

Complementary Pathways for Refugees: A Canadian perspective

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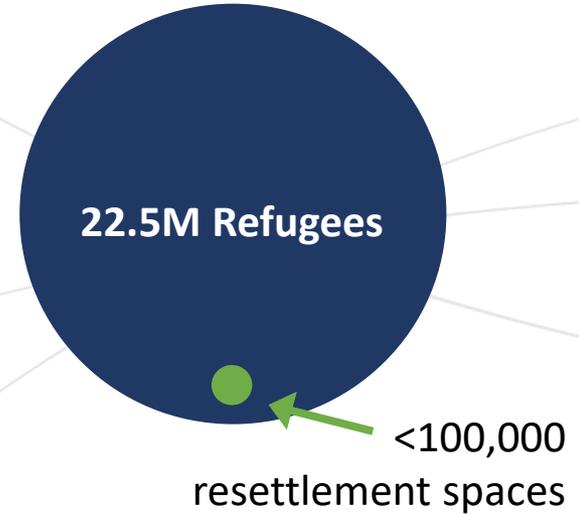


Overview

- **Context:** The need for innovative solutions for refugee protection
- **Definition:** What are complementary pathways?
- **Labour mobility for refugees:** Challenges and opportunities
- **Exploring solutions:** The Economic Mobility Pathways Project

There is an increasing need for refugee protection and durable solutions

- There are an unprecedented number of refugees globally, yet a **lack of durable solutions** has forced the increased use of irregular and dangerous migration pathways.
- Canada has increased resettlement levels and supports resettlement capacity abroad, but **millions remain in need of protection**.
- The **2018 Global Compact on Refugees** recognizes the need for more effective and innovative responses, and recognizes complementary pathways for refugees as another third country solution in addition to resettlement



By thinking of refugees as vulnerable and reliant on aid, **our own thinking has been limited** to providing solutions through asylum and resettlement.

By recognizing the great diversity within refugee populations and **changing the narrative** to one of refugees as **self-reliant** individuals with their own **aspirations, new possibilities for migration** become evident.

A diverse population requires diverse migration options

Refugees seek **opportunities** because **they cannot return home** due to persecution and/or conflict, but also often have **limited access** to work, education and services in host country



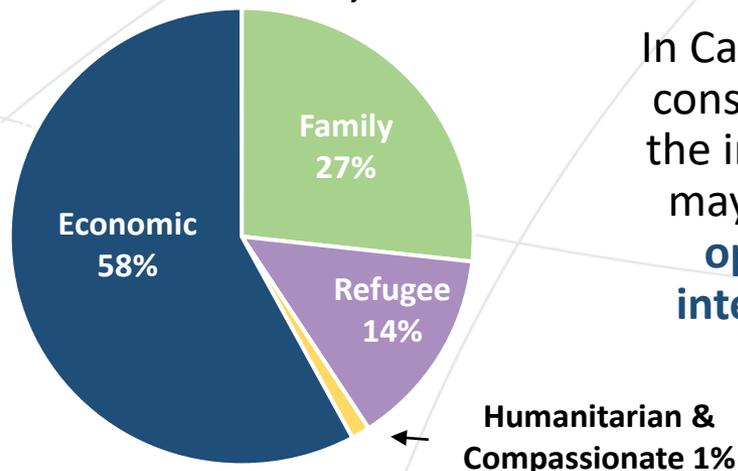
Refugees also seek out **other legal migration pathways** when circumstances permit (*e.g., educated, skilled and/or have a job offer; can obtain a study permit*)

What are complementary pathways?

- They are legal migration pathways for refugees to find safety and opportunity, that are **in addition to traditional resettlement** which assist the most vulnerable.
- They can take many forms such as labour mobility, family reunification or education pathways, and **will differ from country to country**.
- They **expand the concept of refugee mobility** from a solely humanitarian focus to one which includes mobility based on **refugees' skills, abilities, and other attributes**.

2019 Planned Permanent Resident

Admissions: 330,800



In Canada, **economic immigration** constitutes the largest portion of the immigration system, and thus may offer substantial migration **opportunities for high- and intermediate-skilled refugees**.

Canada's Guiding Principles for Complementary Pathways

Additionality

Resettlement must continue to focus on assisting the most vulnerable refugees. Accordingly, the development of complementary pathways will occur **outside and in addition to Canada's humanitarian programs**, including both asylum and resettlement.

Permanent protection and a durable solution

By using immigration programs that offer **permanent residence**, refugees will be assured of long-term solutions: they will not need to depart Canada after a temporary stay, nor will they need to claim asylum to stay in Canada.

Dignity and empowerment

Resettlement often highlights refugee needs and vulnerabilities, but a more nuanced understanding of refugee experiences, needs and desires will open up more opportunities; more opportunities helps **respect refugee autonomy and choices**.

Settlement support

Same as for all newcomers, **robust settlement and integration supports** need to be available. Monitoring of settlement outcomes for refugees who arrive through complementary pathways will help evaluate whether the current suite of available services is sufficient.

Canada's economic programs select migrants based on human capital, not humanitarian criteria

Resettlement Program

Objectives

Saving lives
Providing protection

Eligibility

Vulnerability
Lack of durable solution

Program Streams

GAR, PSR, BVOR

Economic Programs

Objectives

Economic growth and prosperity
Labour market needs

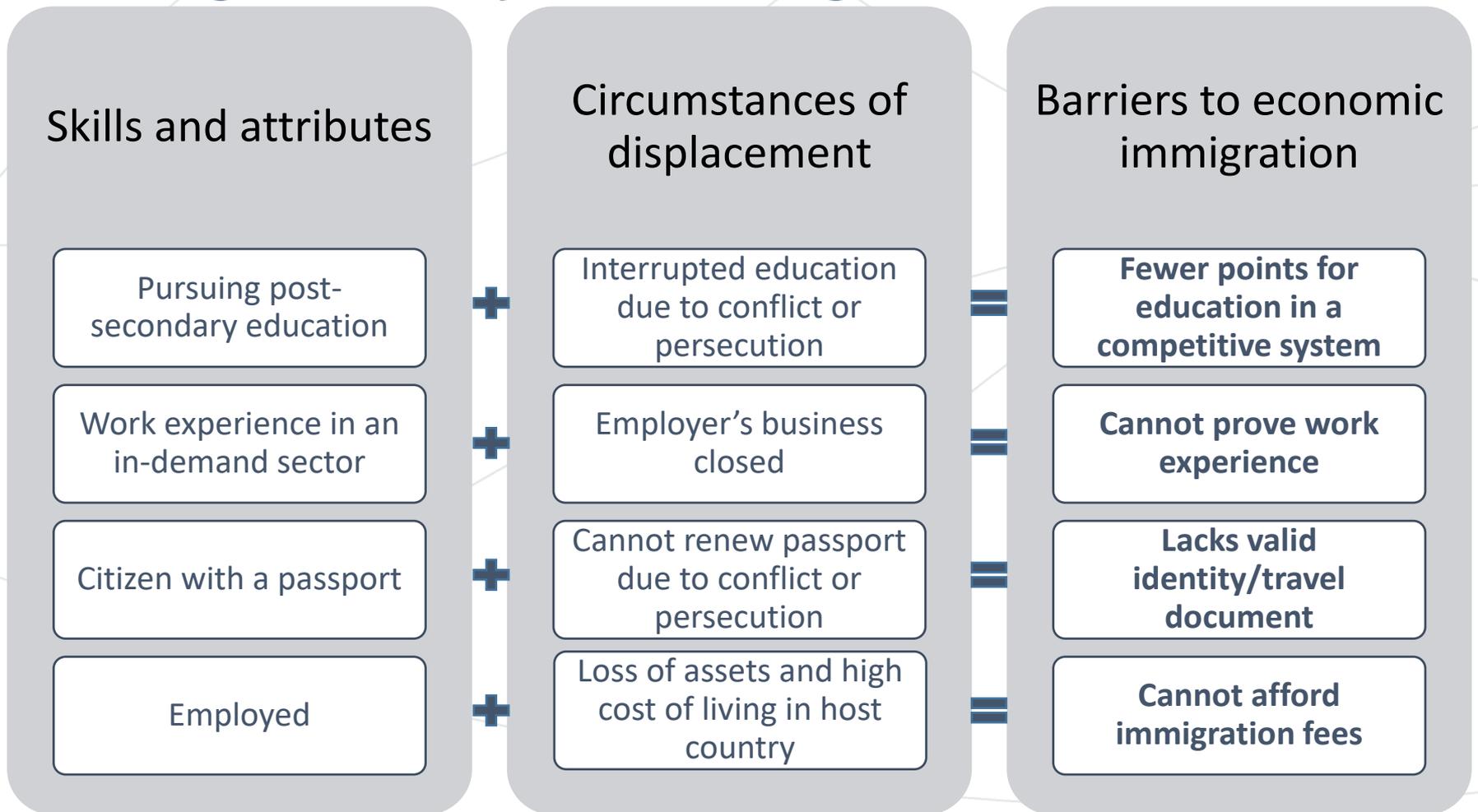
Eligibility

Ability to establish
High human capital
In-demand skills

Program Streams

Federal Skilled
Workers/Trades
Provincial Nominee,
Atlantic Immigration Pilot,
Rural and Northern Pilot

Canada's economic programs are not designed for unique challenges faced by skilled refugees



The average number of Syrians coming to Canada as economic migrants fell 50% with the onset of conflict, suggesting the significant challenges faced by those who are displaced and affected by war or persecution

Canada is committed to innovating and testing complementary economic pathways

- The **Economic Mobility Pathways Project (EMPP)** aims to identify 10-15 **skilled refugees** with strong economic settlement potential who can apply for immigration to Canada under a federal economic program or a Provincial Nominee Program.
- Launched in April 2018, the research project is administered by IRCC in collaboration with the UNHCR, RefugePoint, Talent Beyond Boundaries and participating provinces and territories (Yukon, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland).
- **Target population:** Urban and camp-based refugees in the Middle East (Jordan, Lebanon) and in East Africa (Kenya); refugees with all skill levels that align with existing permanent economic immigration programs (high- and intermediate-skilled).

EMPP's goal is to examine whether skilled refugees can access immigration to Canada through existing economic programs

EMPP's impact will be an evaluation and documentation of the barriers faced by skilled refugees applying for economic immigration

EMPP's results will be the admission of a small number of refugees to Canada and will feed directly into policy work on complementary economic pathways

The EMPP provides **evidence for policy development** on complementary pathways and supports the **implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees**

Early lessons learned

There are **skilled refugees** who meet the requirements of Canada's economic programs.

They **require support** to navigate the different programs and connect with employers, as well as **program requirement flexibilities** to overcome administrative and financial barriers.

Validates refugees' desire to be **recognized for their skills and abilities**, not only their vulnerability.

Future Considerations

The development of complementary pathways requires **new partnerships** between the **humanitarian and private sectors**, as well as with the **settlement sector** who has expertise assisting refugees in Canada prepare for and gain employment.

Coordination with **overseas livelihoods programming** for refugees (e.g. opportunities to pursue education and develop skills) will help align the refugee skills and immigration opportunities in future.

Highlighting the economic contributions of refugees contributes to a **powerful and positive narrative** at a time when irregular migration is scrutinized and anti-immigration sentiment is rising.

Annex: Early lessons learned from EMPP

Financial requirements	Owing to the circumstances of their displacement, refugees may not always have the funds necessary to cover application costs or the ability to provide proof (e.g., inability to legally open a bank account).
Evidentiary proof	Refugees may meet program eligibility requirements, but can be difficult to obtain the evidence currently required to prove their eligibility (e.g., proof of work experience) or admissibility (e.g., police certificates).
Processing times	Varying processing times may discourage employers from offering positions to refugees; job offers are crucial to meeting eligibility requirement in several economic programs.
Work permits	Refugees are often unable to fulfill the requirements to be eligible for temporary work permits, namely to leave Canada at the end of the period of authorised stay.
Settlement funds	Several federal and provincial economic programs require applicants to demonstrate that they have sufficient funds necessary to establish upon arrival to Canada; most refugees do not have these funds available.
Access to information	Organizations are needed as focal points for information-gathering and -sharing on complementary pathways for refugees and for organizations accustomed to working in resettlements channels.
Identification of qualified refugees	There is a lack of infrastructure to support the identification of refugees skills and work history in a systematic manner. Refugee databases have been developed with resettlement in mind, and are focused on documenting vulnerability information instead of human capital information.
Connections to destination countries	In order to increase the number of refugee applicants for economic programs, refugees require help making connections with economic opportunities in Canada.
Differing contexts	To participate in the EMPP, candidates are required to provide proof of UNHCR registration; however, in Lebanon and Jordan, this criteria could not be applied. As well there were different challenges faced by refugees in an urban versus a camp environment.
Post-arrival settlement and integration	Arriving as permanent residents through economic programs, refugees will have access to settlement programs, but do not qualify for specialized supports for resettled refugees (e.g., Interim Federal Health Program coverage or income support).