with or even exceeding the
U.S. average. Other long-term refugee groups
such as Cubans lag somewhat on these indica-
tors. Fewer than 60 percent of Afghans, Bhutan-
ese, Burmese, Hmong, Liberian, and Somali
refugees arriving during 2004-13 were literate
in their native languages at arrival. More than
60 percent of all refugees from Bhutan, Burma,
Iraq, Liberia, and Somalia residing in the United
States during 2009-11 had incomes below
twice the federal poverty level. Whether or
not their incomes rise and benefits use will fall
over time remains to be seen.

Question: What Is the Likely Integration Pic-
ture for Syrian Refugees?

Fact: Syrian immigrants already in the
United States are relatively well educated and prosperous. In 2014, 39 percent of Syrian immigrants (ages 25 and older) were college graduates, compared to 29 percent and 30 percent of the overall foreign- and U.S.-born populations.\textsuperscript{10} The median income of households headed by a Syrian immigrant was $52,000, slightly higher than all foreign-born households ($49,000) but lower than U.S.-born households ($55,000).\textsuperscript{19} Recent Syrian immigrants—those arriving in the United States since 2012—had even higher educational attainment.\textsuperscript{20} Of course, the socioeconomic status of Syrian refugees may differ from the larger Syrian immigrant population, but data specific to Syrian refugees are not yet available.

Question: Is the United States Likely to Experience Flows of Would-Be Asylum Seekers Similar to Europe?

Fact: Due to its geographic location, the United States is unlikely to experience large flows of asylum seekers or other migrants from Syria or elsewhere in Africa or the Middle East. Because asylum seekers from these regions have no easy land or sea route to the United States, they must generally seek admission through official resettlement channels. Only those from Latin America and the Caribbean can reach the United States by land or over a short distance by sea. The recent wave of Central American adults, unaccompanied children, and intact families seeking asylum amounts to a fraction of the population arriving in Europe.

In sum, the evidence suggests that the U.S. resettlement program, despite its funding limitations and reduced intake from earlier periods, successfully resettles substantial numbers of refugees every year.

During their initial resettlement period, refugees depend on federal assistance and equal, if not larger, private community support. Though they start out by and large poor and dependent on public assistance, within five to ten years most refugees achieve self-sufficiency and near economic parity with the U.S.-born population. Still, some refugee groups are more successful than others, and several of the most recently resettled groups begin with substantial income and education disadvantages.

Where will the new refugee flows proposed by the Obama administration fit into this picture? Syrian refugees, if they fit the pattern for Syrian immigrants already in the United States, are likely to have relatively high educational attainment that will promote their integration and self-sufficiency. The U.S. labor market is currently strong, with an unemployment rate near 5 percent—which bodes well for initial employment of new refugees. At the same time, federal resources for refugee resettlement are limited, and any significant additions must be appropriated by Congress. Thus, there are limits as to how many refugees can be successfully resettled in the United States under current conditions. These limits may be tested by proposed increases in ceilings on annual admissions. But the tests facing the United States pale in comparison with those faced by European countries such as Germany that must resettle hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers in the coming months.

\textit{In sum, the evidence suggests that the U.S. resettlement program, despite its funding limitations and reduced intake from earlier periods, successfully resettles substantial numbers of refugees every year.}
Endnotes


6 Ibid, 24-27.

7 Ibid, 28.

8 Ibid, 21-22.


14 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the American Community Survey (ACS), 2009-13 pooled.

15 Ibid.


17 Ibid, 22-23.

18 U.S. Census Bureau, “S0201. Selected Population Profile in the United States, 2014 American Commu-

19 Ibid.
20 MPI analysis of ACS data, 2009-13 pooled.

About the Authors

Randy Capps is Director of Research for U.S. Programs at the Migration Policy Institute. His areas of expertise include immigration trends, the unauthorized population, immigrants in the U.S. labor force, the children of immigrants and their well-being, and immigrant health-care and public benefits access and use.

Dr. Capps, a demographer, has published widely on immigrant integration at the state and local level. He also has examined the impact of the detention and deportation of immigrant parents on children.

Michael Fix is President of the Migration Policy Institute, a position he assumed in July 2014 after serving as CEO and Director of Studies. He joined MPI in 2005, and was previously Senior Vice President and Co-Director of MPI’s National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy.

Mr. Fix’s research focus is on immigrant integration and the education of immigrant children in the United States and Europe, as well as citizenship policy, immigrant children and families, the effect of welfare reform on immigrants, and the impact of immigrants on the U.S. labor force.

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The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. The Institute provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic responses to the challenges and opportunities that migration presents in an ever more integrated world.
SECURITY SCREENING OF REFUGEES ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES: A DETAILED, RIGOROUS PROCESS

Resettlement is considered a durable solution for refugees who cannot return to their countries of origin or integrate into the current country that is hosting them. Resettlement to a country like the U.S. presents a life-saving alternative for a very small number of refugees around the world - less than one half of one percent. Refugees seeking resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) must pass through a number of steps aimed at ensuring that they do not pose a security risk.

—STEP 1
Refugee Status: A refugee is someone who has fled from his or her home country and cannot return because he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Certain individuals of special humanitarian concern to the U.S. who are within their countries of nationality may also be considered as refugees eligible for admission to the U.S.

—STEP 2
Referral to the United States: A refugee who meets the criteria for resettlement in the U.S. is referred to the USRAP by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a U.S. embassy, or a trained non-governmental organization. Some refugees, including family members of refugees already in the U.S. and refugees who belong to specific groups identified by the Department of State, may be eligible for direct access to the USRAP and do not need a referral.

—STEP 3
Resettlement Support Center: A Resettlement Support Center (RSC), contracted by the U.S. Department of State, compiles the refugee’s personal data and background information for the security clearance process and to present to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for an in-person interview.

—STEP 4
Security Clearance Process: With information collected by the RSC, a number of security checks are conducted. The State Department runs the names of all refugees referred to the United States for resettlement through a standard CLASS (Consular Lookout and Support System) name check. In addition, enhanced interagency security checks were phased in beginning in 2008 and applied to all refugee applicants by 2010.

—STEP 5
Security Clearance Process: Certain refugees undergo an additional security review called a Security Advisory Opinion (SAO). These cases require a positive SAO clearance from a number of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies in order to continue the resettlement process. When required, this step runs concurrently with Step 4.
For additional information on welcoming refugees into your diocese, please contact:
Jim Kuh
USCCB/MRS
Associate Director Of Program Advancement and Evaluation
jkuh@usccb.org
202-541-3220

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