



New Zealand's part in addressing the current global humanitarian crises: considering alternative methods of entry

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New Zealand Red Cross and the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (the authors) have prepared this paper to brief the Government on ways in which it is proposed that New Zealand responds to international resettlement needs and strengthen its reputation as a leader in refugee resettlement.

1. Background

The world currently faces the greatest humanitarian crises it has ever seen and there is no sign that this is going to improve any time soon. In 2014, 42,500 thousand people were forced to flee their homes every day– around four times more than in 2010.¹

The Syrian conflict is into its fifth year and there is no solution in sight. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) notes that an estimated 9 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. Most of them have no prospect of returning home in the near future.²

The vast majority - half of whom are children – currently live in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. While these countries have received their neighbours with generosity and humanity, they are unable to provide basic protection needs for many refugees. The current situation in Europe has clearly shown that Syria's neighbours cannot cope alone with the crises and it's incumbent on the international community as a whole to step up and provide protection for those who have been forced to flee from their homeland.

New Zealand has committed to resettling 750 Syrian refugees over the next 2.5 years – 150 as part of the annual UNHCR quota as well as 600 additional UNHCR selected refugees. When they arrive in New Zealand they will complete a six-week orientation programme before being resettled in communities around New Zealand. This decision followed widespread public support for New Zealand to do more to respond to the global refugee crisis with calls for an immediate intake of Syrian refugees coming from community organisations, church groups, refugee background communities, members of parliament, the media and many more. The authors welcome the Government's commitment to resettling the additional Syrian refugees.

However, only about one percent of the total number of refugees get resettled through the UNHCR third country resettlement program. Even with the recent commitment from New Zealand and other countries to resettle more Syrians, this only provides a durable solution for a small fraction of those in need of protection. Others have to rely on other means.

It is not only the Syrian conflict causing massive displacement. Large populations of refugees have also fled Afghanistan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Eritrea, Pakistan, Iraq and other situations of conflict, violence and human rights violations.

¹<http://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0ahUKEwiP7qz13LbJAhXEIJOKHZUuCuIQFggnMAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Ftimesofindia.indiatimes.com%2Fworld%2Fuk%2FConflict-and-persecution-forced-42500-people-to-leave-their-homes-per-day-in-2014%2Farticleshow%2F48838732.cms&usg=AFQjCNGwDGj-9PBJKIYc4XzcEj-e7e9IXw&bvm=bv.108194040.d.dGY>

² <http://syrianrefugees.eu/>

In light of the immense international displacement, UNHCR has urged the international community to offer greater refugee resettlement opportunities, humanitarian admission places, family reunification, **and other forms of admission.**

2. Alternative methods of entry

The authors urge the Government to implement additional admissions programmes which would offer legal avenues for those displaced to access safety and protection. These could include: community-based private sponsorship, humanitarian visas, academic scholarships and labour mobility schemes. These programmes would be in addition to and would complement the existing UNHCR annual resettlement quota.

Many comparable jurisdictions have already implemented such programmes including Australia, Canada, Germany and France.

Community-based private sponsorship

Private sponsorship programmes enable private citizens with a legal entity, NGOs, or other interested groups such as faith-based groups or local authorities to support refugees to be resettled. Such programmes can build strong relationships between refugees and receiving communities, and can operate either alongside government resettlement programmes or in a hybrid arrangement. Private sponsorship can also enable refugees who have resettled to sponsor family members who may otherwise not qualify under a family support category like the one outlined above. Costs to the state are expected to be significantly lower than with a government resettlement programme as some of the costs related to resettlement, reception and integration support may be covered by the sponsor.

Both Canada and Australia implement private sponsorship programmes. In Canada, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR)³ programme enables Canadian citizens and permanent residents to support refugees living abroad to find protection in Canada. The programme is strictly for sponsorship of people who are either Convention refugees or a person in a refugee-like situation. The sponsors are responsible for providing the refugees with care, lodging, settlement assistance and support for the duration of the sponsorship period (normally 12 months). The Government of Canada usually provides a loan to the person being sponsored for medical examinations overseas and their transportation to Canada. For those who are unlikely to be able to repay the loan, such as elderly people unlikely to enter the labour market or unaccompanied minor children, the sponsoring group is asked to pay for some or all of the costs. Sponsoring groups may be matched with a refugee either by themselves putting forward a name of the refugee or refugee family they wish to sponsor, or through the Matching Centre at Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

In relation to Australia, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) assists in implementing the private sponsorship programme. The IOM No-Interest Loan Scheme⁴ assists those who have been granted a visa under Australia's Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) to travel to Australia. The loan is interest-free and repayable over a 24 month period. In addition, the IOM provides advice and support before, during and after the journey to Australia. Pre-departure medical screening, and health assessments are also undertaken by

³ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/ref-sponsor.pdf>

⁴ http://www.iomaustralia.org/projects_nils.htm

IOM. The costs for these services are covered by the Australian Government. The Australian Cultural Orientation programme, which is funded by the Government, is implemented by IOM in various locations in Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia.

The IOM also assists Canada in implementing the PSR by implementing *inter alia* the Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) programmes and facilitating travel arrangements.

Extended Family reunification schemes

Since 2013, extended family reunification schemes have provided legal access to almost 31,000 Syrian refugees, with family members in Europe to come to Europe.

An extension to the current family support category from 300 places to 600 places annually would provide a simple option for alternative entries within an existing system. The family support category is currently oversubscribed and an extension to this category would allow for the queue to be cleared. This is a financially viable option as travel and settlement costs such as housing and basic necessities of life are incurred by the sponsor family.

New Zealand Red Cross are working to extend initial resettlement support to family reunification arrivals. This additional support will ensure improved settlement outcomes for this group.

This category as a form of alternative visas could also be extended by adjusting the definition of family to enable a wider group of sponsors to apply and ensuring a definition of families reflective of multicultural norms. The reality of wider family interdependence needs to be acknowledged.⁵

Academic scholarships

Noting that many students in places of conflict or situations of displacement have their studies interrupted, many countries have implemented academic scholarship programmes to support refugee students with opportunities to continue their education. The scholarships provide funding support for travel, accommodation, subsistence and tuition. Students are provided with appropriate travel documentation and study visas for the duration of their studies.

An example of such a scheme includes the ‘Leadership for Syria’ programme set up by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and supported by 7.8 million euros from the Federal Foreign Office.⁶ This programme offers 100 students in Syria or refugees from Syria (regardless of the country in which they are currently staying) the opportunity to study in Germany.

Labour mobility schemes

Labour mobility opportunities provide for the lawful onward movement of refugees from countries of asylum to third countries to pursue employment. Labour mobility can help refugees realize their human right to work and to live with dignity while fulfilling labour shortages in third countries.

⁵ It is common for 3 generations of family members to live together in very interdependent relationships.

⁶ <https://www.daad.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/en/31298-scholarships-programme-for-syrian-students-launched/>

The provision of work visas for refugees would enable onward movement as well as provide New Zealand with additional skilled workers. Existing work visas options could be extended to those in refugee situations through the sponsoring of an existing NZ employer. This could include skilled work categories as well as seasonal or labour shortages.

3. Key Elements of an alternative admissions programme

Alternative admissions programmes must at a minimum:

- guarantee non-refoulement
- provide appropriate legal status and documentation
- provide access to basic services
- ensure the protection of rights and freedoms on the same basis as nationals.

The Government should also consider establishing travel loans or other funding schemes, which can be implemented in cooperation with organisations including New Zealand Red Cross, IOM and community groups.

4. Support in the community

There has been a significant increase in public support and willingness to participate and support resettlement in the community. During the media coverage of the Mediterranean crisis New Zealand Red Cross received one years' worth of volunteer enquires in the period of a week.

There has also been a coordinated response from the Catholic and Anglican churches which have, on top of a long history of supporting refugees, have committed to providing more support for resettlement of refugees. This support will not be limited to only refugee quota families.

The increased public support demonstrates a significant level of public support for providing protection for refugees. It also ensures that any increase in refugee arrivals will be met with appropriate levels of community support through practical settlement support and welcoming neighbourhoods.

5. Recommendations

The authors recommend that leveraging off community support the Government:

- a) **agree** to consider options for implementing alternative admissions programmes for those in need of protection
- b) **agree** that any alternative admissions programmes will be in addition to the annual quota.

The authors are available to assist in scoping these programmes including assessing any need for existing settlement services to be applied to these programmes and the cost and resource implications of this.



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