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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Topic A: Environmentally Displaced Refugees

Topic B: Facilitating the Resettlement of Refugees in Host Nations

Committee Overview

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, or UNHCR, is a global organization formed in 1950 working to create better lives for refugees, displaced people, and stateless people and replaced the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It was formed as a result of World War II to help those displaced in Europe and has won two Nobel Peace Prizes since, once in 1954 and once in 1981, emphasizing the importance of the work it does. Since then it has worked in various crises such as the

Syrian refugee crisis that have arisen to provide assistance to address the displacement of groups of people. With over 60 million displaced people in the world, UNHCR has more responsibilities than ever. Currently, the main areas of focus for UNHCR include Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

In this conference, the focus of this committee will be on two main topics: environmentally displaced refugees and the resettlement of refugees. Both are extremely relevant topics in this day and age due to various natural disasters, climate change, and a variety of conflicts that have left refugees in need of protection.



Topic A:

Environmentally Displaced Refugees

Introduction

With the effects of climate change becoming increasingly evident, more and more people are becoming displaced due to both long- and short-term environmental factors. While it is difficult to pinpoint climate change as the sole cause in the displacement of persons, it is widely held to be a major factor in terms of exacerbating the longtime issue. In 2017, 68.5 million refugees were displaced - setting a global record.¹ Out of these, it has been estimated that anywhere between 22.5 to 24 million of them were displaced due to “‘sudden onset’ weather events -- flooding, forest fires after droughts, and intensified storms.”² Leading experts expect to see an increase in the prevalence of climate-driven displacement in the coming years due to more gradual changes in weather patterns and ecosystems. These changes will include: “desertification, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, air pollution, rain pattern shifts[,] and loss of biodiversity.”³ The World Bank has estimated that the regions of Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia alone are expected to generate approximately 143 million more climate migrants by 2050.⁴ All of these patterns and shifts (both in terms of weather events and patterns as well as human activity such as urbanization) are undoubtedly connected and in turn ultimately reinforce each other,

which has a multiplicative effect on the magnitude of the problem.

Despite the growing scope and seriousness of environmental migration, there is currently no multilateral strategy or framework in place that is equipped to deal with it. Countries have come together twice - first with the 2015 Paris Agreement and, more recently, the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration- and addressed the issue both times, but only to the extent of calling upon nations to begin making plans. There remains no official mechanism for dealing with the growing number of climate refugees.⁵

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugees are currently defined as: “persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection.”⁶ There is a notable lack of inclusion for migrants forced to flee their homes due to environmental reasons under this legal definition, however. This means that those who are forced to leave their nation of origin due to unforeseen environmental/weather events are not afforded the same protections as those officially designated as refugees by the UNHCR. Rather, those who are displaced for environmental reasons are deemed

1 John Podesta, “The Climate Crisis, Migration, and Refugees,” *Brookings*, July 25, 2019
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-climate-crisis-migration-and-refugees>.
2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 “Definitions,” UN, accessed September 13, 2019,
<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/definitions>.

“environmental migrants”, defined by the Commissioner as: “persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are forced to leave their places of habitual residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move within or outside their country of origin or habitual residence.”⁷ With the worsening effects of climate change continually impacting the lives of more and more people across the globe (particularly in the southern hemisphere), the number of people forced to move continues to grow as well. Delegates in this committee must devise a plan to address the needs of those whose displacement can be attributed to changes in the climate, their environment, or the weather.

Historical Background

The term “environmental refugee” was used for the first time (on record) in 1985.⁸ The term was coined by Essam El-Hinnawi, a researcher for the United Nations Environment Program, who described these refugees as: “people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardizes their existence and/or seriously affects the quality of their life.”⁹ Those who could potentially be categorized as refugees under this definition, however, were not recognized by

the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and thus are not afforded the same rights and protections, such as the ability to obtain safe asylum in other countries.¹⁰

Though it is being seen at an increasingly higher rate throughout the globe today, migration driven by climate change and weather events is not a new phenomenon, especially in developing countries. Historically, much of the displacement and movement due to this occurs within a nation’s borders, which explains why refugee status has yet to be extended to include migrants.¹¹

The nation of Ghana, for instance, has been feeling the effects of climate and environmental changes for years now: “Human-made hazards augment the livelihood loss and food insecurity of natural hazards, increasing migration ... [which] intensifies the impacts of natural and human hazards.”¹² The country’s internal migration patterns have been changing significantly over the past few decades. Traditionally, migration within Ghana was dominated by that of male farmers traveling south when there were no crops left for them to plant, while the females were generally expected to stay at home and help pay off the dowries. Decreasing crop productivity beginning in the 1980s, however, ultimately resulted in bringing an end to this tradition. While males continue to dominate internal migration in the country, an increasing numbers of females have been migrating as well. Farmers are also traveling further and

7 “Key Migration Terms,” International Organization for Migration, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>.

8 Silja Klepp, “Climate Change and Migration,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, (April 2017): 6, 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.42.

9 Ayush Banerjee, “Environmental Migration: A 21st Century Issue With No Solution,” *International Association For Political Science Students*, May 28, 2019, <https://www.iapss.org/2018/05/28/75449-2/>.

10 “Why Climate Migrants Do Not Have Refugee Status,” *The Economist*, March 6, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/03/06/why-climate-migrants-do-not-have-refugee-status>.

11 Ibid.

12 Joy Paone and James W. Richmond, “The Migration, Environment and Climate Change Nexus in Ghana,” *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Policy Brief Series 3*, no. 3 (December 2017): 1-5,

https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/policy_brief_series_vol3_issue3.pdf.

further south than they used to, with some giving up their profession altogether if the prospect of being able to harvest enough to provide for their families seems futile.¹³

These changes in migration patterns have been driven in recent years by the gradual effects of climate change in the region: “While many migrants perceive their decision to migrate as an economic and food security choice, the initial drivers of migration are climate change effects.”¹⁴ These effects manifest themselves in many different forms throughout the ten regions of Ghana. They have been exhibited by the increasing droughts, floods, bush fires, and pest/disease outbreaks in the north, and by accelerating erosion along the nation’s coasts - all resulting in an influx of people moving toward urban areas. This rapid urbanization, in turn, reinforces the other factors in a sort of vicious feedback loop.¹⁵ Natural problems such as flooding decrease crop productivity and food supply, while longtime man-made agricultural practices have unfortunately continued to degrade the land - depleting the soil of crucial nutrients and heightening its sensitivity to things like drought and flooding, further worsening the problem and causing more and more people to migrate as a last resort.¹⁶ Accelerating coastal erosion is also an ongoing issue. With a projected sea-level rise of 34.5 cm by 2060, the nation could lose 57% of its coastline which would in turn force many people to migrate elsewhere.¹⁷ Ghana, for its part, has been taking steps to deal with the growing threat. It was the first Sub-Saharan African country to sign on to the 2015 Paris Agreement.¹⁸

While the migration in Ghana has primarily been internal, much of the climate-driven migration in Central and North America has been occurring across borders.¹⁹ In these regions, much of the human displacement is the result of major natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, which have been becoming increasingly frequent. Furthermore, the environmental/human impact is made significantly worse when combined with factors shared by numerous countries in the region, such as underdevelopment and internal violent conflict.²⁰ A recent report estimates that the number of people who were displaced due to sudden-onset weather or environmental events in the eleven nations making up the Regional Conference on Migration for Central and North America (RCM), which includes the United States, totaled about 1.3 million in 2016.²¹ However, this number fails to take into account those who are forced to relocate due to more gradual slow-onset events and developments such as “drought, coastal erosion, land degradation, rising temperatures[,] and changing rainfall patterns.”²² It is difficult to obtain any sort of empirical measurement on just how many of these slow-onset environmental migrants there are in the RCM. This problem is made even worse by the fact that there is a lack of data sharing among relevant agencies.²³

In this region, two broad types of environmentally driven cross-border migration have been identified: “either: (a) to a neighboring country with a contiguous land border, usually for short periods of time; or (b) to more distant destination for

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ileana-Sinziana Puscas, “Central and North America: Migration and Displacement in the Context of Disasters and

Environmental Change,” *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Policy Brief Series* 4, no. 1 (March 2018): 1-5, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/policy_brief_series_vol4_issue1.pdf.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

longer periods of time” (though the two are not always easily distinguishable from one another).²⁴ This type of cross-border movement starting really taking place as far back as 1972, when around 10,000 Nicaraguans emigrated to Costa Rica in order to escape the damage caused by the Managua earthquake and its aftershocks.²⁵ A much more recent example occurred in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake: when over 200,000 Haitians were forced to relocate to other countries (mainly the Dominican Republic).²⁶

Another area of the world that has been hit especially hard by climate change and experiencing problems related to environmental migration is the Pacific Island region- or, more specifically: Micronesia, Polynesia, and Melanesia. Rising sea levels in the region have been causing more and more of these islands to become submerged underwater. The people of this region are suffering from rising sea levels much more than most of the world. While global sea levels are rising by an average of 3 millimeters annually, parts of this region (Micronesia and the Solomon Islands) have been seeing an increase at the rate of 12 millimeters per year since the early 1990s.²⁷

On the Fiji Islands, one tiny coastal village of Vunidogoloa (once home to over 100 people) suffered from increasingly higher tides that overran places where many villagers made their home and kept their possessions. The village has since been forced to disband and relocate slightly further inland to escape the rising tides.²⁸ Due to this and other similar changes, the

nation of Fiji is anticipating a loss of assets worth 5% of its GDP on an annual basis.²⁹ Now, the islands which have yet to be fully submerged by rising sea levels have banded together to push a moral stance for the international community to take action on climate change. Not only did they work to help to shape the 2015 Paris Agreement, but they also helped foster the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that fundamentally changed the nature of the debate surrounding the issue.³⁰ Global temperatures have already risen about 1 °C since their pre-industrial levels, and the new report found (with high confidence) that, given the current rate of warming, the earth is likely to reach a 1.5 °C increase between 2030-2052.³¹ The scientific report predicted that the increase will fall somewhere between 1.5 °C and 2 °C.³² This range of .5 °C, however, leaves a lot of room for significantly different degrees of damage depending on where exactly the number falls.³³ Regardless, it remains the case that if global temperatures continue to increase at the current rate, irreversible climate change will occur, resulting in a tremendous loss of life and environmental damage.³⁴

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Alice Klein, “Eight Low-Lying Pacific Islands Swallowed Whole by Rising Seas,” *NewScientist*, September 7, 2017, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2146594-eight-low-lying-pacific-islands-swallowed-whole-by-rising-seas/>.

28 Justin Worland, “The Leaders of These Sinking Countries Are Fighting to Stop Climate Change. Here’s What the Rest of the

World Can Learn,” *TIME*, June 13, 2019,

<https://time.com/longform/sinking-islands-climate-change/>.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 IPCC, “Headline Statements,” Global Warming of 1.5 °C, 2018.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/resources/headline-statements/>.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

Contemporary Conditions

Current Situation

In 2018 alone, over 17 million people were forced to flee their countries because of natural disasters.³⁵ This equates to approximately one in every 25 US citizens.³⁶ Hence, the problem lies in the very solution to the problem— people displaced by natural disasters are not granted recognition or protection under international law. The term “climate refugee” simply does not exist in international law. In fact, the 2018 Paris Agreement does not mention refugees or other terms like “migration” or “mobility”. Moreover, there is no international consensus on the qualifications of a climate refugee, and there is even less on what should be done to manage the growing crisis.

Additionally, isolating climatic reasons is difficult. While some people migrate due to sudden natural disasters, the majority of climate refugees are forced to flee due to slow changes such as rises in sea levels or desertification. These types of changes are unlikely to immediately be attributed to climate change.

Climate change unequally affects countries. In fact, the countries who bear most of the brunt of climate change are among the poorest ones, as they are situated in some of the hottest parts of the world. It is important to consider that among the countries most vulnerable to climate change; most are on the UN’s list of the world’s 48 poorest countries, according to UK-based risk analysis “Climate Change Vulnerability

Index”. Notably, too, the top 10 countries on the Index are tropical countries.³⁷

The World Bank has projected that “without concrete climate and development action, just over 143 million people could be forced to move within their own countries to escape the slow-onset impacts of climate change.”³⁸ For perspective, the ongoing tragedy in Syria has displaced approximately 3 million people. However, the situation ties back to classifying displaced people as refugees. There is fear that if the refugee spectrum is widened to include people displaced by climate-induced causes, countries will be unwilling to give more resources to the committee and thus other refugees will bear the consequences of this.

Effects on Africa

The entire continent of Africa has experienced significant increases in temperature, dramatic decreases in precipitation, and more frequent and intense tropical storms as a result of climate change. Africans argue that Africa is the least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, yet Africa is also the least prepared for the challenges that result from it, requires the most adaptation due to its high climate and food sources, and is already burdened with many challenges related to poverty and conflict.³⁹

According to the Climate Change Vulnerability Index for 2015, seven of the ten countries most at risk from climate change are in Africa.⁴⁰ The continent of Africa is highly dependent on natural resources and

35 Norwegian Refugee Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (NRC/IDMC), Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019>

36 U.S. Census Bureau. (2019, October 16). U.S. population clock, <https://www.census.gov/popclock>.

37 Richard Martin, MIT Technology Review <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/538586/climate-change-why-the-tropical-poor-will-suffer-most>

38 World Bank Group, Groundswell : Preparing for Internal Climate Migration, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/29461>

39 Claudia ten Have, Africa and Climate Change, <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/africa-and-climate-change>

40 360Africa, <https://360africa.org/8-ways-climate-change-is-already-affecting-africa/> ##targetText=Observable%20effects%20of%20climate%20change,receding%20of%20bodies%20of%20water.&targetText=Entire%20economies%20suffer%20when%20the%20water%20levels%20of%20Africa's%20huge%20rivers%20drop.

agriculture, the first assets to be undermined by agriculture. Additionally, most states lack the infrastructure required to protect against disasters such as floods.

Situation in Bangladesh

There are an estimated 200,000 Bangladeshis displaced from their homes every year due to river-bank erosion. Nearly all of these thousands of people cannot easily appeal for resettlement in a different country. Bangladesh is widely recognized as one of the country's most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. This is due to 80% of the country being floodplains, most of the country being below sea level, high population density, high poverty rate, weak infrastructure, and its dependence on agriculture.

By 2050, it is estimated that 11% of Bangladesh's land will be lost due to rising sea levels, displacing an estimated 15 million people.⁴¹ Already, Bangladeshi people are suffering the effects of rising sea levels, as water supplies have been contaminated with salt, causing much of the population to suffer health problems. If Bangladesh were to suffer a mere three-foot rise in sea level, 20 percent of the entire country would be submerged and over 30 million people would be displaced. Bangladesh is projected to undergo nearly double that by the end of the century.

Additionally, coastal Bangladesh is already experiencing a higher frequency of tropical storms, with higher severity as well. This has caused loss of human life, loss of infrastructure, and disruption and loss of agriculture.

41 <https://ejfoundation.org/reports/climate-displacement-in-bangladesh>

42 Leslie Allen, Smithsonian Magazine, August 2004, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/will-tuvalu-disappear-beneath-the-sea-180940704/>

43 Mark Abadi, These island nations could be underwater in as little as 50 years, <https://www.businessinsider.com/these-island-nations-could-be-underwater-in-as-little-as-fifty-years-2015-12>

Island Nations (Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu, and the Marshall Islands)

In 2003, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, the planet's fourth-smallest nation, claimed that the global-warming threat is no different from "a slow and insidious form of terrorism against us."⁴² The effects of climate change are already a disturbing reality for the island nations of Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu, and the Marshall Islands, as one in ten residents have moved off the islands within the past decade.⁴³ According to the UN report "Climate Change and Migration Issues in the Pacific," island nations could be fully submerged in a matter of decades if sea levels continue to rise at their current rate.⁴⁴

Several island nations are already making plans to relocate their country's entire population; Kiribati has already purchased land in Fiji. However, in Fiji, the situation is equally as grim, as homes are routinely flooded and lost.

Past United Nations and International Actions

As previously alluded to, the UN established the UNHCR in 1950 in the aftermath of World War II. The commission was originally intended to help with displaced refugees in Europe as a result of the war.⁴⁵ However, the Commission, despite being set to disband after three years, has continued to tackle global refugee challenges for over 68 years- dealing with crises and developments in regions of the world such as: Africa in the 60s, Asia and South America in the 70s-80s, and the Middle East this century.⁴⁶ The hallmark of the UNHCR's mission was enumerated in

44 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/261/Pacific.pdf>

45 "History of UNHCR," UNHCR, Accessed September 19, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/history-of-unhcr.html>.

46 Ibid.

the 1951 Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, where it was called upon “that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law.”⁴⁷

Despite all this, however, as previously discussed, those who are forced to flee their homes as a result of environmental and climate-related disasters (as well as more gradual changes) are not recognized under this refugee status, and thus lack the same protections. According to the UN, there are a number of legitimate reasons to continue on like this. As Dina Ionesco, head of the Migration, Environment, and Climate Change (MECC) Division at the UN Migration Agency (IOM) explains: “Climate migrants have been invisible for many years on the migration and climate debates ... hence, it might seem paradoxical in this context not to encourage the establishment of a climate-specific legal status, parallel to the existing refugees’ status.”⁴⁸ She goes on to discuss a few of the reasons behind this decision; explaining that, for one thing, citizens of some small islands at risk of being submerged underwater have made it clear they do not wish to leave their homes forcibly- but would rather remain or “move in dignity and through regular channels without abandoning everything behind.”⁴⁹ Another key reason not to include climate/environmental refugees is that their movement/displacement mainly happens within a sovereign nation, such as the case previously discussed in Ghana.⁵⁰ There are

also a number of more practical matters that support maintaining the current arrangement. One key reason is that it is very difficult to isolate environmental/climatic reasons as the main factor behind the displacement of persons.⁵¹ Furthermore, in today’s polarized political climate, with growing anti-refugee sentiment being pushed by various groups (largely over the internet, but sometimes also finding a voice in government), politicians and national leaders in democratic countries are much more constrained in what they can do without facing significant pushback. As Ionesco explains, going back to modify who is protected by refugee status under international law could actually backfire and cause the definition and protection(s) to become much more stringent.⁵²

On top of all of this, the issue of climate change itself and its effects has only really been recognized as an urgent and top threat very recently. This is mainly because, up until recently, the effects of climate change were lower in frequency/scope and were less recognizable for much of the general public. However, it now seems that the degree of the problem has increased significantly, and at a rapid pace. Back in 2009, a UNHCR news release wrote that “the total number of people affected by disasters has risen sharply over the past decade with an average of 211 million people directly affected each year, nearly five times the number affected by conflict in the same period.”⁵³ And keep in mind, that statement itself was announced over a decade ago. Efforts to address the issue of climate change

⁴⁷ “The 1951 Refugee Convention,” UNHCR, Accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/1951-refugee-convention.html>.

⁴⁸ Dina Ionesco, “Let’s Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees,” *United Nations*, June 6, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/06/lets-talk-about-climate-migrants-not-climate-refugees/>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ “Aid Agencies Call for Strong Agreement to Address ‘Humanitarian Shocks’ of Climate Change,” UNHCR, June 8, 2009, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2009/6/4a2d0fea24/aid-agencies-call-strong-agreement-address-humanitarian-shocks-climate.html>.

as it specifically pertains to refugees are by and large a fairly recent development.

In 2008, UNHCR spokesperson Ron Redmond addressed the topic at a press briefing in Geneva. Redmond announced that the Deputy High Commissioner L. Craig Johnstone had been scheduled to address the specific topic of environmentally-driven mass displacement.⁵⁴ Again in 2009, the 18 organizations making up the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) called for the critical inclusion of humanitarian concerns in the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol, scheduled to happen in December of that year.⁵⁵ In doing so, they mentioned that over 20 million people were found to have been “displaced by climate-related sudden-onset natural disasters in 2008 alone” according to a study conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs.⁵⁶ This, they claimed, was really the first time they had an empirical way to measure the scale and impact of the growing number of people being displaced by climate-related events such as prolonged droughts or flood seasons. More recently, at the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration held in Morocco in December 2018, leaders representing 164 different countries came together to adopt the UN Global Compact for Migration.⁵⁷ While the compact is groundbreaking in that it is the first official agreement to include the issue of climate change in any talk of immigration, it has numerous limitations—particularly, the fact that it is nonbinding, and countries like the US, Australia, as well as many in Eastern Europe have refused to sign it.⁵⁸ Thus, there remains no effective protocol in place for dealing with this increasingly concerning issue.

Questions a Resolution Must Address

⁵⁴ “UNHCR Examines Displacement Issue at Climate Change Meeting,” UNHCR, December 5, 2008, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2008/12/493937222/unhcr-examines-displacement-issue-climate-change-meeting.html>.

⁵⁵ “Aid Agencies Call for Strong Agreement to Address ‘Humanitarian Shocks’ of Climate Change”

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Carolyn Beeler, “UN Compact Recognizes Climate Change as Driver of Migration for First Time,” *Public Radio International*, December 11, 2018, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-12-11/un-compact-recognizes-climate-change-driver-migration-first-time>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

1. *If the UN were to recognize environmental refugees, what criteria should they use?*

If the UNHCR were to bring those who have been displaced due to climate/weather events under their protection, there would need to be some way to narrowly and clearly define who is able to qualify.

2. *Would it be beneficial to use the full resources of the UNHCR, or are other humanitarian means adequate?*

Part of the debate is whether UN action would even be helpful in terms of dealing with the problem, or whether other forms of humanitarian aid (ex: that of NGOs) already in existence might be more effective.

3. *How much should the UN expect countries to contribute to dealing with this growing global issue?*

Since most climate-driven displacement occurs within sovereign nations, how much of the burden should be on international organizations like the UN as opposed to the individual countries facing the issue? And, moreover, how much in terms of funding should countries/organizations be expected to contribute toward dealing with the issue- if at all?

4. *Should developed economies contribute significantly more relative to emerging economies?*

This issue of climate/environmental migration, like many others, takes much more of a toll on emerging economies with more vulnerable populations and governments generally less equipped to bear the financial burden. Due to this, should developed economies like those in Western Europe have to bear more of the financial burden that is to be taken?

5. *What role should NGOs and other organizations play?*

Since it is often very hard and may take time to take effective multilateral action on the part of sovereign states, how much responsibility should be placed on private sector NGOs and other humanitarian groups to tackle the problem?

6. *Should the General Assembly revisit the 1951 Convention?*

This would likely need to be done in order to modify and expand the established definition of the term 'refugee'. However, critics argue that opening the definition up today, with growing nationalist/anti-refugee sentiment, could lead to it becoming much more restrictive

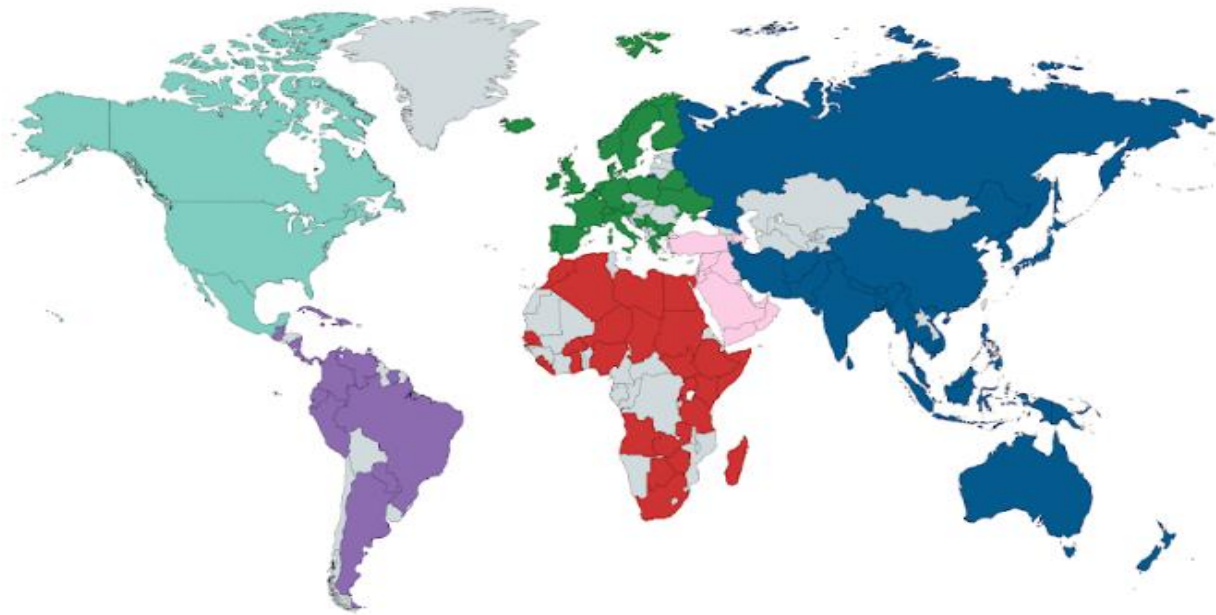
7. *How can nations be convinced to help tackle the issue?*

Given the increasing polarization in many developed economies pertaining to the issue of refugees in general, it might be difficult to get them to agree to take on some of the burdens associated with resolving the issue.

8. *To what extent should other UN agencies play a role in dealing with this issue?*

Since refugees driven by climate change and environmental events are not protected under refugee status, there is only so much that the UNHCR has the authority to do. To what degree should other branches of the UN, like the UN Environment Programme, have a responsibility when it comes to dealing with this issue?

Bloc Positions



▪ *Small Island Nations*

About a third of small island nations' citizens live on land less than 5 meters below sea level, making small island nations the most vulnerable group of nations in regards to the threat of sea levels rising, storm surges, and coastal destruction. This group of countries, comprising of countries such as Kiribati, Vanuatu, and the Marshall Islands, demand more from higher-emitting and slower-acting countries. These nations will highlight the direct impacts of these threats on their countries, such as loss of islands, destruction of infrastructure, and relocation within their country. This group may seek policies to identify the most vulnerable zones in their country that may allow the people in them to relocate to other areas.

▪ *Southeast Asia*

Bangladesh, Vietnam, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand are among the nations that are affected the most by climate change.⁵⁹ Their long coastlines, high population density, and low-lying areas make the region more vulnerable. Southeast Asia must adapt to the changes in climate that China and India's greenhouse gasses contribute to. This region will seek support from larger economies to improve their energy efficiency and infrastructure to better accommodate for the changes in climate and keep their citizens within their borders.

▪ *Africa*

It is predicted that the largest number of climate migrants are expected to be from Sub-Saharan Africa, as much of the population is already living in harsh conditions which make adapting to more climate-related pressures much more difficult.

⁵⁹ Kevin Krajick, "Climate Migrants Will Soon Shift Populations of Many Countries, Says World Bank,"

<https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2018/03/19/climate-refugees-will/>

- *Western Countries*

The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa promotes stability and addresses the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa). It aims to foster stability and to contribute to better migration management, including by addressing the root causes of destabilization, forced displacement and irregular migration.⁶⁰ However, this trust fund does not address climate at all. This is in line with the essential problem that western countries do not recognize climate migrants as refugees, as many argue that reopening the refugee convention amidst a sweep of nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiments might actually make things worse for the very people it aims to protect.

Currently, New Zealand is exploring the idea of creating a new visa for people migrating due to climate change. Most countries will support local adaptation within island nations.

- *Latin America*

Migration from Central America has recently received much attention for gang violence and corruption, but it's important to note the prevalent link between environmental instability and emigration. Rising global temperatures, spreading crop disease, and extreme weather changes have made harvests unreliable and therefore created economic instability. Latin American countries will push for the implementation of climate-friendly models of agriculture to prevent further emigration of citizens. Additionally, they will debate concerning which countries should bear the responsibility of climate migration.

⁶⁰ European Commission,
https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/africa/eu-emergency-trust-fund-africa_en

Conclusion

The question is no longer whether or not climate change is occurring and affecting people, but rather what action the international community will take to address these changes that are already in effect. The national and international response to this pressing issue has been limited, and the effects of climate change will only worsen the situation for citizens worldwide. Protection for displaced people around the world is undoubtedly inadequate, as even persons with refugee status endure a trend of maltreatment and persecution. Not only is there an unclear definition for an entire category of people, but the population is also unprotected by international law.



Topic B:

Facilitating the Resettlement of Refugees in Host Nations

Introduction

Due to unfortunate circumstances such as conflict, environmental disaster, war, and persecution, people are forced to be displaced from their home countries into an asylum country. However, these refugees cannot always stay in the asylum countries due to reasons such as lack of resources or dangerous living conditions. This is when resettlement occurs. Resettlement is defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as “the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another state that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grants them permanent settlement.”⁶¹ This state then provides rights to the refugees similar to the ones that nationals of that state share.

UNHCR recognizes three main possible plans of action for refugees in asylum countries. They are voluntary repatriation where a refugee returns home, integration where a refugee becomes a permanent resident of their asylum country, and resettlement where the refugee moves to another country to take up permanent residence.⁶² Resettlement is often seen as the last option out of these three choices. While only about 1% of refugees are successfully resettled, the increase in the number of refugees causes the need for the process of resettlement to be reevaluated.⁶³

The current process of resettlement goes as follows. First, refugees register to UNHCR requesting resettlement. UNHCR categorizes the resettlement into three different categories: emergency resettlement, urgent resettlement, and normal resettlement. After UNHCR approves the case, it is then submitted to a resettlement country. The resettlement country performs interviews and background checks and makes the final decisions whether the refugees should be resettled in the country.⁶⁴

However, the process is not complete here. After resettlement, it takes time and effort to become accustomed to the new society they have been placed when it is vastly different from the environment they are coming from. Different NGOs, the governments of resettlement countries, and the UNHCR have created programs to facilitate integration such as language training and cultural orientation, as well as vocational programs to promote employment.

Delegates in this committee must reevaluate the resettlement process as well as address the dropping rates of countries offering resettlement. In 2017, there was a 54% drop in states offering resettlement places, in part due to changes in policy in the U.S.A., one of the largest resettlement refugee acceptors.⁶⁵ Currently, funds for

⁶¹ *Resettlement*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement.html>.

⁶² *Solutions*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/solutions.html>.

⁶³ *Ibid*.

⁶⁴ *Resettlement*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement.html>.

⁶⁵ *Resettlement at a Glance*, (UNHCR, 2017), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/protection/resettlement/5a9d507f7/resettlement-fact-sheet-2017.html>.

resettlement come from the host nations, further discouraging them from offering resettlement. The committee must also reevaluate the criteria a refugee must fit in order to be resettled and into which category.

Historical Background

People have been moving place to place to avoid unfortunate circumstances such as persecution, war, and environmental disasters as long as we have known in seek of protection. Examples include the resettlement of Jewish people in Britain in 1656 and Zoroastrian migration to India. The recorded and organized resettlement of people began around the time of the two World Wars. Following the Russian Revolution, more than 40,000 White Russians fled to China. However, as the communist regime gained power in China, this population was again relocated.⁶⁶ As the 1930s rolled around, various international organizations took on the task of helping those facing persecution by the Nazi Party.⁶⁷

The need for a single, cohesive organization to address refugee needs emerged after World War II when there were over 21 million displaced people throughout Europe and even more in parts of Asia.⁶⁸ After the League of Nations was dissolved and replaced with the United Nations (U.N.). A year after its establishment in 1945, the U.N. created the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to deal with the displaced people in Europe.⁶⁹ Similar to UNHCR's current goal, the IRO wanted to focus on repatriation. However, the Cold War caused further instability that made repatriation difficult. The IRO then

turned to resettlement instead. Between 1947 and 1951 over a million people were resettled by the IRO compared to the 73,000 they repatriated.⁷⁰

In 1951, UNHCR took over from the IRO the responsibility of finding solutions to not only those displaced by World War II, but also those displaced in Eastern Europe as the Soviet Union worked to increase its power.⁷¹ This time period specifically contributed to the ease and growth of resettlement. There were a large number of people fleeing communist regimes and accepting them aligned with the interests of Western democratic nations in fighting the growth of communism. Resettlement became established as a key tool that the UNHCR utilizes to fight for the protection of refugees. Additionally, countries like Austria, Canada, and the United States saw the refugees resettling in their nations as a way to increase the workforce that had diminished due to the recent wars.⁷²

The next major event that called for the use of resettlement was the Hungarian Revolution. Between 1956 and 1957 over 200,000 people fled from Hungary into Austria.⁷³ The way UNHCR responded to this crisis set the precedent for refugee laws and policies that would be passed later on. Within nine weeks of the start of the crisis, 92,950 people were resettled out of Austria.⁷⁴ By the end over 170,00 people took up residence in over 37 new countries. ⁷⁵

One of the first crises handled by the UNHCR outside of Europe began in 1972, when Idi Amin, the President of Uganda, decreed that all persons of Asian origin must leave Uganda, whether they were citizens or

⁶⁶ *New Issues in Refugee Research*, (UNHCR, 2013), <https://www.unhcr.org/510bd3979.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, (UNHCR, 2011), <https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *New Issues in Refugee Research*, (UNHCR, 2013), <https://www.unhcr.org/510bd3979.pdf>.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *The History of Resettlement*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/5d1633657.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

not.⁷⁶ With the help of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the United Nations Development Programme, the UNHCR stepped in and, less than two weeks later, several countries such as the U.K., U.S. Canada, and Belgium offered permanent resettlement, with over 40,000 people resettled in 25 countries after a few months.⁷⁷

Due to multiple military takeovers in Latin American countries, many people sought refuge in Chile. However, in 1973, General Augusto Pinochet staged a coup d'état to overthrow the elected President Salvador Allende in Chile.⁷⁸ As a result, those that had previously sought refuge in Chile had to find a new place to stay. UNHCR stepped in again and by the spring of 1974, 5,000 refugees from Chile were resettled in 19 different countries.⁷⁹ Additionally, UNHCR stepped in to provide protection to Chileans as well who were forced to flee the country. Over 110 countries opened their doors to Chileans that needed protection.⁸⁰

Around the same time, the consolidation of power in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam created the Indo-Chinese conflict. This caused a mass exodus of people sometimes termed the “boat people.” This event would be the largest example to date of resettlement and would last decades, changing the demographics of countries around the world.⁸¹ The number of people seeking resettlement was so large that many asylum countries that had been providing aid before began to deny

refugees, turning boats away.⁸² This was the first crisis that called for new legislation and policies that were much more detailed than the previous crises required. It was agreed that the refugees leaving Vietnam would be allowed to land in South East Asian refugee countries with the assurance that these refugees would be resettled elsewhere as soon as possible.⁸³ This policy was termed the “blanket” policy and found a way to prevent immediate loss of life on boats. In the next seven years, over 700,000 Indochinese were resettled across the globe.⁸⁴ In 1986, those leaving Vietnam increased drastically, almost doubling in a three-year period.⁸⁵ After evaluating the situation in Vietnam, it was determined that there was no extreme deprivation of human rights in the area. Most of the people leaving the country left in desire for better economic opportunities.⁸⁶ As a result, the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) was adopted in 1989 and dramatically decreased the number of people being resettled by evaluating more closely the needs of people.⁸⁷

Similar to today, toward the late 1980's the UNHCR was forced to shift its focus from Vietnam to the Middle East. The Iran and Iraq War and other repressive regimes in the area created a large need for resettlement and refugee protection. In Iran, the Baha'i faced religious persecution due to the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.⁸⁸ As a result, many of those people who were facing persecution took asylum in countries nearby like Pakistan and Turkey. They were again later resettled to other parts of the world. The next catalyst

⁷⁶ *The History of Resettlement*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/5d1633657.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, (UNHCR, 2011), <https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

of resettlement in the Middle East was the first Gulf War. The number of displaced peoples was vast with over two million displaced in less than three weeks. With the emphasis now placed on repatriation rather than resettlement following the Vietnam crisis, most displaced were repatriated. Still, there were a number of Iraqis that were deemed unsuitable for repatriation and were resettled.

Finally, as a result of the Bosnian conflict in the early 1990s, in a seven-year period over 15,000 refugees from the Former Republic of Yugoslavia were resettled elsewhere with still over half a million refugees within the country.⁸⁹

Contemporary Conditions

Issues with the Current

Resettlement Process

It was predicted in 2012 that in the coming years, one in ten refugees would need resettlement.⁹⁰ After the Indochinese conflict, migration has become increasingly difficult, with stricter visa rules and border monitoring. This is causing refugees to resort to illegal measures of crossing borders to seek asylum. Unfortunately, these methods are often deadly. One of UNHCR's priorities is to create safer migration methods. However, the humanitarian space trying to aid refugees and facilitate resettlement is becoming smaller and smaller as the problem is getting bigger and bigger.

With areas of instability becoming more widespread, even trying to put UNHCR staff in the area to try to aid refugees or resettle them is becoming extremely dangerous.⁹¹ Additionally, repatriation is also becoming more difficult

with barriers like “stalled or failed peace processes, the presence of landmines, insufficient registration, inadequate reception capacity, and shortages of services and livelihood opportunities.”⁹² Additionally, the economic, social and political factors in host countries make local integration a less promising solution as well. As a result, the importance of resettlement is increasing.

One prominent issue is the discrepancy between the need of people in need of resettlement and the places available to resettle them. While the inception of the Working Group and ATCR has increased the number of resettlement countries, it has not increased nearly fast enough to keep up with the need for resettlement. In 2010, it was predicted that over 800,000 refugees would be in need of resettlement over the new few years, but with only 80,000 available resettlement spots available each year, there is no way that current demand can be met.⁹³ While UNHCR, NGOs, and other international organizations are trying to remedy this, there is no clear solution in sight.

Fears of security have additionally made it more difficult to place people in resettlement countries. The number of resettlement opportunities for certain refugee populations is decreasing with increased regulation by some states. Some resettlement countries have adopted selection criteria that can discriminate who can be resettled in their state. This makes it difficult to place some groups of people, no matter how urgent their resettlement case is. Different populations of people have been labeled “difficult” or “favored” depending on the ease with which the refugee can be placed.⁹⁴ Difficult populations are labeled as

⁸⁹ *The History of Resettlement*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/5d1633657.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *New Issues in Refugee Research*, (UNHCR, 2013), <https://www.unhcr.org/510bd3979.pdf>.

higher security risks and include populations such as the Iraqis and Rohingyas.⁹⁵ On the other hand, favored caseloads are deemed as low-security risks and are believed to be able to integrate into the resettlement state easier. As a result, resettlement states prefer to accept cases that are “favored” even if there are others equally or more in need of protection. Additionally, with increased background checks on each case, the time to be processed and approved is taking longer as well.⁹⁶ In the United States, it takes over 12 months to process resettlement referrals.⁹⁷ This has a huge impact worldwide as the U.S. takes in over twice as many resettlement cases compared to all the other resettlement states combined.⁹⁸

Another factor to consider is the likelihood that fraud occurs. Many of the crises that create refugees are happening in nations where poverty rates are higher. This means that having resettlement opportunities is valuable as a potential economic opportunity. As a result, those who are not facing human rights violations try to gain refugee status as well through corrupt means.⁹⁹ However, UNHCR is fighting fraud and corruption to ensure that the resettlement process remains clean.¹⁰⁰

An ongoing concern in of the resettlement process is integration. Refugees that are being settled are suddenly immersed in a new society with a different language, customs, and economic opportunities. Additionally, they may need help to recover from the often-horrendous situations they come from. Without guidance, it is close to impossible for these refugees to find a way to become

accustomed to and thrive in their new home. Resettlement states have placed an emphasis on new programs and guidance to help newly resettled refugees. However, newly formed resettlement states lack the infrastructure to provide these refugees the resources necessary for successful integration into the state.¹⁰¹ The UNHCR works to educate states on integration practices that are beneficial and focuses on creating a welcoming community for these refugees. However, negative attitudes towards certain races or religions can make the integration process more difficult in terms of social integration, economic opportunities, and overall safety.

In order for resettlement to occur, many different organizations have to come together to ensure that it happens. Host countries, the UNHCR, NGOs, international organizations, resettlement states, and the refugees have to collaborate for the resettlement to be successful. This collaboration does not always flow smoothly. Host countries will sometimes limit access to refugees, hindering the resettlement process.¹⁰² Resettlement cases have to go back and forth through the different organizations to be finally approved for resettlement. As a result, the processing times for these applications can often be lengthy.

Another issue is the varying acceptance rates for different categories of resettlement. In order from the most accepted category to the least accepted category, the categories go in the following order: older refugees, family reunification, lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions, survivor of violence and/or

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ *New Issues in Refugee Research*, (UNHCR, 2013), <https://www.unhcr.org/510bd3979.pdf>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Rush, Nayla. “UNHCR Corruption: Resettlement Spots for a Price”. *Center for Immigration Studies*. April 23, 2019.

<https://cis.org/Report/UNHCR-Corruption-Resettlement-Spots-Price>

¹⁰⁰ “Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees”. *UNHCR*. March 2008.

¹⁰¹ *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, (UNHCR, 2011),

<https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

torture, legal and/or physical protection needs, medical, women and girls at risk, and children and adolescents at risk.¹⁰³ The highest accepted category has a hundred percent acceptance rate whereas the lowest has less than a seventy percent acceptance rate.¹⁰⁴ The two lowest accepted categories are women and children that are at risk.¹⁰⁵ While there have been efforts to remedy the fact that they are discriminated against in the approval process, there is still a long way to go.

Iraq Emergency

Decades of violence and war have created a massive crisis in Iraq. Since 2014, over three million Iraqi have taken refuge in their own country with over a quarter of a million more in other countries.¹⁰⁶ The infrastructure and supplies needed to aid these refugees are lacking, with over 360,000 displaced in settings like unfinished and abandoned buildings.¹⁰⁷ While the UNHCR is working to provide supplies to refugees on the ground, this is not a permanent solution.

Resettlement was used widely before 2003 in Iraq during the regime of Saddam Hussein. After his fall, resettlements decreased with an increased emphasis on voluntary repatriation, in the hopes that the situation would improve. However, in December 2006, a Return Advisory and Position on International Protection Needs of Iraqis outside Iraq was issued that recommended that no Iraqi from Central and Southern Iraq be forced to return due to instability and violence in these areas.¹⁰⁸ In

addition, the ability to protect refugees in first asylum countries was decreasing with a lack of resources and crises of their own. As a result, resettlement was again encouraged as it seemed there was no other path. States were encouraged to take Iraqis. However, in a post-9/11 society, some states were skeptical of taking in these refugees.

As time went on, radical extremist groups gained power in Iraq, further preventing repatriation and creating more in need of protection. Overall, the Iraq emergency has been going on for decades with no clear end in sight, making resettlement a vital tool to protect Iraqi refugees.

Syria Emergency

After the Arab Spring in 2011, peaceful protests occurred in Syria demanding a democratic government. However, these protests were violently suppressed and a rebel group formed with the intention of overthrowing the government. This group was called the Free Syrian Army, and this series of events caused the start of the Syrian Civil War. During this period, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIL) was also increasing its presence in Syria.¹⁰⁹

Currently, there are over 5.5 million people residing internally in Syria.¹¹⁰ Since 2011, over 5.6 million people have fled Syria and are now in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan.¹¹¹ However, these countries are running out of space and resources for these refugees. About a million displaced Syrians currently

103 *New Issues in Refugee Research*, (UNHCR, 2013), <https://www.unhcr.org/510bd3979.pdf>.

104 *New Issues in Refugee Research*, (UNHCR, 2013), <https://www.unhcr.org/510bd3979.pdf>.

105 Ibid.

106 *Iraq Emergency*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/iraq-emergency.html>.

107 Ibid.

108 *Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees*, (UNHCR, 2007), [https://www.unhcr.org/en-](https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/subsites/iraqcrisis/45f80f9d2/resettlement-iraqi-refugees.html)

[us/subsites/iraqcrisis/45f80f9d2/resettlement-iraqi-refugees.html](https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/subsites/iraqcrisis/45f80f9d2/resettlement-iraqi-refugees.html).

109 *Syria's civil war explained from the beginning*, (Al Jazeera, 2018), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html>.

110 *Syria Emergency*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>.

111 *Where Syrian refugees have resettled worldwide*, (Pew Research Center 2018), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/where-displaced-syrians-have-resettled/>.

reside in Europe.¹¹² However, only about 24,000 Syrians were formally resettled and have permission to stay permanently.¹¹³ The rest are in Europe as asylum seekers. In North America, about 100,000 Syrians are displaced.¹¹⁴ About 52,000 have resettled in Canada and about 21,000 have settled in the U.S. with the rest again seeking asylum.¹¹⁵

As the situation in Syria slowly improves, roughly 100,000 Syrians are choosing to return each year.¹¹⁶ However, this rate is not nearly fast enough to cope with the 5.6 million people taking refuge outside of Syria and needs alternate solutions.

South Sudan Emergency

South Sudan is accustomed to violence. For over 22 years, civil war has been ongoing between the predominantly Muslim north and Christian south.¹¹⁷ In 2005, a peace agreement was made, laying out a plan for a referendum where the people can vote whether the country should be split or not.¹¹⁸ This referendum took place in 2011 and over 99 percent of South Sudan voted for independence.¹¹⁹ On July 9th, 2011, the republic of South Sudan become formally recognized.

However, the struggle did not end there. In a desire for independence, the tensions within South Sudan were left unaddressed in the push for independence.¹²⁰ After independence was achieved, the discrepancies between the over 60 different ethnic groups in South

Sudan and the difficulties in building a new country proved to be too much.¹²¹

In December 2013, rivals from two different ethnic groups broke out in violence. In just the first week of violence, over 10,000 people were displaced.¹²² In 2015, a peace agreement was reached but did not last long. By 2016, the groups were clashing again. Soon, smaller disputes over land became more frequent as well.¹²³ There is no clear end in sight and U.N. officials fear it may turn into genocide.¹²⁴

Over two million refugees have left South Sudan and are in neighboring countries.¹²⁵ Still, there are more than 2.3 million refugees still in harm's way in South Sudan.¹²⁶ It is estimated that over 200,000 south Sudanese will be in need of resettlement in 2020 alone and with no end to this situation in sight this number will only increase.¹²⁷

Rohingya Emergency

The Rohingya Muslims are a minority population that live in Myanmar. Myanmar is a primarily Buddhist country. As a result, the government of Myanmar denies the Rohingya citizenship in the country and labels them as illegal immigrants. Since the 1970s, the Rohingya have been leaving Myanmar, going to countries like India, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.¹²⁸ The latest exodus started in 2017 after violence broke out between police and Rohingya Arsa militants. Over 6,000 Rohingya were killed during the violence and over 288

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 *Where Syrian refugees have resettled worldwide*, (Pew Research Center 2018), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/where-displaced-syrians-have-resettled/>.

115 Ibid.

116 *Syria's civil war explained from the beginning*, (Al Jazeera, 2018), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html>.

117

118 *The conflict in South Sudan, explained*, (Vox, 2017), <https://www.vox.com/world/2016/12/8/13817072/south-sudan-crisis-explained-ethnic-cleansing-genocide>.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 *South Sudan Emergency*, (UNHCR, 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/south-sudan-emergency.html>.

126 Ibid.

127 *1.4 million refugees set to need urgent resettlement in 2020*: UNHCR, (UN News, 2019),

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/07/1041632>.

128 *Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis*, (BBC, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

villages were damaged or destroyed.¹²⁹ The UN labeled the Rohingya crisis as the "world's fastest-growing refugee crisis."¹³⁰ The UN Security Council has warned Myanmar to end the violence but has yet to place sanctions on the state.¹³¹ Most of the refugees are arriving in Bangladesh, and the country is working to build more camps.¹³² However, when countries like Canada offered resettlement opportunities, Bangladesh denied the offers.¹³³ With a situation like this that has been raging on for decades, it must be evaluated if resettlement can be a useful situation.

Past United Nations and International Actions

As mentioned above, the United Nations has been involved in aiding refugees and facilitating resettlement since its inception. With the establishment of the UNHCR, a body was established to deal with resettlement and refugee crises directly. Until the Indochinese conflict, the resettlement process was fairly simple due to the limited number of people seeking resettlement. People would apply to the UNHCR stating they are seeking resettlement and then they would be matched with an asylum country. There was rarely an issue with finding an asylum country as the number of people seeking resettlement was so low.

This all changed in 1986. The UNHCR realized that many of those who were leaving Vietnam and seeking resettlement were not doing so in fear of harm or persecution, but instead in the desire for better economic opportunities elsewhere.¹³⁴

Additionally, asylum countries could not cope with the number of people arriving on their shores. As a result, the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) was put into place to curtail this issue. One of the main elements of the CPA was that it ended the blanket policy that was put into place earlier that allowed anyone leaving Vietnam to be resettled. The CPA instead stated that the boat people would be allowed to land at the first Southeast Asian asylum country. Once they were there, each person's case would be reviewed to see if they fit the definition of a refugee. If they did fit the definition of a refugee, they would then be resettled. However, if they did not meet the criteria to be defined as a refugee, they would have to return to Vietnam. The UNHCR would monitor the situation to ensure refugees would not be subject to human rights violations if they were to return home. In addition, there was a program set up to help reintegrate the people returning home into society. The final aspect of the CPA was to expand the previously established Orderly Departure Programme allowing people that fell under categories such as family reunification and re-education camp internees to emigrate easier.¹³⁵

In addition to the CPA, the UNHCR spread information in Vietnam to alert potential migrants that leaving the country for economic reasons would not be supported to discourage them from attempting the perilous journey. Due to the CPA, resettlement numbers decreased greatly.¹³⁶ Since then and to the present day, resettlement is seen as a last resort for a refugee. One in twenty of UNHCR's refugee

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis*, (BBC, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² *Rohingya Emergency*, (UNHCR, 2019),

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/rohingya-emergency.html>.

¹³³ *Bangladesh silent on Canada offer to take Rohingya refugees*, (Al Jazeera, 2018),

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/bangladesh-silent-canada-offer-rohingya-refugees-181109010656363.html>.

¹³⁴ *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, (UNHCR, 2011),

<https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

population was resettled in 1979. This number drastically dropped to 1 in 400 by 1994 showing the shift away from resettlement by UNHCR.¹³⁷

However, it is still a tool that is widely used around the world when a crisis arises, even though it is much more regulated. After the Kosovo crisis in 1999, UNHCR began using resettlement as a part of the UNHCR relief operation and Humanitarian Evacuation Programme (HEP).

The flaws of the idea that every person fleeing a country should be granted refugee status and resettlement were realized by the beginning of the 1990s. As a result, countries began looking to the UNHCR to help identify refugees and resettlement cases. In response in 1994, UNHCR worked “to develop regular multilateral consultative processes, strengthen its resettlement management capacity, and articulate resettlement policy and criteria.”¹³⁸ Its efforts culminated in the first UNHCR Resettlement Handbook that was released in 1996.¹³⁹ “The Handbook established a comprehensive reference of UNHCR resettlement criteria, standards, procedures, and priorities, and was complemented by a training programme for resettlement staff and government and NGO partners.”¹⁴⁰

Alongside the handbook, there was a realization that there needed to be more open and effective means of communication between groups involved with resettlement. In response, the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) was established in 1995. Members of this group included the UNHCR, resettlement states, and international organizations. They also

began inviting different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the meeting as well, setting the basis for the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR). The Working Group meets twice a year creating an “an informal forum to discuss policy directions on resettlement and steer efforts to enhance the use of resettlement as a tool of international protection, a durable solution and a responsibility and burden-sharing mechanism.”¹⁴¹ The ATCR meets annually and has become the main way the resettlement agenda is set and defers from the Working Group with its intense involvement from NGOs.¹⁴² As a result of these regular meetings, UNHCR began working on creating new resettlement states to find new areas that refugees can be sent to. A key aspect of this program was pairing existing and new resettlement countries together so they could learn from one another.¹⁴³

In 2001, the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees was held to reevaluate again the resettlement process in light of these new countries offering aid and a new handbook came about replacing the old one called “Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration.”¹⁴⁴

The use of resettlement was reevaluated in the early 2000s with the realization that resettlement was being used too rarely and often in the wrong situations. With the implementation of the Agenda for Protection in 2002 and the Convention Plus initiative in 2004 resettlement was expended with an emphasis on “proactive planning to comprehensively assess and identify

137 UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, (UNHCR, 2011), <https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

resettlement needs and using resettlement strategically within a comprehensive approach to durable solutions in order to maximize the protection benefits.”¹⁴⁵ The strategy behind resettlement was further investigated in the “Position Paper on the Strategic Use of Resettlement” written by UNHCR in 2010.¹⁴⁶ Overall, these various pieces of policy have shaped resettlement to what we see it as today.

¹⁴⁵ UNHCR *Resettlement Handbook*, (UNHCR, 2011), <https://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Questions a Resolution Must Address

1. Should resettlement continue to be limited and only used as last measures or are there benefits to be seen in expanding it?

Throughout history, the use of resettlement has gone up and down with the views on the benefits and reasons to use resettlement everchanging. Currently, resettlement is only used in extreme circumstances or when all else has failed.

2. Is the current process for identifying and classifying resettlement cases effective or should there be changes made to the system?

Currently, there are three categories for resettlement: emergency resettlement, urgent resettlement, and normal resettlement. Each categorization has specific timelines and guidelines associated with it.

3. How much oversight is necessary and is feasible with violating national sovereignty to monitor refugees once they have been placed in resettlement states?

UNHCR must monitor refugees once they are resettled to ensure they are treated with dignity, but the question is to what extent must they and can they be monitored.

4. How, if at all, should we incentivize countries to become resettlement countries or to accept more resettlement cases?

More and more countries are limiting how many resettlement cases they will accept while the number of refugees in need is only increasing. To cope with this, more resettlement countries and larger acceptance quotas are necessary.

5. To what extent should other UN agencies play a role in the resolution of this issue?

The events that occur in various countries that lead to the creation of refugees that need resettlement are often under the jurisdiction of other UN agencies. It needs to be evaluated how much UNHCR should work with these other agencies to not only protect the refugees but also to put an end to the root cause.

6. Where can additionally funding for resettlement of people come from?

Currently, funds to resettle a person come from the resettlement state. However, this burden on the resettlement states can be a factor for them to limit how many people they can take in. This could be prevented if there was another source of funding.

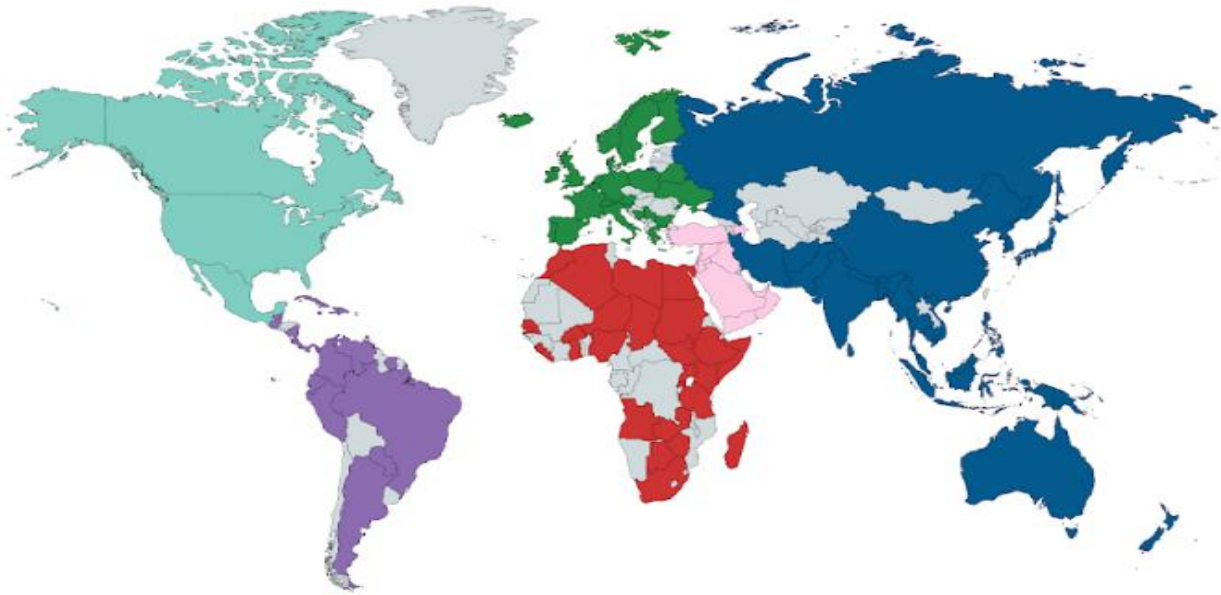
7. What role should NGOs and other international organizations have in the resettlement process?

NGOs have been working alongside different UN agencies for decades. What role should they play in the resettlement process and what responsibilities should they be given?

8. Are the current programs to aid assimilation into the new resettlement country effective?

The UNHCR and NGOs have created programs to help with assimilating refugees to their new homes such as language and culture lessons, but is this enough to ensure they thrive in completely new surroundings?

Bloc Positions



- *Africa*

This region hosts some of the world's most underdeveloped and war-torn countries. As a result, Sub-Saharan Africa has over 26 percent of the refugee population around the world. Crises in Nigeria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Burundi, and Yemen are only extirpating the already large refugee crisis in this region

- *Asia and the Pacific*

This area both contains resettlement states such as Australia, but it also contains areas that are of concern such as Afghanistan and Myanmar with the Afghan crisis being the "largest protracted situation in the world."

- *Europe*

Europe hosts many resettlement states with a large number of refugees arriving first in the asylum states along the Mediterranean due to proximity to areas that refugees are fleeing from.

- *North America*

The United States and Canada are traditional resettlement states and have been taking in large numbers of refugees since the earliest days of the UNHCR. However, changing policies in the United States has decreased the number of resettlements occurring there.

- *Latin America & the Caribbean*

Internal conflict, crime, and armed groups have been a constant threat to people in these areas creating refugees especially coming from areas like Venezuela, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

- *Western Asia*

The region is one of the most problematic and creates one of the largest needs for resettlement. Situations in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have created a large number of refugees that surrounding countries like Greece are unable to cope with creating a potential need for resettlement.

Conclusion

In the future, it is important to keep working toward increasing the number of resettlements and ensuring they are successful. Additionally, preparing for future refugee crisis by coming up with solutions that make resettlement easier or alternatives to resettlement is vital. With the millions of displaced people around the world, this issue becomes imperative and extremely time-sensitive. Other than emergencies detailed above, there are many

others going on such as in Venezuela, Burundi, and Yemen. With no clear answers to how these crises will end, the number of refugees in need of resettlement is sure to increase. The current solutions that currently exist have no hope of keeping up with the number of refugees in need of protection. Therefore, it is necessary that the concept of resettlement is reevaluated to ensure it is being used enough, in the right situations, and effectively.

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