

PATH OF A REFUGEE

1. Live in a place where people are persecuted because of their race, religion, ethnic affiliation, social group, or political belief. Belong to one of these groups.
2. Flee your country when your life is threatened. Take only your immediate family members and the clothes you are wearing.
3. Find your way to the relative safety of a neighboring country.
4. Apply to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for protection.
5. Wait.
6. If the United Nations recognizes your need for protection, you may be given a card and allowed to live in a refugee camp. You may not even be safe there, especially if you are a woman or a child.
7. You probably don't have enough to eat; it is usually illegal for you to leave the camp.
8. Ask UNHCR to refer you to the nearest U.S. Embassy which has a Refugee Processing Post.
9. Assemble the necessary documents.
10. Wait.
11. Assemble more documents.
12. Wait again.
13. Interview with a United States government official. Convince that person that you should have refugee status.
14. You wait again.
15. If the answer is no, you have other options:
 - a) Return home
 - b) Stay where you are
 - c) Try another country

16. If the answer is yes, your application becomes a “case” and is assigned to an agency.
17. Wait.
18. The VOLAG assigns your case to one of ten non-profits who determine where you’ll go and with what resettlement agency. The US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) is one of these; it supports local affiliates such as IIRI. If you have relatives who will help, they will sponsor you and it is a “reunion” case. If not, it is a “free” case, and a church or civic group will be your sponsor.
19. In either instance, the prospective sponsor promises to do certain things to help you once you come to the United States.
20. Wait.
21. Finally, the time comes for you to travel to the United States.
22. A caseworker from the resettlement agency meets you at the plane and takes you to your new home. The resettlement agency is the most important source of information and assistance during the first months of adjustment to life in the U.S.
23. The first few months the caseworker helps you and your family become oriented to your new city, i.e. health screenings, school registration, legal paperwork, etc. while you attend ESL classes and job training classes.