

THE BLENDED REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP PROJECT 2015



For the Lord your God...loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

Into its third year, the **Blended Refugee Sponsorship Project** will resettle 800-1000 Visa Office Referred refugees from a number of countries in 2015.

What is the Blended Sponsorship Program?

This is a sponsorship undertaking where both Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH-Mennonite Central Committee) through its Constituent Groups (CG-churches and partners) contribute to the financial support of refugees. Under this model, the Government of Canada will provide the refugees with 6 months of income support and the CG will cover the remaining six months. The SAH and its CG also have the responsibility to provide settlement and emotional support for the refugees for the 12 month sponsorship term. The refugees sponsored under this program are eligible for a full 12 months of Interim Federal Health Care coverage.

The Canadian government has identified the following key populations:

Burundians

The latest wave of Burundi refugees started in 1993 after the assassination of their first democratically elected president. The massacres which followed started another round of flight and displacement that was re-enforced by each new wave of violence. After ten years of war, over 500,000 are estimated to be in the refugee camps in western Tanzania. Another 300,000 are thought to be dispersed across Tanzania or otherwise living there in dire conditions. Every month, it is reported that 100,000 people on average become temporarily displaced as a result of the ongoing fighting.

Congolese

For more than two decades, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has struggled with ongoing conflict in its eastern provinces. As of November 2014, an estimated 2.6 million Congolese were internally displaced, and nearly 500,000 had fled their homes into neighboring countries. Non-state armed groups and elements of the Congolese army (FARDC) threaten civilians in North Kivu, South Kivu, Katanga, and Orientale provinces.

Eritreans

Though Eritrea became independent in 1991, its citizens remain victimized by the regime. They suffer arbitrary and indefinite detention; torture; inhumane conditions of confinement; restrictions on freedom of speech, movement, and belief; and indefinite conscription and forced labor in national service. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that over 1,000 refugees leave the country every month headed for the neighbouring countries. There are over 100,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan and over 3,500 in Kenya.

Iraqis

In January 2014, the world braced itself for yet another, potentially far wider reaching, crisis in the Middle East. With waves of displacement and turmoil in Iraq dating back some 35 years, and a country divided around sectarian lines, it would not have taken much to tip the balance. And tip it did, this time at the hands of a Sunni militant group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL. Since the fighting broke out late last year nearly 1.8 million people have fled their homes according to the International Organization for Migration in Iraq.

Iranians

Harsh Government crackdown of public demonstration and continued human rights abuses have forced thousands of Iranians to flee to the neighbouring countries. As of 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that the number of Iranian refugees was 75,613 of which 12,177 were assisted by the UNHCR. The Iranians who have fled are composed of young journalists and political activists.

Syrians

In 2011, a peaceful revolution began in Syria. In response, the regime began to shoot indiscriminately and to bomb areas supportive of the revolution. As a result, armed gangs spread across the country. People were forcibly displaced and others fled from one place to another, trying to escape the conflict. The total number of displaced people is comprised of over 2.5 million refugees who are living in neighboring countries and 6.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Syria, according to the UNHCR. The number of people uprooted — half of which are children — equals 40 percent of the country's pre-war population.

Colombians

Colombia has been torn apart by conflict for over 40 years. The continued war between the Colombian government, various guerrilla groups and drug traffickers has cost the lives of over 50,000 people. Forced internal displacement in Colombia continues to be a matter of concern. According to official figures from the UNHCR as of Oct 2014, over 5.7 million people were internally displaced. UNHCR estimates that over 98% of 1,000 asylum seekers arriving Ecuador every month are Colombians. Approximately 23% of the cases are headed by single women and unaccompanied or separated children. Resettlement needs in the region have increased, particularly for Colombian refugees.

Bhutanese

In early 1988, the government of Bhutan implemented a new census policy, which used the Citizenship Act of 1985 to categorize southern Bhutanese into seven types. When the decision was appealed, it was met with arrest of the leader of Southern Bhutan. His arrest led to protests demanding for human rights and democracy. The consequences of the protest were appalling: arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, threats, harassment, fire, destruction of houses and confiscation of citizenship cards. Most of the citizens were pressurized into leaving "voluntarily" and were forced to sign a so-called "Voluntary Migration Form" at gun point. The exodus of hundreds of thousands of people into Nepal provoked a humanitarian crisis and the establishment of a Bhutanese Refugee Camp in South-East Nepal by the UNHCR. The conditions in the Bhutanese Refugee camps are terrible. People are going hungry on a regular basis, children and others are sleeping without blankets in the cold and some of the refugees do not have clothes. The exiled Bhutanese refugees not only lost their homes, but were also dispossessed of their personal belongings.

In their countries of asylum, no durable solution can be achieved and since local integration is not possible for these refugees, resettlement to Canada is their only viable option.

Contact us to learn how to partner with MCC and welcome these refugees into our communities?



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