The information below is for supporters to use while answering questions about refugees and engaging with the public. While the information below may be helpful, no statistic or memorized response will take the place of a personal and emotional connection to supporting refugees - so remember: be yourself, relax, and feel encouraged to tell your own story about why you care for refugees and displaced persons.

**How many refugees are in the world?**
There are over 65.3 million displaced persons in the world today, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - UNHCR. This includes refugees (over 21.3 million) and internally displaced persons.

There are more refugees in the world today than at any point since World War II.

The United States accepts thousands of refugees each year. Still less than 1% of all refugees in the world today will be resettled - this is not a solution for every refugee, but for those eligible, it is a life changing mission of hope, that can lift the most vulnerable populations out of danger and give them a new start.

**What is a refugee?**
Under international and U.S. law, a refugee is someone outside his or her own country with a well-founded fear of persecution in that country based on: (1) race; (2) religion; (3) nationality; (4) membership in a particular social group and/or (5) political opinion.

Refugees resettled in the U.S. successfully support their families, pay taxes, and contribute to their new communities. They work in industries ranging from hospitality, food service, teaching, engineering, nursing and medicine, and many start their own businesses. Albert Einstein and Sergey Brin, the founder of Google, are former refugees whose accomplishments demonstrate what the U.S. has to gain from welcoming refugees.

**Are refugees screened/vetted?**
Refugees are the most thoroughly vetted people in the U.S., undergoing rigorous screenings by the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, Department of Defense, Department of State and National Counterterrorism Center, which include biometric checks, forensic document testing, medical screenings and in-person interviews by highly trained DHS officers.
Where do refugees go?
Refugees are resettled in almost every corner of the United States. They integrate successfully into all types of communities across the country.

What to avoid:

• Speaking as an expert
  Unless you are a lawyer or security expert, stay clear of answering questions as if you are one. Often when asked a question we feel the urge to respond, regardless of if the topic is really within our expertise. Remember, you are a refugee supporter, and your heartfelt opinion from that perspective is a thousand times more valuable than a dry explanation from an expert.

• Politics
  This will be hard to do, especially since refugees have become a center focus and political debate. However, we are here to advocate for refugees, not a particular party or politician - a message about refugees and why they are in need of assistance will keep you from getting bogged down in a debate and focused on a positive message.

• Mentioning refugees and extremism/terrorism together
  We don’t want to create the link in people’s minds between extremism or terrorism and refugees. Try as best as you can steer clear of those topics.

Additional (and difficult) Talking Points

Why does the U.S. assist refugees overseas and through resettlement to the U.S.?

The U.S. has a long history of providing protection and assistance to persons facing persecution and fleeing violence. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. led the assistance and reconstruction effort to help displaced persons. Part of the solution was to resettle hundreds of thousands of Europeans displaced from the war who could not return home. This leadership continued throughout the Cold War period, with the U.S. resettling numerous Vietnamese refugees, people fleeing from the former Soviet Union, and Cubans. Overseas aid and protection was expanded to Asia, Latin America and Africa. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. further expanded its efforts to protect vulnerable and displaced persons by funding programs such as helping
victims of gender based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, providing
educational opportunities to Burmese refugees in Thailand and helping to return home
hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees. In recent years, the U.S. has resettled
Darfuri refugees fleeing genocide and violence, Bhutanese forced out of their country,
Iraqi and Afghan refugees displaced by war, and many other populations in need of
lifesaving protection.

Who determines how many refugees to resettle?

Every year, the President works with Congress to determine the number of refugees
overseas who will be admitted to the U.S. The State Department works with nine non-
governmental refugee agencies (CWS is one of them) to help resettle and integrate
refugees. For this fiscal year (FY 2017), President Obama determined that the allowed
number of refugee arrivals would be 110,000, a reflection of the continuing conflict in
Syria and longstanding conflicts elsewhere. In January, President Trump reduced this
number to 50,000.
What about security screenings?

Refugees are already the most vetted non-citizens in our country. All refugees undergo thorough and rigorous security screenings prior to arriving in the United States, including but not limited to multiple biographic and identity investigations; FBI biometric checks of applicants’ fingerprints and photographs; in-depth, in-person interviews by well-trained Department of Homeland Security officers; medical screenings; investigations by the National Counterterrorism Center; and other checks by U.S. domestic and international intelligence agencies. Supervisory review of all decisions; random case assignment; inter-agency national security teams; trained document experts; forensic testing of documents; and interpreter monitoring are in place to maintain the security of the refugee resettlement program. Due to technological advances, Syrian refugees are also undergoing iris scans to confirm their identity through the process. Learn more about the Refugee Processing and Screening System: https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/266671.pdf

Are refugees a drain on local resources, taking advantage of welfare, subsidized housing, Medicaid and other programs?

Each immigrant pays, on average, $20,000-80,000 more in taxes than he or she consumes in benefits. Additionally, current levels of immigration will provide a net benefit to the Social Security system of $450 billion in the next twenty years. This is because 75 percent of immigrants arrive in the United States in their prime working years. Furthermore, while the support some refugees receive in the form of cash and medical assistance is crucial to building a foundation for their integration into U.S. society, one of the first goals of arriving refugees is employment. Finding a job, paying taxes, and integrating into local communities is the goal of arriving refugees. Often, refugees have spent many years in a camp or urban location where they weren’t allowed to work - finding a job and contributing to a community is often the fulfillment of a dream refugees have held for decades.

I’ve heard refugee resettlement is very profitable for some non-profits, and that religious organizations and NGOs refuse to commit any of their own resources for resettlement efforts.

All NGOs, including CWS, serving refugees rely on donations, volunteers, local fundraisers, and sometimes private grants, to meet the needs of the refugees they serve. The needs of refugees and the services provided far exceed the government support for the program. Federal funding for the resettlement program has not increased substantially for cost of living or even inflationary changes for years, but we continue to welcome refugees as best we can through fundraisers, donation drives, and volunteer help. NGOs, including CWS, are routinely monitored by the federal government, and are held to high accountability levels both in non-profit standards and by government policies. Learn more at: cwsglobal.org/financials
Are communities consulted about refugee arrivals?

The local service providers that resettle refugees work very closely with local congregations, employers, schools, hospitals, and other community groups to welcome refugees and assist them in the integration process. Under federal law, every state that resettles refugees must submit a State Plan for Refugee Resettlement, and nearly every state employs a refugee coordinator to implement the State Plan, oversee federal grants for refugee services, and work across state agencies and with community partners to increase communication and collaboration. Many communities are inviting refugees to join them, including Moorefield, West Virginia, which recruited several Iraqi refugees who had initially arrived in North Carolina to come work in a poultry plant. There are similar instances of this happening all over the country, as refugees continue to positively contribute to their new communities.

How do newly arriving refugees integrate into the United States given their diverse cultures?

“Like most immigrants, my siblings and I learned to assimilate into this big melting pot called the United States of America. We worked hard on our studies and in our businesses. Along with other Vietnamese immigrants and refugees of the time, stories of successes...quickly spread around the community.”

- Former Congressional Representative Anh “Joseph” Cao who came to the U.S. in 1975 with his family as a refugee.

Like Rep. Cao, refugees are grateful for their opportunities to begin a new life away from persecution, and are eager to start working, learn English, and integrate in the United States. All refugees are offered a brief U.S. cultural orientation course prior to departure for the United States, which is followed up by additional cultural orientation upon arrival in the U.S.
Are refugees medically screened? How do you know they aren’t bringing in HIV, hepatitis, TB, malaria, and other diseases?

All refugees being considered for resettlement to the U.S. undergo medical screenings to ensure that people with contagious diseases such as tuberculosis do not enter. Due to lack of available care in their country of origin or problems encountered while fleeing persecution, many refugees need medical services before or upon arrival to the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) closely monitors the medical screening process and prevents the admission of people with health conditions hazardous to the public.

I’ve heard certain towns feel overwhelmed by refugee resettlement in their communities, and therefore have sought moratoriums on taking in new refugees?

While it is true that a small number of localities have sought a moratorium on refugee resettlement, there are many more that actively welcome refugees and value the contributions they make to the community. For example, the mayor of Clarkston, GA, was once adamantly anti-refugee before learning about the resettlement program and meeting with refugees living in his community. He is now a strong, outspoken champion for refugees and refugee resettlement. Some mayors have even requested that refugees be resettled in their towns, recognizing the economic benefit refugees bring to local communities – including starting new businesses, working in agriculture, and building stronger, more diverse and welcoming communities. Corporations also recognize the benefits that refugees bring to the United States. For example, Tyson Fresh Meats in Waterloo, IA employs large numbers of resettled refugees, and works with the U.S. State Department to bring refugees to Waterloo. Communities, like those in Lewiston, Maine, have flourished due to the drive that refugees bring in building new lives in the United States.