

Young Refugee Women: Special Considerations for Resettlement



Centre for
Youth & Society 

A strong sense of cultural identity and pride in culture, ethnicity, and upbringing can help young refugee women buffer challenges at school and at home.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Women and children comprise 80% of the world's refugee population. Attending to their unique strengths and needs strengthens not only women and girls but also families and communities.

KEY POINTS

- ❑ Forced migration policies are typically not differentiated for men and women. Such policies do not account for the specific needs of refugee girls and young women and can make resettlement more difficult for women.
- ❑ Gender inequalities experienced prior to resettlement can leave girls one step behind in education, language, and general readiness for successful integration into the settlement country. Settlement programs need to address this gap through programming and supports designed specifically for them.
- ❑ To best help uprooted young women, organizations need to understand their intersecting identities – understanding challenges women face through the lenses of gender, class, race, language, trauma, and educational background.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

❑ **PROBLEM:** Some researchers find that young women experience gender discrimination in resettlement services – identifying that services for women may not be as practical or comprehensive as services for men.

❑ **SOLUTION:** These researchers argue that organizations run for and by women are needed to address the specific needs of refugee women and girls.

❑ **PROBLEM:** Refugee girls may have additional responsibilities at home that can keep them from participating in resettlement programming (e.g. childcare for siblings, housework, language brokering for parents).

❑ **SOLUTION:** Settlement programs can respond with increased flexibility (e.g. offering programming for younger children at the same time as programming for teen girls), and providing additional outreach for refugee girls within schools.

Young refugee women are strong – help them build on their existing strengths

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Challenges

- ❑ Some research finds that young refugee women identify racism as one of the most significant forms of violence faced at school.
- ❑ Uprooted young women often struggle with navigating cultural tensions between expectations of school, community, and home environments.
- ❑ Research finds that young refugee women have fewer friends than non-refugee youth. A lack of peer support can leave them with few relational resources.

Resources

- ❑ School outreach that combats discrimination and provides opportunities for young refugee women to make connections with peers can help.

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- ❑ Despite increased responsibilities at home and in assisting parents, young refugee women often develop a sense of maturity, competence, and confidence in being an advocate for their parents.
- ❑ In addition to a strong sense of cultural identity, many young refugee women draw from a strong spiritual identity. Creating partnerships with religious organizations may be a good way for settlement workers to make connections with youth and provide opportunities for enrichment and integration into the settlement society.
- ❑ It's time for us to shift our perspective from one of vulnerability to one of strength. By beginning to work from a strength-based perspective that appreciates the intersecting aspects of refugee girls and young women's identities, we can begin to better tailor our services to match their specific needs.

