



Resettlement Newsletter

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

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Welcome to our Refugees Resettlement Newsletter!!!

Greetings from Brussels...

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe is glad to announce the launch of the Resettlement Newsletter, as part of the project "Resettlement in practice". We will stay in touch for the following year approximately every two months. I can imagine which kind of questions are coming to your minds: "What is refugee resettlement? Are we talking about return, repatriation? Not at all. Curious? What do you know about it? Nothing, something, everything? It does not matter; it is time to take resettlement seriously, especially if you care about refugees in need of durable solutions. Why is it so important? Millions of refugees are stuck in countries where they do not have any future, without the possibility to go back home, living in temporary camps without any hope...That is the right moment for a resettlement alternative...Resettlement means giving the opportunity to refugees from country "A", who are "stuck" in country "B" to move to country "C" and re-build their life there. After having listened to the experiences of other countries you could realize that resettlement is a good solution for your country, too. We will inform you about the steps of the project and there will be a space for debate concerning several aspects of refugee resettlement in a pluralism of voices (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, ECRE, European Commission and other stakeholders). Take your time, go through the articles, and if you want to write to us giving your feedbacks or asking questions we will try to take up as many as possible in the next issue.

Enjoy the reading!

Best regards,
Alessia Passarelli
Communication Intern of
Refugees Resettlement Project



Liberian Refugees (photo: Penny Forester)

Refugees' Voices: Lorway (Liberian resettled in Baltimore):

"When I was coming here I was in deep sorrow. I had a son, and the way that they killed him is why I came. My heart will always hurt when I think about my son. When I got in the plane, I didn't even know if I would arrive in America and still be alive. But when I came here and met the agency, I felt that God had blessed me. I feel that if I stayed at home, I would not be alive today."

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.



Somali Refugees (photo UNHCR)

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

Matthew
25:35b

Towards a European Resettlement Programme

Only seven European countries currently resettle refugees; collectively they offered fewer than 5,000 places last year, a fraction of the world's refugee population. Yet resettlement is widely recognised as an essential tool of international protection, a durable solution and a demonstration of international solidarity and burden sharing. That's why this spring the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) urged Europe to play a much bigger role in the global resettlement effort. Firstly, existing national programmes should be more efficient and annual quotas filled. New programmes should be established on whatever scale is feasible. At the same time, European states should act in a coordinated fashion to enhance and expand their resettlement activities. A EU-wide resettlement scheme as has been proposed by the European Commission would constitute an important first step in that direction. In the longer term, ECRE proposes the development of a joint European programme, based on common criteria and committing European states to making a significant number of resettlement places available each year.



Woman and child in refugee camp.
Photo: CWS/Chris Herlinger

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, coordinated 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.

Fundamental, however, is the principle that resettlement programmes do not and should not negate or undermine the right to seek and enjoy asylum in Europe. They should complement existing systems for dealing with the protection claims of spontaneously arriving asylum seekers.

For reasons of principle and pragmatism, a European resettlement programme should be developed and run through the tripartite global resettlement efforts, coordinated by UNHCR, which should be funded accordingly.

A European resettlement programme should have mechanisms to make full use of the experience and expertise of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (both in receiving countries and in regions of origin) to help enable it to resettle more refugees while ensuring that the resettlement process remains credible, transparent and focused on the protection needs of refugees.

For example, NGOs working in the region of origin might make referrals via UNHCR. Through their direct contact with vulnerable refugees in the field, NGOs are well placed to iden-

tify candidates for resettlement. This would not only help identify the most needy cases but also broaden accountability in terms of the legitimacy of the selection process.

While the final decision to accept a refugee for resettlement must be taken by a representative of the European State, as only states can admit refugees, there would also be a clear benefit in NGOs being present and providing expertise and advice to states at key stages of the decision-making process, to help advise on the particular circumstances of individual cases or to provide additional background on the protection environment in the country of first asylum.

A European resettlement programme should include a role for NGOs in pre-departure activities that would increase the chance of successful and rapid integration into the resettlement country. For example, NGOs might provide counselling services, information about the resettlement country and language training.

Engaging refugee populations, the often-neglected partner, in resettlement planning would help manage their expectations about the functions and limits of resettlement.

Done well, resettlement can play a significant role in helping European states meet their obligations to provide protection to the world's refugees. They should seize the moment and realise the potential benefits of playing a leading role in expanding global resettlement efforts.

ECRE

This article is drawn from ECRE's paper: "The Way Forward - Europe's Role in the Global Refugee Protection System - Towards a European Resettlement Programme", April 2005, which is part of an ECRE series of proposals designed to provide constructive recommendations on a number of topical refugee policy issue, in order to contribute to and positively influence the European debate. For papers published to date please go to www.ecre.org

Last stop on the Underground Railroad is journey's end for Somalis

Church World Service (USA) reports about the story of resettled refugees

Before the Civil War, free blacks, abolitionists and Native Americans of Western New York broke the law to help runaway slaves escape to Canada across Lake Erie and the Niagara River.

Today, a quarter of a mile from the last stop on the Underground Railroad, a resettlement agency affiliated with Church World Service is welcoming a group of refugees escaping bondage and virtual slavery.

The welcome does not altogether dispel somber aspects of the past. "We've got to remind Americans about our own heritage," said Robert Roggie of Journey's End Refugee Service, "that we produced refugees that fled to Canada. It doesn't make people more supportive but we want to remind them."

Journeys End Refugee Service and local churches working with the agency are not breaking any laws in welcoming the oppressed Somalis. The 332 Bantu bound for Buffalo — and the rest of the 13,000 being resettled all over the US — are being admitted by the US government after it became clear there was no other durable solution for them. The group's need for refuge and resettlement is irrefutable. Their individual stories have been carefully checked. They've passed health exams and cleared security screens.

The Bantu are here as a result of a public-private partnership involving an array of advocates and interest groups, including churches and faith communities exercising their beliefs and living out their convictions. Government refugee policy, processing and funding is matched by private donations and many hours of volunteering.

Unlike Africans chained in the dank, dark hold of slave-ships sailing the Atlantic passage to the slave markets of America two centuries ago, the Somali Bantu refugees are flying in from Nairobi, a city 275 miles inland from Africa's Indian Ocean coastline.

From Malawi and Mozambique, their

ancestors had been sold along the coast, some bound for sale further east. In Somalia, even after slavery was abolished early last century, the Bantu were marginalized by other clans. Without clan ties, their fortunes plunged further during Somalia's civil war.

Muya Malande's story is typical of the Somali Bantu. He and his wife Arbai Jumale and their four children, Osman, Mame, Saleman and Abdi were the first to come to Buffalo.

The family's life as refugees began in the 90's, during the Somali civil war. Militiamen with AK-47s ordered him and his relatives to carry everything of value in his home to the main road, from where it could be driven off as plunder. His uncle was shot dead for refusing.

In late 1992, Malande's father-in-law was killed in front of his family. The family fled to Kenya with other Somali Bantu, reaching the border eight days later, out of food and wa-

130,000 refugees.

With a high school diploma, better English skills than most other Bantu, and some experience as a medical aide with Medecins Sans Frontieres in the refugee camps, Muya enrolled for a Registered Nurse's degree soon after arriving in Buffalo. He has been working and going to school since then.

"The family's life as refugees began in the 90's, during the Somali civil war."

Arbai, who could not read or write any language when she arrived, is now reading and writing English while maintaining the family and mentoring family members that have followed. The older three children have just graduated from kindergarten and first grade.

It had been feared that the resettlement of the Bantu would be extraordinarily difficult. One year after the Malandes' arrival, it seems silly that toasters and microwave ovens would deter people who have been through what the Somali Bantu endured.

While engaged in a strategic planning process that will impact its operations over the next three to five years, Journey's End's immediate focus is on the 120 Somali Bantu it is responsible for resettling. The agency, affiliated to Episcopal Migration Ministries as well as to Church World Service, hired former Peace Corps worker and fluent Swahili speaker Anna Ireland. She joined seasoned caseworker Ali Nur.

Kathleen Johnson, a former missionary with experience in Liberia, visits Somali Bantu and Liberian mothers in their homes to teach English.

As a result of Journey's End's strong experience resettling African, it cooperated with the local office of Jewish Family Services in preparing for the 50 Somali Bantu that JFS is resettling via the



Caseworker Anna Ireland with Abdi Salim, youngest member of the first Somali Bantu family JERS received last year.
Photo: JERS

ter. They were trucked to Dadaab, the site of camps for more than

Resettlement is not the refugees' return in their own countries

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. The two local affiliates worked together for the first time in planning orientation for the Bantu.

Some residents on Buffalo's West Side, where the Bantu were housed, voiced concerns that greet many newcomers struggling to begin a new "Western New York is a good resettlement location," he says, "with plenty of housing for rental and purchase." He points out that Buffalo has lost population in recent decades, with people abandoning the city for suburbs, leaving behind housing primarily for rental use.

"However, landowners want to sell as they age," he says. Two family homes that sell for \$10,000-40,000 could become income-producing properties. After a couple of years, a refugee can become a landlord and have the mortgage covered by renters.

"A Burmese man bought a nice house for \$9-10,000, which was very well maintained by an old Italian family," said Roggie. "He's living in it

and planning to rent out part of it."

Buffalo's schools have an immigrant history, according to Roggie. "We are an immigrant town, well prepared for new immigrant groups," he said.

Journey's End has been able to place newly resettled refugees—around 200 this year, plus a similar number of Cubans through a program aimed



Mame Salim, Saliman Salim, Arbai Jumale, Adbi Salim, Osman Salim and Muya Malande arrive at Buffalo July 2003. Photo: JERS

at easing congestion in Florida—in entry-level jobs in the service sector, packaging, and small-scale production. The economy, though weak, is transitioning from heavy manufacturing to the higher technology and service sectors.

Roggie is not alone in his views about refugees, immigrants and their place in Buffalo. The Buffalo City Common Council, where Journey's End co-chairs a task force, identified resettlement as one solution to rebuilding local neighborhoods.

"In essence, refugees built our communities," Roggie says. "In a city like Buffalo, rebuilding our community is a theme that plays out often and refugees can play a part. New immigrants in our city bring new resources and new energies in rebuilding its roots."

Thomas Abraham

August 25, 2004

Further details visit the CWS at:
<http://www.churchworldservice.org/>

UK Presidency Resettlement Seminar

On 4 and 5 July 2005, the UK Home Office hosted one of the first events of the UK Presidency of the European Union. A mix of officials from across the EU, Canada, Norway, and the voluntary sector attended a Resettlement Seminar in London. Over ninety people participated in an interesting mix of presentations and discussions.

Resettlement is a humanitarian initiative involving the transfer of refugees from their country of asylum to a third country that has previously agreed to admit them and grant them formal status. It provides some of the world's most vulnerable refugees with a solution to their plight. The seminar aimed to promote discussion amongst EU Member States on the opportunities and potential challenges of resettlement, and possible ways for the EU to add value to national efforts.

Tony McNulty, UK Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Nationality, delivered the opening keynote speech. He emphasised the importance of closer EU co-operation in the area of asylum and immigration, and outlined the UK government's approach: 'It is necessary to tackle abuse of the system in a firm but fair manner. At the same time, we can and should welcome and integrate those to whom we grant refugee status, as well as open up more legal routes and provide durable solutions to those refugees around the world identified by the UNHCR as being most in need.'

Various perspectives on resettlement were given by the UNHCR, European Commission, European Council on Refugees and Exiles and British Refugee Council. Canada, Sweden and the UK shared learning from their national resettlement programmes. The UK scheme is called the Gateway Protection Programme and was established in 2002. Although it is

early days, the UK has already welcomed over 200 refugees through its programme.

Andy Burnham, UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Immigration, chaired a lively panel session at the end of the first day. Key themes included refugee selection and integration procedures, and the public debate on asylum. The second day focussed on possible EU activities, with a presentation by the European Commission and group discussions.

Further detail including copies of presentations from the seminar is available on the Home Office website at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/eupresidency2005/resettlement_seminar.html

Resettlement and the EU

Accepting refugees for resettlement is a mark of generosity and of responsibility and burden-sharing on the part of States. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) welcomes the opportunities that states continue to offer to provide protection and a durable solution to refugees through resettlement. UNHCR is also encouraged by the interest which is shown by EU countries in resettlement, and is committed to working with all of those involved – including states, civil society and refugees themselves – to ensure that best use is made of this important element in the system of international protection of refugees.

With the appropriate integration measures in place, resettled refugees become an asset for the resettlement country, through their contributions to society at large. Refugees bring with them important skills and resources, as well as diversity which, when appreciated and utilised, is a distinct social, cultural and economic benefit for the resettlement country.

Basic principles

Resettlement is defined as the process of selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state, which has agreed to admit them with a long-term or a permanent residence status. It is operated on the basis of several core principles that can be summarised as follows:

- ◆ Resettlement of refugees is a core element of the regime of international protection of refugees. It is a UNHCR Mandate responsibility to pursue this solution, although it remains a discretionary act on the part of states.
- ◆ Resettlement is a tool to provide international protection and meet the special needs of individual refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country where they have sought

refuge.

- ◆ Resettlement is a durable solution for larger numbers or groups of refugees, alongside the other durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration.
- ◆ Resettlement is also a tangible expression of international solidarity and a responsibility-sharing mechanism, allowing states to help share each other's burdens, and reduce problems impacting on countries of first asylum.
- ◆ Furthermore, resettlement is an exercise of partnership where the international community represented by states, UNHCR and the civil society through inter alia NGOs, all play a distinct but synergic role to achieve a humanitarian outcome, i.e. a durable solution to refugee problems.

Comprehensive solutions and the strategic use of resettlement

When resettlement efforts are undertaken as an essential element of a comprehensive protection and durable solutions strategy, there are a number of complementary benefits to be gained. This is what is commonly referred to as the "strategic" use of resettlement. In other words, the use of resettlement in a manner so that it creates benefits, directly or indirectly, to refugees other than to those refugees being resettled. This allows for the use of resettlement as a solution for some refugees, while at the same time achieving more protection for a larger number of refugees or improving the asylum conditions in the countries where they reside.



Uzbek refugees at Bishkek airport, Kyrgyzstan (photo BBC)

Resettlement criteria and processes

The UNHCR resettlement criteria and related considerations form the basis for the identification of refugees in need of resettlement and the pursuance of resettlement as the appropriate durable solution. They are contained in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, which was endorsed by UNHCR's Executive Committee in 1996.

The resettlement criteria are defined on the basis of the protection needs of certain categories of refugees, or typologies of refugee situations, for which resettlement is deemed the only available durable solution. If a refugee falls under one of the following eight categories, he or she may be eligible for resettlement:

- 1) Legal and Physical Protection Needs;
- 2) Survivors of Torture and Violence;
- 3) Medical Needs
- 4) Women-at-Risk
- 5) Family Reunification
- 6) Children and Adolescents
- 7) Elderly refugees
- 8) Refugees with lack of local integration prospects - for whom no other durable solution is available.

UNHCR encourages States to use these criteria to inform and guide their decisions on resettlement cases.

"Integration potential" as a resettlement criterion

In spite of the clear protection-oriented nature of resettlement, in recent years, some resettlement countries are increasingly resorting to selection criteria that are based on integration potential rather than protection needs. An approach that emphasizes immigration criteria (such as the integration potential) rather than protection needs may result in

Resettlement is not an alternative to the spontaneous asylum seeking

putting the lives of vulnerable refugees at risk when no other solutions are available to them.

Refugees in need of resettlement fall by definition within vulnerable categories, which is precisely the reason why UNHCR considers them eligible and in need of resettlement. In other words, the "integration potential" criterion is in contradiction with the very nature of resettlement, which is meant to be a humanitarian solution to the plight of refugees. UNHCR is concerned that this approach may create confusion between refugees and economic migrants.

A common EU Resettlement Scheme

UNHCR welcomes the discussion about the establishment of a common EU Resettlement Scheme, as well as the proposal to include a resettlement component in the Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs). However, re-



Darfur Camp (UNHCR/ J.B. Mollard)

settlement must be seen as a complement, and not a substitute, for national asylum policies.

Further, the indicative resettlement target or quota that is set for the RPP would need to be such as to make an impact on the overall protection needs identified in particular countries or regions. UNHCR encourages the setting of a substantial resettlement target or quota. In short, the EU Scheme should aim to increase resettlement to the EU, and not simply be the sum of the present national EU state programmes.

Given that resettlement is a core function of UNHCR, the organisation is pleased that the central role of UNHCR in identifying resettlement needs, proposing operating procedures and coordinating quotas has been recognized. UNHCR has signalled its readiness to assist in the design and implementation of a common EU resettlement scheme. However, additional resources will be required, in the form of financial

contributions earmarked to UNHCR's resettlement activities, to ensure that the necessary added capacity to identify and refer resettlement candidates can be built into UNHCR's field operations.

NGOs can also play an important role, and UNHCR would be pleased to collaborate with NGOs from EU countries ready to assist in the implementation of the scheme.

Although the first EU resettlement operation is to be undertaken within the context of the pilot RPP(s), UNHCR hopes that consideration can be given, after the initial pilot, to a wider application of the concept. It would be important to maintain the concept of the common EU Scheme, as one of a wider program operating globally, which is not restricted to a geographic region or specific nationality or nationalities. This would permit a more equitable access to international protection as well as durable solutions for refugees worldwide.

UNHCR

www.unhcr.ch

European Commission's proposal on Regional Protection Programmes

Background

The 2nd of September 2005 the Commission presented to the Council and to the Parliament the proposals for an EU approach to the international protection system. The Regional Protection programmes should enhance the capacity of areas close to region of origin to protect refugees. It seeks to strengthen co-operation between Europe and countries of first asylum. The aim should be to create the conditions for one of the three Durable Solutions to take place: local integration in the country of first asylum, return or resettlement.

According to the Commission, Resettlement of refugee would be an important factor in demonstrating the partnership element of Regional Protection programmes to third countries.

Regions for the first Regional Protection Programmes

The Commission proposed two areas for the pilot's programmes:

a) The Western Newly Independent State (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus). The work will focus on strengthening the already existing protection capacity throughout reinforcement of subsidiary protection, integration and registration.

b) Sub Saharan Africa (Great Lakes/East Africa). This programme reflects the idea to be close to the refugees' countries of origin and to support them. The Community intends establishing a dialogue with Tanzanian authorities in order to discuss the opportunities for and the appropriateness of a Regional Pro-

-tection Programme in the country, addressing the refugees from the great Lakes region.

c) North Africa, Afghanistan region and Horn of Africa are the other possibilities to be explored for further development of Regional Protection Programmes.

An evaluation of the RPP, mainly focus on the effects and results of the programmes will be carried out by 2007.

The document is available on the webpage of the European Union's area of Freedom security and Justice.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/illegal/doc_immigration_illegal_en.htm#com_2005_388



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa



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Coming soon...

CONFERENCE:

"Understanding Resettlement in Practice: capacity building for action!"

A project of CCME

**9th-12th of November 2005,
Brussels**

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.