



CID Talk, Rachel O'Connor

New Zealand Red Cross

What's next for New Zealand's refugee policy?

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Rachel O'Connor works for the Red Cross and has 11 years' experience working in the area of refugees and migrants. New Zealand has a proud history of resettling refugees. We have recently increased the refugee quota, with the government funding the Red Cross to settle the refugees under this quota into New Zealand.

The resettlement space has changed significantly in the past decade. Everything normally moves quite slowly but since 2015 and the coverage of the Mediterranean crisis, a response was sparked in the Global North. In New Zealand there was a positive response, with offers of help pouring in from public and a positive media presence. Globally however, the response started positively but quickly switched to negative with xenophobia, populism, use of migration for political leverage and a very harmful rhetoric linking refugees with terrorism. Changes in social opinion about refugees and migration are seeing borders closing and asylum conditions made as difficult as possible.

The numbers of refugees seeking asylum was the worst ever last year, however this year has already topped that. Since 2014, the urgent need for resettlement has doubled to 1.4 million, but the opportunities for resettlement worldwide have dropped to 75,000 from 163,000 in 2016. This is mainly due to the change in the United States administration. The US has always been the champions of resettlement, with more refugees settled than the entire world put together. The changes in policy are having a devastating effect. There is a great need for resettlement to be shared globally. It is not as impossible as the media makes out, with less than 0.01% of the world's population needing resettlement.

There is a call for a growth in resettlement around the world as this shows an act of solidarity with the Global South, who are hosting most refugees. It also shows hope for others and an opportunity for strategy – if a country resettles, there is an opportunity to advocate for changes in the home country, with a capacity for negotiation. The effect is greater than a single person's life.

The 2016 New York declaration reinforced commitment to refugee response. Two Global compacts were created: The Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Compacts were well engaged with and a wide group of countries were involved in negotiations. The objectives were to ease pressure on major host countries, creating a practical response framework where host countries can draw on other countries for support – technical, financial, etc. and to improve the situation for both refugees and host – economic development and employment opportunities. The emphasis should be on inclusion over integration.

There was multi sector involvement in the global compacts – World Bank, civil society, private sector, but there are some major issues. There is no mechanism for measuring how much responsibility should be shared around. The compacts are all voluntary and are not legally binding.

In New Zealand the next promising step is the trial of a Community sponsorship model, which is happening now and will be assessed at the end of the year. Have a look at Rachel's presentation on our [website](#), and follow the conversation in upcoming CID Weekly newsletters.