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Fact Sheet

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
Washington, DC
January 16, 2004

Refugee Admissions Program for Africa

Background

Since 1980, over 138,000 African refugees have been admitted to the United States for permanent resettlement. Most were Somali (over 43,000) or Ethiopian (over 37,000), but the number also includes Sudanese, Liberians, Congolese, Rwandans, Sierra Leoneans, and Angolans, among others. In recent years, the program has grown more diverse both in terms of nationalities admitted to the United States and processing locations. In FY 2003, refugees from 24 African countries were admitted to the United States.

The majority of refugee admissions processing in Africa are coordinated by the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, with the assistance of a Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and by the U.S. Embassy in Accra, with the assistance of an Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) and IOM. Processing in sub-Saharan Africa takes place during circuit rides originating at our two regional centers in Accra and Nairobi and is the result of careful coordination among the UNHCR (for identification of refugees and processing and logistical support on site), OPE/JVA (for case preparation), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (for adjudication), and IOM (for post-adjudication processing, cultural orientation and travel arrangements).

The U.S. program also processes African refugees in Cairo, and since FY 1999, the program has expanded significantly at this site, primarily to address the needs of Sudanese and other refugees in Egypt.

FY 2004 Admissions Program

The U.S. admissions program for FY 2004 includes a ceiling of 25,000 admissions from Africa, an increase of 5,000 over last year's ceiling and 50% of the total regional ceilings approved by the President for the year. The partners in the U.S. Refugee Program, including U.S. Government agencies, NGOs, UNHCR, and IOM, are working together to identify new groups in need of resettlement and to process the greatest possible number of refugees for admission. Much of this effort is focused in Africa. Refugees of any nationality in Africa are eligible for referral to the program by UNHCR or a U.S. Embassy. The United States also identifies and designates as eligible for resettlement processing specific groups of special humanitarian concern to the United States. Such groups are defined in concert with the UNHCR, DHS, NGOs, and other experts.

The family reunification element of the Africa program for FY 2004 applies to spouses, unmarried sons and daughters under age 21, and parents of persons who were admitted to the United States as refugees or asylees and who are nationals of the following countries: Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC), Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan. For consideration for family reunification under these guidelines, a qualified relative in the United States may file an Affidavit of Relationship with one of the affiliate offices of participating resettlement organizations.



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