



Canadian Council
for Refugees

Conseil canadien
pour les réfugiés

**“EVERY DAY
WE LIVE WITH
FEAR AND
UNCERTAINTY.”**

Canadian Processing of Resettled
Refugees in Africa

• December 2025

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A EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

African Refugees Still Waiting: Systemic Racism and Refugee Processing

Refugees in Africa consistently wait the longest for resettlement in Canada, denying them equal access to rights and protection.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report explores the experiences of refugees awaiting resettlement to Canada, focusing on **Government-Assisted Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees and One Year Window** applicants seeking family reunification

The findings are based on case submissions, CCR member input, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data, public information, and CCR's long-standing expertise on refugee processing.

This report assesses both progress made and continued failings, and it makes recommendations for achieving equity in refugee processing.

Two years after Canada's Auditor General revealed serious inequities in how refugee applications are processed, little has changed. The 2023 report found visa offices across Africa were under-resourced leading to larger backlogs and longer processing times for both Government-Assisted and Privately Sponsored refugees.

A Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) report—Canadian Processing of Resettled Refugees in Africa—shows that not only do these inequities persist, they are deeply entrenched.

PERSISTENT INEQUITIES

Despite efforts by IRCC to address delays, processing times for refugees in Africa being resettled to Canada continue to be slowest. These outcomes are not random—they reflect structural inequities that are built into the system.

African offices are under-resourced, data on regional processing is hard to come by, and the continued government failure to address these barriers results in the violation of the principle of equity where African refugees are treated unfairly—in short: systemic racism.

LIVES ON HOLD

The prolonged delays in processing have profound effects on thousands of people. As they wait, refugees are living in precarious conditions, often with poor housing, food and medical care. They are separated from family. They are often under constant threat to their safety through violence, detention and deportation. Lives are on hold. Applicants describe despair and frustration.

Silence from visa offices adds to the uncertainty as applicants note that communications is a weak spot in the system. A Sudanese applicant put it succinctly: ***“Every day we live with fear and uncertainty about our lives.”***

EVIDENCE OF CHRONICALLY DELAYED PROCESSING

Processing times for all the categories tracked in this report are the slowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Current wait times are 42 months for Government-Assisted Refugees and 47 months for Privately Sponsored Refugees. In the One Year Window category—where refugees already in Canada have one year to apply to be reunited with family members—wait times are also longest in Africa.

The experience of Sudanese applicants is a searing case in point. In 2024, the federal government opened a **family-based humanitarian pathway to permanent residence for Sudanese** affected by the conflict. Yet, this seems to be a humanitarian pathway in name only as long wait times persist.

SYSTEMIC FACTORS LEADING TO INEQUITY

- **Unequal Resources:** Visa offices in Africa are unable to meet the processing needs of applicants, despite the creation of a “surge team” intended to offset the lack of visa office staff in Africa.
- **Low Immigration Targets:** Immigration levels are far too low for the number of refugees waiting. The targets for Privately Sponsored Refugees are declining, while the backlog of cases grows. This shortfall in levels disproportionately affects refugees in Africa.
- **Stalled Anti-Racism Action:** Although IRCC made a number of commitments and developed **plans** to address racism, it is not clear how inequity in processing cases in Africa will be tackled. IRCC has yet to update its action plan and recently eliminated its Equity Division, further stalling progress on addressing racism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CCR calls on the government to ensure equitable processing times for resettled refugees across regions, and in particular to end the consistently slow processing times in Africa, through clear policy commitments, service standards and adequate resourcing.

To achieve the objective the government should:

- Set targets for equitable processing times by region, and track and report on them.
- Ensure transparency and accountability by publishing processing times by region and immigration category.
- Increase immigration targets for Privately Sponsored Refugees to eliminate existing backlogs.
- Adopt a transparent and equitable emergency response framework for humanitarian crises that upholds the principle of additionality.
- Provide timely and accessible information to applicants.
- Strengthen information training and information resources for visa officers to improve assessment of applicant’s reasons for flight and current circumstances.
- Create an accessible mechanism for all sponsors to flag excessively delayed cases.
- Introduce flexible processing measures for applicants unable to meet requirements (such as medical examinations or biometrics) due to security conditions or displacement.

B INTRODUCTION

Every year tens of thousands of refugees overseas are offered protection and a permanent home in Canada through resettlement. Many have spent years waiting for their applications to be processed. But, for refugees in Africa, processing times are consistently among the slowest, evidence of the barriers created by systemic racism.

These inequities have been a focus of concern and advocacy by the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) and its members for years.

In October 2023, Canada's Auditor General published a report on processing of permanent residence applications that confirmed the particular inequities faced by refugees in Africa.

Two years after the publication of the Auditor General's report, do the inequities persist? This report assesses progress and continued failings and makes recommendations for achieving equity in refugee processing.

1. Inequities and systemic racism—Long-standing CCR concerns

CCR has a long history of drawing attention to Canada's particularly slow processing of refugees from Africa.¹ In 2009, the CCR report, *Nairobi: Protection Delayed, Protection Denied*, highlighted the extraordinarily long processing times at the Nairobi visa office. That report used publicly available data on processing times. However, in 2016 the Canadian government stopped publishing processing times by visa office or region. Overnight, transparency regarding inequities in processing was lost, making continued analysis difficult.

In 2017, in response to concerns raised by CCR, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) prepared a Memorandum to the Minister analyzing the processing times in Africa, and identifying the steps that would be needed to address the concerns.² The findings of the Auditor General in 2023 suggest that any actions taken were not successful in ending the inequity.

The CCR has also repeatedly called attention to the inequity in Canada's responses to humanitarian crises. Emergency situations in Africa have rarely resulted in special immigration measures being adopted, and when they are, they are significantly more limited than measures introduced for crises in other regions.³

1 See our recent Anti-Racism issue paper *Ending inequity in processing of resettled refugees, particularly from Africa* (2024)

2 *Memorandum to the Minister, Processing Times in Africa, F-922881*, disclosed under the Access to Information Act.

3 CCR, *Ending inequity in responses to global refugee crises*, December 2024.

2. Auditor General Report 9, 2023

Two years ago, the Auditor General of Canada published a report⁴ that was critical of many aspects of the way in which applications for permanent residence were processed.

Overall, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) found that processing was slow for refugee resettlement applicants compared to all other immigration categories studied: “Refugees continued to face the longest average wait times among all three permanent resident classes.” (OAG report, paragraph 9.30)

But refugees in Africa experienced particularly long delays. The report found larger backlogs and longer processing times for refugee applicants in Africa because these offices were often under-resourced.

According to the Auditor General, IRCC “recognized that its offices in sub-Saharan Africa⁵ were chronically under-resourced.” (OAG report, paragraph 9.48)

A comparison of backlogged cases by nationality makes the discrepancy clear:

“[...] in the Government-Assisted Refugees Program, more than half of the applications submitted by citizens of Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were backlogged. In comparison, only one third of the applications submitted by citizens from Syria were backlogged.”

OAG report, paragraph 9.32

Unsurprisingly, the Auditor General found that backlogs accumulated in offices that had fewer staff:

“[E]ven with additional temporary officers in 2022, the Nairobi office had about half the staff but almost double the assigned workload of the Ankara (Turkey) office. Similarly, the Dar es Salaam office had a comparable number of staff but five times the assigned workload of the Rome (Italy) office.”

OAG report, paragraph 9.47

- Nairobi visa office had about half the staff but almost double the workload as Ankara.
- Dar es Salaam had a similar number of staff but five times the workload of Rome.

Because of the shortage of staff in Africa, some offices could not meet the targets assigned to them for family and refugee programs in 2022. “For example, in the Government-Assisted Refugees Program, officials told us that other, better-resourced offices, such as those in the Middle East, were asked to exceed their assigned targets with their own application workloads, in order to meet the Immigration Levels Plan.” (OAG report, paragraph 9.50)

As a result, some applicants in Africa were forced to wait until the next year before starting their lives in Canada because the government had not assigned enough resources to the region.

How much progress has been made in addressing inequities in the two years since the publication of the Auditor General’s report?

⁴ Auditor General of Canada, Report 9 to the Parliament of Canada, [Processing Applications for Permanent Residence—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), 2023 (cited below as OAG report).

⁵ “Sub-Saharan Africa” is the name given by IRCC to one of the world regions into which its offices are grouped. The term “Sub-Saharan Africa” is criticized as unhelpful and rooted in colonial racism. (See, for example, Quartz, [Why do we still use the term “sub-Saharan Africa”?](#) 21 July 2022.) The term is used in this report only to refer to the IRCC region of that name.

3. About this report

This report focuses on the experiences of refugees waiting for resettlement to Canada, more specifically:

- **Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs):** refugees referred to Canada by the UNHCR because of a particular need for resettlement due to vulnerabilities.⁶
- **Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs):** refugees sponsored by organizations or groups of individuals in Canada who undertake to support them financially and morally for one year after their arrival.
- **One Year Window applications (OYW):** immediate family members of refugees recently resettled to Canada. The family members were not in the same location during the initial resettlement processing (as commonly happens given protracted crises and patterns of displacement and vulnerability in Africa), and now spouse and/or children need to reunite with the resettled refugee in Canada. The application for the family members must be made within a year of the refugee arriving in Canada, hence the program name.

The analysis and recommendations of our report are based on:

- **Case examples:** submitted by applicants, sponsors, family members and others. We received approximately 300 submissions in response to an invitation to complete a short online form. Several of them are summarized below, using fictitious names throughout.
- **Input from members:** including at a virtual meeting held in June 2025.
- Data provided to CCR by IRCC on processing times and inventories for resettled refugees, broken down by region and by visa office.
- Publicly available information.
- Knowledge of the issues affecting processing of refugees in Africa acquired by the CCR over the decades.

The CCR acknowledges with appreciation the willingness of the IRCC Resettlement, Family & Humanitarian Branch to engage with the CCR on the core issues of this report and to share crucial data. We look forward to further dialogue to advance the common goal of equity in processing for Africa.

⁶ While most GARs are referred by UNHCR, the Canadian government has agreements with some other organizations enabling them also to refer refugees.

C CHRONICALLY SLOW PROCESSING IN AFRICA

Six years of waiting!

In April 2019, private sponsorship applications were submitted for Ahmed and Sara, their children, and their orphaned niece and nephew. Ahmed's brother and his family live in Winnipeg and were anxiously expecting the arrival of the family.

The family waited more than six years in Ethiopia to come to Canada.

OVER THESE YEARS:

- Several members of the family were taken hostage by Al-Shabab. During this time their applications could not be processed.
- In 2021 Ahmed died as a result of the injuries he suffered during his captivity. Sara was made the principal applicant.
- Sara gave birth to a baby in November 2023. In the months before the birth, communications from the visa office suggested that the family was on the point of travelling to Canada.
- In January 2024, the sponsors submitted the baby's birth certificate. Seven months later, the visa office again requested the baby's birth certificate.
- In September 2024, in response to an email from the sponsor emphasizing the vulnerable situation of the family, the visa office responded: "A decision has been made and the file is in the final stages of processing. Once it has been finalized, it will be sent to IOM for travel arrangements in the near future."
- For reasons that are not clear, there were problems doing the medical exam. Finally, in February 2025, the visa office sent new medical instructions and the medical exams were done.
- In April 2025, the sponsors were assured by IRCC that "the file is currently in its final stages of processing."
- In October 2025, six and a half years after the process began, news came that the family is finally about to arrive.

1. What the statistics show

Recent statistics provided to the CCR by IRCC show that processing times⁷ for all the categories tracked in this report are slowest in the Sub-Saharan African region.⁸

Processing times (in months) for Government-Assisted Refugees, by region, applications finalized 1 February–31 July 2025

Region	Processing Time
Sub Saharan Africa	42
Middle East	26
Europe and Maghreb	15
Americas and the Caribbean	15
Indo-Pacific	13
Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O)	2

Processing times (in months) for Privately Sponsored Refugees, by region, applications finalized 1 February–31 July 2025

Region	Processing Time
Sub Saharan Africa	47
Europe and Maghreb	42
Indo-Pacific	40
Middle East	39
Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O)	30

Processing times (in months) for One Year Window applications, by region, applications finalized 1 February–31 July 2025

Region	Processing Time
Sub Saharan Africa	35
Middle East	31
Europe and Maghreb	25
Americas and the Caribbean	22
Indo-Pacific	18
Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O)	1

⁷ Processing time should be read as “80% of cases finalized in the specified six month period were completed within XX months or less”. A minimum of 10 cases are required to calculate processing times.

⁸ IRCC includes in the region of “Sub Saharan Africa” its visa offices in Accra, Addis Ababa, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Pretoria.

2. Experiences and outcomes of slow processing

The long delays force people to wait years in precarious situations, without security or an ability to get on with their lives. The uncertainty and lack of information about the progress of their application leave people frustrated and despairing. When they are finally resettled to Canada, it is much harder for them to integrate because of the long years in limbo, often without access to schooling, adequate health care or food, and daily at risk of harassment, arrest and detention, and even deportation.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS WHILE WAITING

While applicants wait, babies are born leading to a need for more paperwork, while in other cases applicants may die.

In 2000, private sponsorship applications were submitted for Abdi and Fatima, refugees in Zambia, along with several of their children. One of the children, an adult daughter, was approved and arrived in Canada in October 2023. However, there was no news whatsoever about the rest of family for over a year, despite inquiries. There was no answer to an email requesting that the application be expedited after other family members were detained in a round-up of refugees.

In February 2025, Abdi died.

Finally, after a further request that the application be expedited, the remaining family members arrived in June 2025.

LONG DELAY AFTER INTERVIEW

The interview is a crucial step in the resettlement process: the immigration official asks the applicants questions in order to determine if they meet the refugee definition and need resettlement. If all goes well, the applicant is accepted in principle and the next steps are to confirm admissibility (notably through a medical examination and security screening).

However, in some cases, there is no communication at all for long periods after the interview. Instead of seeing their case move forward, as they hoped, applicants are left in limbo. Occasionally, a year or two later, they are called for another interview, without explanation.

A family of two parents and five children, one of whom is disabled, had their interview in 2023. Two years have passed since the interview and they have seen no progress. (They are in Ethiopia—the application was submitted four years ago.)

The Auditor General reported: “We found that backlogged applications often experienced multiple delays with long periods of inactivity from the time they were submitted.”

OAG report, paragraph 9.37

3. Delays in the Sudan Family-Based Humanitarian Pathway

“The lack of timely communication and support from IRCC has made it very difficult to navigate this process despite the program’s stated purpose of reuniting families affected by the war in Sudan.”

sister of an applicant

In 2024, after considerable advocacy from the Sudanese Canadian community, the federal government opened a [family-based humanitarian pathway to permanent residence for Sudanese](#) affected by the conflict. The CCR welcomed the measure, as a much-needed response to the devastating suffering and widespread displacement caused by the civil war. Although the measure was too restrictive, as pointed out by the CCR⁹, simply to have an immigration initiative to respond to a crisis in Africa was a step forward.¹⁰

However, processing times have not reflected the urgency of the situation. As one family member noted, “Given the ongoing conflict in Sudan, it was reasonable to expect this program to be prioritized. Unfortunately, IRCC has not approached it from a humanitarian perspective, despite officially labeling it a humanitarian and compassionate program.” Another family member asks:

“This a special program pathway to help people who lived under war. How is it possible it takes all this time?” Her father has died while waiting for processing.

The [Sudanese Canadian Community Association](#) (SCCA) has expressed profound concern over the slow processing: “These delays are prolonging the suffering of families caught in life-threatening circumstances in Sudan, while imposing catastrophic financial strains on those who managed to flee the war. They undermine Canada’s stated commitment to humanitarian values and global leadership in refugee protection. These are not abstract consequences; these delays have already proven deadly, as loved ones have tragically lost their lives while waiting for Canada to act.”

DELAYS CAN COST LIVES

Tragically, in some cases the applicant dies while waiting for processing. The CCR heard from several people who were grieving family members who had died before they could come to Canada.

After his daughter died, a grandfather applied under the Sudan special measures for himself and his granddaughter, for whom he was caring alone in Egypt. While waiting for processing, the little girl died, leaving her grandfather in grief instead of hope, as a family member notes.

⁹ CCR, [Letter on the immigration measures in response to the conflict in Sudan](#), February 2024

¹⁰ Historically, Canadian immigration responses to crises in Africa have been rare, despite the numerous wars and situations of mass displacement. A recent example: despite the brutally violent war in Ethiopia, there were no Canadian immigration measures at all. CCR, [Ending inequity in responses to global refugee crises](#), 2024

LACK OF EXPEDITED PROCESSING FOR VULNERABLE APPLICANTS

While applicants and their family members rightly expect all cases to be processed quickly, some individuals have compelling reasons for needing especially urgent attention. Yet, the government is not necessarily responsive to such requests.

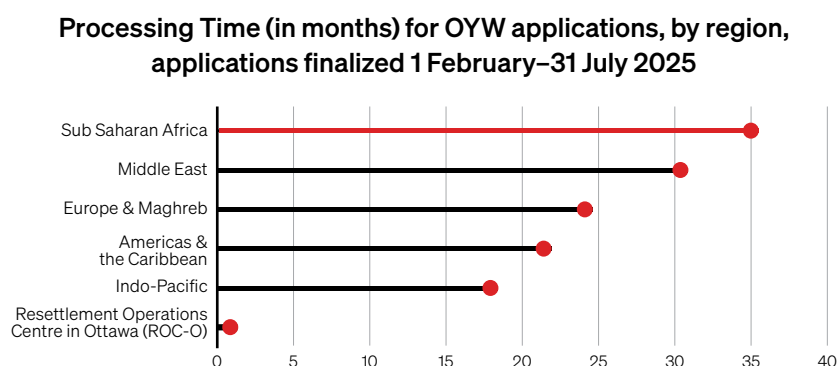
Family members requested expedited processing for a man who was detained by the RSF for five months. He endured injuries and traumatic experiences during his detention that left him deeply scarred, both physically and mentally. Although supporting evidence, including pictures, were given to IRCC, as far as the family know, no consideration has been given to his case. He is living alone in Ethiopia without family support, facing depression and unable to work.

4. Family reunification cases: One Year Window (OYW) applications

When a refugee who is being resettled to Canada has immediate family members (spouse or common-law partner, and children) in another location, they sometimes need to be processed separately, after the person has arrived in Canada. This situation may arise when the person flees their country, but their family remains at home, or when family members are separated during flight. After arrival in Canada, the person needs to make an application for their family members. This is known as the “One Year Window” Program, because the application must be made within one year of arrival.

Although the One Year Window application is intended as a way of processing the family members as part of the original application, in practice it often seems like it is treated as a new application, with family members waiting nearly as long again as the original applicant. Although the name “One Year Window” leads some to think that the family members will arrive within a year, processing times are routinely far longer.¹¹

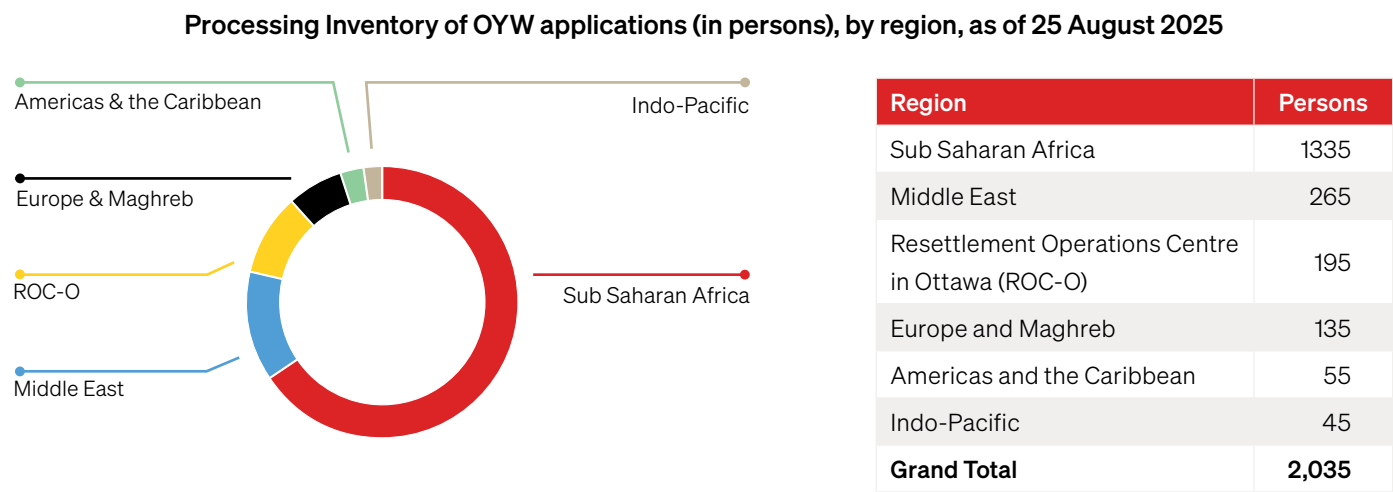
Wherever they are in the world, family members applying through OYW wait too long, but the processing times are longest in Africa.



¹¹ The “one year” refers to the time that the resettled person has to submit a One Year Window application for their family members. They have one year from the date on which they became a permanent resident (usually the day they arrived in Canada).

Some applications are finalized very quickly—within just one month—at the Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O). These are straightforward cases processed entirely in Canada, as part of IRCC’s efforts to reunite families as quickly as possible. Most OYW cases are sent out to the relevant visa office after initial processing at ROC-O.

Two-thirds of the inventory of applications for family reunification through One Year Window are in Sub-Saharan Africa (1,335 persons, as of August 2025).¹² This means that the long processing times in that region affect many people.



IRCC has recognized that OYW processes need review and clarification, and has been responsive in consulting with the CCR and developing an action plan to address shortcomings. Among the objectives of the plan are reducing the need for OYW applications by ensuring that, wherever possible, family members are processed concurrently with the

refugee, and reducing requests for DNA tests to establish family relationship. While addressing long processing times is identified as a priority area for action, the principal measure identified to address it is the setting of service standards.

The data recently shared by IRCC and published in this report reflects the department’s commitment to transparency on processing of OYW applications, including by region and visa office.

SIX YEARS AND STILL WAITING

Jeanine and Denise are 15-year-old twins who have been waiting for six years in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, to be reunited with their mother in Canada. Their One Year Window applications were submitted in August 2019, shortly after their mother arrived in Canada as a Privately Sponsored Refugee.

The girls, whose father has died, are living with three adopted brothers— orphaned cousins—who are also waiting to be reunited with their adoptive mother.

12 The large proportion of One Year Window applications in Africa may reflect, at least in part, patterns of displacement that result in a higher rate of refugee families being separated than in other regions.

5. First in, First out?

In principle, applications are supposed to be processed based on the general rule of “first in, first out” (FIFO). In practice, however, many of those observing the progress of cases do not see evidence that the rule is followed—either on a global level (since applicants in Africa tend to wait longer than those in other regions), or individually (similar cases at the same visa office appear to be processed at different speeds, with some who applied later receiving their visas before others who applied earlier.)

A Sponsorship Agreement Holder reported that they have nine cases in Uganda, where the applicants have been waiting between 33 and 39 months and have still not arrived.

On the other hand, in 2025 they have had arrivals from Uganda of people whose processing took “only” 24–36 months. “In other words, more recent cases are being processed ahead of older ones.”

The Auditor General noted that FIFO was not always followed:

“We also found that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada did not consistently process applications on a first-in-first-out basis contrary to its operating principle. In 2022, newer applications were finalized ahead of older ones in all eight programs we examined.” (OAG report, paragraph 9.20)

It is not surprising that some cases take longer than others. Sometimes there are delays related to the security screening, or the applicant needs more time to submit documents. However, without information about the status of the case, people are left to speculate about the reasons for different processing times, and the sense of inequity is strong.

One Sponsorship Agreement Holder observed that, in their experience, they are often aware of the reasons why cases in regions other than Africa are delayed. In contrast, for African cases, there is generally no clear indication of the reasons for delays.

Faduma, her husband and children have been waiting three years in Kenya for processing of their application. Another family sponsored by the same group from the same refugee camp arrived in Canada almost a year ago, even though they applied more than a year after this family. One of the children had serious health issues needing treatment. This has been brought to IRCC’s attention, and resulted in some progress on the file, but then things stopped moving.

Despite the best efforts of the sponsor, the response received is simply: “This case is under review.”

D COMMUNICATIONS

Many applicants, sponsors and family members lament the lack of communication from the Canadian government on the status of the application.

Example of a generic response:

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your email.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act requires that each person applying to Canada be screened in many ways, including eligibility, health, security and criminality.

Although we cannot give you a time frame for finalization, our office will ensure that this application is finalised as soon as possible, and, if needed, will follow-up with partners on matters related to your application.

Our office will make contact when we are ready to proceed to the next steps.

We regret that our response could not be more favorable apparently. [sic]

When responses are received from the visa office, they are sometimes generic replies that do not address the specific questions raised. An applicant in Uganda states: “Instead of getting information that directly answers my questions, I received general responses that left me without clarity about my case. This has made the process more stressful and uncertain for me.”

When the visa office does send communications about the next steps in the process, there are sometimes errors or confusion, which can be difficult to resolve because of the lack of responsiveness from the visa office.

- An applicant in Zambia was asked for a refugee ID from Uganda, even though she has never been to Uganda. The request caused particular distress because it came after there had already been unexplained delays in the case, resulting in her needing to re-do her medical exam. She had just completed the exam for the third time.
- A sponsor reports that the Dar es Salaam visa office sent three requests, separately and at different times, for the same documentation to different people involved in the application. The documentation was submitted in response to the first request, by replying to the email, as instructed. When the sponsor explained, in reply to the second request, that the documentation had already been submitted by email, they were told the documentation needed to be submitted through the webform.
- Although IRCC has agreed to copy the representative of the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) in any correspondence relating to one of their cases, several SAHs reported that this does not always happen.

E AFRICAN PROCESSING ISSUES: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

1. Threats to life, liberty and security

While waiting for resettlement to Canada, refugees often face danger on a daily basis, living in a country to which they have fled but where they are unwelcome and have few or no rights. Arrest, detention and deportation are real threats for many, and make speedy resettlement more important than ever.

Bereket, an applicant for resettlement, writes: “it is important to note that in Egypt, the authorities frequently conduct roundups of refugees and asylum seekers. Many people are deported to Eritrea against their will, without consent or due process. Those who are deported often face imprisonment for many months under harsh and inhumane conditions, with women in particular suffering severe abuse and mistreatment.”

2. Challenging living conditions as refugees

While waiting for safety in Canada, many if not most refugee applicants lack access to the basic necessities of life: food, adequate housing, health care. They may be barred from working or, if they can work, the only jobs available are poorly paid. Children are often unable to go to school.

When refugees finally arrive in Canada after years of waiting in these conditions, their integration is that much harder because of the toll taken on their physical and mental health and the lost years of education for the children.

Semer and Salina are Eritrean refugees, living with their four young children in Umgargour refugee camp in Sudan. They were displaced to this camp as a result of the outbreak of war in Sudan in April 2023.

The camp has very poor health care, so communicable diseases such as cholera and diarrhea abound. Their children are not able to go to school. They are living in tents which are very hot and don't give protection from dust storms or heavy rain. There is no means of earning money in the camp, and they are not allowed to leave the camp. As a result Semer and Salina cannot meet their children's needs, and they are suffering from malnutrition.

“I want to urge IRCC, considering all the difficulties we are passing through in Sudan, to speed up our process, to end our suffering.”

3. Family separation

In the case of One Year Window applications, families that have already endured separation spend several more years apart. Children are far from a parent, spouses are unable to be together.

Hope's wife and children were resettled to Canada two years ago. Hope himself is currently in Uganda, waiting for finalization of his One Year Window application.

The family is struggling with the prolonged separation. When the wife and children first arrived in Canada, they expected a swift reunion. The two-year wait has taken an emotional toll. The children are not doing well at school and the mother is trying to manage a part-time job and childcare with insufficient support.

4. Stress of long wait

Whether waiting as a Government-Assisted Refugee, a Privately Sponsored Refugee, a family member in the One Year Window or the Sudan pathway program, applicants find the long wait extremely stressful. This is particularly accentuated when there is no clear information from the government about the status of their case, or when they can expect to come to Canada.

Murad received confirmation of his file number almost two years ago, but since then has received no updates. "I believe my process may be on hold ... I have not received any new information or news about the progress of my case, which has created a lot of uncertainty and stress." Murad was a refugee in Sudan at the outbreak of civil war in 2023. He was displaced a second time and is now in Ethiopia.

Ruth is in Addis Abeba, caring for her four children alone. The children's father is displaced in another country. Four and a half years after the sponsorship application was submitted, and nearly two years after her interview with a Canadian immigration official, she is waiting for information about next steps. Ruth and her children survived a traumatizing attack on the refugee camp where they were living previously. Others in the camp were killed or kidnapped. The wait is particularly difficult for Ruth because she sees other people processed more quickly than her family. Her cousin notes that the situation is causing a lot of mental anguish and desperation.

A Sudanese family who fled the outbreak of civil war is waiting for processing to come to Canada under the Sudanese special measures. The long delays have caused significant stress and uncertainty for the parents, who are left struggling with both emotional and financial challenges. "Every day we live with fear and uncertainty about our lives and the future of our children."

5. Emotional and financial stress on sponsors and family members in Canada

Slow processing often places enormous stress on those in Canada trying to offer support and encouragement from a distance. In many cases, sponsors or family members are providing financial support to the refugees overseas who are in situations where they can't earn money. A particular challenge for sponsors is that they must also set aside funds so that they are ready to meet their commitments to welcome and provide for the applicants on arrival in Canada (at an unknown date).

While waiting for resettlement to Canada, Tesfa is in a state of indefinite limbo. He is wholly dependent on the goodwill of friends and relatives for financial monthly support. His circle of friends and family members are finding this increasingly difficult to sustain.

The outbreak of war in Sudan in April 2023 has had a devastating impact on Sudanese Canadians who are mostly helpless as they follow the relentless news of death and destruction in their country of origin. Many have mobilized their energies and financial resources to respond to family and friends directly impacted. The Sudan Family-Based Humanitarian Pathway offered an opportunity for some to sponsor family members, but it requires an enormous financial commitment. Many report that the stress of supporting their relatives emotionally and financially while the application stalls is taking a heavy toll on them mentally, while also causing them economic difficulties.

6. Principle of equity

“Efficiently and promptly processing permanent resident applications supports the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 10—Reduced Inequalities—specifically target 10.3, which relates to equal opportunities and outcomes, and target 10.7, which relates to the orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people.” (OAG report, paragraph 9.9)

“People who apply to Canada’s permanent resident programs should benefit from the government’s efforts to improve processing speeds regardless of their country of citizenship or the office where their application is sent for processing.”

OAG report, paragraph 9.12

The persistence of disproportionately long processing times in Africa and chronic under-resourcing of visa offices in the region reflect systemic racism in Canada’s immigration program. Whatever the intentions of the decision-makers, the result is that Africans are treated inequitably.

This inequity was noted and lamented by many of the applicants, sponsors and family members who submitted case examples.

As a response to crisis, the Sudan Family-Based Humanitarian Pathway, which is small and slow, stands in sharp contrast to the measures to help Ukrainians fleeing the conflict in their country, which saw 300,000 people admitted to Canada in a two-year period (March 2022 to April 2024).¹³

¹³ IRCC, *Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel: Key figures*

According to research commissioned by IRCC, immigration officials also notice the inequities: some officials are reported to have observed or suspected examples of impacts of racism, including in “the speed with which applications from European countries are processed compared to other regions” and “differences between the efforts deployed to deal with refugee crises (most notably, the differences between how the recent Ukrainian refugee crisis was handled compared to others such as Syria, Afghanistan and Haiti)”.¹⁴

In its [Anti-Racism Value Statement](#), IRCC has recognized the presence of racism in Canada and within the organization. IRCC accepts its responsibility to “take meaningful and lasting action for our employees, our clients and Canadians” and resolves to “identify and address systemic discrimination and barriers within all policies, programs and initiatives.”

¹⁴ IRCC, [2022-23 Anti-Racism Employee Qualitative Research](#)

F PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF INEQUITIES IN PROCESSING

1. Inequity in resource allocation at visa offices

One of the key findings made by the Auditor General was that African visa offices were under-resourced, relative to offices in other regions. This explains, at least in part, the slow processing and limited communications.

The Auditor General reported that IRCC:

“continued to assign its sub-Saharan African offices some of the highest processing volumes for family and refugee programs, and it had no immediate plan to resolve the high levels of backlogged applications and longer wait times for these applicants”. (OAG report, paragraph 9.48)

To address the inadequate resources in Africa, IRCC created in 2022 a “refugee processing surge team”. The team is based in Canada and brings resettlement expertise “to provide surge capacity and supplementary processing support to missions in the Sub-Saharan Africa region.”¹⁵ Members of the surge team work on cases from Ottawa as well as making trips to support visa offices in Africa in processing resettlement applications.

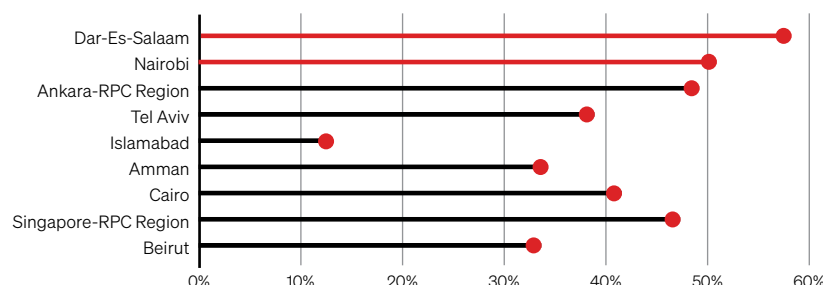
Has the creation of the surge team helped to address the disproportionately slow processing in Africa?

Recent processing times might seem to suggest not, since the Sub-Saharan African region had the longest times: 42 months for Government-Assisted Refugees, 47 months for Privately Sponsored Refugees.

However, processing times are backward-looking. When efforts are made to address a large backlog, processing times will go up, as the oldest cases are finalized.

To estimate future processing times, we can consider the age of inventories. If many of the applications have already been waiting a long time, that will be reflected in processing times when they finally arrive. Unfortunately, this is not encouraging for the future. Dar-Es-Salaam and Nairobi are the visa offices worldwide with the largest number of refugees waiting to be resettled. They are also the only offices with more than 50% of their inventory already over 24 months old.

Percentage of resettlement application inventory that is over 24 months old



Visa offices ordered by size of inventory

¹⁵ PACP – Staffing Plan for Processing Offices Abroad – December 5, 2023

In the context of significant budget cuts at IRCC, both as a result of the reduction in immigration levels announced October 2024, and as part of government-wide cuts, the CCR is concerned that efforts to re-balance resource allocations across visa offices will be compromised.¹⁶

However, in welcome news, CCR has been assured that the refugee processing surge team is permanent and has been protected from funding cuts, and that IRCC is committed to bringing African processing times in line with those in other regions. The regional breakdown of arrivals in 2024 of Privately Sponsored Refugees is strong evidence that IRCC is working hard to live up to this commitment: 17,445 Privately Sponsored Refugees, representing 59% of arrivals, were resettled from the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

2. Inadequate immigration levels

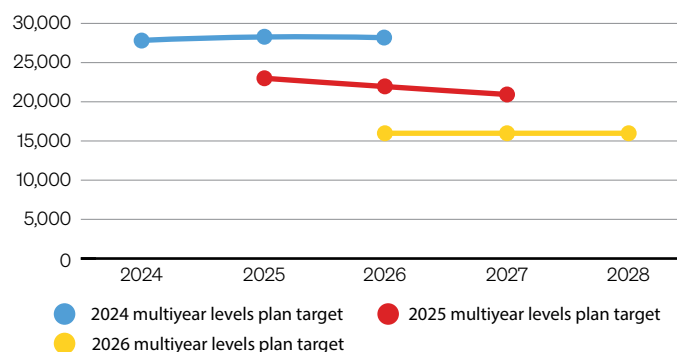
The Auditor General notes that the success of IRCC's efforts to clear backlogs of cases is linked to the immigration levels. There is little room for progress when the backlog greatly exceeds the immigration target for the coming years.

"For example, at the beginning of 2022, the number of applications to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program waiting to be processed was already three times higher than the number of refugees the department could admit that year, and it received 20,000 new applications." (OAG report, paragraph 9.30)

Since the Auditor General's report, the immigration levels have been dramatically cut still further, meaning it will take even longer to address the backlogged inventory in Africa.

In the context of large overall reductions in immigration levels announced in **October 2024** and again in **November 2025**, Privately Sponsored Refugees have been cut far more radically than other immigration categories. From 27,750 in 2024, the target was reduced to 23,000 in 2025 and will be only 16,000 in 2026 (and likely also for 2027 and 2028), representing a 42% cut from 2024 to 2026. In 2025 and 2026, 17,500 spaces for Privately Sponsored Refugees have been lost due to the cuts.

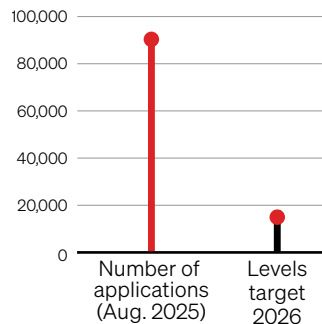
Privately sponsored refugees: planned levels



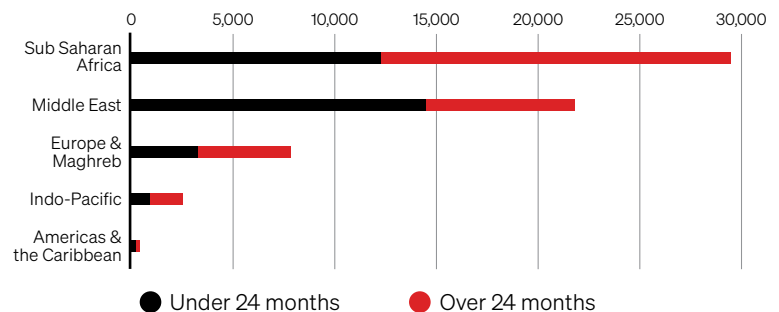
¹⁶ According to **Budget 2025**, IRCC needs to meet a target of 15% savings over three years.

The number of people waiting for their application to be processed is now nearly six times larger than the number of Privately Sponsored Refugees Canada is prepared to welcome in 2026.

Private sponsorship: applications pending compared to 2026 target



Processing Inventory at visa offices of Privately Sponsored Refugee applications (in persons), by region, as of 25 August 2025



This shortfall in the levels disproportionately affects refugees in Africa. Of the 61,880 people with a private sponsorship application awaiting finalization at one of the visa offices as of 25 August 2025, 48% were in the Sub-Saharan African region. Among these applications, of those that have been in process for two years or more, 56% are in the Sub-Saharan African region. The success of efforts by IRCC to address the backlog of African refugee cases is limited by the constraints of the levels targets.

The low immigration levels for refugees also limits IRCC's ability to implement measures adopted to respond to crises. As noted below (page 21), applicants under the Sudan Family-Based Humanitarian Pathway must expect to wait years because of the lack of levels space. IRCC had also committed to other measures, including giving priority processing to anyone with an active refugee application who was in Sudan when the crisis erupted April 2023. Two and a half years later, many such refugees are still waiting for processing, in part at least because of the low refugee targets.

Refugees from Eritrea, Samuel, Lily and their two children were sponsored to come to Canada while they were in Sudan. When the civil war broke out, the family had to move in search of safety. During this time, Lily gave birth to their third child. With the war expanding, they were forced to flee to South Sudan with their seven-week-old baby girl. Since they couldn't find security in South Sudan, they continued their journey and reached Uganda.

Samuel notes: "Even though Uganda is a stable country, we as refugees struggled to settle. Our children couldn't go to school for over nine months." They were hoping that Canada's special measures in response to the conflict in Sudan would lead to quicker processing, but they are still waiting.

3. Priority processing for Sudanese special measures?

In March 2024, then Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marc Miller [told the House of Commons Citizenship and Immigration Committee](#) that, in response to the crisis in Sudan: “We’ve prioritized permanent resident applications from the region within most family-based streams.” At that time, since the Sudan Family-Based Humanitarian Pathway had only just been launched, there were no arrivals yet, but, he said, “We expect them to land physically, we hope, later in the year or early in 2025.”

Expectations were therefore high that processing would take place on an expedited basis. Instead, it became clear that many arrivals would be significantly delayed. In September 2024, the *Globe and Mail* reported that some applicants were being told that they might not arrive until 2027 or 2028.¹⁷

The following month, CBC reported on a meeting between a Sudanese-Canadian advocacy group and Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marc Miller. One of the advocates, Samah Mahmoud, said: “We were promised by the Minister’s office that people will be here by the end of this year and latest by next spring, but now, he says only a handful of people will be coming this year. We were furious at this response because we know what they’ve done for other communities and the response was much faster.”¹⁸

The cause of the delays in the anticipated time of arrival became clear following the announcement of the [2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan](#). Applicants under the Sudanese family-based pathway fit under the line for Humanitarian & Compassionate applications, for which the government has set the target of just 21,200 persons for the combined three years 2025–2027. In addition to the approximately 7,000 individuals in the Sudanese special measures, there are applicants from the recent measures for Ukraine and Hong Kong also waiting for these few slots, as well as some 66,000 people waiting for a decision on a humanitarian and compassionate application.¹⁹

Thus, in 2024, the Canadian government opened a humanitarian pathway for Sudanese affected by the conflict, only to effectively decide later in the year, through the setting of the immigration levels, that most of those applicants would not in fact be able to arrive in Canada for the foreseeable future.

¹⁷ The *Globe and Mail*, [Family members dying in Sudan after lengthy delays in Canadian program](#), community says, 17 September 2024, Geoffrey York

¹⁸ CBC News, [London, Ont., residents applied months ago to bring family from warring Sudan to Canada. They’re still waiting](#), 24 October 2024, Isha Bhargava

¹⁹ As of 9 October 2025, IRCC reported about 49,400 people outside Quebec were waiting for a decision on a humanitarian and compassionate application, and about 17,000 inside Quebec. IRCC, [Check our current processing times](#).

The recently announced [levels plan for 2026–2028](#) offers no relief: over the next three years, the government is only setting aside a total of 13,800 spaces for applicants in measures to respond not only to the conflict in Sudan, but also to Ukraine and Hong Kong.

2026–2028 Levels	2026	2027	2028	Total
Humanitarian–other*	5,800	4,000	4,000	13,800

** admissions from Canada’s responses to the situations in Ukraine, Sudan, and Hong Kong*

As a result, applicants wait, while the brutal war continues in Sudan provoking a humanitarian disaster and the “world’s most damaging displacement crisis.”²⁰

4. Service standards and transparency on timelines

The Auditor General noted that there are no service standards for processing times for refugee applications. This contravenes Treasury Board directives that require service standards for all services. (OAG report, paragraph 9.22).

In response to the Auditor General’s report, IRCC committed to establish service standards for services that currently have none, including for resettled refugee immigration programs. Completion of the first phase was expected by the end of the 2024–25 fiscal year.²¹ While CCR has been consulted by IRCC on service standards for Privately Sponsored Refugees, we are not aware of any standards yet being set.

The Auditor General also recommended that “online information on expected processing times should be provided for all permanent resident applications and consider the volume and age of applications already in its inventories.” (OAG report, paragraph 9.26)

IRCC responded that “new methodologies have been developed in order to calculate forward-looking estimates of processing times. This will allow the department to provide clients with more accurate expected wait times, accounting for volume and inventory after clients have submitted their applications.” (OAG report, Recommendations and Responses)²²

The new methodologies have been implemented for some immigration categories—for example, for Protected Persons and Convention Refugees in Canada. At the time of writing, the new methodologies were not available for resettlement applicants, but were expected to be implemented soon.²³

20 UNHCR, [Two years of war in Sudan: a devastating combination of record displacement and dwindling aid](#)

21 OAG report, “Recommendations and Responses”. See also [PACP - Overview of the OAG Report Recommendations and IRCC Detailed Action Plan in Response to the OAG Report](#) - December 5, 2023, for more detailed action plan and timelines.

22 See also [PACP - Overview of the OAG Report Recommendations and IRCC Detailed Action Plan in Response to the OAG Report](#) - December 5, 2023.

23 <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html#immigration>. For Protected persons and convention refugees in Canada, the new method shows that a new applicant can expect to wait 104 months if in Quebec, and 99 months if outside Quebec, as of 9 October 2025. The number of applicants waiting for a decision is also shown.

5. Continued need for measures to address systemic racism and inequity

The Auditor General observed that “the department did not track or analyze application processing times or backlogs by country of citizenship” nor did its gender-based analysis (GBA) plus assessment “look for differential outcomes in processing times on the basis of gender or other intersecting identity factors, such as race or citizenship or country of residence.” (OAG report, paragraph 9.34)

IRCC has taken a number of important measures in recent years to combat racism.

Its [Anti-Racism Strategy 2.0](#) (2021–2024) contains a major focus on internal issues related to human resources, but also includes [pillars](#) on “Policy and Program Design” (addressing systemic racism and bias in IRCC’s policies and program designs) and “Service Delivery” (addressing systemic racism and bias in IRCC’s implementation of policies and programs with applicants and external partners).

Following on from the 2021–2024 strategy, IRCC promised a new approach, to be “driven by the launch of an Equity Strategy in 2025”. This new approach is intended in part to ensure programs and policies “are free from bias and discrimination”.²⁴ However, this Equity Strategy has not yet been published.

IRCC also created an Equity Branch within the department, which was expected to “strengthen its approach to equity, inclusion, GBA Plus and anti-racism efforts”.²⁵

However, in 2025 the Equity Branch was disbanded. Some of its functions have been re-assigned to the sector responsible for human resource management. It is therefore unclear what structures are in place to ensure that IRCC sustains effective efforts to address systemic racism in program delivery.

24 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, [Strategic Plan 2025 to 2027](#)

25 IRCC, Departmental Plan 2025–26 - [Gender-based analysis plus](#)

G NEED FOR SENSITIVITY TO REALITIES IN AFRICA

The situation in many countries in Africa is often extremely challenging, both for those displaced and going through immigration processing, and for immigration officials overseeing the processing. Refugees may need to navigate wars, humanitarian crises, restrictive policies towards refugees and situations of generalized insecurity.

When Canada's visa offices in Africa are under-resourced, visa officers are less able to respond effectively and in a timely manner to the evolving realities faced by refugee applicants. Officials need to be well-informed about, and sensitive to, the challenges faced by refugees.

1. Multiple displacement

Some refugees are displaced multiple times, including during processing of their immigration application. Many refugees in Sudan at the outbreak of civil war in April 2023 were forced to flee again, either within Sudan or to another country. Sometimes refugees move because the situation is too insecure or is unlivable, for example because of changing policies towards refugees. Some applicants move because they are not able to fulfill Canadian immigration requirements where they are.

Tekle fled Eritrea—first to Sudan, then to Ethiopia and he is in now Kenya, in Dadaab refugee camp. “My resettlement process was approved in 2020 while I was in Sudan, and I was scheduled to travel on April 17, 2023. Unfortunately, the conflict in Sudan broke out just two days before my departure, and I was unable to leave.”

Tekle is still waiting to travel to Canada. His medical results have expired. He needs the visa office to issue new medical instructions so he can do another medical.

2. Responding to urgent situations

Wherever they are in the world, refugees may experience situations that demand urgent action while they are being processed for resettlement to Canada—for example, if they are under imminent threat of being forcibly returned to the country where they fear persecution.

In such circumstances, applicants or their sponsors can submit to IRCC a request for urgent processing. Sponsors with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder organization have available to them a dedicated contact at IRCC to whom they can address a request for urgent processing. Other sponsors must use the general email address.²⁶

²⁶ Private sponsorship applications are submitted by Sponsorship Agreement Holders (organizations who have signed an agreement with the federal government), Groups of Five or Community Sponsors, or, for sponsors in Quebec, through a separate process administered by the Government of Quebec. IRCC, [How to sponsor a refugee](#)

While overall responsiveness is not what sponsors would like to see, the government itself implies that it is less responsive in some regions, including based on caseload. One sponsor received a communication that said:

“Please be aware IRCC offices abroad may require more time than others to review files and correspondence depending on case loads, regional circumstances and other factors outside of our control.”

This caveat was included in a response sent in August 2024 to a request for urgent process because the applicant had been abducted and tortured by agents of the country of origin. More than a year later, the person is still waiting for processing by the Nairobi visa office.

The visa offices with the two largest caseloads of Privately Sponsored Refugee and One Year Window applications are Nairobi and Dar-Es-Salaam.

3. Biometrics requirements: challenges in Sudan

For many Sudanese applicants, meeting Canada’s biometrics requirements creates tremendous hurdles. Following the outbreak of the conflict, there were no biometric services available in Sudan, and travelling to a place where the services were available could be perilous and expensive.

Sarah, her husband and their daughter applied in February 2024 for the Sudan family-based pathway. They hoped that Canada would open biometrics services in Sudan, but after waiting nine months, they decided to travel to the UAE believing it would expedite their application. With biometrics instructions issued by IRCC, the family crossed the country, including travelling through conflict areas, and arrived in the UAE. The journey was expensive. It was only made possible thanks to financial contributions from relatives around the world. To the horror of all, once they arrived in the UAE, IRCC withdrew the biometrics letter for the daughter stating it had been sent in error. After months of pleading, a new biometrics letter was issued in February 2025. Having completed the biometrics, the family is now waiting to be issued medical instructions. Meanwhile their UAE visas have expired.

More recently, thanks to concerted efforts, IRCC has made available biometrics services in Sudan.²⁷

4. Challenges meeting requirements

For many applicants, complying with all IRCC’s processing requirements is difficult or impossible. Important documents, such as birth and marriage certificates, may have been lost in the context of war or flight. Biometrics can only be done at offices designated by IRCC, which are not available in all countries. Applicants may need to travel long distances and cross borders, often at some personal risk. It may be difficult or impossible for them to get a visa to enter or remain in the third country.

²⁷ IRCC, [Canada resumes biometric collection services in Sudan](#), 24 July 2025

5. Delays related to security screening

Young children excepted, all applicants must pass a security screening, undertaken not by IRCC but by their “security partners”. While in most cases the screening is quick, there can be long delays if the relevant agencies decide that a more detailed assessment is necessary. This is particularly the case if an interview is required.

Delays for security screening are experienced by applicants around the world. Input received by the CCR suggest that applicants in Africa, however, are less likely than others to be told the reason for the delay.

The Auditor General report notes that there were security-related delays in about 5% of the applications in their sample (OAG report, paragraph 9.41). The percentage is not broken down by region. The report does not examine whether resource allocation by the security partners, notably officials sent on circuit for interviews, is equitably allocated between regions. This would affect how long some applicants wait for security screening.

Kehaz, his wife and four children have heard, through the intervention of a Member of Parliament, that their resettlement to Canada is delayed because the security assessment is “non-routine”. Kehaz served in the military as part of national service. Since it is considered a complex application, there is no processing time.

Unfortunately, in June 2025, Kehaz and his 17-year-old daughter were arrested and detained in Addis Ababa, where the family is living. The family is very worried that they will be deported to Eritrea, their country of origin (a common fate for Eritreans in detention in Ethiopia).

6. Rejections

Some decisions made by visa officers suggest a lack of understanding of the realities faced by applicants. If the applicant submits additional information, a negative decision might be overturned, but this adds to the delays in processing.

Last year Temesgen thought he and his wife were about to be resettled to Canada. They had passed the interview, completed medicals and his wife had been asked to submit her passport (she is Ethiopian, he is Eritrean). Instead, in October 2024, their application was refused on the grounds that Temesgen could access Ethiopian citizenship through his wife.

Temesgen points out that the refusal is not justified. Given the current conflict between the two countries, Eritreans are viewed with suspicion and treated as security concerns. It is extremely difficult if not impossible for Eritreans to be granted Ethiopian citizenship. He submitted his appeal within 30 days, as required, but there has been no further communication from the visa office. Meanwhile Temesgen’s wife’s passport remains at the Nairobi visa office, their medicals have expired, and, as an Eritrean in Ethiopia, Temesgen lives in constant fear of being arrested by the police.

7. Exit issues

In several countries, particularly in East Africa, there are exit controls that create barriers to departure for some refugees. The rules change frequently and are often opaque and applied in mysterious ways. Generally, being registered as a refugee is a requirement, but registration may not be possible.

IRCC makes significant efforts to facilitate exit for refugees being resettled, but the ultimate decision lies with the government of the country in question.

Applicants and their sponsors experience confusion and frustration, because of a lack of clear information. Some applicants who appear to qualify for an exit permit are frustrated because their case does not move forward. Sometimes it not clear why one person is able to leave, and another person who is similarly situated is not moving.

Recently, in some cases at least, it appears that applicants are being asked to prove they have the documents to qualify for an exit permit in order to do biometrics (a step that is usually early in the IRCC process). One sponsor reported applicants being unable to complete biometrics even though they had passports, which should be sufficient.

Luna is a young woman from Eritrea who had found temporary refuge in Sudan. When the war broke out in Sudan, she travelled to the Metema refugee camp in Ethiopia. Because of the dangerous conditions there, she relocated to Addis Ababa. There she was interviewed and approved for resettlement to Canada, but since she could not get an exit permit as she was not registered as an asylum seeker, and she could not register, she made the dangerous decision to travel to Uganda.

Her timing was unfortunate as, in January 2025, just as she arrived, Uganda suspended the issuance of asylum seeker documents. Her sponsor in Canada is hoping the Canadian government can negotiate with the Ugandan immigration authorities to allow Luna and others in her situation to leave.

H OTHER CATEGORIES AFFECTED (DR2 APPLICANTS, FAMILY CLASS)

While this report focuses on resettled refugees, similar concerns affect other categories. This includes the overseas family members of people who made a successful refugee claim in Canada (Protected Persons)—known as DR2 applicants. Family Class sponsorships of family members in Africa can also be slow and challenging, and in some cases affect refugee families.

Chimuka was accepted as a refugee in Canada in August 2022 and submitted his permanent residence application less than a month later. His spouse and two children in Zimbabwe were included in the application. Three years later, the family is still waiting to be reunited. Chimuka's spouse is experiencing neurological health concerns with limited access to health care. The prolonged separation and uncertainty not only delay access to appropriate treatment but also create immense emotional strain for the entire family.

Tixbit sponsored his wife and their child in June 2023, over two years ago, under the Family Class. His family members are refugees. The medicals were completed two years ago, but they are still waiting to be reunited. The wife writes: "This delay falls outside of the normal processing times but the visa office doesn't admit that. It has been very difficult for us as a family to remain separated for so long... Why is a family class application taking two years, is it because I am a refugee?"

I RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall recommendation

The CCR calls on the government to ensure equitable processing times for resettled refugees across regions, and in particular to end the consistently slow processing times in Africa, through clear policy commitments, service standards and adequate resourcing.

To achieve the above objective, and to ensure equity in processing in Africa, the CCR also calls on the government to:

- Set targets for equitable processing times by region, and track and report on them.
- Ensure transparency and accountability by publishing processing times by region and immigration category.
- Increase the immigration targets for Privately Sponsored Refugees to a level that will allow the large backlog to be absorbed.
- Adopt a transparent and equitable emergency response framework for humanitarian crises that upholds the principle of additionality.
- Provide timely and accessible information to applicants on the status of their case and in response to inquiries.
- Strengthen information training and information resources for visa officers to improve assessment of applicant's reasons for flight and current circumstances.
- Create an effective and accessible mechanism for all sponsors (not only Sponsorship Agreement Holders) to flag excessively delayed cases.
- Introduce flexible processing measures for applicants unable to meet requirements (such as medical examinations or biometrics) due to security conditions or displacement.