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BOSNIAN REFUGEES' ADJUSTMENTS TO RESETTLEMENT IN GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA

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ABSTRACT—Upheaval causes many people to flee intolerable conditions in their own countries and to seek better lives elsewhere. The United States plays a pivotal role in the resettlement of refugees uprooted by these crises. The refugee resettlement program in North Dakota primarily assists the refugees in making a better life, and it ultimately helps the state's quest for population growth, ethnic diversity, and economic development. This study deals with refugee resettlement in North Dakota communities, specifically Bosnian refugees in Grand Forks. Survey questionnaires and interviews were used to gain an understanding of the issues that the Bosnians face in adjusting to life in the community. Their concerns include the lack of employment opportunities with a livable wage, learning English, and job/skills training.

KEY WORDS: refugee resettlement, refugee adjustments, Bosnian refugees, North Dakota

Introduction

Over the past decade, the plight of desperate people fleeing such places as Bosnia-Herzegovina has focused worldwide attention on finding permanent humanitarian solutions to refugee crises, including resettlement to safe countries. Resettlement of refugees has been important to the development of the United States as a thriving, diverse society. Such migrations to America have been spurred by these people's desires to escape political oppression and religious persecution, while at the same time seeking economic opportunities to become self-sufficient in their new homes. In the post-cold war period, ethnic and nationalistic tensions in various parts of the globe have swelled the refugee numbers coming to the United States. Each year, more refugees are permanently resettled in the US than in any other country (UNHCR 2001).

This study investigates refugee resettlement and refugees' adjustments to life in North Dakota, specifically the Bosnian experience in Grand Forks. In 2000 the majority of the over 600 refugees arriving in North Dakota communities came from Bosnia, the Sudan, and Somalia. Refugees resettling in these communities increase the state's small, slowly growing population and stimulate economic growth. This study proposes to provide a sketch of the refugee resettlement process in the United States and an understanding of the significant issues that Bosnian refugees face in their adjustments to living in Grand Forks, ND. The findings of this study may offer insight into the issues that other refugee groups may face in resettling in the state, as well as other areas of the Great Plains.

Global Refugee Population Crises

On 1 January 2002 the number of people "of concern" for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) totaled a phenomenal 19.8 million. This number included the 12 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR 2003). As defined by the 1951 "United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" and its 1967 Protocol, a refugee is "a person outside of his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (INS 2001).

The UNHCR, as recognized by international mandate, is responsible for protecting and finding "durable" solutions for refugees worldwide. Refugees crossing into a bordering country are usually placed into camps set up by the UNHCR. There, interviews are conducted to determine if they qualify for refugee status. While most refugees prefer to return to their home countries (voluntary repatriation) when it is safe, some refugees integrate into the country of first asylum or permanently resettle in a safe third country. Resettlement may be a long and difficult process, and refugees may remain in a camp for a period of a few months or several years. Less than 1% of all refugees have the opportunity for third-country resettlement (LIRS 2001). Most countries do not sponsor refugee resettlement programs, nor do they accept quotas of refugees on an annual basis. The ten traditional resettlement countries that do are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. The US remains the largest refugee resettlement country in the world (UNHCR 2001).

United States Refugee Resettlement Process

Since 1975 the United States has admitted over 2.4 million refugees. The US continues to accept a quota of refugees according to an annual refugee admission ceiling determined by the president in consultation with Congress. The US refugee resettlement process was temporarily put on hold following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Because of concerns about the entry of potential terrorists into the United States, the proposed admission ceiling for the fiscal year 2002 was the lowest in a decade. The ceiling was set at 70,000 refugees that are of "special humanitarian concern" to the US. The allocation of refugees from various geographic regions are: Africa (22,000); East Asia (4,000); Eastern Europe (9,000); former Soviet Union (17,000); Latin American/Caribbean (3,000); and Middle East/South Asia (15,000) (INS 2001).

The Refugee Act of 1980 incorporated into US law the international definition of refugee. Those considered for refugee admission must be "persons of special humanitarian concern who can establish persecution or have a well-founded fear of persecution" (Gordon 1996; Holman 1996; Violet 2000; USDOS 2001). Before 1980, cold war geopolitical interests dominated the US refugee policy. Each year, a limited number of refugees who meet the specified requirements for application are eligible for resettlement in the United States. The UNHCR or US Embassy may refer refugees for a refugee status eligibility interview (on a case-by-case basis) with the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Some refugees, as members of a specific religious or ethnic group in particular countries, may also be eligible for an interview. While eligibility for the US resettlement program usually requires refugees to be outside their home countries, there are also a few in-country processing programs (Cuba, Vietnam, and the former Soviet Union). In addition, close relatives already residing in the United States can prepare supporting documents for the refugee's application (INS 2001).

Ten national voluntary agencies work under cooperative agreements with the US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migrations to sponsor and provide initial resettlement services for those refugees found eligible for resettlement to the United States. Before arriving in the United States, the refugees and their immediate family members undergo health and security clearances and attend cultural orientation sessions. Generally, the International Organization for Migration arranges transportation for the refugees, though they are expected to repay this cost

(USDOS 2001). Throughout the US, the local refugee resettlement agencies include religious-based organizations, private organizations, state agencies, and ethnic organizations. The section that follows will address the resettling of refugees in communities of the Great Plains state of North Dakota.

Refugee Resettlement in North Dakota Communities

This study is concerned with refugee resettlement in North Dakota, one of the 10 states located in the Great Plains. Between 1983 and 2000, these states resettled only 147,772 refugees (9% of the nationwide total). Of those, Texas resettled the largest number of refugees annually. Furthermore, the number of refugees per capita is not remarkable for the Great Plains states, with the exception of North Dakota. The state ranked 48th in population (642,200) in 2000, yet sixth in per capita refugees (5,592) resettled in the state (Gaber and Gaber 2002).

According to the 2000 census, North Dakota's population increased by only 3,400 persons (0.5%) during the previous decade. Part of this modest growth occurred in the counties with larger urban centers, such as Fargo, whose population increased by 22% (US Department of Commerce 2000). Immigration, namely the resettlement of refugees, is cited as one reason the state's population grew. The majority of the refugees entering the state resettled in the largest city, Fargo. The refugee population in Fargo is estimated to be 5,500, or 6% of the city's population. This includes about 2,000 Bosnians, 1,000 Vietnamese, 800 Sudanese, 700 Somalians, and 500 Kurds. Refugee groups also represented in Fargo are from 25 other countries worldwide (*Forum* 2001b).

Many North Dakotans are descendents of Norwegian, German, and other European immigrants who settled the state during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These early migrants were needed for the settlement of the state, and today's migrants (refugees) arriving in North Dakota's communities are helping businesses expand their work force. However, others in the communities, such as social service providers and educators, wonder how their agencies and school systems will cope with the influx of refugees (*Forum* 2001b). North Dakota governor John Hoeven is one who is encouraged by the diversity that refugee resettlement brings to the state:

Clearly, diversity brings more pluses to a community. Cultural diversity enriches individual communities and our state. Our North

Dakota heritage, as well as our national heritage, has thrived upon ethnic and cultural diversity. As we work to build North Dakota's population, we welcome people to our state, regardless of ethnic status or national origin. (*Forum* 2001b:E8)

Since the 1970s, communities in North Dakota have had a tradition of sponsoring refugees from all parts of the world. Local churches usually sponsored refugees by coordinating their efforts with Catholic, Episcopalian, and Lutheran resettlement agencies. By the early 1990s, two national voluntary agencies, the Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) in New York and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) in Baltimore, sponsored the refugees coming to North Dakota. They are responsible for the guidelines of minimum standards for services to be provided during the first 90 days (Slobin and Klenon 1995; Slobin et al. 2002). In 1988 EMM became the entity charged with carrying out the Episcopal Church's resettlement work, and it resettles over 3,000 refugees annually throughout the United States (EMM 2002). In 1939 the LIRS was established to help refugees resettle in the US after World War II. LIRS has gone from aiding only Lutheran Europeans to helping all refugees "regardless of national origin, race, religion, culture or legal status" (LIRS 2001). In the past 60 years, LIRS has resettled 280,000 refugees through local refugee resettlement programs and has become the second largest of the 10 national voluntary agencies. In addition, LIRS specializes in resettling refugee children coming to the United States without family (Solberg 1992; LIRS 2001).

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of North Dakota provides refugee resettlement services in the state through its Center for New Americans, which has functioned as a freestanding facility since August 1999. They are responsible for meeting the refugees at the airport; providing housing, health checkups, and necessary clothing; helping them apply for Social Security cards; enrolling children in school; helping adults learn English; and helping adults become "job ready" to seek employment. The resettlement programs are funded through federal and state monetary grants, providing services for the first eight months (Slobin et al. 2002). The refugees are encouraged to become integrated into their communities and achieve economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible. One year after admission, a refugee is eligible for adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident. Five years after admission, a refugee is eligible for naturalization to US citizenship (USDOS 2001).

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF REFUGEES ARRIVING IN NORTH DAKOTA CITIES, 1991-2000

City	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Percentage	
											Total 1991- 2000	of arrivals (%)
Bismarck	9	52	62	35	100	52	116	126	134	33	719	16.1
Fargo	172	382	264	304	294	247	364	389	445	559	3,420	76.5
Grand Forks	0	7	9	11	15	18	27	11	33	18	149	3.3
Jamestown	7	10	5	9	1	4	0	4	0	0	40	0.9
Minot	5	10	15	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	35	0.8
Valley City	10	7	0	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	31	0.7
Wahpeton	4	11	5	11	0	10	9	7	8	9	74	1.7
State total	207	479	360	380	419	331	516	537	620	619	4,468	100.0

Source: Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota, Center for New Americans.

According to available annual state statistics, only 78 refugees came in 1988. By the end of the next decade, North Dakota was resettling over 600 refugees yearly (Table 1). The three largest cities of Fargo, Bismarck, and Grand Forks are all staffed locations for resettlement. The largest resettlement activity takes place in Fargo, averaging over 76% of the statewide arrivals. Bismarck averaged 16% of the resettlement over the same time, and Grand Forks followed with 3%. The 1997 flood in Grand Forks and its aftermath contribute to the smaller than expected numbers of refugees resettled in the community. In North Dakota communities such as Jamestown, Minot, Valley City, and Wahpeton, resettlement activity primarily reunites refugees with family members.

During 2000 a total of 619 refugees were resettled in North Dakota. Approximately 72% of the refugees came from Bosnia, 14% from the Sudan, and 6% from Somalia. Eight additional refugee groups made up a smaller percentage of the new arrivals in 2000. While 19% of the refugee cases that arrived in the state in 2000 consist of single members, over 55% had four members or more. Almost 80% of the refugees resettled in the state were part of family reunification, which is a significant part of US refugee resettlement programs.

Bosnians represent the largest refugee group in the state; their numbers have steadily risen over the last seven years. At the beginning of the Bosnian resettlement in North Dakota, 19 refugees came in 1993. In 2000 almost 450 Bosnian refugees arrived in the state. However, the origins of refugees in North Dakota are expected to change significantly, with fewer coming from the former Yugoslavia and more from African countries. Much has been written about the "Lost Boys of Sudan" (Corbett 2001; Lorch 2001; Satchell 2001). These Sudanese war orphans in Fargo now number 40.

In August 2001 the North Dakota Office of Refugee Resettlement virtually shut down the refugee resettlement program in Fargo. Lutheran Social Services and its Center for New Americans were no longer allowed to accept any new unaccompanied refugees, citing management problems providing the services to refugees resettling in Fargo. After identifying problems and what could be done to get back on track, the program was expected to resume accepting new refugees by 1 October 2001 (*Forum* 2001). Then, the events of September 11th temporarily halted all refugee flows to the United States. Recently, it was announced that about 375 refugees would be coming to North Dakota when refugee resettlement resumes nationwide. Many of these would be family reunification. At least 250 to 300 of the newly arriving refugees would resettle in Fargo, with the rest going to Grand Forks and Bismarck (*Forum* 2001a).

In 1999 the Center for New Americans/LSS in Grand Forks became the primary agency for resettling refugees in the community. Since 1993 the Grand Forks Refugee Resettlement Coalition has provided support for the refugee resettlement process. The coalition's members are primarily Grand Forks area denominational churches. An important way the coalition members act as advocates for refugee resettlement is by holding fundraisers. The coalition pays the deposit and first month's apartment rent for refugees coming to Grand Forks. Throughout the year, the coalition assists the refugee resettlement program in many other ways, including providing the furnishings and helping to set up apartments for newly arriving refugees. In addition, the members volunteer to drive people to medical and dental appointments, shopping, and English-Language Learner (ELL) classes (Olson 2001).

In December 2002 the Grand Forks Refugee Advisory Board was established to coordinate the refugee resettlement services available in the community. The members of this board represent the Altru Health Systems, North Dakota Job Service, Grand Forks county services, urban develop-

ment and housing, continuing adult education ELL, school district ELL, the public health department, and the police department. Members of the board inform newly arriving refugees of the services that each offers (Olson 2003).

Since 1993, 158 refugees have been resettled in the Grand Forks community. Refugees have arrived from Vietnam, Iraq (Kurdish), Kosovo, Bosnia, and Croatia. As of December 2001, there were 112 members of the refugee population in Grand Forks. Of those, Bosnians are the largest refugee population with an estimated 100 residing in Grand Forks, which includes men, women, and children (Olson 2001). The next section provides a brief historical background to the refugee crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina that brought Bosnian refugees to the US.

Refugee Crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The violent breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began in 1991 when the republics of Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. The conflict that ensued spread to the south, with Bosnia-Herzegovina declaring its independence in 1992. Devastating consequences followed, leading to "the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War" (UNHCR 2000:281). The conflict ended in December 1995, but not before leaving half a million people as refugees in bordering countries, and some 700,000 refugees in Western Europe, almost half of them in Germany. In addition, internally displaced persons (IDPs) totaled 1.3 million. In all, over half of the almost 4.4 million prewar Bosnian population were displaced from their homes by the war (UNHCR 2000). These refugees have become "the living casualties of wars and political oppression" (LIRS 2001).

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina left the lives of the people shattered. The cost in human lives was tremendous; an estimated 200,000 people died as a result of the war, many of them civilians. Sixty percent of the homes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, over half of the schools, and 30% of hospitals were damaged or destroyed, as was the economic infrastructure, such as factories, roads, railways, telecommunications, and basic utilities (*Refugees Magazine* 1999).

In the succession of Balkan conflicts, the circumstances in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the subsequent refugee crisis were unique. The prewar Bosnian population was the most ethnically diverse of all the republics, with 44% Muslims, 31% Serbs, 17% Croats, and 7% other minorities (gypsies or Roma, Albanians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Italians). Throughout

Bosnia-Herzegovina, these different nationality groups lived together for generations and mixed marriages were common. As Bosnia-Herzegovina became a war zone, Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and people in ethnically mixed marriages began to flee their homes and seek the protection of the UNHCR, which is responsible for conferring legal refugee status. In 1999 alone, the number of refugees from Bosnia that were resettled worldwide totaled 478,300. They were resettled in Yugoslavia, Croatia, the United States, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark (INS 2001).

Research Problem: Refugee Adjustments in the Resettlement Process

While the numbers and origins of refugees resettled to the United States have undergone changes over the years, the difficulties that refugee groups face in adjusting to a new society have not. Refugee status presents its own unique conditions to resettlement. The dangers in fleeing a home area and the fact that such separations are permanent are very traumatic to many, including the Bosnian population (Dyregrov et al. 2000; Weine et al. 2001; Plante et al. 2002). Refugees resettling and adjusting to life in US communities have been studied for many different groups, including Bosnians (Somach 1995; Dimeo and Somach 1996; Bulic and Dongieux 1999; Jackson 2000), Iranians (Bozorgmehr 1996), Laotians (Valbrun 2000), Sudanese (Abusharaf 1998; Holtzman 2000), and Vietnamese (Shelley 2001). The adjustments of such diverse refugee groups to living in US communities vary widely. Refugee populations bring their own social and cultural heritage to their new communities. Refugees hold certain expectations about life in the United States. Likewise, American society has expectations regarding refugees (Haines 1996). In 1995 a study of Bosnian resettlement found no consistency in the services available to refugees as they resettle in communities across the US. Some of the major challenges that refugees face in adjusting to resettlement include learning English, obtaining employment, starting over in a new community as a refugee, and culture shock. In the case of the Bosnian refugees, there is the cultural difference of moving from a socialist society to a capitalist society. Their social safety net, which included welfare, medical, dental, and childcare provisions, is gone (Somach 1995).

The focus of the current study is the Bosnian population in Grand Forks. This is the first step in a larger project to investigate refugee adjustments to resettlement in North Dakota. This project will include the cities of Bismarck and Fargo at a later date. During the spring and summer of 2001, contacts were made with the Grand Forks coordinator of the Center for New

Americans and several members of the Bosnian population. With about 100 members, Bosnians make up about 90% of the refugees that have been resettled in Grand Forks. The coordinator reported that this number includes approximately 50 adults (Olson 2001). Employable adults age 18-65 (except those caring for children under six), who are resettled in communities as refugees, are expected to be employed within three months of their arrival (USDOS 2001; Somach 1995). Since this current study is interested in the issues that Bosnian refugees face in adjusting to the Grand Forks community, it is essential to gather data from the employable adult population.

Research Methods

This study incorporates the use of data from survey questionnaires and interviews to investigate the Bosnian experience in the refugee resettlement process in the Grand Forks community. When conducting survey research with refugee groups, researchers often use the method of "snowballing" because of the difficulty of locating the populations. With this method, participants "are obtained through referrals among people who share the same characteristics" (Bloch 1999:371). Therefore, the sampling procedure of this study does not follow those of a random sample. No complete address list is maintained by the Grand Forks Center for New Americans to administer a mail-out survey, since many of the Bosnian population no longer required its services. The study relied on assistance from the coordinator of the Center for New Americans and from members of the Bosnian population to distribute and collect the questionnaires. Only English-language questionnaires were distributed, which may have excluded some individuals with low levels of literacy in English from participating in the study. In November 2001, 40 questionnaires were distributed to adult members of the Bosnian population in Grand Forks. The rate of response was 50% of the total questionnaires distributed. The identity of the respondents was not indicated on the survey form, nor was there any way to match the respondents' answers to their identity.

The study's participants answered 32 questions, of which 27 were structured and 5 open-ended, regarding their resettlement experiences in Grand Forks. In the questionnaire, 10 questions requested demographic, family, and length of residency data; 3 questions addressed education and language; 7 questions requested employment and transportation data; 7 questions addressed the assistance provided during the resettlement process; 2 questions addressed resettlement difficulties; and 3 questions asked

what would improve the respondents' lives in Grand Forks. The questions were coded and entered into a computer file. Percentages were calculated for the structured questions of the survey. The open-ended questions were analyzed for emerging themes. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the demographic and family characteristics of the Bosnian refugees?
2. What are the education, language proficiency, and employment levels of the Bosnian refugees?
3. Who was most helpful to them in getting settled in Grand Forks?
4. What has been the most difficult for them in adjusting to life in Grand Forks?
5. In their opinion, what could be improved to make them and others want to stay in Grand Forks?

The data collected from the questionnaires were supplemented by interviews conducted with five Bosnian members (three women and two men) of the population residing in the Grand Forks community. The Grand Forks coordinator and a Bosnian community leader were helpful in the selection of potential interview participants, with participation being completely voluntary. The research questions for the interviews complemented the questionnaire portion of this study. The interviews gathered data on demographic, family, length of residency, education, employment, and specifically, the refugees' experiences in adjusting to living in the community. In December 2001 the interviews were conducted at the Center for New Americans and the sessions ranged from 45 to 60 minutes. Permission to tape record the interviews was received from each participant. The taped interviews were transcribed and then recurrent themes in the responses were identified. Quotations from the respondents that best illustrate these themes are included in the findings.

Results

Questionnaires

The same number of men and women answered the questionnaire. A majority of the study participants are in their 30s (58%). Most are married (90%) and 54% have children 12 years of age or younger. Nearly 70% reported that they had lived in Grand Forks for over three years. Sixty-three

percent heard about Grand Forks as a possible resettlement site from family already resettled in the community.

All the respondents have at least a high school education. Forty-eight percent report that they have completed some college or a trade/technical or undergraduate degree. Sixty-eight percent said that they were definitely making progress in learning English. Ninety percent of the respondents were employed at the time of this questionnaire and 41% had been with their current employer for over three years. They were employed in various types of work, including food services, retail sales, manual labor, mechanics, and education. The participants were asked how they felt about their current employment. While over half responded that they enjoyed their current employment, 41% reported that it is just a way to earn a living.

The last three research questions specifically referred to the refugee experiences in adjusting to resettlement in Grand Forks. Questions inquired about the assistance provided in the resettlement process, the difficulties encountered in their adjustment, and what could be improved in the Grand Forks community (Table 2). Thirty-three percent of the responses selected the Center for New Americans (the local refugee resettlement agency) and the Grand Forks Refugee Resettlement Coalition as most helpful in the resettlement process. Also cited as important were family and friends who were already part of the community.

Several questions examined their friendships with other Bosnians, as well as friendships with others in the community. A majority of the respondents reported that they had Bosnian and non-Bosnian friendships and could go to these friends for advice about finding a doctor, finding a job, and speaking English. The Bosnian friendships provide a comforting feeling that if you need help, somebody will be there for you. Their non-Bosnian friends provide advice about the purchase of a car and insurance, banking, taxes, and services, such as unemployment benefits. They also go to their non-Bosnian friends for cultural questions.

Among the respondents, the common threads regarding difficulties in adjusting to life in Grand Forks include finding a good job (32% of the responses), learning English, and coping with North Dakota weather. Only one respondent said he or she had experienced an act of discrimination or prejudice in Grand Forks, citing particular comments from coworkers. Sixty-seven percent of the participants replied yes, and 33% were unsure, when asked if they planned to stay in Grand Forks for the next two to five years. The participants were asked about what could be improved in the Grand Forks community. The most often reported answers are employment

TABLE 2

**BOSNIAN REFUGEES' ADJUSTMENTS TO LIVING IN GRAND
FORKS, ND**

Question	Responses ¹	
	Number	Percentage
Who was most helpful in getting resettled?		
(N = 54) Center for New Americans/Grand Forks Refugee Resettlement Coalition	18	33.3
Family	13	24.1
Friends	11	20.4
Government services	6	11.1
Church groups	6	11.1
What has been most difficult in adjusting?		
(N = 44) Finding a good job	14	31.8
Learning English	12	27.3
Weather	8	18.2
Transportation	5	11.4
Housing	3	6.8
Getting information about services	2	4.5
What could be improved in Grand Forks?		
(N = 45) Employment opportunities	12	26.7
More English language training	9	20.0
Jobs/skills training	8	17.8
Cost of housing	8	17.8
Educational opportunities	5	11.1
Better housing	3	6.7

¹ Respondents could check all answers that apply.

opportunities (27% of the responses), more English language training, job/skills training, and the cost of housing.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with five Bosnians living in Grand Forks. Overall, the results of the interviews support the data that were obtained

from the questionnaires. However, there are advantages to conducting interviews over questionnaires, such as being able to ask followup questions. The interview participants were in their 30s and had come to Grand Forks as refugees over five years ago. They are married and raising children under the age of 10. All had completed some college courses, a trade/technical program, or an undergraduate degree. They were all employed at the time of these interviews.

Recurrent themes were found in their responses to the last three research questions, referring to the refugee experiences in adjusting to resettlement. The participants reported that the Center for New Americans, the Grand Forks Refugee Resettlement Coalition, and family that were already settled in the community were most helpful in the resettlement process. The Grand Forks coordinator and other community resettlement volunteers were cited by the respondents as "very willing to help us with any problem any time of the day or night." Family reunification is an important part of the resettlement process. Some participants came to Grand Forks to be reunited with family members. One of the women brought her sister and family and then her parents to Grand Forks through the same process. They all mentioned that the Grand Forks community, in general, was very helpful and welcoming to newly arriving refugees. Finally, the refugees have to take the first step in creating a new life for themselves and their families. One of the men related that the adjustment to a community was a two-way street, in that "you [the refugees] have to make the effort to be part of the community."

When asked about what had been most difficult in adjusting to life in Grand Forks, overwhelmingly the lack of job opportunities with a livable wage was mentioned. One participant was "scared" that upgrading her credentials to US standards would not advance her in the career she was attempting to reestablish in the US. In addition, economic opportunities were considered very important because many refugees provide support for both their families in Grand Forks and family members still living in Bosnia. Although they are now proficient in English because of their length of stay in Grand Forks and their prior knowledge of English before arriving in the US, learning English is very important to newly arriving refugees. Most arrive with a beginning level of English.

The interview participants were asked about what could be improved in the Grand Forks community. The most often reported answers were employment opportunities and more English-language classes. One woman added, "I think the prime thing is getting a job, getting a really good decent-

paying job, so [refugees] can have a good life." When asked if they planned to stay and make Grand Forks their permanent home, one participant responded that "it is our wish to stay here and just be with our family members and everyone we know," while another said that "it is our home already." One of the women reported that her family had recently bought their first home in Grand Forks. Furthermore, this area was cited as "a good place to raise a family." One of the respondents summed up the feeling of losing one's home in Bosnia and finding a new home in Grand Forks:

We are all dealing in one or another way on a daily basis with some kind of loss. Once you lose your home, you kind of learn to deal with other losses. Like a balloon going off from the child's hand, you don't know where you belong, who you are, and to a certain extent it's somewhat of an identity crisis. My home doesn't exist anymore. What I am, where I am headed . . . now it's just fine again. [Grand Forks] most certainly does feel like a home. I wouldn't want to lose that for one more time.

Discussion

The Bosnian experience in the Grand Forks community was investigated to understand the significant issues that the refugees face in the resettlement process. An important goal of the US refugee resettlement program is economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible (USDOS 2001). The Bosnian refugees who have resettled in Grand Forks are finding jobs (90% hold jobs), but they report that one of their greatest challenges remains securing employment that provides a livable wage. Furthermore, many of the Bosnian refugees arrive in the community with little or no English-language skills. In the pursuit of economic self-sufficiency, language acquisition and employment opportunities are adjustment issues that studies have found affect most refugee groups, including Bosnians resettled in other US communities (Somach 1995; Dimeo and Somach 1996; Jackson 2000) and the Sudanese resettled in Minnesota (Holtzman 2000).

Researchers who have studied the refugee impact on the communities of Fargo, ND, and Moorhead, MN, argue that the quest for economic self-sufficiency sometimes becomes a "trade-off between enrollment in ESL [ELL] classes and early employment" (Slobin et al. 2002:14). The Grand Forks coordinator confirms that refugees sometimes forego attending English-language classes in order to accept early employment. In the initial

period of refugee adjustment to the basics of the American workplace, refugees could more easily move beyond the minimal-pay jobs to livable-wage employment with an integration of English-language classes and job/skills training. In Grand Forks, there have been a few opportunities in which individual employers offer language instruction to refugees as part of their employment (Olson 2003).

In the Grand Forks community, underemployment is cited as an adjustment issue for some refugees in their pursuit of economic self-sufficiency. Although Bosnian and other refugees may arrive with certain skills and abilities, these foreign-acquired degrees and skills are not always recognized in the US (Somach 1995; Haines 1996; Dimeo and Somach 1996; Bulic and Dongieux 1999). Members of the Bosnian population have found that the need for US certification has been a barrier to their professional employment in the Grand Forks area. For example, several are attending university classes to receive teaching degrees so that they will be able to continue their careers as teachers.

Although there may be similarities between the US and Bosnian ways of life, one consensus is that life in Grand Forks is "very busy" compared to life in Bosnia. The pace of their new life means that the quality time spent with their families is scarce. Many Bosnians in other US communities confirm this finding (Somach 1995). They had expected to have more free time than they actually do in their new American lives. US communities that resettle refugees are often lacking a general knowledge about the homeland of the refugees. One of the respondents spoke of "the importance of having the people believe in you and your qualities and because you are coming from nowhere [in some people's minds]. In America, they have heard of Paris and London, but not many are good geographers. [People asked] Bosnia? Is that in Asia? [laughter]."

Finally, several participants cited the North Dakota weather as a difficulty in refugee adjustment to the Grand Forks community. Of course, the weather is something that North Dakota residents cannot change but can only accept. An interview participant reports that "Over there [Bosnia] it is the same thing, there is winter and it's cold. So it wasn't really too hard to get used to."

While the services offered by the Center for New Americans were very important in the refugee resettlement process, family members already part of the community were cited as very helpful in making the adjustment to life in Grand Forks. The US State Department's family reunification program has been a large part of the resettlement process in North Dakota. Like

family, the refugee community can make the adjustment process easier by acting as a go-between for refugees and the larger American society. They can be particularly helpful in guiding newly arriving refugees toward needed services (e.g., health care, insurance needs), as well as opportunities (e.g., finding a job, buying a car). The results of this study reveal that many newly arriving Bosnian refugees have family and friends already in the Grand Forks community, which they report provides them with a "soft landing" and eases their adjustments to resettlement. Further, the coordinator reports that the Bosnian refugee community in Grand Forks has been very supportive of refugees who arrive as free cases, that is, without family or friends already in the community.

For a community to be successful in a refugee resettlement program, it has been shown that family and friends of the refugee populations and a well-run network of community volunteers are needed to work with the sponsorship of the local resettlement agency (Slobin et al. 2002). Waterloo–Cedar Rapids, IA, is an example of a program that is working effectively because of the strong community spirit and support of refugee resettlement (*Forum* 2001b). From the results of this study, the Grand Forks community seems to be doing an effective job in helping the refugees adjust to American life. Credit for the success of the resettlement program should be given to the Center for New Americans and the Grand Forks Refugee Resettlement Coalition. The establishment of the Grand Forks Refugee Advisory Board was a major step forward in the coordination of community services. In part, this advisory board came about because Grand Forks leaders have been actively seeking refugees to resettle in the community to stimulate population and economic growth. As previously mentioned, the refugee community in Grand Forks is very important in the resettlement process. The coordinator reported that Grand Forks' refugee resettlement program is considered a model of a success (Olson 2003).

Conclusion

Using a survey questionnaire and interviews, this study found that the top concern was the lack of job opportunities with a livable wage. Of course, this is important to nonrefugee residents in the Grand Forks area as well, but the refugees are at a disadvantage because many arrive without knowing the language or much about American society. English-language and job/skills training were also significant issues in successful resettlement. Some expressed their desire to work in the area in which they received education and

training while in Bosnia, but their credentials do not readily transfer. The refugee adjustment issues found in this study are consistent with prior research on Bosnian resettlement in the United States. The Grand Forks refugee resettlement program seems to have all the "right stuff" to effectively resettle refugees in the community. The results of this study may be beneficial to other refugee resettlement programs in North Dakota, as well as other areas of the Great Plains.

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