

# Conceptualising Integration in Refugee Resettlement Programmes in Japan and UK

Dr Linda Morrice, University of Sussex. [L.m.morrice@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:L.m.morrice@sussex.ac.uk)

Dr Naoko Hashimoto, Hitotsubashi University. [Naoko.hashimoto@r.hit-u.ac.jp](mailto:Naoko.hashimoto@r.hit-u.ac.jp)



一橋大学  
HITOTSUBASHI UNIVERSITY

# Refugee resettlement is one of three durable solutions to refugee displacement recognised by UNHCR

## UK

- One of the top three resettlement countries in Europe
- Relatively longstanding experience of resettlement initiatives (Beirens and Fratzke 2017).
- Currently three main resettlement schemes:
  - Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) (2004)
  - Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) (2015)
  - Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) (2016).
- Consolidation into 1 scheme approx. 5000 refugees per year (Home Office 2019)

## Japan

- One of the very few Asian countries with a domestic refugee protection system
- “The first resettlement country” in Asia (operational since 2010)
- Long-term Indo-Chinese refugee admission history (1978-2005)
- Very small RST quota (annually 30 → increase to 60)
- Special admission of 150 Syrian refugees as foreign students (2017-)

# National asylum / immigration context

## Japan

- Extremely low refugee recognition rate (less than 1%)
- Rapid and steady increase (2012-2017) and a sudden drop (2018) in asylum applications
- RST quota almost equal to the asylum seekers recognised as refugees
- Extreme precarity during the asylum process vs extremely generous integration course for RST (and Convention) refugees

## UK

- Bifurcated, 2 tier asylum policy
- Resettled refugees smallest group of refugees in the UK .
- Approx. 30,000 asylum seekers enter UK each year, around 50% eventually receive refugee status.
- Asylum seekers - not subject to integration policies until status is confirmed (except Scotland).
- Extreme precarity and limbo of asylum seekers Vs resettled refugees.

# Profile of resettled refugees - tied to the goals and motivations of a country's resettlement scheme

## UK

- Selected on grounds of “**vulnerability**”. UNHCR indicators of vulnerability:
  - Medical needs, disability and survivors of torture or violence.
- Likely to have relatively high levels of long-term health needs – mental and physical.
- High levels of caring responsibilities (Collyer, Morrice, Tip et al 2018; Morrice, Tip, Collyer, Brown 2019).
- Traditional benchmarks of quickly achieving self-sufficiency not appropriate for vulnerable groups. Different benchmarks needed to measure integration.

## Japan

- THE single most important criterion: “**prospect for self-sufficiency**”; UNHCR submits cases based upon the GOJ’s “wish-list”
- Should be “fit” to engage in fulltime employment or study within 6 months upon arrival
- Being on social welfare is regarded as a failure
- Japan being the late comer, the best and the brightest had already left for “Western” countries
- Having relatives living in Western countries and/or extremely vulnerable family members still in Thailand/Malaysia/Myanmar
- The majority of resettled refugee adults are fully employed within 1 year upon arrival

**Integration outcomes are tied to population selected, their capacities and resources**

# Conceptualising integration

## UK (Northern/Western literature):

- A process and not an 'end state'
- Multidimensional and takes place across different spheres.
- Multi-directional involving adaption responsibility on the part of everyone in society
- Different from assimilation
- Context specific – population, geographical (national and local) and timeframes

(Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019)

## Japan

- The term “integration” does not get translated well.
- “Multicultural co-existence” is the term officially used by the relevant Ministries.
- Such policies are often targeted for “new-comers” (since 1990s, inflow of Japanese-Brazilian, Japanese-Peruvian migrants, increasing ‘marriage migrants’, and South-east Asian short-term labour migrants), rather than refugees
- Very low ratio of migrants in the local society makes integration measures ‘assimilationist’

# National Contexts: Diverse histories of migration and levels of demographic complexity

## Japan

- 250 years of “Sakoku” (national isolation)
- Colonisation of neighbouring countries in the early 20c
- Persistent national myth of homogeneity and mono-cultural identity
- Has never had an official “immigration policy” (schizophrenia): open for highly skilled migrants while “closed” for low-skilled migrants
- One of the most rapidly aging societies in the world
- Long-term migrants steadily increasing but still around 2% (half of them have the Korean and Chinese origin)
- Some local municipalities host 10% of foreign residents
- Extremely violent and vocal xenophobia against Koreans and Chinese, while hidden / subtle racism against black or Muslim

**=> The integration course designed for resettled refugees is by far the most developed, the only fully officially funded integration measures for any foreigners in Japan**

## UK

- Long history of migration:
  - Roman, Viking and Norman settlers (amongst others),
  - British colonisation of the ‘New World’.
  - Post-war migration -members of British commonwealth invited to UK to fill labour shortages
- Slow ‘multicultural drift’, or re-inscription of British national identity (Back and Hall, 2009).
- Idea of a mono-cultural national identity based on descent replaced by a multicultural national identity
- Superdiversity - More demographically complex migrant populations are interacting and mapping onto and interacting with existing diverse populations (Vertovec 2007; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore, 2017).
- **BUT** ... hostile environment
  - Tightening and restriction of migrant rights and reconfiguration of borders (e.g. Bloch and Doná, (eds) (2019).
  - Intensification of debates about national identity, cultural difference and shared values.
  - New ‘hierarchies of belonging’ (Back, Sinha and Bryan, 2012)

# Resettlement: Roles and responsibilities

## UK

- Funding from central Government -> local government
- Local Authorities provide housing, a case worker to help the family register with a health services, enrol children in school and college, and intensive language support.
- Originally funding for 1 year and then mainstream benefits/services, now extended to up to 5 years on tapering basis (LGA 2016)
- Recognition of the need for long term integration support

## Japan

- All the central government funding for RST refugees go through the semi-governmental central integration agency (RHQ)
- Fully funded, spoon-feeding 6 months integration training course upon arrival, followed by a sudden start of “self-sufficient” local life with some follow-up by RHQ
- Limited official recognition of the involvement of private entities (e.g. NGOs, local groups, forced migrants from Myanmar, etc.)
- Huge burden on employers, volunteers, local coordinators (partially funded)

**Local Context:** National policies set the framework, but integration is played out at the local level of cities, towns and neighbourhoods

## UK

- Experiences of integration differ across geographical contexts (e.g. Robinson, 2010; Platts-Fowler and Robinson, 2015; Hickman et al., 2012).
- Different places offer different assemblages of social, economic and cultural opportunities, and constraints (Phillips and Robinson 2015).
- Whether institutions, services etc. are culturally sensitive (Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015).
- Refugee community organisations and ethnic social networks can provide access to information, practical and emotional support for refugees (Robinson *et al.*, [2007](#); Spicer, [2008](#); Zetter 2005; (Damm, [2009](#); Edin *et al.*, [2003](#));).

## Japan

- Congregation in the suburbs of Tokyo metropolitan area in Phase 1 → dispersal efforts in Phase 2
- Very few local municipalities with experience in migrant integration in general
- Less recognition of important interaction with Myanmar communities in Japan (e.g. “Little Yangon”)
- “Integration” into the problems facing the Japanese society in general (e.g. gender-stereo-typing, lack of nursery facilities, lack of public transportation in rural areas, etc.)