

The Effects of the September 11th Terrorist Attacks on Refugees and the U.S. Refugee Program



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THE EFFECTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 11th TERRORIST ATTACKS ON REFUGEES AND THE U.S. REFUGEE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

On September 11, 2001, the nation watched the staggering sight of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers collapsing and the massive destruction and burning of one side of the Pentagon. People witnessed with horror the loss of life, as well as the loss of *away* of life. Almost immediately, the media confirmed our fears. These were *intentional* attacks. They were the work of militant Islamic terrorists. Across the nation, the newest refugees and immigrants experienced shock and grief consistent with their fellow Americans, with one difference—many refugees and immigrants, especially those of Middle Eastern descent, felt immediately that they were in danger.

To the credit of President Bush and the administration, there were quick and decisive statements designed to mitigate negative reactions to Arab Americans:

...our nation must be mindful that there are thousands of Arab Americans who live in New York City who love their flag just as much as [we] do. And we must be mindful that as we seek to win the war that we treat Arab Americans and Muslims with the respect they deserve. I know that is your attitude, as well; it's certainly the attitude of this government, that we should not hold one who is a Muslim responsible for an act of terror. We will hold those who are responsible for the terrorist acts accountable, and those who harbor them.

—President George W. Bush

The September 11 terrorist attacks had an immediate, devastating effect on the entire country. The events had a particularly chilling effect on refugees because many feared that they would mistakenly be perceived as terrorists despite the efforts of the president to dispel that perception.

U.S. REFUGEE PROGRAM (USRP)

The U.S. Refugee Program (USRP) admits only well-screened refugees. In spite of this, the USRP was suspended indefinitely, stranding more than 20,000 screened and travel-ready refugees in refugee camps and other processing locations. Refugee processing began again slowly in February of 2002 with additional security screening measures in place. The Department of State, Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (DOS/BPRM) indicated that by mid-April 2002 overseas processing had resumed in some places with additional staffing in processing centers and additional Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) personnel. By mid-June, fewer than 16,000 refugees have arrived, so it is unlikely that we will reach even 50 percent of the ceiling of 70,000 established for fiscal year 2002, which ends in September 2002.

The U.S. Refugee Program enjoys the strong support of the American people, the Congress, and the president. It is a well-defined rescue program for a distinct subset of immigrants—those who demonstrate a “well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”¹ Refugees come to the U.S. because they cannot stay in or return to their home countries.

The U.S. Refugee Program reflects the commitment of the U.S. to provide protection and opportunity for people who flee persecution and to recognize refugee resettlement as a positive and forward-thinking foreign policy initiative. Upon arrival, refugees may access a series of benefits and adjustment services for a limited time in order to help them achieve early employment and integration into new communities. Refugees have long been the best screened immigrants entering the country.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is the primary federal agency charged with the resettlement of refugees following their official acceptance and legal arrival in the U.S. As stewards of this undertaking, ORR awards grants to states to provide up to eight months of interim cash assistance and medical benefits, as well as social service funds for employment, English language training, and other services. These funds are to serve refugees, asylees, and Cuban-Haitian Entrants. States, in turn, distribute the funding to local governments and community-based organizations to serve, each year, approximately 70,000 newly arrived refugees and refugees in need of services who have been in the U.S. less than five years² Given its commitment to provide funding to assist refugees in becoming self-sufficient, ORR is concerned that its funds help mitigate the impact of the terrorist attacks, while sustaining existing core services.

ASSIGNMENT

ORR commissioned the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED) to collect, compile, and analyze information about the impact of the September 11 attacks on refugees and the refugee program and to recommend strategies that address the consequent needs of the U.S. refugee program, including issues that mitigate the new and existing barriers to positive resettlement. To learn how the terrorist attacks of September 11 have affected refugees, the communities in which they live, those who serve them, and the U.S. Refugee Program in general, ISED interacted with nearly 400 people (in individual conversations and focus groups) including refugees, service providers (at national, state, and local levels), policy analysts, public officials, employer and trade associations, and private citizens. (See Appendix I for a complete list.) The recommendations are those of the authors, informed by the issues and concerns raised by refugees and service providers at all levels. Part A describes the findings from which the recommendations emerged. Part B presents the recommendations.

¹ Refugee Act of 1980.

² The Refugee Act of 1980 provides for at least 50,000 refugees per year, but the admission ceiling for each year is set by the president. Historically, the annual number ranges from 50,000 to 120,000. The ceiling for FY02 is 70,000. The number of persons served with ORR funds is actually greater when the residual population in the U.S. less than five years is added and when asylees and entrants are included.

A. FINDINGS

This section of the report describes the findings that emerged from the focus groups with refugees, the roundtable discussions with service providers, and information gathered from other sources. The section describes how the September 11 attacks affected refugee admissions, refugee individuals and communities, the national refugee service network, state refugee agencies, and federal agencies.

1. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS

The attacks on September 11 prompted a suspension of refugee admissions while security measures and immigrant processing were reviewed. Some Immigration and Naturalization Service officials who interview refugees overseas were recalled while new security practices were being developed and implemented. More than 20,000 refugees who had been screened and cleared to leave for the United States were delayed, many for more than nine months, some indefinitely.

On November 21, 2001, President Bush announced a resumption of refugee processing and set the ceiling at 70,000 refugees for fiscal year 2002. At the U.S. Senate's Subcommittee on Immigration's February 12, 2002 hearing, "Empty Seats on the Lifeboat: Are There Problems with the U.S. Refugee Program?" both INS Commissioner James Ziglar and Assistant Secretary Arthur "Gene" Dewey, the top State Department official in charge of refugees, affirmed their commitment to reaching the 70,000 ceiling. Mr. Dewey qualified his remarks by saying "it would take a miracle" to bring 70,000 refugees this year. By mid-April 2002 both INS and the Department of State reported that refugee processing was underway in most posts with additional staffing to facilitate progress toward the ceiling. Changes include additional security screening for approved refugees and additional security measures for American citizens working in the overseas processing sites.³

In the first four months of the fiscal year, fewer than 800 refugees were admitted, compared to 14,000 during the same time period in the previous year. By mid-June 2002, nearly nine months into the fiscal year, less than 15,000 have been admitted. It would require a Herculean effort to admit even 35,000 refugees this fiscal year—50 percent of the ceiling. In human terms, thousands of refugees will not find the safety and security that the U.S. usually provides.

³ The following security measures were implemented following the September 11 attacks: (1) As in the past, refugee applicants receive a Consular Lookout Support System (CLASS) name check. (2) A Security Advisory Opinion (SAO) is required for all males of certain (unspecified) nationalities between the ages of 16 and 50—which adds an additional two to three months of processing time. (3) INS verifies all family reunification cases by comparing information on the A-file with the Affidavit of Relationship (AOR) and by checking appropriate and applicable databases. (4) INS and the FBI consult together to review selected refugee applications. (5) All refugees 14 and older are fingerprinted at ports of entry (or in overseas posts as available), limiting the number of refugees that can arrive in any given day. (6) All refugees are photographed (full face and side face) and the photographs are compared to the person at time of departure. (7) INS notifies the FBI of the names of arriving refugees six days in advance of arrival.

2. PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Perhaps the greatest impact of the terrorist attacks was on individual refugees and their communities.⁴ These impacts included both emotional reactions that created fear and experiences of bias and discrimination.

Emotional Impacts. The greatest and most obvious impact of the terrorist attacks on individual refugees was the fear and uncertainty they produced. Every refugee with whom we talked spoke about the feelings of fear, sadness, and uncertainty that resulted from the September 11 attacks. These emotions were immediate and increased with time as individual refugees began to experience the direct and indirect effects of prejudice and hostility directed at them by the broader population. Many described themselves as being re-traumatized, i.e., experiencing again the trauma they endured when they were forced to leave their homes and countries. Refugees in New York said:

*I was in school and my teacher told us a plane hit the World Trade Center. At first, I thought it was just a little plane, just an accident. We listened on a radio and when the second plane hit, I knew it is not an accident. I knew it is an attack. I knew this is not over. I experienced this at home in Kosovo.*⁵

*When war came in my country, they stopped school. When they stopped school the next day, I was afraid this would be like the same. Like no more education.*⁶

Many revealed how frightening the events of that day were. For many, there were “flashback” experiences. They had visceral memories of bombs falling, of planes crashing, of fighting. Some of the images surfaced during the day and some at night. Refugees remembered people running through the streets and recalled experiences of being unable to find family members. They say they still fear more attacks at any minute.

Individuals in the refugee focus groups talked openly, some occasionally weeping, about how uncertain the attacks made them feel. In each focus group, people talked about being shocked that such an attack could happen in the United States. They thought they had left such warfare behind and now feared that life in the U.S. would erupt into the same uncertainty they lived with prior to their departure from their homelands. They said:

*I expected love and peace in the U.S.*⁷

*I lost faith. I believed it would be better [here]. [I] felt like I should go back to my country.*⁸

⁴ This section of the report does not purport to provide a professional psychiatric or psychological profile, nor does it claim to provide a comprehensive economic analysis. It presents the effect of the terrorist attacks on refugees and their communities from the viewpoints of refugees and those who serve them.

⁵ Refugee Focus Group, New York City, NY, February 12, 2002.

⁶ Refugee Focus Group, New York City, NY, February 12, 2002.

⁷ Refugee Focus Group, Northern Virginia, January 17, 2002.

⁸ Refugee Focus Group, New York City, NY, February 12, 2002.

Many refugees, traumatized by the association of the word “terrorism” with “foreigners,” were afraid to appear in public. Fear was especially strong for the many who had experienced actual persecution in their homeland. Despite the strong and very positive statements of support for refugees and immigrants made immediately and repeatedly by President Bush and others in the administration, many refugees—particularly those of Middle Eastern and African descent—indicated they were afraid for their safety. One said, “I stopped telling people I was from Sudan.”⁹ Many people of Arabic descent, in particular women who wear traditional clothing, did not go out to shop, take public transportation, or even go to work. Agency staff fear this isolation may lengthen the socialization and adjustment process for refugees.

In the Detroit area following September 11:

- One family refused to allow its children to attend school
- Another family refused to leave the basement of their building
- Seven families refused to shop alone for three months
- One man forced his wife to quit her job in a bank¹⁰

In Detroit, health care professionals noted changes in the Muslim population during the time period after the attacks. Post-September 11, public health professionals in Detroit have seen higher blood pressure rates, an increase in no-shows for medical appointments, and an increase in smoking rates in the Muslim population.¹¹ In spite of their emergency needs, they were not emotionally able or willing to enter the queue of other people accessing mainstream services.¹²

In addition to the emotional responses to the attacks themselves, some refugees were shocked and alarmed to see armed military and national militia in airports, train stations, and other public places. As the government statements about fighting terrorism and “rooting out” terrorists who might already be in the U.S. increased, so did the fear among Iraqi, Afghan, Iranian, Sudanese, and Somali refugees. With the publication of lists of known individuals linked to terrorist activity, some Muslim refugees with Arab-sounding names spoke of increased anxiety. Later, as it became known that Middle Easterners were being questioned, required to show documentation, and sometimes detained, many refugees experienced feelings of anger and a sense of violation of their rights and their persons.

“I have fear...that my freedom is diminishing. I came here for freedom but I see that I am a target, a suspect in this country now.”¹³

⁹ Refugee Focus Group, Austin, TX, March 6, 2002.

¹⁰ Service Provider Roundtable, Detroit, MI, April 3, 2002.

¹¹ Service Provider Roundtable, public health workers, Detroit, MI, April 3, 2002.

¹² Nor were agencies prepared to serve them. Mainstream social service and mental health agencies often did not have staff prepared to serve refugees—who are both culturally different and have had unique traumas. Refugee service agencies were themselves in crisis. In Manhattan, at least two refugee service agencies were temporarily closed because of their proximity to “Ground Zero.” Others were scrambling to patch together emergency and crisis relief to help the thousands of refugees affected by the disaster.

¹³ National Volag (Voluntary Agency) Roundtable, Washington, DC, January 15, 2002.

Violence. Violence toward refugees increased. The Southern Poverty Law Center's tolerance-promoting website¹⁴ compiled a watchdog list of crimes and bias-related incidents against Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Americans from September 11, 2001 through March 28, 2002. It reported 248 incidents across the U.S. Below is the number of incidents for selected states:

California: 46 incidents
New York: 30 incidents
Texas: 13 incidents
Florida: 11 incidents
Michigan: 10 incidents

These incidents include murders and beatings; vandalism of cars, homes, and businesses; vandalism of mosques; threats of killing, beating, and massacre (some against high school students); abuse such as name calling, pulling turbans and scarves off people's heads; and racial profiling and police harassment. Predictably, California and New York, which have the most diverse populations, experienced the highest number of bias incidents. The data of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission support these findings. The EEOC reported that 157 religious-based discrimination complaints were filed between September 11 and November 28, 2001, up from 64 for the same period in 2000.¹⁵

Threats. A refugee focus group of Sudanese and Somalis reported that many Somali families have received threats. Some of the threats came in letters sprinkled with white powder. Those receiving such letters threw them away rather than risk calling the police and bringing attention to themselves. Many have lost confidence that police and public officials will help them. Group participants also talked about widespread depression in the African community, identifying three refugees who had committed suicide since the September 11 attacks. The group felt certain that Americans were against Somalis because of the harm done to the U.S. military in Somalia several years ago.¹⁶

Discrimination. Discrimination has taken many forms. One example is housing. Some landlords have refused to rent to refugees or cancelled leases held by refugees. They say they fear that, given the present political climate, foreign-born tenants, especially those of African and Middle Eastern origin, will sully the reputations of the rental properties or make the properties targets of vandals.¹⁷

Discrimination took other forms as well. Focus groups of refugees in California described other examples of negative reactions following the September 11 attacks:

Kids on the street make fun...

[Some] job applications have added 'white Mid-Eastern.'

*I feel rejected; I want to feel accepted.*¹⁸

¹⁴ www.tolerance.org

¹⁵ *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 22, 2002.

¹⁶ Refugee Focus Group, San Diego, CA, February 12, 2002.

¹⁷ Refugee Focus Group, San Diego, CA, February 12, 2002, and Service Provider Roundtables.

¹⁸ Refugee Focus Group, San Diego, CA, February 12, 2002.

*Additional Bias Incidents
Following the September 11 Attacks*

The Arab American Institute Foundation Report to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, dated October 11, 2001, reported that 326 hate-based incidents toward Arab Americans were committed in 38 states between September 11 and October 10, 2001, with California, Virginia, and New York accounting for the majority of incidents.



In a report dated November 20, 2001, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee claimed to have confirmed 520 violent incidents directed against Arab Americans after the September 11 attacks.



On December 21, 2001, an article in the *Los Angeles Times* entitled “Hate Crimes Have Soared Since Sept. 11” stated, “In the three months since September 11, there have been seven times more reports of hate crimes directed against Middle Easterners in LA County than all of last year (according to county officials).” The Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission said that between September 11 and December 12, 2001, 92 hate crimes were committed against individuals or groups because of a belief that they are Muslim or of Middle Eastern descent.



In a January 20, 2002, article headlined “September 11 Backlash Murders and the State of ‘Hate’”, the *Washington Post* stated, “In 2000, the FBI reported 33 anti-Islamic hate crimes across the country, including four aggravated assaults and no murders. In the four months since September 11th, federal authorities have investigated more than 250 incidents of violence or serious threats against Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians, including numerous assaults and fire-bombings.”



The Council on American Islamic Relationships reports that there have been 1,717 anti-Muslim incidents between September 11, 2001 and February 8, 2002. Over 25 percent of the incidents reported were in California and New York.

Demand for Identification Documents. Authorities—for example, employers, police, landlords, and public assistance eligibility workers—more frequently require photo identification, but the identification cards that refugees receive upon entering the U.S. (I-94) do not consistently have photographs. This lack of recognized secure identification documents for refugees makes it harder to obtain driver’s licenses, employment, and various public benefits. For example, a growing number of states require two forms of ID (one picture ID) before issuing a driver’s license. The public expects an ID card that resembles a driver’s license, but refugees find it difficult to acquire such an ID. This, combined with a weak economy and generalized xenophobia, makes securing employment for refugees more difficult than in recent years.¹⁹

Confidence and Identity. These experiences have had major effects on refugees’ confidence and sense of identity. Communities that first appeared to be welcoming seem less welcoming. Communities that seemed secure seem less secure.²⁰ In Detroit, service providers report that among the effects of September 11 are that some children of Arabic descent are ashamed of their heritage, and some refugees from the Middle East have been reluctant to renew their I-94s (Public Law 107.173), fearing rejection. People in the latter group have unnecessarily fallen out of legal status.

Remittances. In Detroit, another ramification of September 11 is that small businesses licensed to process money transactions overseas have had their business interrupted. This has made it difficult for many African and Middle Eastern refugees to assist their relatives who remain in the homeland.

INS Detentions. Refugees and immigrants are further distressed by the detention of people by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Nationwide sweeps in the two months following September 11 resulted in the detention of 1,200 non-U.S. nationals.²¹ According to INS, most detainees were men of Arab or South Asian origin. Eight months after the attack, more than 300 people remained in custody.²² Refugees expressed concern about the detentions and the lack of information available regarding the arrests. A plethora of stories circulated among refugee communities about deportations and separations from families.²³

Some Middle Eastern refugees told us they had begun to plan for their departure from the U. S. in the event that they became convinced that their rights would be compromised. They were considering other countries where they might be able to request and receive asylum.

¹⁹ The Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration of the Department of State (DOS) has worked with the Social Security Administration to verify refugee status. This helps many refugees obtain Social Security cards quickly in a climate of distrust. Still, this does not address the need for a photo ID for arriving refugees.

²⁰ On the other hand, other refugees—including Middle Easterners—say they continue to have complete confidence in their welcome. An Afghan taxi driver in Nashville said that the FBI and local police have been proactive in outreach to refugees. “They called many of us on the telephone to tell us that we had protection and that we should let them know if we received threats or experienced prejudice” (conversation in Nashville, TN, April 9, 2002).

²¹ The writers attempted to find out whether any of those detained had refugee status, but no contacts at INS or DOS/BPRM could confirm or deny identification.

²² Amnesty International: “Concerns Regarding Post-September 11 Detentions in the USA,” www.amnestyinternational.org.

²³ Refugee Focus Group (40 Sudanese, Afghan, Iranian, Somali refugees), Dallas, TX, March 7, 2002.

Some could name the countries to which they would flee and had made at least initial inquiries into how they might reasonably seek asylum elsewhere.

Two African refugees in Southern California were arrested by the police for domestic disturbances around the time of the terrorist attacks. Their experiences are widely known within their ethnic communities and the larger refugee and immigrant communities and have had a traumatizing effect on those populations. Following are updates from the refugee caseworker:

“Mr. A has now been released.... The criminal court charged him \$10,000, but he got a lawyer to reduce it to \$3,100. Then he got transferred to a different INS jail, where he was made to work off a \$4,000 fine. He is out now, but they took his documents because they had him on the way to deportation when the lawyer (that they now owe \$2,100!!!) intervened on Mr. A’s behalf. So he avoided being deported, but now owes thousands of dollars and has no documents, so he can’t work!”

“Mr. B has been in jail for 6 months and has completed his criminal sentence. He was about to be released when the INS took him to their jail. Apparently, if you have been here for less than 7 years, criminal charges are sent to the INS and there is a \$10,000 fine added to the whole tamale! Right now an Immigration and Naturalization Service lawyer is investigating the case.”

Concern for Relatives. The delay in refugee processing means that many refugees worry about family members who were expected to arrive in the U.S., but are languishing in refugee camps or other locations as they await processing. Refugees worry about the safety of their families overseas and are anxious about their safe arrival in the U.S. They seek assurance that their spouses and children will be coming to join them. They have heard of the extra screening required for family reunification cases and the rumors that family reunification will no longer have the priority within the refugee program that it currently has.

Public Information and Education. The terrorist attacks and the subsequent “war on terrorism” have focused increasing attention on Islam and on the countries from which many refugees come. Some stories increase public knowledge and awareness while others increase public fear and prejudice.

An example of the news media creating fear was NBC’s *Today Show* on February 26, 2002, that opened a news segment with these words: “A terrorist may be living next door to you!” The segment concerned the locations of known or suspected terrorist cells in the U.S. The implicit message was that if one lives in one of the general areas of the report and has Middle Eastern neighbors, one should be alert and beware.

The news media have created an increasing awareness of Afghanistan. Maps in newspapers and in the nightly TV news describe enemy positions and show military action. However, most of this coverage does not delve into the history, culture, and achievements of the country. Such educationally oriented information has been much less plentiful.

Many refugees say they want to “tell their stories” so that people understand they have fled the same enemies that America now fights.²⁴ They believe that if they can tell their stories, the American public will embrace them.²⁵ There is a rising interest among refugees, indeed a proactive interest, in telling their stories. While they were devastated by the negative impact of September 11 and the following wave of what they perceived as anti-foreigner betrayals, they want to turn the tide of the American mainstream by telling their stories and by finding ways to become real “citizens” of their communities, no matter what their status. Service providers believe they also can do a better job of sharing the stories of individual refugees in a way that builds community and helps the nation see its own history in the story of the newcomer. A service provider in southern California suggested tutoring Muslim imams to address groups, via the media and in person, regarding the contributions, attitudes, and values of the Muslim community.

The American public’s interest in Islam has increased sharply since September 11. A department manager at a New York Barnes and Noble store indicates, “We can’t keep enough books on Islam in stock.”²⁶ This may provide a useful opportunity to educate the American public about refugees and immigrants. Some initiatives have already begun. Churches and mosques have developed partnerships and shared meals together, welcoming each other into their houses of worship. In New Hempstead, NY, a local mosque and an Episcopal Church are partnering in a summer youth mission to Bosnia to work in an orphanage. Muslim mothers and Christian mothers work together planning and gathering provisions for the mission, their partnership making a statement of goodwill in a diverse community.

Increase in Citizenship Applications. Many refugees are responding to these new realities by seeking citizenship. There has been a 61 percent increase in citizenship applications by refugees and immigrants. Some fear that the laws of the United States will soon change to further restrict the rights of non-citizens. There is also a heightened awareness of patriotism and a desire to take part. One immigration expert comments, “They experience both pride and fear that they are foreigners. They feel insecure in not being full members of the community in a time when community solidarity is emphasized.”²⁷

²⁴ The idea of telling the stories has support in a report from U.S. polling firms delivered at the January 2002 conference of the National Immigration Forum (NIF) in Washington, DC. In a presentation, a panel of pollsters indicated that, in the aftermath of September 11, most Americans are not interested in the “rights” of immigrants, or in the laws that govern our civil rights, or in the activities of the United Nations. They *are* interested in and respond positively to the stories of individual refugees and immigrants.

²⁵ Post-September 11 Roundtable Dialogue at the African Refugee Conference hosted by the Ethiopian Community Development Council, May 15, 2002.

²⁶ Barnes and Noble, West Nyack, NY, September 2001.

²⁷ Mark Krikorian, *The San Antonio Express-News*, January 27, 2002.

3. ECONOMIC IMPACTS

While there is evidence that the U.S. economy entered a recession prior to September 11, the terrorist attacks clearly exacerbated the economic situation.²⁸ Particularly hard-hit were the hotel and tourism industries, where refugees are heavily represented.²⁹ Many refugees work as maids, wait staff, bus persons, dishwashers, bellhops, janitors, and maintenance workers. They also drive taxis, work in the airline food service industry, and serve in security positions.³⁰

Other industries in which refugees are heavily represented were also affected by the economic slowdown. Refugee service providers noted, for example, light industries and meatpacking, in addition to other service industries.³¹ While it is difficult to quantify how many refugee jobs have been lost as a direct result of the September 11 attacks,³² we know that the overall unemployment rate is up. (See Appendix II for unemployment rates for selected states.)

Furthermore, re-employment in jobs that provide self-sufficiency level income is also difficult. First, there are fewer jobs and the competition for jobs has increased. One staff member says, “Before September 11 we always said that a refugee does not need to speak English. Now, we are seeing that the competition is stiff and the person who can speak some English will get the job over a person who doesn’t.”³³ Second, there is heightened sensitivity toward the foreign-born. Third, many of the available jobs do not pay enough to lead to self-sufficiency.

Strategies for Refugee Self-Sufficiency. In a conference call with state refugee coordinators, in the roundtable dialogue with national voluntary resettlement agencies, and in the multiple local service provider dialogues, the issue of refugee self-sufficiency was an underlying concern in relation to employment, the economy, and the goals of the programs. Because of the increase in unemployment and the difficulties faced by refugees in obtaining

²⁸ We acknowledge that information gathered for this section is heavily anecdotal and that statistical data is general in nature and not refugee-specific.

²⁹ Historically, most refugees go to work within four to six months after their arrival in the U.S., usually in entry-level jobs in the service sector.

³⁰ Following the September 11 attacks, the airline industry was immediately and heavily affected. Airports were shut down and remained closed for days and weeks. Ronald Reagan National Airport did not resume full operations until April 2002. There was a “ripple effect” into related industries. Tourism and business travel all but stopped for the remainder of September and were extremely slow during the last quarter of the year. Service providers have indicated that many refugees across the country have been laid off as a direct result of the impact on air travel. The economic slowdown related to travel has affected refugee employment.

³¹ For refugees living in metropolitan New York and the Washington, DC-Northern Virginia area, the economic impact of the September 11 attacks on employment has been especially devastating. In November 2001, the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region conducted an informal survey of nonprofit partners serving immigrants through its Bridging Differences Initiatives. The 14 responding agencies reported job losses in the hospitality, tourism, transportation, and construction industries. (See Community Foundation for the National Capital Region web site.)

³² There are three reasons for the difficulty in quantifying refugee job losses as a direct result of the September attacks: (1) employment statistics for a given month are not available until at least three months later, (2) there is no way to determine how many job losses are directly related to the attacks, and (3) the employment data are not refugee-specific.

³³ Conference call with World Relief Refugee Program Area Directors, February 13, 2002.

employment at self-sufficiency level incomes, refugee service providers are increasingly exploring new markets and industries in which to seek employment opportunities—and they are increasingly looking for other economic development strategies including re-certification and self-employment.³⁴ Agencies already involved in asset development strategies and re-certification initiatives saw them as having positive impacts on refugees and in the refugee communities. Agencies that were not engaged in such strategies displayed a keen interest in learning how they might begin to expand options and resources for refugees, linking new arrivals to economic development opportunities.³⁵

Impact on Family Members Overseas. Many refugees expressed worries about the effect of layoffs and reductions in hours have an effect on refugee economies around the world. They said that many new arrivals have left family behind to whom they send money. This money makes a tremendous difference in the quality of life for those awaiting travel to the U.S. or for those who are not able to escape, so the loss of income has an impact on those extended families.

4. EFFECTS ON THE SERVICE PROVIDER NETWORK

The network of refugee service providers is extensive. It includes state, county, and city refugee agencies, community colleges, national voluntary resettlement agencies (Volags) and their local affiliates, Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), public and private social service agencies, faith-based institutions, and a vast contingency of volunteers. This network was appreciative of the opportunity to talk with ISED staff about the September 11 attacks and the impacts on their agencies, programs, and services. Many indicated this was the first time since the attack that they have had an opportunity to talk, to brainstorm, to listen to each other, and to think about opportunities and challenges with folks beyond their immediate associates.

Emergency Response. The agencies have become vividly aware of the importance of coordination among service providers in crisis situations—to facilitate beneficial information sharing, reduce feelings of isolation, and empower the major service providers to move across network lines to find solutions nationally and locally. Service providers are especially concerned about planning for potential future terrorist attacks to assure that they are prepared to serve the needs of refugees effectively and have access to emergency funding for that purpose.

Service providers recognize that refugees, a distinct subset of the foreign-born population, are a very small group of people nationwide. In New York, for example, hundreds of refugees were directly and indirectly affected by the attack. They lost jobs, were evacuated from their homes, lost family members, and were traumatized by the attack and its aftermath.³⁶ Early discussions regarding emergency relief for refugees left service providers

³⁴ Service Provider Roundtables in Houston and Austin, TX, March 5-6, 2002.

³⁵ Michigan Immigrant and Refugee Conference, May 3, 2002; Service Provider Roundtables in Houston and Austin, TX, March 5-6, 2002.

³⁶ Refugee Focus Group, New York City, NY, February 12, 2002, and follow-up conversations with New York State employees.

in New York expecting that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) would provide funding (channeled through the state refugee office) to enable local refugee service agencies to serve refugees. The New York state refugee office and its network of local service providers prepared funding requests for submission to ORR.³⁷ However, it turned out that funding for emergency services was disbursed through social service block grants that were channeled through state human service directors rather than the state refugee coordinators. Many refugee service agencies were unable to access the funds. This misunderstanding had a negative impact on refugee service providers and the services (or lack thereof) provided to refugees. Funding for services was provided to mainstream agencies, some of which were not prepared to provide culturally—and linguistically—appropriate services. Many refugees did not apply for help during the days and months that followed.³⁸ Subsequent to the attacks, ORR issued an emergency grant (\$3 million to New York State, \$375,000 to Virginia, and \$225,000 to the District of Columbia) to help offset the effects of these events on refugees.

Network Infrastructure. Much of the public funding that refugee service providers receive is given on a *per capita* basis.³⁹ Consequently, the suspension of refugee admissions seriously affected the income streams that pay staff and maintain their service capacity. National resettlement agencies and most state refugee offices steadfastly believe that maintaining an infrastructure adequate to respond to refugee crises is essential. Defining an adequate infrastructure is more difficult.

In early FY02, national resettlement agencies and their affiliates were stretched to the limit of their fiscal capacities. Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) conducted a poll of resettlement networks to gauge the effect of potentially low arrivals. They report that some agencies “have reduced resettlement staff by up to 60 percent.”⁴⁰ In roundtable discussions, national voluntary resettlement agencies reported that some staff, in anticipation of curtailed hours and layoffs, found new jobs. Morale was low. One national director suggested that the entire refugee resettlement network suffered from “low-grade depression.” Another national resettlement director described the process of downsizing in affiliates as follows:

*First they don't fill staff vacancies, then they lay off Reception and Placement staff, then Match Grant staff, then state funded performance-based staff. Now they can't pay overhead. The national [agency] is supporting them. The next step is closing. We can't afford to keep them [affiliates] open.*⁴¹

In February of 2002, most national agencies and their networks were developing plans for closing some affiliates, but by mid-April there was hope that the resettlement infrastructure would survive. The affiliates tried to avoid layoffs in order to protect the capacity for resettlement. Local affiliates took a variety of measures⁴² to retain staff and keep them

³⁷ ORR State Letter 01-25, September 28, 2001.

³⁸ New York state refugee coordinator's office, January 2002.

³⁹ Some public funds support a percentage of administrative costs. Some state contracts are performance-based.

⁴⁰ *Refugee Reports*, Volume 22 Number 12, December 31, 2001.

⁴¹ Refugee Council USA Roundtable, Washington, DC, January 15, 2002.

⁴² Refugee Council USA Roundtable, Washington, DC, January 15, 2002.

occupied during this lull in resettlement activities. Some staff used the time to do tasks that they are usually too busy to do, e.g., refine resettlement policies and procedures and catch up on all case file notes and documentation. Other staff were shifted to other units of the agencies. Still others took vacation time.

Two responses helped sustain the capacity of the resettlement agencies. One response came from the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the other from the Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration. (1) In December 2001, ORR agreed “to allow Matching Grant (MG) agencies to draw down federal funds in the absence of refugee arrivals during the last three months of calendar year (CY) 2001 to keep their infrastructure intact and to provide for additional services and goods to MG clients who have lost their jobs.” ORR also waived the five-year limitation on eligibility for social services. This waiver is valid through September 30, 2002. This action enables refugees who have been in the U.S. for longer than five years, but are not yet citizens, to receive a variety of services including but not limited to employment training and placement, English language study, and mental health services.⁴³ (2) The Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), following consultation with the national voluntary agencies, announced that it would provide the administrative portion (\$400 per capita) of resettlement funding to agencies based on original budget submissions.

Volunteers. In response to some of the negative orientation toward the foreign-born, some citizens wanted to make positive statements. Consequently some refugee service agencies experienced a surge in volunteers. Having more volunteers when there are fewer new arrivals to assist presented a challenge, as did training and effective deployment of volunteers with fewer professional staff. Some volunteers moved on to other volunteer opportunities rather than wait for arrivals.

Challenges for MAAs. Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) are an important component of the refugee service network. MAAs have found their roles shifting and expanding post-September 11. The attacks drew many refugees and immigrants to seek counsel and assistance from ethnic community-based organizations. Many refugees and immigrants recognize now, more than ever, a need to have the support of their ethnic communities. MAAs are conduits of information and assistance delivered in the language and cultural style of the homeland. Even when serving newcomers from other nations, the refugee experience can transcend the cultural differences.⁴⁴

Many MAAs are experienced in the provision of services to their constituencies and see both the need and the opportunity to maintain and expand their activities. At a meeting of an umbrella group of National MAAs, representatives spoke about the growing roles of MAAs in conflict resolution, cross-cultural sensitivity training, citizenship preparation, community liaison for landlord/refugee interactions, leadership development, technical assistance,

⁴³ ORR State Letter 01-31, December 5, 2001.

⁴⁴ MAA Roundtable Dialogue, Washington, DC, January 16, 2002 and the African Refugee Conference hosted by the Ethiopian Community Development Council, May 13-15, 2002.

economic development, and asset development. They identified a number of challenges including:⁴⁵

- Provision of services to newly arriving refugees from other nations and cultures
- Concern over possible loss of traditional sources of income from ORR
- Building organizational capacity to seek additional funding for service provision
- Building organizational capacity to develop economic and asset development strategies
- Need for leadership development
- Need for linkage between MAAs, potential funders, and political leaders

Challenges for State Refugee Service Agencies. State refugee agencies are another critical component of the refugee service network. State coordinators, especially those from states with large numbers of refugees in residence, point to the substantial increase of work in their offices as a result of the terrorist attacks. They say the following activities consume more of their time than ever before:⁴⁶

- Responding to media requests for information (and correcting media misrepresentation) about refugees/ethnic groups
- Working to amend and extend existing contracts with service providers as creative solutions to new situations are identified
- Developing plans and funding for targeted employment, mental health, and trauma-related assistance
- Disseminating outreach information regarding legal assistance and hotlines for bias incidents/refugee victimization
- Responding to increased interest in citizenship
- Exploring economic and asset development strategies for addressing refugee employment and self-sufficiency issues
- Planning for possible funding loss in years ahead
- Exploring ways to maintain refugee service provider capacity
- Working more closely with school systems to address refugee children's fear
- Attempting to address the growing concern with refugee documentation

5. FEDERAL COORDINATION AND GUIDANCE

The Refugee Act of 1980, Public Law No. 96-212, provided for the coordination of the efforts of the Department of Justice/INS, the Department of State/BPRM, and the Department of Health and Human Services/ORR through an ambassador-level coordinator. The position of ambassador was eliminated in 1994, but the role itself remains with the State Department. The attacks of September 11 occurred just as all three federal agencies responsible for the U.S. Refugee Program were in leadership transitions. Leadership transitions take time. Crises of this proportion are challenging, even for leaders who are

⁴⁵ MAA Roundtable Dialogue, Washington, DC, January 16, 2002.

⁴⁶ SCORR telephone conference call and discussions with individual state coordinators.

fully engaged with an experienced and cohesive team.

It is probably not surprising, then, that many national, state and local service providers expressed concern about coordination among and guidance from the agencies that have major roles in the U.S. Refugee Program. They identified several issues, including:

- The need for a statement that would provide state and local governments and the general public information about the refugee program to help them understand the importance of the program as a foreign policy initiative and as a humanitarian response
- The need for immediate interaction with public officials in New York and Virginia to explain that arriving refugees have been interviewed and approved by INS and have had a security check, and that none of the terrorists arrived with refugee status
- The need for coordinated information regarding the suspension of the program
- Clear directives regarding the availability of emergency funding
- Ongoing public announcements to dispel growing fear of the foreign-born
- Joint agency leadership to resolve the security and programmatic concerns⁴⁷

The difficulty for states and refugee service providers following the terrorist attacks was that they received little information. ORR is the primary link to states and thus the primary source of information, but it is not the decision-maker regarding refugee admissions. The Department of Justice convened an interagency task force to discuss and recommend security issues related to the refugee program, but ORR was not invited to participate until late in the spring of 2002. ORR's participation is important for many reasons: it brings valuable insights from refugees and refugee service providers; it gives refugees, states, and service providers a symbolic seat at the table; and it has the potential to increase communication back to the field.

Review of Refugee Policy. September 11 has made apparent the need for a reexamination of U.S. foreign policy, immigration policy, and refugee policy. The U.S. Refugee Program, in its current form, was shaped by the Refugee Act of 1980. The Department of State, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Health and Human Services have legislated responsibilities in the resettling of refugees.

The focus of the refugee program has shifted over time. The program was initiated in response to the exodus in Southeast Asia. However, resettlement from Southeast Asia is nearly complete. Another focus was the Soviet Block. But the Cold War is over, and resettlement from former Soviet Union countries is coming to an end. The preponderance of

⁴⁷ Among the "coordination" issues raised by service providers and analysts was the creation of an interagency task force headed by the Department of Justice to review security-related issues and procedures. Although the task force dealt primarily with overseas and international issues, the participation of ORR, which has primary responsibility for the domestic program, might have brought additional insights about the impact of decisions on arriving refugees and their families awaiting processing. ORR was not invited to join the task force until late spring of 2002.

Soviet and Bosnian refugees resettled in the 1990s, readily employable in the United States, is being replaced by refugees from Africa, the Near East, and South Asia who, many service providers say, may require more extensive services and training in order to become self-sufficient.⁴⁸ Effective integration services for newcomers, both refugees and immigrants, are now a priority. In fact, it may be an issue for national security.

Historically, the U.S. refugee resettlement program has emphasized family reunification, but that emphasis is now being questioned. This change is occurring, in part, because emergent groups often do not have family in the U.S. to serve as anchors; they must create community, establish themselves, and, later, file for relatives. There is also, rightfully, concern over fraud cases in the Africa program.⁴⁹ While no rescue program or refugee assistance program is ever entirely without incidents of fraud, the current concern for both refugee protection and national security heightens the need for accountability and accuracy in the refugee program.

The fundamental way in which most Americans perceive immigration has changed. Before September 11, immigration policy was seen either as a political issue or as an economic strategy, but few looked upon it in terms of national defense. Yet, it is transparently evident now that this is precisely how the nation thinks.
—Gary Endelman, “Siskind’s Immigration Bulletin,” January 4, 2002

An important new aspect of U.S. refugee policy, of course, is the focus on security. Americans, more than ever, want to know that newcomers to the United States share their love of freedom and independence and will become valuable members of the new American community.

All of this together indicates that it may be time to reexamine immigration and refugee policy, including the roles of the different bureaucracies that were put into place 22 years ago.

⁴⁸ MAA Roundtable, Washington, DC, January 16, 2002. RCUSA Roundtable, January 15, 2002. SCORR conference call and individual discussions with state refugee coordinators.

⁴⁹ U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for Fiscal Year 2003: Recommendations of the Refugee Council USA, May 2002. This document provides an excellent discussion of fraud in the Africa program, as well as the measures taken to resolve it.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are those of the authors. They are informed by interactions with nearly 400 people including: refugees; local, state, and national service providers; policy analysts; public officials; employers and trade associations; and private citizens.

Recommendation 1. Express commitment to the protection of refugees and to refugee resettlement as a viable solution.

It is important that the national and state leadership in the public and private sectors clearly and strongly express commitment to refugee protection and for the U.S. Refugee Program. The nation needs to hear from senators and congressmen, from state legislators, from the executive branches of national and state government, and from the private sector—both corporations and non-profits.

As we spoke with refugees and refugee service providers during this project, there was a consistent and, at times, insistent call for strong leadership in this time of crisis. Refugees are feeling threatened and fearful in their adopted country, and they need frequent and strong support. They need to know that they are, in fact, still welcome in the U.S., that the institutions of our country will support—not attack—they, and that the freedom they sought when coming here is still alive.

Recommendation 2. Revitalize interagency coordination and provide guidance to the field.

It is especially vital in today's climate that the federal agencies responsible for refugee protection and services work closely together. This collaboration is as important as the collaboration of security agencies that has been the focus of so much public discussion. The refugees already living in the U.S., the refugees who languish in camps awaiting clearance to come to the U.S., and the networks of agencies who serve refugees once they arrive will all benefit from such collaboration and guidance.

Recommendation 3. Educate the general public.

All entities involved with refugees need to make education of the public a priority, sharing the stories of individual refugees and telling of the success of the resettlement program. This was the most frequently identified need of those we interviewed. Even refugees who lost their jobs because of September 11—and thus might be expected to focus on their employment needs rather than public education—identified public education as a high priority because they see public education as key to employment and to the general well-being of their families and communities. In the current environment, it is especially important to describe the contributions of the thousands of refugees in the U.S. and to articulate the success of resettlement as a public-private partnership.

Public education can take many forms, including:

- *Public announcement campaigns*, such as the U.S. Postal Service's current sponsorship of a very effective public address announcement in which foreign-born postal workers state, "I am an American," and the posters used in the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) ad campaign currently displayed on some public transportation facilities in the northeast
- *Human interest stories from refugees themselves* on local and national radio and television
- *Opportunities for personal interaction with refugees*, for example, bringing people together through social, cultural, and educational events so that people get to know one another and develop mutual respect and trust
- *Education of the media*, i.e., linking media resource persons knowledgeable in a wide range of refugee and international issues, as well as tracking biased reporting and holding the media accountable
- *Countering ethnic stereotyping* by creating a pool of "spokespersons" who can make presentations to local civic and religious organizations and can respond to issues as they arise
- *Education of public officials*, especially those who have frequent, first-line contact with refugees, such as police, teachers, motor vehicles examiners, health care providers, state lawmakers, city and county officials, and workforce development staff

Recommendation 4. Develop an emergency plan in the event of new terrorist attacks.

Federal, state, and private agencies need to develop a comprehensive plan that coordinates information to and emergency initiatives of refugee service providers. Such a plan should address the needs of refugees currently in the U.S., overseas processing and arrivals, the needs of states and communities receiving refugees, and the needs of the service providers. The plan of action would provide mechanisms for support, guidance, and communication. It would address the issues that forced the complete suspension of the U.S. Refugee Program and subsequent faltering of the networks that sustain the program following the attacks on September 11. A good plan would not give refugees things unavailable to others in need. It would, however, ensure that refugees have access to resources meant for everyone. The plans would be developed at both the national and local levels.

Communication. There needs to be a plan for providing accurate and timely information to all parties affected by the crisis. Initiatives could include federal 800 numbers for information and descriptions of emergency funding availability. Emergency and evacuation procedures should be translated into refugee languages. Radio and television, perhaps the most valuable means of providing initial disaster-related information, should be prepared to call upon specific, trained people fluent in refugee and immigrant languages who can translate emergency announcements.

Emergency Social Service Phone Number (211 Initiative). Another promising resource is the new 211 initiative. On July 21, 2000, the FCC assigned the 211 phone number for human services information and referral nationwide.⁵⁰ Though the system is in its infancy, there have been initial successes.⁵¹ It is important, however, that the special needs of refugees and other foreign-born individuals be taken into consideration in its design.

Recommendation 5: Increase the per capita grant for reception and placement.

The Department of State provides initial per capita resettlement grants to agencies that resettle refugees. Over time, there has been a substantial reduction, in real dollars, of the economic value of these grants. In 1975, the initial per capita reception and placement grant was \$560. The equivalent value in 2001 dollars would, conservatively, be somewhere between \$1,552 and \$1,844.⁵² However, the actual grant amount in 2002 was \$800.

Recommendation 6. Expand the Match Grant program.

The Match Grant program provides eligible refugees, entrants, and asylees short-term cash assistance, job development and employment services, and case management. It has been very successful in assisting refugees' adjustment and early employment. While the program currently serves a significant portion of new arrivals, expansion would allow a larger number of refugees to benefit from this successful strategy.

Recommendation 7. Provide comprehensive case management services.

Comprehensive case management services provide assessment and support for children, adults, and families. Under current programming, the length of time that case management services are provided to refugees varies from state to state and from program to program and is generally insufficient.⁵³ Extending the period of time during which case management services are provided would increase the likelihood that serious health and mental health cases would be tracked more effectively. In the current system,

⁵⁰ Each state public utility or public service commission is now charged with determining who should be awarded the number in that state and how it will be implemented. (See Teddy J. Baird, J.D., "211: The Michigan Business Community Needs to Answer the Call," March 23, 2002.)

⁵¹ The United Way in Atlanta, Georgia, and the state of Connecticut have already established 211 centers to serve their communities. Both centers responded very effectively to the consequences of September 11. Connecticut 211 served as the victims' assistance line for the families of Connecticut residents who were lost in the World Trade Center. The anticipated outcomes of 211, when it is fully implemented across the country, include the following: individuals and families will have a system at their fingertips to access information and referrals to services; every American will use 211 to help navigate the complex and growing maze of human service agencies and programs; the human service field will have more data providing critical information for community services, such as data on community needs and duplication or gaps in services; and individuals will have simplified access to information on volunteering and philanthropy. (See "211: Building Community Preparedness, A United Way Call to Action.")

⁵² GDP price deflator: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. CPI-U: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

⁵³ Under the initial reception and placement grant, case management services are provided for 90 days. The Match Grant program provides case management services for 120 days. State refugee programs vary, providing 12 months to 5 years of case management services.

serious mental health and medical cases may not be identified during the period of time case management is offered, preventing adequate intervention and monitoring. The result is the endangerment of the health of the individuals themselves and the communities in which they live.

Recommendation 8. Expand mental health services.

It was clear that many refugees across the U.S. suffered emotional reactions ranging from fear, uncertainty, and anxiety to what may be characterized as depression and re-traumatization. Some states and local regions have refugee-specific mental health programs funded directly by ORR. In these states, refugees are able to access culturally appropriate and sensitive services ranging from support groups to individual counseling, clinical assessment and interventions, substance abuse support, and suicide prevention. Still, in some major cities⁵⁴ that are home to large numbers of refugees, there are no programs designed to assist torture victims. A long-range component of an expansion of mental health services could include a plan for recruiting and training refugees to do crisis management and to provide initial counseling assessment services. Volunteers can also be trained to participate in drug and substance abuse counseling.

Recommendation 9. Strengthen the capacity of Mutual Assistance Associations and other ethnic community-based organizations.

MAAs and other ethnic community- and faith-based organizations have a natural role in providing services to refugees. They are, at the same time, the keeper of the refugee culture, a bridge for new arrivals into the mainstream economy, and a path to self-sufficiency and integration. MAAs also have the potential to provide positive public education and to create opportunities to tell the stories of new immigrants. They can organize public relations campaigns utilizing such strategies as town meetings and distribution of positive feature stories.

Some MAAs and other ethnic community-based and faith-based organizations are large, complex organizations with considerable capacity and diversified funding streams. Others have not developed the capacities that will enable them to transition from a small service provider funded by limited sources to an agency that has diversified funding; is able to serve a diverse set of clients; and has the capacity to receive, administer, and effectively use federal, state, and local funding. These latter organizations could benefit from technical assistance to develop their organizational capacities so that they could serve more effectively the functions that are important to their communities.

Recommendation 10. Increase the focus on integration and self-sufficiency.

Food, shelter, clothing, and a job are only the first phase of refugee resettlement. Integration and progress toward self-sufficiency are the critical second phase. The work

⁵⁴ For example, Atlanta, Miami, Houston, and Seattle have no centers for victims of torture. Dallas has a small program but receives no ORR funding.

of the refugee service network has increasingly focused on these two objectives. Effective integration and the achievement of self-sufficiency require intensive, quality services and a network with the capacity to deliver those services. ORR has already demonstrated understanding of this issue by providing limited discretionary funding for initiatives such as medical case management, ethnic community development, preferred communities, family strengthening, microenterprise development, individual development accounts, and technical assistance to ORR grantees to increase their capacities to provide effective services. The ability of the network to recognize and re-define the scope of work appropriately will lend credibility to future funding requests.

Community integration initiatives. There are many examples of communities coming together to create strong integrated communities that engage in forward thinking and problem solving. Among those making a difference in integration are the demonstration projects participating in ORR's three-year integration initiative, which may provide valuable models for future replication. While we wait for those outcomes, federal and state funders could support and encourage integration planning and practice. These efforts can be encouraged by grant making that will:

- *Improve relationships between refugee communities and the police.* This may include educating police about refugee cultures and refugees about police culture; having the police explain rights to refugee groups; and teaching refugees how to report hate crimes. "Bridging the Gap" in Atlanta is a program that has been effective in bringing local police and refugees closer together. As local police are increasingly used to enforce immigration laws, the importance of understanding the nuances of the foreign-born community grows exponentially.⁵⁵ With the signing of the U.S. Patriot Act in the fall of 2001 following the September 11 tragedies, police in New York City and throughout the country are assisting in rounding up the 400,000 deportation absconders across the country. Such a massive undertaking has refugee communities terrified and police confused. People are literally waiting in their homes, fearing that the police will come to get them—often ironically reminiscent of the lives they fled. Though refugees are usually not subject to deportation, many are unsure of their rights, as again are many police. Both groups need to become more familiar with each other.⁵⁶
- *Educate school children and youth about refugees.* ORR currently provides K-12 grants to state departments of education to educate youth and coordinate the needs of refugee youth. According to state refugee coordinators and service providers, these grants vary in effectiveness. There is a sense among some service providers that this initiative is less effective than it could be in some cases if ORR provided the grant through the state refugee offices. There is currently no requirement in the grant that local education systems coordinate their efforts with the state or local refugee programs. To the extent that coordination occurs,

⁵⁵ "Florida will soon become the first jurisdiction to accept a long-dormant federal plan to deputize local police officers as agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.... The immigration service...is actively promoting such partnerships with other states." Susan Sachs, *New York Times*, March 15, 2002.

⁵⁶ "Cops Step up Effort to Deport Illegals," Larry Celona, *New York Post*, March 14, 2002.

effective programs exist. ORR may also consider encouraging the use of UNHCR-developed school curricula and/or providing funding to develop curricula to be shared with schools throughout the United States.

- *Encourage support groups and services for refugee children and their parents.* Islamic refugee women may be more likely to attend groups that are held at schools, since schools are perceived as neutral, non-threatening sites. Some of the K-12 education grants already use schools for meetings to assist refugee children and their parents in negotiating the cultural and educational challenges of life in the U.S. Schools could also offer programs that model and teach parenting skills, family fiscal management, and conflict resolution.
- *Earmark a portion of gang-prevention funding for refugees.* One of the barriers to acceptance and integration is the participation of refugee youth in gangs. These activities seem to have increased since September 11. Some service providers believe that additional funding to work with refugee youth to prevent gang-related activity would increase the likelihood of integrating refugee youth into the mainstream and minimizing gang-related activity.

New self-sufficiency strategies. There has been an increasing recognition of the potential of new economic and asset development strategies as ways to facilitate refugee movement toward self-sufficiency. There is no population better suited to take advantage of these new strategies than refugees. By their very presence here in the U.S., they prove themselves to be survivors and entrepreneurs, willing to make great sacrifices to succeed and prosper. ORR has pioneered the use of economic development and asset development strategies to move refugees from marginal self-sufficiency to financial stability. States and local communities may be able to follow suit. We can learn from the experience of the ORR funded projects, modifying program requirements and designs to achieve maximum economic opportunity for refugees. Technical assistance to grantees should be a key component of any plan. The programs are complex, and agencies moving from social and employment services to economic and asset development strategies may need to make staffing and program adjustments as they move forward. The strategies include the following:

- *Employment services and ELT.* A key component of economic development continues to be employment services and English Language Training, both of which are essential building blocks of the refugee resettlement and integration process. Resettlement goals and program initiatives guide refugees into early employment. Job training, ESL, and re-certification information and training should remain high priorities.

⁵⁷ Service Provider Roundtable, Detroit, MI, April 2, 2002.

⁵⁸ Service Provider Roundtable, Detroit, MI, April 3, 2002.

- *Microenterprise development.* Refugees are increasingly seeking microenterprise opportunities and agencies are increasingly recognizing the need to respond to this demand. Many refugees come with considerable experience as entrepreneurs in their countries of origin, and their dreams are to become business owners in the U.S. Refugee service agencies are increasingly recognizing the value of microenterprise development as an economic and asset development strategy, and some of those that have received funding for several years have created considerable capacity and have leveraged multiple funding sources to increase their ability to serve the community.
- *Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).* While only a portion of refugees are interested in self-employment, nearly all are interested in building financial stability for their families through the purchase and ownership of assets. IDA programs nationally are proving highly popular and effective.
- *Community Service Employment (CSE) projects.* Community Service Employment projects are subsidized employment initiatives. The length of subsidy varies as negotiated by the employer and the program agency within the proscriptions of the grantor. They have been especially appropriate for refugees who have been in the U.S. for extended periods of time without becoming successfully attached to the workforce and without developing language or job skills.

POSTSCRIPT

Many of the people who were engaged in dialogue for this paper indicated that the process of talking about the events and consequences of September 11 was therapeutic—that it helped just to talk. It was certainly therapeutic for the ISED staff involved. We came away heartened by the courage and resilience of refugees and service providers, many of whom were severely affected by the attacks. While the attacks may have caused some to fear the freedoms we have, thousands of others recognize that freedom is the very essence and foundation of the American dream.

The network of states, voluntary agencies, and MAAs that resettle and serve refugees in the U.S. is complex, fragile, and valuable. It is an organism with an energy and rhythm born of compassion, science, and art. In times of crisis it needs information, stable income, and ways to serve, as well as to be renewed and strengthened. We end this endeavor more convinced than ever that the U.S. Refugee Program is an extraordinary public-private partnership that embodies the commitment of the American people to assist those who must leave their homelands and combines common sense with compassion to build new American communities.

⁵⁹ Also, mainstream microenterprise development agencies are beginning to recognize the tremendous potential of refugees as a market for their services.

APPENDIX I

I. Methodology

To learn how the terrorist attacks of September 11 have affected refugees, the communities in which they live, those who serve them, and the U.S. Refugee Program in general, ISED engaged in the following activities:

- We held focus groups with refugees in New York, Virginia, Texas, Michigan, and California. One of the focus groups was made up of refugee youth, all of whom were high school students in New York City. The other groups were made up of adults. The focus groups represented refugees who had been in the U.S. for varying lengths of time—some for five years or longer, many less than a year.
- We also engaged in roundtable dialogues with national and local service providers including national voluntary resettlement agencies (Volags), Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), and state refugee coordinators.
- We held telephone conversations with individual national, state, and local service providers.
- We talked with selected employers and trade associations to gather information related to downsizing, temporary layoffs, and the general economic effect of the attacks on employment.
- Research associates searched internet sites and various publications related to refugees, bias crimes, labor/employment, mental health, and media coverage.
- Drawing on dozens of conversations with policy makers, service providers, and refugees, we listened to and recorded their experiences and recommendations.

II. List of Contacts

Roundtable Dialogues of Refugee Service Providers

- January 14 & 28, 2002 – State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement (conference calls)
- January 15, 2002 – Refugee Council USA
- January 16, 2002 – National Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs)
- March 5, 2002 – Houston, Texas (state meeting for service providers)
- March 7, 2002 – Austin, Texas (state meeting for service providers)
- March 8, 2002 – Dallas, Texas (state meeting for service providers)
- April 9, 2002 – Nashville, Tennessee (state meeting for service providers)

Refugee Focus Groups¹

- January 17, 2002 – Northern Virginia

¹ Roundtable Dialogues and Refugee Focus Groups were convened by state refugee coordinators, umbrella agencies, or local forum groups. The groups varied in size from 8 to 100. Attendance lists were compiled by the conveners but, since many of those lists were incomplete, we do not include the names of the individuals participating in those groups.

- February 12, 2002 – New York City
(International Rescue Committee – Youth Project)
- February 12, 2002 – San Diego, California
- February 13, 2002 – Los Angeles, California
- March 5, 2002 – Houston, Texas
- March 6, 2002 – Austin, Texas
- March 7, 2002 – Dallas, Texas
- April 2-4, 2002 – Detroit, Michigan

Telephone and In-Person Conversations with State Refugee Coordinators

- Ed Silverman, Illinois
- Molly Wilkinson, New York
- Kathy Cooper, Virginia
- Barbara Burnham, Georgia
- Sue Levy, Wisconsin
- Thuan Nguyen, California
- Jan Reeves, Idaho
- Maria Diaz, Nebraska
- Marlene Myer, North Carolina
- Norman Nakumura, Utah
- Carolyn Chester, Pennsylvania
- Al Horn, Michigan
- Caitriona Lyons, Texas
- Steve Meinbresse, Tennessee

Conversations with Other Key Individuals

- Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum
- Robert Carey, International Rescue Committee
- Berta Romero, Refugee Council USA
- Ralston Deffenbaugh, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- Dan Kosten, World Relief
- Richard Parkins, Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Ellen Dumesnil, Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Frances Tinsley, Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Kathleen Newland, Migration Policy Institute
- Jan Belz, Department of State/Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration
- Terry Rusch, Department of State/Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration
- Kathleen Sullivan, Immigration and Naturalization Service
- Lavinia Limon, Immigration and Refugee Services of America
- John Fredriksson, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- Larry Yungk, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- Richard Hogan, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- Dona Abbott, Bethany Christian Services, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Gayle Hoffman, Bridging the Gap, Atlanta, Georgia

Conversations with National Volag Affiliate Networks and National Program Managers

- February 5, 2002 – International Rescue Committee
- February 13, 2002 – World Relief

State Refugee Conferences

- Michigan Immigrant and Refugee Conference, May 3, 2002

ORR Staff

- Carmel Clay-Thompson
- Gayle Smith
- Henley Portner

Discussions with Trade Associations and Employers²

- American Hotel & Lodging Association
- International Beef Packing
- Tombstone Pizza
- American Association of Homes and Services for the Aged

² ISED research associates contacted a number of trade associations and employers. Only the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aged were willing to talk about the effect of the September 11 attack on their industry and employees. The report looks at employment issues and experiences through the eyes the refugee community and the local and state service providers. Research associates tracked unemployment data via the Internet.

APPENDIX II

Unemployment Rates for Selected States and Cities September 2001 – February 2002¹

State / City	September 2001	October 2001	November 2001	December 2001	January 2002	February 2002
Illinois	5.5	5.6	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.8
California	5.4	5.8	6.1	6.0	6.4	6.1
Michigan	5.1	5.3	5.8	6.0	no data	no data
Texas	5	5.3	5.5	5.7	5.7	5.7
New York	4.9	5.0	5.5	5.8	5.8	5.9
New York City	no data	no data	no data	7.3	7.2	7.3
Florida	4.6	5.1	5.2	5.1	5.3	5.3
Wisconsin	4	4.5	4.7	4.7	5.2	5.8
Massachusetts	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.4
Georgia	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.4
Minnesota	3.3	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.2
Metro D.C. Area	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.3
Washington, D.C.	no data	no data	no data	6.4	6.7	6.9
Virginia	3.1	3.7	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.1

¹ Statistics compiled by ISED from the Department of Labor website.

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