



# UNHCR

## The UN Refugee Agency

### **New Handbook on Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees**

A new handbook on refugee resettlement has just been published by UNHCR and the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST), an Australian NGO. Entitled "Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration", the handbook is intended as a resource to help in the development of sound programs for the integration of resettled refugees.

"We are delighted that this handbook has been published," said Erika Feller, UNHCR's Director of International Protection. "Resettlement is a vital durable solution for refugees, but concrete programs are essential to help refugees to integrate in their new countries. That is what this handbook is all about."

The handbook was written by experts from the VFST, with financial support from the government of Australia. Substantive advice was provided by UNHCR and by a task force consisting of governmental and NGO representatives from a dozen countries. It addresses issues such as initial reception of resettled refugees, ways of preparing receiving communities, language training, education, employment, and the special needs of children.

"The handbook is unique" said Paris Aristotle, Director of the VFST. "It shows how valuable it is to pool the expertise of resettled refugees, resettlement workers, governments and UNHCR." The handbook, which is written in a user-friendly style, is targeted primarily at program planners. It provides practical examples of "best practices" in various countries. Because refugees themselves are at the centre of the resettlement process, the handbook is interspersed with comments from resettled refugees, reflecting their own experiences.

The production of the handbook was one of the outcomes of the April 2001 International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, which was hosted by the Swedish government. The Conference endorsed refugee resettlement and successful integration as important pillars of the international

system of refugee protection. But Conference participants noted that there had been little systematic effort to compile examples of "good practice" in refugee resettlement. One idea which gained general support at the Conference was to produce a manual which would allow for experience and good practice to be shared across borders. Ismail Ibrahim, National Refugee Education Coordinator in New Zealand and a resettled refugee, describes the handbook as "a cornerstone in building the capacity of the international community to respond meaningfully to the plight of refugees."

The handbook is not a "how to" guide, but is intended to be helpful to any government or community which is planning to receive resettled refugees. It will be especially useful for countries or communities considering refugee resettlement for the first time. The handbook also supports the Agenda for Protection - a detailed and wide-ranging set of goals and objectives that will act as a blueprint for improving protection of asylum seekers and refugees worldwide. The Agenda for Protection, which is expected to be endorsed later this week by the 61 governments that sit on UNHCR's Executive Committee, calls for developing capacity with new resettlement countries and ensuring that resettlement "runs in tandem with a more vigorous integration policy" - goals which are furthered by the handbook.

While UNHCR has long relied on resettlement programs in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, as well as Nordic countries, it has also been working to expand the availability of resettlement by increasing the number of participating countries. Seventeen countries are now involved in the resettlement effort, including newcomers such as Benin, Brazil, Chile, and Ireland.

The handbook is posted in English on UNHCR's website, [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch) under Protecting Refugees, Legal Protection, Resettlement.

*French and Spanish versions of the handbook are under preparation.*