

Factsheet

COMPLEMENTARY REFUGEE PATHWAYS: PROTECTED ENTRY SCHEMES

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Special visa pathways can offer asylum seekers abroad protection and safe passage, removing the need for dangerous journeys, disrupting people-smuggling operations, and decreasing disorderly movement. Countries including Canada, the United States, Italy, Brazil and Australia have offered such pathways at various times.

Are there alternatives to dangerous journeys for refugees?

Yes, and one example is '[protected entry procedures](#)'. These are [arrangements](#) that enable a person to apply for protection from a specific country while outside that country's territory, including from within their home country. Some examples are detailed below.

How does protected entry work?

Protected entry usually involves bespoke schemes designed to address the needs of particular groups or individuals who are at risk of persecution or human rights violations. The eligibility criteria and application process can differ greatly between procedures.

One example of protected entry is known as 'in-country processing', whereby a person seeking asylum may apply for protection in another country before crossing an international border (eg. at an embassy or consulate). Officials of the settling country then [process applications](#) and authorise refugees (or others recognised as needing protection) to safely cross borders and access that country's protection. It is called 'in-country processing', because a refugee's status is considered, in whole or in part, while they are in their country of origin. The resettlement of people from Vietnam during the 1980s is an example, as is, most recently, the US Biden Administration's [Central American Minors](#) (CAM) program.

Another form of protected entry involves a settling country issuing humanitarian visas that permit asylum seekers to travel safely to that country and submit their protection claim on arrival. Examples include Italy's Humanitarian Corridors and Brazil's Humanitarian Visas for Syrian asylum seekers (detailed below).

What are the benefits and risks?

Protected entry can remove the need for an individual to take a potentially dangerous journey across an international border, circumvent people-smuggling ventures and generally

increase orderly global movement. However, these special procedures need to be carefully designed to ensure applicants are protected throughout the process of application, remembering their safety may be at risk. It is also important to ensure that alternative pathways function to expand access to protection; these should be used to supplement, not replace, [national asylum procedures and other protection pathways](#).

Examples of protected entry procedures:

Italy's Humanitarian Corridors

In December 2015 [faith-based organisations](#) secured an agreement with the Italian government to operate a two-year pilot program for the [protected entry](#) of asylum seekers. Begun in 2015 and first established in Lebanon, the pilot Corridors program enabled [faith-based organisations](#) to fly [1,000](#) mainly Syrian asylum seekers to Italy through 2016 and 2017. The scheme has since been renewed, and corridors have been opened in Ethiopia and Morocco. The French and Belgian governments have also launched smaller versions of this scheme. In 2019, UNHCR named Italy's Humanitarian Corridors scheme as a regional winner of the prestigious Nansen Refugee Award. The agency [said](#) that the award is to honour 'those who have gone to extraordinary lengths to support forcibly displaced and stateless people'.

Brazil's Humanitarian Visa for Syrians

Since September 2013, the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) has offered [Special Humanitarian Visas](#) for Syrians affected by the civil war. The visa is valid for two years and may be [extended](#). [Applications](#) for the visa can be lodged at Brazilian consular offices in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt.

Australia's In-country Special Humanitarian visa

Australia has an In-country Special Humanitarian visa ([subclass 201](#)) under which small numbers of people are resettled each year. The subclass 201 is reserved for exceptional cases and there is no set annual quota. Cases are finalised in around 6 months, but during that time applicants remain within their country of origin. In 2018-19 the Australian government received [9,411](#) applications for this visa and granted [1,891](#) places. Many of those resettled under the subclass 201 that year were [Yazidis](#) from Iraq. In 2019-20, the Australian government granted [fewer places](#) than originally planned under the annual humanitarian program, because it suspended the granting of visas in March 2020 due to COVID-19. That year the government received 7,627 applications for the subclass 201 visa and it granted [1,195](#) places. In 2016 the Australian Human Rights Commission [called](#) on the Government to 'explore options for enhancing access to in-country processing and other "protected entry" procedures for people facing persecution who are still within their country of origin'.