

Transit, Tents, Homes

A Donor's Guide to Funding the Three Phases of the Refugee Crisis



Photo: International Rescue Committee/Tara Todras-Whitehill



Photo: United Nations Refugee Agency/Evelyn Hockstein



Photo: International Rescue Committee/Brian Horlin



Photo: Getty Images/Alamy



Center for Disaster Philanthropy

The when, where and how of informed disaster giving

“Today is a good day,”

Amal said, watching our sons play soccer during a community back-to-school picnic.



Her face framed by her hijab, her dark eyes misted as we talked. Between her faltering English and my broken Arabic, I learned many things. I learned that she and her family had slept in 14 different places in the past 18 months, escaping violent outbreaks as they moved around North Africa after leaving their home in Libya. At one point, they believed the refugee placement process would never end. They certainly never expected to end up in the United States, much less in a place called Raleigh, North Carolina. And most of all, while she sometimes worried about the future, it wasn't quite as bad as the things that used to keep her up at night.

*Amal and her family are just a few of the 65 million people displaced around the world as part of the global refugee crisis. Where they begin the process of becoming a refugee and how they travel from that point on varies widely, but often, their journey comes in three phases: **transit, tents, and homes.***

Definitions and Numbers

Before looking at the pathways refugees take, it's helpful to examine a few basic concepts:

Asylum Seeker: When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum—the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance.

Refugee: A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal, and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries. Refugees are protected by international law.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP): An internally displaced person has been forced to flee their home for the same reasons as a refugee, but remains in his or her own country and has not crossed an international border. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid.

Migrant: A migrant is someone who moves to improve their life through better work, education, or family reunification, but is not in danger of persecution or death if they return home.



REFUGEE & IDP NUMBERS

- At the end of 2015, more than 65 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide. This includes refugees, internally displaced persons, and stateless people.
- About half of all refugees are children.
- Most of the world's refugees come from Syria (nearly 5 million), followed by Afghanistan and Somalia.
- Those three countries account for 54 percent of all refugees.
- There are about 6.6 million IDPs inside Syria, more than 1 million IDPs inside Somalia, and about 1.5 million IDPs inside Afghanistan.



Photo: Mercy Corps/Karine Altier

TRANSIT

A rubber dinghy carrying refugees from Turkey to Greece reaches shore, while others who arrived earlier continue their passage on foot.

Refugees flee their homes in many ways: sometimes by boat, sometimes by vehicle, often on foot.

The time after refugees decide to flee their home countries and seek asylum is perhaps the time they are most vulnerable and experience the most danger. They may not know much about where they are going or how, they often have limited resources, and open roads in conflict areas are particularly unsafe due to both natural elements and the threat of violence or extortion. Along the road, refugees and their families face hunger, illness, and death as they seek a better life.

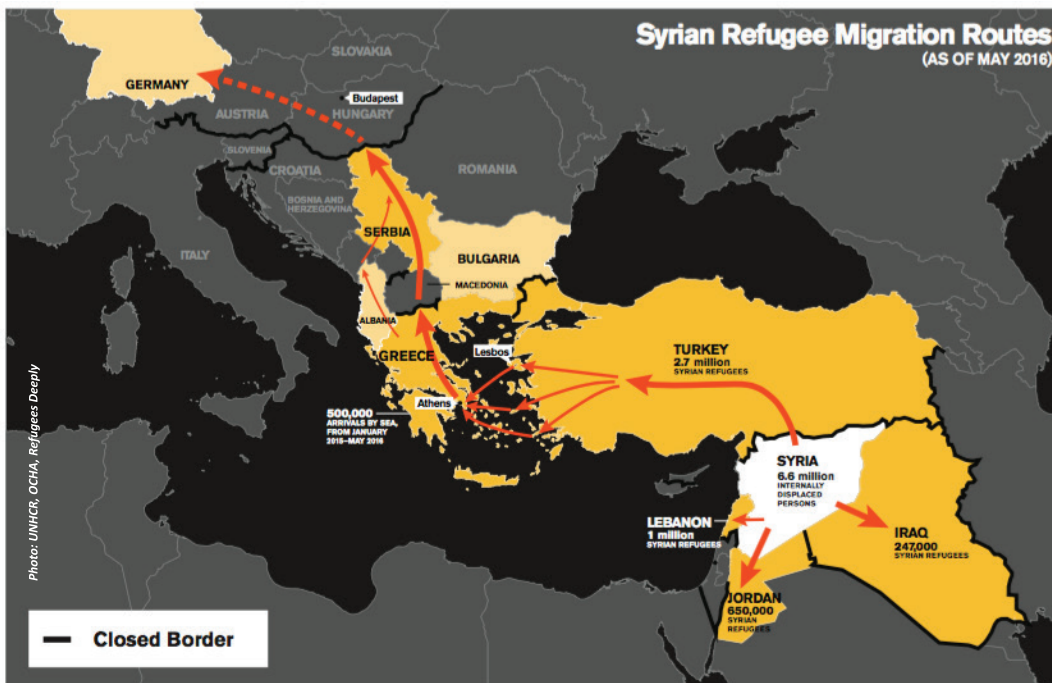
Refugees in transit most recently made the news as they poured into an unprepared Europe throughout 2014 and 2015 via boats and dinghies across the Mediterranean. In these cases, refugees made the trek to Turkey or North Africa and then paid a smuggler for passage; from Turkey, a passage of only a few miles to Greece cost several thousand dollars a

person. The boats were almost always overloaded and often capsized. Many drowned, some were rescued, and a few were able to swim. If they made it through that journey, they had to navigate a complex situation in Europe, with changing border openings and differing entry laws among countries. They then had to figure out where to go, how to get there, and how to maintain basic necessities along the way.

Instead of trying to reach Europe, some Syrian refugees have fled to surrounding countries (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon) and stayed there. On this dangerous journey, refugees face warring groups, bombings, and intermittent access to basic needs. An estimated 70,000 people were stranded in no-man's-land between Syria and Jordan after Jordan closed its border to refugees following an ISIS attack in June 2016.

Refugees were left in the desert with the choice of either waiting it out or returning to dangerous areas within Syria.

While the situation in Syria gains much of the world's attention, the refugee situation in Africa worsens with violence and insecurity so severe that people are seeking shelter in other war-torn countries. The United Nations has noted that 43,000 South Sudanese refugees have fled to eastern Darfur, home to one of this century's worst humanitarian crises, including genocide. Nearly 100,000 Ethiopians and Somalis left home by boat



Sources: UNHCR, OCHA, and Refugees Deeply

to Yemen, where conflict has made the country one of the world's most dangerous.

Nearly 1 million have been displaced from the Central African Republic, and thousands of Nigerians have fled to neighboring countries to escape the extremist Islamist group, Boko Haram. Aid workers need flexibility from funders to help refugees in transit; conflict and security issues create needs that change daily. They are often providing people with grab-and-go supplies: water, small snacks, and small hygiene packs. One worker from the International Rescue Committee said that people arriving in Greece en route to a destination further North in Europe are taking what they can carry as they travel. If they are already carrying a child, what they can carry is cut in half, even though their needs might be double.

Besides portable supplies, refugees in transit need access to communication networks—information on where it is safe to go, a way to connect with extended family they may be traveling to meet, and knowledge of jobs, relief resources, and other options that might be available to them. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable as they travel in these situations. There is wide evidence of kidnapping, rape, and gender-based violence.

Shelters in areas of high transit can provide a form of temporary protection, along with the connection to information or other services needed by women. Humanitarian groups have discussed a variety of interventions for women and girls on the road. Solutions include providing humanitarian corridors (where safe paths out of conflicts areas to safe areas are opened to allow non-combatants out of the area) and single-gender resources.

WHAT DONORS CAN DO

Funders can meet the needs of fleeing refugees on the road in a variety of ways:



Photo: United Nations/Mark Garten

1. **Award frontline humanitarian organizations flexible funding to meet challenges that change daily.** In these cases, flexible funding allows organizations to meet crucial needs of refugees on the move and often with few resources.
2. **Support information flow**—and the organizations that specialize in providing connectivity and information networks in challenging circumstances.
3. **Fund the full arc of protecting vulnerable people on the move.** This especially applies to women and girls, who often face gender-based violence in their home country and at every stage of being a refugee. There are a number of groups that have established histories of working with refugee women and girls, and should be trusted sources for funders in this area.



Photo: International Rescue Committee/Tara Todras-Whitehill

TENTS

A boy escapes the midday sun at the Alexandria
refugee camp in northern Greece.

Refugees often live in camps for years, even though the camps were never meant to be a long-term solution.

Undoubtedly the refugee

scenario that is most familiar is that of the large refugee camp—recognizable by United Nations tarpaulin. These camps dot disputed areas in Palestine, the countries around Syria, and many places throughout the continent of Africa.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the U.S. Department of State estimate that the length of major protracted refugee stays has increased eight years during the past 20 years. Upon arriving in a camp, refugees can be processed as asylum seekers (if they meet the requirements), which gives them some access to housing, medical care, and a small monthly stipend (\$30, depending on location). However, people in protracted refugee situations are often deprived of freedom of movement, access to land, and legal employment—all of which keeps them from integrating into local communities where they could be assets instead of burdens.

Depending on the location of the camp, there are often challenges with resources including food, water, and electricity.



2016 Rwanda Refugee Camp

Jordan is already one of the world's ten most water-scarce countries. Funding shortfalls to UNHCR resulted in at least one camp in Jordan having no power for more than nine months. Some camps do not even have that type of infrastructure.

While camps are plentiful, the humanitarian sector agrees that more should be done to integrate refugees into communities. However, integration would require services to help those refugees transition into the community. Those who support refugee camps point to things like simpler logistics and food distribution, easier access to education and medical services,

and better access to U.N. resources for permanent placement. Those who see the camps as inadequate solutions believe they lack good employment opportunities, often trapping refugees at the camp for years and taxing the resources of the host country.

If a refugee chooses to leave a camp and live off the economy in an urban setting, as many do, they often still do not gain legal status, property rights, or education and medical access. In Turkey, one of the largest holders of Syrian

refugees, people are unable to register for asylum. They are allowed to register annually for temporary status. Aid Works noted in its report, [*Closed Doors, Open Secrets: How the World Abandoned Millions of Refugees in Turkey*](#), that the government blocks the access of aid groups to refugees not living in camps. And if the aid groups do try speaking up about the situation, they risk having their credentials in the country revoked. There are similar challenges in Lebanon, where there are no formal camps.

WHAT DONORS CAN DO

Meet the needs of refugees living in camps when you:



1. **Fund nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** working in host countries to boost economic and social capacity and overall infrastructure.
2. **Make grants** that support long-term camp programs that align with your organization's mission and values. Some examples include psychosocial trauma support, skills training, elderly care, educational programs, or language courses.
3. **Fund the basic needs** of food, water, education, and hygiene.



Photo: United Nations Refugee Agency/Evelyn Rockwell

HOMES

Having fled war-torn Central African Republic for the U.S., a single mother has access to job training and educational services that allow her to support her family.

Refugees fortunate to be granted asylum in another country still face all the challenges that come with the resettlement process.

The ideal situation for those forced to flee their home countries is still one that comes with challenges. After arriving at a camp or temporary location, they register with UNHCR as refugees and ask to be granted asylum in another country. UNHCR interviews them about where they have been, their identity, and why they believe they should be granted asylum as refugees. After initial background checks are completed, they are referred for placement. Countries handle placement in different ways, and here we will examine the U.S. process exclusively.

In the U.S., the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Health and Human Services run the resettlement process. DHS receives refugee referrals from UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and then vets candidates for resettlement through extensive background, security, and health checks. Claims made by applicants for asylum are investigated and verified. On average, it takes 18-24 months to complete this investigation and background check process.

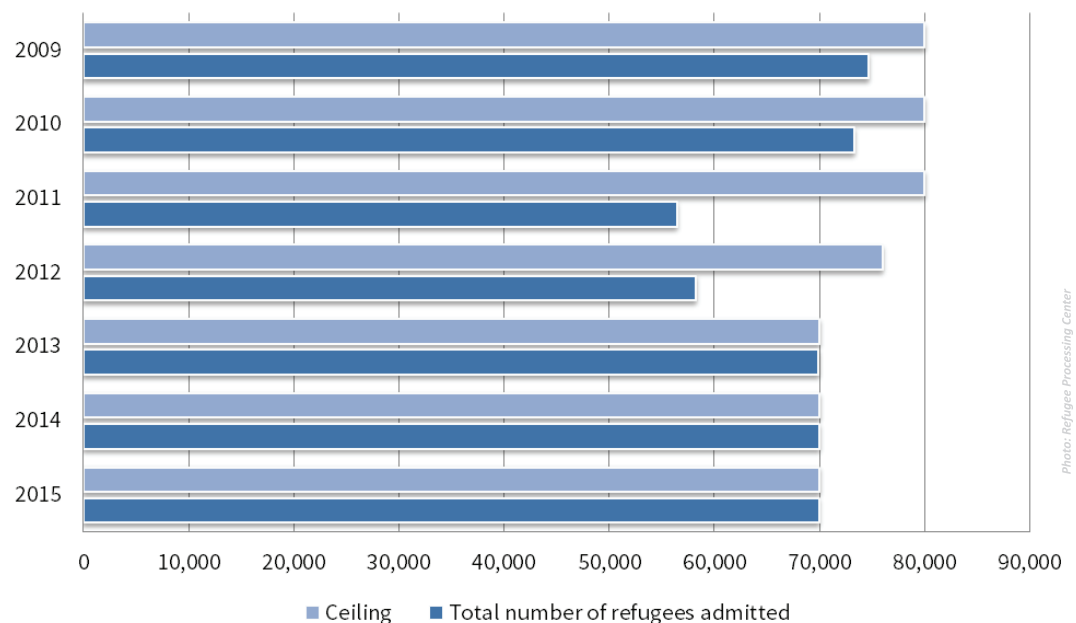
Of all the refugees resettled annually, only a small percentage is settled into the United States—and they are among the luckiest in the world. The number of refugees allowed into the U.S. each year differs slightly based on annual decisions made jointly by the president and Congress. In Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015, about 70,000 refugees were resettled to the U.S. In FY 2016, the proposed ceiling is 85,000.

Once a refugee is accepted for placement in the U.S., the IOM coordinates a flight, a cost the refugee must pay back later. There are nine NGOs that work with the State Department to resettle refugees:

- Church World Service
- Ethiopian Community Development Council
- Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Hebrew Immigration Aid Society
- International Rescue Committee
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services
- World Relief

Once they arrive, refugees receive a stipend of approximately \$1,000 to help with the initial expenses of finding housing. They are required to find employment. After one year, they are eligible to apply for a permanent resident alien status. The nine NGOs listed above assist refugees with applying

Refugees Admitted Compared to Ceiling in U.S.



for social services programs that may be available to them, depending on the area where they are located.

During the past year, public support of refugee resettlement efforts in the U.S. has wavered. The governors of several states have sought ways to prevent resettlement agencies from placing Syrian and Iraqi refugees in particular in their states, citing security concerns. (The Migration Policy

Institute notes that only three of the hundreds of thousands of refugees accepted through U.S. refugee processes have been associated with any acts of terrorism. The three were charged with plotting acts of terror). The state of Texas went so far as to sue the International Rescue Committee and other federal defendants in a lawsuit that was dismissed in mid-2016, stating that the resettlement program was a federal operation that states had no control over.

WHAT DONORS CAN DO

NGOs working with refugees in the U.S. cite several ways funders can help:



Photo: International Rescue Committee/Jason Liao

1. **Fund advocacy work** around the acceptance of refugees into communities and education on the benefits of a culturally diverse population that has always been the trademark of America.
2. **Provide grants** that fund assistance for refugees by working with the nine NGOs in the resettlement process to boost capacity and services.
3. **Provide local, grassroots assistance** by focusing on the specific needs of refugees in your region. Work through community agencies or community foundations to support areas such as access to transportation, or assistance in obtaining transportation; language courses; single-gender transition services; or employment placement assistance.

How Will You Approach the Refugee Crisis?

Funding refugee assistance is challenging because it is complex and spans the entire globe. It's not always a popular or easy decision, and it requires smart funders willing to bridge risky gaps to meet unfathomable needs.

However, it is a crisis that we can no longer ignore. It is in our best interests as humans and smart philanthropists to play a unique and critical role in addressing the situation. While governments wrangle with the politics and policy surrounding refugees, private funders have the ability to act quickly, collectively, and creatively.

Global Refugee Crisis Fund

The Center for Disaster Philanthropy launched the [Global Refugee Crisis Fund](#) to provide organizations the opportunity to collectively and more effectively help refugees. Gifts to the fund allow you to address both critical, immediate needs as well as the long-term challenges of the ongoing crisis. Leverage your impact on the crisis with a donation to the [Global Refugee Crisis Fund](#).

Custom Funding Strategies

Let CDP help you make thoughtful investment decisions in the crisis with strategic, one-on-one guidance. Our staff, board, and advisory council bring more than one hundred years of combined experience in disaster management, philanthropy, and nonprofit leadership to our efforts to transform disaster giving.

Find out how the Center for Disaster Philanthropy can meet your organization's values and disaster philanthropy objectives.

Schedule a one-on-one consultation with:

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Sources for this paper:

*The United Nations Refugee Agency
International Rescue Committee
Mercy Corps
Concern Worldwide
Aid Works
Women's Refugee Commission
U.S. Department of State
Department of Homeland Security
Office of Refugee Resettlement
Migration Policy Institute*