



Resettlement Newsletter

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Issue IV

April 2006

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Networking among stakeholders key for successful Resettlement Observations of the visit to Finland

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Once again a welcome to the fourth issue of the CCME Resettlement Newsletter! This issue will have a focus on the Capacity Building Visit to Finland. In fact, a month ago a delegation coordinated by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe went to Finland on a study visit of the Refugees' Resettlement programme there, as part of the ongoing project on refugees' resettlement. It was an important opportunity to see with our own eyes what resettlement is all about. Eight people, including two of the Finnish organizers of the visit, were part of the delegation, they traveled by minibus and started their journey at the railway station of Helsinki directed to Jyväskylä.

Impressed by the weather, generally -15° but one morning the delegation experienced -28°, and by the amount of untouched snow the first thoughts of the delegation went to the refugees, especially to those who have been resettled in Finland coming from Africa, for example: how amazing and different must be life in this part of the world!

The delegation visited Jyväskylä, Tampere, Lahti, and Helsinki and in that short period of time tried to combine visits to the Municipality and local authorities with the ones with NGOs and Churches working in the migration field, taking care of language and cultural courses. Of course, an important part of the study visit was the meeting with the refugees themselves.

What do they think about resettlement? How do they describe the life in Finland and the integration process? You will have the chance to read in the Newsletter the story of Samuel, a Sudanese resettled in Finland. The delegation met different refugees, they heard the experience of young afghans who learnt the language quickly and see themselves perfectly integrated into the Finnish society; they heard the problems of women in getting a job or learning the language.

The delegation believes that, although Finland doesn't have a long immigration history, with its 750 resettled refugees per year and its good practices, it could be a model for other European countries. One of the delegation's critical views was that they reckoned that what is missing is a more regular sharing of information and good practices among the Municipalities in Finland.

In this issue of the Newsletter you will find a comprehensive report of the Capacity building visit to Finland and the example of an integration project held by the Finnish Red Cross.

The capacity Building Visit to Finland will be followed by the one in North America at the end of April and the one in Kenya in the first half of June. Both visits will be reported on in the next issues of the Resettlement Newsletter.

Thank you very much for your comments and support that are really helpful and more than welcome. Once again, take your time and let the Newsletter speak for itself.

Enjoy the reading!

Best regards,

Alessia Passarelli
Communication Intern of
Refugee Resettlement Project



(Photo: Penny Forester)

"For I was a stranger, and you welcomed me."

Matthew

Refugees' Voices: Nagina (Afghanistan refugee resettled to Baltimore):

"Sometimes I worry that I forget the place I come from, because all my friends are over there. And my uncle, and everything is over there. My heart is over there. Yeah. It is my country."

In <http://www.theirc.org/photoessays/index.cfm?essayID=11&thisstartrow=1>

Resettlement is a transfer of refugees from a country of first asylum where they cannot stay to a third one where they can re-build their life.

Capacity Building visit to Finland

6-11 March 2006

A six-member CCME delegation visited Finland to learn from the Finnish experience in reception and integration of resettled refugees. The delegation, from the 6th to 10th of March 2006, visited various projects and NGOs, and also met with authorities and resettled refugees in four cities: Jyväskylä, Tampere, Lahti and Helsinki. On the last day of the visit the delegation held a panel discussion, in Helsinki, with the main actors in the resettlement process.

The Finnish government, after the Pinochet coup in 1973, brought a total of 182 Chilean refugees to Finland. In 1979 and 1980, 115 Vietnamese/Indochina refugees who ones were dubbed the "boat people" were received from Malaysia. These experiences, one could say, have lead Finland to be one of the four (Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands) European traditional countries of resettlement. The ministry of Labour is involved in the task of selection, reception and integration of resettled refugees. Directorate of Immigration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are also the main authorities administering immigration and refugee issues.

Finland accepts persons defined as refugees by UNHCR, and other foreigners who are in need of international protection. Finland takes resettlement just as a humanitarian policy, not as labour migration. Therefore, it receives small and balanced refugee communities that include most vulnerable groups; children, single mothers, elderly and those in need of medical help and if possible peer support persons. There are 432 mu-

nicipalities in Finland, the range in size of population being 132 (Sottunga, an Island) and 559 716 (Helsinki). Municipalities are basic administrative units that provide quite comprehensive social service. Municipalities in Finland are legally autonomous and answerable only to the voters. Municipalities have the prerogative of accepting or turning down requests made by Ministry of Labour to receive and resettle refu-

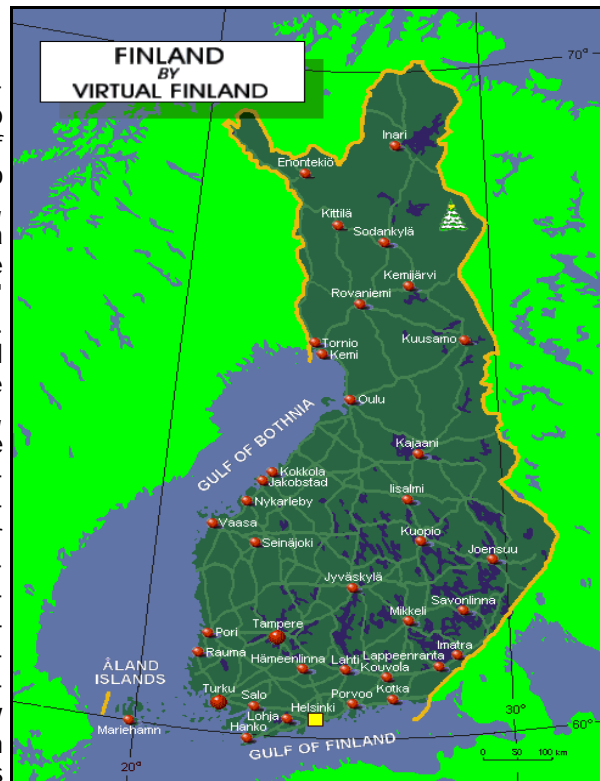
Municipalities and employment offices have a primary role in reception and integration of refugees. Before the arrival of quota refugees Municipalities arrange apartments furnished with basic materials, and on their first few days in Finland the social workers would advise refugees how they need to go about their daily lives. According to the integration act, refugees will remain clients of the municipalities and employment offices for their first three years with special rights and benefits. Municipalities are required to draw up an integration plan for those who are outside the labour market and lived in Finland for less than three years.

In the 1990s Iranian and Iraqi refugees were the major groups resettled in Finland. From 1995 to 2005 Finland has resettled 6929 refugees from different parts of the world. The three biggest nationalities accepted for resettlement from 2000 onwards are Afghans, Sudanese and Iranians.

The delegation has been able to witness a common practice in Jyväskylä, Tampere and Lahti: in their effort to promote social and economic integration of refugees the stakeholders have built a network that comes together to deal with all aspects of the refugees' lives; the network involves mainly the municipality, employment office, parishes, NGOs, immigrants, schools, projects, voluntary workers and private persons.

Projects like Palapeli, in Jyväskylä; Kotopolku, in Tampere; and Latu, in Lahti supplement the activities of municipalities and employment offices in promoting the integration of refugees. These projects give literacy classes, basic Finnish language courses, basic computing and also social and cultural orientations. Those who acquired sufficient Finnish language skill would be di-

(Continued on page 3)



The delegation started from Helsinki travelling to Jyväskylä, going down to Tampere, visiting Lahti and concluding the study in Helsinki.

nees. The Employment and Economic Development Centres, which is under Ministry of Labour, compensates municipalities for expenses that are incurred by hosting refugees; the payment is made per head and lasts for three years.

rected to continue their studies or look for apprenticeship training and jobs. Moreover, these projects give personal guidance and assistance to refugees to draw up their individual plan of integration.

The Finnish Red Cross, Finnish Refugee Council and churches are some of the visible actors in immigrant and refugee works. The Finnish Red Cross in addition to its supporting role in the integration of immigrants and promoting tolerance, it does practical arrangements for family reunification and also receives quota refugees at the airport. The Finnish Refugee council, among other activities, locally helps refugees by establishing peer groups, disseminates information about refugees to boost knowledge on the background and circumstances of refugees in Finland and in the world; it also annually awards the Refugee Woman of the Year prize on International Women's Day. Individual citizens, volunteers, as well contribute their share to enhance the social participation of refugees through NGOs, parishes and projects; the men's group in Lahti could be mentioned here as an example. The men's



Travelling from Jyväskylä to Tampere

group organizes excursions and other leisure activities that could bring Finns and refugees together.

The delegation in its five-day visit has witnessed the importance of networking among the various stakeholders, and also the growing and crucial role being played by the third sector to help refugees find their places in society. The delegation from its discussions with resettled refugees, project leaders and authorities, has learned that Language course should be well fi-

nanced and effectively organized in such a way that it is continuously available until refugees attain basic language skills of the host society, as language is the first pillar of social and economic integration.

Berhanu Yeteshaw

Project Assistant

One of the organizer of the CBV to Finland

Members of the delegation:

- Doris Peschke, General Secretary of CCME
- Alessia Passarelli, Communication Project, CCME
- Alexandra Gröller, Diakonie/RS, Austria
- Cristian Popescu, SOZE, Czech Republic
- Federica Brizi, FCEI/SRM, Italy
- Geesje Werkman, PKN, The Netherlands

„What do you think about the Capacity Building Visit to Finland?“ The opinion of the delegates

How would you describe the refugees' resettlement programme in Finland?

- Very well organised, perhaps a bit paternalistic.
- It is a good thing that Finland takes 750 refugees by resettlement. And then it is great that they take those who are in the most vulnerable situations, what means most of them are women with children.

According to you, which is the most interesting aspect of RR in Finland?

- The responsibility of the municipalities in the programme.
- There are several good programmes for integration and I think it is wise that municipalities are involved in this. But, and I cannot deny that there are some butts. Learning Finnish is difficult, so everybody told us. But then it is really wrong that the courses sometimes stop and the refugees must wait some

months to continue the lessons. The refugees should learn proper Finnish within three years, that time is too short I think.

How could you report this experience in your own country?

- Through meetings with the government and local authorities, NGOs and other interested actors.
- I will report the way Finland receipt the refugees in the coming half year, so that we can have a look at the learning points for the Netherlands. I will report to the Refugee counsel in the Netherlands.

Why is it so important implementing RR programme in Europe?

- Because this is another possibility for refugees to get protection in Europe.

Which advice would you give to the North America delegation?

- To compare the USA and Canada experiences in order to get new inputs for future European programmes.
- Giving people in legal and physical protection needs, first of all vulnerable groups, like survivors of violence and torture, women-at-risk, children and adolescents and older refugees the possibility of a secure and promising future is the most important argument for implementing refugee-resettlement-programmes in Europe. First of all these people do not have the chance to survive in refugee camps in the first countries of asylum in a mentally and physically well way.

By Alessia Passarelli

Interview with Samuel Nhialluak Resettled Refugee to Finland

Samuel Nhialluak lives in Vuolijoki a small village near Kajaani, south of Oulu.

How long have you been living in Finland? Would you like to describe your experience?

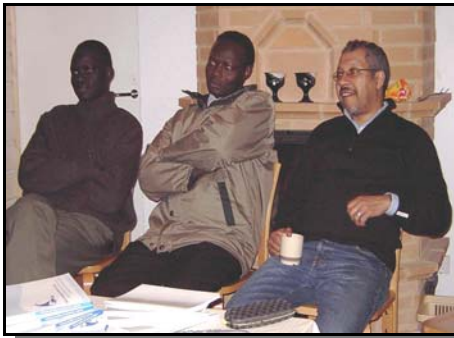
I have been living in Finland for one year and a half. I left Sudan in the year 2001, I went to Egypt, I stayed in Egypt for four months then I went to Lebanon and I stayed there for 2 years. After that I came to Finland it was the year 2004. It was a very long journey. We came actually during the summer, and in summer in Finland there is no

night, the day is long, so we arrived at one o'clock in the night and there was still light we couldn't sleep...that was the difficult part of it. My feeling as soon as I arrived was quite good, but with some big questions: why it is 10 o'clock at night and the sun is still there? Of course we had been told about that but we didn't think the picture would have been really like this...we thought maybe it's just one or two days but in reality it was like that the all summer. First feeling were really positive...but then of course we came at summer and there was no activities, no schools, no anything...we did our papers, resident permit and then we had to wait from June to September when we had the first cultural orientation. Nevertheless we enjoyed that summer.

As you know resettlement has various stages and it begins with the selection: how was the selection process?

The selection was really an important step to start with, because we were

set for resettlement in another country but we didn't know which country, it would have been any country, but we were selected to be resettled in Finland that was something important to think about Finland, study about Finland, to read about Finland and also to be convinced whether to come here or not. When they said "Finland" I didn't know anything about Finland



Discussing integration in Jyväskylä

at all. I thought I knew where Finland is on the map but I didn't know anything about it and, moreover, I didn't know anyone in Finland. Then we had a cultural orientation, which lasted three days. It was

good but three days it's quite a short time. I'm talking about the one we did in Lebanon not the one here in Finland that was longer, up to 6 months. In Finland we had language and orientation courses.

How was the first contact with the Finnish community?

Everybody was expecting us to come, but the meeting with the Finnish community was very difficult, first of all we didn't know the language and they didn't know ours. Few people spoke English and even them, I think, they were told not to speak English with us so we could learn the language quickly. In few days, we had to know how to introduce ourselves, how to say thanks, how to greet during the morning, how to greet during the day and so on...we had to learn that quickly because this was part of the daily relationship with other people and in this way we opened some kind of connection with this other people...the positive thing is that if they see that you are interested to

learn the language they encourage you. It was difficult but after all it was for our benefit, in fact, we learnt the language quickly and in few months before the language courses started we were able to introduce ourselves, to buy things by ourselves, unfortunately it doesn't happen everywhere.

Do you consider yourself integrated into the Finnish society?

Well in a process of being integrated. For me integration is to find your own place in the society. You can feel part of the society when you understand how people live, their standard of life, and their culture. At the same time a crucial point is how they can also understand how we think and what our culture is about. I see integration as a two-ways process. In some places we have the "family' friends", people whom you can spend time with: women can learn what women do in Finland and the same happens for men. I think this is the best way for integration, learning from the daily life. Nevertheless it's something that shouldn't be planned but it should be automatic. Unlikely this does not happen everywhere.

Which are the main problems faced by Sudanese in Finland?

You know, the main problem it's resettlement itself. Resettlement takes a long time and it has many parts. It's a two-ways-responsibility: the government and the local authorities from one side and us from the other.

Understanding the life in this part of the world and knowing how to balance between our own experience and the new life in this society it's a problem as well. We have the problem of the winter, the language. Sometimes you have the problem feeling that you are not welcomed in some places. You feel that people are not happy that we are here; just like that, even if they don't say anything but you can feel it from how they look at us. It takes time for us to think we are really at home.

Another problem, but it depends on each family, is how to live our lives

Resettlement is not an alternative to the spontaneous asylum seeking

here in Finland as family: wife, husband, children, how to divide responsibilities and how to do things correctly and what does it mean for a person to be free, what does freedom mean here...as this concept of freedom has created many problems among Sudanese here. It is true, the life we had before it was different. Traditionally there are responsibilities that people know that are for men and some responsibilities that people know are for women, but now here is different and everything should be done together. Personally I think we should find a way in the middle. In Sudan most of

the men, are the ones who work while women take care of the houses and children. So the men keep money and they are responsible for the family but here in Finland it's different women work, they want to have different bank accounts and men think that maybe there are planning to get a divorce, they don't understand why their wife would like to have a separate bank account. This is just an example. For me we should try to find the right balance. It's not bad or negative to have different bank account. I think that understanding it's the only solution to overcome and solve problems.

What do you think about resettlement?

I would say that is good to give to other people in need the opportunity to live another kind of life somewhere else, in a peaceful place. The kind of resettlement we have in Finland it's a good one, because it's done by the authorities/official and in this way everybody is equal, everybody has the

Interview with Samuel Nhialluak

Led by Alessia Passarelli

Refugees and Migration Work

Finnish Red Cross

The Finnish Red Cross (FRC) works nation wide to support the integration of immigrants. There are co-ordinators at FRC headquarters, some key persons in different districts offices and projects and volunteers in local branches to provide services and opportunities for immigrants.

In its operational capacity, FRC receives all the refugees resettled yearly to Finland upon their arrival in Finland, including informing the local authorities of the arriving refugees. The Finnish Red Cross also takes care of the travel arrangements in the refugee family reunification process. The FRC is prepared to accommodate asylum seekers if larger groups suddenly arrive in Finland. It maintains two out of the 15 reception centres for asylum seekers in Finland and also two group homes for unaccompanied minors.

Advocating for a humanitarian and human rights based refugee and migration policy is a crucial element in the work of the Finnish Red Cross. We actively follow the policy developments especially in Finland and the EU and co-operate with both Red Cross Na-

tional Societies and refugee NGOs in Europe. FRC is a member of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

FRC MULTICULTURAL WORK

Supporting the integration of newly arrived immigrants, especially refugees, and promoting an open dialogue of challenges related to building a multicultural society are one of the core activities of the FRC.

One part of this work is to strengthen co-operation with immigrant associations and Finnish NGOs. The Finnish Red Cross also aims to get immigrants to become active members and volunteers in the Red Cross. Volunteer work plays an important role in integration by strengthening the personal and social contacts and skills of immigrants. A new challenge is to develop methods and practical tools for the implementation of the personal integration plans of the newcomers which are a responsibility of the local authorities. Here the role

of NGOs could be much stronger.

In practise the FRC multicultural work can be, e.g. supporting immigrant associations, organising trainings and seminars, counselling, developing tools and methods, supporting volunteers, organising camps, cultural clubs and awareness campaigns.

THE KOTOPOLKU PROJECT

The FRC Kotopolku Project began in April 2001 with the objective of promoting the integration of immigrants. Of its five employees, the project manager is originally Finnish but the integration co-ordinators come from different cultural backgrounds. The working languages of the team are Russian, Kurdish, Arabic, English and Finnish. The multiethnic team has proved very efficient in many perspectives. It serves different ethnic groups with culture sensitive working methods and provides the originally Finnish partners with new ideas.

The Kotopolku Project works nation wide. The most important partners of the project are immigrant cultural associations, other NGO's, social, cultural and youth offices in different municipalities, employment offices and the regional Employment and Economic Development Centres. Working together with various different partners in close cooperation is a characteristic of the Kotopolku Project.



Multicultural Fashion show, 21st March. The Day against Racism (photo Hilma Bukareva, FRC).

The Kotopolku Project staff collect and provide information about Finnish society, for example, housing, employment, hobbies and free time activities, and education. They organise courses and small group activities to strengthen the integration process of immigrants, offer and search for practical work training placements from other third sector organisations and also assist immigrants in forming their own associations and groups. The main objective is to promote integration of immigrants.

In the Kotopolku Project people are encouraged to act on their own initiative in the integration process. The project supports cultural activities e.g. theatre workshops, cultural celebrations and training.

The project searches also for various third sector organisations to collaborate with immigrants. Many organisations could offer more voluntary work opportunities, from which immigrants could learn more about Finnish society and make new

contacts with Finns. There is also a very strong network fighting against racism and organizing programmes for the special Action week against racism in March in Pirkanmaa area.

The project provides different trainings and workshops to the officials and other employees and volunteers who work with the immigrants. There are some new training methods developed in the project. E.g. the "Refugee Path" is a Socio Drama which gives refugee workers and students an opportunity to experience and feel what it can be to flee from ones own country. The Integration Time Line is a visual method to study a person's integration process in a new country.

After five years of work, the Kotopolku Project is still going strong with new challenges ahead.. There is always lots of work in making new methods and initiatives familiar to co-operative partners. Informing and marketing are the key words of the Kotopolku in

the year of 2006.

Social integration - becoming a full member of the new society - is a long process for an individual. The immigrant needs not only to take an initiative, but also to find a cultural identity in Finland. From people who work with immigrants, it requires good cooperation with the authorities, other organisations and immigrants. Common dialogue is needed for creating new, better ways of supporting integration. In our common world the main question is in what kind of society we really want to live in? An open and tolerant society can slowly grow towards mutuality and multiculturalism.

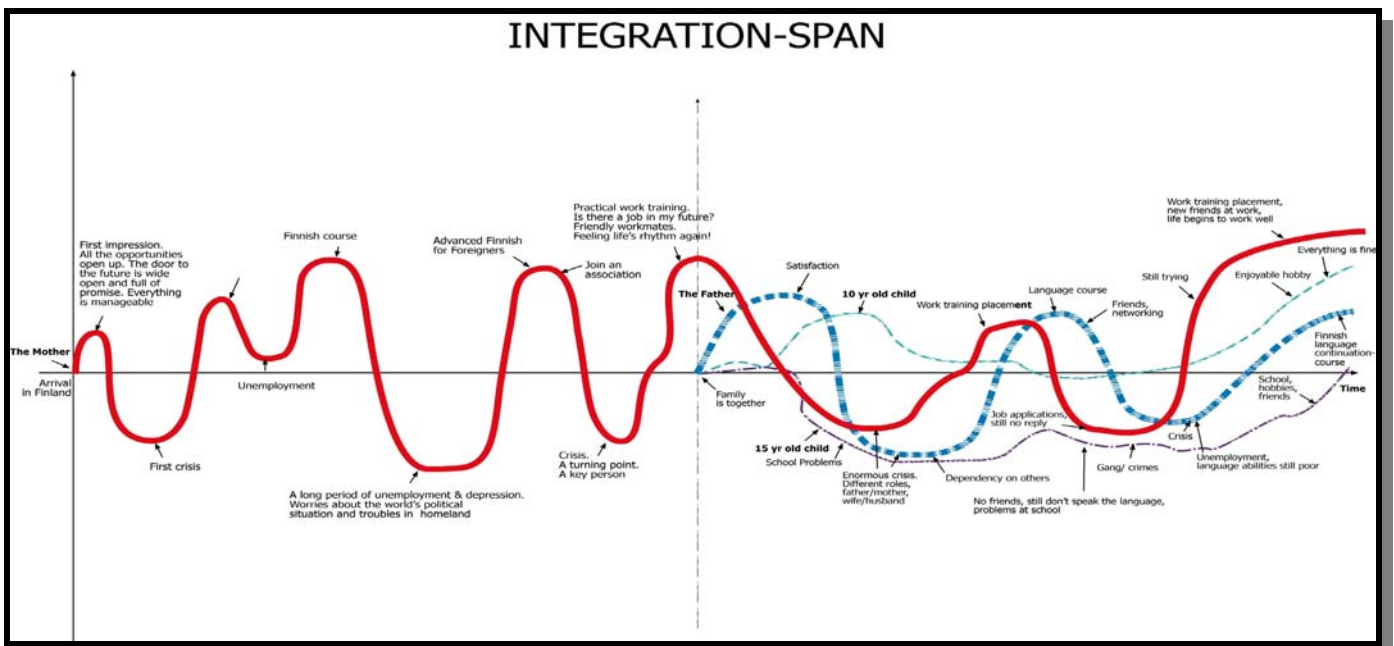
Johanna Matikainen

Project Manager

Finnish Red Cross

Kotopolku Project

www.kotopolku.redcross.fi



The integration Time-Line illustrates an immigrant's family integration as a process in which good and bad experiences exist. The purpose of the integration Time-line is to help the immigrant from his or her own experiences and assist him or her in creating better life strategies in within the new society. Making one's own time line is intended to encourage immigrants to be actively involved in their own lives and to make long term plans and create their own vision for the future. Finnish Red Cross, Kotopolku Project

Resettlement is not the refugees' return to their own countries



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

Some criticism on Resettlement

CCME considers Resettlement an important and complementary tool of international protection for people in need. CCME is aware of the debate which is going on among some organizations across Europe. The risk of using resettlement to stop the spontaneous arrival of the asylum seekers is real; nevertheless CCME reckons that for some refugees it's the only chance to re-build their life safely. CCME is promoting Refugees Resettlement in Europe as one of three durable solutions for refugees. CCME also considers that one of the roles of the NGOs, at various stages of Resettlement, is to monitor

the opera of the Governments and to avoid the idea of adopting resettlement as an alternative to the right of asylum.

For your information these are the organizations who raised the concern on resettlement:

AEDH European Association for the protection of Human Rights

APDHA Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía, Spain

AMDH Association Marocaine des Droits Humains, Morocco

ARCI, Italy

GISTI Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés, France

CCME

Rue Joseph II, 174

B-1000 Brussels

Belgium

Tel. +32 2 234 68 40;

Fax +32 2 231 14 13

Info@ccme.be

Editor: Alessia Passarelli

Email: alessia.passarelli@ccme.be

Coming soon...

Capacity Building visit to:

North America

22nd - 29th of April

Kenya

8th—13th of June

As part of the project

"Understanding resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!"

1) What is CCME?

CCME is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. The aim of CCME is to develop in the churches throughout Europe a due sense of responsibility towards the situation of migrants, refugees and minority ethnic people.

Founded in 1964, CCME is an organization of churches and ecumenical councils as well as churches related agencies; its members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, diaconal agencies and Councils of Churches in presently 16 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

CCME is active in the Platform of NGOs on Migration and Asylum hosted by UNHCR in Brussels.

CCME promotes awareness-raising on issue of racism and xenophobia within the churches and in society, it conducts studies of the situation of migrants, refugees and minority ethnic people at local, national and international level.

2) What is "Resettlement in practice"?

The project "Resettlement in practice" takes up the conclusions of the study process and consultation "Make Resettlement Work" which CCME organized in 2003-2004 and enhances/improves the network created between governmental institutions, UNHCR, Churches and NGOs. Reactions and discussions during that study process indicated that among many relevant actors in the field of refugee protection there was no clear understanding of what resettlement should entail.

3) What is Refugee Resettlement?

It's one of the 3 traditional durable solutions for refugees, along with the local integration in the country of asylum and repatriation. Basically, it's a transfer of refugees from their country of first asylum to a third country that has agreed to admit them with a long term or permanent resident status. Resettlement provides protection for refugees whose safety is immediately at risk and it is a tool of international protection in a context of burden sharing among states.

4) What Resettlement is not...

Resettlement is not the same as seeking refugee status through the asylum system, nor is it a more legal process for accessing asylum rights and can never substitute a spontaneous request of asylum.

Resettlement is not synonymous with "Temporary protection" classifications.

Resettlement cannot become a system of profiling refugees in accordance to their nationality or religion in order to create more or less valuable categories of refugees. Resettlement is based exclusively on the protection needs of the refugees.

5) Which are the Resettlement countries?

The countries that actually host resettlement programs are the following: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and USA. Those countries are called the "traditional ones", but next to them there are also new partners such as Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Island, Ireland, Spain and UK.

The project "Understanding Resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!" is funded by the European Refugee Fund of the European Commission.

The views expressed and information provided by the project and partners involved do not necessarily reflect the point of view of and do in no way fall under the responsibility of the European Commission.