

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN Hawaii

REFUGEES IN HAWAII

The United States has been a leader in welcoming [refugees](#) who seek safety from persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Following World War II, the U.S. began welcoming refugees and over time the system has evolved to have a strong infrastructure centered on [public-private partnerships](#). Communities across the U.S. have recognized the important economic and social benefits of resettling refugees. (Hawaii) residents have played a vital role in the resettlement program and refugees have positively contributed to HI communities. In 2013, organizations and communities across [Hawaii](#) welcomed less than [1% of refugees arriving in the U.S. Of the 50 newcomers to Hawaii in 2013](#), 44 were asylum seekers and 6 were a resettled refugee.

Where are most
refugees in
Hawaii from?

Bhutan
Burma

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES IN HAWAII

In addition to [programming](#) to support refugees when they first arrive to the United States, the federal government provides monetary aid through grants to the state, Voluntary Agencies, and other refugee aid organizations for community and short-term refugee support. Primary program services include cash and medical assistance, access to English as a second language classes, vocational and employment assistance.

FEDERAL FY14 ORR FUNDING TO HAWAII FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS (AS OF DECEMBER 2013)

Total	Cash & Medical Assistance	Matching Grant	Refugee Social Services
\$ 170,000	\$25,000	\$ 70,000	\$75,000

Another service available to refugees in Hawaii is the employment [Matching Grant Services](#), administered by Voluntary Agencies in the state. An alternative to public cash assistance, private agencies match federal contributions and provide intensive case management services to help refugees get employed and become self-sufficient within 120 days of arrival. The Pacific Gateway Center helps to administer these grants.

"I want people to know that I am very happy to be in a country where there is democracy and where I can speak freely about my experiences."

-[Nyunt](#) is an assistant manager at 7-Eleven

REFUGEES MAKE HAWAII STRONG

"[Becoming a U.S. citizen was the proudest moment of my life](#)," he said. "I am happy to be in a country that observes human rights, and I want to stay here for the rest of my life. Here I can speak freely and tell people, 'This is my life.'" John Nyunt, from Burma, was resettled as a refugee in the United States and made Hawaii his home. He was an influential community activist in Burma, where he was persecuted for his support of the National League for Democracy and its leader Aung San Suu Kyi. His work ended with a violent military coup which resulted in him being thrown into prison. He spent his first three months in solitary confinement, and the conditions in the general prison were not much better. He was finally released in 1999 and eventually was able to come to the United States. He recently became a U.S. Citizen and is the proud assistant

manager at a 7-Eleven, a job for which he is grateful but also one that is far removed from his old standing as a widely respected lawyer and political activist in what was then known as the Socialist Republic of Burma.

LOCAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OFFICES AND AFFILIATES IN HAWAII

- **USCRI, Pacific Gateway Center**, Honolulu

In addition to these agencies, many ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) exist throughout the state to help various refugee communities integrate and succeed in their new homes. These organizations are run by refugees to aid in the resettlement of fellow refugees by providing a variety of direct services, increasing civic participation, and preserve the community's cultural identity and history.