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BRIDGING DIVIDES

The Role of Ethnic Community-Based Organizations in Refugee Integration



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INTRODUCTION

Today, 35.7 million immigrants live in the United States and account for 12.4 percent of the nation's total population.¹ While most immigrants arrive as family members to reunite with relatives, others come as economic migrants sponsored by employers or as refugees and asylum seekers fleeing political strife and violent conflicts in their war-torn countries. Many arrive sharing the common hope of starting a new, peaceful, and economically self-sufficient life in a country that they will come to call their home.

Refugees, one of the most vulnerable immigrant groups, constitute a mere 10 percent of annual immigration flows to the United States but have come to populate many metropolitan areas around the country.² While the traditional immigrant gateway cities of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago continue to receive the largest refugee flows, new destinations such as Utica, NY; Fargo, ND; Erie, PA; Sioux Falls, SD; and Binghamton, NY have also experienced steady inflows of refugees over the past 20 years.³ As refugees continue to resettle in both traditional and new immigrant gateways across the United States, native-born Americans debate how to effectively integrate these newcomers into their communities.

The process of refugee integration begins with resettlement. The US Resettlement Program, formally instituted under the Refugee Act of 1980, admits refugees on an ad hoc basis to the United States for permanent residence. The Refugee Act incorporated the refugee definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol into the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), defining a refugee as:

Any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.⁴

In establishing the federal Refugee Resettlement Program, the Refugee Act of 1980 sought to "provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States."⁵ It specified that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the US Department of Health and Human Services would aim to accomplish this goal by, among other things, providing funds for programs such as vocational and English-language training; ensuring women are awarded the same opportunities as men in receiving such training; and establishing cooperative partnerships between nonprofit organizations and governments at the state and local levels. It also stipulated that ORR would "take into account the availability of employment opportunities,

affordable housing, and public and private resources (including educational, health care, and mental health services) for refugees in the area” and “the likelihood of refugees placed in the area [of becoming] self-sufficient and free from long-term dependence on public assistance.”⁶ As the federal Resettlement Program admits refugees on a permanent basis, the various services and programs that serve to help them when they first arrive in the country should also help in their long-term integration.

Refugee integration is a *multi-dimensional* concept that can be interpreted and measured in different ways. Some gauge levels of integration through tangible benchmarks such as securing a job and earning an income, purchasing a home, or acquiring US citizenship. Others rely on more emotional and psychological measures such as their sense of belonging to a community or ability to retain cultural, religious, or linguistic ties with their countries of origin while living in the United States.

Integration is also a *multi-generational* process in which children of immigrants tend to become more thoroughly incorporated into the American mainstream than their parents. Some parents worry about their children losing their cultural and national heritage and becoming too Americanized. Immigrant parents who lack education or vocational skills may hope that their children and grandchildren benefit from the educational and economic opportunities that were never available to them.

Finally, integration is a *multi-player* process. Immigrants in the United States change the character and nature of the country just as the people and institutions of the United States influence the way immigrants lead their lives. Refugees are not alone in their efforts to integrate into American society, but are joined by a variety of public and private institutions. Integration is broadly defined as a “dynamic, multidirectional process in which newcomers and the receiving communities intentionally work together, based on a shared commitment to tolerance and justice, to create a secure, welcoming, vibrant, and cohesive society.”⁷

Among the many stakeholders in the refugee integration debate are ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs), nonprofit organizations that have “a direct social-service base with clients, paid professional staff [though many work on a volunteer basis], offices open to the public with regular service hours, and some sources of funding.”⁸ They derive their ethnic identities from the composition of the board of directors, senior management, staff members, and the clients they serve.⁹

Unlike many other organizations, ECBOs take on a unique role in refugee integration as they assume many functions that serve both refugees and the wider community. They may act (to varying degrees) as *service providers* and *civic and political representatives* for refugees, *community centers* that foster mutual understanding and relationships, *intermediaries* between government and the larger community, and *partners* of voluntary resettlement agencies, other nonprofit organizations, foundations, corporations, and government. This report highlights the importance of ECBOs to refugees and to the communities that have resettled refugees across the United States.

THE PROJECT

The integration of refugees into the economic, social, and political fabric of the United States presents a number of challenges. While assisting refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency is the primary integration focus of ORR, other factors such as promoting leadership development and an understanding of the rules of the United States also help refugees to integrate into this country. ECBOs play an important, but often unseen, role in this process.

Origins of the Project

In 2003, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) received a three-year grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to fund its Project for Strengthening Organizations Assisting Refugees (SOAR), which offers technical assistance in the organizational, financial, human resource, and program management of immigrant or refugee-established ECBOs.¹⁰ These organizations, all of which received the ORR Ethnic Community Organizations (Self-Help) Grant (Category 3)¹¹ during FY2006–2007, offer a range of services and programs that help refugees adjust socially, economically, and politically to their new lives in the United States.

As part of Project SOAR, the IRC partnered with the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) to explore the role of ECBOs as drivers of refugee integration and to highlight their innovative programs or practices that promote such integration. MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy shares three goals commensurate with this study: 1) to conduct policy research and highlight the role of different institutions (government, foundations, immigrant organizations, research institutions) in immigrant integration; 2) to provide technical assistance and training for government officials and community leaders; and 3) to serve as a convener of and create linkages between different stakeholders in the immigrant integration debate, including practitioners, academics, and service providers, through publications, policy roundtables, and videoconferences. This study is intended to contribute to ORR's commitment to helping refugees integrate into the United States.

Goals of the Project

The IRC and MPI sought to understand how ECBOs view, define, and involve themselves in the integration of immigrants and refugees. We aimed to uncover unique and successful integration programs run by ECBOs and report our findings in three tangible ways.

First, we presented our preliminary findings of this study at the Office of Refugee Resettlement 2007 National Consultation in Washington, DC, on January 23, 2007.

Second, we discussed the findings and recommendations of this study with participating ECBO leaders, academic and policy researchers, and the Director and senior staff of ORR at the Forum on the Role of ECBOs in Refugee Integration at MPI on February 22, 2007. The forum provided a venue for these different stakeholders to engage in a frank discussion about integration initiatives and priorities, organizational challenges, and recommendations.

Finally, we published “Bridging Divides” to highlight the vital contributions of ECBOs to refugee integration; share the challenges faced by leaders of ECBOs; and recommend new ideas to enhance their role as key players in the refugee integration debate.¹² In recognizing the important role of ECBOs in refugee integration, the report also offers strategies for fundraising, advocacy, and public education. It should be noted that the report does not offer a comprehensive review of programs and services offered and the challenges faced by all refugee-serving ECBOs in the United States. The report primarily reflects information gathered from the nine site visits conducted in the course of this study and, while neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, it nonetheless sheds light on an often overlooked topic. The following discussion of nine ECBOs is not intended to represent a general endorsement by MPI. Rather, it is meant to illustrate the variety of integration activities at work in local communities.

Methodology

1. PREPARATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

MPI staff prepared two questionnaires (one for management and staff and the other for clients) to conduct interviews during all site visits. The management and staff questionnaire covered the following topics: organizational background; local context (history of refugee arrivals, local economy); geographic area served by the ECBO; the ECBO’s definition of integration; details and issues regarding their programs and services; benchmarks to measure the success or failure of programs; public education and outreach initiatives; advocacy; and funding. The refugee questionnaire inquired about clients’ personal background; experiences since arriving in the United States; connection with the organization; services utilized; opinions on the organization; level of input into the organization; services they wished they could receive from the ECBO; and their view of integration.

2. INTERVIEWS

When possible, IRC and MPI staff conducted interviews with leaders and staff members of organizations prior to client interviews. The goal of this strategy was to gain an overall understanding of the organizations and their services before interviewing clients, but we were flexible to accommodate scheduling conflicts and time constraints. In six of the nine visits, management and staff members were interviewed before clients. All interviews were kept confidential, and site visits typically lasted an entire day.

3. SELECTION OF ORGANIZATIONS

IRC and MPI staff visited nine refugee organizations in eight cities in six states between October 2006 and January 2007. All ECBOs were established by refugees to serve refugees and had received ORR funding in FY2006-FY2007.¹³ Some had also received technical assistance from the IRC through Project SOAR. Though the IRC and MPI were unable to secure convenient dates to conduct interviews at organizations on the West Coast, the participating organizations nonetheless represent diverse national and ethnic groups in different locations across the country.

Report Outline

This report first paints an overall portrait of refugee resettlement in the United States by highlighting the size and composition of refugee arrivals.

It then provides an overview of the different dimensions of refugee integration and discusses a range of programs offered by ECBOs that address these issues. Some programs are specifically designed to integrate refugees, while others are de facto integration programs. The report then profiles each ECBO that took part in this study and highlights one or two of their innovative programs.

The last section specifies the challenges faced by ECBOs and their clients, as well as by ORR. It concludes with recommendations on how ECBOs and others can enhance their roles as key players in the refugee integration process.

A PICTURE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Refugee resettlement is “the most secure form of protection that the United States has to offer a refugee”¹⁴ as it offers permanent residence and a path to US citizenship, thereby placing refugees under the protection of the US government.

Refugees fleeing persecution in the former Soviet Union and countries in Southeast Asia dominated refugee flows to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. The eruption of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s and the civil conflicts in Africa and the Middle East since the 1990s have also marked significant periods of refugee flows to the United States.

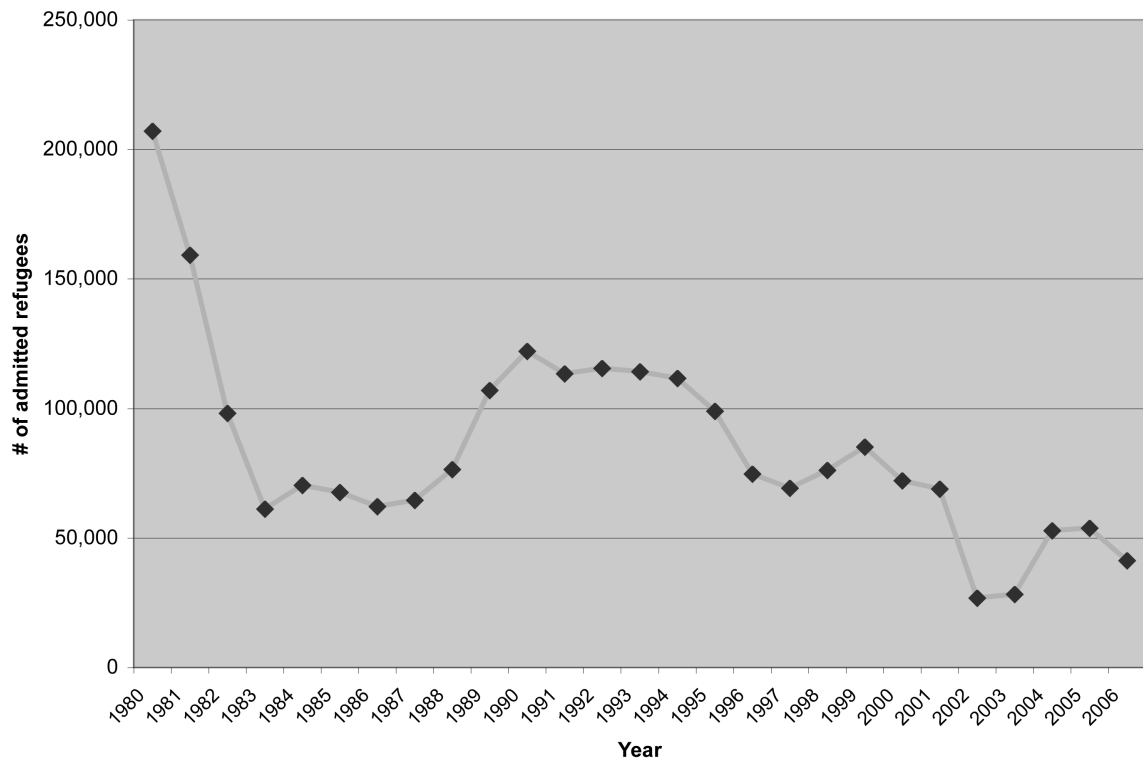
For the past six years, the United States has set its annual refugee admissions ceiling at 70,000, a 70 percent decline from where it was set when first introduced 27 years ago. From 1991 to 2006, actual arrivals were 270,000 refugees short of the total permitted under the annually allotted refugee admissions ceilings.¹⁵ Figure 1 illustrates the downward trend in US refugee admissions since 1980. In recent years, numbers declined most rapidly immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Anti-terrorism legislation such as the material support bar has contributed to the declining numbers since 2001.

Despite this downward trend, the United States continues to resettle more refugees overall than any other country. Of the refugee cases referred by UNHCR in 2005, the United States resettled 60.5 percent of the total number of resettled refugees, while Canada and Australia—the world’s second and third largest countries of refugee resettlement—resettled 15.1 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively.¹⁶ Other countries, however, resettle higher proportions of refugees compared to their native populations.

Between 1980 and 1990, approximately 974,000 refugees arrived in the United States,¹⁷ and by FY2006, that number had increased to 2.3 million.¹⁸ An additional 344,507 individuals were granted asylum from fiscal years 1990 to 2005.¹⁹ When combined, almost 2.4 million refugees and asylees from at least 115 countries entered the United States between 1980 and 2006.²⁰

While refugees are unable to choose where they are resettled, resettlement agencies try to place them in areas where family members, co-ethnics, or compatriots reside. Nevertheless, upon resettlement many move to different locations across the United States to join relatives, to live in places inhabited by co-ethnics, or to find better jobs. From FY1983 to June of FY2004, 30 US metropolitan areas received 71.7 percent of the total refugee population,²¹ and six states—California, Florida, New York, Texas, Washington, and Illinois—resettled 60.2 percent of all resettled refugees during that same period.²² In FY2006, ten states received almost two-thirds (63.5 percent) of all refugees in the United States.²³

Figure 1: Total Refugee Arrivals from 1980 to 2006²⁴



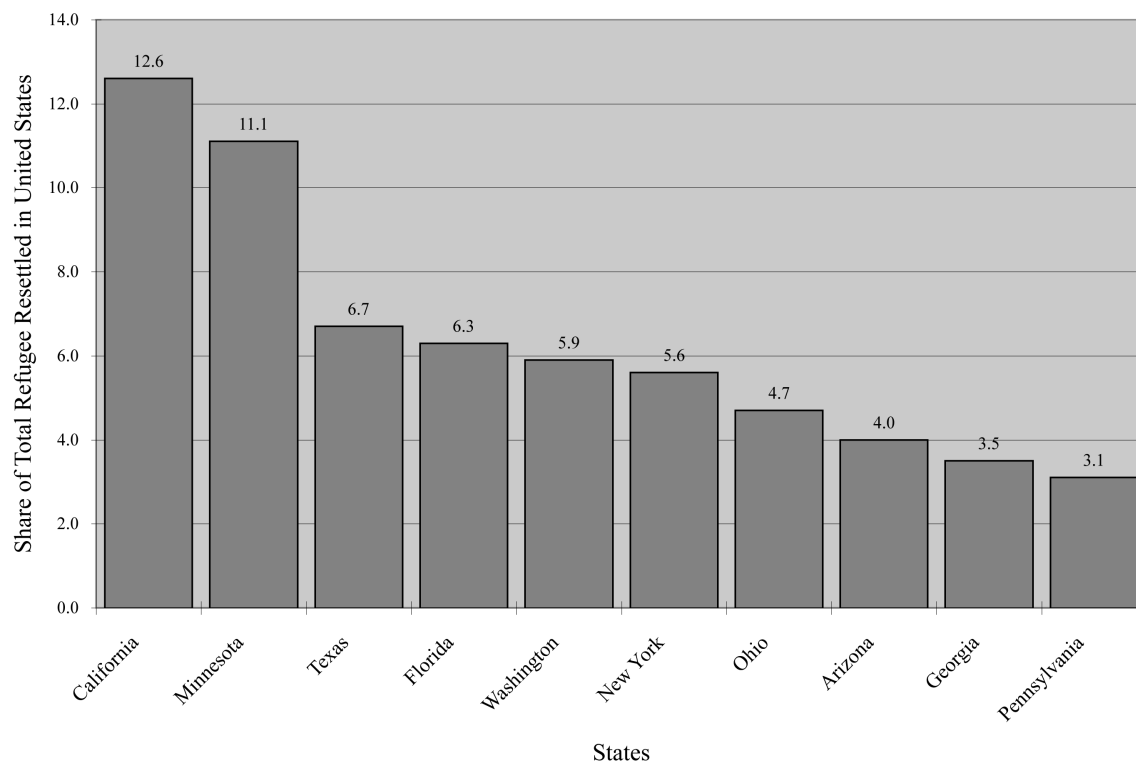
Sources: DHS, "Table 13: Refugee Arrivals: Fiscal Years 1980 to 2005." <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/publications/YrBk05RA.shtm>; US Department of State Refugee Processing Center, "Arrivals by State as of 30 September 2006." <http://www.wrapsnet.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=e9t6SXZQenU%3d&tabid=211&mid=648>.

Table 1: Ten States with Largest Number and Share of Refugees Resettled FY1983–FY2004²⁵

State	Number of Refugees	Share of All US Refugees (%)
California	426,788	21.6
Florida	257,275	13
New York	247,007	12.5
Texas	99,717	5
Washington	86,861	4.4
Illinois	73,415	3.7
Massachusetts	57,408	2.9
Pennsylvania	56,990	2.9
Minnesota	53,479	2.7
Georgia	48,817	2.5
Top 10 Total	1,407,757	71.1
Grand Total	1,978,831 ²⁶	100

Source: ORR Annual Report to Congress—2004, Table 2. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc10appendixA2.htm>.

Figure 2: Share of Total Refugee Arrivals to Top Ten States in the United States in FY2006²⁷

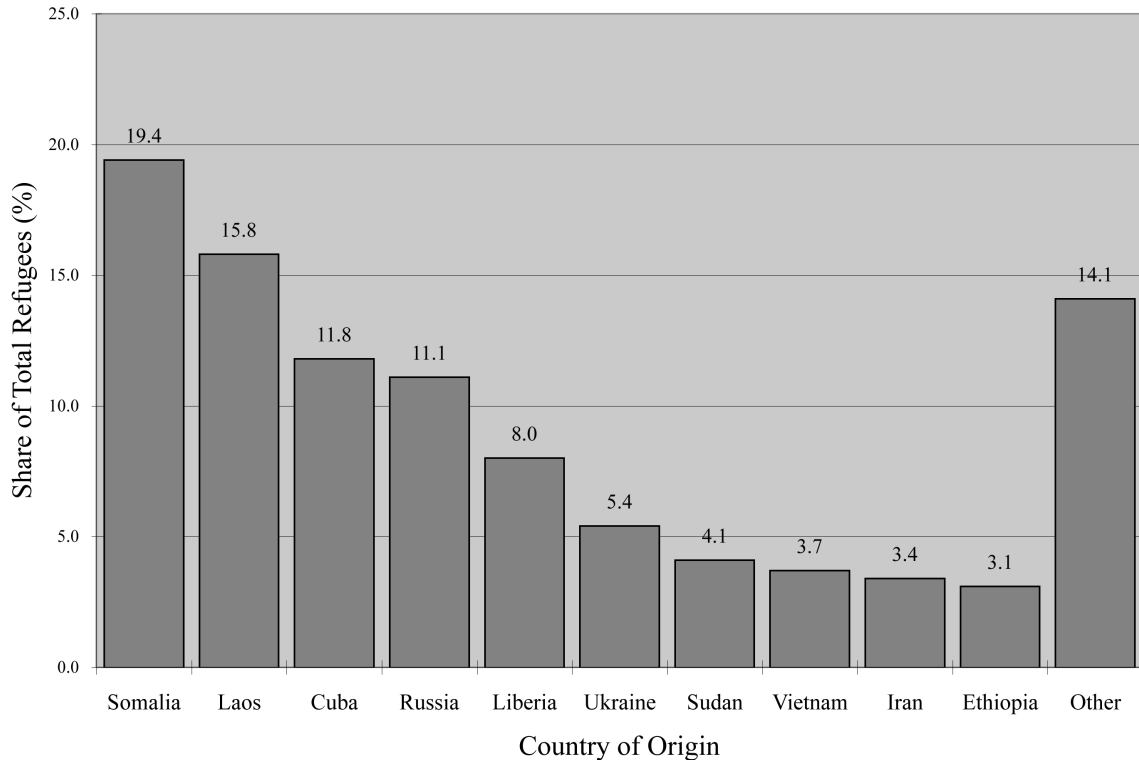


Source: US Department of State Refugee Processing Center, "Arrivals by State as of 30 September 2006." <http://www.wrapsnet.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=e9t6SXZQenU%3d&tabid=211&mid=648>.

In 2005, 86 percent of the 53,813 refugees admitted to the United States through the resettlement program were nationals of ten countries.²⁸ The composition of refugees has shifted over the years, paralleling the evolving humanitarian crises around the world and often reflecting US foreign policy priorities. In FY2003, the largest number of refugees came from the Ukraine (17.9 percent), Liberia (10.4 percent), and Iran (8.7 percent), whereas in FY2005, they mostly originated from Somalia, Laos, and Cuba. Between FY1996 and FY2005, the region that produced the highest number of refugees to the United States was Europe with 43.1 percent of all admitted refugees, followed by Africa with 21.9 percent, Asia with 21.2 percent, North America with 4.6 percent, and Oceania with 0.2 percent.²⁹

Finally, refugees are resettled at different stages in their lives. Those from Laos, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo tend to be younger when they arrive than those from the former Yugoslavia and USSR. In FY2005, nearly one in five Laotian refugees was under the age of 5, and one in three was between the ages of 5 and 17. Similarly, over half of the refugees who arrived in the United States from Burundi in FY2005 were under the age of 17. In general, those fleeing more recent humanitarian crises, such as those in Africa, tend to be younger. By contrast, while no group has very large proportions of elderly refugees, 6.5 percent of refugees from the former Soviet Union and 5.9 percent from Cuba were of retirement age when they arrived in FY2005. Many who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, such as South-east Asians, have reached retirement age in the United States.

Figure 3: Refugee Arrivals by Country of Origin: FY2005³⁰



Source: DHS, Office of Immigration Statistics, Kelly Jefferys, "Refugees and Asylees; 2005." http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/Refugee_Asylee_5.pdf.

Table 2: Refugees Who Arrived in the United States in FY2005 by Country of Origin and Age Category

Under 5 years		School Age (5–17)		Working Age (18–64)	
Country of Origin	Percent	Country of Origin	Percent	Country of Origin	Percent
1. Laos	18.3	1. DRC	38	1. Eritrea	81.9
2. Burundi	16.7	2. Liberia	37.3	2. Former Yugoslavia	76.6
3. Togo	15.1	3. Laos	36.8	3. Iran	75.1
4. DRC*	13.2	4. Burundi	35.6	4. Ethiopia	72.8
5. Sudan	12.8	5. Rwanda	35.4	5. Cuba	70.7
6. Somalia	11.9	6. Afghanistan	34.4	6. Iraq	68.3
7. Burma	10.4	7. Somalia	31.7	7. Sierra Leone	66.7
8. Liberia	9.4	8. Colombia	30.3	8. Burma	66.4
9. Vietnam	9.2	9. Vietnam	26.3	9. Vietnam	63.4
10. Former USSR	8.5	10. Former USSR	26.2	10. Sudan	63
11. Other Countries	4.1	11. Other Countries	30.3	11. Other Countries	63.8
Total Average	10.3	Total Average	28.4	Total Average	57.6

*Note: DRC denotes the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Source: US Department of State, DHS, DHHS, "Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2007: Report to Congress: Table V." <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/74762.pdf>.

DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRATION

Refugees in the United States are not a homogenous group. Some have spent years in refugee camps and suffered from severe discrimination in their home countries; some were never allowed to pursue educational or economic opportunities; and some were educated professionals who left their respective countries because of violent conflict. Regardless of their unique situations, all resettled refugees must learn to adjust to their new environments in the United States.

Integration often comes in stages, consisting of shorter- and longer-term elements that together form a dynamic process. The building blocks of integration such as achieving economic self-sufficiency, learning and respecting a new social and political system, and becoming legal permanent residents or citizens are the most rudimentary factors in any refugee's initial adjustment. Components of longer-term integration, no less important, consist of upward mobility, cultural interaction and ethnic solidarity, and empowerment. While we categorically identify six elements of integration here, it is important to note that both short- and long-term integration form part of a dynamic process, the components of which are interdependent and contingent on diverse personal, cultural, and local contexts. This section details these various dimensions (visually depicted in Figure 4).

The Building Blocks of Integration

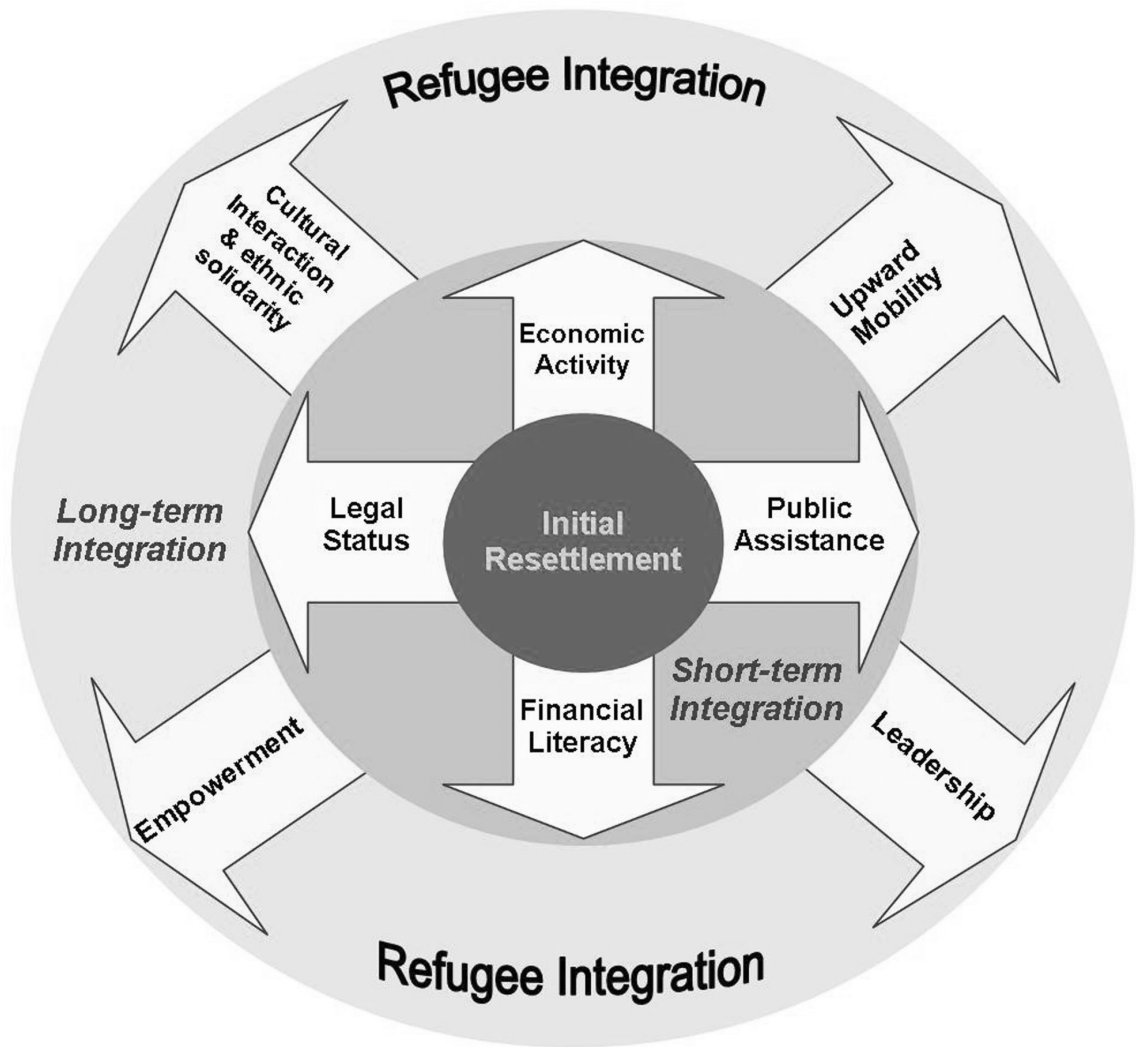
1. ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Finding a job, an essential first step toward achieving economic self-sufficiency, is a challenge for many refugees. Basic English-language skills are a prerequisite for refugees to communicate effectively in the workplace and attain higher paying jobs, yet most arrive with little to no English-language skills and some are illiterate in their native languages. In interviews, resettled refugees frequently cited English-language proficiency as the most significant obstacle to their integration in the community. Other research conducted in New York City and Los Angeles found that immigrants with limited English proficiency are more likely to earn significantly lower wages, experience higher rates of unemployment, be food insecure, and live in poverty than those who are English proficient.³¹ Those with little to no English skills are less likely than English-speaking refugees to find decent-paying jobs, and as a result, many assume temporary jobs that end abruptly and that do not guarantee a steady source of income.

Refugees exhibit disparities in economic activity based on their geographic origins. At 74 percent, Eastern European refugees experienced the highest employment rate among all refugee groups, while only 48 percent of those from the former Soviet Union were employed.³²

Figure 4: The Dynamic Process of Integration



Labor force participation rates were also highest among Eastern Europeans at 79 percent, followed by refugees from Latin America at 77 percent, and Africa at 76 percent.³³ Latin American and African refugees experienced the highest levels of unemployment, while those from Southeast Asia had the lowest.

Women were also less economically active than men on all counts, but the gender difference was particularly stark among African refugees, where 13.6 percent of African female refugees were unemployed compared to 5.9 percent of their male counterparts.³⁴

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Refugees constitute a small portion of the nation's foreign-born population, but they are one of its most vulnerable groups. As such, they are eligible for government cash and medical assistance for eight months upon arrival, and remain eligible for other kinds of public

Table 3: Employment (EPR), Labor Force Participation (LFP), and Unemployment Rate (UR) (%) by Region of Origin in 2004³⁵

Region of origin	EPR (%)	Region of origin	LFP (%)	Region of origin	UR (%)
1. Eastern Europe	73.6	1. Eastern Europe	79.3	1. Latin America	9.5
2. Africa	67.4	2. Latin America	76.5	2. Africa	8.3
3. Latin America	66.9	3. Africa	75.7	3. All	6.7
4. All	62.6	4. All	69.3	4. Eastern Europe	5.7
5. S.E. Asia	57.1	5. S.E. Asia	60.9	5. Middle East	4.9
6. Middle East	50.5	6. Middle East	55.4	6. Former USSR	4.2
7. Former USSR	47.5	7. Former USSR	51.9	7. S.E. Asia	3.7

Source: DHHS, ORR, "Annual Report to Congress—2004." <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc7.htm#4>.

Table 4: Economic Activity among Male and Female Refugees in 2004³⁶

Economic Indicator	Male	Female
Employment Rate (%)	70.8	52.5
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	77.1	59.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.2	7.4

Source: DHHS, ORR, "Annual Report to Congress—2004." <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc7.htm#4>.

benefits thereafter. Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, refugees, unlike other LPRs who entered the United States following the passage of the act, qualify for welfare benefits during their first five to seven years in the United States, depending on the type of benefit. Refugees and LPRs are entitled to a variety of federal benefits such as Social Security, Pell Grants for higher education, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.³⁷ In 1997, Congress restored Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid benefits to all refugees who entered the United States after August 22, 1996, for seven years. Subsequent reauthorization of federal means-tested public benefit programs have removed time restrictions for refugees in Food Stamps, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), but not for SSI.³⁸ Historically, refugees have demonstrated high use of public benefits, partly because of their automatic eligibility for these programs, and partly because of their low incomes.³⁹

Between 1994 and 1999, however, refugee use of such benefits declined dramatically, illustrated by a 78 percent drop in TANF usage; a 53 percent drop in Food Stamps usage; and a 36 percent drop in Medicaid usage.⁴⁰ By 1999, refugee participation in federal means-tested benefit programs, including TANF, Food Stamps, and Medicaid, was slightly lower than that

of natives⁴¹ and after 1999, refugee participation declined even further, more so than among low-income LPRs, naturalized citizens, and native citizens.⁴² Despite their eligibility for all means-tested public benefit programs, by 2002, only seven percent of refugees relied on TANF, amounting to a 34 percent drop from 1994. Similarly, only five percent of refugees received SSI by 2004, a seven percent decline from a decade earlier.

There are several plausible reasons for the decrease in welfare use among refugees. First, the 1996 welfare reform may have had a “chilling effect” on refugees: While refugees remained eligible for benefits after welfare reform in 1996, many may not have known this or may have been afraid to take advantage of their eligibility. Second, some refugees may have exhausted their seven-year eligibility and thus were no longer qualified to receive benefits. Third, fewer refugees may have needed to depend on welfare over time. For example, a higher proportion of refugees now receive health insurance than before: In 1994, only 10 percent of refugees in the United States received health care coverage, which made them the population with the lowest coverage rate; by 2004, however, 20 percent of refugees were receiving coverage for health care, a sign that an increasing share of refugees of working age were employed and received coverage from their employers.⁴³

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Understanding the basics of the US financial system and how to manage financial resources are also essential ingredients to economic integration. Refugees with limited English proficiency find it difficult to open a bank account and to read or pay their bills. Simple transactions such as writing a check or paying the rent may be entirely new concepts to some refugees. Programs such as those offered by the International Rescue Committee educate refugees in English and their native languages about money management, budgeting, paying bills, banking, understanding and establishing credit, and understanding paychecks and taxes.

1. LEARNING AND RESPECTING THE US SYSTEM

Acquiring basic knowledge of one’s rights and responsibilities in the United States is the first step to understanding the terms and conditions of being a good citizen in this country. These include learning the more mundane aspects of the rule of law, such as what to do when one receives a parking ticket, to more serious norms such as the legal consequences of abusing a spouse.

2. LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENCE AND US CITIZENSHIP

Most refugees who resettle in the United States plan to stay for the long term. The steps to securing legal status in the United States, however, are fraught with difficulties, and refugees often need help understanding and completing government paperwork to acquire legal permanent resident (LPR) status or US citizenship, or to file petitions for family reunification.

Refugees and asylees who have physically resided in the United States for at least one year can apply for LPR status. They also become eligible to apply for US citizenship five years after receiving LPR status, unless they have married a US citizen, in which case they become eligible after three years of obtaining said status.⁴⁴

The acquisition of LPR status and US citizenship is both a tangible and symbolic measure of integration for immigrants. The steps to acquire US citizenship, however, are not easy. Refugees must be proficient in English and have knowledge of US civics and history to pass the exam. Adult literacy and English fluency are normally attained many years after initial resettlement and thus require ongoing training, practice, and remedial instruction. Many adult and elderly refugees, particularly those who arrive with little formal education and proficiency in the English language, face difficulties meeting citizenship requirements. While certain exceptions are made in citizenship requirements for the disabled and the elderly, many still do not pass.⁴⁵

The number of refugees and asylees who, after at least one year of residence, were granted LPR status on the basis of special acts⁴⁶ and the landmark Refugee Act of 1980 from FY1946 to FY2004 totals approximately 3.8 million. The distribution of refugees who have obtained LPR status between FY1946 and FY 2004 varies according to the region of origin: Out of the approximately 3.8 million refugees who have been granted LPR status, 40 percent come from Europe; 36.3 percent from Asia; 20.1 percent from North America (mostly from Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua); 3.2 percent from Africa; and 0.4 percent from South America. In recent years, an increasing share of Somali, Iranian, Iraqi, Sudanese, Ethiopian, and Liberian refugees have obtained LPR status.

Elements of Long-Term Integration

1. UPWARD MOBILITY

Refugees strive to ascend the social ladder once they have attained basic economic self-sufficiency. Those who were educated professionals in their native countries but whose professional credentials are not recognized in the United States are particularly concerned about

Table 5: Countries of Origin of Refugees and Asylees Granted Legal Permanent Resident Status FY1946-FY2004⁴⁷

Country of Origin FY1946-FY2004	Number granted LPR status	Share of all refugees granted LPR status (%)
Cuba	712,364	18.5
Vietnam	703,274	18.3
Former Soviet Union*	243,244	6.3
Poland	210,507	5.5
Laos	203,238	5.3
Ukraine	139,800	3.6
Cambodia	128,442	3.3
Germany	106,747	2.8
Serbia and Montenegro**	106,607	2.8
Bosnia-Herzegovina	101,834	2.6

Notes: *Prior to 1992, data include independent republics; beginning in 1992, data are for unknown republic only.

**Yugoslavia (unknown republic) prior to February 7, 2003. Prior to 1992, data include independent republics; beginning in 1992, data are for unknown republic only.

Source: DHS, "Refugees and asylees granted lawful permanent resident status by region and selected country of birth: fiscal years 1946–2004." Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2004. <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2004/Table21.xls>.

Table 6: Countries of Origin of Refugees and Asylees Granted Legal Permanent Resident Status FY2001-FY2004⁴⁸

Country of Origin FY2001-FY2004	Number granted LPR status	Share of all refugees granted LPR status (%)
Cuba	71,305	20.3
Bosnia-Herzegovina	64,243	18.3
Ukraine	30,061	8.6
Vietnam	21,689	6.2
Serbia and Montenegro*	15,842	4.5
Russia	14,156	4.0
Somalia	12,365	3.5
Iran	12,166	3.5
Iraq	9,465	2.7
Croatia	7,555	2.2
Sudan	6,191	1.8
Ethiopia	5,525	1.6
India	5,198	1.5
Liberia	4,907	1.4
Germany	4,286	1.2

Note: *Yugoslavia (unknown republic) prior to February 7, 2003. Prior to 1992, data include independent republics; beginning in 1992, data are for unknown republic only.

Source: DHS, "Refugees and asylees granted lawful permanent resident status by region and selected country of birth: fiscal years 1946–2004." Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2004. <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2004/Table21.xls>.

their upward mobility. As the many accounts of engineers-turned-taxi drivers attest, refugees who were educated professionals find it hard to acquire the US credentials or licenses necessary to practice their former skilled professions. Those who are non-English speaking and low-skilled refugees can often improve their socioeconomic chances by receiving English and vocational training.

Yet despite the initial challenges in finding decent-paying jobs, from 1994 to 2004, refugee families exhibited increasing wages over time. The proportion of refugee families with children that are low-income, defined as those earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, declined from 68 percent in 1994 to 40 percent in 2004, a sharper rate of decline than that for legal permanent residents, naturalized citizens, and native citizens.⁴⁹

Research suggests three possible explanations for this trend in upward mobility. First, the shift in refugee origins from mainly Southeast Asia in the 1980s to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the 1990s may partly account for the increase in educational attainment and increases in family incomes among refugees. Second, refugees who have naturalized or have lived in the United States for a relatively longer period of time than new arrivals may have raised their value in the labor market by acquiring language and vocational skills. Finally, ORR's emphasis on a work-oriented policy that promotes self-sufficiency by expanding opportunities in vocational training and English as a Second Language (ESL) may have contributed to upgrading the status of refugees in the US labor market.⁵⁰ These increases in income, however, by no means suggest that refugees are an affluent population. To the contrary, they are still more likely than natives to earn below 200 percent of the poverty level.⁵¹

Table 7: Employment Statistics of Refugees and Natives over 16 years of age between FY1999 and FY2004⁵⁴

Economic Indicator	Refugees	Natives
Avg. Employment Rate (%)	62.6	62.3
Avg. Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	69.3	66
Avg. Unemployment Rate (%)	6.7	5.5

Source: DHHS, ORR, “Annual Report to Congress—2004.” <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc7.htm#4>.

Over time, refugees demonstrated higher employment⁵² and labor force participation rates⁵³ than natives (see Table 7). While the US employment rate remained close to 62 percent from FY1993 to FY2000, the employment rate among refugees nearly doubled from 33 percent to over 64 percent during that same period. The labor force participation rate also increases among refugees as they spend more time in the United States: In FY2004, those who had arrived in FY2000 had a labor force participation rate of 69 percent, while the rate for those who arrived in FY2004 was lower at 60 percent.

2. CULTURAL INTERACTION AND ETHNIC SOLIDARITY

As with other immigrants, refugees try to form a new identity by striking a balance between American values and ways of life and those of their countries of origin. While many adult refugees express a desire to preserve their cultural values, beliefs, and languages among their descendants, refugee children are often challenged to balance their heritage with the American values and culture to which they have grown accustomed.

While ethnic solidarity—the congregation of individuals around a shared ethnicity—can be perceived by some as a step toward ethnic segregation from the wider community, it can also be an important process that helps refugees and other immigrants actively participate in US civil society via ethnically based interest groups. Many refugee and immigrant groups, including some of those interviewed for this study, have successfully organized to promote their interests at municipal, state, and national levels.

But for many refugees, coming together along ethnic lines is not an immediate phenomenon. Some come from castes, tribes, or ethnic groups that may have opposed, fought, or discriminated against each other prior to resettlement, making it particularly hard for them to bridge internal rifts, recognize each other as equals, and foster cooperation through ethnic solidarity. Some, unable to escape or resolve past differences, preserve internal divisions.

Finally, some refugees face drastically different gender roles than those prevalent in their native cultures. Men of certain national, cultural, or religious backgrounds often feel disempowered by their economic instability in the United States. Women, on the other hand, feel empowered by their ability and right to participate actively in the economy and society. These contrasting circumstances, at the very least, lead to an adjustment within families and social circles, and can result in (sometimes violent) family conflict or family rupture (separation, divorce, and child custody issues).

3. EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP

The adage “Knowledge is power” is an apt reason why empowerment and leadership are crucial to refugee integration. Refugees, particularly those who are women or members of minority groups, can empower themselves by harnessing the opportunities and rights that exist in the United States. Women may feel empowered by their greater economic participation and increased knowledge of topics such as sexual health and opportunities in higher education. Ethnic or tribal minorities may feel stronger and better protected by their rights guaranteed under the US constitution. Youth may expand their horizons through education and programs that help them discover their unknown skills and talents.

In addition to acquiring knowledge and receiving an education, refugees may acquire leadership skills via unconventional educational channels such as learning art in public museums, volunteering in local communities, or mentoring other refugees to become good citizens. ECBOs with leadership development programs tend to concentrate on enhancing civic participation among refugees. As such, many leaders educate them about the democratic political process, including items such as elections, voting, and running for office. Others develop leadership skills among refugees by making them responsible for conducting outreach and delivering services in their neighborhoods and ethnic communities.

ECBOS: BEYOND SERVICE PROVISION

ECBOs are excellent at identifying and responding to the diverse needs of refugees outlined in the previous section. Competent at delivering linguistically and culturally appropriate services, their staff members quickly come to earn the trust and respect of the refugees they serve. But ECBOs differ from mainstream service providers in that their role goes beyond the normal provision of services.

Not only do they help refugees integrate in the short term by offering immediate assistance finding employment or filing legal documents with the government, they also offer creative programs that contribute to medium- and long-term integration. This study found that refugees regarded such programs highly and were very satisfied with their interaction with ECBO staff. As a vital player in refugee integration, ECBOs take on five major roles by acting as:

1. *Service providers* to refugees based on funded and unfunded (volunteer-based) programs that, for example, help refugees learn English, apply for welfare benefits, or find employment;
2. *Civic and political representatives* of refugee populations by advocating for their interests, priorities, and concerns;
3. *Community centers* by planning festivals, events, and activities for people of all ages, ethnicities, and nationalities;
4. *Intermediaries* between refugees and the government (federal, state, and local) as well as the larger community (universities, schools, public libraries, resettlement agencies, etc); and
5. *Partners* with other stakeholders in refugee integration such as government, voluntary resettlement agencies, and other private and public community institutions.

This section briefly describes the common basic services and programs offered by the participating ECBOs.⁵⁵ It then offers data on refugee resettlement in the seven metropolitan areas in which the participating ECBOs are located, profiles each organization according to these metropolitan areas, and portrays one or two of their innovative integration programs.

Service Provision

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP ASSISTANCE

Many refugees arrive in the United States alone, leaving their families in refugee camps or in their countries of origin. Together with voluntary resettlement agencies, ECBOs assist

refugees in completing family reunification forms (I-730), petitions for alien relatives (I-130), and Green Card applications (I-485), sometimes for a small fee. Citizenship programs inform applicants about fees⁵⁶ and procedures, and prepare them for the citizenship test.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Refugees frequently cite lack of English language proficiency as the most difficult short- and long-term challenge they face in the United States. ECBOs address this need by offering different levels of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes on their premises and in shared community facilities. When limited funding impedes the offering of such classes, ECBOs often refer clients to other nearby ESL class providers such as local houses of worship and high schools. Many refugees rely on ECBOs to provide English classes, however, where teachers can speak both English and their native tongues.

SOCIAL SERVICES

A number of ECBOs help refugees identify the social services for which they are eligible. Some, for example, help clients obtain federal and state benefits like Medicaid and provide case management for TANF recipients. Others provide more generic services such as driving elderly clients to medical appointments or helping refugee parents register their children for public schools.

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

Many ECBOs offer or refer their clients to a variety of employment assistance and job training programs and providers. Among other things, such programs can teach refugees how to use a computer, prepare resumes for job interviews, and train them to become teachers or municipal employees. Because not all ECBOs possess the internal capacity to offer a wide range of employment services, some refer refugees to partnering local companies, career centers, and workforce development agencies. The lack of credentialing or accreditation services for educated and professional refugees, however, remains an issue. With no government infrastructure to systematically accredit educated and professionally trained immigrants, refugees can find themselves in adverse and often precarious socioeconomic situations.

YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION

Educational programs that address contemporary cultural and political issues appeal to a wide audience. Some ECBOs hold educational programs for youth on topics that are not always taught in US schools, such as sexual abstinence. In this process, they also educate parents about what public schools do and do not teach. In effect, ECBOs fill the gap in services that are not provided by public institutions such as government agencies or schools. Others organize cultural festivals and discussions on political topics to educate the entire community about their native cultures and histories. Such educational programs can help foster communication and understanding between refugee and non-refugee communities.

HEALTH EDUCATION

Many ECBOs offer culturally appropriate health education programs on diverse topics such as HIV/AIDS, obesity, diabetes, and mental health (with a particular focus on treating the psychological effects of conflict and overcoming the cultural stigma associated with mental health care). Some also provide seminars on understanding and obtaining health insurance.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Refugees who arrive from countries that run on barter systems or have other trade or exchange regimes often are often lost when trying to navigate the US financial system. ECBOs, sometimes in partnership with local banks or voluntary resettlement organizations, offer financial literacy training courses to leaders of other immigrant associations so that they, in turn, can reach out to and educate diverse refugee populations. ECBOs are an essential resource for disseminating information and implementing financial literacy projects across many neighborhoods.

SERVICES FOR SENIORS

Seniors face unique challenges that require separate attention. Elderly refugees and immigrants may require transportation to hospitals, interpretation services, and assistance with health insurance and benefits more than younger refugees. Older refugees face steeper learning curves than children in learning English and other skills that help them integrate into society, making it more difficult for them to pass the citizenship exam.⁵⁷ Furthermore, many seniors who have reached retirement age are generally more concerned about leading a healthy lifestyle than about looking for jobs in the local area. Certain ECBOs function as community centers and organize programs and events to actively involve their elderly populations in everyday activities.

Organization Profiles

A total of nine ECBOs in eight different cities in six states participated in this study. They range from long-established organizations to those that are new and still seeking to diversify their funding sources to support their operations. Each organization holds a unique vision of integration, reflected in many of their innovative services and programs.

Organizations vary in their amounts and sources of funding, the average number of clients served each year, and the composition of their clientele (refugees, asylum seekers, non-refugee immigrants, non-immigrants). Table 8 provides a brief overview of the sites visited.

NEW YORK, NY, PRIMARY METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (PMSA)⁵⁸

- 186,500 refugees were resettled in the New York metropolitan area between FY1983 and June of FY2004, more than any other metropolitan area. Between FY1983 and FY2006, New York resettled 241,458 refugees, second only to California among states.⁵⁹
- Eighty percent of New York's refugees came from the former Soviet Union. Other countries that had over 1,000 resettled are, in rank order, Vietnam, the former Yugoslavia, Iran, Romania, Poland, Afghanistan, Liberia, and Cambodia.

Table 8: Overview of Participating ECBOs

Organization	Date Visited	City	Executive Director	Number of Staff	Population(s) Served
Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst (JCH)	10/25/06	Brooklyn, NY	Vladimir Vishnevskiy, Director of Immigrant Services; Harold Wasserman, JCH Executive Director	50 full-time staff; 100 part-time staff; many volunteers	Russian Jewish refugees and immigrants; Chinese immigrants
Bosnian-American Association of New York City (BAANYC)	1/07/07	Queens, NY	Rasid Nuhanovic	All volunteers	Bosnian refugees
Somali Community Center of Nashville (SCCN)	11/21/06	Nashville, TN	Abdirizak M. Hassan	6 full-time staff; 1 part-time staff member	Somali refugees; Other African (Sudanese, Central African, East African) and Middle Eastern refugees (Iraqis, Kurds, Yemenis)
Montagnard Human Rights Organization (MHRO)	11/17/06	Raleigh, NC	Rong Nay	1 full-time staff member; 7 part-time staff	Montagnard refugees from the Central Highlands of Vietnam
North Carolina African Services Coalition (ASC)	11/16/06	Greensboro, NC	Omer Omer	7 part-time staff	All African refugees and immigrants
Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell (CMAA)	12/7/06	Lowell, MA	Vong Ros	11 full-time staff; 2 part-time staff	Cambodian refugees
Pan-African Association (PAA)	12/19/06	Chicago, IL	Patrick Augustin	9 full-time staff; 3 part-time staff	All African refugees and immigrants
Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE)	1/11/07	St. Paul, MN	Wilhelmina Holder	4 full-time staff; 2 part-time staff; 2 interns	African, Asian, and Latino immigrant and refugee girls and women

(continues)

Table 8 (continued)

Organization	Date Visited	City	Executive Director	Number of Staff	Population(s) Served
Somali International Minorities of America (SIMA)	1/12/07	Minneapolis, MN	Ahmed Keynan	1 full-time, 2 part-time, and 3 volunteer staff	Refugees from nine specific Somali tribes

- The current annual operating budgets of the participating ECBOs ranged from zero to \$5 million.
- The mean average current operating budget among ECBOs was \$816,477.
- The median average current operating budget was \$400,000.
- All organizations received ORR funding in FY2006-FY2007, either directly or indirectly.
- Since beginning operations, four of the nine organizations have received federal grants other than ORR grants, either directly or indirectly; seven of the nine have received state grants; four of the nine have received city grants; eight have received foundation grants; eight have received other private donations; and four collect membership dues or charge clients small fees for services.
- The average number of clients served per year ranged from 60 to 10,000.⁶⁰
- The percentage of refugees among clients served ranged from 15 to 100 percent.

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- Not surprisingly, New York resettled more refugees from the former Soviet Union than any other metropolitan area. It ranked second for its number of Iranian refugees.

The Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst (JCH)

Executive Director of JCH: Harold Wasserman

Director of Immigrant Services: Vladimir Vishnevskiy

Associate Director of Immigrant Services: Lyubov Mikityansky

Established in 1927, the Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst (JCH) serves the Russian Jewish community in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. With 50 full-time and 100 part-time staff members, JCH counts approximately 10,000 to 15,000 clients per year.⁶¹ The Russian Jewish elderly comprise 20 percent of JCH's total clientele, but account for 65–70 percent of the clients served by the organization's Department of Immigrant Services. JCH has an annual operating budget of over \$5 million, with \$1.6 million coming from direct and indirect government grants; \$1.5 million from the UJA-Federation of New York; and the rest originating from membership and program fees, special events, and individual donors.

The Department of Immigrant Services offers programs in ESL, civic education, registration, case management, citizenship, domestic violence, mental health, and interest-free loans. As a community center, JCH also hosts myriad other activities, including daycare, after-school programs, fitness activities, SAT and college preparation, and Shabbat and Jewish holiday services.

Vladimir Vishnevskiy and Lyubov Mikityansky, Director and Associate Director of Immigrant Services, stated that although one of the department's main goals is to ensure the self-sufficiency of their clients, JCH envisions long-term integration as a process of balancing societal integration with the preservation of Russian Jewish identity.

Bensonhurst Business Club JCH's Bensonhurst Business Club (BBC), established in 2002, serves as a networking and community organization for the Russian American business community. A member of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, BBC is now in its fifth year and boasts 100 members. BBC allows successful members to share their business practices with newer members, while providing a forum for Russian American businesses to highlight their products and services. The club charges an annual membership fee of \$150.

The club places a high value in giving back to the Jewish community. As co-founders Felix Filler and Alec Teytel state, "You need to put your soul to work." BBC requires all members to perform community outreach, while providing technical skills to new entrepreneurs. In addition, BBC screens and recommends small Russian American businesses for free micro-enterprise loans of up to \$25,000 from the Hebrew Free Loan Society. Thus far, 18 businesses have received such loans.

The Bensonhurst Business Club exemplifies JCH's broader vision of integration. The BBC's community involvement is in keeping with the Jewish value of *sedaka*, the highest level of charity that allows individuals to become self-sufficient and, in turn, make contributions themselves. The club promotes the economic mobility and entrepreneurship of immigrants and refugees while seeking to preserve the identity of the Russian Jewish community.

Elderly Services The Russian Jewish elderly of Bensonhurst represent unique integration challenges. Many are refugees who have arrived since the fall of the former Soviet Union. These elderly refugees, some of whom are also Holocaust survivors, experienced anti-Semitic discrimination in the former USSR, and according to Vladimir Vishnevskiy, have had to continually suppress their heritage and identity.

Innovative programs like the Silver Sneakers program, a preventive measure to keep seniors out of hospitals and doctors' offices in which private health insurance companies pay for seniors' use of fitness facilities at JCH, try to integrate elderly refugees into the community by offering everyday activities. JCH's Older Adult Groups, such as those on Jewish heritage, Israel, Russian and American literature, health education, and Holocaust survivors, provide ways for elderly refugees to discover and celebrate their identity and interests. Senior citizens manage the groups, allowing them to strengthen and demonstrate leadership in their community. The Older Adult Groups have been tremendously popular, despite their lack of funding.

Vishnevskiy states, "You cannot integrate if you are not happy in your new country," emphasizing the importance of these groups in helping the Russian Jewish elderly find pride and happiness in their ethnic identity. The groups also provide elderly refugees with a sense of purpose. As the leader of the Israeli Club stated, "The biggest problem for older people is finding a way to be useful. Here at JCH, I find a way to be useful."

Bosnian-American Association of New York City (BAANYC)

President: Rasid Nubanovic

Vice President: Mustafa Tanovic

The Bosnian-American Association of New York City (BAANYC) was established in December 1999 by Bosnians who had fled the war in the former Yugoslavia during the first half of the 1990s. Astoria, Queens, has been home to immigrants from the former Yugoslavia since the 1970s. After witnessing the formation and activities of other ECBOs that catered to Jews, Chinese, and Hispanics, a group of eight Bosnians organized themselves to support the Bosnian community. BAANYC helps Bosnians adapt to the lifestyle and society of the United States through education (civics, ESL classes, computer classes, and health education) and the provision of useful services. The organization believes that robust management is the key to offering clients quality services that meet their needs.

BAANYC received its first major grant in 2003 from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, but it relies on membership dues to support its activities. It has provided and sponsored an array of activities, festivals, and lectures for the community, including:

- Presentations on health care, health insurance, mental health, women's health, drug and substance abuse, and healing from war;
- Lectures by Bosnian politicians on the situation in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia;
- Movie screenings on Srebrenica and a Bosnian film festival in New York;
- Book presentations on the Bosnian war;
- Educational tours to major cities in the United States and Canada;
- Folk dancing;
- Mentorship program to inform high school students about college admissions, student loans, and financial aid; and

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- Three levels of ESL classes; employment referrals; computer classes; preparation for citizenship tests; and education on US laws.

Currently, all staff members work on a volunteer basis to organize events or offer activities such as piano lessons or Bosnian language classes. Weekly announcements about BAANYC's programs and events are broadcasted on Bosnian radio. The 11-member, mostly Bosnian, management team plans to welcome young Bosnian college graduates to its board.

BAANYC distinguishes itself from the local mosque, emphasizing the fact that it is a non-religious, multiethnic, and multilingual organization. It strives to foster an open environment that serves Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians among others. BAANYC believes that integration means "to help our people accept the American lifestyle and live independently by securing a job, and to teach them not to lose their identity or forget their country."

Medical Help Program Since 2000, the Bosnian-American Association of New York City has offered transportation to and interpretation services at hospitals to its refugee clients. The organization capitalized on its access to Bosnian media outlets (radio, newspaper, television) in New York to advertise and recruit students to serve as transporters and interpreters at local hospitals. With up to 15 paid, mostly college, students, BAANYC has made regular and emergency medical services more accessible to its clients.

In addition to facilitating access to doctors, BAANYC has also tapped its ethnic network to refer clients to Bosnian doctors who treat them at discounted prices or for free. Bosnian gynecologists, plastic surgeons, ophthalmologists, and psychologists are consulted regularly, offering advice in their respective fields. The organization has hosted presentations and discussions on women's health, skin cancer, substance abuse, and health insurance.

NASHVILLE, TN, METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA)⁶²

- Over 9,400 refugees were resettled in the Nashville metropolitan area between FY1983 and June of FY2004. Between FY1983 and FY2006, Tennessee resettled 19,689 refugees, ranking 22nd among states.⁶³
- The Nashville metropolitan area ranked 33rd for its number of refugees resettled between 1983 and 2004.
- Half of the refugees resettled in Nashville came from Iraq, Vietnam, Laos, and former Yugoslavia, which each had over 1,000 refugees resettled there. Almost one-quarter came from sub-Saharan Africa, mainly Somalia and Sudan.

Somali Community Center of Nashville (SCCN), Nashville, TN

Executive Director: Abdirizak M. Hassan

Founded in 2000 by Somali refugees and currently led by Abdirizak M. Hassan, the Somali Community Center of Nashville (SCCN) serves Somali and other African and Middle Eastern refugees in the Nashville metropolitan area. A full mutual assistance association, SCCN offers a variety of programs that include social adjustment; ESL; health education; abstinence; youth activities; translation and interpretation; immigration and

family reunification assistance; and services such as referrals and educational programs on “SOM-TV.”

SCCN has six full-time and one part-time staff who serve approximately 400 clients every month. SCCN funding sources include the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Office of Minority Health, and the Tennessee State Department of Health. SCCN is also a sub-grantee on several projects and receives further funding streams by charging modest fees for high-demand services, such as family reunification and Green Card applications.

According to Hassan, SCCN views integration as a way for refugees to successfully handle daily issues and become self-sufficient, in addition to overcoming the ethnic and tribal differences that existed in Somalia. This inclusive approach is evident in the diversity of its clientele and the wide range of programs offered to help refugees become self-sufficient.

Mental Health Programs SCCN offers the Mental Health Access for Refugees and Immigrants (MHARI) with their grant partners, the Sudanese Community Association of Tennessee and the mental health provider Centerstone. MHARI seeks to increase knowledge and awareness of mental health issues and refer refugees to appropriate mental health providers. SCCN held focus groups to understand the specific needs of the community and learned that mental health facilities often carried a stigma and thus impeded access to care.

SCCN tries to modify such negative preconceptions of mental health institutions by holding community meetings in mental health facilities on popular topics such as employment, Medicaid, and child rearing in addition to mental health. Separate meetings are held for Somalis and for other Africans, such as Sudanese and Central Africans, to offer culturally tailored services to these groups. Salaad Nur, coordinator of the program, is pleased at the success of MHARI in encouraging otherwise reluctant clients with serious mental health conditions to utilize mental health services. A number of Somalis, Sudanese, and Central Africans have self-referred for mental health assessments following the community meetings.

Refugee School Impact Program As a growing receiving community for refugees and immigrants, Nashville faces challenges in adjusting its services to the needs of these groups. To address this issue, the English Language Learner (ELL) Office of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools partnered with SCCN to implement the School Impact Program under the provision of state funds. The program offers training sessions where teachers and parents can discuss problems and cultural issues with regard to the education of refugee children. Teachers can discuss communication problems and learn more about behavioral issues that may stem from a child’s refugee experience. Salaad Nur, program coordinator, stated that parents serve as “quality control” monitors because they can best assess how much their children are learning and if they are experiencing difficulty in school.

SCCN also utilizes Somali-language DVDs produced by an adult literacy center in Minnesota to educate Somali parents about the roles and context of the American school system. Many parents are surprised to find that schools in the United States, unlike those in Somalia, do not serve to instill moral values such as abstinence. The DVDs play on a television in the SCCN lobby where clients wait for appointments. (DVDs on other topics such as domestic violence will be available soon.)

RALEIGH-DURHAM-CHAPEL HILL, NC, MSA⁶⁴

- Almost 2,000 refugees were resettled in the Raleigh-Durham metropolitan area between FY1983 and June of FY2004. Between FY1983 and FY2006, North Carolina resettled 20,187 refugees, ranking 21st among states.⁶⁵
- The Raleigh-Durham metropolitan area ranked 106th for the number of refugees it resettled between 1983 and 2004.
- Forty percent of the refugees resettled in Raleigh-Durham came from Vietnam, with another 17 percent from the former USSR and Yugoslavia combined.

Montagnard Human Rights Organization (MHRO), Raleigh, NC

Executive Director: Rong Nay

Director of Operations: Vien Siu

The Montagnard Human Rights Organization was founded as a nonprofit agency in 1998. Located in Raleigh, NC, it also serves clients in Greensboro and Charlotte. Led by Rong Nay, who served as assistant commander of the Montagnard Resistance Forces in southeast Asia, the organization has one full-time and seven part-time staff members, currently all serving on a voluntary basis. MHRO advocates for the protection of human rights of the indigenous Montagnards of the Central Highlands in Vietnam and assists Montagnard refugees to resettle in North Carolina. As part of MHRO's larger advocacy mission, Nay speaks at local churches to educate the greater community about the human rights situation of the Montagnards and seek sponsors for new arrivals. Since it received its first three-year federal grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in 2003, the organization has helped 180 individuals to adjust to their new lives in the United States.

Staff members help their clients meet the immediate challenges of community integration by, among other things, registering children for school, driving the elderly to doctors' appointments, helping refugees complete family reunification and Green Card applications, and teaching English to the elderly in preparation for their citizenship exams. Such activities form part of MHRO's larger view of integration: to help Montagnards in North Carolina gain self-sufficiency and a greater understanding of democracy.

MHRO Understanding Democracy Seminars MHRO's refugee clients have endured and escaped political repression and persecution in Communist-dominated Vietnam, and thus need guidance in recognizing their rights and responsibilities in the United States. The Understanding Democracy Seminars help clients better understand American democracy by teaching about voting and citizenship and offering tips on building trustworthy relationships in the United States. Thus far, 103 people have attended these seminars.

Americans, such as a local lawyer, the Greensboro Director of Elections, and refugee sponsors, are invited to lead the seminars. While self-sufficiency is MHRO's immediate goal in assisting their clients, these seminars fulfill their long-term vision of integration. By involving the greater community and educating Montagnards about their role in democracy, Nay and Siu aim to increase the civic, political, and social participation of Montagnards in the United States.

GREENSBORO—WINSTON-SALEM—HIGH POINT, NC, MSA⁶⁶

- Over 6,000 refugees were resettled in the Greensboro metropolitan area between FY1983 and June of FY2004. Between FY1983 and FY2006, North Carolina resettled 20,187 refugees, ranking 21st among states.⁶⁷
- The Greensboro metropolitan area ranked 51st for its number of refugees resettled between 1983 and 2004.
- Forty percent of the refugees resettled in Greensboro came from Vietnam, with another 20 percent from the former Yugoslavia. Twelve percent came from sub-Saharan Africa.

North Carolina African Services Coalition (ASC), Greensboro, NC

Director: Omer Omer

The African Services Coalition (ASC), formally founded in 1997 with the sponsorship of AmeriCorps and Lutheran Family Services, provides essential social and community services to the African community in North Carolina. Under the direction of Omer Omer, the Sudanese executive director of ASC who arrived in the United States in 1995, the organization serves approximately 1,500 clients per year. ASC offers case management; translation and interpretation; job training and placement programs; health education; ESL, GED, and citizenship classes; and acculturation programs. For some of its services, ASC partners with other ethnic organizations. In addition, ASC conducts cultural outreach to the greater community by holding an annual Pan-African Festival. ASC facilitates the arrangement of speaking engagements at which refugees share their experiences at churches, museums, and libraries.

ASC has received funding from the North Carolina Office of Minority Health and, since partnering with the North Carolina Office of Refugee Resettlement in 2000, has also received federal targeted assistance grants. Its Pan-African Festival is sponsored by American Express and the North Carolina Humanities Council.

Omer views integration as a three-step process in which refugees 1) learn how to communicate in their new home and not be intimidated; 2) become self-sufficient; and 3) feel a sense of personal belonging to the United States. While Omer and his staff admit that many refugees have difficulty achieving this last stage of integration, he is clear about ASC's role in the process: "Our program serves to help clients make the shift from Africa to America. Once they make that initial shift, they trust us and feel comfortable, relaxed, and confident. Then and only then can they follow a path to be part of the broader community."

HIV Outreach Program The HIV Outreach Program helps African refugees overcome the cultural stigma attached to HIV/AIDS by educating them about the virus. The program impacts more than the health of refugees: it educates and empowers clients with the knowledge needed to take control of their personal well-being. Blanche Wordsworth, HIV Outreach Coordinator, says many refugees deny the existence of HIV/AIDS in the United States. Although cultural attitudes inhibit frank discussions on sex, Wordsworth stated that her clients appreciate receiving any information. Since its inception over a year ago, the HIV Outreach Program has educated 2,014 clients.

Lost Boys of Sudan Storytelling The Sudanese refugee clients of ASC participate in public education seminars throughout the Greensboro community, where they discuss their displacement from Sudan to Ethiopia, then to Kenya, and finally to the United States. The demand for these services has been high, and the clients have spoken at community colleges, universities, churches, and libraries. There are approximately 15 to 20 storytelling sessions per year, with audiences ranging from 50 to 250 people. The African Services Coalition donates the money raised from these events to Project Education Sudan,⁶⁸ a nonprofit organization working to build primary and secondary schools in war-torn southern Sudan.

In addition to fostering greater communication with other Greensboro residents, the Lost Boys of Sudan Storytelling also allows clients to build a sense of belonging in their new home, as clients see that the American community cares about their past experiences. The storytelling program is one example of how ASC's cultural outreach has led to a rather positive response in this new immigrant- and refugee-receiving community.

LOWELL, MA, MSA⁶⁹

- 1,935 refugees were resettled in the Lowell metropolitan area between FY1983 and June of FY2004. Between FY1983 and FY2006, Massachusetts resettled 56,777 refugees, ranking eighth among states.⁷⁰
- The Lowell metropolitan area ranked 105th for its number of refugees resettled between 1983 and 2004.
- Over 90 percent of the refugees resettled in Lowell came from Southeast Asia: half were from Cambodia, with another 20 each from Vietnam and Laos.

Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell (CMAA), Lowell, MA

Executive Director: Vong Ros

The Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA) was founded in 1984 to serve Cambodians and Southeast Asians residing in the Lowell area. Lowell is home to an estimated 35,000 Cambodian refugees, making them roughly one quarter of the city's population. CMAA is headed by Executive Director Vong Ros, who was himself a CMAA client when he arrived as a Cambodian refugee at age eight. CMAA offers educational, workforce development, health, citizenship, and cultural programs, in addition to providing basic social services such as assistance with school registration. The organization has 11 full-time and 2 part-time staff members who serve approximately 500 clients annually. CMAA receives funds from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Massachusetts State Department of Mental Retardation, the United Way, the City of Lowell, and from foundations and individual donors. In 1999, it received its first ORR grant to increase community employment.

CMAA tries to integrate its refugee clients by helping them preserve and celebrate Cambodian culture and enhance their ability to become self-sufficient. According to Executive Director Ros, "Pol Pot murdered over 2 million Cambodians, most of them formally educated, because he saw them as a threat that could rebel against his evil ruling. As the survivors of this trauma, we must work to rebuild a caring and loving community with good health, values, and respect that existed prior to the Khmer Rouge regime. I believe the best people that can help Cambodians heal are Cambodians, with help from other communities as well."

CMAA “Guide to Healthy Eating” Funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Services, and the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention, CMAA created a “Guide to Healthy Eating,” which includes traditional Cambodian food recipes that are lower in fat, salt, and sugar than traditional recipes. According to Jeri Peterman, a dietician at CMAA, refugee clients tend to overeat, given the abundance of food in the United States, especially after being deprived of adequate nourishment during their time in refugee camps. The availability of inexpensive meat and products with high sugar, salt, and fat content has changed eating habits and caused some to suffer from heart disease, high cholesterol, and diabetes. The “Guide to Healthy Eating” illustrates how Cambodian clients can eat their native foods in a healthier manner by making a few adjustments to their recipes.

The cookbook has helped Cambodians improve their quality of life through suggestions for healthier eating and preserve an important part of their culture. “There are many skills we need to teach our community to help them rebuild their lives in their new country. Good health has been a neglected topic, but we are now making it a high priority because our clients cannot achieve anything without good health,” said Ros. In addition to the cookbook, Peterman holds Cambodian cooking demonstrations for the greater Lowell community to create a venue to foster interaction between members of the Cambodian and non-Cambodian communities.

CHICAGO, IL, PMSA⁷¹

- Over 63,000 refugees were resettled in the Chicago metropolitan area between FY1983 and June of FY2004. Between FY1983 and FY2006, Illinois resettled 73,428 refugees, ranking sixth among states.⁷²
- Chicago ranked third for its number of refugees resettled between 1983 and 2004.
- Over one third of Chicago’s refugees came from the former Soviet Union, and another one-fifth from the former Yugoslavia. Vietnam, Romania, Poland, Iraq, and Cambodia each had between 2,700 and 5,700 refugees resettled in Chicago.
- Chicago resettled more refugees from the former Yugoslavia than any other metropolitan area. It ranked second for its number of refugees from Iraq, and third for its number of refugees from the former Soviet Union and from Cambodia.

Pan-African Association (PAA), Chicago, IL *Executive Director: Patrick Augustin*

The Pan-African Association, founded in 2002, aims to serve, empower, and promote the interests of all refugees, asylees, and immigrants of African descent residing in the Chicago metropolitan area. Headed by Haitian-born Patrick Augustin, PAA has nine full-time and three part-time staff members who serve 700 clients annually. PAA provides vocational training programs in computer literacy, cleaning, and sanitation; ESL and citizenship classes; adjustment assistance, including instruction to new African refugees on how to survive Chicago’s harsh winters; health education and outreach to the African community; and cultural programs, such as Ramadan and other holiday celebrations, African dance classes, and storytelling. PAA’s Somali Bantu Project also provides additional adjustment assistance to this particularly vulnerable population.

PAA has relied mainly on funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Illinois Departments of Human Services and of Public Health. In 2006, PAA diversified its funding sources to include foundations and other government agencies. PAA is currently devising a strategic and fundraising plan.

Augustin states that PAA's vision of integration is to provide clients with programs that assist them in becoming self-reliant, in addition to guidance and training that help them become contributing members to their new community, city, and country.

Mentoring Program PAA has implemented a mentoring program for newly arrived refugees in which a native-born volunteer or a long-established refugee serves as the mentor to help new arrivals increase their English-language proficiency and acquire computer skills. Mentors also explain everyday know-how which is foreign to refugees, share their thoughts on American culture, and offer simple companionship to clients. Thus far, 120 mentors have helped over 180 clients.

As Augustin states, "The mentors not only assist clients one-on-one during their adjustment and integration process, but help clients feel welcome in the US and provide them with first-hand experience of American lifestyle and culture."

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL, MN, MSA⁷³

- Over 41,000 refugees were resettled in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area between FY1983 and June of FY2004. Between FY1983 and FY2006, Minnesota resettled 63,337 refugees, ranking 7th among states.⁷⁴
- Ranking only 30th among metro areas for its number of foreign born in 2000, Minneapolis "jumps rank" to 8th for its number of refugees resettled between 1983 and 2004.
- Forty percent of refugees resettled in Minneapolis came from Southeast Asia (a third from Laos and 11 percent from Vietnam). One-third was resettled from countries in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly Somalia, Ethiopia, and Liberia. Almost a one-fifth came from the former USSR.
- Minneapolis resettled a higher number of refugees from Somalia than any other metro area (14 percent), and was ranked second for its resettlement of Ethiopian and Laotian refugees (9.5 percent).
- Minneapolis has resettled a steady and significant share of the national refugee population over the period. It ranks behind only metropolitan New York for its number of refugees resettled in the 2000s (each resettled over 10,000).

Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), St. Paul, MN *Executive Director: Wilhelmina Holder*

Founded in 1995 by immigrant women, the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE) provides empowerment and leadership training to African, Asian, and Latino immigrant and refugee women and girls in Minnesota. Led by Wilhelmina Holder, a Liberian native, WISE has three full-time and two part-time employees as well as two interns. WISE currently offers programs in financial literacy; empowerment, leadership development, and education on democracy for teenage girls; and an empowerment program for developmen-

tally disabled Asians and their families. During 2006, WISE served at least 625 clients, 75 percent of whom are refugees, 20 percent immigrants and 5 percent native born.

WISE has received funding from the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Minnesota Governor's Council of Developmental Disabilities, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, the Metropolitan Regional Council of Arts, and numerous private donors, including the McKnight, Women's, Otto Bremer, Headwaters, and Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundations. WISE also partners with many other organizations in the Twin Cities to capitalize on resources and strengths and build synergy in the nonprofit community.

According to Holder, WISE views integration as "a process of learning and understanding social, cultural, political, and economic systems; strategic networking; using appropriate resources to meet essential needs; and participating in these systems to achieve self-sufficiency and community development." Through its empowerment and training programs, WISE helps women and girls learn about available resources and discover their own skills and talents to improve their lives and those of others.

Girls Getting Ahead Leadership (GGAL)/Girls Democracy in Action (GDIA) The GGAL program invites immigrant and refugee girls (ages 16–19) to apply for a two-year training program focusing on educational potential and self-empowerment. As the girls and their families are not familiar with the US education system, GGAL addresses participants' achievement in high school, financial aid opportunities and college preparation, and career paths. According to Mai Lee Yang, GGAL program coordinator, such information allows girls to make educated decisions about their futures. As most girls come from cultures in which women are disempowered, GGAL also works to build girls' self-esteem so that they can fully develop the capacity to achieve and advocate for themselves.

The Girls Democracy in Action (GDIA) is part of the GGAL program and teaches girls about American democracy, and encourages participants to share and discuss what they learn with their parents and families. GDIA also serves other roles: it teaches participants how to increase their civic participation in their local communities; encourages them to acquire US citizenship; register to vote; and become more involved in creating political change.

Now in operation for five years, the GGAL/GDIA program has been very successful. Many participants have gone on to college and several have received scholarships, such as the Bill Gates Millennium Scholarship and individual scholarships to St. Paul's College. According to Yang, the GGAL program meshes well with WISE's greater vision of integration by helping immigrant girls and their families benefit from the best opportunities offered by the American educational system.

Financial Literacy Initiative for Immigrants (FLII) WISE's Financial Literacy Program is a joint initiative with other nonprofit organizations in the Twin Cities to create an "Immigrant Wealth Campaign." FLII has three specific program areas: home buying, savings and investments, and asset protection and insurance. It teaches newly resettled refugee and immigrant women how to navigate the basics of the US financial system, such as how to open and maintain a bank account, pay bills, and use a credit card wisely. FLII develops the basic skills necessary to manage money more effectively.

In keeping with its philosophy of building partnerships, WISE also uses its “Becoming Part of Wealth in America” curriculum to certify staff members of other nonprofit organizations and ethnic community leaders (such as tribal elders and religious leaders in Somali communities) in financial literacy training. Through this process of delegating responsibility to the most effective agents, WISE builds the capacity of other organizations and communities to provide culturally appropriate financial education programs to the people with whom they have constant interaction.

*Somali International Minorities of America (SIMA)*⁷⁵

President: Fatima Dubat

Executive Director: Ahmed Keynan

Vice President: Beshir Diriye

The Somali International Minorities of America (SIMA) was founded in 2001 to support the minorities of Somalia in Minneapolis–St. Paul and in other parts of the United States. The organization’s main role is to represent and advocate for members of Somali ethnic minority tribes that together constitute what is known in the Somali constitution as the “Others,” an outcast group in Somalia. It tries to educate the broader public about the transplantation of tribal divides from Somalia to the United States, and the need to combat discrimination against minorities and promote equality among all. As Bashir Diriye, vice president of SIMA notes, “Integration means not to be discriminated against based on one’s origins and to make everything equal, including access to the larger community.” Leaders of SIMA primarily view integration as the achievement of equal rights and opportunity.

Approximately 6,500 refugees from Somalia settled in the Twin Cities between 1983 and 2004, but SIMA’s clients are mostly those who entered the United States in the last five years.⁷⁶ Most clients can neither speak nor read English, and many are low income. Not all clients are from the minority groups, but those who are minorities stressed the importance of coalescing to foster ethnic solidarity and tribal cohesion to promote pride in their identity.

SIMA focuses its efforts in assisting refugees to file immigration documents, receive an education, and preserve their culture. Staff members also help refugees find housing and employment, offer interpretation services, and explain citizenship requirements. Many Somali children and adults who learn English and math in schools encounter difficulties in the classroom because teachers do not teach refugees at their respective comprehension levels. To fill this gap in the education system, SIMA offers English and math classes that are adjusted to suit the levels of their students.

One full-time, two part-time, and three volunteers serve 300 clients annually. The organization received funds from the Otto Bremer Foundation, United Way, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement in addition to individual donors and \$10 membership fees. SIMA has benefited from being a member of Minnesota nonprofit coalitions that help them learn about managing a nonprofit organization. SIMA publishes its annual bilingual news journal, *The Dulman* (“Victimized”) *Voice*, and utilizes ethnic media outlets to disseminate information about its programs and activities.

Public Lectures on Equality and Somali Tribes Ahmed Keynan and his colleagues at SIMA have drawn large crowds to public lectures at the University of Minnesota, the Minneapolis

Convention Center, and local television stations (Somali TV, Mai-TV) to raise awareness among the Somali, American, and international communities about the silent discrimination against the “Others.” SIMA goes beyond its mission as a local service provider by engaging in advocacy for Somali minorities around the world.

CHALLENGES

Both the commonly requested services and unique integration programs of ECBOs have helped resettled refugees transition into their new homes. But refugees and ECBOs still face numerous challenges. This section elucidates the challenges faced by refugees, ECBOs, and ORR as they strive to help refugees integrate successfully in the United States.

Challenges for Clients

Despite refugees' satisfaction with ECBO programs, they still face numerous challenges, some logistical and others directly related to their linguistic, socioeconomic, or cultural integration.

1. LOGISTICAL BARRIERS

LOCATION AND TRANSPORTATION

Refugees, with the help of their sponsors, resettlement agencies, or ECBOs, are placed in housing and offered assistance through a case worker. However, those who live in areas that lack efficient public transportation find it difficult to get to work or to ECBOs. Even when public transportation is available, newly resettled refugees who lack English skills or literacy have great difficulty in communicating or reading where they would like to go. While many cited their desire to learn how to drive and obtain a driver's license, many lacked the financial resources or literacy skills to take or pass a driving test.

TIME

Refugees who talked to interviewers were available for the following reasons: 1) they did not have a job; 2) they took time off of work; 3) they arrived after work; or 4) they were free during a weekend. Balancing family and work obligations is inherently difficult and presents a challenge for refugees who seek services at ECBOs and other service providers. A commonly voiced concern was the lack of accessible English classes and childcare offered during off-work hours. If refugees lived or worked far from where ECBOs or English classes were located, they were less likely to utilize their services.

CHILD CARE

Access to child care can help children of immigrants prepare for school, and allow both them and their parents learn English through family literacy programs.⁷⁷ Research shows

that the children of immigrants are less likely to be in child care than the children of natives. While 66 percent of the children of natives under the age of six are in one of four principal forms of non-parental child care, only 47 percent of children of immigrants are in these forms of child care.⁷⁸ Twenty-six percent of native children and 17 percent of children of immigrants under the age of 6 are in center-based care (including day care centers, Head Start, nursery school, preschool, and pre-kindergarten).⁷⁹ Thirty percent of children of native parents who work are in center-based child care compared to 23 percent of children of working immigrants.⁸⁰ Finally, while 23 percent of the low-income children of natives use center-based care, only 15 percent of the children of their immigrant counterparts do so.

Child care usage among immigrants may be lower for a number of reasons including the lack of locally accessible child care; the lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate services; and the lack of financial resources or subsidies to afford child care.⁸¹ Many parents, particularly refugee mothers, cited affordable and adequate child care as both a general concern and one that impedes them from accessing services at ECBOs. The cost of child care, in particular, represented a significant challenge; during one site visit, clients stated that they spent over 60 percent of their income on child care.

2. INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Overall, refugees expressed frustration and fear about their inability to speak English. Those who had lived in the United States for several years or who arrived at a young age were more likely to speak English than new arrivals or those who arrived at an older age. Some refugee parents occasionally practiced English at home with their children who learned English at school.

A common problem cited among adult refugees was the lack of ESL classes during work or after-work hours. While few noted English learning opportunities offered by their employers at the workplace, most relied on those offered at local community colleges, churches, and ECBOs. Many refugees held the common belief that learning to speak English is the first step in integrating into the United States: some considered English a necessity to communicate at work, while others, who for instance worked as cleaners at hotels, saw learning English as a medium- or long-term goal rather than an immediate need. Parents were also eager to learn English to engage more in their children's school activities and to converse with teachers.

ACADEMIC PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

Although refugees understand the importance of education to empower and integrate themselves in the United States, the infrastructure and mechanisms of the US education system often do not respond adequately to their aspirations. Refugee adults and teenagers who had not gone to school in their countries of origin were often frustrated that schools in the United States would not teach them at a level where they could understand and follow classes. They stressed the need for schools to adapt to their levels of understanding instead of placing them in classes according to age. Some schools were more challenged than others in understanding and providing for the cultural and educational needs of their refugee students. ECBOs are

often able to effectively fill this learning gap by teaching refugees basic mathematics and English commensurate with their comprehension levels.

BARRIERS TO UPWARD MOBILITY

Refugees often take temporary jobs that have little prospect for long-term employment. Employers in the United States often set English proficiency as a prerequisite for most occupational training programs,⁸² and do not invest in training and language classes for limited English proficient (LEP) individuals, 84 percent of whom are foreign born.⁸³ The public workforce development system under the Workforce Investment Act has also responded insufficiently to the needs of LEP workers.⁸⁴ Refugees, many of whom have not been educated, are automatically disqualified from employer-provided training programs, which require participants to have attained at least a ninth-grade education.⁸⁵

But education does not guarantee economic success, a reality that particularly holds true for foreign-educated and trained professionals. The transfer of foreign-earned credentials is a major challenge for educated immigrants in the United States. Recent research found that 50 percent of legal immigrants experienced occupational downgrading in their first year in the country, meaning that they worked in jobs requiring lower skills than those they had abroad.⁸⁶ The same study found that more than three-quarters of the highest skilled immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean had lower-skilled jobs in the United States than they had abroad. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that in 2002, 18.1 percent of foreign-born individuals in the United States were overqualified for their jobs, compared to 13.4 percent of the native born.⁸⁷ Twenty-four percent of foreign-born noncitizens with at least a bachelor's degree earn less than \$19,800 annually as opposed to 7.6 percent of their American counterparts.⁸⁸ Educated refugees interviewed in this study including lawyers, physicians, and mechanical engineers, many of whom were ECBO leaders, referred to their personal experiences of job downgrading in the United States.

Discrimination against refugees is another major barrier to socioeconomic mobility. Among the ECBOs visited in this study, those who served black African populations tended to be more sensitive to this issue than others. Even highly educated, trained, and qualified refugees faced pressures stemming from racial prejudices. While American employers look for candidates with work experience, refugees argue that it is hard to acquire work experience and build their resumes if few people are willing to hire them in the first place. Certain ECBOs also cited women as a group vulnerable to (gender-based) discrimination.

HOUSING

Refugees normally resettle in metropolitan areas where rental costs for apartments are relatively high. Many stated that they face significant challenges in accessing affordable housing upon their arrival. Subsidized housing can help refugees ease their finances, but some fear that such government subsidies, which make those who cross an income threshold or add another wage earner to the household lose their eligibility, can be a disincentive for refugees to upgrade their skills to try to increase their wages.

Refugees also often live in residential areas that are densely populated by other refugees. Though many refugee groups draw comfort and support from living among co-ethnics, some

noted that their residential concentration discourages interaction with people outside their communities.

3. CULTURAL BARRIERS

KNOWLEDGE OF US SYSTEMS AND RULES

Many refugees, even those who had received cultural orientation or literacy classes in refugee camps, were surprised at the gap between their expectations and realities of living in the United States. Many ECBOs educate refugees about fundamental aspects of life in this country such as their rights in the workplace (fair wages, equal opportunity, and other labor laws); local, city, and state laws (what are acceptable and unacceptable acts in public and other elements of civic responsibility); democracy and civic participation (the right to vote as citizens and volunteering to help the community); and financial literacy (family budgeting, basic savings, and using the US bank system). Some refugees stated that they received simple but useful cultural tips like how to use domestic appliances, dress for cold winters, and instruct their children to return school supplies to their teachers.

CHANGES IN THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Some refugees and ECBO staff members cited reluctance on the part of men, particularly of non-European origin, to allow their wives to work outside of the home. Many non-European male refugees admitted, however, that they gradually came to acknowledge the need for their wives and children to work in order to financially support their families.

PERPETUATION OF ETHNIC DIVIDES

In some areas, ethnic or tribal divides between refugees that had existed prior to their resettlement to the United States continue to exist and cause tension between these groups. Staff members of the Somali International Minorities of America (SIMA) in Minneapolis, MN, noted continued discrimination against their clan and tribal members in Minneapolis by those of higher castes based on tribal hierarchies in Somalia. One Somali staff member noted that their relationship with the broader American community was better than those with Somalis from non-minority tribes. But members of other ECBOs, like those at the Somali Community Center of Nashville (SCCN), observed that ethnic and tribal divides among Somalis were no longer salient after their resettlement to Nashville.

Challenges for Organizations

ECBO leaders vary in their management styles and ability to make their organizations succeed in the long term. While some are qualified and knowledgeable of how to run their non-profit organizations, others are relative newcomers to nonprofit management. But regardless of how long ECBOs have been in existence, leaders of these organizations all share the challenge of making their respective operations sustainable. This section illuminates the key challenges that leaders face in developing a robust organization.

1. ACQUISITION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF FUNDS

The programs offered by ECBOs depend not only on the needs and priorities of different age, ethnic, and gender groups, but also on the availability of funding to support their efforts. A salient challenge encountered by virtually all participating ECBOs was the difficulty in acquiring and diversifying funds. According to many ECBO leaders, administrative costs are the most expensive part of their day-to-day operations. After spending the largest proportion of their grants on staff, equipment (such as computers), and rent, leaders are often left with a small share to actually design and implement programs and events.

Leaders who have tried to broaden funding sources through various matching grant schemes voiced their frustration over the lack of interest among funders to support their organizations' endeavors. Those with diversified funding streams from government, philanthropic foundations, corporations, and individual donors were able to offer a wider range of creative programs and were more sustainable than those that had not endeavored to, or had not yet received funding from, sources other than ORR.

As nonprofit charitable organizations, some organizations were hesitant to charge fees for their services. A number of leaders believed that charging refugees for their services contradicts the welcoming spirit that they try to project about their organization and community.

2. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Most ECBOs had some mechanism, often via ethnic media outlets or word of mouth, to communicate with refugees and other immigrants about their programs and services, but almost all of them found it harder to conduct outreach in non-refugee communities.⁸⁹ Several factors influenced their ability to successfully engage the broader community including: a community's history of receiving refugees; the level of confidence of an ECBO to reach out to non-refugee populations and organizational partners; usage of mainstream media outlets to disseminate information; level of organizational exposure to the public through cultural activities, events, and festivals; openness to serve or welcome individuals of other ethnic backgrounds to the organization; and relationships with local universities, community colleges, and schools.

As one ECBO leader put it, "Staying within our community is our 'comfort zone,'" ECBOs often shy away from interacting with or seeking help from non-refugee communities. However, leaders understand the importance of training and encouraging their staff to reach out to such communities, to initiate dialogue, and to enhance cooperation between otherwise ethnically, geographically, and sometimes religiously, divided communities.

3. ESTABLISHMENT OF DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS

Some ECBOs, sometimes due to political barriers, struggled to identify potential partners at the local or state level with whom they could work to help refugees integrate into their respective communities. While states such as Minnesota and Illinois strongly support the development of nonprofit organizations through seminars, workshops, and technical assistance, others lack initiatives and the infrastructure to help grassroots refugee organizations enhance their operational capabilities.

The establishment of institutional partnerships also posed a challenge for ECBOs. Many leaders noted that rather than establishing institutional partnerships with, for example, community colleges, they more often partnered with individual teachers or volunteers who would work with refugees on a part-time or volunteer basis.

Despite the potential partnerships that can sprout from the connections that board members bring to an organization, many ECBOs lacked boards with people from diverse backgrounds and with varied work experiences. Several, in fact, had boards comprised of people of a single ethnicity or nationality based on their notion that such individuals can more easily identify with their constituency's needs.

4. SERVICE PROVISION

While some ECBOs partner with voluntary resettlement agencies and other local nonprofits to decrease their workload of delivering services (either directly or through referrals), many find that refugees often return to their organizations for help regardless of such partnerships. As leaders often attest, many refugees prefer frequenting ECBOs over mainstream organizations because staff members possess the necessary language skills and cultural understanding to communicate effectively with them. This can be problematic for ECBO leaders who want to spend more of their energy developing innovative programs that mainstream organizations do not offer. Moreover, it can lead to a situation in which multiple organizations within the same geographic area offer the same services. While the foreign-language skills and cultural understanding of ECBO staff undoubtedly comfort refugees, such tailored care and awareness may sometimes hamper an ECBO's capability to deliver creative and unique services that differ from mainstream organizations.

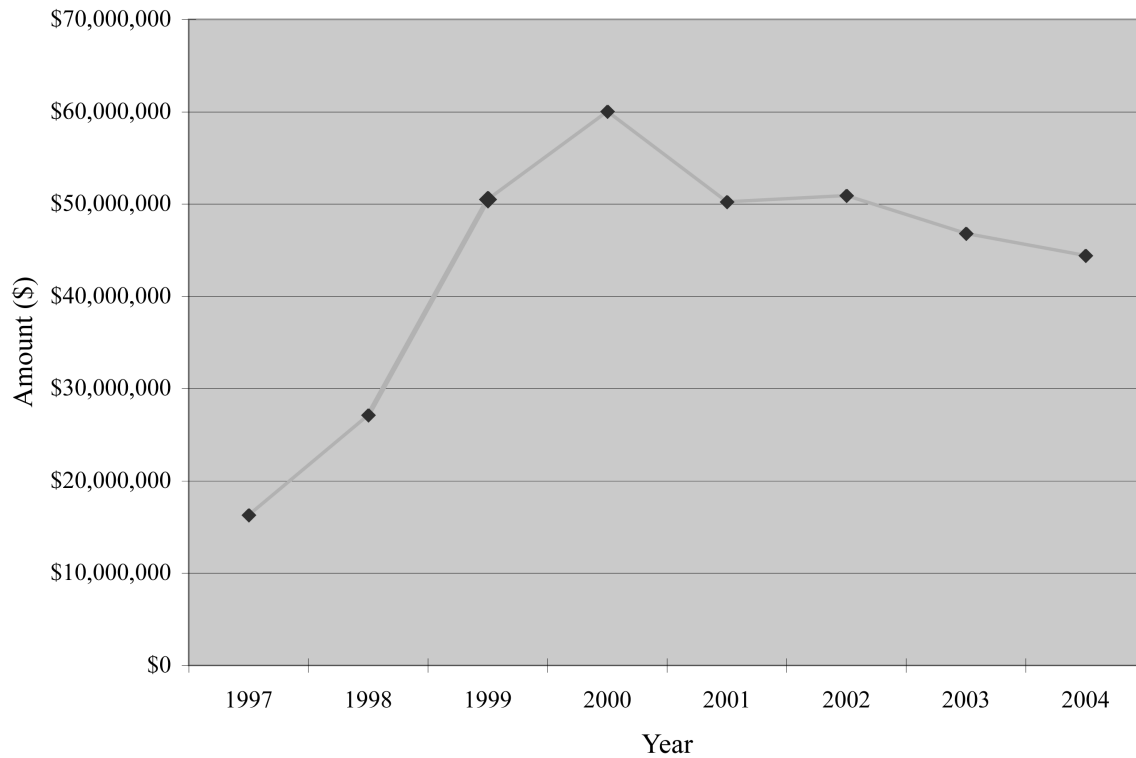
Finally, while some ECBOs are strongly committed to fostering long-term relationships with all community members and institutions, others are less enthusiastic about serving as community centers. Those in the latter group argue that their job is accomplished once they have helped refugees in their community to become economically self-sufficient. A large majority of those interviewed for this study, however, favored the former option over the latter, asserting that ECBOs with a longer-term vision can better foster integration by promoting greater interaction between individuals of different nationalities and ethnic groups.

Challenges for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

1. LIMITED FUNDS

ORR awards competitive discretionary grants to different stakeholders, including ECBOs, to support programs that serve refugees who have not yet become US citizens. Discretionary funds, which are awarded through a competitive panel review process, differ from formula grants that are awarded to states. Between FY1997 and FY2004, the amount of available discretionary funds increased, although it has declined from its peak in 2000. This increase is partly due to two Congressional earmarks that increased the designated discretionary proportion of ORR's social services funding to address refugee needs.

**Figure 5: Office of Refugee Resettlement Discretionary Grants for All Programs
FY1997-FY2004⁹⁰**



Source: ORR's Annual Report to Congress FY1997–FY2004.

2. RESPONDING TO THE EVOLVING NEEDS OF REFUGEES

ORR faces many challenges, particularly in managing its limited discretionary funding in a way that effectively addresses the evolving needs of refugees who find themselves at different stages of integration. Moreover, ORR must modify its funding streams to respond to emerging refugee needs by eliminating, merging, or creating different programs. For example, the program for services for refugees with special conditions was merged with the Preferred Communities program in FY2004.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Culturally appropriate services and daily interaction with refugees make ECBOs an essential player in the refugee integration process. Therefore, it is important to consider how ECBOs can sustain themselves and enhance their capacity to offer more and improved services, events, and activities that foster integration. Sustainability depends on securing diverse funding sources, building effective management, recruiting experienced staff, and constructing mutually beneficial partnerships with organizations, funders, and governments.

As refugee integration is not a uniform process, the recommendations below for ECBOs and other stakeholders in refugee integration must be adjusted to local contexts. Nevertheless, the suggestions originate from discussions with ECBO leaders and other stakeholders during the site visits and the forum hosted by MPI.

Ethnic Community-Based Organizations

- *Funding: In order to become sustainable, ECBOs should develop strategies to diversify their funding sources among federal and state government grants, foundations and corporate donations, individual donors, and other partners.*

For most ECBOs, government funding forms a significant portion of their operating budget, yet the inherent uncertainty of continued government funding means that to be financially sustainable, ECBOs should develop strategies to acquire funds from different sources. Not only does diversified funding ensure a more secure funding stream, it also allows ECBOs to add flexibility to their programs. ORR grants, for instance, do not allow non-refugee immigrants or naturalized citizens to participate in programs; other funders may not have such conditions.⁹¹

Developing proposals and receiving grants from foundations not only ensures more flexibility in designing and implementing programs, it also builds working relationships with foundation representatives who have relatively more freedom than government program officers to continue and increase funding for successful programs. Such working relationships are particularly important as refugees become more integrated, as ECBOs may be able to highlight their successes more effectively in new funding applications.

ECBOs should also not underestimate the role that individuals, including their own clients, can play in their long-term financial sustainability. While some nonprofit organizations

balk at the thought of charging fees to their clients, others observe that clients are willing to pay modest fees for necessary (and often one-time) services, such as assistance with Green Card applications. Nonprofit organizations may be charity organizations, but their continued operations—so essential to their clients—rest in part on securing funding.

Some have noted that individual donor contributions comprise 80 percent of nonprofit funding.⁹² As such, ECBOs should look to their clients as future volunteers and potential donors. As refugees become upwardly mobile, they may give back to the organization that helped them integrate in their new country. Outreach to individuals and to houses of worship may also elicit modest donations that can add up to significant amounts.

ECBOs may also create more funding opportunities by proactively developing partnerships with other organizations that work on similar issues and pursuing sub-grant opportunities. By joining forces with other prominent organizations, partnerships can expose ECBOs and their programs to the wider community, thereby increasing the chances of obtaining more funding from private and community foundations.

Though grantwriters, fundraisers, and outreach and development coordinators can be beneficial to an ECBO, they are expensive to hire and many of the more recently established ECBOs do not have the financial capacity to afford such staff or to hire contractors. More importantly, leaders and staff members of ECBOs are ultimately the best “salespeople” of their organizations and the most qualified to recount the stories of their refugee clients. As such, organizations should consider developing the skills of their staff members by sending them to training sessions on grantwriting, fundraising, outreach, and nonprofit management. Investment in training would effectively empower staff members to then train others within the organization and allow ECBOs to nourish and build internally instead of having to rely heavily on external support. In addition, ECBOs should spend ample time publicizing and promoting their work to increase the potential growth of their efforts.

Career centers at local community colleges or universities can also help an organization develop capacity. ECBOs should take advantage of student interns and graduate students who look to gain work experience or conduct research in local nonprofits or immigrant communities. While interns and researchers may be temporary, they nonetheless are helpful and affordable resources.

No matter how many individuals or organizations ECBOs approach, they should assure funders that their money will be spent effectively and wisely by, for example, keeping detailed records of the number of clients in each program. Tracking and providing data on programs is imperative to making successful funding requests. Furthermore, as funders often require quantifiable evaluations of the programs that they support, ECBOs should develop internal metrics or partner with other organizations or individuals to ask for external assessments of their programs. The implementation of effective evaluation schemes can demonstrate good management and reflect a positive image of the organization to funders. Moreover, evaluations can help ECBOs inform themselves about the quality and effectiveness of their programs and make adjustments accordingly.

- Entrepreneurial Vision: *When appropriate, ECBO leaders should be creative in offering programs, and broaden the types of programs offered.*

ECBO leaders should envision and implement innovative means to offer services to refugees. One option is to delegate the delivery of services to other organizations or community leaders who have better access to their community members. Instead of only offering programs in a single location (i.e., at the ECBO), leaders can train individuals from other organizations on how to offer the same programs in their respective communities.

Teaching refugees how to become self-sufficient and take care of themselves is an important task. ECBO leaders should be careful not to do things *for* refugees, but instead teach them *how* to complete processes themselves. Not only does this educate and empower refugees, it also lightens the workload of overburdened ECBO staff members who often spend late nights completing citizenship applications on behalf of their refugee clients. Many leaders offer English or computer classes so that refugees can answer their own questions by learning how to read a pamphlet or surf the Internet.

Finally, as one ECBO leader put it, “why assist people to apply for citizenship and offer ESL classes when many other organizations in the area are already offering such programs?” ECBOs should explore creative and innovative ways to integrate refugees. Programs that focus on developing leadership skills among refugee teenagers, encouraging volunteerism by helping fellow refugees resettle in the United States, helping disconnected youth rediscover their identity through art, and empowering women to live independently through career and life skills training are equally as important for refugee integration as is offering commonly requested services like job training or filing applications for Green Cards. Other ideas include forging partnerships between refugee communities and local law enforcement agencies to educate refugees about their rights, encourage them to report criminal behavior, and nurture a positive image of police officers, or offering advice to local school districts or community colleges on how to help refugee students learn more effectively.

Organizational Development Tips

- **Develop effective and clear promotional tools such as pamphlets, brochures, presentations, or fact sheets to explain the organization’s mission and services. These should be distributed to the community and larger public at every opportunity. Ethnic and mainstream media (radio, television, and newspapers) are vital means of communication to disseminate information about programs, services, and events.**
- **Develop a regularly updated and informative Web site that includes information on organizational history; mission; program activities; eligibility; and accomplishments. Potential donors want to easily see who you are and what you offer. Technology and the Internet are useful means to broadcast your activities to wide audiences including funders and the media. Web sites should be accessible for English-speaking audiences.**
- **Conduct consistent donor research. If staff resources are scarce, recruit university interns to assist with research and proposal writing.**
- **Tell personal refugee stories. Document the successes and milestones of refugee clients and share those stories with the public and local media.**

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- Partnerships: *ECBOs should look for partners with other refugee/immigrant, community, nonprofit, and educational organizations in order to increase funding, capitalize on comparative advantages, and increase knowledge and skills.*

The sustainability of an organization largely depends on its ability to build and maintain successful partnerships with other organizations. First and foremost, developing strong partnerships will help ECBOs increase the likelihood of receiving direct funds or sub-grants. Even relationships with institutions that do not share programmatic or thematic interests can have positive implications. Many ECBOs in this study, for example, received in-kind contributions such as office space, help with grant writing, or rent payments from individuals who work in their vicinity.

Furthermore, partnerships with mainstream organizations are an effective and efficient way for ECBOs to build capacity, provide services to wider populations, and reduce duplicated services. Not only does this help ECBOs to capitalize on the comparative advantages of different organizations by, for example, adapting the technical expertise of a technical assistance provider in a culturally appropriate manner to meet their needs, it also opens up channels for discussion and cooperation among groups that are not ethnically constricted. As partnering organizations collaborate on projects, employees will be able to exchange knowledge through informal meetings.

Finally, partnerships are a way for ECBOs to increase their contact, involvement, and visibility beyond their specific ethnic community. By increasing interaction between refugee and non-refugee populations, particularly in newer resettlement communities, ECBOs can raise public awareness of humanitarian crises around the world and highlight their important role in integrating these newcomers into their societies.

- Board of Directors and Staff: *While ECBOs' ethnic staff are essential in communicating and providing a culturally comfortable atmosphere for clients, ECBOs should, when possible, work to diversify their staff members and board of directors.*

Successful ECBOs tended to capitalize on the strengths of their native-born American staff and board members to offer services or take advantage of their networks. This is not to say refugees cannot effectively run organizations on their own, but that they can benefit from the

Organizational Development Tips

- **Do not be afraid to be creative with programs. Programs for leadership, empowerment, youth, and mental health can be funded. It can be beneficial to ECBOs and clients to develop niche programs that are not otherwise offered to refugees in their communities.**
- **Encourage former refugee clients to volunteer or mentor youth. An innovative way for ECBOs to expand resources and offer leadership opportunities to refugees is to encourage refugees to “give back” to the organization.**

Organizational Development Tips

- **Innovative collaborations and partnerships can become effective, unique programs, i.e., partnerships with law enforcement officials, university students or faculty, and corporations and financial institutions.**
- **Small organizations should look for mentors to lead them through the strategic fundraising process. Larger mentor organizations can serve as lead funding agencies, or at least can provide advice on community resources such as volunteers, new board members, in-kind donations, new clients, and individual funders.**
- **Understanding the mission and activities of other organizations such as other voluntary resettlement agencies or refugee support and service providers can help ECBOs understand where they can fit in and what service gaps they can help fill. ECBOs can also look to larger, well-established service providers for information on best organizational and social service practices.**

technical expertise of Americans who have been trained various field such as grant writing, nutrition and health, or counseling.

Board or staff members, and even interns, who are proficient in English can add great value to an organization's fundraising and advocacy efforts. In addition to offering culturally and linguistically appropriate service to refugees, they should also have the capacity to communicate with non-refugee populations and organizations to conduct outreach, build partnerships, and raise public awareness about refugees.

Organizational Development Tips

- **Gradually, ECBOs should look to integrate diverse community members as part of the staff or board of directors. Members from different ethnic backgrounds, ages, genders, and professions can lead to wider access to funding opportunities.**
- **A diverse board and staff can lead to greater public support, understanding, and advocacy.**
- **Organizations should recruit board and staff members who are proficient in English to help with fundraising, representation, and advocacy.**
- **A diverse board of directors that is representative of the larger community can help with public education campaigns and overall public support.**

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)

- *Interagency Collaboration: ORR should assume a leadership role in organizing efforts among federal departments and their agencies to collaborate on integration initiatives.*

Considering its Congressional mandate, ORR has both a responsibility and an advantage to assume a leadership role in refugee integration. Established by Presidential Executive Order #13404, the Task Force on New Americans has the potential to become a vital force in implementing integration programs across departments and agencies at the national level. ORR has partnered with the US Department of Agriculture in an initiative to reach out to refugees in rural areas. Other interagency talks have begun between ORR and the Employment and Training Administration of the US Department of Labor on joining efforts to enhance services at one-stop employment centers. The Federal Trade Commission has also provided ORR with insight into financial fraud and financial literacy programs, both of which are important to refugee integration. Such collaborative efforts signal progress on the federal level, and ORR should continue to foster interagency work both under and outside the rubric of the Task Force on New Americans.

- *Consultations and Working Groups: ORR should continue its internal review of integration practices, its work with the Integration Working Group, and offer consortia for leaders from government, ECBOs, voluntary resettlement agencies, foundations, and corporations to discuss priorities in immigrant integration.*

Under the leadership of Director Martha Newton, ORR created the Integration Working Group to begin an examination of priorities and best practices in refugee integration. In its recommendations to ORR, the Integration Working Group specified that ORR should “seek broader collaboration with non-federal entities.”⁹³ At the MPI forum held in February 2007, leaders from ORR, ECBOs, and voluntary resettlement agencies echoed this recommendation, agreeing that similar discussions should be organized in the future. Given ORR’s openness and willingness to consult refugee leaders about their priorities in integration, ORR could provide more venues and opportunities to assemble different players involved in the integration process.

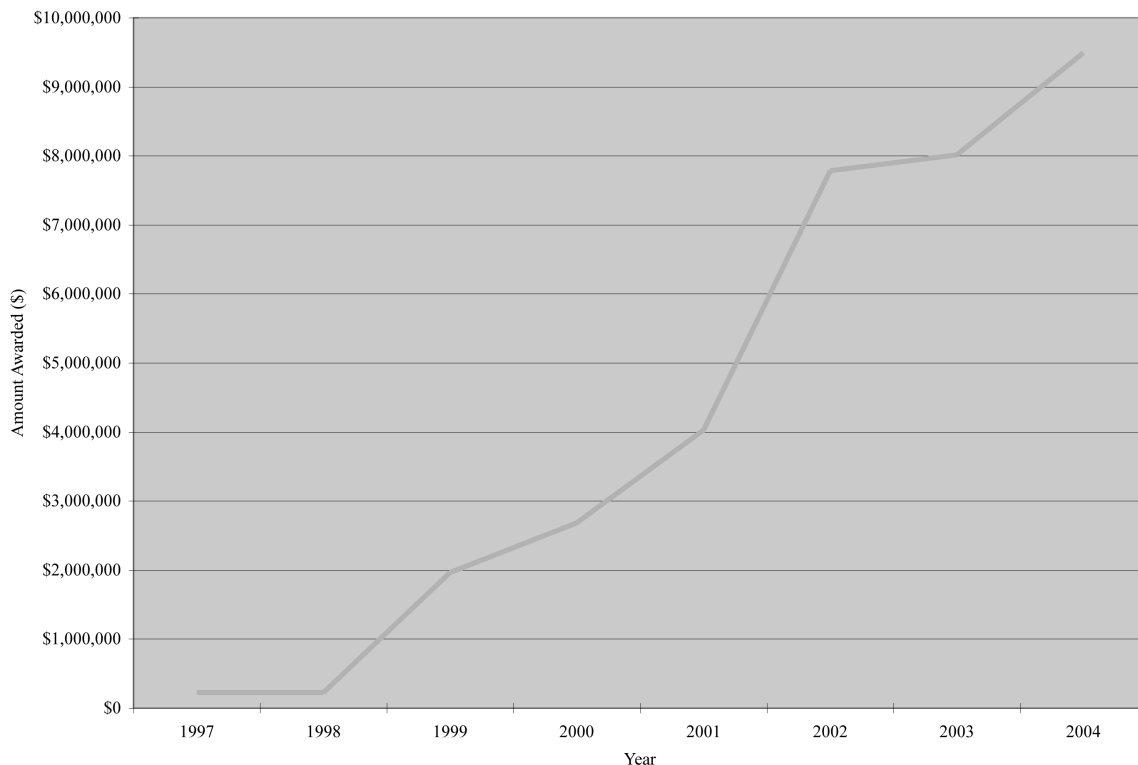
In combining its efforts to augment government interagency collaboration, ORR could, for example, reach out to companies and nonprofits that work on specific areas of immigrant integration to examine overlooked issues such as the credentialing and licensing of foreign-trained professionals, which was also one of the specific recommendations of the Integration Working Group.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the Task Force on New Americans may possibly offer new sources of funding that could, for example, finance research on credentialing practices across the United States and in other countries such as Canada, where a national agency has been established to respond to this issue.

- *Funding schemes: ORR should continue to allow ECBOs to apply for ORR grants in response to their refugee clients’ respective needs, and help different organizations identify and capitalize on their comparative strengths.*

Funds distributed under the Ethnic Community Organizations (Self-Help) Program,⁹⁵ the grant that all participating ECBOs had received in FY2006-FY2007, are to be used to “build bridges among refugee communities and community resources [. . .] facilitate cultural adjustment and integration of refugees, and deliver mutually supportive functions such as information exchange, civic participation, resource enhancement, orientation and support to newly arriving refugees and public education to the larger community on the background, needs and potential of refugees.”⁹⁶ Discretionary funding for Ethnic Community Organizations (Self-Help) showed a positive trend between FY1997 and FY2004 (see Figure 6). In FY1997, four grantees shared \$221,168 awarded under this grant,⁹⁷ but by FY2004, 54 grantees shared an estimated total of \$9.5 million.⁹⁸ This is an encouraging trend given that ECBOs play a crucial role in integrating refugees in the United States.

The increase in Ethnic Community Organizations (Self-Help) funding reflects ORR’s obligation to prioritize programs that are most needed by current refugee populations. Table 9 depicts the types of organizations that are eligible to apply for selected ORR discretionary funds. ECBOs, like other nonprofit agencies, are eligible to apply for most discretionary funds, save a few such as the Wilson-Fish projects that are reserved only for states. As Figure 7 suggests, ECBOs capture almost half of the grants for which they are eligible to apply.

Figure 6: ORR Discretionary Grants Awarded for Ethnic Community Organizations (Self-Help) FY1997-FY2004⁹⁹



Source: ORR’s Annual Report to Congress FY1997–FY2004.

Table 9: ORR Discretionary Funding by Eligibility, as of April 2007¹⁰⁰

	ECBO	Other Nonprofit Agency	State	Voluntary Resettlement Agency (VOLAG)
Ethnic Community Organization (Self-Help)	X	X	X	X
Unanticipated Arrivals	X	X	X	X
Technical Assistance	X	X	X	X
Individual Development Account	X	X	X	X
Microenterprise Development	X	X	X	X
Wilson-Fish Program			X	X
Preferred Communities				X

Source: ORR, April 2007.

Some have suggested a funding scheme in which discretionary funds are allocated into different funding “pots” based on refugee needs: 1) programs for newly arrived refugees—economic insertion, job skills, housing, documentation and application services, ESL classes, civic education; 2) programs for refugees who have resided in the United States for more than five years—vocational training, ESL classes, citizenship training; and 3) programs for refugees who have lived in the United States for more than five years, are able to speak English, and are looking for better economic opportunities to achieve upward mobility—leadership development, empowerment, and cultural programs.

Such a division of funds, however, could potentially hinder ECBOs’ innovative capacities. Currently, ECBOs are allowed to be creative in their program designs, methods of service delivery, and the management of their organizations because ORR allows recipients of discretionary grants to apply the funds flexibly. ORR should continue offering funds that allow ECBOs to apply the funds as they see fit, as this would allow them to adjust the number and types of services they provide according to the evolving needs of their respective communities.

Another hypothetical partitioning of funds is according to age group. ECBOs serving refugee groups that are younger (those under 17) may benefit from funding that focuses on helping refugee children learn in American schools or promote leadership and civic engagement among youth. However, as most ECBOs serve young, middle-aged, and elderly refugees, they might be unnecessarily constrained to only offer services for youth if funds were separated according to age.

Some have suggested extending the three-year Ethnic Community Organization Self-Help grant to five years. There are several tradeoffs, however, to such a scheme. First, given ORR’s set annual budget, it would inevitably cut the number of organizations that receive

Figure 7: Percent Distribution of ORR Discretionary Funding in FY2006¹⁰¹

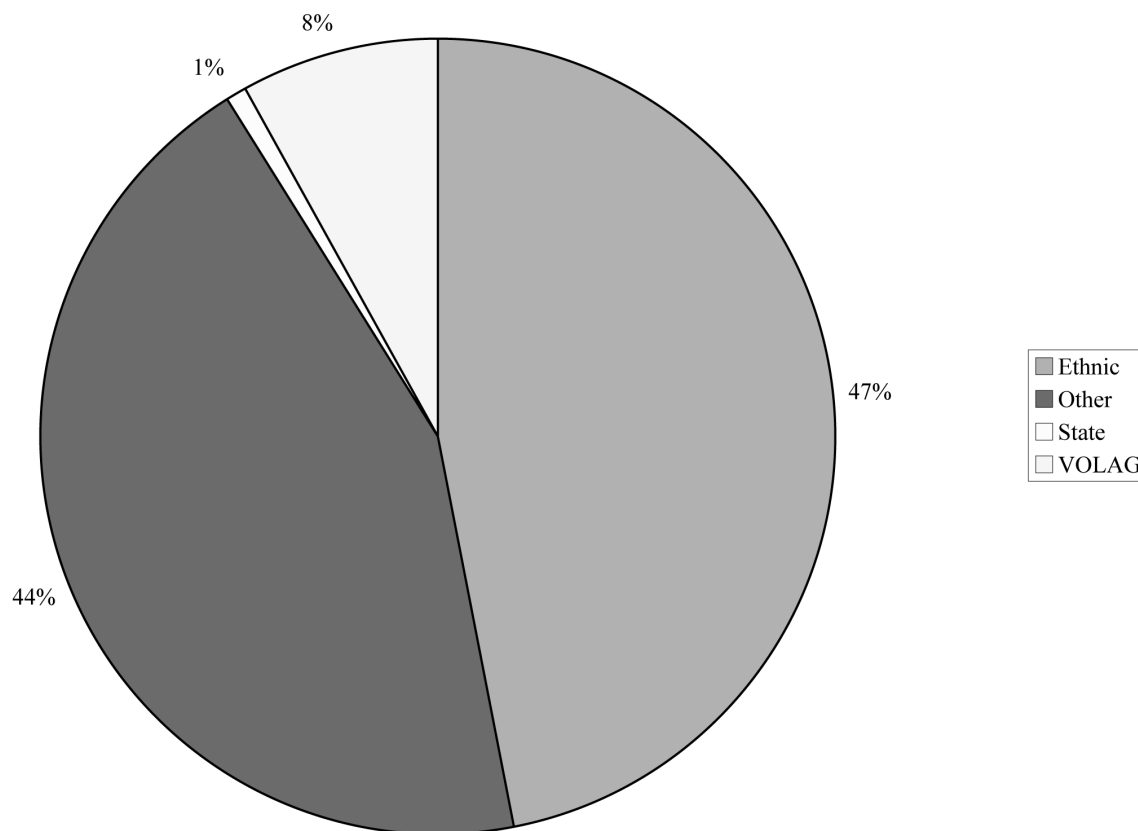


Figure 7 shows the allocation of ORR discretionary funding for which ECBOs are eligible to apply. The “Ethnic” category of this chart includes grants awarded to other nonprofit or state agencies on behalf of ECBOs. It does not reflect, however, possible indirect funding from states, VOLAGs, and other agencies to ECBOs.

Source: ORR, April 2007.

funding each year. Second, if funds are locked for five years to finance the programs of a set number of organizations, ORR may not have sufficient resources or the flexibility to support ECBOs and other organizations attempting to accommodate new refugee groups resettling in the United States.

A better picture of a more effective funding scheme may arise after consulting leaders from ECBOs, voluntary resettlement agencies, and other local nonprofits who serve refugees on a daily basis. While this report has highlighted the importance of capitalizing on the comparative strengths of different organizations (both ethnic and mainstream) to deliver services more effectively and efficiently, the roles assumed by ECBOs and resettlement agencies often overlap. Furthermore, because ECBOs differ from each other in their needs, capacity, innovation, and leadership, funding schemes should not assume that they will function uniformly. While competition over funds between ECBOs and voluntary organizations may be inevitable, ORR could work to promote collaboration between them to decrease duplicated efforts and instead draw out their comparative strengths.

Schemes that allow organizations to apply grants creatively can encourage ECBOs to develop and implement increasingly diverse programs that address their clients' evolving needs. As such, ORR should continue offering, and expand where possible, flexible discretionary funds. ECBOs may also benefit, through subcontracts, from some of the mandatory funds channeled directly to states. In such scenarios, ECBOs, voluntary resettlement agencies, state governments, and state refugee coordinators should actively collaborate in the design and delivery of meaningful integration services for refugees.

State and Local Governments

For state and local government officials, it is important to recognize that the refugees residing in their locales are important constituents and future US citizens whose interests and rights must be protected. As immigration enforcement devolves to the state and local level, state and local governments must fully inform immigrants of their rights. More specifically, it is necessary for state and local government officials to be aware of their civic and legal duties to provide public benefits and offer interpretation and translation services to refugees seeking help or information from federally funded agencies.

State and local governments, some of which have city, county, or state offices dedicated to immigrant or refugee affairs, could enhance their ability to assist refugees and immigrants on issues such as education, workforce development, health, and financial literacy by partnering with ECBOs. Today, many of the state or local government agencies that handle immigrant affairs are, or have evolved from, state refugee coordinating bodies and most tend to focus on language access and the provision of social services. Given this reality, refugee state coordinators and staff working in Departments of Human and Social Services should take the lead in devising schemes on the state, county, and local levels to actively involve ECBOs in immigrant integration.

CONCLUSION

This report has demonstrated the vital role of ECBOs in refugee integration by illustrating their unique programs, activities, and services. It has also offered recommendations on how these organizations and other stakeholders can enhance the role of ECBOs in the integration process.

Questions for further academic and empirical research remain. First, does refugee integration differ in new and old receiving communities, and if so, what are the determinants of these differences? Do tensions over public benefits and employment exist between refugees and labor immigrants, and if so, how can they work to overcome such differences? Such questions highlight the complexities and challenges of refugee integration.

The resettlement of refugees is one of the few areas of action in which the US government systematically addresses the issue of immigrant integration, taking positive steps to promote the successful adaptation of newly arrived residents to their new communities—and vice versa. This study of how ethnic community-based organizations participate in that process shows that newcomers and the organizations that they establish are important agents of integration—not just passive recipients of services. The support that they receive from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, other agencies of government at state and local levels, and from other organs of civil society is an investment in the future, and a model for a more comprehensive approach to making a reality of our national motto: “out of many, one.”

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 31. Randy Capps, Leighton Ku, Michael Fix, Chris Furguele, Jeff Passel, Rajeev Ramchand, Scott McNiven, Dan Perez-Lopez, Eve Fielder, Michael Greenwell, and Tonya Hays, “How Are Immigrants Faring after Welfare Reform? Preliminary Evidence from Los Angeles and New York City,” (Washington, DC: De-

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- partment of Health and Human Services, 2002). Available online at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/HSP/immigrants-faring02/>.
32. Many of the refugees from the former USSR were skilled professionals but encountered difficulties in transferring their credentials to the US labor market. This, among other things such as the higher proportion of elderly population among refugees from the former USSR, may explain the low employment rate among this population.
 33. Ibid.
 34. US Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), "Annual Report to Congress—2004." Available online at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc7.htm#4>.
 35. Ibid.
 36. Ibid.
 37. Capps, Fix, Henderson, "Trends in Legal Immigrants' Public Benefits Use Following Welfare Reform," 2007 (forthcoming).
 38. Most states do not impose time limits on refugee usage of Medicaid or TANF, but this varies by state. Refugees who were present in the United States before August 22, 1996 have no time restrictions on their SSI benefits. If a current law suit pending in Philadelphia is ruled in favor of the plaintiff, refugees would receive an additional two years for SSI benefits, thus bringing the total duration of eligibility for the program up to nine years.
 39. Capps, Fix, Henderson, "Trends in Legal Immigrants' Public Benefits Use Following Welfare Reform," 2007 (forthcoming).
 40. Michael Fix and Jeffrey Passel, "The Scope and Impact of Welfare Reform's Immigrant Provisions," (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2002). Available online at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410412_discussion02-03.pdf.
 41. Ibid.
 42. Capps, Fix, Henderson, "Trends in Legal Immigrants' Public Benefits Use Following Welfare Reform," 2007 (forthcoming).
 43. Ibid.
 44. US law had previously limited the number of asylees who could adjust their status to LPR status to 10,000 per year. However, this limit was eliminated after passage of the REAL ID Act in 2005, "Naturalization Basics." HIAS. Available online at: http://www.hias.org/immigration/Answers/nat_basics.php; Jeanne Batalova, "Spotlight on Refugees and Asylees in the United States." Migration Information Source, August 1, 2006. Available online at: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=415>.
 45. This has had adverse effects on refugees who are SSI recipients and have not become citizens within seven years upon their arrival.
 46. Special acts include: Presidential Directive of 12/22/45; Displaced Persons Act of 6/25/48; Orphan Act of 7/29/53; Refugee Relief Act of 8/7/53; Refugee-Escapee Act of 9/11/57; Hungarian Refugee act of 7/25/58; Azores & Netherlands Act of 9/2/58; Refugee Relatives Act of 9/22/59; Faire Share Refugee Act of 7/14/60; Refugee Conditional Entrants Act of 10/3/65; Cuban Adjustment Act of 11/2/66; Indochinese Refugee Act of 10/5/78; Refugee Act of 1980 (3/17/80); P.L.105-277 (Iraqi asylees) of 10/20/98; and the Syrian Adjustment Act of 10/27/00. US Department of Homeland Security, "Refugees and Asylees Granted Lawful Permanent Resident Status by Enactment; Fiscal Years 1946-2004." Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2004. Available online at: <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2004/Table20.xls>.
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 48. Ibid.
 49. Randy Capps, Michael Fix, Everett Henderson, "Trends in Legal Immigrants' Public Benefits Use Following Welfare Reform: An Update." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute and Migration Policy Institute. 2007.

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50. Ibid.
 51. Ibid.
 52. The employment rate is defined as “the ratio of the number of individuals age 16 or over who are employed (full or part time) to the total number of individuals in the population who are age 16 or over, expressed as a percentage. US Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), “Annual Report to Congress—2004.” Available online at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc7.htm#4>.
 53. The labor force participation rate is defined as “the ratio of the total number of persons in the labor force [those aged 16 and over who are employed or looking for a job] divided by the total number of persons in the population who are age 16 or over, expressed as a percentage. US Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), “Annual Report to Congress – 2004.” Available online at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc7.htm#4>.
 54. US Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), “Annual Report to Congress—2004.” Available online at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc7.htm#4>.
 55. Not all ECBOs (in this project and in general) offer every program listed in this section. Some provide one type of service while others offer more.
 56. The current fee for citizenship applications is \$330 for adults and \$255 for children, but the US Citizenship and Immigration Services announced on January 31, 2007, that fees could be raised to \$595 for adults and \$460 for children. The changes are currently under deliberation.
 57. This has a direct consequence for elderly or disabled refugees who arrived after August 22, 1996, in securing SSI and Medicaid benefits as SSI is limited to seven years upon arrival. If seniors or disabled refugees do not pass the citizenship exam within the seven years (due to backlogs or other reasons), they lose their benefits.
 58. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Audrey Singer and Jill Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004). Metropolitan Area (MA) is an area with “a large population nucleus, together with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus [. . .] Each MA must contain either a place with a minimum population of 50,000 or a US Census Bureau-defined urbanized area and a total MA population of at least 100,000 (75,000 in New England). An MA contains one or more central counties.” Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) are “MAs that are not closely associated with other MAs.” Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) are two or more defined areas within MAs that have over 1 million people. “Each PMSA consists of a large urbanized county or cluster of counties (cities and towns in New England) that demonstrate very strong internal economic and social links, in addition to close ties to other portions of the larger area [. . .] PMSAs are established only where local governments favor such designations for a large MA.” US Census Bureau, “Reference Resources for Understanding Census Bureau Geography: Appendix A. Census 2000 Geographic Terms and Concepts.” Available online at: <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/reference.html>.
 59. Authors’ calculations from data obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 60. The statistics of 10,000 clients represent those who are duplicated, i.e., coming for more than one service or program.
 61. This number includes “duplicated clients,” those who participate in more than one activity and are thus counted more than once in the JCH database.
 62. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Singer and Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004).
 63. Authors’ calculations from data obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 64. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Singer and Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004).
 65. Authors’ calculations from data obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 66. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Singer and Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004).
 67. Authors’ calculations from data obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 68. Available online at: <http://www.projecteducationsudan.org/index.html>.

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69. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Singer and Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004).
 70. Authors' calculations from data obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 71. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Singer and Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004).
 72. Authors' calculations from data obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 73. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Singer and Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004).
 74. Authors' calculations from data obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 75. Metropolitan area statistics based on analysis by Singer and Wilson of The Brookings Institution using Office of Refugee Resettlement records for FY1983 to FY2004 (ending June of FY2004).
 76. Singer and Wilson, "From 'There' to 'Here,'" September 2006. Available online at: www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20060925_singer.pdf.
 77. Family literacy programs allow parents and children to build their English-language skills through projects with schools and ESL providers. Such programs aim to improve the literacy of parents and children, in addition to increasing parent involvement in their children's education.
 78. Randy Capps, Michael Fix, Jason Ost, Jane Reardon-Anderson, Jeffrey S. Passel, "The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants." Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Available online at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311139_ChildrenImmigrants.pdf.
 79. Ibid.
 80. Ibid.
 81. Ibid.
 82. Laura Chenven, "Getting to Work: A Report on How Workers with Limited English Skills Can Prepare for Good Jobs," AFL-CIO Working for America Institute. Available online at: www.workingforamerica.org/documents/PDF/GTW50704.pdf.
 83. Randy Capps, Michael Fix, Jeffrey Passel, Jason Ost, Dan Perez-Lopez, "A Profile of the Low-Wage Immigrant Workforce" (Washington, DC: Urban Institute), November 2003. Available online at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310880_lowwage_immig_wkfc.pdf.
 84. Chenven, "Getting to Work: A Report on How Workers with Limited English Skills Can Prepare for Good Jobs."
 85. Capps, Fix, Passel, Ost, Perez-Lopez, "A Profile of the Low-Wage Immigrant Workforce," Washington, DC: Urban Institute, November 2003. Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, Passel, "The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants." Available online at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311139_ChildrenImmigrants.pdf. http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310880_lowwage_immig_wkfc.pdf. However, there are also separate service providers that offer vocational training programs especially for refugees. The Spring Institute for International Studies, for example, provides technical assistance for English Language Training programs that serve refugees. For more information see the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning's Web site at: <http://www.springinstitute.org/?action=elt>.
 86. Ilana Redstone Akresh, "Occupational Mobility among Legal Immigrants to the United States," *International Migration Review* 40, No. 4, publication forthcoming. Available online at: https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/redstone/www/papers/occupational_mobility.pdf.
 87. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *International Migration Outlook SOPEMI 2006*, (Paris, France: OECD, 2006). Available online at: http://www.istat.it/istat/eventi/2006/ocse/ocse_migration_report_2006.pdf. See pp. 51–54.
 88. Barry Newman, "The Other Hidden Immigrants," *The Wall Street Journal Abstracts*, May 18, 2006.
 89. The broader non-refugee community may include other immigrants as well as native-born Americans.
 90. Office of Refugee Resettlement's Annual Report to Congress FY1997–FY2004.
 91. Only refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and victims of trafficking or torture are eligible for ORR-funded programs. Organizations receiving ORR funds may still provide services to immigrants and naturalized citizens, however, with funding from other sources. For more information on eligibility requirements and procedures, see Office of Refugee Resettlement, State Letter 00–17. Available online at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ort/policy/s100-17.htm>.

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92. Tony Poderis, *It's a Great Day to Fund-Raise!* (Ohio: FundAmerica Press, 1996).
 93. Gerald Brown, Peggy Gilbert, Jan Losby, "Report of the Integration Working Group" (Washington DC: Institute for Social and Economic Development, 2007).
 94. Ibid.
 95. Until FY2004, the Ethnic Community Organization Self Help Program was under Category 4.
 96. National Archives and Records Administration, "Part III: Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement: Grants and Cooperative Agreements; Notice of Availability; Notice." April 23, 2004. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/pdf/HHS-2004-ACF-ORR-RE-0004.pdf>.
 97. US Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, "Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Annual Report to Congress—1997." Available online at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/97arc3.htm#ethnic>.
 98. US Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, "Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Annual Report to Congress—2004." Available online at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/04arc6.htm#c>.
 99. Office of Refugee Resettlement's Annual Report to Congress FY1997-FY2004.
 100. Information provided by ORR, April 2007. The table reflects current eligibility as stated by ORR.
 101. Information on distribution of funds provided by ORR, April 2007.

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BRIDGING DIVIDES:

The Role of Ethnic Community-Based Organizations in Refugee Integration

Despite recent declines in admissions, the United States resettles more refugees than any other country, and many of the organizations that help refugees feel at home in their new communities were founded by refugees themselves.

“Bridging Divides,” a new study by the Migration Policy Institute and the International Rescue Committee, examines the role ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) play in helping people who have escaped violence and persecution abroad adjust to life in the United States. It also examines the importance of these organizations to communities that resettle refugees.

ECBOs partner with the government, voluntary resettlement agencies, and other institutions to provide refugees with essential services. Their activities range from helping refugees learn English, find employment, and apply for citizenship, to politically advocating for refugees’ rights and interests. They also serve as intermediaries and as “cultural centers” that foster understanding and relationships between refugees and the broader community. The authors describe several innovative programs — from culturally appropriate health education to business clubs — offered by ECBOs to help refugees become upwardly mobile and civically engaged.

The study looks at organizations founded by refugees from countries around the world, including Sudan, Cambodia, Somalia, Bosnia, Vietnam, and the former Soviet Union. The authors find that in addition to confronting language, housing and financial barriers, refugees may also face more unique cultural difficulties, such as the perpetuation of ethnic divides from their home countries even after they resettle in the United States.

The report addresses the various challenges facing ECBOs in providing services and presents recommendations and organizational development strategies. It also suggests how other types of organizations can bolster and enhance the efforts of ECBOs in integrating resettled refugees into the United States.



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