

Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ACTR) 2023
Learning In Crisis: Building Solutions Together
NGO Statement

Introduction

We, the participating non-governmental organisations of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ACTR) 2023, offer the following policy recommendations to actors involved in refugee resettlement, reception and complementary pathways.

Today, the global resettlement community finds itself in challenging times. Successive crises of recent years have leant themselves to pauses in resettlement activity and emergency adaptations of traditional programmes. The short interval between the displacement of large groups of people with humanitarian needs from Afghanistan and Ukraine put pressure on systems already impacted by the pandemic. These issues occur against a backdrop of unprecedented numbers of forcibly displaced people around the world¹, and both new and ongoing protracted conflicts. These challenges are further exacerbated by a housing shortage and cost-of-living crisis affecting many regions worldwide.

As we strive for sustainable and equitable solutions to these issues, and ultimately aim to increase resettlement and complementary pathway quotas ahead of the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, the NGO community urges the following policy recommendations be adopted:

Recommendations

1. Additionality

It is extremely encouraging that new community sponsorship and complementary pathways programmes are in development globally. However, we note that a number of these programmes have not yet achieved additionality to the resettlement quota. Additionality is an important principle that ensures obligations to those arriving under needs-based resettlement programmes are met, and creates an incentive for community members to assist in expanding resettlement opportunities. The development of new sponsorship programmes and complementary pathways should not result in a reduction in the number of resettlement places offered by state authorities.

We also encourage the implementation of named sponsorship, in particular to facilitate family reunification and offer targeted support for cohorts with diverse needs, such as the LGBTQI+ community. However, for States exploring the possibility of introducing named sponsorship, it is important that it is implemented in addition to other existing pathways, such that each pathway is sustainable and does not take away from the resources of other pathways. Ultimately, additionality offers States the ability to expand and deepen its crisis response.

2. Equity

While there have been many positive examples of adaptive and effective crisis responses across resettlement countries in recent years, inequity has arisen between different cohorts of displaced people. For example, Ukrainian arrivals are met with faster processing times for State supports and social welfare than other arrivals. We applaud the efficiency in offering supports to those fleeing Ukraine, but we encourage that these successes be applied to all arriving cohorts. Additionally, certain political ideologies in some States have given way to a difference in policymaking aims between asylum seekers and other cohorts of arrivals. We condemn the limiting of access to asylum, including through externalisation policies. Finally,

¹ See UNHCR data on numbers of those forcibly displaced at <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

we continue to be concerned about equitable access to resettlement across various countries of asylum and regions globally, knowing that resettlement resources are often concentrated in a limited number of “high yield” locations, while leaving others with little or no access.

3. Durability of Status and Travel Documents

As education and labour pathways develop globally and greater use is made of humanitarian admission and other temporary visas, we are mindful of the importance of ensuring those arriving under such pathways are provided durable status in their country of arrival. We echo UNHCR’s recommendation in this regard to provide travel documents to individuals benefitting from education and labour pathways, and the means to eventually secure passports in their country of arrival. Durable status will be particularly important once the study period ends or the individual looks to find a new job. It allows for renewable re-entry, which may be essential for visiting family members, travelling for work or petitioning for family members to join them. Finally, durable status acts as a guarantee against *refoulement*.

4. Partnerships

We encourage States to consider and implement innovative and sustainable partnerships both with civil society organisations and other organisations in the community, fostering a whole-of-society response and harnessing the expertise of different actors. State resources and NGO expertise from the ground can complement each other well. In addition, we urge States to be creative in who they seek partnerships with as they seek to increase quotas and broaden reception systems. Successes have been seen in partnerships with businesses in the private sector, and well as non-typical community groups like sports organisations.

We can also see the success of partnerships in seeking to source housing solutions. Many countries are exploring partnerships with faith-based organisations and rural communities in order to increase the supply of affordable housing. We urge States to think creatively in considering solutions to housing shortages.

Finally, a whole-of-society response has knock-on impacts. We have seen that the more people involved in welcoming refugees to their community, positive public narratives around refugees organically form and grow. This is an important element in leading governments to create more refugee-friendly policies, as well as to counter xenophobic ideologies.

5. Refugee Participation

The importance of refugee participation and inclusion in resettlement policy has been acknowledged in recent years. We urge States and other stakeholders involved in refugee resettlement and complementary pathways to continue considering innovative ways to meaningfully include refugees in the design, implementation and evaluation of all resettlement and complementary pathway programmes. We particularly welcome initiatives supporting refugee-led organisations to lead or co-create the development of complementary pathways.

6. Long-term Integration Supports

We encourage States to be mindful of the need for long-term integration supports. There can be difficulty accessing integration supports once a designated integration period ends or upon leaving a temporary reception centre. We have seen how critical continued access to mental health supports is for resettled refugees. Long term supports may be particularly important for individuals with diverse needs or facing intersectional barriers. We urge States to develop reception systems that are flexible, adaptable, and that recognise diverse needs while also recognising that groups of refugees with diverse needs are not homogenous groups. The aim should be for a person-centred and individualised approach, with long-term supports in place.

Given the current housing shortage faced by many resettlement countries, we also encourage States to meaningfully consider how to improve integration supports for those facing extended stays in temporary accommodation centres.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

We have noted there is a lack of in-depth data regarding resettlement programmes and integration. The success of resettlement and complementary pathways programmes cannot only be measured by numbers alone but also by integration outcomes. As resettlement programmes grow and complementary pathways are developed, we urge States to implement longitudinal studies and in-depth data collection, such that programmes outcomes can be continuously monitored and adapted in line with necessary improvements. We note the importance of involving all stakeholders including resettled refugees, at all stages of monitoring and evaluation. As well as improving programme resiliency from lessons learned, such studies will in turn lend themselves to important information for the global resettlement community, as detailed comparative data can be created across resettlement countries.

8. Investment in Departure Countries

In many ways, we see a strong emphasis on programme and policy needs in destination countries, but less attention on the parallel systems needed in departure countries. To ensure equitable access to resettlement for those who need it, we must bolster identification systems and pre-departure supports in countries of asylum, including working with, and appropriately resourcing, NGO and RLO partners globally. Similarly, in many contexts around the world, refugees need a wide range of supports in departure countries in order to access and navigate complementary pathways. To meet the ambitious goals of *Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030*, we encourage proportionate investment in departure countries to keep up with improvements in destination countries.

Conclusion

Ahead of the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, we, the NGO community, are mindful of the need to drive resettlement pledges. We encourage States to do so in a way that is equitable, sustainable, and resilient to future crises. We acknowledge the progress being made by initiatives such as the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, the Global Task Forces for Labour Mobility and Education, and the Global Family Reunification Network, and urge that an equal effort be made to rally stakeholders around resettlement pledging. Given the goal of the *Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030* that 3 million people will have found protection under resettlement and complementary pathways by 2030, actions to strengthen resettlement programmes and introduce additional pathways are essential.