



ORR State Letter

11 -06

Date: April 25, 2011

TO: STATE REFUGEE COORDINATORS
WILSON-FISH AGENCIES
VOLUNTARY AGENCIES
INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: Eskinder Negash
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement

SUBJECT: Attendance at the 2011 Office of Refugee Resettlement Consultation

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) will host a National Consultation on August 1-2, 2011, at the Omni Shoreham in Washington, D.C. It is a timely reminder that sixty years after the creation of the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, millions of refugees still languish in squalid and overcrowded refugee camps and urban ghettos across the world. Far from finding asylum, they remain in situations of displacement—hoping for a future that is not only free from persecution but ripe with possibility—just as they did six decades ago.

The purpose of this letter is to strongly encourage all of ORR's stakeholder and partners, including State Refugee Coordinators and Refugee Health Coordinators, voluntary agencies, mutual assistance associations, and refugees, to attend and to participate in the Consultation.

We cannot overemphasize the strategic importance of your participation in the Consultation. The Refugee Act of 1980 requires the Director of ORR to consult with representatives from States, voluntary agencies and other key partners to develop policies and strategies for the placement and resettlement of refugees and other vulnerable groups within the United States. The Consultation provides our partners in resettlement the opportunity to raise their concerns, share best practice, ask questions, and provide comments and suggestions to ORR as part of the consultative process. As ORR Director, one of my goals has been to bring the voice of the refugees to the table. The discussion is not complete, however, unless all stakeholders are equally represented, starting with the State Refugee Coordinators and Refugee Health Coordinators who represent and support resettlement in their respective States.

Furthermore, this year's consultation will feature several, small-group dialogue sessions to facilitate consultation between ORR and its partners. We expect that these dialogue sessions will lead to broad and long-term implications for the funding, operation and management of the refugee program, for which our partners' active participation is essential. At a time when budget implications are impacting everyone's planning and projections, your participation in these discussions are more important than ever.

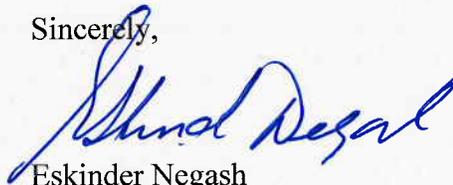
Just as the populations we serve change over time, so must the strategies we use to meet their needs and ensure their successful resettlement. It is fitting that the theme for this year's consultation is "*Bridges to a New Future*"—a true reflection of the role that we all play in the resettlement of refugees to the United States.

For the second year in a row, ORR plans a special focus on consulting directly with refugees. During the consultation, we will convene a listening session and invite refugees to assess the effectiveness of existing resettlement services, share their vision for an improved resettlement system, and suggest innovative programming to achieve that vision. I strongly encourage states and other service providers to consider this emphasis in determining the make-up of their delegations. After all, there is no better way to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention than to ask those we serve for their reflections.

Immediately following the consultation, ORR will host a working session for State Refugee Coordinators, Refugee Health Coordinators and individuals working in the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) programs and Microenterprise and Individual Development Account (IDA) programs. These meetings will be held on Wednesday, August 3, 2011 and Thursday, August 4, 2011, also at the Omni Shoreham in Washington, D. C. Please plan to participate in these sessions if your work is related to these program areas.

We thank you for the critical role you play in the Refugee Resettlement Program, and look forward to your participation in expanding the national and local dialogue on the refugee program.

Sincerely,



Eskinder Negash
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement