



Resettlement Newsletter

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Issue 2

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

Matthew
25:35b

Warm greetings from CCME...

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe is pleased to present you the second issue of the Resettlement Newsletter.

I know many of you were really looking forward to reading the Newsletter again and we are happy to be able to send it out now. Do you still remember what resettlement is all about? I hope so in any case it is our purpose to remind you of the importance of resettlement as a tool of refugees protection and what it entails throughout this Newsletter.

What has happened in the past months? CCME organized the conference on Resettlement and 35 participants gathered from 35 countries to discuss the challenges of refugees' resettlement in Europe. A pre-conference day has preceded the conference itself, giving the opportunity to learn more about this international protection tool for those who were not familiar with resettlement in order to be able to participate actively in the event itself.

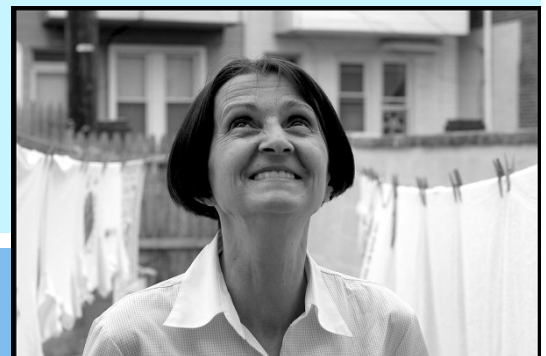
What is going to happen in the coming months? CCME is currently planning the details of capacity building visits to Finland, North America and Kenya. Which is the best method for learning something? A field research I would say; in fact, seeing different resettlement programmes in different countries with own eyes will help actors interested in refugees' resettlement to study the existing resettlement schemes and propose a scheme suitable for their own situation.

Refugees' Resettlement is an important tool of protection for people in need but it should not be misused, resettlement is not always the appropriate durable solution. This is also one of the matters pointed out by this issue of the Newsletter.

We have received many positives feedbacks related to the last issue, we would like to thank all those people who got back to us with comments and congratulations, we really hope this will happen in the future as well. Once again, take your time and let the Newsletter speak for itself.

Enjoying the reading!

Best regards,
Alessia Passarelli
Communication Intern of
Refugees Resettlement Project



Former Yugoslavia Refugee (photo: Penny Forester)

Refugees' Voices: Fahira (woman from Former Yugoslavia resettled to Baltimore):

"I have one sentence. 'Where is my family, there is my country.' Always I say this. I leave my country in '92. And, I don't know, all the people from my country say, 'Oh when I get my green card, first I go in my country and I want to see that and that...' For me I want to see just my family and friends. And if I can, I go for one day to see them and be back. I don't know. I have really, really bad experience there during the war. I am mixed marriage. I lost friends. I lost family. And that's too much sadness for me to go there. Just, my country is where is my family. And my family is my husband and my two children. They are here."

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.

"No more wild animals in the European Forests" Story of a resettled refugee in the Netherlands

46 years ago somewhere in Central Africa, a woman was taken to a local maternity centre to deliver a child. Those days maternity centres were functional! At 11.00 am, an 11 pound baby was delivered healthy after spending 11 months in the womb. And I am not lying! That baby is me, the author of this article. I am or I used to be the 11th child of my father, others have since perished.

My father named me after himself. He was called Ali Waiswa Kinyiri Balunywa. I thus became all that mouthful of names. As usual all took the easy way out and I have ever since been known as Ali!

Unfortunately I was limited in the number of words I have to write, so I will have to skip my colourful youth. I can only say that my father fathered 40 children but died at an early age of 50.

I was an above average student and attended the very best schools in the country at that time. I completed my University education in 1984 with a BA degree in Social Sciences. I immediately got a temporary appointment as a junior administrations assistant. In 1985, I was seconded to The Weekly Topic, the then leading newspaper in Uganda. I worked as an assistant business manager.

I quit as business manager in 1993 to form my own publishing company. I sharpened my writing skills and also acquired a post graduate diploma in Journalism and media management. We were producing leisure, business and cultural magazines, University newspapers and in house company publications.

In the year 2000 for the love of our president, I decided to campaign for another leader. By doing so, I thought I was doing him a favour since it would be the first time a Uganda leader would hand over power peacefully. He had also already ruled for 15 years and all his achievements were being out weighted by the corruption and intolerance of the regime.



Given the short time we had to campaign, we were surprised at the support we garnered! I was a coordinator for Busoga, a region with over 2 million people. I was also a member of the national task force. As our rallies attracted bigger and bigger crowds, the regime in power became more scared. They unleashed the military

on opposition supporters. Many were killed, beaten up, incarcerated in prison or simply made to disappear!

We went to the polls on March 12, 2001 and lost the election. We got around 28% and the president 67%. There was a lot of vote rigging in many parts of

the country so we went to court. All the Judges agreed from the available evidence that there was large scale rigging, but 3 against 2 said it would not affect the result.

After the court case, persecution of the opposition supporters started. Many of them fled the country. Dr Besigye himself fled in August 2001. In September I was harassed by the state organs until our pressure group chairman advised me to take leave for a few months and return when things were better. I left the country for Rwanda. In Rwanda I got a job with the national newspaper as a media consultant. Even in Rwanda, the Uganda Government continued its allegations that we were training rebels. I was advised to seek asylum elsewhere. A friend of mine in the Rwanda government took me to the UNHCR for relocation. I was interviewed and asked for evidence of my prosecution. I handed in all what I could get hold of and went back to my work. A few weeks later, I was invited to their office and informed that The Netherlands had offered to take me up.

On 9 July 2002 I left Rwanda for The

Netherlands. I arrived the next day at Schiphol airport. I was met by IOM officials who organised transport for me to take me to AZC Doorn which was my temporary home as a house was looked for.

I was allocated a small room to share with a 17 year old boy. There was a small bed and 2 blankets but no bed sheets. So I had to go to the nearest shopping centre to get some. I didn't know where to go and I just looked through the shop windows. In one store, the assistant did not seem to know any English. I tried to explain what I wanted in English and with gestures. I ended up buying an overtrek for a dekbed at a cost of 30 euro.

Back at the centre, I made my bed and later at night struggled with the dekbed. I decided to tear one side, placed it between blankets and I entered the bed. Meanwhile, loud music from my roommate filled the room and despite my tiredness, could not find sleep immediately.

Being the typical African man that I was, I naturally did not know how to cook. For the first few days I used to eat in restaurants. Finally I had to cook! I found the kitchen quite dirty! I did not know that we were supposed to share the crockery. I therefore bought all this myself.

The apartment had different nationalities from Sierra Leone's, Sudanese and I from Uganda. Some rooms had TVs and all had electronic stereo systems. So for almost 24 hours, each room had loud noise. Some called it music. The living room television was always on at full volume.

It was so hot outside yet so noisy inside. There were some woods in the neighbourhood. And like in Africa, I thought there would be wild animals and snakes! I had to ask my contact person if it was safe for me to walk in the woods. After a bout of laughter, she indeed assured me that it was safe, as there were almost no more wild animals in Europe. It was then that I managed to escape from the noise of the apartment and the heat of the sun.

Ali Balunywa, Uganda's refugee
resettled in the Netherlands

"Understanding Resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!" Brussels 9th-12th of November 2005 reporting by Flavio Di Giacomo

The Conference "Understanding Resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!" has been an excellent chance for the people involved in resettlement issues to meet and to share experiences.

It is extremely important for people working in resettlement to know how the other resettlement countries work, and what the main differences between the various resettlement policies are. Even if resettlement principles are more or less the same for everyone, resettlement being an instrument mentioned in 1950 UNHCR statute, and even if at a first glance the differences between countries do not appear so relevant, if one compares the US resettlement system with the Canadian, or the Swedish with the British or the Dutch system, it is clear that things are not as similar as they could seem.

The Conference tried to cover all the aspects of Resettlement:

- UNHCR representatives explained the main issues the UN agency must face in the countries of first asylum, and then in the co-operation with the resettlement countries; in particular, the presence of a UNHCR Resettlement Officer who worked in Kenya for several years could clarify a lot of aspects concerning UNHCR activities in Refugees selection.
- representatives for organisations coming from the Netherlands, from Finland, from UK, from Canada, from the USA explained how their Resettlement programmes actually work, giving details of the main problems and of the main achievements;
- representatives of Non resettlement countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Romania) had the chance to express all their comments and to gather useful



CCME Resettlement Conference, Brussels November 2005

information. Some of these countries (e.g. Italy) are currently carrying on feasibility studies with the aim of starting, if possible, their own resettlement programme.

- EU representatives explained the current European Policy about Resettlement. On one hand it seems very encouraging that the European Commission is willing to start an "European Resettlement Programme", but on the other hand the actual organisation of this Programme will take some time, and, most of all, needs the co-operation of the existing Resettlement countries. The political work to be done is just starting. The European Commission however has decided, for the moment, to start as soon as possible the Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs), whose organisation has been clarified by Mr Phil Douglas, and which

include Resettlement Activities to be undertaken by the countries involved.

The conference did not want to be just political and, helping refugees being the first aim of Resettlement, a Congolese Refugee told everyone her own experience, her life in Africa and her new life in Finland.

A panel composed of Representatives of the Canadian Settlement Service, the CWS (US) and of a Representative of UNHCR discussed "Responsibility sharing in Resettlement"

Three working groups were organised (the first on Countries of First Asylum, the second on Resettlement Countries, the third on Advocacy) and at the end every group presented a report.

In the conclusions of the conference it was stressed that, since asylum and immigration issues are now at the top of the European agenda, EU member states must look at the future and use all the tools needed to help people obliged to leave their countries.

Resettlement is a precious tool to help refugees. Unfortunately for the moment Europe is not involved in this issue like America and Oceania, but, since EU would like European Resettlement policies to be reinforced, this trend must be supported by refugee-active NGOs through an intense work of lobbying at national and international levels. The only way to make Resettlement work is to raise the number of resettled refugees, and this would only be possible if other countries will start their own programme and will join an European Resettlement Scheme.

Flavio Di Giacomo, Italian Council for Refugees (CIR), was a participant representing the project partner FCEI at the conference.

Resettlement is not an alternative to the spontaneous asylum seeking

Resettled Refugees and Asylum Seekers Experiences in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands the resettlement of refugees really started during the end of the seventies when many Vietnamese refugees were resettled to the Nederland. The quota was however small. First 250 refugees per year and since 1987 500 refugees per year.

In the beginning of the eighties a special organisation COV (Centrale Opvang Vluchtelingen) was established to take care of the reception and an integration programme for the first three months. Resettled refugees were accommodated in a special centre and moved after three months to houses in municipalities. In the case a municipality houses 30 or more resettled refugees at once it would receive extra finance apart from the ordinary finance for the integration programmes for refugees. Another advantage for the municipalities was that they could plan for the arrival of a group a long time ahead.

In 1999 it was decided to change the selection and reception policy on resettlement. The government decided that instead of selection missions the UNHCR could refer a refugee to the Netherlands by sending a dossier. Because the resettled refugees would come one at the time instead of in groups, the government saw no longer use for the specialised centre or for the extra finance for integration programmes for resettled refugees. From then on they had to be accommodated in ordinary asylum seekers centres while waiting for housing, without a suitable integration programme. In practice this could take more than a year.

This situation was much criticized, also because many of the dossier based referrals of the UNHCR were turned down so the Netherlands

was not able to fulfil its quota. In 2003 the government announced they want to introduce selection missions again. The reception conditions for resettled refugees are also gradually improving by shortening the time they have to stay in the centres and also minimising the amount of centres involved. Nowadays only four asylum seekers centres accommodate resettled refugees and in 2006 there will be only (a specialised) one.

These developments in the Netherlands give an opportunity to see in what way the reception and integration could or even should be different from the way refugees are treated who come as an asylum applicant. Differences:

- Knowledge of the society
At the time a refugee receives its permit after an asylum procedure he has already gained some knowledge about the society. For a resettled refugee everything is new.

- High expectations
Many resettled refugees have high hopes and expectations about their new life. For instance to find easily work on their level and have the possibility to bring other family members or friends as well. For this reason pre-departure orientation is very important. Not only to give some general information about what to expect but espe-



cially to prepare people that starting a new life is not that easy and the possibilities for family reunion are very limited.

- Background
Many resettled refugees have stayed in refugee camps for a very long time, often with limited possibilities to take control of their own lives. Therefore it is important that many refugees need not only a lot of information but also guidance and training in skills. It means also that the integration process can take a long time. Local departments of the Dutch Council for Refugees notice that some resettled refugees need their advise and information even after three or four years. However it must be noted that you see effects of institutionalisation as well by refugees that have to stay for years in asylum seekers centres because of the long asylum procedure.

For a period of time the Netherlands treated resettled refugees after their arrival in the Netherlands as asylum seekers. This had a bad effect on their possibilities to start their integration process. Resettled refugees need a different approach. It is better to take advantage from the positive side of resettlement in relation to integration. Resettlement gives the possibilities to plan ahead a good reception and integration programme. Because of their status there are no legal obstacles to start with education, work and they have access to facilities like the nationals do. At the same time it is good to realise that many resettled refugees need a more -especially in the first period of time- intensive integration programme.

Ariane den Uyl
Policy officer Dutch Council for
Refugees

Resettlement is not the refugees' return to their own countries

Let's have a talk with...Erol Kekic Church World Service (CWS)

1) Resettlement is a tool of international protection for people in need and, for the States, it's a sign of responsibility sharing for the refugees' situation. Recently the word "responsibility" has replaced the word "burden" (burden sharing). Do you think that it's a change of attitude or just a change of etiquette?

One could, in a moment of cynical inspiration, define this title as a convenient excuse, or, if you'd like, a "fig leaf" or a "Viagra pill" for the impotence of the international community to actually step in and intervene, let alone prevent, the - say, genocide, or, more mildly, a civil war and a mass displacement, be it internal or external.

2) We all agree on the importance of Resettlement for people in need, on the meantime we recognize its limits. Would you like to give us some comments concerning the risks of Resettlement?

And then we also think about resettling people into our countries. It is a part of the "responsibility sharing exercise," it helps the neediest refugee cases to start a new life somewhere else immediately, access much needed health care, education and protection, and it is a right thing to do. Resettlement is and should be used as a tool of refugee protection and it should be made available to many more refugees than is currently the case. But not indiscriminately! Resettlement is meant to help "them" not "us." The resettlement countries must have (and almost always do have) the best interest of refugees in mind first - which includes critical thinking about the selection criteria; numbers - quotas; and what "cherry-picking" does to the communities left behind; integration programs - are they still going to be "refugees" years after they were resettled, or will they eventually really get a chance get integrated and won't be recognized as "refugees" three years after the resettlement took place - and will their children be the children of "refugees" or will they get a chance for a full integration???

Resettlement is not a magic panacea and it does not work for everyone. In order for resettlement to succeed, the situation must be ripe on both ends of the spectrum - in the refugee settlement in the country of first asylum, but also in the third (resettlement) country. Over reliance on a dangerously under funded UNHCR and on the government agencies to handle integration programs has proven to be a hardly successful approach around the world. Until local communities themselves reach out to help welcome and in-

tegrate those newcomers, no government agency, regardless of the track record it claims, will ever be victorious in ensuring the full incorporation of the former refugees into the fabric of the society.

3) Working for an NGO, could you explain to us which role a NGO can and should play in refugees' resettlement?

That is why the participation of NGOs, churches and secular organizations, or the Community Based Organizations - CBOs becomes crucial in the process. It is not just the private resources that they bring to bear, but also their commitment, sense of mission, time and energy, good ideas. It is those unpaid volunteers who often contribute the most to a refugee's first integration experience in the third country - by simply being their friend - helping them realize where to buy groceries cheaper and/or why is sauna so important in some cultures.

That is why it is so central for NGOs to think about ways in which they can be integrally involved in the selection process for potential resettlement. Leaving this task solely to UNHCR and various government agencies isn't necessarily the best way to go about it. Only with collaboration between the government and private factors, or through a public-private partnership, can the process and the experience of resettlement be enjoyable and equally successful for all the parties involved, including refugees. NGOs have constituencies at home - they represent a cross section of the community that is about to receive these resettled refugees, and their voice must be heard even in the front end of the process. NGOs also have a mission, the work they perform isn't "just another contract" and the results and the track record behind their work will confirm that makes a big difference as compared to some international, intergovernmental or governmental agencies.

4) Last but not least, you took part to the refugees' resettlement conference organized by CCME last November, taking into consideration that your approach, coming from the US, reflects another "tradition"(or maybe practice...?), which is your general impression of the conference?

I personally enjoyed taking a part in that meeting. I thought the meeting was timely and necessary and served as a good platform for the exchange of ideas and for the discussion of various models of resettlement. It is important to remember that no existing model of re-

settlement will fully fit the mould of the EU-wide resettlement attempt, given the very specific set of issues in place there. Nevertheless, a lot of lessons could be learned from the mistakes already made in so many locations. Resettlement must be done because of refugees' needs not those of resettlement countries. That is why one should NEVER look at integration potential as a stumbling block which limits access to the program. The integration DOES NOT start with the selection, but with the reasoning behind doing resettlement in the first place. Forcing people into submission by demanding they speak perfect language or fulfill some (mostly ridiculous) requirements of our own societies before they can be considered "full-fledged citizens," only takes away from the probabilities of integration. What refugees need post resettlement is a friendly word and as much help as they can get to become self reliant and independent - and the ability to make decisions for themselves. The "need" to force them to wait additional three to five years while "learning language" and gaining those precious "skills" needed to "succeed" in our societies, is a product of our own preconceived notions, not the reality. Those are not good programs that ever result in full integration. Refugees often have those skills, and the will to endure whatever needs to be endured in order to make something out of their lives after being warehoused for a number of years. Calling them refugees five years into the resettlement process is doing them a great disfavor, still identifying them as foreign and different and not integrated. One could go as far as to ask - whether such offer of resettlement by the resettlement country was even genuine in the first place. Or whether refugees would be better off elsewhere. One would have to recognized that the physical protection was provided to resettled refugees, but little was accomplished above that. Often such practices result in individuals "waiting out" their "time" and as soon as they gain those precious citizenship documents, they move back to the country of first asylum where they feel more comfortable and like they may have better chances of integration.

All of this should be further discussed at the EU-level prior to engaging in the resettlement process of any more significant magnitude. That is why conferences and meetings such as the one convened by CCME are crucial.



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

**Extract from the
"UNHCR Global Appeal 2006
Western Europe"**

Recent developments

The decline in the numbers of asylum claims has continued in Western Europe. In the first six months of 2005, fewer than 112,000 persons applied for asylum, compared to more than 129,000 over the same period in 2004, a reduction of 13 per cent.

Despite the overall fall, asylum remains a sensitive political issue. Security concerns, particularly following the London bombs in July 2005, have had negative implications for asylum-seekers and refugees.

Resettlement continues to gain increasing attention. UNHCR welcomed to offer by a number of States (including some non traditional resettle-

ment countries) to accept Uzbek refugees who had been temporarily transferred from Kyrgyzstan to Romania at the end of July 2005 to ensure their protection. Discussions on the European Union resettlement scheme have also continued, including on common approaches to support regional protection programmes, on which the European union has issued new instructions.



CCME Resettlement conference, Brussels November 2005

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Coming soon...

**Capacity Building visit to
Finland**

As part of the project
"Understanding resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!" 6th-11th of March

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.