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Final Report

The Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

This report was prepared by the Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Service of the Division of International Protection, with the assistance and input of our many partners, and was published in March 2022. Great credit is due to Tapiwa Nkhoma for the compiling and drafting of much of the report. Thank you to Charalampia Armpouniot for her expert design skills.

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Cover photo: Eritrean mother Winta hugs her daughter Melat and son Yonathan, at their apartment in Clarens, Switzerland. Winta brought the two children from Eritrea in 2014 but was separated from their older siblings.
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Executive Summary

The objective of *The Three-Year Strategy (2019-21) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways* was to significantly increase durable solutions for refugees in third countries, and to promote more welcoming and inclusive societies to make such increases sustainable. Tragically, the global Covid pandemic had a profoundly negative impact for much of this period. The Strategy's objective for step-by-step growth in UNHCR-referred resettlement of those refugees most at risk was met for 2019 but not in 2020-21; overall, only 60% of the goal was achieved for the three-year period. Covid was the primary driver of the size of the shortfall, but insufficient quotas by resettlement countries also played a significant role. Innovations in processing modalities did enable thousands to benefit from resettlement even during the most severe border restrictions. From a very low base in 2020 the number of refugees moving to safe homes through resettlement grew significantly in 2021, with positive trends for 2022 and beyond. The separate goal of increasing the number of countries resettling refugees was not met.

Reliable and comprehensive data on the movement of refugees through complementary pathways and family reunification are not yet available. Indicative numbers from the ongoing OECD-UNHCR joint study suggest that many tens of thousands benefitted through work, study, and family permits at a volume consistent with the goals of the Strategy, and that the objective for 2019 was likely met. Data for 2020-21 are not yet available.

Significant foundation-laying work was accomplished in challenging circumstances. New multi-stakeholder partnerships were successfully built. Through persistent advocacy, outreach and coordination by many partners, broad and deep ecosystems developed which are well placed to open up substantially bigger education, labour, and family reunification pathways. Innovative financing mechanisms were furthered to underpin these opportunities. A rapid expansion in the number of community sponsorship programmes, plus deeper engagement with sub-national governments, cities, and the education and employer sectors, were clear markers of progress toward the Strategy's goal of sustainable solutions through inclusive communities. The next phase of the Strategy (please also see the Conclusion, below) should focus on converting these partnerships and implementation platforms into much greater scale, ensuring that the deferral of gains due to Covid is redeemed by future growth.

Background

The [*Three-Year Strategy \(2019-21\) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways*](#) was mandated by the Global Compact on Refugees to significantly increase third country solutions for refugees. It was developed in collaboration with over 90 stakeholders¹. Serving as a “blueprint and impetus,” the Strategy articulated three goals to serve its vision that by the end of 2028 **three million refugees would benefit from solutions through safe pathways to third countries**, via expanded resettlement, improved access to complementary pathways, and the building of welcoming and inclusive societies as a foundation.

As a multi-stakeholder process in the spirit of the Compact, action through partnerships was central.

The Strategy was guided by six principles:

- Protection: all pathways should safeguard the rights and protection needs of refugees.
- Durable solutions: if initially temporary, paths lead to solutions.
- Responsibility-sharing to assist refugees and support host countries.
- Additionality of complementary pathways to increase third country solutions.
- Non-discrimination: refugees should be treated equally and have a fair prospect to access third country solutions.
- Family Unity: keeping family members together and providing legal avenues to reunite.

These principles were supplemented by cross-cutting tools:

- Advocacy: rooted in a strong evidence base, alliance-building and strategic communications to inspire action that drives change.
- Multi-stakeholder multi-sectoral approaches that enable collective action.
- Meaningful refugee participation to encourage individual agency, address barriers to access, and support refugees as agents of change.
- Capacity building to establish and strengthen systems and governance, unleash potential and equip stakeholders to initiate and grow programmes.
- Data and evidence to inform strategic communication and meaningful advocacy to demonstrate the social and economic contributions of refugees.
- Technological, social, business, and financial innovations to better serve refugees.

¹ The *Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways*, June 2019.

The Evolving Context

The Three-Year Strategy was prepared at a time when the gap between the need for durable solutions and their availability was growing more severe. Programmes to enable more safe pathways at much greater scale were needed. As the Strategy was being finalized, the wave of record-high resettlement spaces in 2016-17 was receding. That trend needed to be reversed. Improved access to rights-based family reunification was needed. Small and nascent programmes in community sponsorship, education and employment-based pathways needed to be scaled up to both provide more solutions and to engage communities, individual citizens, and the private sector more deeply in receiving and integrating refugees within a positive narrative of contribution and self-agency.

In that context, the Strategy was designed to both lay foundations during an initial three-year phase and to provide an ambitious blueprint for the systematic expansion of third country solutions over a decade.

A Global Action Plan was prepared to capture and coordinate concrete activities. The plan incorporated 104 actions by 21 partners. In keeping with the principles of the Compact and the Strategy, most of these actions engaged multiple partners.

Unfortunately, the central goal of overall growth in pathways has not yet been met. While main targets were achieved for 2019, the first full calendar year of the Three-Year Strategy in 2020 was both the beginning of the Covid pandemic and the nadir of global resettlement departures. Resettlement departures and complementary pathways movements were most severely limited in mid-2020, but the effect of the pandemic on travel was to also prove significant throughout 2021. While resettlement countries and UNHCR quickly found innovative solutions to mitigate the impact on resettlement processing, family reunification, and other pathways, knock-on effects reverberate into 2022. The Afghan crisis in 2021 has had ripple effects which remain difficult to measure and remain ongoing, both stimulating innovations to quickly relocate and find employment and housing for evacuees, while also, at least potentially, delaying arrivals for those in process for resettlement to some countries.

Covid did not only create obstacles; it generated opportunities. While the pandemic halted most travel and many planned activities in support of growth, the new ways of working enforced by Covid in 2020 catalyzed the formation and deepening of global networks and communities of practice. Physically dispersed advocates and programme builders repeatedly "found" each other through global thematic convenings that would not have

happened to the same degree and with the same breadth in pre-pandemic times.

Advocacy and expertise dissemination, in keeping with the implementation tools listed above, flourished in areas ranging from education and employment pathways to family reunification, to resettlement processing, and integration innovation, to community sponsorship. Yet moving from ideas to implementation, from first contacts to sustained and outcomes-driving cooperation, was more difficult.

The economic fallout of Covid, while still evolving, also produced systemic labour shortages which appear to be enduring, presenting opportunities for labour market integration for resettled refugees and the growing of pathways via employment and education-to-employment.

But the deep reduction in actual arrivals of refugees in 2020 and 2021 remains the primary impact of Covid, which the foundation- building efforts so admirably pursued in spite of the pandemic cannot yet be said to balance. Only by realizing their potential in 2022 and beyond in the form of ever- broadening pathways to durable solutions in third countries can the narrative of the past two years be redeemed.



Resettled Congolese refugee, Bertine Bahige and his two children in their home in Gillette, Wyoming, getting ready for the school day.
© UNHCR/Cynthia Hunter, April 2018

Goal 1 Outcomes — Grow Resettlement

The Compact emphasizes the importance of resettlement for responsibility-sharing. Goal 1 seeks to expand the base, scope, size and quality of resettlement as a protection tool for those *refugees most at risk*. This means an increase in the number of places in existing programmes, an expansion in the number of countries undertaking resettlement and also enhancements in protection impact, efficiency and sustainability.

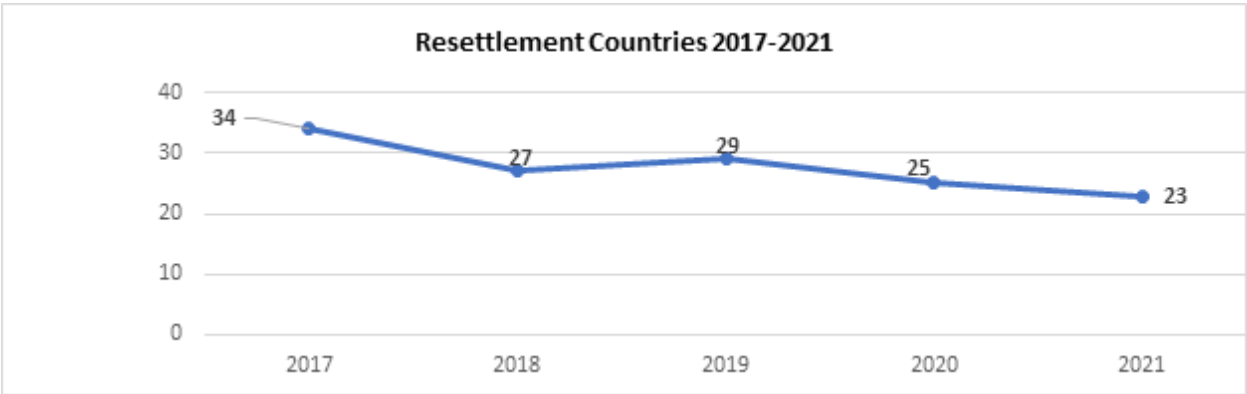
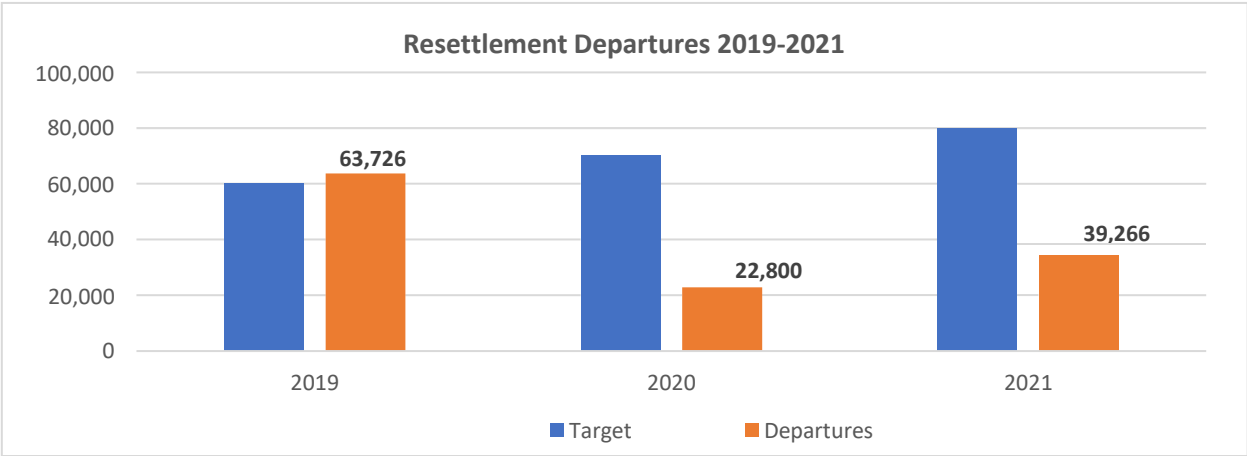
SUMMARY

The objective of at least 210,000 refugees resettled in 2019-21 following UNHCR referrals was not met.

- Annual target met for 2019, not met for 2020 and 2021.
- 125,792 resettled over three years, equal to 60% of the target.

The objective of resettlement countries increasing to 33 was not met.

- During this Covid period, the number of countries receiving submissions *decreased*, to 23 in 2021.



I. Growing resettlement programmes

The Strategy sought to increase the number of countries receiving UNHCR submissions for resettlement to 33 by 2021. This did not materialize, with only 23 resettlement countries receiving UNHCR submissions in 2021, due to national policy decisions and the operational constraints of the pandemic. While several states increased their resettlement programmes and pledged to continue to do so after 2021, others reduced their commitments or extended the time frame for meeting them. In 2021 a total of 80,696 places for new UNHCR resettlement submissions were made available by States, compared to 81,149 in 2019 and 47,830 in 2020. Whilst progress toward the overall resettlement objectives was affected by Covid, some states made significant progress by adopting innovative case processing.

Summary: UNHCR submissions and departures² 2019-2021³

State	2019			2020			2021		
	Quotas	Submissions	Departures	Quotas	Submissions	Departures	Quotas	Submissions	Departures
Australia	7,196	7,048	3,464	3,842	3,847	1,082	1,498	1,839	350
Belgium	670	744	239	416	492	176	712	758	960
Canada	14,312	14,651	9,031	13,500	10,937	3,502	11,355	11,377	5,825
Denmark	0	12	0	230	202	31	100	84	57
Finland	750	898	873	850	1,107	667	1,015	1,209	997
France	2,547	3,311	4,544	5,100	4,169	1,211	1,161	1,555	1,827
Germany	6,550	9,640	4,622	5,440	2,507	1,396	1,700	2,671	5,363
Iceland	0	0	74	85	91	0	0	2	57
Ireland	600	868	783	735	489	194	120	156	55
Netherlands	1,274	1,433	1,857	1,500	928	415	330	535	448
New Zealand	600	1,146	915	825	879	305	0	78	519
Norway	3,100	3,949	2,351	3,000	3,465	1,504	2,972	3,288	2,875
Portugal	619	879	373	1,150	2	222	0	13	301
Spain	1,570	1,193	821	0	29	363	1,100	1,047	521
Sweden	5,050	5,408	4,993	5,000	4,790	3,567	4,152	4,386	5,036
Switzerland	800	1,102	990	800	934	503	865	940	831
UK	4,442	3,507	5,774	4,100	1,904	829	0	74	1,595
USA	30,757	24,810	21,159	1,159	2,081	6,740	54,230	32,851	11,554
Argentina	0	5	0	0	1	4	0	0	0
Brazil	45	45	24	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	60	168	64	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estonia	60	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Croatia	38	41	122	100	0	0	0	0	0
Italy	100	413	471	700	564	21	0	3	0
Japan	30	40	20	40	51	0	0	6	0
R. Korea	60	68	37	60	1	17	60	74	0
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	15
Luxembourg	50	50	35	0	1	14	0	0	0
Malta	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Romania	109	198	73	200	46	37	200	241	80
Uruguay	10	20	10	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total	81,399	81,671	63,726	48,832	39,534	22,800	81,570	63,190	39,266

² Departure statistics include individuals submitted pre-2019 and may therefore be higher than submission numbers during the three-year period.

³ Some data presented on this table may differ from statistics published by UNHCR previously due to retroactive changes or the inclusion of previously unavailable data. In addition, both resettlement submission and departure figures reported by UNHCR may not match resettlement statistics published by States as Government figures may include submissions received outside of UNHCR resettlement processes. For Government statistics on the arrival of resettled refugees, please consult the relevant Government immigration/asylum websites.

At the time of writing, the state of play for major resettlement states during the period of the Strategy, and looking forward, is as summarized below.

Growing resettlement programmes

✓ **Finland's** resettlement programme has been gradually increased since 2019, in keeping with the goals of the Strategy, from 750 to 850 in 2019-2020 and 1,050 for 2021, with a further increase to 1,500 in 2022 as part of its response to the Afghanistan situation.

✓ **Sweden** increased its commitment to receive 5,000 compared to 1,900 in 2018. This commitment has been maintained through 2021 and for 2022. Sweden also maintains a substantial Priority Global Quota (500 places) for emergency and urgent cases worldwide.

✓ **Canada** significantly increased its UNHCR-referred refugee resettlement program targets, from 9000 in 2018 to 10,150 in 2019, 11,700 in 2020 and 13,500 in 2021. In 2022 this has been increased to 20,170 as part of its response to the Afghanistan situation.

✓ **The United States** increased its refugee admissions ceiling from 35,000 in 2019 to 62,500 in 2021 and 125,000 in 2022.

▪ **Australia** increased the ceiling for their refugee and humanitarian program to 18,750 places in the 2018-19 fiscal year, with a minimum of 17,100 places available for the offshore component including resettlement, private sponsorship, and family reunification. However, the program has been reduced to 13,750 places per fiscal year since July 2020, which includes refugees granted asylum in Australia. Only 4,896 admissions based on UNHCR resettlement submissions were achieved due to the pandemic.

▪ **Belgium** resettled 1,375 individuals between 2019 and October 2021 (delayed from initial implementation date of end 2020 due to reception capacity challenges and Covid). In early October 2021, Belgium made a commitment of 1,250 resettlement spaces for 2022.

▪ **Denmark** resumed its resettlement programme in 2019 after a three-year pause, with a commitment to receive 200 refugees yearly between 2020 and 2021. Due to COVID-19 related challenges, this was reduced to 130 in 2021. 88 persons have since been resettled to Denmark.

▪ **France** increased its resettlement programme in 2017 by committing 20,000 places between 2018 and 2021 (with 5,000 admissions planned for each year). Due to Covid the timeline has been extended with France committing to receive 5,000 individuals in 2022.

France was one of the few countries that managed to conduct in-person selection missions during the period resulting in 7,582 individuals being resettled to France between 2019 and 2021.

- **Germany** committed to receiving 5,500 refugees annually between 2019 and 2021; Germany's federal commitment was complemented by additional programs implemented by Laender authorities. Due to the covid pandemic, a total of 11,381 refugees have been resettled to Germany since 2019.
- **Iceland** gradually increased its resettlement quota from 55 individuals to 85 individuals in 2020, and 100 in 2021. 131 refugees have been admitted over the three-year period.
- **Ireland** announced the expansion of its resettlement programme with a new multi-year objective of welcoming 2,900 refugees 2020-2023. Due to the inability to undertake selection missions only 1,032 refugees were admitted between 2019 and 2021.
- **The Netherlands** maintained its resettlement commitment of 1,500 places annually. 2,720 refugees have been admitted since 2019.
- **New Zealand** doubled its annual resettlement commitment to 1,500 from 750 in July 2020 and has maintained this commitment for 2022. This was not met due to Covid, with 1,739 arrivals by end 2021.
- **Norway** maintained its commitment to resettling 3,000 refugees yearly since 2018. 6,730 refugees have arrived in 2019-21 despite the pandemic, due to the adoption of remote processes. In 2021 and 2022 a number of these places will go to Afghan evacuations.
- **Portugal** expanded its resettlement programme in pledging to resettle 1,150 refugees between 2018 and 2021 from 145 planned in 2017. Despite Covid, 896 refugees have been resettled under this commitment.
- **Spain** increased its planned resettlement programme to 1,200 refugees for 2021 and has maintained this commitment for 2022. However, implementation has been delayed due to the pandemic. Spain has admitted 1,705 refugees since 2019.
- **Switzerland** consolidated its resettlement framework in 2019, maintaining its 2018 commitment of 800 places with a two-year programme to receive 1,600 refugees by 2021. 2,324 refugees have since been resettled. The commitment has been extended for a further two-year period and will be in addition to the spaces not filled by 2021 due to Covid.
- The **UK** announced the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) in 2019 and pledged to admit 5,000 refugees under a new global program following the fulfilment of existing pledges including the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Gateway Programme. While the UK received and processed new UKRS referrals in addition to surplus cases carried over from previous programs, resettlement departures were delayed by the pandemic. In total, from 2019 to 2021 the UK resettled 8,198 refugees. The UK pledged another 20,000 spaces starting in 2022 as part of the Afghanistan response, which will include evacuees and resettled Afghan refugees. The implementation timeline is to be determined.

- The **United States** increased its refugee admissions ceiling from 35,000 in 2019 to 62,500 in 2021 and 125,000 in 2022. The USA is the chair for the ATCR in 2022, as well as the current co-chair of the Priority Situations Core Group. The USA accounts for the highest number of UNHCR resettlement admissions during the Strategy period with 39,453 arrivals.

II. Enabling actions for growing resettlement

Note: the activities outlined throughout this report are samples and are not comprehensive of the many actions by many partners in support of the Strategy's objectives.

1. Establishing the Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative

- UNHCR/IOM's joint *Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative* (CRISP), funded by the USA and Portugal, was launched in 2020. It serves as an implementation platform in support of the Strategy. Tailored training has been developed for States and key stakeholders, with courses for government officials, practitioners, and civil servants, and for key stakeholders including civil society involved in reception and integration. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) assisted with the design and content for the training on integration. Due to Covid, the training was adapted for online delivery in 2021. The second course was piloted in May 2021 with participants from the Irish Refugee Protection Programme and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the International Protection Accommodation Service and Tulsa, the Child, and Family Agency. Each session was tailored to the Irish context through thematic experts and IOM and UNHCR country offices.
- UNHCR developed a Monitoring and Evaluation framework covering both the Three-Year Strategy and the CRISP. Two workshops were held in 2021 to gather input from States and key stakeholders to create a Theory of Change and an indicator framework to reflect the full range of stakeholder contributions to the Three-Year Strategy and the partnerships required between governments, civil society, private sector partners and others to deliver it. A further workshop in November 2021 was held to validate the M&E plan—specifically, the indicators, reporting frequency and analysis. An independent review of the Three-Year Strategy and the CRISP will be undertaken in 2022, followed by a formal evaluation in 2024.
- Between 2020 and 2021, the CRISP supported the resettlement of 11 persons who travelled on resettlement to Argentina and Uruguay.

2. Innovation to enhance the efficiency and integrity of programmes

- A data sharing agreement with the United States was finalized in July 2020 to allow for secure sharing of personal data and biometrics. UNHCR continues to pursue agreements

with several resettlement States and IOM.

- The Population Registration and Identity Management Eco-System (PRIMES) Data Transfer Platform (<https://www.unhcr.org/registration.html>) and the UNHCR Secure File Sharing (SFS) platform promise to further ensure the protection of personal data of persons of concern to UNHCR, in accordance with the [UNHCR Data Protection Policy](#).⁴
- Despite Covid, the implementation of some countries' commitments has remained on track through dossier-based decisions and remote interviews. Finland received 84% of its targeted arrivals and Sweden, 89%.
- The piloting of remote pre-United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) screening interviews has been undertaken in an effort to clear a backlog of pending cases.

3. Strengthening meaningful refugee participation in resettlement

The Refugee Advisory Group (RAG), first convened in January 2020, includes representatives from national, regional, and global refugee-led networks which contributed to the Global Refugee Forum, as well as those with lived refugee experience who now deliver services to newly resettled refugees or engage in advocacy in local communities. The group has had an important advisory role in the planning cycle of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) in 2020 and 2021, liaising between the Chair and the refugee community, coordinating refugee participation and statements at the ATCR and the Working Group on Resettlement, creating spaces for refugees to engage in discussions on matters of their own concern and actively supporting the inclusion of refugees in a representative and non-discriminatory manner. The advisory group will continue to lead sessions at the ATCR and Working Group on Resettlement, which will strengthen the role of refugee leadership, advocacy, and partnership.

4. Partnerships developed at the national level to expand programmes

Given the growing importance of resettlement and complementary pathways in the EU's agenda, the Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network was established to respond to the needs expressed by EU+ States for a platform enabling exchanges on operational implementation and EU-specific issues. The Network, which also offers a forum for cooperation and peer learning, is led by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)—now the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)—with other key stakeholders such as UNHCR and IOM joining as appropriate.

⁴ UNHCR, *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*, May 2015.

5. Use of data and evidence-based approaches to enhance sustainability and protection impact

- As the research lead in the European Union Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through a New Knowledge (EU-FRANK) project, MPI Europe conducted a series of workshops on monitoring and evaluation in collaboration with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and EU-FRANK and provided practical support in this area to the Netherlands, Ireland, and Italy.⁵
- With support from the CRISP, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI Europe) and the University of Ottawa Refugee Hub carried out UNHCR-commissioned research to map global opportunities to grow third country solutions and guide the work of stakeholders. Findings were published in September 2021, [Refugee Resettlement and Complementary Pathways: Opportunities for Growth](#).⁶
- Supported by the CRISP, UNHCR contracted the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to undertake a meta-study of available evidence on the impact of government-led resettlement programs across six receiving countries: [The Impact of Government-Sponsored Refugee Resettlement: A Meta Study of Findings from Six Countries](#).⁷
- In 2021, RefugePoint compiled data from various sources for its report on [Preserving the Humanitarian Nature of Resettlement](#).⁸ The results from the past three years (2018-2020) were compared to the projected needs and to the total refugee populations in each country of asylum. The aim of the project was to determine to what extent refugees around the world have equitable access to resettlement. It identified disparate access between regions and within regions.

6. Pursue innovative financing models and new sources of funding to expand sustainable programmes

⁵ See also <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/mpi-europe/mpi-europe-research-eu-action-facilitating-resettlement-and-refugee-admission>.

⁶ UNHCR and Migration Policy Institute Europe, *Refugee Resettlement and Complementary Pathways: Opportunities for Growth*, September 2021.

⁷ UNHCR, *The Impact of Government-Sponsored Refugee Resettlement: A Meta Study of Findings from Six Countries*, December 2020.

⁸ RefugePoint, *Preserving the Humanitarian Nature of Resettlement: An Analysis of 2018-2020 Resettlement Data*, June 2021.

GROW: Growing Solutions and Funding for Refugees

GROW was initiated in 2020 by UNHCR's Division of International Protection (DIP) and the Division of External Relations (DER) to increase both third country solutions and UNHCR's private sector efforts to mobilize social and financial support for refugees. GROW aims to expand third country solutions by supporting States and civil society to receive refugees and enhance integration outcomes. GROW is a multi-stakeholder partnership, particularly with UNHCR's private sector partners, and is based on an innovative funding mechanism.

GROW increases social and financial private sector support for refugee programmes by:

1. Mobilizing interested and suitable volunteers (referred to as Mentors) from UNHCR's and its National Partners' growing donor community to provide hands-on and practical reception and integration support to refugee newcomers.
2. Broadening financial responsibilities and increasing the sustainability of programmes, individual social efforts of Mentors are complemented by private sector fundraising facilitated in cooperation with National Partners and Private Sector Partnership teams. Private sector fundraising is utilised to fill gaps in existing public integration programmes.

Whilst the focus of GROW is currently on assisting resettled refugees, GROW has the potential to be expanded to support refugees arriving through complementary pathways and family reunification.

Countries and authorities have largely welcomed GROW, with initial pilots being implemented in three regions. Thus far, there has been an impressive level of donor/mentor interest as well as enthusiasm and support from UNHCR's private sector partners. Both suggest that GROW has the potential to be launched to more operations where conditions have been assessed as conducive for the development of a project.

While the pre-pandemic planning envisaged an 18-month timeframe starting in January 2020, the Covid situation has led to delays in implementation and refugee arrival.

- In the UK, the Community Backstop Fund, funded by the Shapiro Foundation and implemented by RESET UK, provides access to grants for Lead Sponsors to support their work in the case of unforeseen circumstances once a refugee family arrives. Registered organisations can apply for funding to resolve challenges. The Backstop Fund enabled the streamlining of financial support documentation, encouraging broader participation by more sponsors.



Alaa from Syria listens as her fellow student presents his designs in an afternoon architecture class at the at the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE). Thanks to a scholarship by a non-profit initiative called Global Platform for Syrian Students, she is now pursuing higher education in Portugal. © UNHCR/Bruno Galan Ruiz, March 2016

Goal 2 Outcomes — Advance Complementary Pathways

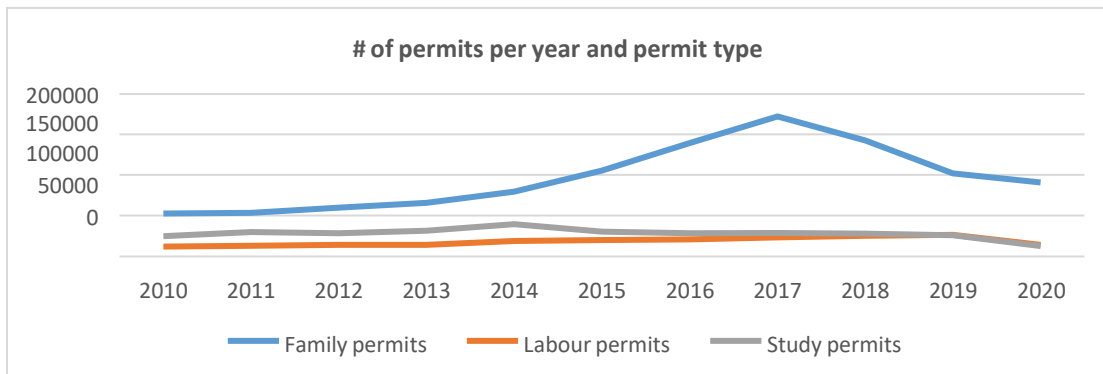
The Global Compact on Refugees emphasizes the need to make safe and legal pathways that are in addition to UNHCR-facilitated resettlement available to refugees on a more systematic basis. While resettlement is an essential tool to meet protection needs of refugees at heightened risk, complementary pathways can expand third country solutions to many more refugees in need of safe homes, ease pressure on host countries and enhance refugees' self-reliance by building their capacities to attain a durable solution. The focus of Goal 2 is increased refugee access to existing pathways, developing additional pathways, or adapting existing ones to better meet refugee needs, a robust evidence base, and coordinated systems design involving all relevant partners to maximize both protection and solutions.

SUMMARY

The objective of at least 120,000 refugees accessing complementary pathways in 2019 was likely met.

- 156,000 first-time residence permits were granted by OECD countries and Brazil to nationals of seven countries with high asylum recognition rates for family, work, or education-related reasons, with the majority being family reunification permits.

- There is currently insufficient data to determine whether the objective was met in 2020 and 2021. Arrivals have been affected by Covid.
- Family reunification is the pathway most followed by refugees according to the study and is also accessed in 92% of UNHCR country operations compared to education (58%), and employment (25%)⁹.



Source: OECD–UNHCR, “Safe pathways for refugees II: UNHCR-OECD study on third country solutions for refugees: family reunification, study programmes and labour mobility”, March 2021

Progress has been measured by examining data from the [joint OECD-UNHCR analysis](#) of work, family, and study permits issued to nationals of states with very high refugee recognition rates.¹⁰ While acknowledging the limitations of the available data, the Three-Year Strategy used the findings of the first [Safe pathways for refugees 2018 report](#)¹¹ to establish a global target on complementary pathways of two million refugees admitted through complementary pathways by the end of 2028.

I. Improving access and developing opportunities for complementary pathways

I. Education Pathways

Expanding pathways to durable solutions in third countries via educational opportunities

⁹ UNHCR, *Complementary Pathways for Admission Global Survey*, April 2021 (Internal).

¹⁰ UNHCR-OECD, *Safe pathways for refugees II: study on third country solutions for refugees: family reunification, study programmes and labour mobility (2010-2019)*, March 2021.

¹¹ OECD-UNHCR, *Safe pathways for refugees: study on third country solutions for refugees: family reunification, study programmes and labour mobility*, December 2018.

has required collective action by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including academia, NGOs, and states. More reliable and sustainable education pathways programmes are being designed and launched.

In November 2019, UNHCR, UNESCO and the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) brought together stakeholders with an identified interest or active engagement in developing education opportunities for refugees as complementary pathways. The conference explored country-specific and region-specific needs and barriers to accessing third country education pathways and identified emerging good practices. A report, *Doubling our Impact, Third Country Higher Education Pathways for Refugees*, outlining the key outcomes of the discussions, was published in February 2020, and helped lay the groundwork for the creation of the Global Taskforce on Education Pathways.

New education pathways on the horizon in the USA and France

✓ The USA has announced a new refugee admissions category for refugee private sponsorship. To complement this initiative a partnership of various entities, led by the Presidents' Alliance, worked on a framework for establishing an education pathway to the USA, while also advocating for the expansion of admissions criteria currently embedded within the student visa to the USA. Community colleges and universities would offer free tuition. Philanthropic groups would cover other costs, and the State Department will aid in resettlement. The Global Taskforce on Education Pathways has been collaborating with Working Groups led by the US Universities Presidents' Alliance in the US on an overall strategy and implementation plan on the launch of education pathways pilots in the US. The initiative is also supported by the Open Society Foundation (OSF).

✓ Following the successful pilot of the University Corridors Project in Italy, France has announced a new national project, UNIV'R (Universities for Refugees). The project will enable French-speaking refugees living in a targeted first country of asylum to study for a Master's degree in France. 50 refugees should benefit from the project over two years (2022-2023).

▪ UNHCR has partnered with Duolingo on a pilot project that will waive fees for language tests provided by Duolingo and give free access to college counselling for up to 25 refugee students seeking admission to third country study programs in selected locations. It is expected that the project will be instrumental in building a comprehensive college counselling model for refugee students seeking admission to third country universities with the expected scope of the project expanding after the pilot phase in 2021.

- In 2021 for the first time a special programme for refugee athletes allowed two members of the Refugee Olympics Team to find education and training opportunities in Canada. Through cooperation of WUSC, the International Olympic Committee and UNHCR, these exceptional individuals have been granted a durable solution through education pathways to Canada and paved way for such programming to start on a larger scale both in Canada and around the globe.
- 71 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, South Sudan, and Sudan arrived in **Italy** as part of the University Corridors for Refugees Project with eleven participating universities. The project is run by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, UNHCR, Caritas Italiana and Diaconia Valdese, with support from the University of Bologna where the first pilot was carried out in 2019, as well as a network of partners in Ethiopia (Ghandi Charity) and in Italy who will support the refugee students throughout their education experience.
- The Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Higher Education Pathways took place (virtually) in 2020 through the leadership of the Japan International Christian University Foundation (JICUF). The objective of the initiative was to share information about existing scholarship programs, and to build a consortium of Asia- Pacific universities, funding agencies and civil society groups that will work together to develop a major scholarship program. As one of the outcomes a group of interested parties dedicated to working on the expansion of education complementary pathways in Asia has been formed. Specific initiatives in this area have also led to more programmes becoming available in Japan through the launch of an NGO consortium Pathways Japan and focusing not only on Syrian students as before but also including those from Afghanistan.
- In 2021, Korea expressed its interest in working with the Joy of Sharing Foundation and UNHCR on a small-scale pilot education pathway. Refugee students would come to Korea to study Korean and undertake undergraduate studies at Sogang University. After their studies, the students will be able to seek employment in Korea, with a pathway to permanent residency after graduating (five years of residence and with relevant financial conditions met). Further, candidates who successfully graduate within the allowed time frame can be granted a long-term visa that is renewable without limitation.
- In 2021 UNHCR signed a quadripartite MoU with the Mexican asylum agency COMAR, the MFA and Proyecto Habesha to spelling out joint cooperation on a higher education complementary pathway to Mexico. The project intends to provide 100 refugee students the opportunity to access higher education in Mexico between 2020 and 2024.
- In response to the Afghan situation many education actors have expanded their programming to offer solutions for the refugee students from Afghanistan, with entities such as WUSC and Global Platform for Education based out of Portugal launching new programmes for Afghan students in 2021.

II. Employment Pathways

An important accomplishment of the Strategy has been the creation and expansion of partnerships that give qualified refugees opportunities to work in third countries. Employment or labour pathways are safe and regulated avenues that allow qualified refugees to enter or stay in another country to work, providing them with either permanent or temporary legal status initially, with progressive access to a durable solution provided through the legal framework and/or specific design of the pathways. Labour mobility programmes may be part of traditional immigration systems adapted to facilitate skilled refugees' admission or be dedicated visa categories designed to facilitate refugee mobility through employment. Flexibility with regard to travel documentation for legal entry and stay, and protection safeguards throughout, are key components of labour pathways.

New employment pathways launched in Australia, Canada and UK

✓ Canada launched a small-scale Economic Mobility Pathways Project in 2018, which successfully tested admitting refugees through existing economic immigration programs. The program was expanded to 500 principal applicants in 2020 and then to a goal of 2,000 in 2021. It is being implemented in coordination with several Canadian provinces and municipalities and with partners such as the Shapiro Foundation, RefugePoint and Talent Beyond Boundaries. As of September 2021, 43 refugees and their family members had arrived under the pilot and through regular visa categories.

✓ The United Kingdom Displaced Talent Mobility Pilot was launched in July 2021. Implemented with Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB), the pilot will give 50 - 100 primary applicants and their families the opportunity to move to the UK for work in a variety of critical fields including IT, construction, and engineering over a two-year period. Under the pilot, refugee skilled worker candidates will be entitled to a five-year Skilled Worker Visa, and then Indefinite Leave to Remain (provided criteria is met). In addition, TBB is working to bring up to 200 refugee nurses in coordination with the National Health Service. Seventy-five individuals had arrived by the end of 2021 with significant additional arrivals early in 2022.

✓ Australia, working in collaboration with Talent Beyond Boundaries, launched a pilot program in July 2021 aimed at providing skilled refugees with a pathway to live and work in Australia. Under this pilot program, endorsed Australian businesses will be able to utilise a Labour Agreement to sponsor skilled refugees to work in their business. The Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement pilot program can be used to sponsor an approved skilled overseas worker on a permanent or temporary basis, to work under one of three employer sponsored visa programs. The initial target is 100 refugees.

▪ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with Talent Beyond Boundaries, Fedasil and Alto Comissariado para as Migrações (ACM), with the support of Fragomen, is working on the development of a labor mobility project, Displaced Talent for Europe (DT4E). The program will provide a minimum of 250 qualified refugees in Jordan and



Syrian refugee Sarya is a software developer who has been offered a job in Australia. She is currently in Jordan preparing to migrate with her family.

© Talent Beyond Boundaries

Lebanon with an employment opportunity leading to a more permanent solution in a number of European countries. The project will be implemented at the beginning of 2022.

▪ Under the 2020 European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Call for promoting complementary pathways for people in need of protection and their further integration, EU-PASSWORLD is a project that aims to create new places for legal admission and effective integration of people in need of international protection by

both designing and implementing new Complementary Pathway programs in education and labour with a community sponsorship component and scaling existing ones. By incorporating practices from community sponsorship, the project will expand the modalities of facilitating refugees' enrolment in European universities and their access to work-related residence permits. The partnership will primarily do so in the three countries involved (Italy, Belgium and Ireland) and in coordination with Caritas-EU, who are engaged in building sustainable programs. It is envisaged that 200 refugees will benefit over a three-year period.

- In addition to continuing its work on education pathways, the World University of Canada is utilising funding from the government of Canada to test an employment model in the hospitality sector in 2021-2022. The Hospitality Industry Welcomes Refugee Employment-Linked Sponsorship (HIRES) pilot will provide refugee youth with sector-specific skills training, and links them with resettlement and employment in Canada through a unique sponsorship model. Workplaces and community volunteers in Canada will privately sponsor refugee youth who are selected and trained overseas and support their resettlement through Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. Upon arrival, sponsored refugees will be provided with integration support, an employment opportunity and workplace mentorship. Despite delays in providing necessary training to candidates due to Covid, 10 refugees in Kenya have so far arrived in Canada.

III. Family reunification

Family Reunification is the only rights-based pathway to third country solutions for refugees. Procedures to facilitate access to this right for refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection have been in place for many years, but significant gaps to actual access remain. As part of its protection and solutions mandate, UNHCR seeks to enhance access to family reunification for persons in need of international protection worldwide. Family reunification is the most relied upon third country solution for refugees.

Family reunification procedures too often remain inaccessible due to restrictive interpretations of the right to family unity and of State obligations to "take the necessary measures to protect the refugee's family, especially in order to ensure the family's unity" (Final Act of the UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries). Many states, for example, define family and dependency only in terms of a nuclear family (pre-flight spouse and minor children). Additional barriers include document requirements, difficulty accessing embassies and consulates, application fees, travel costs, and lack of information and assistance.

Established in December 2020 as an enabling action under the Strategy, the Family Reunification Network (FRUN) is the first global platform dedicated to refugee family reunification. It connects leaders from States, International Organisations, NGOs, community organizations, academics, and legal advocates. Through the FRUN and elsewhere, UNHCR continues to advocate for flexible protection-centred eligibility criteria, inclusive interpretations of dependency, and a pragmatic approach to procedural requirements to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Since its launch, the FRUN has held three global meetings and one brown bag event

convening more than 200 global, regional, and national stakeholders and experts. A multidisciplinary FRUN Advisory Group has also been established to help guide the priorities and activities of the FRUN.

Family reunification: Partnership in Action

✓ A model of partnership in action, the Family Reunification Project was conducted by UNHCR, the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), RefugePoint, and Miles4Migrants. Since the launch of this project, UNHCR and partners have assisted 394 individuals seeking reunification with family members in France, Germany, Sweden, the United States, and several other European states. This has involved counselling to individual families, legal support and litigation interventions, Best Interest Procedures for unaccompanied children, and other significant punctual interventions including facilitation of travel and other key civil documentation, exit procedures and logistics including flight costs. In addition to individual case interventions, this project has supported community outreach to facilitate information provision and identification and has significantly contributed to the realisation of the protection role family reunification plays in preventing irregular movements and reliance on illegal smuggling networks. Outside the context of the Family Reunification Project, since 2020, IRAP has assisted 362 individuals with family reunification and humanitarian visa applications.

✓ A focus on practical solutions and collaboration in the FRUN has resulted in proposals and initiatives from some States to implement more flexible processing modalities; examples include commitments to increased digitalization and suggestions to share biometric data where there is a lack of diplomatic access. UNHCR and the Netherlands also launched a pilot project in 2021 enabling the use of UNHCR interviewing facilities for the purposes of remote family reunification interviews.

- As pledged at the Global Refugee Forum, in 2020, Norway significantly reduced its fees for applications for family immigration, including for family reunification with recognized refugees with a temporary residence permit.
- In October 2021 UNHCR hosted a workshop with six selected European States to consider existing good practices in family reunification processing, such as waived interview requirements and roving consular services, and opportunities presented by the crisis in Afghanistan to further develop and expand these initiatives.
- A December 2021 *Roundtable on Family Reunification in emergency response: the*

Afghan case, was an important opportunity to take stock of lessons learned from family reunification processing in emergency response; to exchange on how to best use the current legal framework to facilitate family reunification of Afghan nationals, and what would be needed to develop and sustain interstate cooperation in this area. Bringing together over 100 stakeholders, including EU Member States and other key stakeholders, the discussion took place in the context of the EU High-level Forum on providing protection to Afghans. The event was jointly chaired by UNHCR and the European Commission.

- UNHCR has started to collect detailed data to map the needs and gaps in State family reunification procedures for refugees. This will also serve to feed advocacy efforts for better and more transparent data.
- Additionally, support of Miles4Migrants to many actors, including UNHCR, working in the field of family reunification, has allowed for more than 15,000 UNHCR persons of concern in 2021 alone to benefit from free airfare when reaching their final destination via family reunification and other pathways.

IV. Humanitarian admissions and visas

Increased use of humanitarian admission and humanitarian visas which do not depend on a UNHCR referral has shown the potential to offer a safe and additional pathway for persons in need of international protection, complementing States' resettlement programmes in the provision of protection and solutions.

Humanitarian Corridors arrivals as of 31 December 2021

Andorra	8
Belgium	150
France	471
Italy	2853

- In 2019, the Humanitarian Corridors programme won the UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award for Europe for sponsoring the relocation of over 2,000 persons in need of international protection to **Italy** in less than four years. The Italian Humanitarian Corridors programme is based on an agreement between a consortium of religious organizations (Sant'Egidio Community; Caritas Italiana; the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy and the Waldensian Table) together with the foreign and interior ministries. The Italian programme, currently engaged in Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon and Niger, has been expanded to several other European countries, including **Andorra, Belgium and France**. In 2021, the Italian Government announced a similar program for 1,200 displaced Afghans in Iran and Pakistan, which will be made up of a combination of UNHCR resettlement submissions and humanitarian referrals by faith-based organisations.

¹² UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Complementary Pathways for Admission of Refugees to Third Countries: Key Considerations*, April 2019, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ceb3fc4.html>.

- **Germany** has continued to implement the humanitarian admission programme for Syrian refugees in Turkey with a new admission directive that up to 500 persons per month could be admitted to Germany until December 31st, 2021. Germany's program will continue in 2022.
- Funded by the CRISP, 90 Afghans travelled under the humanitarian admission programme to **Brazil** in 2021. One Syrian admitted on humanitarian grounds was assisted with travel to Argentina.

II. Enabling actions for improving access to complementary pathways

Note: the activities outlined throughout this report are samples and are not comprehensive of the many actions by many partners in support of the Strategy's objectives.

1. Use of multi-stakeholder pathway-specific task forces to drive expansion of complementary pathways

Recognising that the expansion of resettlement and complementary pathways requires the commitment, expertise and resources of various stakeholders, the Strategy called for the establishment of multi-stakeholder Task Forces specific to identified complementary pathways.

- The **Global Task Force on Third Country Education Pathways** was launched on 28 May 2020. Co-chaired by World University Service of Canada and Open Societies University Network (OSUN), with UNHCR serving as technical advisor, the Task Force which also includes refugee representatives, is currently composed of the following members: Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), European Commission, DG Home, European University Association (EUA), Government of Germany (represented by the German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD), Government of Canada, Government of Portugal, Habesha Project, Institute of International Education (IIE), Japan ICU Foundation (JICUF), Open Society Foundations (OSF), Open Society University Network (OSUN), Pathways Japan, UNESCO, UNHCR, Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), World Education Services (WES) and World University Service of Canada (WUSC) . For its initial two-year term, the Task Force will promote and support the expansion of education (particularly, tertiary education) as a complementary pathway for admission of refugees to third countries, to help meet both the 15by30 target to increase tertiary education for refugees to that of 15% globally by 2030, as set forth in the *Refugee Education Strategy*, and the goals of *The Three-Year Strategy*.

- As noted above, the Family Reunification Network (FRUN) was launched in December 2020. Under the Chatham House rules, it is a space for open and frank discussion of the challenges faced from every perspective related to refugee family reunification UNHCR is the secretariat of the FRUN and the chair of its multi-disciplinary advisory group.
- The formal launch of the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility by the government of Canada is now scheduled for March 2022, although members of its core group have been acting as an informal advocacy and information-sharing network since 2020. Engaging with global stakeholders to increase the number of states that have labour complementary pathways accessible to refugees, and ultimately increase refugee access to protection will be the primary objective. Efforts are currently focused on finalising an effective Core Group of Task Force members, who will be collectively responsible for setting and implementing a concrete work plan.

2. Creation of a Working Group on complementary pathways as part of the ATCR to drive standard-setting

The establishment of taskforces for specific pathways has resulted in eliminating the need for a separate Working Group on Complementary Pathways. In the consultations held at the end of 2021 to discuss what comes next after the Strategy, there was broad consensus that this enabling action should be removed.

3. Strengthening refugee participation in complementary pathways to facilitate refugee access

Refugees have had an influential advisory role as members of the Refugee Advisory Group in the planning cycle of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) in 2020 and 2021, and the Global Refugee Forum's High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021. Members of the Refugee Advisory Group are also represented on the Global Taskforce on Education Pathways. Former refugees who have managed to access pathways are also actively engaged in advocacy efforts for expansion of access to complementary pathways.

4. Use data and innovative tools to facilitate refugee access to pathways

In the absence of comprehensive data on past access to third country solutions via family reunification, education or labour pathways, in developing the objectives for the Strategy the OECD and UNHCR collaborated on a study covering the years 2010-2017. A key planned action was to update these data in 2019 and in 2020. Similar to the initial report, the 2019 update focused on nationals of five countries (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia and Syria) with high asylum recognition rates entering OECD countries with regular visas

or permits linked to complementary pathways. The update added data for the year 2018 to the initial study, thereby establishing a baseline against which to measure progress under the Strategy. The 2019 Safe Pathways for Refugees, UNHCR-OECD Study on third country solutions for refugees: family reunification, study programmes and labour mobility report found that over the period 2010-18, at least 680,700 first-time residence permits were granted in OECD countries to nationals of the five reference countries, 89% being family permits. Compared to 2017, permits for work increased by 10% in 2018,



Syrian refugees Eias Elnejemi (left) and Amara Omar (right) fled the war at home and struggled to get by in Jordan, where neither of them could afford university fees. Awarded scholarships by French regional government, they hope to study at the University of Toulouse and one day rebuild Syria and help other refugees.

© UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau, December 2017

those for education remained stable and permits for family reunification decreased by 24% resulting in an overall decrease year-on-year. However, overall permits in 2018, at 106,400, represented a significantly higher level than the average for 2010-17 (71,800). Due to data limitations, these findings were considered as indicative. A full update, [Safe Pathways for Refugees II](#) incorporating data for 2019, was finalized at the end of 2020 and published in March 2021. It presents an overview of first-time permits issued in OECD countries and Brazil for

family, work and education purposes to nationals of Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela over the decade prior to the COVID crisis (2010-2019). It also shows an encouraging trend: in 2019 alone 156,000 permits were issued, indicating that the target set in the Strategy for 2019 was likely met.

- The UNHCR [Scholarship Opportunities for Refugees](#) platform is an important infrastructure for the Strategy in service of the foundational principle of refugee self-agency. Launched in September 2020, it is a first-of-its kind venue providing UNHCR-verified information on higher education programs available to refugees worldwide. The site intends to provide a global database of reliable, up-to-date information on refugee-eligible scholarships both in countries of first asylum and third countries. The site features 48 scholarship programmes, 13 of which are third country education opportunities. Thus far the site has on average 185 users per day, the majority (64%) aged between 18-34. Based on feedback received from 950 users, at least 38% have found an opportunity they were interested in and have applied or intend to apply at a later date. UNHCR is working

to further engage education providers to expand the number of opportunities featured on the site while also improving the user experience.

- UNHCR-commissioned research to map refugee education opportunities in the West and Central African Region (WCA) was conducted by Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA), a charity organization working in education in Africa, and completed in July 2021. The findings in the report, [Complementary Pathways through Education for Refugees in the West and Central Africa Region: Mapping Refugee Education Opportunities](#),¹³ have informed recommendations on immediate, practical, and concrete opportunities for UNHCR-led engagements that could enhance the ecosystem that supports complementary pathways through education in the region.
- Supported by the CRISP, UNHCR commissioned research to map global opportunities to grow resettlement and advance complementary pathways. This project will generate evidence that helps to both guide and enhance the work of relevant stakeholders to expand access to third country solutions for refugees. The research was conducted by the Migration Policy Institute Europe and its partner, the University of Ottawa, Refugee Hub. The findings were presented at the 2021 ATCR in June and the report, [Refugee Resettlement and Complementary Pathways: Opportunities for Growth](#)¹⁴ was published in September 2021.
- In 2021 UNHCR conducted an analysis to compare and contrast existing education and labour mobility pathways.¹⁵ The purpose is to share good practices and assist actors in complementary pathways by providing guidance and models as States seek to refine their own work on pathways for admission for refugees and asylum seekers.
- UNHCR-led studies on feasibility of various pathways as applicable to various national realities have also been undertaken for Switzerland, Finland and Sweden.

5. Build the capacity of relevant actors to facilitate refugee access to pathways

- Between 2017 and 2019 WUSC shared technical expertise and resources to support Proyecto Habesha in **Mexico** to build capacity, increase sustainability, and identify and strengthen those elements critical to scaling up this education pathway.
- In September 2021, Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB), and Fragomen, a global immigration law firm and UNHCR co-hosted an advocacy and information-sharing webinar on *Employment Pathways for Refugees—the Business Case*. More than 60 corporations participated, including many of the world’s largest firms, along with UNHCR, IOM, the European Commission, and over 50 other stakeholders, with a total of over 200 participants, including companies already using labour pathways and refugees benefiting

¹³ UNHCR and ESSA, [Complementary Pathways through Education for Refugees in the West and Central Africa Region: Mapping Refugee Education Opportunities](#).

¹⁴ UNHCR and MPI Europe, *Refugee Resettlement and Complementary Pathways: Opportunities for Growth*, 2021.

¹⁵ UNHCR, *Comparative Analysis of Education and Labor Mobility Complementary Pathways*, 2021.

from them, the government of Canada, RefugePoint, the European Commission, and the International Chamber of Commerce.

- The European Commission is promoting complementary pathways to the EU in addition to resettlement as part of the New Pact.¹⁶ The political frame of this policy development is provided by the *Commission Recommendation of 23 September 2020 on legal pathways to protection in the EU: promoting resettlement, humanitarian admission and other complementary pathways*. In October 2020, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Call for Proposals on Transnational Actions on Asylum, Migration and Integration was issued. The objective of the call is to fund the design and implementation of complementary pathway programmes which would facilitate enrolment in European universities; access to employment-based residence permits for those with needed skills in the EU labour market or enable family members of beneficiaries of international protection to join them safely and legally. Projects eligible for funding in **Italy**, **Belgium** and **Ireland** were selected in 2021 and are in early stages of implementation.
- The Institute of International Education (IIE) Platform for Education in Emergencies Response (PEER) program is based in Thailand and works with refugee youth from Myanmar living at the border. Although not a third country education pathway in and of itself, it focuses on the preparatory stage that is an essential component of third country education pathways: readying refugee youth for university through assistance with documentation, administration and obtaining tuition waivers. IIE has now begun work to expand this program to **Mexico**, working with Habesha to help students, primarily from Venezuela, prepare for and apply to universities.
- UNHCR is working on a pilot project financed by Innovation Norway to pilot a market based cross-border loan mechanism enabling refugees to finance the incidental costs associated with third country admission opportunities.

¹⁶ See, *European Commission, Migration and Asylum Package: New Pact on Migration and Asylum* documents adopted on 23 September 2020, available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/migration-and-asylum-package-new-pact-migration-and-asylum-documents-adopted-23-september-2020_en [last accessed 01 February 2022].



Liverpudlians welcome Syrian family to Merseyside.
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell, July 2019

Goal 3 Outcomes — Building the Foundation

The Compact is based on the fundamental principle of international solidarity, which can only be achieved if endorsed as a global public good by third countries receiving refugees. An environment that promotes solidarity, diversity and openness is essential for resettlement and complementary pathways to grow sustainably. Moreover, the arrival of refugees can trigger positive social and economic changes, transform civic culture and local institutions, and promote social cohesion, particularly when local communities are engaged in welcoming them. Goal 3 focuses on supporting national and local authorities and communities to design and implement programmes that enable the long-term integration of refugees, adopting models that harness the contribution of both local communities and refugees and promoting an evidence-based positive narrative on refugees.

I. Initiatives promoting welcoming and inclusive societies

A significant number of community sponsorship programmes were developed or expanded during the past three years. There are now programmes in place or being actively explored in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, and Brazil. The European Union has included community sponsorship as a core component of its future refugee protection policy.

Community sponsorship programs seek to increase the overall quantity and quality of integration capacity, provide a warm and welcoming support environment, and deepen community engagement. They can support resettlement programs via UNHCR referrals, serve as complementary pathways in and of themselves, or serve as a tool to support refugees admitted through other pathways. A strength of these programmes has been the cooperation between civil society, UNHCR and government in the design and implementation phase. This work has been supported globally by a multi-stakeholder partnership, the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative.

- **Australia** has announced a four-year pilot program to be launched in 2022 that will facilitate community sponsorship of up to 1,500 refugee and humanitarian entrants across Australia, to help refugees resettle with the support of interested community groups, trained volunteers and faith-based groups. The Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot will draw on elements of the Canadian community sponsorship program and provide an alternative approach to the settlement of refugees, within the Humanitarian program, for those referred to Australia by the UNHCR or who do not have identified links to Australia.
- **New Zealand** has announced a new Refugee Sponsorship pilot scheme that aims to settle 150 people over the period 2022-2024. This Refugee Sponsorship Pilot builds on the first pilot, targeting 25 refugees, known as the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS) Category, established 2016. This 150 will be *additional* to New Zealand's annual resettlement quota of 1500 refugees a year.
- The **USA** committed to launching a private sponsorship pilot program in 2022 that will create new opportunities for private individuals and organizations in local U.S. communities to play an important role in supporting the welcome and integration of refugees resettling in the United States. During the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) on December, USA pledged to also include refugees accepted on education pathways and LGBTIQ refugees.
- As part of its Global Refugee Forum pledge on Resettlement, **Belgium** committed to considering a community sponsorship programme. They met this pledge by launching a new programme, with the first refugees arriving in 2021.
- In December 2019, the government of **Ireland**, as part of an announcement expanding the size of its overall resettlement efforts, converted its community sponsorship pilot to a permanent programme.
- Since May 2019, the **German** federal government has been piloting a Community Sponsorship of Refugees Programme called “NesT – Neustart im Team/New Start in a Team” to facilitate the additional resettlement of up to 500 particularly vulnerable refugees to Germany with the support of private sponsors. In spite of delays due to Covid, 118 refugees have now arrived in Germany through this pilot.

Community Sponsorship in action in Spain

Spain has been implementing a successful sponsorship project in the Basque Region since 2019. At the GRF, Spain pledged to expand sponsorship in the Basque region and explore implementing elsewhere in order to welcome 500 refugees. Since then, programmes have been launched in Valencia (2020) and Navarra (2021), utilizing cases referred by UNHCR.

- Technical advice on design and implementation, training, and additional support were provided by UNHCR and its partners in the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative.
- An independent evaluation was conducted in 2021 by Instrategies. It concluded that there is a clear commitment to improving reception and integration, and also identified mechanisms to better support sponsors and volunteers.
- In spite of delays due to the pandemic, 64 refugees have been welcomed under the projects as of October 2021.

Spain is a member of the GRSI States Network and signed the Network's statement released at the GRF. Representatives at national and regional level have helped showcase the Spanish experience at several international events.

II. Enabling actions to Promote Welcoming Communities

Note: the activities outlined throughout this report are samples and are not comprehensive of the many actions by many partners in support of the Strategy's objectives.

1. Harnessing national and local political leadership to foster welcoming and inclusive societies

- Given the growing importance of resettlement and complementary pathways in the EU's agenda, the EASO, now EUAA, Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network was established to respond to the needs expressed by EU+ States for a platform to exchange on operational implementation and EU-specific issues related to resettlement and humanitarian admissions. The Network, which also offers a forum for practical cooperation and peer learning, is led by the EUAA, with other key stakeholders such as UNHCR and IOM joining as appropriate. The Network's first meeting was held in January 2020 in **Malta**, with the participation of representatives from 18 EU+ countries as well as from DG HOME, the EU Delegation in Ankara, EU-FRANK and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI Europe).
- The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe-led SHARE Network provides a platform for exchange and learning amongst local and regional actors on

resettlement and complementary pathways, promoting partnerships for solidarity and inclusive welcoming and integration. In 2019 the programme focused on building the capacity of smaller municipalities and rural areas to welcome and support the integration of refugees and promoting their increasingly crucial contribution to EU efforts in this context.

- Iceland is establishing a new integration programme which will be accessible by recognized refugees. The programme lasts for three years. It is based on three pillars: municipalities; the directorate for labour (for integration and language training) and the multicultural centre (for information and capacity building).
- In June 2020, the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) jointly organized a webinar with Eurocities on how cities can become more involved in community sponsorship programmes. Participants had an opportunity to hear experiences and challenges from the ground—both from city authorities and sponsors themselves. Similarly, in November 2020, GRSI coordinated presentations and a workshop at a meeting of the Intercultural Cities network of the Council of Europe to promote sponsorship. The network heard both from advocates at UNHCR and the government of **Canada** as well as passionate new sponsoring groups in the **UK** and **Valencia, Spain**.

2. Supporting national and local authorities to establish long-term integration policies and programmes that respond to the specific needs

- Through the CRISP, the UNHCR [Integration Handbook](#) was updated in 2021 to reflect the changing nature of integration processes and programmes and an increasingly broad range of stakeholders engaged in resettlement. The emergence of new resettlement countries and the growing diversity of UNHCR resettlement submissions highlighted the need to complement the well-defined and commonly endorsed resettlement guidelines outlined in the [Resettlement Handbook](#) with guidelines on reception and integration into communities. It has been updated with the assistance of NGOs, refugees, governments, academics, UNHCR colleagues and other international organizations. The Integration Handbook is a key reference text on the integration of resettled refugees.
- Ireland has embarked on the CAPS-EU project (Building Capacity for Private Sponsorship in the European Union). Led by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) and supported by the Belgian reception agency (Fedasil) and Migration Policy Institute Europe, the project will build European, national and local government and non-government stakeholders' capacity to design, implement, sustain and scale up private sponsorship.
- The COMMIT project facilitated the integration of resettled refugees in Italy, Croatia, Spain and Portugal between January 2019 and 2021. Through its activities, COMMIT has worked to strengthen and better link pre-departure and post-arrival support by

mainstreaming resettled refugees' specific needs. In an effort to empower refugees, the project has also built the capacity of host communities to accompany refugees in their integration journey, including through mentorship schemes. The COMMIT project was implemented by the International Organisation for Migration in partnership with Adecco Foundation, Consorzio Comunitas, UNISTRASI and funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union. See also the related Report [Labour-market Integration of Resettled Refugees in the EU: Guidelines for Practitioners](#).¹⁷

3. Developing and supporting bottom-up approaches that foster inclusion and empower communities

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) partnership, composed of Open Society Foundations, Ottawa Refugee Hub, UNHCR, the government of Canada, the Giustra Foundation and the Shapiro Foundation, has continued to promote community sponsorship programs globally. Many activities were undertaken in 2020 and 2021, particularly to support the sponsorship community during the pandemic (convening a number of virtual community calls and workshops to share strategies and tools to welcome refugees in lockdown contexts); to maintain momentum through advocacy for new programmes and strategies to help programmes grow and be sustainable (including a High-Level Panel at Minister / EC Commissioner / UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner level); to grow the sponsor base (Germany, Argentina, UK) support policy design and re-design (Portugal, UK); and to provide training for new programmes (Valencia, Spain, and Belgium).

4. Promoting and supporting an evidence-based narrative on refugees

- To enhance the evidence base for resettlement, UNHCR contracted the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to review the available evidence on the impact of government-led resettlement programs across six receiving countries in three regions (Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, United States). The study covers the observable outcomes, both positive and negative, intended and unintended, and in relation to costs and benefits. The final report, [The Impact of Government-Sponsored Refugee Resettlement: A Meta Study of Findings from Six Countries](#), providing evidence for advocacy efforts and policy design for the growth of resettlement, was published in 2021.¹⁸

¹⁷ IOM, *Labour-market integration of resettled refugees in the European Union: Guidelines for Practitioners*, 2021.

¹⁸ UNHCR, *The Impact of Government-Sponsored Refugee Resettlement: A Meta Study of Findings from Six Countries*, December 2020.

Conclusion and next steps

A combination of powerful socio-economic trends and politics will make 2022 and beyond pivotal years of opportunity to transform the landscape of third country solutions. At the same time, there is significant risk this opportunity will be missed. UNHCR and its partners should develop an ambitious response as the Strategy moves to a new phase: from foundation building to a relentless focus on growth. We must not be afraid to again imagine, and then set out as objectives, the creation of safe pathways for durable solutions in third countries for millions of refugees who have no other options, and to do so with the conviction that this is to the mutual benefit of refugees, countries of first asylum, and countries of destination.

It now appears possible that over the next 3-5 years the combination of UNHCR-referred resettlement and other legal pathways (education, employment, humanitarian corridors, family reunification, community sponsorship) can grow significantly, to the order of scale of a combined 300,000 departures per year. These programmes can also potentially be more consistent and predictable than other durable solutions. That would be a major accomplishment. But it should be seen as a stepping-stone to systematizing such solutions over a decade in order to provide realistic options for a much larger proportion of refugees.

A confluence of factors makes such scale possible. Some are external forces, others the result of expert foundation-building by UNHCR and a remarkable and growing network of tireless partners. To summarize only a few:

- The USA has set historically high objectives for resettlement, with added commitments to innovation via education and sponsorship.
- Other resettlement states from Canada to Finland to New Zealand are adding growing targets to already large per-capita programmes.
- There is strong policy and funding support by the European Union for all third country pathways, with multiple projects each generating new, mutually reinforcing networks.
- There are acute labour shortages at all skill levels across almost all developed economies. Aggravated by the pandemic and population aging, these trends are putting growing pressures on governments to respond and provide large scale opportunities to design safe pathways via employment.
- University-aged populations are dropping in scores of countries, motivating larger and more diverse international student intake.
- The Global Task Force on Third Country Education Pathways is now in place, with members representing influential states and multiple large networks and consortia.

- The Family Reunification Network has been launched, with over 200 participants.
- Canada is launching the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility this spring, engaging governments, UNHCR, key NGOs, the International Chamber of Commerce, IOM and employers from global corporations to national health sectors to small family firms.
- New community sponsorship programs have launched or are being planned in more than a dozen states, and projects to provide sponsorship supports to labour and education pathways are being expanded. Humanitarian Corridor models are being renewed and applied to multiple pathways.

In areas such as education and employment pathways, the problem to solve is that of an hourglass: large supply and large demand are separated by narrow legal channels whose administrative design and recruitment mechanisms tend to exclude refugees. These must be widened and can be. There are no obstacles outside of our control as a determined international community. The mutual benefit story is clear and can be communicated effectively at both local and national levels. This is already happening, if at relatively small volumes, in multiple industries and educational sectors in multiple states.

The Three-Year Strategy envisaged 150,000 resettlement spaces per year for those at greatest risk by 2028. This number could be met as early as 2022-2023 if resettlement countries simply meet their current targets. The Strategy envisages 300,000 refugees moving on safe alternate pathways by that time that are additional to resettlement numbers. That is challenging. Can these two numbers be met and then, beyond 2029 and into the next decade, be further increased to unlock third country solutions for most refugees with no other durable solutions? In a context where populations are already declining or will be soon in much of the world, where each of Europe and the United States have ten million jobs vacant across all skill levels, where OECD countries alone have 5 million non-national students in their post-secondary institutions, the integrating of refugees into those matching and recruitment systems that are already in place holds enormous potential.

The resettlement of those at most immediate risk must be gradually ramped up in a sustainable way, with well-designed integration programmes that actively engage citizens, communities, cities, schools and employers as co-owners of solutions. The vast, multi-billion-dollar industries which already know how to match students and schools, employers and employees across borders to mutual benefit, must be adjusted not so much so as to ensure that schools admit students because they are refugees or companies hire workers because they are refugees (however admirable that would be), but so that they do not *fail* to admit able students and hire good staff because they are refugees. Programmes operating now demonstrate that these pathways work, usually

with a combination of modest administrative adjustments coupled with partnerships to enable matching and facilitation. Refugees using such pathways recount vividly that the day they were asked about their abilities--not only about their needs--was one of the best days of their lives.

Yet, there is significant risk that the multi-stakeholder partnerships that have been put in place under the umbrella of the Global Compact and the Three-Year Strategy lead to only marginal growth. It is not sufficient to have key states and powerful organizations join. What matters is whether this work becomes and remains a priority of those members. Effective structures and institutional determination to systematize access to influence and decision-makers is necessary. In the past, it has generally been lacking. History is littered with pivot points where opportunities were squandered. Seizing the potential of this moment to provide more safe homes to refugees must not be one of them.