



OPENING DOORS, RESTORING HOPE: THE U.S. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM

"Communities across our country have opened their doors and their hearts to refugees, helping them to begin new lives in safety and in freedom."

– Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Marwah and her mother fled Somalia after being attacked and beaten. Sixteen years later, Marwah, married with children of her own, was still living in a refugee camp. She feared persecution if she returned to Somalia, but she and her family faced an uncertain future in Kenya.

Marwah is one of an estimated 13 million refugees around the world who, having fled persecution and violence, struggle to rebuild their lives. Most refugees wish they could return home, but when there is no chance for a safe return and months become years, refugees seek a life elsewhere. Permanent resettlement is a complex process that requires close cooperation among governments and UN agencies. Some refugees are able to integrate into the countries to which they initially fled, but often these communities lack the capacity to permanently absorb all the refugees who come across their borders. For some refugees, resettlement in a third country gives them the best opportunity to start over in a welcoming environment.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program:

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), reinforces the U.S. commitment to the principals of democracy and freedom and supports an overarching goal of President Bush's National Security Strategy: championing human dignity. People across the United States embrace this commitment

by welcoming and helping the refugees that resettle in their communities.

The United States resettles tens of thousands of refugees like Marwah each year through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. More than 2.6 million refugees have been resettled in the United States since 1975. Each year the President consults with Congress to determine the number of refugees the United States will aim to resettle the following year. This consultation sets into motion a complex process that identifies, screens, and prepares those refugees for whom third-country resettlement in the United States is the best option. In 2006, the United States welcomed vulnerable refugees from over 60 nations.



Ilya Abramenko supports his recently resettled family by manufacturing and assembling parts for refrigerant recovery machines. Photo courtesy of Lutheran Social Ministry of the Southwest.

of refugees in need of access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Each year PRM hosts a public meeting to solicit views on future directions of the program, including the views of resettled refugees. Refugees or asylees in the United States can also file family reunification applications on behalf of immediate family members who are still over-



Teens break ground in their new school garden as part of IRC San Diego's Students Plus after school program. Photo courtesy of IRC.

seas to facilitate their access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. All applicants are interviewed by officers of the Department of Homeland Security and undergo extensive health and security screenings before being approved

for resettlement in the United States. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program also works with overseas partners to conduct pre-departure cultural orientation programs that help refugees approved for admission prepare for their new lives. Refugees are resettled in communities throughout the United States.

Partnering for Success:

Once resettled, refugees may face a variety of challenges. They often must learn English, and adapt to a different climate, unfamiliar food, and diverse customs -- all in a society where technology touches most aspects of everyday life. Upon arrival, U.S. NGOs, including church groups and community organizations, help refugees find housing, enroll in schools, and navigate life in the United States.

In 2004, Marwah and her family were met at the airport by representatives from one of ten resettlement agencies PRM works with in the United States. The sponsoring agency helped Marwah and her husband find jobs. Marwah and her husband will face challenges, but with the assistance of their new community, they are building a new life and a future for their children in a safe place.

Despite the challenges, most refugees do succeed. They are scientists, teachers, farmers, authors, small-business owners, and CEOs. U.S. cities and towns that welcome refugees find that refugees become engaged and participating community members. They enrich and revitalize their communities, prompt neighborhood renewal, and facilitate new economic development in cities and towns across the country.

What You Can Do:

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program would not succeed without the individuals in communities across the United States who work to help refugees feel safe and welcome. You can become part of this effort by contacting your local resettlement agency and finding out how you can help. Refugees are your neighbors, coworkers, and new friends. You can help them open the door to a new life.

U.S. Refugee Resettlement Agencies:

- Church World Service (CWS)
www.churchworldservice.org
- Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS)
www.episcopalchurch.org/emml/
- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)
www.ecdcinternational.org
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
www.hias.org
- Bureau of Refugee Programs
Iowa Department of Human Services
www.dhs.state.ia.us/refugee
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
www.theirc.org
- Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service (LIRS)
www.lirs.org
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
www.refugees.org
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
www.usccb.org/mrs
- World Relief (WR)
www.wr.org



Leila Ali Juma, a recently resettled refugee, participates in a financial literacy training session. Through this program, Leila has gained valuable skills in the area of personal financial management. Photo courtesy of IRC.

"The work that we are doing is creating hope and opportunity in the lives of people who are among the most persecuted and vulnerable people in the world."

– Assistant Secretary Ellen R. Sauerbrey