

ALL ABOUT *Refugees*

Who is a Refugee?

No one is a refugee by choice and anyone could become a refugee. At the end of 2011 there were 42.5 million forcibly displaced people including 15.2 million refugees.¹

No one is a refugee by choice

A refugee is someone who has a well founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and due to that fear is unable or unwilling to return.



Boat People fleeing from Vietnam arrive in Canada

The World's Response to Refugees

The international community helps refugees to find lasting, or durable, solutions to refugee situations. The three durable solutions are:

1. Voluntary repatriation
2. Local integration in the asylum country
3. Resettlement in a third country

Canada's Response to Refugees

The 1976 Immigration Act was a milestone in Canada's response to refugees, establishing refugees as a class separate from immigrants; soon after Canadians responded to The Boat People crisis of the late 70s and early 80s which allowed ordinary people from across the country to assist these refugees through private sponsorship.

History of the PSR Program

Through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program over 180,000 refugees, who would not have otherwise been able to come to Canada, were resettled between 1979 and 2002², and 38,274 between 2002 and 2011³. Canada is one of the few countries in the world that annually offers resettlement places to thousands of government-sponsored refugees.

Additionally, Canada's private sponsorship program is unique as it allows private groups across Canada to sponsor qualifying refugees above the government numbers.



A boy receives food during a distribution to refugees in Congo

USEFUL LINKS

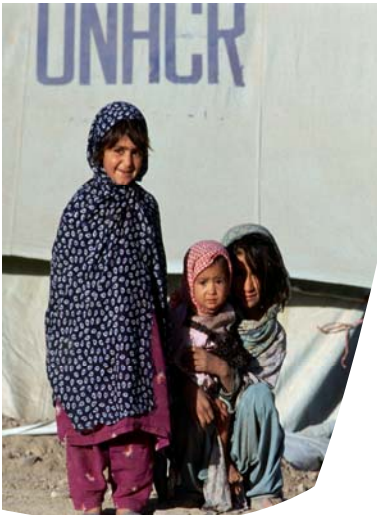
www.cic.gc.ca

www.unhcr.org

www.amnesty.org

www.refworld.org

For more information please consult the RSTP Sponsoring Group Handbook available online at www.rstp.ca.



*New residents of the Roghani Refugee Camp in Chaman
UNHCR photo by Luke Powell*

Who Can Be Sponsored?

Refugees who would qualify under the Convention Refugees Abroad and/or members of the Country of Asylum Class (also known as the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad classes) may be sponsored.

A group may submit an undertaking to sponsor a particular refugee(s) from abroad (sponsor-referred refugee), ask the visa office to refer a refugee(s) (visa office-referred refugee) for sponsorship or, if a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), can refer to CIC's website for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS).

What is the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program?

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSR) is a partnership program administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the people of Canada to extend Canada's capacity to resettle refugees from abroad.

Who Can Sponsor a Refugee?

There are three ways in which refugees can be sponsored through PSR:

1. Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and their Constituent Groups (CGs)
2. Groups of Five
3. Community Sponsor

What Responsibilities Do Sponsors Have?

The sponsoring group is responsible for creating a settlement plan which outlines their plan for reception, care, lodging and settlement assistance for the sponsored refugees within the community of resettlement.

It is expected that at the time of application the sponsor will be able to prove, if required, financial resources for the 12 month sponsorship period.

What Is The Sponsorship Process?

After the application is accepted by the COP-W, a visa officer will interview the applicant overseas. If accepted, the refugee will undergo a medical check while criminality and security checks are completed.

Generally the processing times of PSR cases vary; this is dependent on whether the person is a sponsor-referred or visa office-referred refugee, which country the person is coming from and the complexity of his or her immigration application. As well it should be noted that many visa posts have long processing times due to a large number of unprocessed cases.

For more information on the processing times of individual visa posts visit the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/perm/ref-private.asp>

¹ UNHCR Global Trends 2010 www.unhcr.org/4dfa11499.html

² CIC Facts and Figures 2008 & 2009 www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/index.asp

³ CIC Facts and Figures 2010 www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/facts2010.pdf and

CIC Facts and Figures 2011 <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2011->