



## RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN WHO ENTERED THE UNITED STATES AS REFUGEES

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Approximately 19.5 million refugees exist globally and nearly half are children (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). As families become acclimated and accustomed to the U.S culture, they face numerous challenges. In fact, according to this study, children specifically experience a significant number of stressors during resettlement, impacting them within their family structure, among their peers and in different social interactions.

This qualitative study sought to answer the question: What are the core issues confronting children ages 8-14 with a refugee background as they resettle in the United States? Participants were recruited from Sudanese, Somali, Bhutanese and Karen communities. In addition, a variety of other people working with these children such as service providers and parents were interviewed.

This study identified and explored a total of six core themes inclusive to school, emotional health, cultural identity, social interactions, laws and safety, and changed family dynamics. These themes indicated that though there are positive aspects of resettlement for families to experience, more needs to be done to support parents and children in their adaptation and transition to the United States.

Findings indicated how unfamiliar cultural and social systems created a lot of post migration stress. For instance, several parents indicated the issue with lacking the knowledge of laws and legal systems in the United States. Furthermore, stakeholders highlighted the significant challenges related to adapting and understanding social, and cultural norms within the school systems. Findings therefore, suggest that additional time and resources should be devoted to communities, social agencies, and schools in order to facilitate greater transition for children and their parents.

These findings contributed to the development of a cultural orientation curriculum for children with refugee status, ages 8-14. Furthermore, it acknowledged “refugee status” as a more inclusive, and accurate term when referring to children with refugee background. This is the beauty of using a community-based research approach; it is meaningful to the community as it is to future research.

