whereabouts of anybody they know who is currently living in the US. Additionally they agree not to move within the first 90 days of their arrival in the US under penalty of forfeiting their right to core services. This policy aims to change the incentives by rewarding refugees who share information but could penalise refugees who do not possess the information they might need in order to communicate what their geographic preferences will be once they arrive in the US.

The question that lies at the core of the challenges brought by secondary migration is whether the initial location should be a community where refugees are expected to settle or whether it is more of a receiving location, a launch pad, where refugees simply receive initial core services. The many implications of the answer to this question must be carefully considered. Given the current reality of resettling refugees and their secondary migration, perhaps the answer is to redesign resettlement to be more dynamic and to account for changing preferences.

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The importance of legal counsel

Betsy Fisher

At each stage of the resettlement process, the presence of counsel – legal advocates – can help refugees to present their complete cases efficiently and avoid unnecessary rejections. This provides benefits to decision makers as well.

Legal advocates are particularly well suited to compile a refugee’s narrative and explain why the facts of the individual’s case demonstrate that the individual should be considered for resettlement. At each step of the resettlement process, legal advocates can assist and counsel individual refugees in how to present their narratives clearly – which also benefits those officials, whether from the UN or resettlement states, making the decisions on refugees’ cases. They can in addition provide input for ways to improve refugee processing.

The benefits of legal assistance in refugee status determination (RSD), the first step towards resettlement, are well established. Refugee advocates can operate in refugee
Resettlement opportunities for Syrian refugees are allocated to those who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable, and thousands of Syrian men, women and children have now been resettled. However, single Syrian men (‘unattached’ or ‘unaccompanied’ adult males) living in Middle Eastern host states face particular challenges in accessing resettlement.

Host states that offer resettlement places for Syrians regularly exclude or try to minimise the numbers of single men. In November 2015, it was widely reported that the Canadian government would not be accepting any unaccompanied men, unless they identified themselves as non-heterosexual. Canadian officials denied there was a blanket ban on single men but acknowledged that families, women, children and sexual minorities would be prioritised. The British government consistently cites women and children as examples of the ‘most vulnerable’.

These policies should be understood in the context of domestic politics in resettlement states. Firstly, excluding or minimising the number of single men reflects the widely held view that ‘authentic’ refugees are women and children, who are implicitly vulnerable and in need of external assistance. Secondly, with these policies resettlement states are responding to, rather than challenging, Islamophobic portrayals of Muslim Arab men as threatening, and as potential terrorists, rather than as victims and survivors of the conflict in Syria.

The timetables imposed by some resettlement countries also create difficulties