



# Don't give up – You have to fight!

A survey of resettled children and young people's  
experiences and need of information about their new life  
in Sweden



Länsstyrelsen  
Gävleborg

Gävleborg County  
Administrative Board



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life in Sweden



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Cover photo: Eira film/ES film



## Preface

Since 2009, the County Administrative Board of Gävleborg has been working with the county-wide project *Landa* in order to develop introduction and information activities for newly arrived refugees resettled in Gävleborg. The goal was to develop models for introduction activities that can be used by all municipalities and counties that receive resettled refugees. In 2012, the project underwent transition into *Landa II*, further develops the county's work with resettled individuals and includes the following areas:

- A regional reception of resettled refugees in the county
- A further development of information activities with a particular focus on children and young people

The project is financed through the European Refugee Fund. The project is run in cooperation with the county's municipalities, the Swedish Migration Board and the Swedish Public Employment Service.

During 2012, the project has carried out a survey of the reception experiences of 51 children and young people. The survey was conducted by Mariana Femling. The survey has also been documented in the film *Don't give up*.

The report and film are available on the websites [www.landagavleborg.se](http://www.landagavleborg.se) and [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu)

Gävle, October 2012



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## Summary

*Landa* is a county-wide project for the development of introduction and information activities for newly arrived refugees resettled in Gävleborg. These activities are largely aimed towards adults. The group of children and young people aged 7-18 years has not been prioritised in the introduction and establishment activities.

To improve the activities and developed an adapted introduction material for this group required increased knowledge on children/young people's experiences of reception and their need of introduction activities. Interviews have been conducted with 51 resettled children/young people, both individually and in focus groups. Here are some examples of questions posed and discussed:

- What did you know about Sweden before you came here?
- What information did you receive when you came here?
- Who told you this?
- What is important to tell someone who is moving from your home country to Sweden?
- How shall we tell this?

Approximately 60 per cent of the children/young people interviewed in the project have participated in one of the Swedish Migration Board's *Sweden Programmes (Sverigeprogram)*, and approximately 40 per cent had, in the main, not received any information at all about Sweden prior to departure. All had received help and introduction on arrival. It is clear that the *Sweden Programme* makes a difference and, above all, the *Sweden Programmes* that have had local information and personnel at the information session.

School, the language, climate and that you have to fight and work hard were issues that almost all those interviewed in the project thought were the most important to provide information about to the children/young people who come here. The younger children thought that the most important things to be informed about were school, out-of-school activities and the climate. The older ones felt that problems arising in the family after arrival, loneliness and the difficulty of gaining a good education were the most important. These are some of the things they said:

*“You have to fight – Don't give up!”*

*“It is very important to learn the language as fast as possible”*

*“Tell me about the climate and seasons – that they go round”*

*“Tell me a lot about schools – that without an education, it is very difficult to get a job in Sweden”*

In the interviews, it emerged that it is important to talk about things that create security. To produce pictures and films for children/young people and to let young people who “have made the journey” be involved in the introduction work were some pieces of advice the project received.

The survey shows that the children/young people are in need of quick integration into Swedish society. A good start and introduction can be crucial for newly arrived children/young people moving to a new country. Spending time and resources on a good start is a sound investment both for society and for the individual.

At the same time as Sweden will need to receive significantly more refugees in the future, the municipalities, through the new establishment reform, have reduced resources for refugee reception. Here, there is a lot to gain from coordination and quality assurance in a collaboration between the county's municipalities. There is a need for a mechanism to support and supervise personnel and provide them with relevant and updated information materials. Appoint a regional coordinator for the introduction work/refugee reception.

The survey results are based on the experiences and needs that children/young people have with respect to introduction activities, but are largely transferable to adults.



## Introduction

Since 2009, the County Administrative Board of Gävleborg has been working with the county-wide project *Landa* in order to develop introduction and information activities for newly arrived refugees resettled in Gävleborg. The goal was to develop models for the introduction activities for use by all municipalities and counties that receive resettled refugees. In 2012, the project underwent transition into *Landa II*, further develops the county's work with resettled individuals and includes the following areas:

- A regional reception of resettled refugees in the county
- A further development of information activities with a particular focus on children and young people

The project is financed through the European Refugee Fund. The project is run in cooperation with the county's municipalities, the Swedish Migration Board and the Swedish Public Employment Service.

Further development of the information activities encompasses both information and introduction provided prior to departure to Sweden and a development of joint information activities for newly arrived refugees immediately after arrival in the new home municipality.

The work of Project Landa is to develop a model for how the information should be given in an instructive way within a limited space of time, so that it is appropriate and clear. Among other things, various kinds of information materials have been produced, such as information brochures in the relevant languages and the information film in Tigrinya, "The life of an Eritrean family in Sweden".

When possible, the Swedish Migration Board, through its *Sweden Programme*, provides resettled refugees who have obtained a residence permit with information about Sweden and life in the new country prior to departure. The purpose of the programme is to inform the refugees about conditions in Sweden and prepare them for the journey and arrival in Sweden and to create realistic expectations.

So far, these activities have largely been aimed towards adults. Children/young people aged up to 18 years is a neglected group with respect to establishment activities and introduction. They begin in pre-school, primary and lower-secondary school or in upper-secondary school. The school's focus and mission is language and learning. Children/young people are not covered by the establishment activities and introduction provided to adults, and there are seldom activities in this area that address this age group.

This survey therefore has a particular focus on the need that newly arrived and resettled children/young people have for introduction and information activities. The project is designed to find out what is needed to improve the reception and the introduction activities for children/young people aged 7-18 years. Based on this knowledge, a model is to be developed for how the county's work with reception shall move forward.

This model shall then be tested in the reception work during 2013 in order to then be used in the ordinary work of receiving resettled children/young people.

## Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to increase knowledge about resettled children and young people's need of introduction and information activities *prior to departure* and *on reception in connection with arrival* in the new home municipality.

## Objective

The objective of the survey is to produce a basis for developing a model for introduction activities in the future reception of resettled refugees aged 7-18 years.

## Questions

In order to increase knowledge on children and young people's experiences of reception and their need of introduction activities, the survey needs to obtain answers to:

- What do the children/young people need to know before they come?
- What is most important to communicate?
- What is the best way to work with introduction?
- What is the best way to provide children/young people with information?
- How can their experiences from their initial time in Sweden and their suggestions for improvements be harnessed?

## Hypotheses

Prior to the survey, our hypotheses are that:

- the information will be extremely diverse
- children/young people's experiences of the same information will vary
- many have not received any information at all
- language difficulties may affect the result
- those who have been part of the Sweden programme have received opportunities for a better start
- the information that provides the opportunity to process information using multiple senses, such as pictures, drawing, painting, singing, playing, etc. is more successful than traditional information using speech and text.
- young people do not dare or are not accustomed to giving criticism.

## Definitions and abbreviations

The following are definitions and abbreviations used in this report.

**Introduction activities:** An initial help, other information, or conversation, text, lesson, etc. where initial assistance is given.

**Information:** Anything capable of being perceived.

**Children** are defined under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as persons under 18 years. **Young people** is used to describe those who are 13-25 years old. Thus, for the age group 13 to 18 years, both terms can be used (UNICEF, 2012).

**Refugee** is someone owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR, 2012a).

**Asylum seeker** is someone who travels to Sweden and seeks protection (asylum) here, but whose application is still pending.

**Resettlement** is the organised selection and transfer of refugees to Sweden. This is carried out by the Swedish Migration Board in cooperation with the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR. Those selected are often called quota refugees.

**Quota refugee** denotes refugees and other persons in need of protection. Quota refugees are selected in cooperation with the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, which presents cases which it assesses to have exhausted all other possibilities, such as return to the country of origin or settlement in the country of refuge and where resettlement is the only solution. These persons who are selected in the Swedish refugee quota often have their residence permits ready upon arrival and can thus settle in a municipality immediately.

This report uses the term resettled individuals or resettled refugees.



Picture 1. Refugee camp

Photo: Swedish Migration Board

The following abbreviations appear in this report:

UN	<i>The United Nations</i>
SFI	Swedish for immigrants
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - the UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund - the UN's organisation for children's rights
IOM	International Organisation of Migration
EBO	Eget boende (Own accommodation) – the asylum seeker arranges his/her own accommodation
ABO	Swedish Migration Board accommodation centre

## Background

### The refugee situation in the world

To place the refugee quota in a larger context, it may be good to have something to compare with. These figures come from the UNHCR.

Today, there are approximately 44 million displaced people outside their country of origin. Of these, it is estimated that around 800 000 individuals are in need of resettlement in the coming years, that is, their situation is untenable, and there is no solution for them. Today, there are about 80 000 places for quota refugees worldwide. This means that only one in ten in need of this help is able to get it. See Picture 2.



Figures taken from the UNHCR website: [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

Picture 2. The refugee situation in the world

Source and picture: Swedish Migration Board

### The Swedish refugee quota

Sweden is one of about 25 countries in the world that receives quota refugees – resettled refugees. Each year, the Riksdag allocates money for a Swedish refugee quota. The Swedish refugee quota is intended for refugees and other persons in need of protection, who cannot return home and are not safe in their current location.

The Swedish Migration Board, in cooperation with the UNHCR, selects the cases which are assessed to have exhausted all other possibilities, such as return to the country of origin or settlement in the country of refuge and where resettlement is the only solution. These persons who are selected in the Swedish refugee quota often have their residence permits ready upon arrival and can thus settle in a municipality immediately.

Sweden is the European country that receives the highest number of resettled refugees, around 1 900 refugees per year. Gävleborg is one of the counties in Sweden that receives the highest number of resettled individuals, around 150-200 per year. Eight of the county's 10 municipalities currently receive resettled refugees. These are the municipalities of Ljusdal, Bollnäs, Ovanåker, Ockelbo, Sandviken, Hudiksvall, Nordanstig and Hofors.

# Method

## Timetable

The timetable for the survey was from February 2012 to September 2012.

Feb – March	An interview template and an information letter to parents and schools was produced. Refugee coordinator/officers were contacted to reach children and young people. A small study of the literature was performed in order to gain an overview of current research in the area. Two pilot studies were conducted by means of test interviews.
April – May	Interviews were conducted and data collected.
June – July	Compilation of data. A working model was developed for continued reception activities.
Aug – Sep	The survey results were presented.

## Working method

Prior to the start of this project, contact was made with Region Gävleborg for help with the design of an interview template and with how child interviews should be designed, see Appendix 1. Contact was also made with experts at the UNHCR and with researchers on child interviews at Linköping University.

With the help of refugee coordinator/officers in each municipality and teachers in a number of schools, a selection of resettled children/young people was contacted. A combined information letter and consent form was sent out in advance.

A couple of test interviews were conducted in order to test and develop the questionnaire. The questions focused on the target group's experiences of the information activities they had participated in, as well as their suggestions for areas of improvement. The relevant question areas are departure, the journey, reception on arrival, introduction to the home, school and the opportunity for various out-of-school activities.

The survey was conducted using both individual interviews and interviews in focus groups. In three of the interviews, an interpreter was used. All interviews were recorded. Interviews and group work in focus groups were conducted for two days together with teachers and pupils in the project *Begripligt hela vägen* ('Understandable all the way'), Municipality of Strömsund.

Where the opportunity arose, questions also posed to parents, refugee coordinator/officers and teachers. Questions such as *What questions did the young people ask in the beginning?* and *What is important for getting a fast way into Swedish society?* were asked.

On two occasions, the officer participated in the reception of resettled refugees, in the municipalities of Sandviken and Ljusdal. The officer also participated in the work of the first information sessions for a number of newly arrived families in the municipalities of Ljusdal, Ockelbo and Nordanstig.

In May 2012, the conference, *EU Resettlement Skills Share Day* was held in Brussels. The film *Don't give up!* was produced for that occasion. The film portrays Project Landa's work to survey the experiences of children/young people with respect to the introduction they have received prior to departure and on arrival in their new country. The film is in English and is available for viewing at: [www.landagavleborg.se](http://www.landagavleborg.se) and [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu)

The survey has been continuously evaluated by the company Reflektus.

## Selection

The following selection of children/young people was made for the interviews:

- Children/young people who have come to Sweden as resettled refugees.
- The age of the children/young people on arrival in Sweden should be between 7 and 18 years.
- The project sought an equal distribution regarding age, sex, country of origin and receiving municipality.
- In order to avoid interpretation at the interviews and the time from arrival being too long, the project has chosen to include young people who have been in Sweden from 1-4 years. The age at the time of the interview is then about 8-22 years.
- Both those who have completed the Swedish Migration Board's *Sweden Programme* and those who have not had any introduction at all prior to their arrival in Sweden have been included in the study.
- The receiving municipalities where the selection of young people was made are nine of Gävleborg's ten municipalities. These are the municipalities of Bollnäs, Gävle, Hofors, Hudiksvall, Ljusdal, Nordanstig, Ockelbo, Ovanåker and Sandviken.
- Children/young people from the Municipality of Strömsund have been added after two days' work with focus groups.

Because the Municipality of Söderhamn has many asylum seekers in their own accommodation, EBO, and the Swedish Migration Board has an accommodation centre, ABO, in the municipality, the Municipality of Söderhamn has no reception of resettled refugees. For this reason, the Municipality of Söderhamn has not participated in the survey.

## Ethical aspects

The questions put to the children/young people have only focused on the introduction and information they received prior to departure and on arrival.

The young people appearing in pictures in the report and in the film have given their consent.

The interviews were completely voluntary, and the children/young people are anonymous. No names or other details that can identify the individuals have been used in the report or in any other presentation materials.

## Partners

The survey has cooperated with the project *Begripligt hela vägen*, Municipality of Strömsund. A project supported by the European Refugee Fund. Together, interviews were conducted in focus groups on the questions *What do you think is important to tell someone who is moving from your home country to Sweden?* and *What is security?* A group work was also carried out on the design of an introductory film for children and young people.

## Dissemination of results

The survey results are submitted through this report to the steering committee. The survey results have been or will be reported to the Swedish Migration Board at refugee coordinating meetings, the Working Group Integration Gävleborg at various conferences organised by Integration Gävleborg as well at international conferences in which *Landa* participates. A press release is sent to Swedish press, radio and television.

The report has been translated into English and is available on the website [www.landagavleborg.se](http://www.landagavleborg.se) Both the report and the film "Don't give up" are also available on the international network's website [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu)

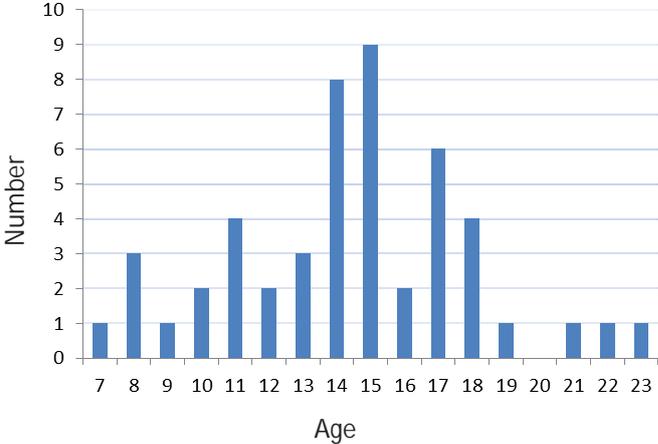
# Results

## The selection outcome

The target group fits very well with the established criteria:

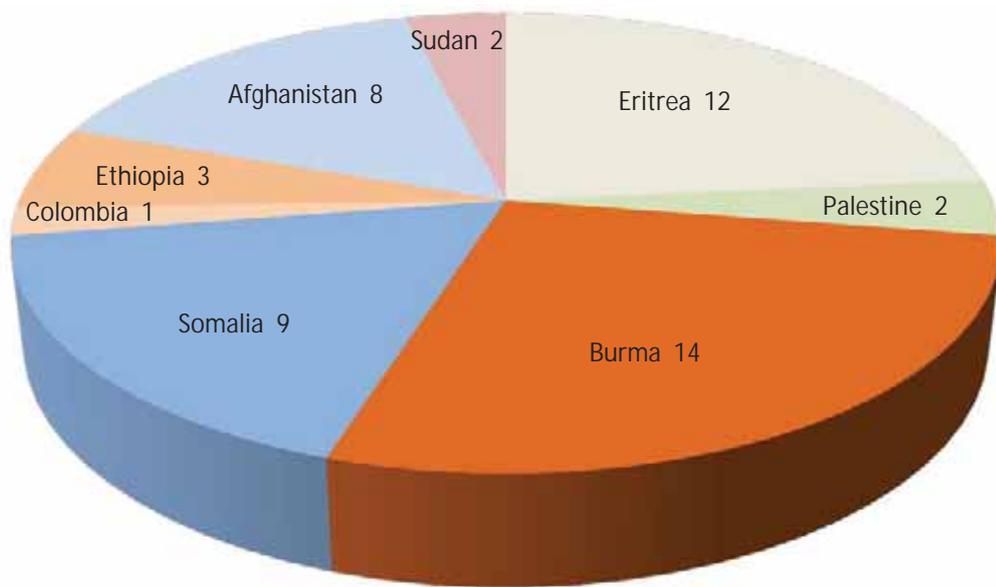
- The survey was conducted with a total of 51 children/young people.
- Of these, 26 were girls and 25 boys.
- The average age on arrival in Sweden was 14.1 years with a range of 7-23 years. See Diagram 1.
- At the time of the interview, the average age was 16.9 years with a range of 9-26 years.
- On average, the children/young people had lived in Sweden for 2.7 years with a range of 0.5-6.0 years.

Diagram 1. The age of the children/young people on arrival in Sweden



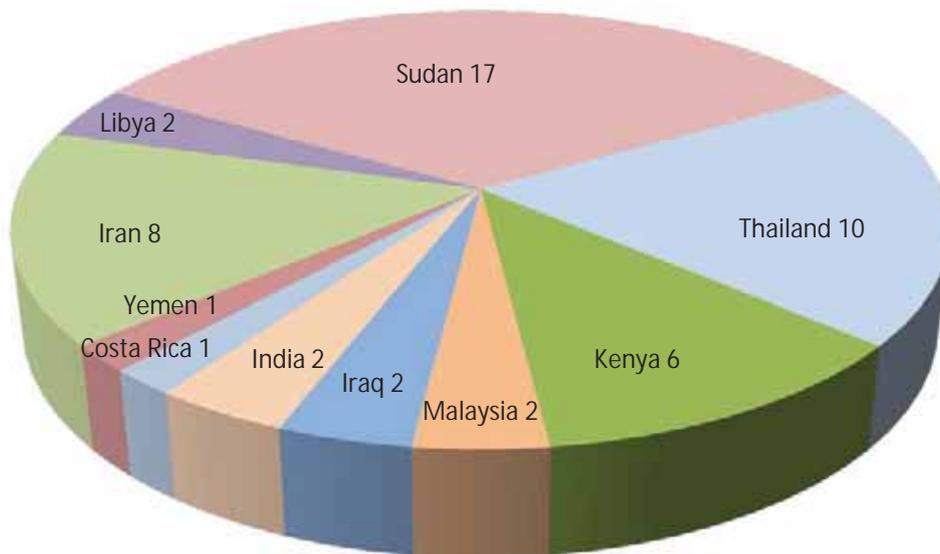
- The young people's countries of origin were Burma, Eritrea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Palestine, Sudan and Colombia, see Diagram 2. This reflects the county's reception of quota refugees about three years ago – in 2009.
- Only one of 51 children/young people was born in the country of origin. With few exceptions, they have also never been in their country of origin. They have been living as refugees their entire lives.

Diagram 2. The family's country of origin



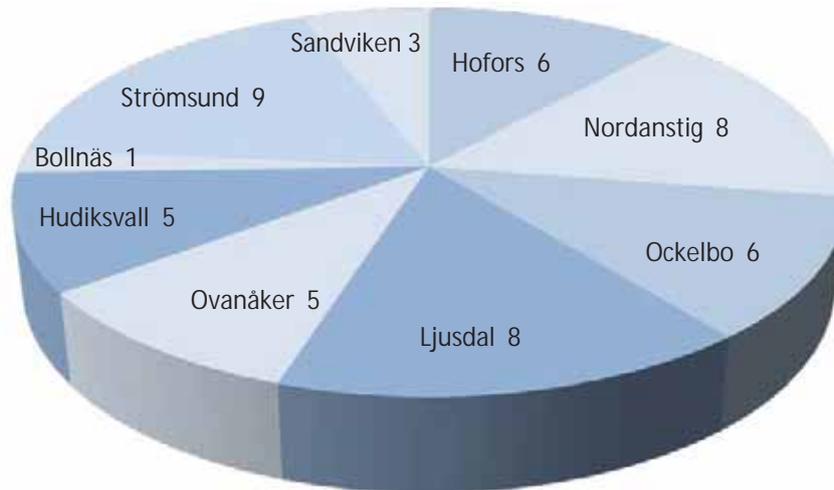
- The countries in which the children/young people have lived as refugees and from which they travelled to Sweden are primarily Thailand, Sudan, Iran and Kenya. But Malaysia, Iraq, India, Costa Rica, Yemen and Libya are also represented. See Diagram 3.

Diagram 3. Countries of departure



- The children/young people interviewed live today in eight of the county's municipalities and in the Municipality of Strömsund, see Diagram 4.
- Because the Municipality of Gävle has many asylum seekers in EBO, it has chosen not to receive resettled refugees at present and has thus not participated in the survey.

Diagram 4. Receiving municipalities



### Individual interviews

During the study, 40 individual interviews were conducted. Conversations began with refreshments and informal chatting so as to establish a relaxed interview climate. The questions focused primarily on the target group's experiences of the information activities they had participated in, as well as their suggestions for areas of improvement. Below are some examples of the questions discussed.

- *What did you know about Sweden before you came here?*
- *Who told you this?*
- *What information did you receive when you came here?*
- *What do you think is important to tell someone who is moving from your home country to Sweden?*
- *How shall we tell this?*



Picture 3. Individual interview

Photo: Eira Film

## Group interviews

Interviews were conducted in a focus group on nine occasions. The group size varied from two to seven young people, and their ages were from 13 – 26 years. In total, 27 children/young people took part in the group discussions. The breakdown is shown below:

Ockelbo	5	Nordanstig	2
Ljusdal A	3	Ljusdal B	3
Hofors	2	Hudiksvall	3
Strömsund A	7	Strömsund B	6
Sandviken	3		

While working with focus groups, we raised the following questions.

- **What** is the most important thing to tell a young person of your age coming to Sweden?
- What is the best way of saying it? – **How** shall we inform them?
- Do you have any suggestions for **what can be done better** compared with the information you received?
- What, for you, is **security**?

In the last four focus groups, the group work was on *How should a good film for children and young people be?*

In collaboration with the Municipality of Strömsund, interviews were conducted in focus groups, and group work had the theme of film. The work was done both in mixed groups and divided into a “girl group” and a “boy group”.



Picture 4. Group work with the “girl group” in Strömsund

Photo: Ulrika Engholm

## The information they received and what they remembered

- Of 51 children/young people, approximately 60 per cent participated in a *Sweden Programme*.
- Approximately 35 per cent of the children/young people had participated in a *Sweden Programme* with local information and personnel from the counties of Gävleborg or Jämtland.
- Approximately 40 per cent of the children/young people had received almost no information at all, about Sweden or what would happen in the near future, prior to departure.
- One of the 40 children/young people who were interviewed individually had had access to the internet prior to departure.

There was a great difference in the information the children/young people had received about their new life and country prior to departure. This ranged from not knowing anything other than “I’m going to Sweden (without even knowing where Sweden is) and it’s cold and there is snow - the snow is warm” to having participated in a Sweden Programme and received information for two consecutive days. There, information was given alternatingly to a children/young people’s group and a large group together with the whole family where they received both verbal information and pictures of local motifs and personnel.

It is difficult to take in information in the situation of upheaval, such as departing to a completely foreign country. The information prior to departure was perceived by many young people as vague, and many of them had relatively blurred recollections. They show this through responses such as “don’t remember”, “have forgotten”, etc. The young people also remember completely different things. It is interesting to compare the responses of siblings. On a couple of occasions, we obtained completely different responses from siblings or young people who had been present at the same information session. One of the siblings had, for example, seen pictures and explains in detail what they had seen, while the other sibling “had not seen anything at all”. Sometimes, it was even difficult to separate the information they had received prior to departure from the information they had received after arrival.

Here are some of the things said - quotations from the interviews when asked what they remembered of the information received prior to departure:

*“Do not remember – have forgotten”*

*“You have so many other things in your head – other things to think about”*

*“I was only thinking about what I would wear and how I looked”*

*“I was worrying the whole time about what it would be like without my friends”*

*“The only thing I cared about was if I could play football”*

*“I only thought about a permanent country and a home – only thought about us going to flee”*

The children/young people that had received information, both through someone telling them and through pictures and film remembered and knew much more about the journey, their new life and country than those who had only received verbal or written information. The difference was strikingly high.

Here it is clear that the *Sweden Programme* makes a difference and, above all, the *Sweden Programmes* that have had local information and personnel at the information session.

The young people who had received the information in a young people's group expressed that it is:

*“Important for daring to ask – I do not ask when parents/adults are there – many women do not dare to ask when men are there”*

*“It's faster”*

*“It's much more fun”*

*“You gain new friends who are going to do the same thing”*

One of the young people expressed, on the other hand, that she absolutely did not want to leave the family; this was a family where family members, after having gone out, had “disappeared” and had never come back. Some of them explained that parents had told them not to ask any questions because they were afraid that their residence permit would be withdrawn.

However, the young people remembered very well the introduction they received upon arrival and the time immediately following. This is largely due to them meeting several times. This gives a number of repetitions, and there is a much more secure and calm atmosphere. All had received assistance and introduction on arrival. However, there was quite a large difference between the municipalities. The children/young people particularly highlighted the availability and assistance of personnel at the municipal refugee reception centre. The commitment of teachers in the preparatory classes was also highlighted. Said by one of the young people:

*“Small problems and issues don't have the chance to become major disasters if you get help in time”*

*“Really difficult for people coming now when there are no refugee coordinators”*

### **What is important information? – What is most important to say?**

What constitutes important information differs depending on past experiences, age, religion, sex, education, country of origin, etc. The children/young people express the need of quick integration into Swedish society, and there were some factors mentioned by virtually all of them regardless of their background.

Virtually all the children/young people thought that school, the language, climate and that you have to fight and work hard were the most important issues about which to provide information to the children/young people who come here. The younger children thought that the most important things to be informed about were school, out-of-school activities and the climate – the seasons – “that they go round”.

The older ones felt that problems arising in the family after arrival, loneliness and the difficulty of gaining a good education were the most important.

Some quotations of things said in the interviews:

<i>“Don't give up – you have to fight”</i>	<i>Virtually all</i>
<i>“Tell me a lot about schools - that schools are good – In school, you get food – You are not allowed to beat children in school”</i>	<i>Virtually all</i>
<i>“In Sweden, it is cold and dark, and everyone is indoors”</i>	<i>Girl, 11 years</i>
<i>“Important to say that not everything will be perfect – don't just talk about good things”</i>	<i>Girl, 22 years</i>
<i>“I reside in Sweden – but live in Arabic”</i>	<i>Girl, 18 years</i>
<i>“You should know that your life will begin again from zero”</i>	<i>Boy, 19 years</i>
<i>“Say that people take off their shoes in Sweden”</i>	<i>Boy, 13 years</i>

<i>“Schools have proper food”</i>	<i>Boy, 9 years</i>
<i>“Don't do anything at all just to get friends”</i>	<i>Girl, 13 years</i>
<i>“You must have the courage to ask for help”</i>	<i>Girl, 25 years</i>
<i>“You have to fight more than 100%”</i>	<i>Girl, 16 years</i>
<i>“In Sweden, you have to be on time – there is no before or after or later”</i>	<i>Girl, 15 years</i>
<i>“Seek contact with Swedish people yourself – they won't make contact – then you become friends”</i>	<i>Girl, 22 years</i>
<i>“Collect words”</i>	<i>Boy, 22 years</i>
<i>“Travelling is fun – fun to go on an aeroplane”</i>	<i>Boy, 15 years</i>
<i>“Important to know that you are not allowed to beat children – but explain to the boys that this doesn't mean they get to do what they want”</i>	<i>Girl, 22 years</i>
<i>“That everyone eats pig”</i>	<i>Girl, 11 years</i>
<i>“That Swedes don't wear headscarves”</i>	<i>Girl, 15 years</i>
<i>“Mum doesn't decide – I decide for myself”</i>	<i>Girl, 16 years</i>
<i>“You are not allowed stand there, eating in the shop at ICA”</i>	<i>Boy, 9 years</i>
<i>“Without education - no jobs in Sweden”</i>	<i>Girl, 19 years</i>

## **What is security?**

In addition to discussing what is most important to be informed about, there was a lot of discussion on the concept of security *What, for you, is security?* What security is differs a great deal depending on age, sex, country of origin, previous experiences, etc. Children/young people say that they need to know things that help to create security. Concrete information and information that plays down the situation creates security. Some factors that contribute to security prior to departure are for the majority:

- Information about the journey
- Knowing what will happen in the near future
- Knowing that you will get help when you arrive and in the following period
- Getting to know a lot about schools
- Films and pictures of the new country
- Films and pictures of the locality – and of the people who will be receiving them

There are varied responses from the young people to the question on what security is. These involve knowing that the police do not take people, that teachers are not allowed to beat children, bringing keepsakes and being with one's family – not getting separated from one's family. Here are some more of the things said:

- “Getting to know a lot about schools”*
- “That you are not allowed to beat children – at school”*
- “Knowing how you can complete your studies”*
- “Understanding the language”*
- “Knowing that I can play football over there”*
- “Being able to drink the water”*
- “Having a lot of keepsakes”*
- “That Sweden doesn't have thieves on bikes that take children”*

*“It is safe – there's no war”*

*“Being with one's family – not getting separated from one's family”*

*“Knowing that you will get help when you arrive”*



Picture 5. Group interview with the “boy group” in Strömsund

Photo: Ulrika Engholm

### **Tips for an information film for children/young people**

Both in the individual interviews and in the focus groups, there was a lot of discussion on how to provide information on the best way. The answer was without a doubt that information is best given using pictures and film. Based on this, they set about working on a “screenplay”. Here are some tips from the children/young people:

*“Show a lot from school – the classroom – the dining room – the sports hall – a chemistry experiment”*

*“Say that schools have a lot of holidays”*

*“Show a family travelling and show life early on”*

*“Show an apartment and a laundry room”*

*“Show nature and buildings – all sorts of buildings, not just the big ones – say there are different types”*

*“Show them that time is important, e.g. show how Willys has its opening hours on the wall and say that these are exact times”*

*“Show the weather and that there is snow and it's cold”*

*“The seasons, that they go round – that it's dark in the winter and really light in the summer”*

*“Show young people at the gym, on the football pitch, etc.”*

*“Show more girls in action”*

*“Get a mix of Swedish and foreign young people in the film”*

*“Show that there is equality in Sweden – that bosses and everyone else do their shopping in the same shop – mix all sorts of people”*

*“Make the film in episodes so that you can pause it to discuss and ask questions”*

*“Don't use formal language, like in books – use colloquial language”*

*“Get rid of the boring music – use young people's music”*



*Picture 6. Young people from the film Don't give up!*

*Photo: Eira film/ES film*

### **What refugee coordinators, teachers and parents say**

The experiences of refugee coordinator/officers, parents and teachers fit well with the findings of the survey. Tips and ideas from this target group:

- Organise outings/picnics and trips – e.g. to Furuvik and Järvzoo
- Create venues and meetings – this creates integration – no physical meetings, no integration
- Meetings of a more relaxed, informal nature
- Increase contact with associations and voluntary organisations – continue working with that
- Voluntary organisations need to take on a greater role
- Focus on associations – Work actively to help people into associations
- Use the culture school – libraries – aesthetic programmes etc.
- Work with the United Nations Day – 24 October
- Information takes time and commitment – just pure information is not enough – it takes commitment
- You just have to keep plugging away – do not give up – be committed
- Find the right people, committed people
- Develop the venues – the meetings – how do we reach the voluntary organisations?
- Find, train and support dedicated enthusiasts
- Find out why the young people give up doing activities, ask them:
  - What do you want to do?
  - What could you do?
  - What are your goals – dreams?

To the question *What do the young people ask most about?* which was put to refugee coordinators, teachers and parents, the responses were unequivocal:

- They ask a lot about school
- About when they can start in the “normal” class
- The girls ask most about school
- The boys ask a lot about football and out-of-school activities
- They ask a lot about computers

### **Limitations**

The interviews with interpreters were more difficult than those with direct communication. Even if the interpreter is positive and ambitious, there is still a “distance” between the interviewee and interviewer. When there is silence, the interpreter tends to ask leading questions to elicit a response.

It is important not to steer the interview with leading questions that can be answered with a yes or no, such as *Do you think we should talk about the weather and the seasons?* This is true both for the interviewer and for any interpreter.

It is difficult to gauge the effects of the information they have received.

The children/young people are not accustomed to giving criticism or they dare not do so.

## Discussion

The survey shows that the children/young people are in need of quick integration into Swedish society. A good start and introduction can be crucial for newly arrived children/young people moving to a new country. To bring about quick and good integration, it is necessary to allocate resources for reception and introduction to Swedish society. Spending time and resources on a good start is a sound investment both for society and for the individual.

The survey results are based on the experiences and needs that children/young people have with respect to introduction activities, but are largely transferable to adults.

### Information prior to departure

Faced with such a great and upheaving experience that moving to a completely foreign country means, *the children/young people usually have many thoughts and speculations that make it difficult to take in information. Not knowing anything creates anxiety and insecurity. Prior to departure, children/young people need to know things that help to create security. A certain level of security also means that it is possible to better take in information and impressions.*

In order to create as secure conditions as possible prior to departure, it is important to provide concrete information and information that plays down the situation. Here, only the most essential information is to be included. The children/young people need to *know how things will work on the journey and what is going to happen in the near future. That someone will come and receive them and that they will get help when they arrive in their new home* are important things to communicate. Getting to know *a lot about the schools* is extremely important for everyone aged 7-20 years. *Local information* helps to create security.

Here, harness the experience and knowledge of the resettled young people/young adults, in terms of language, culture and experiences. Use the young people and young adults who are in the county in the introduction work.



Picture 7. The Swedish Migration Board's Sweden Programme  
Photo: Swedish Migration Board

The optimum method is to divide the information into two sessions, which gives time and opportunity to process impressions and to formulate the questions that already exist and may arise. Where there is opportunity, information should be alternated between a large group and smaller groups.

General information, such as films of the new country, the journey and maps etc., are more appropriate for viewing by the whole group. For information about the culture, social issues etc., where the opportunity for questions is desired, smaller groups are appropriate. Here, the survey clearly demonstrates that a children/young people's group is preferable. This is first and foremost because *“It is important for daring to ask”* but also because *“It's faster”*, *“It's much more fun”* and *“You gain new friends who are going to do the same thing.”*

The children/young people have expressed clearly that pictures and film is the best way in which to give information. Regardless of the level education, they do not like reading texts longer than a few lines. Most countries also have a large number of dialects and languages, which often makes it impossible to understand the content of the written text.

Adapted information materials are needed for children/young people. Films are appropriate for showing:

- Simple information about Sweden
- How things will work on the journey
- What will happen when they arrive and life early on
- Different housing environments
- The seasons – that they go round

Pictures are appropriate for showing:

- Maps
- Local motifs from the receiving municipalities – the new home municipalities
- Pictures of personnel they will be meeting early on
- Pictures of, and things said, by children/young people who have made “the journey”
- Seasons – that they go round



Picture: Swedish Migration Board

Let each child/young person receive a simple, summary booklet that includes a simple glossary, pictures from the film they have seen, the local motifs shown prior to departure and pictures of resettled children/young people, with a selection of “the things they said about what is most important to say”.

Today, the refugee camps have internet to a much greater extent than was the case just three years ago. Of the 51 children/young people, one had had access to the internet prior to departure. Today, they “chat and tweet” with friends who are still in the camps. Use the internet where this is possible.

### **Information on arrival and in the period immediately following**

To bring about quick and good integration, it is necessary to allocate resources for reception and introduction to Swedish society. Especially in those cases where it has not been possible to provide information prior to departure, it is extra important to have a good introduction on arrival. Also in this work, there is much to gain from the use of the young people and young adults who “have made the journey”.

Very early on after arrival, the situation is not completely unlike that prior to departure. A long journey, many new impressions and much that is uncertain and difficult to understand. This means that the introduction and the information provided is to be simple and it needs to be repeated many times. Since it takes a long time to make a new language one's own, and considering that many of the children/young people have a much shorter schooling than their Swedish peers, the material used in all introduction and information should continue to be very clear and simple.

Using models that stimulate multiple senses at information sessions both increases understanding and makes the information easier to remember. Make use of a mix of written text, pictures, film, music, song and physical activity. Another way is to use symbols and silhouettes instead of full pictures so that viewers can create their own images. An example might be when you want to discuss family constellations, to show pictures using silhouettes or hands instead of full pictures, see Appendix 1. Show pictures of both Swedish and resettled children and young people.

Again, it is important to alternate the introduction, sometimes giving it in a larger group of entire families and sometimes in groups divided by age and/or sex in girl and boy groups. The age division that may be appropriate could, for example, be based on the school system's educational ladder, 0-6 years, 7-13 years, 14 years and older.

It is appropriate to arrange information sessions by topic, such as *The future, Health, Family, Education, Your municipality, Your country, Your county*, etc. Here it is extremely important to be able to have a flexible approach. If questions and problems arise, the sessions need to be flexible, so that the next occasion can be based on the participants' questions.

For quick integration into Swedish society, it is important for this group to come into contact as soon as possible with associations, organisations, churches, and youth clubs. This is a quick way to getting into contact with Swedish children/young people and thus also to the new language. Integration Gävleborg should actively work to make it easier for them to get into contact with associations.

Just as important as coming into contact with Swedes is making contact with countrymen or other resettled children/young people who have made "the same journey". Often, they are allocated a "Swedish sponsor" when they arrive in their new municipality/school. Several of the children/young people interviewed expressed that it would also be good to have a countryman as a sponsor or mentor. The ideal situation is to have both a friend as a way into the Swedish language and society as well as someone with whom to share questions and problems, someone who can understand.

A forum primarily for older young people and young adults where they can meet, raise questions and discuss problems with each other is an urgent need. Something that builds community. This might be in the form of meetings, internet, camps, summer school, etc.

Several of the young people and the young adults have highlighted the value of proximity and access to "their refugee coordinator/officers". Quickly getting help with small everyday problems may prevent misinterpretations and misunderstandings which in turn lead to greater problems and unnecessary work afterwards. "*Tiny, tiny details can cause big disasters.*"

The group young people and young adults, 17 – 20 years, risks falling through the cracks when it comes to education and work. They are too old to enter primary and lower-secondary school, they do not know the language well enough and usually have an inadequate educational background to start in upper-secondary school and they are too young to be considered for establishment through the Swedish Public Employment Service. They really want to study and work but there are no good solutions for them, which creates frustration and despair. It is especially difficult to find solutions in the smaller municipalities. A good start in the new country – the municipality can be crucial.

There is an urgent need to develop solutions for this age group regardless of which municipality they live in. It is important for both for the young people themselves and for society to harness the resources and energy that these young people have.

Finally, a small detail in the introduction that does not cost anything is that “International Class” has higher status than “Language class” and “Preparatory class”.

### **Major future demands on municipalities**

This section discusses that which the survey has demonstrated and that which has emerged through contact with refugee coordinator/officers, teachers and persons at Integration Gävleborg.

Refugees coming to Sweden as asylum seekers have actively chosen to come here and then usually have some knowledge of the new country. Resettled individuals coming to Sweden have been assigned a country and usually have no or very little knowledge of their new country, which places high demands on the municipal reception.

The information that the children/young people had received before coming to Sweden ranges from no information at all, to two hours in a large group of about 400 people who are going to different countries, to having participated in the “Sweden Programme”, receiving information for two consecutive days. The survey also shows that there is a great difference in the children/young people's educational background, and that there is great variation between the municipalities' refugee reception.

Besides this, because of the refugee situation in the world, the county's municipalities will within the next few years need to receive significantly more refugees than at present. This places additional requirements on the municipalities.

The new establishment reform (Dec 2010) has meant that the Swedish Public Employment Service has been given greater responsibility for the establishment of newly arrived refugees, which has resulted in a reduction of resources to the municipalities. The need and the municipality's responsibility for reception remains. The challenge to manage this despite reduced resources is great.

Here, there is a lot to gain from coordination and quality assurance in a collaboration between the county's municipalities. Harness existing experience and knowledge and utilise resources in the best way to create regional coordination and cooperation. There is a need for a mechanism to support and supervise personnel and provide them with relevant and updated information materials. Appoint a regional coordinator for the introduction work/refugee reception.

There needs to be a flexible organisation that brings in various forms of expertise as may be required. Appoint a reference group consisting of resettled young people and young adults who can be involved when producing pictures, making films, setting up forums and not least for having as a sounding board when it comes to questions concerning young people/young adults.

And last but not least, harness the experience and knowledge of the resettled immigrants themselves in terms of language, culture and experiences. Use the young people and young adults who “have made the journey” and who are in the county in the introduction work. And do not forget to include women and men, girls and boys both in the information materials and in the information work.

## Recommendations

In order to harness the capacity and energy of the newly arrived children/young people, it is of great importance to spend time and resources on a quick and good start. The survey reveals that the most urgent matters to start with are to:

- Produce picture materials adapted for children and young people
- Produce a film adapted for children and young people
- Use as resource persons the young people and young adults “who have themselves made the journey” in the information and introduction work
- Create and develop sustainable solutions with respect to education and work for the group consisting of young people and young adults aged 17 – 20 years
- Create a forum for resettled young people and young adults

In addition to this, both in the survey and through contact with refugee coordinator/officers, teachers and persons at Integration Gävleborg, it has emerged that there is an urgent need to:

- Create a long-term regional coordination for the introduction work
- Appoint a coordinator for the regional introduction work
- Appoint a reference group consisting of resettled young people and young adults
- Work actively to get associations and organisations involved in the introduction work

For more detailed information see the sections *Results* and *Discussion*.

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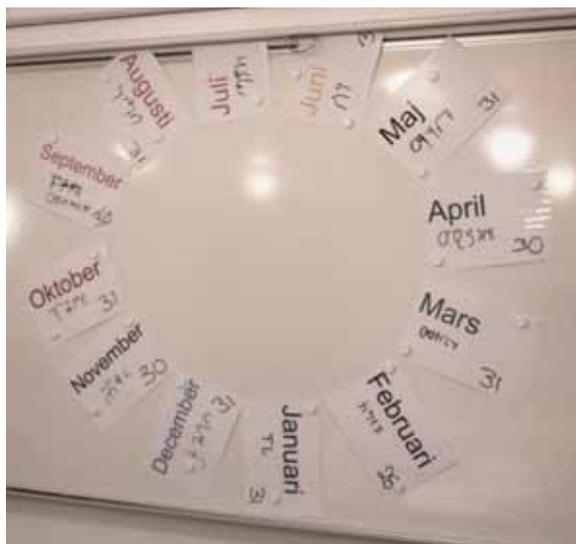
## Some examples of good information materials



*The Swedish Migration Board's timeline used in the Sweden Programme.*



*Family constellations – cohabiting, married, single and divorced with two children  
Bobo Andersson, Labour Market Unit – Gävle municipality*



*'The year's months, festivals and seasons'  
Mariana Femling, Landa – County Administrative Board of Gävleborg*



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- 2012:10 Ge inte upp – Du måste kämpa! – Kartläggning av vidarebosatta barn och ungdomars upplevelser och behov av information om sitt nya liv i Sverige

Gävleborg County Administrative Board  
Report: 2012:10  
ISSN: 0284-5954



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