

Fiscal Year 2011 Funding Urgently Needed for the Office of Refugee Resettlement February 2, 2010

There are an estimated 14 million refugees around the world, most of whom are women and children. Since the United States refugee admissions program was established in 1980, the number of refugees admitted to the United States each year has ranged from 27,000 to 207,000. President Obama set the refugee admissions goal for fiscal year 2010 at 80,000, and has not yet set the 2011 admissions goal. As part of our commitment to strengthening and growing the resettlement program, Refugee Council USA recommends that the U.S. admit 100,000 refugees in 2011. This recommendation takes into account an increasing global need for resettlement and the United States' tradition as a world leader in refugee protection.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was established in 1980 with the mission to assist refugees resettled by the United States in obtaining self-sufficiency. ORR's mission has grown in the ensuing 30 years to include assisting other vulnerable populations in the United States, including trafficking victims, torture victims, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, Indochinese Parolees, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants, and unaccompanied alien children. Unfortunately, ORR's budget has not kept up with its growing mandate, the changing characteristics of the populations it now serves, cost of living and inflation increases, and the needs of today's refugees. Coupled with chronic underfunding, the challenges connected to the current economic crisis have placed the resettlement program in peril.

Three areas in which increased funding for ORR is critical:

- Funding for basic needs. The basic needs of all refugees are not currently being met. Cash and medical assistance, access to social services, and housing assistance are central to the provision of a minimal safety net for refugees, thus allowing refugees to focus on employment and integration.
- Employment and self-sufficiency. ORR needs more funding for programs that promote integration and employment. Increasing funding for the Voluntary Matching Grant Program, encouraging employers to hire refugees, and investing in programs to help highly educated refugees find jobs in their professional fields will allow more refugees achieve self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on cash assistance.
- Highly vulnerable refugees. The number of refugees who are in single-female-headed households, are victims of torture, and have severe medical and mental health problems is on the rise. Meanwhile, the cost of additional assistance to meet their special needs is also increasing. ORR needs additional funding to provide intensive case management, medical and mental health care, and assistance for victims of torture and trafficking.

Overview of Funding and Funding Needs of the Office of Refugee Resettlement

Item/Account	FY '08 Actual	FY '09 Actual	FY '10 Obama	FY '10 House	FY '10 Senate	FY '10 Actual	FY '11 Obama	FY '11 80,000 Refugees ¹	FY '11 100,000 Refugees ²
Transitional and Medical Services	\$ 296.1	\$ 282.3	\$337.1	\$337.1	\$353.3	\$353.3	\$417.0	\$ 496.5	\$ 571.9
Refugee Social Services	\$ 154.0	\$ 154.0	\$154.0	\$154.0	\$154.0	\$154.0	\$154.0	\$ 204.0	\$ 236.6
Preventive Health	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7	\$ 6.4	\$ 7.4
Targeted Assistance	\$ 48.6	\$ 48.6	\$ 48.6	\$ 48.6	\$ 48.6	\$ 48.6	\$ 48.6	\$ 61.0	\$ 70.8
Subtotal – Refugee and Asylee Resettlement Services	\$ 503.4	\$ 489.7	\$ 544.4	\$ 544.4	\$560.6	\$560.6	\$649.3	\$742.9	\$861.7
Assistance to Trafficking Victims	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.8	\$15.0	\$15.0
Assistance to Torture Victims	\$ 9.8	\$ 10.8	\$ 10.8	\$ 11.3	\$ 11.3	\$ 11.0	\$ 11.0	\$25.0	\$25.0
Unaccompanied Alien Children	\$ 132.6	\$ 123.1	\$ 175.6	\$149.3	\$149.3	\$149.3	\$207.0	\$180.0	\$180.0
Total – Office of Refugee Resettlement	\$ 655.6	\$ 633.4	\$740.7	\$ 714.9	\$ 730.6	\$730.9	\$877.6	\$987.9	\$1106.7
Total with Supplemental & Roll Over	\$ 696.2	\$787.4							

ORR was funded at \$633.4 million in fiscal year 2009 and provided services to an estimated 120,000 persons (including 74,000 refugees). However, the support provided to these individuals was far from adequate. RCUSA believes that, should the number of refugees admitted in fiscal year 2011 be the same as the number estimated to be admitted in fiscal year 2010, **ORR would still need an increase of \$257 million in order to adequately serve those individuals and the communities hosting them.** Without a significant increase in funding and key improvements to the structure of the resettlement program, many newly arriving refugees will not be able to successfully integrate and begin their new lives in the United States.

¹ RCUSA estimate of what ORR's fiscal year 2011 funding should be if the U.S. admits 80,000 refugees in fiscal year 2011, which is the same number of refugee admissions that President Bush set in his Fiscal Year 2009 Presidential Determination on refugee admissions

² RCUSA estimate of what ORR's fiscal year 2011 funding should be if the U.S. admits 100,000 refugees in fiscal year 2011, which is the number of refugees USCCB advocates admitting in fiscal year 2011.

Summary of Proposed Increases

- Emergency Housing Assistance. The proposed increase includes \$30 million in additional funding for housing assistance to help more than 8,000 refugee households avoid homelessness. While the federally funded programs administered by local refugee resettlement agencies are highly successful in assisting refugees in securing employment and housing, the temporary assistance they receive upon arrival is often not sufficient to cover their housing costs before they have attained self-sufficiency. Safe and decent housing is central to successful integration for any newcomer.
- Voluntary Matching Grant Program. The proposed increase would include \$75 million in additional funding to enable ORR to roughly double (from 27,000 to 57,000) the number of refugees and other eligible persons who participate in the Voluntary Matching Grant program. This program enables refugees and other eligible persons to become self-sufficient within 4 to 6 months without resorting to federal and state welfare programs. The program leverages public funds with private donations at a 2:1 ratio, requiring private voluntary agencies to match Federal government contributions. The program has experienced a decrease in employment rates during the economic recession but remains the most successful program in helping refugees achieve self-sufficiency. We recommend a total allocation of \$135 million for this program.
- Specialized Employment Services: The proposed increase includes \$12.4 million in Targeted Assistance to provide highly educated and professional refugees with training, accreditation assistance, language acquisition, and job placement. By helping refugees pursue their careers, this funding will benefit businesses and communities. Additionally, \$3 million would be used to provide incentives for employers to hire refugees. This funding would increase refugee employment rates and decrease refugee welfare utilization by providing employment services to unemployed refugees and wage subsidies to certain employers who hire refugees.
- Case Management for Highly Vulnerable Refugees: The proposed increase includes \$13 million for social services to provide intensive case management for vulnerable refugees such as victims of torture, women heads of households, and those who are disabled or have serious medical issues. As the U.S. continues to welcome greater numbers of refugees with special needs, there is an increased need for these types of services, particularly longer term and more intensive assistance to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency and integrate into their communities.
- Community Outreach: \$4 million of the proposed increase would fund local programs that increase direct volunteer engagement, foster cross-cultural exchanges and promote the local integration of refugees.
- Assistance to Torture and Trafficking Victims. The proposed increase includes \$25 million to provide services to torture victims and \$15 million to assist victims of trafficking in the United States. Funding for torture rehabilitation has remained static for many years, resulting in a demand for services that exceeds resources and has caused programs to close or drastically scale back services. Refugee health screenings of newly arriving Iraqi refugees indicate a torture prevalence rate of 85 percent. ORR also serves victims of trafficking and develops outreach activities to identify victims. Due to the enactment of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) in December of 2008, ORR will need additional funds to implement the law's new protections for trafficking victims.
- Unaccompanied Alien Children. RCUSA recommends funding increases in fiscal year 2011 to better protect unaccompanied refugee and alien children residing in the United States. In FY 2009, ORR served over 6,600 unaccompanied alien minors and nearly 950 unaccompanied refugee minors. ORR will need \$180 million in fiscal year 2011 to continue serving unaccompanied alien children, to fund the use of more child-centered placement options and to improve services to these children. Funding for the unaccompanied refugee minor program is included in the Transitional and Medical Services budget line item. RCUSA recommends a \$60 million allocation for this program to comply with TVPRA mandates and provide housing, medical care, and mental health and other services to the abused, abandoned and neglected migrant children who are now eligible for the program.