

Part I: Introduction to the Local Inclusion Toolkit for Refugee Resettlement

1. RESETTLEMENT

1.1 What is refugee resettlement?

Resettlement is a safe pathway for refugees from the country in which they first sought asylum, generally a country in the global south, to a third country that has agreed to admit them with a long-term or permanent resident status. Resettlement provides protection for refugees whose safety is immediately at risk, and is a tool of international protection and an **expression of international solidarity and burden-sharing** amongst states.

1.2 Who is resettled?

In practice, resettlement is available as a durable solution for a very small number of refugees. Of the 25.4 million refugees of concern to UNHCR in the world as of 2018, **less than 1%** are submitted for resettlement, and 85% of the world's refugees live in countries of the Global South¹.

1.3 What role do regions and cities play in resettlement?

Although national governments are responsible, in most cases, for the selection of refugees for resettlement, regional and local authorities play a central role both in offering places for resettled refugees and providing reception and integration support once they have arrived. The success of national refugee resettlement programmes thus depends on the commitment, ability and partnerships of cities, municipalities and regions.

2. RECEPTION & INTEGRATION FOR RESETTLED REFUGEES

2.1 What is integration?

Integration is generally recognized as a dynamic, **two-way process**; it requires mutual adaptation and accommodation by refugees, migrants and other newcomers as well as understanding and welcome contributed by host community members and institutions. Integration can be understood as a set of related processes in areas such as housing, health, employment, language learning, civic participation as well as experiencing feelings of safety and welcome.

Institutions in the receiving society must provide the conditions for successful integration by guaranteeing refugee and migrant participation in the 'economic, social, cultural, civil and political life' of the receiving society.² 'Guaranteeing participation' within the integration process means that the receiving society provides rights and opportunities, while individual refugees take on certain responsibilities. For example, while receiving countries grant the right to work and support accessing the labour market, newcomers actively pursue opportunities for language-learning or job training, as well as abiding by local tax laws and regulations.

2.2 Approaches to integration for resettlement in Europe

European countries vary in their approaches regarding integration of newcomers. When it comes to resettlement, two distinct approaches are common. In those resettlement countries with predefined programmes for the integration of newcomers, services for resettled refugees are often mainstreamed into this wider provision. In contrast, other European resettlement countries have developed integration programmes specifically targeting resettled refugees.

¹ UNHCR (2018) [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017](#)

² ECRE (2005) [The Way Forward: Towards the Integration of Refugees in Europe](#)



Such specialised programmes can be more responsive to the particular needs of resettled refugees. They are better able to tailor integration measures according to the profiles of particular refugee groups, including by engaging new partners with expertise in relevant areas. Specialised programmes are also more likely to support the development of local expertise and refined approaches for reception, and can provide an ongoing, structured entry into mainstream services for resettled refugees at the end of the programme. However, mainstream programmes can assist the integration of resettled refugees by providing earlier opportunities for them to connect with other refugees and immigrants, and to learn to navigate mainstream social welfare systems. In addition, mainstream programmes often have a strong basis in national policy and funding frameworks and so may be more sustainable on the long run.

In addition to mainstream and specialized services for newly-arrived resettled refugees, most European resettlement countries also carry out **pre-departure cultural orientation (CO)**. CO refers to interventions that provide refugees with information about the travel process and the resettlement country prior to their departure from the country of asylum. CO programmes are generally designed to prepare refugees for their initial period of resettlement, and address both practical information as well as skills and attitudes which support integration prospects. The majority of European resettlement countries organise some form of pre-departure CO programme, which typically involve trainings sessions ranging from a few hours to more than one week.

2.3 Phases of integration

The integration process varies considerably according to how long refugees have been in their new country.

Arrival – the 1st week:

After leaving the country of asylum – where they may have lived for many years – resettled refugees will often undertake long journeys to reach their new home country. The initial arrival to an unfamiliar context, with new weather, a foreign language, potentially unusual housing and many administrative tasks, is often disorienting.

As such, a common approach during the first week is to provide information on relevant agencies and systems gradually and during multiple information sessions, rather than all at once. However, casework support should also encourage refugees to take control of their own affairs wherever possible. Successful resettlement integration programmes place great emphasis **promoting independence and self-sufficiency**. At the same time, programmes must have capacity to respond to urgent needs (i.e. medical issues) within this initial period and to reassure refugees about the ways in which complicated problems will be addressed over the coming months (*See tools 1.1-1.5*).

The following are a few important tips³ for initial arrival and reception of resettled refugees:

- Welcome resettled refugees directly at the airport;
- Provide key information gradually, and repeat at different points during the reception phase;
- Limit the number of new actors that new arrivals interact with during their first week after arrival;
- Communicate clearly on roles and responsibilities, i.e. what refugees can expect from the local resettlement programme and what is expected of them;
- Make time in the reception schedule for refugees to meet other newly-arrived refugees and, where appropriate, visit each other in their new homes;
- Provide orientation by introducing refugees to service providers, local public transportation systems, their neighbourhood and the city centre during the first week after arrival.

³ ICMC (2011) [Welcome to Sheffield – Reflections on 8 years experiences of receiving resettled refugees at the local level](#)

Reception – the first few months:

Reception services for resettled refugees refers to the support provided during the period directly following their arrival in the new host country. The length of reception is generally defined by individual resettlement countries within their national programmes and therefore varies from the first few weeks to periods of three, six or up to 12 months after arrival.

Each case is different: resettled refugees arrive with different needs, vulnerabilities, skills and aspirations, and host communities carry their own set of needs and capacities. While all resettled refugees can become fully participating citizens, this may be a gradual process. The strongest local resettlement programmes aim to provide **flexible support and interventions** that meet the requirements of each individual, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. In general, the overall aim of such reception interventions is to provide tools, skills and knowledge that facilitate long-term integration beyond the first year of residence in the city.

Settlement – the first year and beyond:

After the initial reception phase, resettled refugees should be able to access mainstream services and participate to some degree in their local communities. Ideally, they will have developed some formal and informal connections in their new communities. Settlement services aim to support longer term integration and inclusion in the host community.

Overall, many resettlement programmes structure the first year roughly as follows:

- Months 1-3: High level of support and assistance to access services
- Months 4-9: Reduced levels of direct support and encouragement and assistance to live independently
- Months 10-12: Lower level of support and preparation for end of the integration support programme.

However, as noted above, the strongest resettlement programmes allow for some flexibility such that support can be tailored to the needs and capacities of refugees and host communities.

3. ARRIVAL & RECEPTION SYSTEMS

3.1 Approaches to reception – centralized reception vs. direct placement

Resettlement programmes in Europe take two distinct approaches to reception. Several European resettlement countries use a *centralised reception* system, in which resettled refugees initially reside in accommodation facilities for a defined period before later moving to municipalities. In other cases, resettled refugees move directly into independent accommodation in a municipality after arrival, in an approach referred to as *direct placement*.

3.2 Partnerships to coordinate arrival, reception and integration

In many resettlement programmes across Europe, local actors have formed **partnership structures to coordinate pre-arrival planning**. Working in partnership allows partners to pool and maximize resources. It can also improve coordination and communication between service-providers, and local, regional and national government actors which, in turn, can ensure smooth reception for resettled refugees. In the longer term, collaborative teamwork of multiple partners and institutions is also crucial for settlement and integration. By bringing together all agencies working with resettled refugees, local partnerships are able to provide higher quality case management and develop joint strategies to address particular needs.

4. CASE WORK AND SERVICE DELIVERY

4.1 Casework in Integration

In refugee resettlement, in both mainstream and specialised reception and integration programmes, providing casework integration support is usually the role of NGOs or local municipality social services. 'Casework' refers to the process of supporting individuals or families ('cases') to identify and meet their needs, manage their circumstances and achieve their aspirations, and is widely used in service provision with resettled refugees and many other populations.

Casework is usually done by bilingual professionals or in partnership with **interpreters or cultural mediators** who can bridge linguistic and cultural divides (*See tool 3.3*). Best practice for using these tools is to translate (or at least, verbally translate) them into the native languages of resettled refugees so that they can play an active role in planning their own orientation and integration.

Casework support for resettled refugees is typically provided for a defined period, from a few months to several years, and can include a range of integration support including:

- Orientation to the new country;
- Acting as a contact person for other services (i.e. care coordination);
- Psychosocial support;
- Helping to navigate housing, benefits and other social service agencies and providing relevant referrals;
- Mediation between refugees and the host community members (i.e. helping negotiate rental contracts with landlords);
- Connecting refugees to legal assistance for family reunification or other legal issues;

(*See tools 2.3-2.7*).

4.2 Personal Integration Plans

Many organisations providing longer term integration support for resettled refugees rely on *personal integration plans*. Personal integration plans are **developed collaboratively by refugees and caseworkers**; they are used to set future goals and targets for individual refugees' integration, and to plan the steps needed in order to achieve these goals. Refugees, together with caseworkers, generally review these plans at regular intervals and adjust them over time, thus providing a highly individualised and flexible way of planning and promoting refugee integration (*See tools 2.1 and 2.2*).

4.3 Engaging Volunteers

Another common approach of municipalities and organisations involved in supporting resettled refugees is to engage volunteers. Volunteers can play crucial roles in supporting newcomers, can be available on evenings and weekends when formal services may not be, and can connect refugees to informal networks. Beyond direct support to new arrivals, **volunteers can advocate for refugees within the host community**, contributing to increased tolerance and awareness.

4.4 Working with Vulnerable Populations

The process of fleeing home, surviving in a country of asylum and then adapting again to a resettlement country exposes newcomers to many challenges and psychological stressors. Refugees may have also been exposed to trauma prior to leaving home or during their journey; and even after resettlement, adjusting to a new country can be overwhelming, stressful and isolating. Furthermore, most countries select refugees for resettlement according to vulnerability criteria, meaning that refugees who are resettled often face many barriers to supporting themselves – i.e. due to medical conditions, being a female headed household, etc.

For those receiving resettled refugees, it is therefore important to be aware of the psychosocial challenges refugees may be facing. An awareness of the factors which impact newcomers' wellbeing is an essential piece of assessing what kind of support they may need. Identifying *aggravating* and *protective* factors – i.e. traits or experiences which may increase or decrease a person's vulnerability to stress and mental health issues – can be a helpful way of understanding needs and coping mechanisms.

These factors may include experiences from the home country or the resettlement country. For example, aggravating factors might include experiences of stress and trauma, or the loss of a close relative in the home country; and they may include feelings of *culture shock*, isolation or experiences of prejudice or xenophobia in the resettlement country. Likewise, protective factors could include having close family ties, welcoming neighbours or good friends. **Aggravating and protective factors are not static, but rather depend on what is meaningful to an individual**; the same factor may be meaningful or not to different people or at different times in a person's life. When appropriate, and with a foundation of trust between caseworker and newcomer, mapping out aggravating and protective factors can be a helpful way of identifying needs and capacities and, in turn, providing support which builds on strengths (*See tool 2.7*).

Working with vulnerable populations can also take a toll on the person providing support – the caseworker, in many instances. An attention to **self-care and access to supervision** for employees is thus another important piece of a strong resettlement programme (*See tools 3.4-3.5*). Finally, strong programmes also recognise their own limits and establish connections and **referral mechanisms** with mental health professionals who can support refugees who are suffering from more serious distress (*see tool 3.2*).

Part II: Description of Tools

1. ARRIVAL, RECEPTION & ORIENTATION

The following tools are particularly relevant during the first weeks and months after arrival, particularly for caseworkers supporting an initial orientation.

1.1 Arrival Day Checklist

Urgent tasks that should be done during first day of arrival can be listed here and used to train new volunteers and caseworkers.

1.2 First Week Appointment Schedule

A schedule can be used to structure events and appointments during the first week/s after arrival. The schedule can be shared with resettled refugees, interpreters and multiple organisations in order to ensure everybody involved has an overview of what to do and knows what to expect from each other. Aside from easing logistics, this tool can help strengthen partnerships across multiple agencies and stakeholders involved in resettlement.

1.3 New Environment Checklist

This checklist can include tasks for caseworkers or volunteers who are orienting resettled refugees to their new neighbourhood.

1.4 Household Items List

Caseworkers should always provide a list of items given to refugees on arrival, as well as clear guidelines about what newcomers can keep and what they will be expected to give back to the hosting organisation for future new arrivals.



1.5 Mail Organisation System

This document can be used to make a folder for storing and categorising important documents. Many will be received by mail, so it can be helpful for newcomers to have a system for storing documents when they arrive at home, even if they will later need support of an interpreter to read them.

2. SETTLEMENT SUPPORT & INTEGRATION PLANNING

These tools can be used during the first year after arrival and beyond. They can be used by caseworkers who are helping refugees navigate service-delivery and social welfare systems. Some of these tools may also be useful to be adapted for pre-departure cultural orientation as a mechanism to provide realistic expectations about the types of support that will be available after resettlement.

2.1 Personal Integration Plan (template 1)

The Personal Integration Plan should cover a range of aspects regarding refugee integration: starting with housing, learning about their new environment, managing benefits and social welfare assistance, finding employment, accessing education and developing social networks. Together with caseworkers, newcomers are encouraged to reflect on their current situation, identify future goals and the necessary steps to be taken. The PIP is reviewed periodically to assess progress and re-design goals as needed/desired. When working with families, it may be helpful to fill out one PIP for each adult or one for the family, depending on the respective situation of the family and the preferences of each individual.

2.2 Personal Integration Plan Summary (template 2)

The PIP Summary sheet can be used to summarize the main action points from the PIP and gain an overview of the steps in all areas.

2.3 Benefits & Personal Finance Checklist

This tool can be used as a base for discussion around eligibility for benefits, navigating social welfare systems and planning personal finance strategies.

2.4 Family Budgeting Template

This template can be used by caseworkers and refugees to draft a simple monthly budget, taking into account income and expenditures.

2.5 Employment and Volunteering Checklist

This tool can be used as a base for discussion and planning to identify and access employment, volunteer work and/or relevant training opportunities.

2.6 Legal Status Checklist

This tool can be used as a base for discussion and planning to understand legal processes and requirements.

2.7 Protective and Aggravating Factors Guidelines

Identifying factors that may be 'aggravating' or 'protective' (see Part I above) for a specific individual can be helpful for both caseworkers and refugees.

3. Multi-Purpose Tools for Caseworkers

The following additional tools and guidelines can be helpful more broadly for case workers and volunteers working in refugee reception and integration.



3.1 Case Note Sheet

This tool can be completed at the end of each day by the caseworker, as a form of reflection on the work that has been done and to inform colleagues about progress.

3.2 Referral Contact List (2 templates available)

This contact list can be used as a personalised referral sheet; refugees and caseworkers can list the contact details of individuals and agencies with whom they have appointments or seek support.

3.3 Guidelines for Working with Interpreters

These guidelines can be used by caseworkers and volunteers who are working with interpreters or cultural mediators.

3.4 Self-Care during Arrivals

Suggestions and guidelines to ensure case workers' general well-being during reception times.

3.5 Self-Care ABC's

Additional suggestions to practice self-care, maintain well-being and avoid secondary trauma.



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