



Thank you for your interest in becoming a refugee support volunteer for New Zealand Red Cross.

Overview

- New Zealand welcomes 750 former refugees per year as per the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' annual quota.
- Refugees arrive in 'intake' groups every eight weeks, and first spend a compulsory six weeks at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre in Auckland.
- Families/individuals then head off to their final resettlement centres in Auckland, Waikato, Manawatu, Wellington/Porirua/Hutt Valley and Nelson.

The volunteer role and training

- Once refugees arrive to their resettlement area, locally trained volunteers, with the support of agency staff, assist and guide these new arrivals through their initial resettlement process.
- A number of training courses are held each year, and all volunteers are required to attend this course prior to volunteering.
- Course content includes an introduction to the refugee experience and the role of the refugee support volunteer. We provide an introduction to New Zealand Red Cross' Refugee Services programme and other key support services. We also cover key information on health, wellbeing and education and explore aspects of culture, teams and teamwork.



"It's a privilege to have the opportunity to help a family make a new life for themselves and it's amazing to see the growth in [the family's] confidence."



“The ‘tag team’ approach with other volunteers and the excellent training made it an attractive position.”

“I wanted to give something back, but also needed to juggle it with a full-time job and family. I thought the Red Cross Refugee Services programme would work well. The training was after hours and there was flexibility with regards to when you could support your families.”

The placement

- Following training, volunteers commit to a placement with a former refugee family or individual.
- Volunteers generally work together in teams, with each volunteer taking on a role that best suits their availability.
- Teams are carefully formed to match complementary skills and time availability amongst members, and thus your contribution can still be very valuable even if you may have limited time to give (for example, if you are working full-time).
- Volunteers provide practical, hands-on support, and often foster strong friendships with members of the former refugee family/former refugee individual as well as with others in their volunteer team.
- Volunteer tasks can include:
 - setting up the household prior to the family’s/individual’s arrival
 - helping the refugee family to enrol their children in school
 - enrolling the family/individual at the doctor
 - registering with Work and Income
 - other similar responsibilities.
- No prior experience in these areas is required; we equip you with all the tools you need to carry out these initial resettlement tasks, and guide you every step of the way.

Time commitment

- The first two to four weeks after arrival are quite busy with initial appointments and general settling-in tasks.
- After the first six weeks, much less volunteer time is required as the family/individual becomes more settled, and volunteers will typically spend time on an as-needed basis only (depends on your role in the team, level of social involvement with the family/individual, etc).

Support

- A volunteer coordinator and other professional Red Cross staff support and guide your team throughout your placement.
- We also foster opportunities for you to network with other volunteers to share in the challenges and rewards of your volunteer experience.



The role

- Refugee support volunteers do an extraordinary job; they are a core part of the services that Red Cross offers new arrivals to the settlement areas.
- As a refugee support volunteer you have the opportunity to:
 - provide a warm welcome to New Zealand, and assist at a critical stage of resettlement
 - share your skills and knowledge, as well as gain new skills and experiences
 - share your culture as well as learn about and experience a culture different from your own
 - form lifelong friendships with other volunteers and former refugee families or individuals
 - have a positive impact on people's lives, including your own.

“It was a great comfort to know the Red Cross team was there in support and always extremely helpful.”

“The volunteering programme is essential to the settlement of former refugees. It’s not that I’m doing anything extraordinary, but the little things I do are significant...”

“Both husband and wife started calling me ‘bhai’ which was an urdu/hindi word for ‘brother’. It was amazing!”

“Supporting the refugee family helped me raise my self-esteem. I felt somewhat powerless and not very confident as a newcomer to New Zealand society. Supporting the refugee family made me feel that I can participate in and contribute to New Zealand.”

Thank you for taking the time to read through our programme information.

The process:

1. Application

Our application process allows us to get to know a little bit about you, and for you to find out more information about the programme and our work with former refugees.

2. Training

As we cover a variety of topics relating to the volunteer role and placement, our volunteer trainer and coordinator have the opportunity to understand your strengths and needs as a volunteer, and match you with the right team mates and placement.

3. Placement

Following training and acceptance onto a placement, you can begin to work as a refugee support volunteer. You and your team are supported by Red Cross staff and resources.

4. Returning to volunteer

Once your minimum placement period is complete, you can request to take on another placement and continue to offer your skills and experience as a refugee support volunteer.

“Volunteering has made a difference in my life in many ways... It has enriched my life by bringing me in closer contact with other cultures. It has educated me on what being human is, how we all wish for the same kind of freedom and opportunities.”

“I loved the challenges. There were situations where I had to be patient, think outside of the box or simply be optimistic.”

“I have learnt how to communicate with people regardless of their culture, belief and ethnicity. I have learnt that the key things for good communication were patience, respect, open-mindedness, good heartedness and a smile.”