



Resettlement Newsletter

Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe

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Inside this issue:

<i>Rolling out the red carpet—Germany: Save me campaigning for resettlement—from the grassroots</i>	1
<i>Strategic use of resettlement—a Danish experience</i>	4
<i>ASPIRE—towards more resettlement !</i>	6
<i>Palestinian refugees: trapped on the Syria-FAQs....</i>	7
	8

For I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.

Matthew 25:35b



Campaigning for resettlement : public awareness activity on the Marienplatz, Munich

A first step... not more, not less Thoughts on the recent JHA Council conclusions

Welcome the new volume of CCME' s Resettlement Newsletter!!!

...once again we will keep you updated for the next year on news regarding resettlement towards the member states of the European Union.

Our edition comes shortly after an important decision on resettlement of the EU Justice & Home Affairs Council: on 27th November the Council agreed that around 10.000 of the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees should be resettled from Jordan and Syria to the EU in a coordinated effort of the EU member states. Many would say that 10.000 is a very small number, compared with the tens of thousands of Iraqis for whom resettlement remains the only protection option, and it can be noted that this decision is long overdue. However, it signals the first coordinated resettlement effort of the EU for almost a decade. Member states will now need to deliver on the promise made, and in giving those resettled a lasting perspective to rebuild lives.

CCME hopes that the Council decision could also become a signal for the EU's willingness to take a bigger share in international refugee protection in the future. In its annual projection for 2009, UNHCR estimates that 560.000 refugees globally are in need for resettlement—a huge challenge for the international community and the EU.

In this edition, see how efforts of an established resettlement can be used "strategically" (p. 4), learn about advocacy to start resettlement (p 1-3) and the situation of those most in need of resettlement (p. 7)

Enjoy the reading!

Best regards and a blessed advent time

Torsten Moritz

Rolling out the red carpet

Germany: Save me! Campaigning for resettlement from the grassroots

A report from Bavaria by Stephan Dünwald

In autumn 2007, the Bavarian Refugee Council at Munich and the Augsburg Refugee Council decided to start a campaign for a resettlement program in Germany. The idea was born out of a discussion about "Fortress Europe", and opening a new door for refugees via resettlement seemed to us a good opportunity to make a fresh input into an almost blocked discussion about asylum in Germany. It was obvious that we could not start a Germany-wide campaign. And, intending more a discussion about asylum and refugees in society than really a German resettlement programme, we wanted to start right at the bottom. We learned about the efforts of UNHCR and both churches (catholic and protestant) to lobby for resettlement on the parliamentary level, and all agreed that it is time to start a broader campaign.

Within the Bavarian Refugee Council we decided to begin with a campaign at Munich. The city council has been known to us as quite liberal in refugee matters, and we hoped to gather a couple of relevant institutions supporting the campaign.

(continued on page 2)

Rolling out the red carpet....

This worked out quite well, as the well established Munich theatre "Münchner Kammerspiele" was one of our main partners, together with eventually more than thirty NGOs that gave more or less practical support to the campaign.

Our goals were quite simple. We wanted to get a positive decision of the city council to offer resettlement places for 850 refugees, and we wanted to gather 850 persons that are willing to act as "godparents" for these refugees. We chose the (rather arbitrary) number of 850, because Munich this year was celebrating its 850th birthday.

The means we could and wanted to use were limited. Together with the Münchner Kammerspiele we organised some public events, beginning with a provoking quiz show around the topics European borders, refugees, and German asylum law, then a public debate with the party leaders of the Munich city council and UNHCR, finally a party. We had some 50.000 postcards printed and distributed to make the campaign known, and at the heart of the campaign we established a website

(www.save-me-muenchen.de) for presenting the campaign and its supporters and for spreading information. Here, each godfather (or -mother) could subscribe in public, together with a photo, age, profession, and the reason why he/she is supporting the campaign.

Apart from pushing forward the Munich campaign, we introduced it to other refugee councils in Germany and to the umbrella organisation Pro Asyl. The idea was broadly welcomed among NGOs and we became quite engaged presenting the campaign in other German cities. Pro Asyl decided to coordinate a Germany wide campaign following the developed pattern, and other major cities in Germany decided to start their own local campaigns (see also www.save-me-kampagne.de). About at the same time a discussion, initiated by the churches and UNHCR, came up on resettlement of Iraqi refugees, underlining the importance and necessity of our campaign.

Step by step the Munich campaign found its shape. We engaged in a critical debate with other activists criticising the limited goals and the known difficulties of resettlement

programs, but the campaign was broadly accepted. We felt a bit under pressure, as the Munich campaign was linked to elections of a new city council in spring and to the anniversary festivities in early summer, but, though many activities and events were improvised at short time, the project went smoothly ahead. We hardly had time to do extensive lobbying, but the broad local platform guaranteed that within short the campaign was broadly known. The reactions were very positive. The subscribers on the website differed broadly regarding age, profession, and motivation to support the campaign, but they all agreed on the need for a renewed and broader protection for refugees and committed themselves to practical integration and assistance to arrived refugees. In the end, we surpassed our goal with more than 945 godparents for the campaign on our webpage, and the city council decided that there is a need for a better refugee protection, that the major of Munich shall promote the installation of a German resettlement scheme, and that Munich is willing to receive and integrate refugees arriving within such a program.

With these results the Munich campaign was not only a good kick-off for similar projects in other German cities, but the gathered materials, texts and website facilities as well as the experiences we made were made available to the other initiatives. We give support on how to organise the campaign and to manage the website-program, further, more elaborated materials are being produced by Pro Asyl. More than a dozen cities already started their own campaigns, many others are preparing for it.

Resuming the results, the cam-

„Quiz show“ on European border at the Munich Kammerspiele



Rolling out the red carpet...**„Save me“ visualised: Marienplatz Munich**

campaign is successful first of all because of its impact on activating support for refugees and putting the theme on the agenda. It becomes clear that commitment and engagement for refugees is widely spread and much higher on the level of civil society than on the level of politics.

It might be doubted that the message reaches the relevant body of German policy makers, but, with this campaign, we had a very prompt reaction from the Bavarian ministry of interior, even before the campaign officially started. The ministry's press release stated that everything is okay with Bavarian and German refugee policy, and that there is no need for resettlement and other improvements. Meanwhile, the ministry changed its position and demands the reception of Iraqi refugees. This is still not the reaction we are aiming at, but nonetheless it marks a crucial change in attitudes.

The campaign was not the standard of criticism and opposition against refugee policy the Bavar-

ian Refugee Council is used to. Rather, it pronounces asylum and refugees in a positive and activating way. So, on one hand it was the most conservative campaign the BFR ever run, on the other hand it proved to be the right campaign to restart a discussion about the fate of asylum and refugees, opening a way forward.

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For the national campaign see:

<http://www.save-me-kampagne.de/index.html>

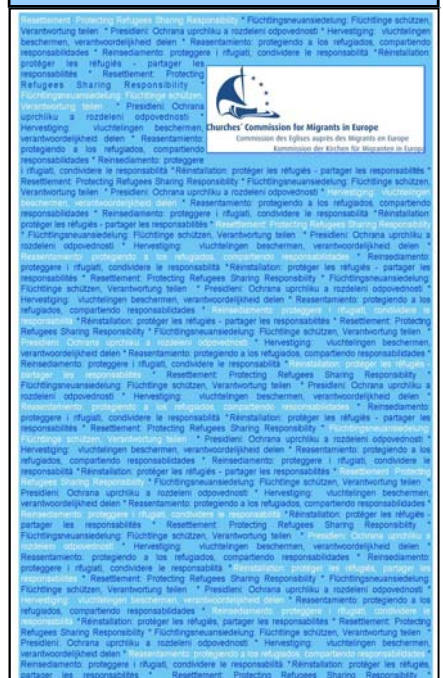
CCME resettlement factsheets

As a response to the need to explain resettlement in an easily digestible format, CCME has produced a series of „resettlement factsheets“: The factsheets contain concise information on various aspects of resettlement :

- what is resettlement
- what is Europe's role in resettlement
- who are the actors in resettlement
- what are the different steps of resettlement
- the personal story behind resettlement

Printed copies are still available in English, French and German, (5 A4 pages per language, each printed on both sides).

Pdf.-files with the Czech, Dutch, Italian and Spanish translations are also available. (see: <http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html>; enquiries at: info@ccme.be)



Strategic use of resettlement— a Danish experience

by Vagn Klim Larsen and Anne La Cour Vaagen

The Agenda for Protection, endorsed by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioners' Programme in 2002 recognises the need to expand resettlement opportunities and to use resettlement more strategically with the purpose of achieving durable solutions for more refugees.

The strategic use of resettlement has played an important role in the context of UNHCR's Convention Plus Initiative in 2004, which has aimed to provide comprehensive solutions to refugee situations. The idea of working with 'strategic use of resettlement' has been to involve all parties in designing comprehensive multilateral agreements that fit the specific situation: UNHCR, refugee hosting countries, resettlement countries, countries of origin, and other relevant resettlement partners.

During the discussions among resettlement countries of how to design comprehensive agreements under the term 'strategic use of resettlement' it was pointed out that resettlement countries should consider developing selection criteria to provide themselves with the flexibility to resettle persons of concern to UNHCR, who may not fall within the terms of the 1951 Convention.

Resettlement in Denmark

Denmark began funding an official Refugee Quota Programme in 1978. From 1983 to 2005, an annual quota of 500 persons was established. Beginning in July 2005, Denmark changed to a three-year quota totalling 1.500 persons in order to make the quota more flexible.

The quota comprises three categories: 1) geographical origin, 2) medical cases or the Twenty-Or-More (TOM) programme, and 3) emergency and urgent dossier cases. Emergency and TOM dossier

cases are received directly from UNHCR in Geneva. Emergency cases are processed within two-three weeks, urgent cases take one-two months, and all others are processed within two-three months.

The Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs decides how the quota will be filled and to where the two-three annual selection missions, based on a recommendation from the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), will go to. The recommendations are prepared considering the projected global resettlement needs from UNHCR, Danish municipality recommendations, and the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. Generally, each year 75 places are saved for emergency/urgent cases and 20 for medical or TOM cases.

In 2005, resettlement was extended to include refugees on humanitarian grounds as well. Another important change was the adoption of a refugees integration potential as the second criterion for resettlement – with protection needs being the first criterion. The integration criterion (which takes into account educational and language background, family size, work experience and age) aims to measure the ability of a refugee to take advantage of the opportunities available in Denmark.

The integration criterion is not

applied in emergency and urgent cases. In situations where resettlement of a certain group of refugees is considered to be of "strategic" importance the integration criteria should be applied with flexibility.

The integration criterion was, and still is, subject of debate among actors in resettlement in Denmark.

On the whole the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) opposes the concept of focusing on integration potential. This is primarily due to the risk of excluding some of the most vulnerable groups from coming to Denmark due to their "lack of integration potential". The Danish Refugee Council has experienced an increased focus on integration related issues when debating resettlement and this is despite the fact that it has been officially declared that protection needs come first. As of today it has not been sufficiently documented that the application of the integration potential criterion is associated with higher degree of integration.

The refugee situation in Nepal

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Bhutanese government introduced a series of repressive citizenship laws and "Bhutanization" policies that focused on the political, economic, religious and cultural exclusion of ethnic Nepalese living in southern Bhutan (Lhotshampas). The government began enforcing the 1985 Act on Citizenship in a discriminatory manner resulting in mass denationalization of thousands of Lhotshampas in violation of international human rights law. The government of Bhutan also introduced a "one nation, one people" policy in 1989 that forced the practice of Drukpa culture through a compulsory dress code and the termination of Nepali language instruction in schools. Books written in Nepali were publicly burned.

Children in the camp



Strategic use of resettlement(cont.)

In the early 1990s, the Bhutanese government crushed resistance by ethnic Nepalese and others who protested the policies through large public demonstrations and the formation of a political party calling for a multi-party democracy. The government closed schools and suspended health services in southern Bhutan. Members of the Bhutanese police and army imprisoned, raped, and tortured many of those who were directly, indirectly or incorrectly presumed to be associated with the demonstrations. Government forces also destroyed houses and forced many ethnic Nepalese off their lands.

From 1990-1992 the Lhotshampa community began to organize demonstrations calling for a restoration of basic human rights in Southern Bhutan. In response to these demonstrations, the government of Bhutan began systematically harassing and seriously mistreating Lhotshampas.

Tens of thousands of people had fled human rights abuses in Bhutan or were forcibly deported in 1992. Before they crossed the border into India, the Bhutanese government forced many to sign "voluntary migration certificates", thus surrendering their rights to Bhutanese citizenship under the nationality laws. Initially, refugees fled overland to West Bengal and Assam in India. However, harassment from Indian police forced them to move on to Nepal.

In 1991, the Government of Nepal and UNHCR established refugee camps. The situation has evolved into a protracted dispute with many refugees in Nepal wanting to invoke their rights to return to Bhutan while the Government of Bhutan refuses them entry on the grounds that they are illegal migrants or "anti-nationals".

Nepal is not signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and there ex-

ist no other regional instruments or national legislation governing the treatment of refugees. The camp rules restrict their freedom of movement and prohibits their engaging in any gainful activities. The Nepalese government has shown reluctance to open up for local integration of the Bhutanese refugees, and has in the past made it clear that the local integration will only be considered for a possible residual caseload after voluntary repatriation has taken place.

Voluntary repatriation is not supported by the Government of Bhutan and is currently not an option for the Bhutanese refugees. The individual identities of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal are largely known to the Government of Bhutan and any attempt to informally return would either lead to immediate deportation from the country or indefinite detention. It is reported that the present situation in southern Bhutan has not improved since the 1990s and there is a strong likelihood that the refugees will face persecution should they decide to informally return to Bhutan.

Strategic resettlement from Nepal

In October 2006 it was announced that USA, in order to break the impasse of the bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan, was willing to resettle 60.000 of the refugees. Since then more countries, including Denmark, have accepted to resettle various numbers of Bhutanese refugees. Although most of the refugees basically prefer repatriation to Bhu-

tan or local integration in Nepal – an increasing number seem to have accepted that resettlement probably will be the only possible solution to the majority of the group. It is hoped and expected that along with the resettlement process pressure will be put on both Nepal and Bhutan to allow larger number of Bhutanese to stay in the region under normalized conditions.

The first Danish selection mission to Nepal

The first ever Danish selection mission to Nepal took place from 13-24 September 2008 under the auspices of the UNHCR. The purpose of the mission was to select approximately 150 refugees from Bhutan for resettlement in Denmark.

The selection mission was carried out by the Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, and a representative from a Danish municipality. Furthermore a journalist and a photographer from a Danish newspaper and a student researcher joined the mission. The mission visited Beldangi-1 Refugee Camp located near Damak.

The interviews with the refugees were carried out in UNHCR/IOM's facilities in the city of Damak in the eastern part of Nepal.

In the morning before the interviews where to take place information sessions were held with the refugee group. The refugees were provided with information about resettlement to Denmark, a short introduction to Denmark, Danish society, and what would be expected of them in Denmark. Written information describing rights and obligations in Denmark were distributed in the refugees own language. Finally the Integration Declaration was explained and distributed to the refugees. The Integration Declaration details the conditions for resettlement in Denmark. Conditions include willingness to find work, the necessity of learning

In the Beldangi 1 camp



Strategic use of resettlement (cont.)

the Danish language, and participation in the integration programme.

Interviews took place over 5 days with roughly 30 minutes to 1 hour per family. The interviews were facilitated by two teams including representatives from the Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service with the assistance of a local translator. At the end of the interview refugees were required to sign the Integration Declaration.

Following the interviews, each team presented their cases and discussed whether resettlement to Denmark was appropriate, and what status should be granted. The Danish Refugee Council is considered a "listening partner" often advocating for cases that were questioned on the grounds of "lack of integration potential".

To conclude the mission the delegation provided UNHCR with an evaluation of the mission, an overview of the caseload selected, lessons learned, and protection challenges. This was done both in Damak and in Kathmandu. In addition to the meetings with UNHCR the mission also met with IOM and the Danish ambassador to Nepal.

After initial decisions of who should be resettled to Denmark were made, IOM was requested to complete a health examination before the final decision was made by the Danish Immigration Service, taking into consideration the recommendations from the delegation.

The Danish Immigration Service with the occasional assistance from the receiving municipal authorities in Denmark will return to the area to deliver a one-week Pre-Departure Cultural Orientation

Course.

IOM subsequently organises the travel to Denmark.

Processing of in-country selection missions can take up to three months.

It is expected that further Danish missions to Nepal will take place in the coming years.

The caseload

Compared with other resettlement selection missions, the delegation was surprised to find a comparatively high number of medical cases in the caseload presented by UNHCR. A deaf-mute woman, a girl with Downs Syndrome, a severely depressed mother of a young boy, a man in need of a kidney transplant, a young woman with a severe brain-damage and a young man with an undiagnosed psychiatric condition were among the difficult cases. It was especially the undiagnosed psychiatric cases that took lengthy discussions both within the delegation and with UNHCR to come to an agreement. The psychiatric system in Nepal is underdeveloped which meant that UNHCR was not able to get proper psychiatric diagnoses. The fact that the mission was considered to be a so-called "strategic use of resettlement mission" was crucial for the fact that the Danish Immigration Service decided to recommend everyone for resettlement. If the Danish integration criteria had been implemented it is very unlikely that all initially selected refugees had been ac-

cepted.

The caseload also included a high number of illiterate refugees. Illiterate persons normally do not fulfil the Danish integration criteria unless they are one out of a family who are literate. This criterion was also looked upon with more favourable eyes during the selection mission.

ASPIRE— towards more resettlement !

NGOs and civil society in Europe are continuing engagement for more resettlement to Europe:

CCME will together with partners hold debates with policy makers across the EU: national policy debates on resettlement are planned for the first half of 2009 in Berlin, Brussel, Bucharest, Budapest, Paris and Lisbon. A regional debate in Riga will bring Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian actors together.

National finding will be complemented by a European multi-stakeholder conference on resettlement during the Swedish EU presidency in Sigtuna/Stockholm 25.-28 August. All events are part of the ERF funded ASPIRE project (Assessing and Strengthening Participation In refugee Resettlement to Europe)

Other civil society experts are continuing their work with ICMC and French „Forum Refugiés" holding a resettlement training in Lyon 10.-13. February 2009.

Planning resettlement debate in the Baltics: UNHCR's Ajmal Khybari and Torsten Moritz (CCME) in front of the Estonian Parliament



**Resettlement -
protecting the most
vulnerable among
refugees**

Palestinian refugees: trapped on the Syria-Iraq border

Ariane den Uyl reports

About 3,000 Palestinian refugees fled from Iraq because of killings, kidnapping, torture and death threats to Syria, but they stranded at the border in three camps in very bad circumstances. Resettlement is their only solution, but up until now only a very few refugees were actually resettled.

An international NGO delegation visited them last November to advocate for a real solution for these refugees. Ariane den Uyl, policy officer of the Dutch Council for Refugees was part of the delegation.

The fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 turned Iraq into chaos and every minority that was considered 'not loyal to Iraq' became victim of persecution. The Palestinians who had been able to live and work in Iraq until then, became increasingly targets of violence, kidnapping and death threats by armed militias. When they try to flee to Syria, Syria was not willing to receive these refugees. Only the first group of 300 was in the end allowed to enter Syria but only if they would stay in the border camp. Other Palestinian refugees that arrived later had to stay in no-man's-land or even at the Iraqi side of the border.

The participants of the delegation who are part of NGOs from USA, Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands and Malaysia were shocked to see the poor situation these refugees are in. They live in tents in the desert, extremely hot in summertime, and freezing cold in winter. There is lack of fresh water and sanitation facilities. We saw piles of rubbish throughout the camps.

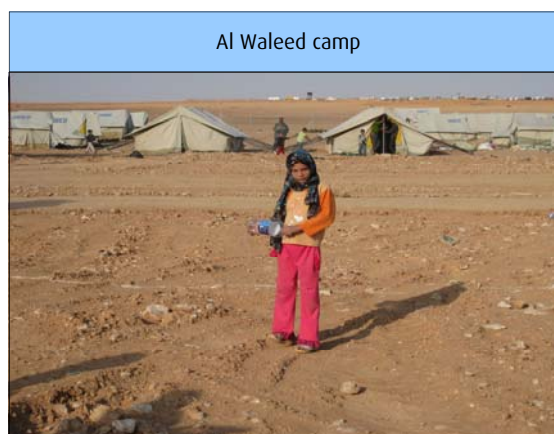


Al Tanf refugee camp

The Refugees are not allowed to work or move freely in Syria. Education is only possible for children until the age of 14. One of the camps, the Al Tanf camp is located in a 50-meter strip in no-man's-land between a busy highway and a concrete wall. There are living 940 refugees but the amount is actually growing as Palestinian refugees who found to be illegal in Syria are put in this camp as well.

The medical situation is also bad. Especially for the Al Waleed camp that is located in Iraq. It is very difficult for UNHCR to get inhabitants of this camp to a hospital. The refugees in Al Waleed camp told us that the last two years at least 13 people died in the camp of which some of them young children. Most of these deaths could have been prevented if there had been sufficient medical care. It is clear there is a great need for a rapid solution for this awful situation.

There is a small step towards a solu-



Al Waleed camp

tion as the JHA-council talking about the Iraq crisis on 26 November, stated that resettlement is the only solution for these Palestinian refugees in the camps and that the European Union will resettle 10.000 refugees from Iraq.

Ariane den Uyl

Dutch Council for Refugees

Why should Europe resettle more refugees?

- 1) Resettlement can provide protection to those in greatest need: the most vulnerable and those in protracted refugee situations.
- 2) Resettlement is a way for Europe to demonstrate its solidarity and take its share of its responsibility in the provision of this durable solution to the world's refugees.
- 3) Resettlement provides access to Europe for refugees.
- 4) Resettlement provides the opportunity for good, co-ordinated and quality reception and integration programmes to be developed.
- 5) Resettlement is an important means of facilitating public understanding of all refugees, their plight and the situations they flee.

(CCME, based on ECRE's "way forward")



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CCME office (red building on the left) in front of the European Commission Headquarters (Berlaymont)

FAQ—frequently asked questions....

1) What is CCME?

CCME, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. CCME members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, diaconal agencies and Councils of Churches in presently 19 European countries. CCME is in the process of becoming a commission of the Conference of European Churches and cooperates with the World Council of Churches.

2) What is ASPIRE ?

The ASPIRE project ("Assessing and Strengthening Participation In refugee Resettlement to Europe") enhances knowledge and political debate in EU member states to engage in refugee resettlement - as an additional instrument of refugee protection.

It includes activities to

- Analyse in which member states debates suggest an openness towards resettlement
- Promote existing policies and best practice in these member states (through sharing of materials and knowledge)
- Bring governmental and non-governmental actors in member

states with a recent interest in resettlement into debate with one another on selected issues on resettlement

- Provide continued updated information on resettlement to non-specialised public which is generally interested in refugee protection
- Provide a forum of discussion and exchange for governmental actors, civil society actors and UNHCR to explore the role, structure and added value of a European resettlement scheme

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 traditionally host resettlement programs are : Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and USA. Those countries are called the "traditional ones". Countries such as Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal and UK have in recent years started programmes. Others, among them several EU member states, are currently considering or starting them...

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

General info on resettlement

<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/3bb2eadd6.html>

On the CCME project

<http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS>



ERF-CA 2007

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