

Hospitality is simply love in action.



Refugee Sunday Publicity and Activity Materials

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Refugee Resettlement Fact Sheet

Number of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the World

Figures from USCRI as of December 31, 2007

World total: 14,047,300

Africa: 2,799,500
Americas and the Caribbean: 787,800
Europe: 527,900
Middle East: 6,380,200
East Asia and the Pacific: 934,700
South and Central Asia: 2,617,200

United States total: 151,200 (nationality makeup listed in order of population residing in the U.S.)

China: 16,800	Iran: 3,900	India: 2,800
Haiti: 12,300	Guatemala: 3,400	Nicaragua: 2,400
Cuba: 11,700	Vietnam: 3,400	Burma/Myanmar: 2,200
Somalia: 11,600	Ethiopia: 3,200	Sudan: 2,200
Colombia: 8,200	Indonesia: 3,100	
Russia: 8,100	Ukraine: 3,100	Other: 42,800
Liberia: 6,900	Venezuela: 3,100	

Minnesota resettled 3,198 refugees in 2007.

It has resettled approximately 80,500 refugees since 1979.

For the most up-to-date statistics on refugees, visit:

The World Refugee Survey published by USCRI, online at:

<http://www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=2114&subm=179&area>About%20Refugees&>

Important Terms

Unless otherwise noted, information from the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

A REFUGEE is someone who:

- has fled their home country because s/he has experienced persecution or has well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion
- is unable to return to their home, or unwilling (because of well-founded fear) to avail him/herself to the protection of that country

adapted from the UN definition as established in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees...not to be confused with the broader IMMIGRANT: "A person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence" (from Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Generally speaking, refugees flee to refugee camps, where they wait for the opportunity to be resettled in a third country. Conditions in refugee camps are usually poor, and there are little or no opportunities for education, employment, or health care. Less than 1% of refugees are offered permanent resettlement, and many remain in camps for decades.

If a refugee is offered the opportunity to resettle, they must pass a set of vigorous screenings and interviews before leaving the camp. Refugees who are offered resettlement in the United States arrive legally, and are free to stay in the US as permanent residents. After one year, they are eligible to receive their green card, and after five years they are eligible to apply for citizenship.

United States Immigration timeline for refugees:

1. Acquisition of refugee status overseas
2. Arrival in the United States (admitted indefinitely)
3. Permanent Residence Status ("green cards—eligible to apply one year after arrival)
4. Citizenship [optional]—eligible to apply five years after acquisition of Permanent Residence Status ("green card")

AN ASYLUM SEEKER: "Someone who claims to be a refugee. Often, an asylum seeker must undergo a legal procedure in which the host country decides if he/she qualifies for refugee status. International law recognizes the right to seek asylum, but does not oblige states to provide it." The difference between refugees and asylees is where they are granted refugee status—in their home country, or in their country of asylum.

Facts about Refugee Reception and Placement in the United States

Unless otherwise noted, information from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Resettlement is carried out and funded by a public-private partnership:

1. Public—mainly the following three federal agencies
 - United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
 - Department of State
 - Department of Health and Human Services
2. Private
 - Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs)/Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs)
e.g., Minnesota Council of Churches' Refugee Services
 - Churches
 - Individual/group donors

The Minnesota Council of Churches provides the following services to refugees and asylees:

- **Assistance in applying for state benefits**
 - Transitional grant
 - Cash Assistance: Single adults, childless couples—up to 8 months after arrival
 - Mainstream welfare:: Families with children under 18 years old—up to 2 years after arrival
 - Refugee Medical Assistance: Single adults, childless couples—up to 8 months after arrival
 - Mainstream Medicaid Program: Families with children under 18 years old—time limits vary by state
- **Employment Services**
 - Job skills development
 - Employment counseling and orientations
 - Assistance in applying for positions
 - On-site job training
 - Employer relations
- **Education:**
 - Computer Skills classes
 - Public Speaking education and opportunities
 - Job readiness classes
 - New Arrival Resource Empowerment Workshops
- **Immigration:**
 - Assistance in filing for family members through AOR process
 - Help with Green Card applications
 - Assistance with replacement and travel documents
 - Citizenship applications and preparation

Publicity Tools for Refugee Sunday:

Sample Bulletin Insert:

MN Council of Churches Refugee Services

Leaving behind family, culture, livelihood and lifestyle to start a completely new life is the traumatic reality of a refugee. Refugees leave knowing that because of their politics, religion, race, or ethnic community, they **risk their lives** remaining in their homeland.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...”

Matthew 25:35

Refugee resettlement in the U.S. began as a faith-based grassroots movement to assist displaced people after WWII. The U.S. government has become more involved with resettlement, but **faith-based communities** still play a **crucial role**.

Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services is an **ecumenical ministry** that assists new refugees in gaining self-sufficiency. We are currently resettling refugees from places including Somalia, Burma, Bhutan, the former USSR, and Liberia.

If you would like to work together with us to help newcomers, contact **Refugee Services** at **612-230-3219** or rsvolunteers@mnchurches.org.

Refugee Sunday Newsletter or Bulletin Blurbs:

Week 1:

Did you know?

A **REFUGEE** is someone who:

- * has fled their home country because s/he has experienced persecution or has well founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion
- * is unable to return to their home, or unwilling (because of well-founded fear) to avail him/herself to the protection of that country.
- * Minnesota has resettled approximately 80,500 refugees since 1979. Faith-based communities play a crucial role in refugee resettlement.

Week 2:

Did you know?

- * Refugee resettlement in the U.S. began as a faith-based grassroots movement to assist displaced people after WWII. The U.S. government has become more involved with resettlement, but faith-based communities still play a crucial role.
- * Less than 1% of refugees are offered permanent resettlement, and many remain in refugee camps for decades, where conditions are usually poor.
- * The Minnesota Council of Churches has a Refugee Services program. This is an ecumenical ministry welcoming persecuted persons from around the world into new lives of freedom, hope, and opportunity in Minnesota. To participate in this work, please call 612-230-3219.

Week 3:

Did you know?

- * The number of refugees and asylum seekers in the world totals over 14 million. Of these, the majority are from the Middle East.
- * Minnesota resettled over 3,000 refugees last year.
- * The Minnesota Council of Churches has a Refugee Services program. In 2007, they resettled 318 refugees. They are currently resettling refugees from Somalia, Burma, Bhutan, Ethiopia, the former USSR, Liberia, and more. To participate in this work, please call 612-230-3219.

Week 4:

Did you know?

- * If a refugee is offered the opportunity to resettle, they must pass a set of vigorous screenings and interviews before leaving the camp. Refugees who are offered resettlement arrive in the U.S. as legal citizens and are free to stay as permanent residents.
- * One year after arrival, refugees are eligible to receive their green card (permanent residence status). After five years they are eligible to apply for citizenship.
- * An asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee. The difference

between a refugee and asylee is where s/he is granted refugee status—in their home country or the country of asylum.

Coat Drive Announcement:

Coats for the Cold! Cold weather is on its way! Refugee families who have recently arrived in this country from warmer lands need the warmth of our Minnesota hospitality.

Please look in your closets (or pocketbooks) for extra coats, gloves and mittens. We are most in need of small-medium adult coats and adult mittens or gloves. Children's coats, hats, scarves and mittens are also welcome. (These efforts are in support of the Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services. To volunteer additional services and items to refugee families, contact Refugee Services at 612-230-3219.)

The Refugee Speakers Bureau

The Refugee Speakers Bureau (RSB) is a group of former refugees and asylees coordinated by the Minnesota Council of Churches, Refugee Services program for the purpose of arranging community presentations given by refugee speakers. RSB engagements provide educational opportunities for churches and other community groups as well as public speaking and advocacy opportunities for RSB members.

The Refugee Speakers Bureau (RSB) educates and empowers its members in educating community audiences about their life experiences. These speakers are not only capable but enthusiastic about telling their personal stories, discussing the resettlement process and the refugee/asylee community, and addressing questions from interested community members.

To ensure the confidence and comfort of each speaker, a short course in public speaking is offered by the Minnesota Council of Churches, Refugee Services education program. Students discuss how to address different audiences, outline what they want to include in their personal stories, practice impromptu speaking, outline an adaptable presentation, and practice in front of one another. Attendees receive certificates and have the option to join the Bureau. Those that choose to join the RSB are contacted when an appropriate engagement arises. This participation is voluntary, unpaid work; our hope is that the relationship will be mutually beneficial, allowing speakers to gain experience and public speaking skills while also furthering MCC RS's goals of community outreach and education.

The RSB is intended to adapt to a large variety of audiences so that presentations can be made to churches, educational institutions, nonprofits, businesses, clubs, and other organizations—all for free. The goal of this bureau is to educate the Minnesotans about the resettlement process and refugee/asylee community through a personal connection, with the end goal of encouraging a caring, invested, informed community better able to welcome refugees and asylees to our state.

Speakers can share for between fifteen minutes and an hour, and can be accompanied by a Refugee Services staff person, who can give an introductory presentation about refugees world wide and the resettlement process in the United States.

Ways to Incorporate a Refugee Speaker into a Refugee Sunday Service:

- Invite a speaker for your adult education hour. Speakers can also be accompanied by a Refugee Services staff member who can share general information about refugee resettlement and the work of Refugee Services.
- Invite a speaker to share briefly (fifteen minutes) for a mission moment, meditation, or during the sermon/teaching time.

- Invite members of a refugee family that has worked with your church to give an update on their progress and life in Minnesota.

For more information, or to request a speaker, please contact Kristin Zoellner at 612-230-3219 or kristin.zoellner@mchurches.org.

Activities for Children and Youth

- Invite older children and youth to play the “Take Refuge” game, developed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This game, which resembles chutes and ladders, takes players through the obstacles that a refugee might encounter as he or she tries to escape to safety. The game board and instructions can be downloaded from the following website:
http://www.usaforunhcr.org/usaforunhcr/uploadedfiles/take_refuge_game.pdf.

Instructors or group leaders can create several copies of the game for small groups or transfer the game board to a large piece of fabric or butcher paper to play a large-scale version of the game.

- Play “What Would You Take With You?” To do this activity, read the following prompt to the group:

“Imagine for a moment that you are a refugee. You have to leave your home to go to a new place that is safe. You can only bring what you can carry in a duffel bag because you will be leaving your country by boat. Because there are soldiers coming to get you and your family, you only have one minute to decide. Which ten items would you bring?”

After participants have written down their ten items, read the next prompt:

“Now, because the boat on which you are leaving is too full, you must cross off five items that you will leave behind. You only have 1 minute to decide what you will keep. What is left in your bag?”

After kids have chosen the five items that they would keep in their bags, discuss with the group what types of items they decided to keep. Items often mentioned or discussed can include water, food, a pot, matches, soap, a blanket, a hat, plastic (to make a shelter), a first aid kit, money, birth certificate or other identification, an address book, photos, clothes, hiking boots, a sleeping bag, medicine, a Bible, food, special jewelry, or a compass. Ask the group how they decided what was most important to bring with them. There are no right or wrong answers for this activity.

- Talk about how Jesus was a refugee. When he was a baby, his parents fled from Herod’s army because they feared for Jesus’ life. They, like many refugees, became homeless because of persecution. Write prayers for refugee kids and ask God to give them protection and strength.

- Have a discussion about the challenges refugees face. Explain how refugees do not often have much time to decide which of their possessions they will bring with them when they leave their homes, and many of them face very difficult journeys. Have children or youth imagine what it might be like to leave their friends and family and start a new life in a strange new place. Ask if anyone has ever felt out of place, or had to move to a new house. If so, talk about how friendly neighbors and community members can help new people feel at home.
- Brainstorm ideas with the group about ways they could help refugees who come to Minnesota or learn more about refugees. Some ideas include:
 - Making cards for kids and their families who are resettled through Refugee Services.
 - Donating blankets, school supplies, pillows, or dishes to Refugee Services' clients.
 - Trying new foods or listening to music from a different culture.
- Talk about the ways that kids have extended kindness to their family, friends, and strangers – for example, new boys or girls in their classes at school. Talk about the Golden Rule and how they can show God's love to new neighbors and classmates even in small ways – like sitting with them at lunch or asking them about their traditions. Remind the group members that refugees might look different, speak a different language, or have different customs than them, but that we are all children of God. Consider discussing Matthew 25:35-40, and how we can serve God by serving each other.
- Be aware that discussing issues about refugees can be unsettling or even frightening, especially for younger children. Younger kids may need to be reassured that they are loved very much and that there are many people in their lives – parents, church members, police officers, teachers – who are there to help keep them safe. Consider explaining the refugee situation in simple terms for young children – for example, refugees are people who needed to find a new home in Minnesota, and we can help them feel welcome.
- Older children and youth may be interested in doing a service project related to refugee resettlement. Look to the “Service and Educational Projects for Church Groups” section of this booklet to help come up with ideas.
- Be creative! Do an art project, listen to prayers or hymns in a language spoken by refugees, enjoy a new food – or ask parents to consider making a dish from another culture for Thanksgiving dinner.

Service and Educational Projects for Church Groups

The following are a variety of projects that a church could consider undertaking in order to learn more about refugee resettlement or to serve Minnesota's refugee families. Some could be part of your Refugee Sunday celebration, while others would be more appropriate for continued involvement. These projects provide ways for churches to help meet specific needs of refugee women, men, and children, to participate in Minnesota's resettlement effort, and to share the overall of resettling a refugee family with others.

Please consider prayerfully considering whether or not one of you and your congregation are being called to work on one of these exciting and life-giving projects. All sorts of people can be involved – these projects can be adapted for youth groups, Sunday school classes, confirmation classes, adult education groups, women's and men's groups, adult Bible study groups, and seniors' groups!

- **Co-Sponsor a Refugee Family**— Churches have the opportunity to partner with MCC to provide refugees with basic necessities during their first few months in the U.S. All refugees coming to Minnesota are joining family, but in many cases the family sponsor does not have the capacity to meet all of the new arrival's needs. Church sponsors make a significant difference as they guide refugees on a path towards self-sufficiency. This very special opportunity is also a transformative experience for the church as they come to know a refugee family and live out God's call to welcome the stranger.
- **Host a Speaker from the Refugee Speakers Bureau** – The Refugee Speakers Bureau is comprised of refugees and asylees who are excited to educate Minnesotans by sharing their powerful life experiences. They are able to speak for a church gathering or adult forum for free, and their presentations are sure to stimulate interesting discussions.
- **Fund-raiser** – Put on a potluck dinner, including foods from around the world, and ask for a donation to Refugee Services. Money collected can go towards helping refugee families with their initial needs, including food, clothing, housing deposits, and bus passes.
- **Linen Drive** – Collect blankets, sheets, quilts, towels, pillows, and mattress pads. The Refugee Services staff will distribute them to newly arrived refugee families in need of these essential items.
- **Welcome Baskets** – Collect toiletries, dishes, blankets, towels, and other items for each member of a newly arrived refugee family of 4, 5, or 6 people. Refugee

Services will provide you with a list of exactly what is needed. Drop off at Refugee Services or with a family to help meet the basic needs of one of Minnesota's newest households to help them set up their new home.

- Furniture Drive – Collect good quality, new or used furniture to donate to families moving into their first homes in Minnesota. Beds with mattresses and box springs, as well as kitchen/dining room tables and chairs are always especially needed.
- House-Keeping Kits— Put together much needed house-keeping supplies for families moving into their first apartments. These kits include a small wastebasket filled with dish soap, laundry detergent, all purpose cleaner (like 409), a pack of sponges, a box of trash bags, and a small dustpan/broom set.
- Winter Coat Drive— Collect warm winter coats, mittens, and hats in good condition. Every fall, Refugee Services distributes winter clothing for free to newly-arrived refugees who do not have warm clothes for our Minnesota winters!
- Volunteer with Refugee Services— Interested individuals or pairs may want to consider volunteering at MCC-Refugee Services. There are a variety of volunteer positions, and we are particularly in need of drivers to transport furniture donations from donors to families a couple of times per month.

For more detailed information about conducting any of the above projects with your church or group, or to propose a project of your own, please contact the staff at the Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services program. If you plan to collect donations of any kind, please contact Kristin Zoellner (contact information below) to arrange drop-off times and locations.

The Refugee Services program is located at 122 W. Franklin Ave., Suite 100, Minneapolis, MN, 55404. You can also email Kristin Zoellner, the Resource Coordinator, at (612) 230-3219 or kristin.zoellner@mchurches.org.