Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
Background Guide 2019

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2019 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to welcome you to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This year’s staff are: Directors Stephanie N. Shady (Conference A) and Claire Molk (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Alejandro Borja Gallegos (Conference A) and Melissa Salgado (Conference B). Stephanie holds BAs in Political Science and Spanish and an MA in Political Science, and is currently pursuing her doctorate in Political Science with a focus on migration and national identity. Claire received her dual BA in International Relations and Political Philosophy in 2015 and is currently pursuing an MA in Religious Studies. Alejandro Borja completed his BA in International Relations at Universidad San Francisco de Quito and currently is heading the Summer Initiative in Ecuador. Melissa graduated with her BA in Political Science with a focus on international relations in 2016 and just finished her MA in Political Science at the University of Texas at Tyler.

The topics under discussion for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are:

1. Providing Adequate Shelter for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons
2. Supporting Sustainable Return and Reintegration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons
3. Strengthening the Capacity of Refugee Resettlement Countries

The primary purpose of UNHCR is protecting the welfare and rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Considering the current global crisis of forced migration, UNHCR is a crucial committee within the United Nations (UN) system. However, the agency suffers from financial constraints that harm the effectiveness of its work. Taking this into account, it is paramount that delegates review carefully the mandate of UNHCR, as well as its governance and the work it carries out to understand how the body works and what actions it can realistically undertake in today's climate.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State’s policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2019 in accordance with the guidelines in the NMUN Position Paper Guide.

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, that serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions are the:

1. NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. NMUN Rules of Procedure - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory NMUN Conduct Expectations on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Collin King (Conference A) and Martina Vetrovcova (Conference B), at usg.hr_ha@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Conference A
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.
Committee Overview

Introduction

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the United Nations (UN) agency whose primary purpose is the protection of the welfare and rights of refugees. The UN General Assembly established the body in 1950 to address the high number of displaced Europeans after World War II with a three year mandate. However, the General Assembly soon began proposing various resolutions to extend the body’s work to groups of people not included in its original scope. UNHCR’s first significant emergency followed a violent Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, and highlighted its essential role in delivering aid to those fleeing and seeking refuge in neighboring states. The 1960s’ decolonization of Africa led to UNHCR’s first involvement in a region outside of Europe. During the subsequent decades, UNHCR further expanded its reach to Asia and Latin America in response to the displacing violence of ethnic cleansing, organized crime, and armed groups. Due to the need for UNHCR’s continued work, the General Assembly decided in 2003 to prolong its mandate indefinitely.

Most of UNHCR’s resources are dedicated to field operations that address the needs of forcibly displaced persons, including 25.4 million refugees, 40 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 10 million stateless persons, and 3.1 million asylum seekers. A refugee is a person who, fearing conflict or persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political conviction, has left the state of their nationality or habitual residence. Whether they are unable or unwilling to go back to previous residences, refugees are protected under international law from forced return to conditions that may risk their lives and/or freedom. IDPs differ in that while they have had to flee their homes, they have not crossed an international border, often making them more difficult to reach. Stateless people have been denied a nationality due to discrimination, state succession, or conflict, and subsequently limited access to employment, medical attention, education, and overall freedom of movement. Asylum seekers are those looking for protection in a different state, but whose claim for refugee status has not been ascertained. Additionally, UNHCR aids returnees, those who voluntarily return to their states of origin after fleeing. The rising number “forced migration” victims is usually attributed to the deteriorating situations or ongoing conflicts in states such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, and Myanmar. UNHCR also works closely with other agencies to address the needs of an estimated 18.8 million individuals who have been displaced due to natural disasters, such as the ongoing drought in Somalia.

1 UNHCR,  What We Do, 2018.
3 UNHCR, History of UNHCR, 2018.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 UNHCR, Americas, 2018; UNHCR, Asia and the Pacific, 2018; UNHCR, History of UNHCR, 2018.
7 UN General Assembly, Implementing actions proposed by UNHCR to strengthen the capacity of his Office to carry out its mandate (A/RES/58/153), 2003.
8 UNHCR, Executive Committee, 2018; UNHCR, Figures at a Glance, 2018; UNHCR, Who We Help, 2018.
14 UNHCR, Returnees, 2018.
UNHCR provides a variety of humanitarian aid, including food and nutritional supplements, basic shelter as well as long-term accommodation such as camps or other forms of housing, cash assistance, and legal services. While immediate assistance in crises constitutes a large portion of the body’s work, UNHCR’s larger goal is to help refugees find durable solutions to rebuild their lives. From 1945 to 1985, UNHCR focused mainly on resettlement, the transferring of refugees from an asylum state to a different one willing to grant them permanent settlement. As the causes of displacement increasingly varied, the agency began to utilize the concept of voluntary repatriation, the refugees’ return to their state of origin. As the number of cases related to refugees seeking to return home expanded during the 1990s, UNHCR’s role in reintegration into home states evolved to include infrastructure and community development, as well as an increased focus on reconciliation and peacebuilding in affected communities. For cases in which repatriation is not feasible, UNHCR focuses its efforts on refugee integration into host states; this includes economic, legal, social, and cultural components and often the granting of asylum or citizenship. The protection of stateless persons’ rights to nationality constitutes a large portion of this work and is carried out through the advocacy of more inclusive nationality laws, provision of guidance materials, highlighting good practices for birth registration, and assistance in overcoming civil registration obstacles.

Given the extensive resources needed by host communities for the above strategies, the UN General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration) in 2016, committing global support and responsibility in dealing with the large numbers of forcibly displaced persons. It established the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF), a global-scale plan to guarantee refugees their rights and the predominant framing tool for UNHCR’s proposed global compact for refugees, released in July 2018.

**Governance, Structure, and Membership**

UNHCR, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, currently employs over 11,517 national and international staff members across 128 Member States. Moreover, UNHCR has increased its initial $300,000 budget to $8,275,300,000 in 2018 to address the needs of the 68.5 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide. UNHCR falls under the UN Programmes and Funds, reports annually to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and is governed by the Member States that make up its Executive Committee (ExCom). The ExCom approves the agency’s annual program priorities and budget. Member States are elected by ECOSOC as members of the ExCom according to equitable geographical allocations. The ExCom was originally comprised of 24 members, but has since grown to 102 Member States. The committee reports directly to the General Assembly Third Committee, and follows directives issued by either the General Assembly or ECOSOC. The ExCom meets every

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30 Ibid., p. 3.
October to review financial matters for the coming year, advise the High Commissioner, authorize appeals for funds, and approve upcoming targets. In 1995, the ExCom created a Standing Committee, which meets three times per year to discuss the work of the body as a whole and any new situations that arise. In January 2016, the General Assembly elected High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, to serve a five-year term. Grandi works in close collaboration with the Senior Executive Team, comprised of the Deputy High Commissioner, Kelly Clements, the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, George William Okoth-Obbo, and Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk. UNHCR’s $8,275,300,000 budget rests on four pillars: refugees, stateless people, reintegration programs, and IDPs. The budget stems almost entirely from voluntary donations by Member States, intergovernmental institutions, corporations, foundations, and individuals worldwide. To acquire these donations, UNHCR releases an annual Global Appeal that provides detailed information regarding the major areas of concern for UNHCR, as well as supplementary appeals that address specific situations. The budget also includes contributions from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for situations requiring immediate response, such as a natural disaster or violent conflict.

**Mandate, Function, and Powers**

The basis for UNHCR’s mandate is Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which specifically recognizes the right of all individuals to seek asylum in another state. The founding document of UNHCR is General Assembly resolution 428 (V), known as the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1950). Here, UNHCR’s mandate is defined as: “providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting governments and … private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities.”

Other documents that guide the work of UNHCR include the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which defines the term “refugee” as well as the rights and obligations of refugees, and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which expanded the 1951 Convention and UNHCR’s mandate to include refugees from conflicts occurring after 1951. UNHCR’s mandate also includes other groups, such as stateless people, as defined in the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, adopted by ECOSOC, outline the rights and protections for IDPs. However, IDP 33 UNHCR, ExCom Membership, 2018; UNHCR, ExCom Structure and Meetings, 2018.  
34 UNHCR, ExCom Membership, 2018; UNHCR, ExCom Structure and Meetings, 2018.  
36 UNHCR, Senior Executive Team, 2018; UNHCR ExCom, Update on budgets and funding for 2018 and reporting on 2017, 2018.  
40 UNHCR, UN Sister Organizations, 2018.  
assistance requires consideration of state sovereignty and therefore strong coordination mechanisms.\textsuperscript{47} In 2007, the ExCom adopted the policy framework and implementation strategy titled \textit{UNHCR’s Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response to Situations of Internal Displacement}.\textsuperscript{48} The framework emphasizes the agency’s primary responsibility to refugees and stipulates that aid to IDPs must be given in collaboration with national governments, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other UN agencies.\textsuperscript{49} As such, the body’s work with IDPs operates on a “cluster” approach, in which UNHCR coordinates with relevant agencies to deliver aid ranging from health care to shelter.\textsuperscript{50} The mandate of UNHCR was further expanded in the 2011 ExCom report entitled \textit{UNHCR’s Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons Affected by Natural Disasters}.\textsuperscript{51} The report emphasizes UNHCR’s primary focus on conflict-related disasters, and that its role in natural disaster relief should be limited to pre-existing refugee or displacement operations.\textsuperscript{52} Notably, paragraph seven draws attention to Member States as primary actors in initiating and coordinating humanitarian response and UNHCR’s actions as complementary to those of local governments.\textsuperscript{53}

In recent years, partnerships have become central to the organization’s activities and priorities.\textsuperscript{54} The Secretary-General called for the first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), held on 23-24 May 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey.\textsuperscript{55} Prior to the summit, UNHCR was involved in multiple thematic and regional consultations, delivering key messages for fostering a more inclusive humanitarian system, bridging the humanitarian-development divide, and restructuring how the humanitarian field meets its financial needs.\textsuperscript{56} At the WHS, participants highlighted the \textit{2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)} to overcome the humanitarian-development divide, meaning the lack of coordination between overlapping agencies of humanitarian and development aid.\textsuperscript{57} Cooperation and partnerships also underpin the CRRF, whose implementation and development into a global compact on refugees is UNHCR’s responsibility, as stipulated in the New York Declaration.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{Recent Sessions and Current Priorities}

UNHCR held its 68th ExCom session between 2-6 October 2017.\textsuperscript{59} The ExCom’s debate focused on several topics related to the protection of refugees, including stronger national asylum systems and UNHCR’s goal to eradicate statelessness by 2024.\textsuperscript{60} The committee’s discussions also addressed the need for burden- and responsibility-sharing in aiding displaced persons, a central theme in the implementation and refinement of the CRRF as well as the proposed global compact on refugees.\textsuperscript{61}


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} UNHCR, \textit{Internally Displaced People}, 2018.


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 3.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54} UNHCR, \textit{Strategic partnerships, including coordination and the World Humanitarian Summit}, 2016, pp. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} UNHCR, \textit{Strategic partnerships, including coordination and the World Humanitarian Summit}, 2016, pp. 6-7; Sustainable Development Solutions Network et al., \textit{Bridging the humanitarian-development divide}, 2016, pp. 1-2.


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 11.

Since the establishment of the CRRF in 2016, UNHCR has overseen the framework’s application in 12 states within Central America and Africa.\(^{62}\) UNHCR’s activities between 2017-2018 have predominately been linked to synthesizing the CRRF’s lessons learned and innovations within its application for the High Commissioner’s proposed global compact on refugees.\(^{63}\) The global compact on refugees has four key objectives, which include easing pressure placed on host states, enhancing the self-reliance of refugees, expanding third-country solutions access, and supporting states of origin to promote returnees’ safety and dignity.\(^{64}\) The compact’s program of action splits into two categories: “arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing” and “areas in need of support.”\(^{65}\) It also establishes the Global Refugee Forum, an annual gathering to outline challenges, expand the number of involved actors, and report on the progress of the compact.\(^{66}\)

The other major guiding framework is UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2017-2021.\(^{67}\) UNHCR outlines its “five core directions” – protect, respond, include, empower, and solve – in its pursuit to develop more comprehensive approaches outlined in the CRRF and the global compact.\(^{68}\) UNHCR’s work in 2018 has also included developing a global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration, expanding the protection of rights to encompass both refugees and traditional migrants.\(^{69}\) The committee’s 69th session will be held between 1-5 October 2018.\(^{70}\)

**Conclusion**

There is a growing need for long-term and systematic support for both refugees and their hosting communities.\(^{71}\) UNHCR’s work in these areas exemplifies the 2030 Agenda’s goal to encompass all and leave no one behind in the greater international agenda.\(^{72}\) Furthermore, durable solutions are the key for finding greater synergy between the humanitarian and development fields.\(^{73}\) The CRRF and the proposed global compact on refugees are the first steps toward a more equitable and responsible approach to the protection of an ever-growing refugee population.\(^{74}\)

**Annotated Bibliography**


This publication breaks down UNHCR’s agenda between 2017-2021. After laying out the statistics and challenges currently facing refugees, the document outlines the body’s declarations of work within its five core directions: protect, respond, include, empower, and solve. The last section, “Making it Work,” provides details on the logistical and technological components needed in all five conceptional areas of focus. Delegates should use this source for a more concrete understanding of the UNHCR’s goals and its plans to achieve them.


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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 UNHCR, UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2017-2021, 2017.
68 Ibid., p. 15.
70 UNHCR, 2018 Executive Committee Session, 2018.
73 Ibid.
UNHCR compiled this quick guide as a comprehensive reference outlining the work on the global compact for refugees. It delineates the historical steps leading up to the proposed compact released in July 2018. It also summarizes the essential components of the compact and how it will work upon its adoption at the General Assembly’s seventy-third session. Delegates should use this source to ground their understanding of this monumental document so that they can utilize the framework in prospective resolutions. Delegates can find the link to the advanced version of the full global compact on refugees in the bibliography section.


UNHCR regularly produces its Global Appeal, and this document is the latest for the years 2018-2019. As a document geared primarily toward donors, it outlines the financial requirements of the body’s work for the upcoming year. It also more specifically underlines the hurdles UNHCR and its partners face in their efforts to address humanitarian crises. Delegates should use this document to bolster their understanding of current UNHCR financial priorities and the challenges it faces in carrying out programs.


This annual report covers UNHCR’s work completed in 2017. Following an overview of the year, the report includes regional summaries and thematic updates in sections “Responding with Lifesaving Support” and “Building Better Futures.” This document reviews the responsibilities of UNHCR as well as the body’s Global Strategic Priorities for 2016-2017. The report then provides detailed analysis on the body’s most recent successes and areas of improvement. It is a vital document for delegates’ understanding of the progress of UNHCR’s ongoing efforts and the areas still requiring resolutions to challenges.


This General Assembly resolution contains the New York Declaration, calling for the implementation of the CRRF and the development of a global compact on refugees to be headed by UNHCR. Delegates should use this document to understand the UN’s position on refugee and migration issues, as well as a reference for the commitments to solidify a global approach to the growing numbers of refugees made by the General Assembly, and how the UNHCR will be instrumental in executing them. More specifically, it places the topic of refugee and migration populations within the context of the 2030 Agenda. Delegates can find details regarding the CRRF and the global compact in Annex 1 of the resolution.

Bibliography


I. Providing Adequate Shelter for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Introduction

Forced displacement is a rising issue that currently affects 68.5 million people worldwide. One of the main challenges facing forcibly displaced persons is access to adequate shelter in which their needs are being met. In early 2018, 16.2 million people were newly displaced, an average of 44,440 per day. Of the 68.5 million people currently displaced, 40 million are categorized as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 25.4 million as refugees. Following the definition by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), IDPs are groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, violence, violations of human rights, or natural or artificial disasters, and have not crossed an international border. A refugee is defined as someone who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

One of UNHCR’s first points of action regarding displacement is providing some form of shelter to those affected by disasters or conflict. UNHCR has worked toward providing shelter needs to refugees since the Hungarian Revolution of 1955, which resulted in a large refugee crisis. Settling refugees in emergency housing in the beginning included not only establishing camps, but also the help of families in host states. During UNHCR’s first crisis, refugees were moved from Hungary to over 30 different states on five continents. This essentially set the precedent for the work UNHCR does within crises today, where one of its main goals is to provide adequate shelter for both refugees and IDPs in times of need. UNHCR's views shelter not only as a form of protection against harsh weather conditions, but also as a key to restoring dignity, self-sufficiency, and personal security. Adequate shelter is more explicitly defined by UNHCR as a “habitable, covered living space providing a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity.” To live in adequate shelter also means that, wherever a refugee or IDP decides to settle, he or she should have access to water systems, acquire local government permission to be there, and not suffer under the consequence of overcrowding. There are many logistical and humanitarian considerations in providing adequate shelter for IDPs and refugees. Some challenges include providing durable shelters in harsh weather conditions, appropriate shelter response for urban and rural areas, and accommodating all types of vulnerable populations.

International and Regional Framework

The right to adequate shelter was first outlined in 1948 through Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Additionally, Article 21 of the 1951 Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) grants refugees the same rights to housing as the citizens of

76 UNHCR, Shelter, 2018.
81 UNHCR, Shelter, 2018.
83 Ibid., p. 244.
84 UNHCR, Fiftieth Anniversary of the Hungarian uprising and refugee crisis, 2006.
85 UNHCR, Shelter, 2018.
86 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 UNHCR, Shelter Solutions, 2015.
90 Ibid.
the host country. Furthermore, Article 11 of the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) reiterates the same idea of the right to adequate standards of living for all, including housing, and the right to continue working toward those adequate living conditions.

Expanding these standards to IDPs are the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (2004), specifically principle 18, which ensures the IDPs’ right to move freely and choose their own housing, and re-emphasizes the importance of the standard on adequate housing set by UNHCR. Under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission on Human Rights produced the *Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons* (The Pinheiro Principles) in June 2005. This document reiterated the points made in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* by further specifying refugees’ and IDPs’ rights to sustainable shelter, housing, and property restitution regardless of their status. In addition, the Pinheiro Principles address important challenges in the provision of shelter, such as property ownership, shelter construction, and the insufficient inclusion of women and girls in shelter decision-making. They also highlight the dangers of hazardous weather conditions, and encourage Member States and organizations like UNHCR to work towards the creation of solutions for more durable and sustainable shelters.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda), adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015, works toward a more sustainable world via 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The topic of shelter falls under SDG 11 to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.” Specifically, target 11.3 of SDG 11 aims to ensure access to adequate housing to all peoples, whether they are living in slums in the developing world, or they are refugees searching for shelter. On 19 September 2016, the General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration). This Declaration set out to improve the livelihood of refugees by creating a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and calling for a global compact on refugees. The CRRF re-emphasizes not only UNHCR’s commitment to providing refugees and IDPs adequate shelter, but also encourages Member States’ agency through implementing the CRRF. In October of 2016, Member States gathered in Quito, Ecuador to attend Habitat III, the third conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, to discuss the challenges faced with providing housing. Through this conference, the *New Urban Agenda* was created, which addresses the need for sustainable urban development, and ensures the rights refugees and other displaced persons are being met regarding housing.

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97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
103 Ibid., p. 16.
104 Ibid., p. 16.
106 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
further clarify the imperative issues in meeting the standards of adequate shelter and ensuring vulnerable populations are not forgotten throughout the many different crises.107

Role of the International System

UNHCR is at the forefront of providing shelter for refugees and IDPs since it is a fundamental component to its objective to provide immediate assistance in cases of emergency.108 A main principle in UNHCR’s emergency response regarding shelter is to consider the specific context of the crisis as there is no one universal shelter solution.109 In 2017, UNHCR created an emergency response framework, referred to as the UNHCR Emergency Handbook.110 The framework outlines UNHCR’s policies on emergency response regarding improvement of response timelines, provisions for shelter, and protection of vulnerable groups.111 Vulnerable populations such as women, children, or the elderly have different needs that must be considered when providing shelter.112 A current campaign UNHCR is working on to accommodate the specific needs of these populations is called “Nobody Left Outside,” which is a campaign to raise funds for IDPs and refugees who are forcibly displaced.113 UNHCR has also created the Global Shelter Coalition, which brings companies and philanthropists together to help fund and create durable solutions to the refugee crises occurring throughout the world.114 UNHCR’s Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter (2014-2018) (2014-2018 Global Strategy) aims to improve refugee living conditions through shelter solutions that are socio-economically secure and “provide privacy, security, protection from elements, and a sense of home.”115 One suggested concept is a master planning process which aims to include host communities, humanitarian and development actors, governments, and affected populations in settlement planning and design.116

In 1992, the UN established the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as the primary coordination mechanism for humanitarian assistance.117 Along with UNHCR, the committee includes the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which provides materials such as metal sheets, blankets, and essential cooking items to families with children during emergencies.118 The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the International Organization on Migration (IOM) focus on the provision of necessary materials and assistance for building shelters.119 UNHCR also works closely with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).120 IFRC and UNHCR co-lead the Global Shelter Cluster, an IASC coordination mechanism comprised of multiple shelter actors including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), experts, local and national governments, and donors.121 Within this partnership, IFRC focuses on natural disaster relief and emergency response, whereas UNHCR concentrates more on conflict-based displacement.122 A main objective for the cluster is to ensure adequate coordination between the governments they are working with and relevant NGOs.123

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108 UNHCR, Shelter Solutions, 2015.
109 UNHCR, How We Shelter, 2018; UNHCR, Shelter Solutions, 2015.
111 Ibid.
112 UNHCR, Shelter Solutions, 2015.
113 UNHCR, Nobody Left Outside, 2018.
114 UNHCR, Global Shelter Coalition, 2018.
116 Ibid., p. 16.
119 IOM, Shelter, 2018.
120 UNHCR, The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2018.
121 Shelter Cluster, Global Shelter Cluster, 2018.
122 Ibid.
The Global Shelter Cluster focuses on the spaces into which refugees are moving, addressing the specifications of rural and urban settings as well as the subsequent needs of the displaced.\textsuperscript{124}

Regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) also provide assistance when it comes to shelter and settlements.\textsuperscript{125} The EU helps specifically through the European Commission’s Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, primarily through funding.\textsuperscript{126} The European Commission has posted a set of guidelines, the \textit{Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements Guidelines}, in 2017 that outline a “people centered” approach of the EU with regard to funding, food assistance, and shelter and settlements.\textsuperscript{127}

\textit{Addressing Structural Challenges of Providing Adequate Shelter}

Providing adequate shelter logistically requires not only having somewhere to live, but also addressing the challenges of the access to clean water, the risks of overcrowding such as disease outbreak, and the necessity of having durable shelters to withstand extreme weather conditions.\textsuperscript{128} When providing shelter, UNHCR tailors its response by first assessing the location the agency will be working, regarding whether it is in an urban or rural setting.\textsuperscript{129} There are two forms of shelter that refugees and IDPs access: dispersed or grouped settlement.\textsuperscript{130} Dispersed settlement involves living with host families as well as rural or urban self-settlement, in which IDPs or refugees choose somewhere to settle without government or NGO assistance.\textsuperscript{131} In dispersed settlement, there is the possibility of eviction by landlords or the government if, for example, refugees have settled in an area without obtaining legal permission.\textsuperscript{132} Lacking permission from governments for using public space can further escalate an already sensitive issue.\textsuperscript{133} Grouped settlement can include collective centers, planned camps, or self-settled camps.\textsuperscript{134} For both refugees and IDPs, urban settlements involving collective centers are mostly located in areas such as gymnasiuums, warehouses, community centers, and other buildings, which are not designed for sustainable living.\textsuperscript{135} A major challenge for both methods of shelter provision within urban areas specifically is the limited availability of housing, often due to a physical lack of available land, forcing refugees and IDPs to settle in congested spaces or marginalized neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{136} These neighborhoods have less access to basic services, and adding more people to the population further limits their resources.\textsuperscript{137}

As part of its 2014-2018 Global Strategy, UNHCR works toward measuring and correctly identifying the percentage of people who do not have adequate shelter.\textsuperscript{138} Addressing adequate housing involves a myriad of factors, such as regulations for specific floor space in both warm and cold climates, and includes having access to cooking areas and supplies.\textsuperscript{139} As outlined in the 2014-2018 Global Strategy, UNHCR aims to use existing resources from the area of settlement and ensure that shelter assistance is not just providing less-durable materials such as a tents.\textsuperscript{140} After assessing each situation as concretely and effectively as possible, durable solutions can include more traditional forms of housing such as dome
housing, huts, or even mud houses depending on climate and situation. One of the first sites of implementation was Ghana, where the UNHCR field office of the Takoradi provides assistance, including shelter materials and skill building, to three different settlement camps. Dealing with over 5,000 refugees and a lack of materials, field officers created a training camp for refugees who wanted to be involved in the planning process, resulting in a prototype program where refugees are taught vital skills for shelter building. Simultaneously, UNHCR has been working on the development of a “master plan” concept, in which all affected groups would be included in the decision and planning process. In Rwanda, UNHCR has partnered with both Stanford University and Ennead Architects on the development of the toolkit needed to complete this process, which culminated in the creation of a pilot of the master plan project and has subsequently helped set up a new settlement in Mugombwa. The project on both the host community and the refugees is monitored, with the information gathered used to help implement the master plan concept in other crises.

As camps are one of the quickest and easiest ways to provide shelter for forcibly displaced persons, they have typically been used for emergencies such as the Rohingya or Syrian crises. However, camps also come with their own set of problems to be addressed when thinking of longer-term solutions for refugees and IDPs. Camps were intended as short-term solutions, seen first as a transitional placement during emergencies, yet recent statistics from 2017 showed about 31% of refugees were still living in camps after three years of being displaced. Over-extended camp placements can be detrimental because, like other collective centers, the challenges in supplying proper sanitation, accessing relevant materials, ensuring individual privacy, and preventing security risks increase. Other problems arise when structures within camps are made from non-durable or inadequate materials, leaving refugees and IDPs vulnerable to severe weather conditions.

To address these challenges of group settlements and camps, UNHCR developed the Alternative to Camps policy. Key action areas of this policy are settlement and shelter responses that facilitate movement out of camps into long-term settlements, such as planned settlements or living with host families, as well as ensure concepts such as self-reliance and new skill development are included in shelter provision processes for refugees and IDPs. Currently, most displaced persons live in settlement solutions known as “mixed settlements.” In mixed settlements, a majority of refugees live in a combination of planned camps, transit sites, privately hosted living accommodations, or informal self-managed settlements. Although not the most ideal of solutions, mixed settlements are one step away from camps to better provide shelter for both IDPs and refugees.

Meeting Individuals’ Shelter Needs

UNHCR ensures to pay special attention to vulnerable populations when addressing shelter needs. Women, children, those with disabilities, and elderly persons all come with different sets of needs that are

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143 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
154 Ibid., p. 1.
155 Ibid., p. 1.
156 Ibid., p. 1.
not always met in camps, or other forms of shelter that UNHCR and its partners provide. In some situations, children are the heads of their households. These child-headed households are often at high risk of exploitation, violence, abuse, or even human trafficking. In addition, the elderly as well as children might have difficulty creating and building their own shelters, or are forced to depend upon others to help them sustain their living arrangements. Depending on the materials from which the shelter is made, security risks can arise from improper and unsecure walls or the inability to lock doors. At times, shelters are simply made of tent material or metal sheets, and while it gives a type of covering, it is not ideal when it comes to security. All of these factors increase vulnerable groups’ risks of harassment, exploitation, or assault, and can negatively impact their mental and emotional well-being.

It is imperative to assess whether UNHCR’s shelter standards are being met to protect vulnerable populations. One of the nine 2014-2018 Guiding Principles is age, gender, and diversity, which is mindful of respecting the rights and needs of all people, of all ages and sex. This is important as UNHCR aims to implement these principles during the shelter process. The Alternative to Camps policy also works to find solutions that are inclusive of the diversity of displaced persons, can help refugees and IDPs with the transition of living in an unfamiliar place, and so decrease the possibility of conflict with host populations. The camp coordination initiative headed by the IASC strives to ensure women and girls are empowered throughout the process of providing access to adequate shelter. The main objective for this initiative is to coordinate roles and responsibilities with individuals who will be conscious of the needs of both women and men, as well as adopt community-based approaches to challenges in camp situations. Similarly, the UNHCR Handbook on the Protection of Women and Girls includes objectives to identify women and girls who need shelter assistance and to increase their participation in the constructing or organizing of shelter. Furthermore, those who have been victims of gender-based or other forms of violence have the right to confidential shelter locations that serve to protect them from potential offenders or avoid stigmas that could be harmful and detrimental.

An important objective of the 2014-2018 Global Strategy is to ensure the type of housing offered allows refugees and IDPs to feel empowered to “build their own shelter.” This is meant to foster self-sustainability and to have a positive impact on the well-being of those in camps. Such community empowerment includes refugees and affected populations in the development of settlements and shelter processes, enabling better assessment of the needs all those who are displaced. Similarly, UNHCR’s contingency plans, executed by its regional offices together with local governments, are meant to foster community engagement and cooperation between refugees and host populations by ensuring both groups are considered in settlement plans.

158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 UNHCR, Alternatives to Camps, 2018.
171 Ibid., p. 41.
172 Ibid., p. 112.
174 Ibid., p. 112.
175 UNHCR, Shelter Solutions, 2015.
176 Ibid.
Case Study: The Rohingya Crisis

The crisis in Myanmar with the Rohingya refugee population has grown at an exponential rate in the past few years.\(^{177}\) The Rohingya are a Muslim minority group fleeing Myanmar due to violent persecution based on their religious identity.\(^{178}\) The largest exodus of the Rohingya Muslims was in August 2017, when 723,000 people were forced to flee their homes, the majority to Bangladesh.\(^{179}\) As the situation continues to escalate, spontaneous shelters have appeared, causing an increased worry over structural challenges relating to the durability of shelters and safety within the previously residing community.\(^{180}\) The Kutupalong refugee settlement in the Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh has become the largest of its kind with more than 600,000 people living in an area of about 13 square kilometers.\(^{181}\) This proves difficult in providing adequate shelter, basic services, water sanitation, and ensuring the safety of vulnerable populations, as overcrowding and a lack of durable materials pose a serious challenge.\(^{182}\) Another rising challenge is the increasing safety risks for the Rohingya because the area where most have settled is prone to monsoon flooding and landslides.\(^{183}\) With more refugees fleeing to Bangladesh, the number of people who are at risk of these landslides only continues to increase.\(^{184}\)

Recently, UNHCR appealed to increase the funding for emergency response in Bangladesh from March to December of 2018.\(^{185}\) The supplementary appeal identified 1.3 million people who are in need of assistance, 80% of which are women and children.\(^{186}\) With regard to adequate shelter, it found that about 31% of shelters have some kind of vulnerability, such as a lack of walls or inadequate materials, which puts the Rohingya refugees at risk.\(^{187}\) The appeal had originally asked for $238.8 to fund assistance for the Rohingya crisis.\(^{188}\) However, as of early August 2018, only 44% of the needed extra funding had been allocated.\(^{189}\) These funds are extremely important as they are meant to help build durable shelters able to withstand flooding or landslides.\(^{190}\)

Similar to other emergency situations, UNHCR’s primary action concerning shelter for the Rohingya has been to first provide shelter kits, as a part of the emergency preparedness.\(^{191}\) It has then assumed work to upgrade shelters to ensure that they are meeting the standards of living set by UNHCR.\(^{192}\) The third phase of their projects has been focused on ensuring that these shelters are able to withstand the rainy season in Bangladesh.\(^{193}\) As of July 2018, 688 shelters were damaged during the monsoon season, affecting roughly 14,000 Rohingya refugees and 3,000 households.\(^{194}\) UNHCR has managed to replace or repair 640 of those shelters that were damaged, while another 1,505 households were relocated.\(^{195}\)

Recently, the Secretary-General and the president of the World Bank Group visited the camps to observe and discuss the situation with those living in it, and to assess what further needs remained regarding the Rohingya situation.\(^{196}\) While moving forward in solving this crisis, it is important to consider not only the

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177 UNHCR, Rohingya Emergency, 2018.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid., p. 3.
190 UNHCR, Myanmar Refugee Emergency Response in Bangladesh, 2018, p. 11.
191 Ibid
192 Ibid.
193 Ibid.
195 Ibid., p. 2.
196 UNHCR, Monsoon rains highlight needs of Rohingya refugees, 2018.
financial need to build durable shelters, but also to implement ideas regarding the safety of those being affected, while being mindful of the continuing trend of individuals having to flee.197

Conclusion

Although many improvements have been made regarding shelter, UNHCR and their partners still have important work to do to address all shelter needs.198 UNHCR must continuously be mindful of not only providing adequate shelter, but should also keep in mind the living standards of both refugees and IDPs.199 Currently, UNHCR is facing both structural and humanitarian challenges with regard to shelters, including providing durable shelters that can withstand hazardous conditions, preventing overcrowding in camps, and ensuring vulnerable populations are not forgotten.200 The inclusion of vulnerable populations such as women, children, and the elderly in the decision-making and planning process is still an issue that currently needs to be worked on in terms of safety and durability of shelters being built.201 Although camps are one of the fastest ways to provide shelter, finding different options is beneficial as the individual needs of each displaced person can be more easily met.202 Although both the UNHCR Alternative to Camps policy and the 2014-2018 Global Strategy are making progress toward addressing durability and safety challenges, through inclusive policies and durable shelter ideas, further work can still be done.203

Further Research

Moving forward on this topic, delegates should consider the following questions: What can Member States do regarding refugees and IDPs in both urban and rural shelter situations, especially with regard to access to water, sanitation, and other vital necessities? In what other ways can UNHCR improve shelters in camps? What is needed to create shelters that will withstand harsh weather conditions? How can the Alternative to Camps policy be expanded and better implemented? Are there ways to improve the living conditions of those who live in camps? How can the international community help vulnerable populations at risk of abuse or exploitation due to lack of adequate shelter?

Annotated Bibliography


This report provides specific information on the equal inclusion of the needs of women, girls, boys, and men when it comes to shelter solutions. As ensuring the rights of women refugees and IDPs has been a continuous struggle, this document can serve well as a baseline for new ideas regarding women, girls, and other vulnerable populations and their shelter needs. The document highlights the issues that vulnerable populations face, such as higher safety risks or risks of exploitation, and points to their specific needs that are often not being met. Delegates should use this document as a focal point for reflecting on gender equality as they do their research on equal inclusion in the shelter process.


The Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter is a comprehensive work that looks at different strategies to help refugees settle in a sustainable manner. The Global Strategy
has nine guiding principles as its main driving force that are to be used by UNHCR as well as by Member States when providing shelter. Some of these include gender inclusivity and community participation. Delegates should use this strategy to assess the type of work UNHCR is trying to implement regarding refugees and settlement, while being mindful of all populations affected by the wide variety of crises.

This document provides information on the policy UNHCR follows within its Alternatives to Camps initiative. It begins by giving reasons for a new policy, introducing new types of shelter for refugees and IDPs. A focus of this document is providing shelter in urban areas for refugees, as this kind of settlement comes with its own set of problems including often lacking access to running water. It also delves into the different forms of implementing the Alternative to Camps policy in a sustainable manner. One of the main concerns for UNHCR is the environmental implications that camps can have, and this document therefore addresses some of those issues as a major challenge to finding adequate alternatives for camps. Delegates should use this resource to come up with own ideas on alternatives to camps.

The Emergency Handbook on Shelter Solutions provides a comprehensive look on the necessary actions and tools to provide shelter in times of emergency. It underscores key points such as adequate shelter materials and tools needed in emergency response. The handbook further addresses standards and objectives for protection and the key areas, in which UNHCR wants to improve its own procedures in reaction to crises. A major area of concern for the handbook is the family tent, which is meant to provide adequate shelter for refugees and IDPs as a short-term solution. Delegates should use this source to understand the role UNHCR has regarding shelter during emergencies.

This website provides information on the Nobody Left Outside Initiative UNHCR aims to complete. The website addresses the ideals with which UNHCR works to implement adequate shelter for vulnerable populations. Moreover, it gives background information on how UNHCR provides shelter, the geographical areas in which it works, as well as the progress made and information on funding disbursement. The website also offers information on the Global Shelter Coalition, which works toward advocacy, innovation, efficiency, and the protection of the environment regarding shelter needs. Delegates should use this source to understand the need for continued funding when it comes to UNHCR and their efforts on shelter, and as a concrete example of UNHCR’s work.

As the Rohingya emergency is one of the fastest growing refugee crises in the world, this site is extremely beneficial for delegates’ practical understanding of the problem. It details not only recent events and the related news and stories, but also gives a brief history on the situation. This website is also very helpful for delegates when looking at what has been done and on what needs to be improved regarding shelter specifically in the Rohingya refugee emergency.

This document is meant to be used as a tool in finding alternatives to camps. Published in 2017, it addresses different settlement options, contingency planning, legal issues, advocacy, and security. It further discusses significant issues UNHCR is aiming to focus on with its Alternative to Camps initiative. As part of the solution, the document highlights
the importance of community planning and development planning. By reading this report, delegates will learn why both of these processes are relevant and important in moving forward with providing adequate shelter to refugees and IDPs.


The How We Shelter website gives information on how UNHCR provides shelter. The website is beneficial for information on recent developments regarding shelter projects. It has also begun spotlighting different Member States and their specific shelter solutions to crises. Currently the focus is on Rwanda and their dual shelter initiative, an important innovation regarding shelter. Along with giving some information on how UNHCR works to provide shelter, this site can be beneficial to delegates as they do research on their assigned Member States. It will also help them come up with new ideas on how shelters could be built more effectively and sustainably.


This website serves as the main site for information on UNHCR’s work with shelter. It involves current and relevant information on the projects UNHCR is working on regarding shelter, and the challenges that come with them. It also presents examples of projects in urban areas, the Alternative to Camps agenda, as well as UNHCR’s role in these shelter processes. The site also has links to stories and news that are relevant to shelter and refugees, which can be useful to delegates as they delve into research on why providing adequate shelter is important. Delegates should use this site to foster their understanding of the shelter processes that UNHCR undergoes and the foundations of UNHCR’s work.


This source is an interactive website that has the most up-to-date information on refugees and IDPs. It has data on not only the current number of refugees and IDPs but also information on where they are situated. The data also shows how the number of crises, refugees, and IDPs has increased over the last few years. Delegates should utilize this informational website as they research current developments and relevant statistics to help develop their arguments and positions on the current situation of refugees and IDPs and their needs regarding shelter.

**Bibliography**


II. Supporting Sustainable Return and Reintegration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Introduction

Since 1946, when the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted resolution 62 (I)-I, “Refugees and Displaced Persons,” the UN has recognized the need to assist in the return and reintegration of refugees to their countries of origin as a durable solution to forced displacement. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) leads the UN’s efforts, assistance, programs, and initiatives in this regard and expanded its work to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2003. According to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), refugees are persons who have left “their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order.” IDPs are people forced to leave their homes and move across their own country as a result of violence, conflict, or natural or human-made disasters.

For UNHCR, the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs is the most desirable solution for both groups. According to international refugee law, return is a fundamental right of all refugees, but the decision to return should be voluntary in nature, meaning that no one can force refugees to return to their countries of origin. Return and reintegration can be organized, in coordination with host countries and UNCHR, or spontaneous, when refugees and IDPs return by their own means. Once refugees return to their countries of origin, they are no longer refugees and are, instead, returnees.

Reintegration occurs immediately after return and is the process that enables returnees to regain all their rights and capacities to participate, work, and live within their communities of origin without fearing any type of discrimination. Clause 29 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) (2015) recognizes that, even though IDPs and refugees are different in nature, facilitating their return and reintegration contributes to the transition from conflict to a durable peace as well as sustainable development in their countries and communities of origin. In order to achieve effective return and reintegration, countries of origin are called to demonstrate their political will and commitment to help their displaced communities. When national capacities to protect the rights and interests of returnees are fully restored, effective return and reintegration can happen.

204 UN General Assembly, Refugees and Displaced Persons: Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, and Agreement on Interim Measures to be Taken in Respect of Refugees and Displaced Persons (A/RES/62(II)-I), 1946, p. 98.
212 UN General Assembly, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1), 2015.
213 UNHCR, Voluntary Repatriation, 2018.
International and Regional Framework

Article 33 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* acknowledge return as right for all refugees. Article 33 of the latter introduced the principle of *non-refoulement*, which states that Parties to the Convention shall not expel or obligate refugees to return involuntarily to their countries of origin since this might represent a threat to their life and freedoms. The Convention also implies that return, also known as repatriation, can only happen once the fear of persecution has ceased.

This *Cairo Programme of Action* (1994) encourages states to strengthen by all possible means the development of international assistance for the effective return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs. Hence, it suggests that Member States adopt political provisions for refugees’ return and reintegration. These provisions can include programmes for providing rehabilitation assistance to returnees and the creation of long-term reconstruction and development policies for building more inclusive and sustainable societies.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed themselves to 17 goals to improve the quality of lives of all persons, including refugees and IDPs. More specifically, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8, 10, and 11 seek to construct societies that are more inclusive for vulnerable communities, including refugees and IDPs. Following this, in 2016 the report of the Secretary-General, A/70/59 called upon states to cooperate toward effective action for assisting refugees and potential returnees. The Secretary-General’s recommendations include developing interstate cooperation at the regional and global levels, improving their screening procedures for awarding both temporary and definite asylum or facilitating return, and coordinating international humanitarian assistance so that it can be distributed efficiently and effectively for strengthening the capacities of refugees, host communities, and returnees.

Complementarily, in 2016, the General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* and the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF). In the Declaration, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to enhance the refugee protection regime, respect their rights, and provide sustainable support aiming to reach durable solutions, including return and reintegration, all based on the SDGs guidelines. The New York Declaration expressed the need to support the construction of conditions in countries of origin necessary for refugees and IDPs to return in safety and dignity. These conditions include: the creation of guarantees for returnees to have the same access to rights as other citizens, and the creation of social, political, and economic incentives for reintegration. Finally, the Declaration also requested the creation of two Global Compacts to be adopted during the 73rd
session of the General Assembly in 2018. Member States have demonstrated their interest in improving the management of return and reintegration with the adoption of the Global Compact. At the regional level, Article II of the African Union’s (AU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969) endorses the principles of non-refoulement and voluntariness, and acknowledges the responsibility that both countries of origin and host countries have to cooperate in order to guarantee a safe return. This Convention also includes the principle of non-penalization, which means not criminalizing or starting legal prosecution against returnees for having left their country. The Organization of American States’ (OAS) Cartagena Declaration of Refugees (1984) also endorses these principles and includes family reunification as a fundamental principle. The European Commission approved in 2015 the European Agenda on Migration, which is the current framework of action on migration, including displacement. This Agenda emphasizes that the protection of refugees demands international responsibility and highlights the primary task of UNHCR to identify whether refugees are able to return to their countries of origin.

Role of the International System

UNHCR plays a key role in facilitating effective return and reintegration processes. In response to a lack of synchronized action across the UN system in its refugee response in the 1990s, General Assembly resolution 46/182 (1992) created the UNHCR-led Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). UNHCR chairs and sponsors different IASC commissions and thus significantly contributes to and coordinates the cooperation among UN humanitarian agencies for enhancing return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees. It also facilitates, in partnership with countries of origin, the creation of the necessary conditions that permit a return in safety and dignity. As the leader of IASC, UNHCR coordinates cooperation among relevant stakeholders to assist refugees from Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Libya, and Venezuela, among others. Most of UNHCR’s actions addressing return and reintegration are based on the Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection Handbook (1996). This document represents a set of guidelines for all repatriation operations and explains how the 4Rs approach (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction) and the principles of international refugee law should be applied. It also provides valuable information for the management of return and reintegration, not only for UNHCR’s staffs, but also for governments and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners working in these areas. It further provides a wide variety of practical approaches for the protection of refugees and IDPs seeking voluntary repatriation amid large-scale refugee situations.

In addition to the Handbook guidelines, UNHCR bases its actions on the 4Rs, which were first included in UNHCR’s Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern (2003) and expanded.

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231 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 OAS, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, 1984, p. 4.
235 European Commission, European Agenda on Migration, 2015, p. 4.
236 Ibid.
239 IASC, About IASC.
241 Ibid., p. 1.
242 Ibid., p. 1.
243 Ibid., p. 1.
244 Ibid., p.13.
in the *Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy* (2018).\(^{245}\) The 4Rs approach seeks to connect all four processes in order to promote durable solutions for refugees, reduce poverty levels within returnees’ communities, and help to create good local governance for the benefit of returnees.\(^{246}\) UNHCR’s *Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy* also emphasizes the importance of working within an extended partnership and multi-stakeholder perspective, which should incorporate not only international organizations and agencies but also NGOs, community-based organizations, and civil society.\(^{247}\)

For all these initiatives, UNHCR works alongside other UN agencies such as the UN Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as the World Bank. UNDP works with UNHCR and states to address the root causes of displacement, support return, and enhance reintegration.\(^{248}\) UNICEF works permanently with UNHCR by providing in-field assistance for child refugees and IDPs since they are a vulnerable population.\(^{249}\) An example of this is the case of South Sudan, where UNICEF assisted IDPs and returnees by providing them with access to shelter, water, and temporary learning facilities.\(^{250}\) WFP, the World Bank, and other institutions work similarly in order to support UNHCR’s role in return and reintegration by providing food assistance, funds, and other types of humanitarian assistance.\(^{251}\)

**Promoting Return as a Durable Solution**

Supporting return as a durable solution is one of UNHCR’s key goals for 2018-2019.\(^{252}\) UNHCR underscores that voluntary return provides returnees with the opportunity to recover not only their economic, social, and political rights, but also their land, wells, and other properties.\(^{253}\) UNHCR works to support refugees and IDPs “to return voluntarily in safety and dignity in situations where conditions permit.”\(^{254}\) For example, UNHCR, aiming to facilitate return for refugees and IDPs from Myanmar, has requested the government to provide the following guarantees for a safe return: a definite end to violence; a restoration of safety and security for all citizens; clear progress on rights and citizenship for all; and, inclusive development for all the displaced people of the Rakhine State.\(^{255}\) According to UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic, as of October 2018, the conditions in the Rakhine State of Myanmar are not conducive for a safe return of the Rohingya refugees.\(^{256}\)

UNHCR works in partnership with the governments of origin and host countries in order to facilitate the creation of conditions for return, as it has done with the creation of the *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees* (SSAR).\(^{257}\) In 2012, UNHCR and the Swiss government hosted a conference for the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.\(^{258}\) This conference led to the creation of the SSAR, a multi-year framework that seeks to identify and implement durable solutions and facilitate technical and in-field assistance to host countries.\(^{259}\) The SSAR pursues five key objectives, all of them for refugees and returnees and led by UNHCR: support voluntary repatriation; warrant access to shelter and essential


\(^{248}\) UNDP, UNHCR and UNDP urge tangible progress to improve conditions in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, 2018.

\(^{249}\) UNICEF, UNICEF assists returnees to South Sudan with shelter, water and temporary learning facilities, 2011.

\(^{250}\) Ibid., p. 84.


\(^{255}\) Ibid., p. 84.

\(^{256}\) UNHCR, *UNHCR deep concern at return of Myanmar nationals from India to Myanmar*, 2018.

\(^{257}\) UNHCR, *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries*, 2016, p. 4.
social services; facilitate improved livelihood opportunities and food security; warrant social and
environmental protection; and provide capacity development for national authorities, associations,
organizations, and communities.260

In order to achieve these objectives, UNHCR, with the assistance of more than 50 humanitarian partners,
UN agencies, and other stakeholders, facilitated an unprecedented support to Afghanistan and host
countries.261 As a means of achieving Objective 1 of the SSAR on addressing return and reintegration,
UNHCR facilitated the construction of the Afghan Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme in
2012.262 This Programme became a relevant guideline for the Afghan government and allowed, along
with the recommendations provided by UNHCR, the implementation of policies targeting the attainment of
necessary conditions for effective return and reintegration of all refugees and IDPs.263 In Afghanistan, the
main goal was to immediately create these conditions in order to improve the standards of living in 48
communities of origin so that this could guarantee for all returnees an effective reintegration.264

In order to facilitate voluntary return when conditions are favorable, UNHCR delivers accessible
information to refugees about the existing conditions for return.265 In Iran, for example, UNHCR works
with the Iranian government to provide all Afghan refugees with information about the existing facilities in
their country.266 This information includes the mechanisms and procedures that refugees have to follow in
order for them to opt for voluntary repatriation.267 All this information is widely distributed by UNHCR
staffers and governmental institutions on flyers and bulletins and in information centers.268 In Pakistan,
UNHCR also provides information to refugees about the existing facilities in Afghanistan and the
procedures to follow in order to return.269 Some community-based consultative meetings, called Shuras,
take place and gather members of the government, UNHCR, civil society, and refugees in order to
promote a voluntary and well-informed return.270

UNHCR’s participation is also important for registration management and logistics since it provides
shelter, basic needs, medical care, and transportation services for returnees.271 It also creates Voluntary
Repatriation Centers (VRCs) for voluntary return. In Pakistan, VRCs are in charge of facilitating informed
decisions of voluntary return.272 There, UNHCR has assisted more than 13,000 refugees seeking
voluntary repatriation.273 Additionally, VRC personnel interview possible-returnees and remove them from
refugee registration lists as long as they proceed to reintegration processes.274 In Iran, UNHCR
contributed to the creation of a health clinic in Dogharoun, near the border, where, as of 2014, more than
3,278 refugees have benefited prior to their return.275 All these actions are implemented in cooperation
with other UN agencies such as UNDP, the International Labor Organization, and the World Health
Organization.276


Fostering Reintegration

Return and reintegration are interrelated processes. Reintegration is the continuation of return, and both need to be strategically managed in order to reach post-conflict durable stability and peace in the places of refugees’ and IDPs’ origins.277 For UNHCR, return and reintegration is not a simple reversal of displacement, but rather a dynamic process that affects all the members of a community affected by forced displacement.278 For UNHCR, reintegration’s ultimate goal is the disappearance of social, political, economic, and legal differences between returnees and other residents, and to provide equal access to services, productive assets, and opportunities.279 UNHCR regularly invites Member States to work toward the sustainability of reintegration by progressively reducing returnees’ dependence on international contributions and assistance.280 Thus, in order to achieve effective reintegration, states are called to develop sustainable habitats and societies with the ability to perform an efficient transition from conflict to peace.281

UNHCR also seeks to use reintegration to promote conflict relief and development through the creation of more resilient communities with empowered and self-sufficient citizens.282 In the short-term, financial assistance is necessary, and for this reason UNHCR provides returnees with Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs).283 CBIs deliver cash grants to returnees to enable them to afford their basic expenses and, consequently, access to basic services such as food, shelter, water, and medicine.284 As a means to ensure the effectiveness of CBIs, UNHCR facilitates coordinated operations between host countries and countries of origin, seeking to improve the mechanisms of evaluation and analysis on how these interventions might be implemented.285 Nevertheless, CBIs are temporary, and UNHCR maintains that CBIs will be complementary mechanisms of support; otherwise, it would generate a sense of dependence in returnees and might inhibit them from self-sustainability.286 The main objective, consequently, is that returnees will not depend exclusively; in the mid and long-term, on international assistance.287

UNHCR has expressed that it is necessary for countries of origin to implement projects and initiatives with a holistic scope of action that involves legal, economic, social, cultural, civil, and political mechanisms of reintegration.288 In order to reach its 2018-2019 goals for improving reintegration, UNHCR aims to develop systematic multi-year and multi-partner strategies with national authorities, development partners, and other relevant stakeholders such as NGOs and civil society actors for the management of reintegration.289 These strategies are currently executed in six different operations in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, and Tanzania.290

Additionally, UNHCR is working to deliver clear information to returnees about the facilities for their effective reintegration.291 These processes include the development of mechanisms for monitoring, registration, and supervision of returnees’ progress toward reintegration.292 UNHCR also advocates for the establishment of multilateral agreements among all involved parties in the process of return and

278 Ibid., p. 4.
280 Ibid., p. 2.
281 Ibid., p. 2.
283 UNHCR, Cash-Based Interventions, 2018.
284 Ibid.
286 UNHCR, Cash-Based Interventions, 2018.
289 Ibid., p. 182.
292 Ibid.
reintegration. Tripartite agreements, signed between UNHCR and the governments of both the country of origin and the host country, have been particularly effective in providing a comprehensive framework for joint action. The Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the I.R. of Pakistan, the Government of the I.R. of Afghanistan, and the UNHCR, Governing the Repatriation of Afghan Citizens Living in Pakistan, adopted in 2007 in Islamabad, is an example of this. This agreement created the Tripartite Commission to facilitate voluntary return from Pakistan and reintegration in Afghanistan.

Following the same path, in 2013 Kenya, Somalia, and UNHCR adopted a tripartite agreement seeking to improve the mechanisms of cooperation for return and reintegration of Somali refugees. Tripartite agreements can also be signed between the country of origin, UNHCR, and another UN agency, as in the case of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR with UNDP and Myanmar (2018).

Effectiveness in reintegration processes may also depend on the political will of governments to include initiatives that provide returnees with incentives to stay in their countries despite the possibility of secondary displacement in which, a returnee decides to emigrate for a second time. Some of these national actions can include mechanisms for conflict resolution, initiatives for improving transnational security, policies for the restitution of lands, and the strengthening of programs for labor reinsertion, entrepreneurial loans, access to education and healthcare systems, civil registration, development infrastructure, and a more inclusive system for political participation and decision-making. In order to achieve this, governments are called to work jointly and follow already existing frameworks and approaches to reintegration such as UNHCR’s Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy, which prioritizes the multi-stakeholders approach for cooperation. States might also follow the UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities and its recommendations for the effective achievement of the 4Rs approach.

**Conclusion**

Today the world faces "the highest levels of displacement on record." More than 68.5 million people have left their homes due to violence; 24.4 million of them hold refugee status, and another 3.1 million are still seeking asylum. As of 2017, 30.6 million people have been forced to leave their homes. Today’s conflicts and their effects on civilian populations have contributed to these large-scale migrations; therefore, the need for global support for protecting and assisting refugees and IDPs is urgent. Return and reintegration constitute two durable solutions for these refugees and IDPs and are essential for the achievement of the transition from conflict to peace. Moreover, effective return and reintegration contributes to the reconstruction and sustainable development of societies harmed by conflict, which in turn promotes improved standards of living and human rights for returnees and the entire community. For these reasons, UNHCR is highly committed to developing more and stronger mechanisms of cooperation among Member States toward the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs.

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296 Ibid.
299 Ibid., pp. 177-179.
303 Ibid.
306 UN General Assembly, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1), 2015.
307 Ibid.
**Further Research**

As delegates work to try to meet the current needs for supporting return and reintegration of large-scale movements of refugees and IDPs, they should consider questions such as: How can the international community cooperate with countries of origin to build the necessary conditions for return? How can Member States innovate the current mechanisms for return and reintegration in order to improve the social, political, and economic conditions of returnees? How do all these processes benefit vulnerable groups such as women and children? How can UNHCR improve its mechanisms of response to the effects of large-scale transnational mobilization? What kind of programs or initiatives are necessary for a better understanding of this situation?

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**Annotated Bibliography**


This document provides technical guidance to the personnel and Member State specialists working in the field of repatriation, principally in the case of large-scale situations. It also includes relevant elements that explain the mandate of UNHCR and its role in return, repatriation, and reintegration processes. It also explains a wide range of activities, practices, and approaches for the management of return and reintegration. This handbook will help delegates gain a full and better understanding of how the international system and principally UNHCR have managed flows of refugees and returnees.


This document includes important information related to the procedures that UNHCR follows in order to address forced displacement. In section 3 this document offers a general understanding of the 4Rs approach and technical recommendations on how this approach can be applied. Delegates can use these recommendations to understand the technical effectiveness of this approach and the facilities that it can provide given today’s new displacement trends. It will be useful as delegates create solutions aligned with the current actions led by UNHCR on return and reintegration.


This handbook is relevant for understanding how UNHCR staff operate in scenarios of return and reintegration. This handbook contains the proposal of the High Commissioner for the implementation and understanding of the 4Rs approach as well as its anticipated needs and challenges. Part A seeks to provide a general context and theoretical understanding of return and reintegration, while part B addresses planning and implementation of actions and resources destined to repatriation and reintegration, and part C contributes an explanation of the already existing support mechanisms. Delegates can use this document to find specific actions recommended by UNHCR for return and reintegration.


UNHCR created this report based on the information provided by the governments of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. This report addresses the results of the SSAR during the 2012-2014 period. It provides important statistical information about the programs and initiatives inherent to the Strategy, and delegates can use this information as an example of how these countries work to assist refugees throughout their process from return to reintegration.
This Policy is an example of how UNHCR can address and facilitate reintegration in the short-term. This document sets all the policies and principles guiding Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs) as a means to support returnees at the first stage of return heading up to reintegration. It describes the structure, logistics and specific actions to be taken in order to implement and oversee the accurate use of these funds. Delegates can use this document as an example of how UNHCR addresses reintegration and promotes economic sustainability, entrepreneurship and innovation on refugees, IDPs and returnees.

This Portfolio of Projects includes descriptions, statistics, and in-depth analysis of the projects adopted by the Afghan government to assist return and reintegration of refugees. It explains how the world’s largest return process has been performed and can contribute to the debate on new perspectives for enhancing return and reintegration of new scenarios of large-scale migratory outflows. Delegates will find this document useful for understanding the strategies necessary to promote voluntary return.

This is one of the most important documents containing the guidelines of UNHCR’s actions for the 2018-2019 period. It contains all the objectives of the agency for this term, including those related to return and reintegration. Delegates can find statistical information and case studies to assist in their further research. In this document delegates can find relevant information about the importance of return and reintegration and how UNHCR is acting to promote this particular durable solution.

This Agreement is a sample of the tripartite actions and cooperation between UNHCR and both host countries and countries of origin. This document specifies all the actions to be taken in order to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Afghan citizens. Delegates can use this Agreement as an example of how to create or motivate the negotiation between countries affected by large migratory flows and displacement.

This report was developed by UNHCR in 2008 and is a fundamental document for understanding how UNHCR addresses its efforts to facilitate return and reintegration. This entire document has valuable information related to the different approaches developed by UNCHR toward return and reintegration. It contains a clear explanation of the principles, practices, and possible activities to be applied throughout a returning and reintegration process.

In this report, the Secretary-General presents his appeal to Member States to cooperate toward an effective action an international policy heading to assist refugees and potential returnees. This document contains several recommendations for an urgent international response to large refugees and IDPs migratory flows. All these recommendations are based on statistics, in-depth legal analysis, and different case studies. Delegates can use this document as a source for possible solutions to the situation of refugees, IDPs and returnees worldwide.

**Bibliography**


III. Strengthening the Capacity of Refugee Resettlement Countries

Introduction

When refugees are unable to return to their home countries, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) partners with Member States to find a durable solution, defined as stable living conditions for refugees that end the cycle of displacement.308 UNHCR facilitates three durable solutions: voluntary return and repatriation into the refugee’s home country, local integration into the community where the refugee currently resides, and resettlement.309 Resettlement refers to “the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another state that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement.”310 States are not obligated under international law to resettle refugees and do so on a voluntary basis.311 No global standard for resettlement exists, so UNHCR strives to partner with resettlement states according to their capacities and provide them with guidance.312

However, state capacity for resettlement is limited and declining while the demand for resettlement places is on the rise.313 Due to a decrease in resettlement capacity, UNHCR submitted 54% fewer resettlement cases in 2017 than in 2016.314 UNHCR had planned to submit nearly 170,000 cases for resettlement, but it ultimately could only submit 75,188.315 The majority of resettled refugees in 2017 had fled Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, or Iraq, and they were primarily resettled in Australia, Canada, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.316

Currently, 37 Member States serve as resettlement states, or states that have formally committed to resettle refugees on a regular basis.317 Resettlement states are primarily highly-developed states in the northwestern hemisphere.318 Despite their advanced economies, resettlement states face the challenge of allocating finite resources to various priorities with domestic politics in mind.319 When some citizens of resettlement states express exclusionary attitudes toward culturally-different groups, states may use cultural “integration potential” as a factor in accepting or denying refugees for resettlement, despite UNHCR’s concerns of discriminatory practices and human rights abuses.320 Aware of a growing need, UNHCR urged states in June 2018 to make resettlement decisions based on global need rather than “integration potential,” to reserve 10% of available spaces for emergencies, and to make sustainable commitments to their programs.321

309 Ibid., p. 28.
310 UNHCR, Resettlement, 2018.
312 Ibid., p. 13.
314 Ibid.
315 Ibid.
321 UNHCR, Gap between refugee resettlement needs and opportunities widens, 2018; UNHCR, The integration of resettled refugees: Essentials for establishing a resettlement programme and fundamentals for sustainable resettlement programmes, 2013, p. 8.
International and Regional Framework

The framework for managing refugee resettlement intersects with two important priorities of the United Nations (UN): the protection of human rights and the promotion of sustainable development. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) is rooted in Articles 13-15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948), which provide for the right to leave and return to one’s country, the right to seek asylum from political persecution, and the right to nationality. Furthermore, per Article 2, all rights in the UDHR apply universally, including to refugees, regardless of national origin or other distinguishing traits.

The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees originally provided guidelines for international cooperation to care for those who had fled World War II, and its principles were applied to refugees from all countries in the ensuing 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol underline the core principles of family unity, essential welfare, and physical and legal protection. They further provide a path to citizenship for resettled refugees. Goal 3 of the Agenda for Protection (2003) calls for the strengthening of capacity to protect refugees and more equitable burden sharing of migration flows, with particular attention to the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of increasing capacity through on-the-ground assistance and advocacy to build public support for refugees. In light of growing worldwide displacement, the global community expressed intentions to expand the number and capacity of resettlement states in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (New York Declaration) (2016). If new capacity is well-managed, according the New York Declaration, increased capacity for resettlement can benefit both refugees and host states.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) recognizes migration as an opportunity for the development of “resilient communities” and the empowerment of vulnerable groups such as refugees, most of whom are resettled in urban areas. Goal 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth recognizes the positive contributions of all populations to the health of their communities. Goal 11 on sustainable cities calls for governments to adjust policies for changes in population distribution and resources that come with resettlement. In alignment with SDG 11, the UN Conference on Housing and Development adopted the New Urban Agenda (2016), which emphasizes the inclusion of minority groups, such as refugees, as a mechanism for sustainable urban development and poverty reduction.

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323 Ibid.
325 Ibid.
326 Ibid.
329 Hashimoto, Refugee resettlement as an alternative to asylum, 2018, pp. 162-163.
331 UN DESA, Sustainable Development Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, fully and productive employment and decent work for all, 2017.
333 UN Habitat III, Implementing the New Urban Agenda, 2016.
Role of the International System

As the primary international organization for refugee assistance, UNHCR establishes resettlement procedures and works with international and state partners to coordinate, communicate, and confirm the implementation of resettlement policies. UNHCR continues improving resettlement capacity and has identified five core directions for 2017-2021: protect, respond, include, empower, and solve. As part of its 2017-2021 Strategic Direction, UNHCR maintains its expertise for policy recommendations to support national initiatives where capacity is weak. To facilitate communication among stakeholders, UNHCR hosts the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) to plan with states and NGOs, as well as the Working Group on Resettlement; this process involves consultations with states, UNHCR, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The chair of ATCR rotates annually among resettlement states and a partner civil society organization (CSO). Once the resettlement process is in motion, UNHCR confirms the number and demographics of refugees to be resettled so that UNHCR can provide guidelines for the strategic use of the state’s resources through annual bilateral meetings with each resettlement state. In some states, NGOs begin working with national governments and UNHCR early in the resettlement process to build policy expertise and collect resources for new resettlement spaces; in others, NGO work begins once the refugee is under the jurisdiction of the resettlement state. In addition to resettlement programming, NGOs serve as advocates inside host countries for UNHCR’s work. The host community observes NGOs’ resettlement services, which can help build public support and raise funds for future operations.

After UNHCR submits the cases, and before refugees depart to the resettlement state, IOM provides: medical evaluations, language and culture orientation programs, and transportation to resettlement states. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) complements this work by providing host states with guidelines for sustainable resettlement plans. UNDP has developed policy guidance for local governments to channel migration, including refugee resettlement, as a tool for economic and social growth; and UNDP partners with the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), an intergovernmental organization that hosts an annual meeting for sharing best practices and debating controversial elements of migration policy.

At the regional level, the European Union (EU) is a core partner of UNHCR; UNHCR has set a target of opening 20,000 EU resettlement places per year by 2020. The European Agenda for Migration (2015) has proposed distributing new resettlement places based on measures of capacity including: members’ population, existing resettlement places, unemployment rate, and gross domestic product. With EU funding, the European Resettlement Network partners with UNHCR, IOM, and International Catholic Migration Commission Europe to facilitate refugee integration into their settlement spaces. In 2018-2019, the European Resettlement Network is working with 10 NGOs within nine countries to strengthen

335 UNHCR, UNHCR’s strategic directions 2017-2021, 2017, p. 5.
336 Ibid., p. 20.
340 Ibid., p. 12.
341 Ibid., p. 12.
342 Ibid., p. 12.
344 UNDP, Migration and Displacement, 2018.
347 European Commission, A European Agenda for Migration (COM/2015 240), 2015, p. 5.
348 European Resettlement Network, Who We Are.
capacity and resettle 50,000 refugees, with an emphasis on housing, volunteer training for language instruction, cultural integration, and counseling.  

National governments pay for IOM to facilitate refugees’ travel to the host state; once refugees reach permanent host states, integration policies are fully under the authority of national governments. Since UNHCR seeks to protect refugees’ human rights, it continues to influence the resettlement process by recommending policies and recruiting states that demonstrate consistent budgeting, programmatic adaptability, and willingness to use strategic tactics such as group resettlement for refugees of a protracted conflict. Predictable, multi-year state commitments help UNHCR resettle refugees efficiently and provide space for emergency resettlement cases.

**Improving the Capacity of Existing Resettlement States**

Aware of the mutual benefits of economic and social integration for refugees and resettlement states, UNHCR works with local, national, and international stakeholders to improve state capacity for effective resettlement programs. UNHCR also assesses states’ levels of public support for resettlement programs so that contributions and volunteer work will be provided as needed to maintain or expand resettlement capacity, and so that government officials have political will to allocate resources to resettlement programs. Country experts within UNHCR develop Summary Protection Assessments regarding the needs and viable durable solutions for different refugee populations to inform UNHCR as it submits resettlement cases to states. In order to more accurately track and gather data on resettlement cases by nationality, gender, and other demographics to improve resettlement and integration policy, UNHCR has created a public database covering 2003 to the present.

**Economic Integration**

UNDP has called hosting refugees a “global public good” in recognition of the international responsibility, despite ongoing political tensions, to strengthen the capacity of resettlement states. To incentivize states to improve resettlement capacity, UNDP and UNHCR have underscored that successful economic integration strengthens the host economy and improves the quality of life for resettled refugees. Through employment, refugees can earn wages and benefits, practice the host language, and improve their mental health by returning to a routine. Over time, these gains can produce a virtuous cycle whereby refugees with local work experience and skills can advance in a career and regain stability. However, since resettled refugees tend to seek work quickly within a social network of other refugees, highly-skilled refugees often become employed in low-skilled jobs. This downward social mobility results in lower wages, loss of a sense of meaning in work, and lost opportunity to contribute their full skillset to the host state. Since refugees have limited time for linguistic and cultural preparation before arrival, providing training on the host state’s market structure and language upon arrival is one way that host communities can reduce downward social mobility and, in turn, fill gaps in the domestic labor market.

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349 European Resettlement Network, **SHARE Integration Partners**; European Resettlement Network, **Welcome to the SHARE Network!**
350 UNHCR, **Frequently asked questions about resettlement**, 2017, pp. 6, 12.
351 Ibid., p. 6.
352 Ibid., pp. 6, 10.
355 UNHCR, **Frequently asked questions about resettlement**, 2017, pp. 7-8.
356 UNHCR, **Resettlement Data**, 2018.
357 UNDP, **Under-pressure communities hosting refugees also need the world’s support more than ever**, 2016.
358 Ibid.
359 Campion, **The career-adaptive refugee: Exploring the structural and personal barriers to refugee resettlement**, 2018, p. 7.
360 Ibid.
361 Ibid., p. 8.
362 Ibid., p. 8.
market. Women may have more limited access to education in their home countries, and to job training in refugee camps than men, so they may need additional training and time to find meaningful high-skilled work in the resettlement state.

UNDP has focused its migration management, including refugee resettlement, on sustainable economic development at the local level, with the recognition that localities possess unique resources, needs, and opportunities. The strategic resettlement of refugees with certain educational backgrounds or vocational skills can fill labor shortages as well as bring diverse ideas and skills to local markets. IOM and UNDP co-chaired the Global Migration Group’s Working Group on Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning 2015-2016 and began drafting policy guidelines to promote human mobility as a source of sustainable development, particularly in cities. Additionally, the GFMD held roundtable discussions in 2017 on National Action Plans for leveraging migration for sustainable development, taking into consideration the differentiated needs of individual, non-governmental, and government stakeholders.

**Social Integration**

State capacity to facilitate social integration is also key to ensuring that resettlement is a truly durable solution. UNHCR defines “effective resettlement” in terms of how well refugees are integrated into their host societies, not merely the number of refugees resettled. In addition to market skills, states have problematically prioritized resettlement cases according to “integration potential” based on language, religion, and culture. However, UNHCR has urged states to instead prioritize cases on global need, not on perceived ability of a refugee to fit into a community. Regardless of “integration potential,” refugees will experience a transition period; but, with conscientious efforts, hosts can meet UNHCR’s goals of fostering community engagement and thus “effective resettlement.”

UNHCR emphasizes the importance of building trust between refugees and the citizens of host countries in order to help refugees heal and foster social cohesion, particularly through interactions in schools, local businesses and associations, and religious networks. Critical to the process of trust-building is ensuring that the hosting public become informed about refugees’ home states, assisting them in differentiating between refugees and the people from whom they have fled. To this end, UNHCR recommends that states adopt policies that foster diverse representation in public institutions and that local CSOs and media outlets collaborate on public awareness campaigns. UNHCR also suggests that states work with established resettled refugee populations to help connect newly-arrived refugees to their host communities.

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363 Ibid., p. 9.
365 UNDP, Municipalities and people on the move: Cities’ development policies for successful local management of migration and displacement, 2017, pp. 6-8.
366 Hashimoto, Refugee resettlement as an alternative to asylum, 2018, pp. 166, 171.
369 UNHCR, The integration of resettled refugees: Essentials for establishing a resettlement programme and fundamentals for sustainable resettlement programmes, 2013, p. 11.
370 Ibid., p. 6.
371 Hashimoto, Refugee resettlement as an alternative to asylum, 2018, pp. 170-172.
372 Ibid.
375 Ibid., p. 28.
376 Ibid., p. 28.
The existence of such policies and local engagement demonstrate state capacity for resettlement according to UNHCR’s readiness assessment criteria. Availability of both physical and mental healthcare services in resettlement states is also vital to facilitating refugees’ integration into their new communities. Across ages and genders, refugees have endured significant trauma, including: witnessing conflict and death, personal injuries, sexual violence, and the loss of their homeland. These experiences often result in post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Since most resettlement states are highly-developed democracies, refugees may feel especially isolated, as most of their new neighbors cannot empathize with the realities of conflict. Resettlement states can prepare by building interpretation capacity and training healthcare workers in cultural sensitivity. Additionally, delayed development of infrastructure for mental healthcare reduces a resettlement states’ capacity to provide mental healthcare services to refugees. To address these challenges, UNHCR and the World Health Organization have published technical guidelines for health workers in their Mental Health Gap Action Programme Humanitarian Intervention Guide (2015).

To address both the social, and economic integration considerations, UNHCR conducts periodic readiness assessments for longstanding resettlement states to ensure stable funding sources and programs that adapt to experience gained over time. Additionally, UNHCR works with states to match refugees to ideal resettlement locations via its Protection, Community-based Protection, and Durable Solutions offices; but, final admissions decisions rest with states. UNHCR ensures that national governments consult with local governments and ministries of education, health, and labor. UNHCR uses consultations to clarify the responsibility among and between stakeholders for service delivery and communication; thereby, ensuring that the state’s existing capacity is used efficiently to promote economic and social integration.

**Building Global Capacity for New Resettlement States**

Relying on only a few resettlement states increases the risk of unmet resettlement needs in the future as state capacity and political will to build capacity shifts over time. In a 2017 report to the General Assembly, UNHCR expressed concern that the decline in refugee resettlement spaces is largely due to United States policy changes. The United States has resettled more than 3 million refugees since 1975, the most of any state, and the United States has resettled 18,327 refugees in 2018 as of 6

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377 Bond, Refugee participation seen as key to comprehensive response, 2017; UNHCR, The integration of resettled refugees: Essentials for establishing a resettlement programme and fundamentals for sustainable resettlement programmes, 2013, p. 29.
382 UNHCR, The integration of resettled refugees: Essentials for establishing a resettlement programme and fundamentals for sustainable resettlement programmes, 2013, p. 28.
384 Ibid., p. 3.
387 UNHCR, Frequently asked questions about resettlement, 2017, p. 7.
389 Ibid., p. 18.
391 Ibid.
August. Although the United States still resettled more refugees than any other state in 2017 (36% of all UNHCR submissions), the number of refugees it resettled in 2017 decreased by 75% compared to 2016. The United States has announced that it will cap refugee resettlement spaces at 30,000 for 2019, the lowest cap in its resettlement program history.

In recognition of expanding need and contracting capacity, “Towards Expanded and Effective Resettlement” was the central theme of the 2018 ATCR. One way that UNHCR has sought to expand the number of resettlement states is to open ATCR to states participating in UNHCR’s Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism (ERCM) so they can gain policy expertise. UNHCR appreciates humanitarian commitments, but it relies on multi-year, fully-funded commitments in order to develop predictable plans for the short and medium terms. To improve long-term planning, UNHCR assesses a state’s capacity before it becomes an official resettlement state to determine whether the state has the plans and resources to integrate refugees successfully. UNHCR assesses a state’s legislative framework for rights and a path to citizenship for refugees, its partnerships with CSOs, and its plans for economic and social integration as core indicators of resettlement capacity.

Although UNHCR has identified more than 20 emerging resettlement states, several barriers to establishing new programs exist, including: lack of protection infrastructure, inaccessibility of necessary travel documents, and insufficient funding. Through its Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism (ERCM), UNHRC is mobilizing financial resources and technical capacity through CSOs in emerging resettlement states, especially in Latin America. ECRM also provides limited direct funding for travel to resettlement states and pre-travel health assessments. UNHCR, in partnership with the EU, will soon publish a policy guide for new resettlement states. UNHCR has prioritized the expansion of these initiatives as part of its Strategic Directions for 2019.

**Conclusion**

No global set of standard procedures exists for refugee resettlement, and UNHCR recognizes that each state must establish programs according to its particular context. Still, UNHCR, with a firm commitment to the human rights of refugees, assesses states’ resettlement capacity, shares guidelines for resettlement, and works with states and NGOs to monitor the effectiveness of existing economic and social integration programs. UNHCR estimates that in 2019, 1.4 million refugees will need

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398 Ibid., p. 13.

399 Ibid., pp. 15-16.


404 Ibid., p. 15.


406 Ibid.
resettlement, a 17% increase from 2018. To meet the growing demand for resettlement spaces as some states lose or voluntarily reduce resettlement capacity, UNHCR will depend upon identifying and building the capacity of a more diverse group of state partners that have the resources and political will to make and keep resettlement commitments in the long run.

Further Research

As delegates continue to research ways to strengthen state capacity for resettlement, they should consider the following questions: What additional needs of refugees and host communities need to be met? Why might a resettlement state lose some of its resettlement capacity or voluntarily reduce it, and what can be done to address this? How can UNHCR assist in guiding partnerships among government and non-governmental stakeholders to ensure that resettlement programs are adaptive and sustainable? In what ways can UNHCR more effectively measure state capacity and improve readiness assessments? Should there be additional international guidance on the resettlement process, and if so, what standards for resettlement states should be set?

Annotated Bibliography


This document provides an overview of the ERCM’s goals, areas of work, and budget. It highlights several key ways in which international actors can provide financial and technical support to emerging resettlement states, both directly and through local and national stakeholders. As delegates think about ways that UNHCR can help build capacity to increase the number of resettlement states, they should consider how UNHCR can expand and improve upon this existing program.


This handbook contains UNHCR’s policies on each stage of the refugee resettlement process, from assessing resettlement needs of various populations to relationships with other crucial partners. The handbook also provides useful background on UNHCR’s resettlement mandate. Delegates should in particular look to chapter four on managing resettlement and chapter eight on partnerships and public relations.


This document explains the criteria that UNHCR uses to regularly assess a state’s readiness to resettle refugees. It highlights in detail the necessary legal frameworks, stakeholder partnerships, funding, and community planning for successful and sustainable resettlement programs. Delegates should use this document to gain an understanding of the practical needs of resettled refugees that UNHCR has already identified as they consider how to improve existing state capacity for resettlement.


This document is a useful starting point for delegates in their research, as it provides foundational knowledge on how the resettlement process works; the differentiated roles of states, NGOs, and UNHCR; and funding mechanisms for resettlement. Additionally, it explains the goals of core existing annual meetings and working groups on resettlement. Delegates should also refer to the end of the factsheet for access to additional sources for research.


This factsheet reviews UNHCR’s resettlement needs for 2017 by country, as well as the number and location of resettlement places available for the year. Delegates should explore the detailed data on 2017 resettlement to gain an understanding of the gap between resettlement needs and state capacity and will to fill those needs. As delegates develop future short and long-term solutions to the challenges of resettlement capacity, they should also consider other types of data that UNHCR can use to assess progress in its annual reviews.


This website serves as hub of resources on UNHCR’s NGO partnerships in the area of refugee resettlement. In this repository, delegates will find information regarding high-level meetings, training materials, and best practices among UNHCR and its partners on referring refugees for resettlement, information sharing, advocacy, and more. The focus of this website is on practical implementation of UNHCR’s guiding principles and NGOs’ mission statements.


This annual report from the Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement projects resettlement needs for the upcoming year. The report examines each region separately and identifies anticipated refugee flows as well as which situations where voluntary and safe return is unlikely to be an option in the foreseeable future. After reflecting upon outcomes from the previous year, the report lays out UNHCR strategies for the upcoming year, to which delegates should pay particular attention as they build upon UNHCR’s existing work.


This website is the gateway to numerous reports and program information regarding refugee resettlement in the United States. In particular, the Refugee Council USA focuses on NGO partnerships, a common vehicle of implementing resettlement policies in the United States and other resettlement states. As delegates explore this site’s resources, they should keep in mind the ways in which one resettlement state’s practices can be shared and adapted across other resettlement states to strengthen policies globally.


This guidance note from UNDP highlights the opportunities to use migration, if well-managed, as a tool for development. It focuses on the importance of local government and NGO engagement and partnerships with national or international-level organizations.
given the contextualized area expertise of local actors. Delegates should examine in particular the guidelines on social integration and the role of diasporas for local network building.


This report places resettlement in the broader context of UNHCR’s work for displaced persons and highlights the human rights-centered foundation of its work. The report also describes contemporary displacement cases and provides examples of UNHCR responses. Delegates should use this report to understand the work of UNHCR holistically and as an example of how UNHCR communicates its needs to other UN agencies and Member States.

Bibliography


