**Labour Mobility as a Complementary Pathway to Humanitarian Resettlement in Canada: A Quantitative Analysis**

**Abstract**

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As the global number of people in need of protection continues to rise, new responses are necessary to find solutions for the unprecedented numbers of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, and to encourage well-managed, regular, and orderly migration. Complementary pathways are being explored to help more refugees and displaced persons move from overstrained countries of first asylum to Western nations which have recognized the positive economic impact of immigration.

Contributing to the growing field of literature on complementary pathways, this paper aims to provide concrete data to demonstrate the case for economic labour mobility as a viable solution to the global refugee crisis. By comparing the needs of Canada to the capacities of asylum seekers abroad, it will show that gaps and shortages in the Canadian labour market could be filled by people in refugee circumstances outside of Canada. We will compare 1) the skills and training of those looking to seek refuge unable to find durable solutions in their host countries, and 2) the skills, labour gaps and demographic shortfalls in Canada.

The first data set will look at which the education, skills, work experience and language abilities that are prevalent in refuge seeking populations in Jordan, Lebanon, Kenya and Israel. The first three will be drawn from the Talent Beyond Boundaries’ (TBB) Talent Catalog, which has a total of 20,000 submissions from the three countries.[[1]](#footnote-1) The data set from Israel will be derived from Kav LaOved[[2]](#footnote-2) (The Worker’s Hotline), a workers rights organization in Tel Aviv which assists around 2,000 asylum seekers each year and records their field of employment.

As an indicator of labour market shortages in Canada, we look to occupations and fields set out in Canada’s current Federal and Provincial economic immigration programs that have been identified as in-demand for certain regions across the country. These economic pathways are illustrative of the labour gaps which communities and provinces cannot fill with Canadian workers alone and require the recruitment of international talent. They identify the need for more workers to meet growing immigration targets which aim to drive economic growth and address skills and demographic challenges across the country.

We expect to find that a significant number of people in refugee circumstances living abroad are immensely talented individuals whose lives and careers have been interrupted by war or persecution. Many will have university or college degrees, speak English or French, and have competitive experience with in-demand occupations in Canada. Currently, these individuals can only successfully immigrate to Canada through humanitarian immigration pathways such as government resettlement and private sponsorship, which are oversubscribed and limited. To situate these findings in the larger discussion on complementary pathways, we will provide a brief summary of the hurdles for asylum seekers to access Canada’s economic programs and the ability for higher retention rates outside of major metropolitan areas for refugees and newcomers with meaningful employment.

**Bios**

Veronica Wilson is an immigration lawyer and the founder of Roots Immigration Law in Toronto. She is currently a pro bono legal advisor to Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB), a non-profit dedicated to opening skilled migration pathways to refugees as a new solution to displacement. She has represented TBB candidates relocating to Canada and through this work has pioneered the emerging legal practice on access to Canada’s economic programs for applicants in displacement. Before opening Roots, Veronica led the Canadian permanent residence practice at a boutique immigration law firm in Toronto. She previously lived in South Korea for several years, where her voluntary advocacy work with North Korean refugees and human rights organizations inspired her to pursue a career in immigration law with a focus on social justice and inclusivity.

Dana is the Canada Director with Talent Beyond Boundaries, a non-profit dedicated to opening skilled migration pathways to refugees as a new solution to displacement. She previously worked with Independent Senator Ratna Omidvar, the Global Diversity Exchange at Ryerson University, Maytree, and the IOM Vietnam. She was co-founder of Canada's first dedicated political fact checker FactsCan, a founding Board Member of the Refugee Career Jumpstart Project, and co-author of Flight and Freedom: Stories of Escape to Canada. She has a Master's of Global Affairs and Bachelor of Journalism and Political Science. Dana has worked in Toronto, Ottawa, Hanoi, and Nairobi

1. Talent Beyond Boundaries is a non-profit organization working to open pathways for highly-skilled displaced persons/refugees to fill local labour shortages in Canada. <https://www.talentbeyondboundaries.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.kavlaoved.org.il/en/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)