Resettlement and Complementary Admissions Pathways for Refugees

Presentation at the GMG multi-stakeholder interactive panel
on '*Strengthening Responsibility-sharing for Refugees*'
in advance of September 19th UNGA Summit on Refugees and Migrants

New York, 13 July 2016

What is resettlement?

- Selection & transfer of refugees from host country where they've sought protection, to third country that agrees to admit them as refugees;

- With guarantees of protection against forced return to the home country and access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals or permanent residents;

- Most resettlement programs:

  - give permanent residency status at arrival or in a short time-frame;

  - allow the opportunity for family reunification;

  - provide a pathway to eventual naturalization as a citizen.

- UNHCR identifies refugees for resettlement using needs-based criteria and resettlement countries select/admit based on UNHCR referrals;

- 15 countries have standing resettlement programs;

- Another 11 countries have recently signaled their intention to participate in the program;

- Less than 0.5% of refugees have access to resettlement each year.

What is being sought at the Summit?

Collective commitment to use resettlement to ensure that UNHCR can meet the resettlement needs of 10% of the world's refugees, achieved through:

- Expansion of existing resettlement programs

- More states establish resettlement programs; existing resettlement countries offer assistance, technical advice

- Use by states of **complementary pathways to admit refugees**, in addition to traditional resettlement

- Innovations in resource-mobilization, public-private partnership, engagement of receiving communities (e.g. private sponsorship)

What is meant by 'complementary admissions' pathways?

1. Humanitarian-based

2. Labor-based

3. Education-based

4. Family-based

As compared to traditional UNHCR resettlement, complementary admissions programs might (or might not):

- Apply different criteria to qualify
- Employ different mechanisms for processing applications
- Be temporary or permanent in nature
- Convey different legal status upon arrival
- Lead to different pathways to a permanent solution
- Involve different forms of public and/or private financing
- Convey different post-arrival benefits and services
- Involve UNHCR in identification & referral to greater or lesser extents

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Examples of 'complementary admissions' programs

- Humanitarian admissions
    - admission with temporary protected status
    - lifting visa requirements or humanitarian visas, adjustment of status upon arrival
    - humanitarian evacuation programs
- Refugee access to:
    - temporary labor migration programs
    - permanent immigration thru existing immigration categories
- Expanded family reunification programs
- Medical evacuation programs
- Student visas, refugee education scholarship programs

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What minimum safeguards apply to 'complementary admissions' outside of traditional resettlement?

- Non-refoulement guarantee;

- Enjoyment of other rights under int'l refugee instruments;

- Preservation of family unity whenever possible;

- Avoidance of statelessness of children born in territory;

- Appropriate identity and travel documents;

- Re-admission guarantees with 1st country asylum if admission is temporary;

- Reasonable timeframe for having access to a permanent solution, whether in original host country or third country;

- Specific measures to address refugees' particular vulnerability to labor exploitation, especially in the case of temporary labor mobility programs.

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Do resettlement & complementary admissions make any real difference in the context of overwhelming need?

- life-saving measure for many refugees

- Because traditional resettlement benefits special needs and vulnerable cases, it meets needs that are difficult or costly to meet in host country, easing strain on humanitarian aid systems

- can be an important source of remittances

- may be the only means to preserve family-unity

- creates a viable alternative to irregular onward movements

- most visible proxy for responsibility-sharing

Thank you for your attention!

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