



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIPLOMACY IN ACTION

P-2 Designation for Eritrean Refugees in Shimelba Camp, Ethiopia

POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION
Fact Sheet
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On August 7, the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) designated Eritrean refugees in Shimelba camp, Ethiopia, eligible for Priority Two (P-2) processing under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). This designation was based on a group referral from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) following its determination that the refugees are not likely to return to Eritrea or be locally integrated in Ethiopia, and therefore are in need of third country resettlement.

PRM agreed to consider the group at Shimelba for U.S. resettlement following consultation with Department of Homeland Security/U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS). As a result of this decision, there are now two "priorities," or categories of cases, that have access to the USRAP in Ethiopia: Priority One (P-1) individual referrals and P-2 group referral. (The Priority Three (P-3) family reunification program is currently suspended in many locations, including Ethiopia.)

A P-2 designation allows UNHCR to refer the cases for resettlement as a group rather than submitting a refugee referral form for each case. Each "case" (individual or family group) will be required to undergo a face to face interview with a USCIS officer to determine whether the individual(s) are eligible for refugee status according to U.S. law. In order to be approved as a refugee, an applicant must meet the refugee definition contained in § 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. That section provides that a refugee is a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or last habitual residence and is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

In recent years, the U.S. has admitted some 40,000-60,000 refugees per year through the USRAP, with some 59,000 expected in FY 2008.

Which Eritrean refugees are eligible for resettlement according to the P-2?

Eritrean refugees in Shimelba camp, Ethiopia who were registered along with their derivative family members by UNHCR in the former Wa'ala Nhibi camp between May 2002 and May 2004 and revalidated in Shimelba in November 2004, or were registered along with their derivative family members in Shimelba between December 2004 and August 7, 2008.

Who has been approved for resettlement?

No one has yet been approved for resettlement under this P-2, although some individuals in Shimelba have earlier been approved for resettlement based on Priority One (P-1) individual referrals from UNHCR, a process that is separate from this P-2 group designation. We expect the first USCIS interviews of P-2 cases in Shimelba to begin in early calendar year 2009.

What are the steps in the resettlement process?

After a case is referred by UNHCR, it will be pre-screened (prepared for USCIS interview) by the Department of State's Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) in Nairobi (also known as "Joint Voluntary Agency" or "JVA Nairobi"). Once pre-screening is completed, the case will be scheduled for USCIS interview. For those cases that are approved by USCIS, OPE Nairobi will coordinate all required security and medical clearances and will arrange for cultural orientation classes to inform refugees what to expect from resettlement in the United States. OPE will also arrange for a sponsorship assurance from a U.S. based resettlement agency. The International Organization for Migration will arrange for travel to the United States.

How long does the process take?

In general, it takes 6-8 months from the time of USCIS interview to complete out-processing and arrange travel to the United States. Some cases may take longer due to security or medical holds.

What does resettlement consist of? What benefits are there for resettled refugees in the U.S.?

All refugees approved for U.S. resettlement are sponsored by one of ten resettlement agencies participating in the refugee Reception & Placement (R&P) Program under a cooperative agreement with the Department of State. The sponsoring agency is responsible for placing refugees with one of its affiliated offices and for providing initial services which include: housing, essential furnishings, food, necessary clothing, community orientation, and referral to other social, medical and employment services during the refugee's first 30 - 90 days in the United States. Refugees are also eligible for at least eight months of Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) and Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).

Where can people learn more about resettlement of refugees?

PRM's website can be found at www.state.gov/g/prm. More information on benefits funded by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement can be found at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/benefits/index.htm>.