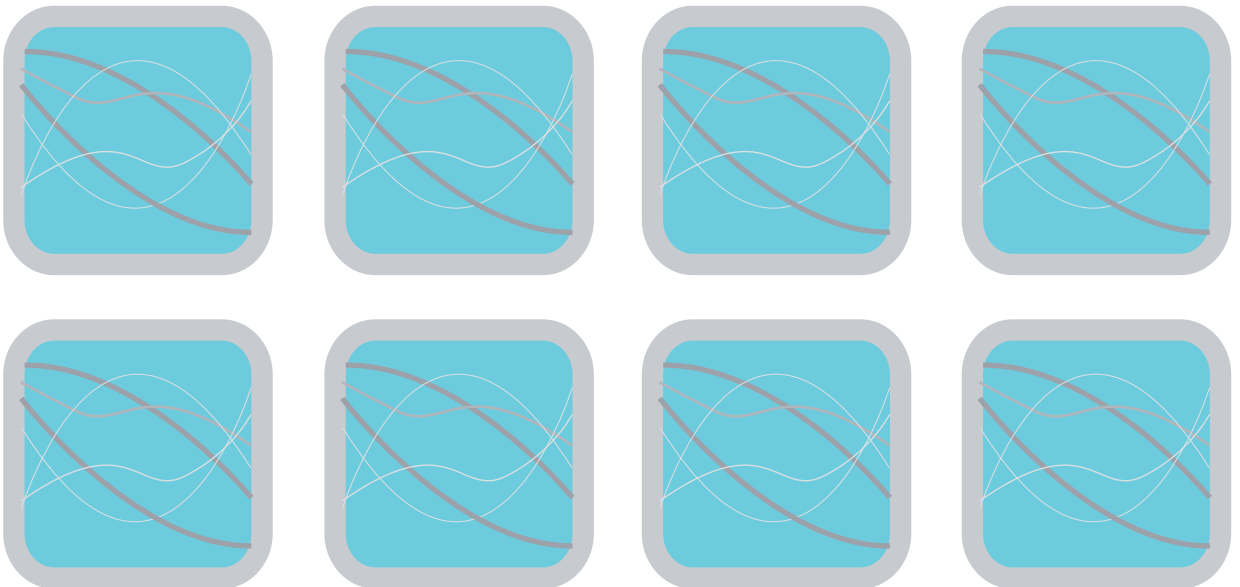


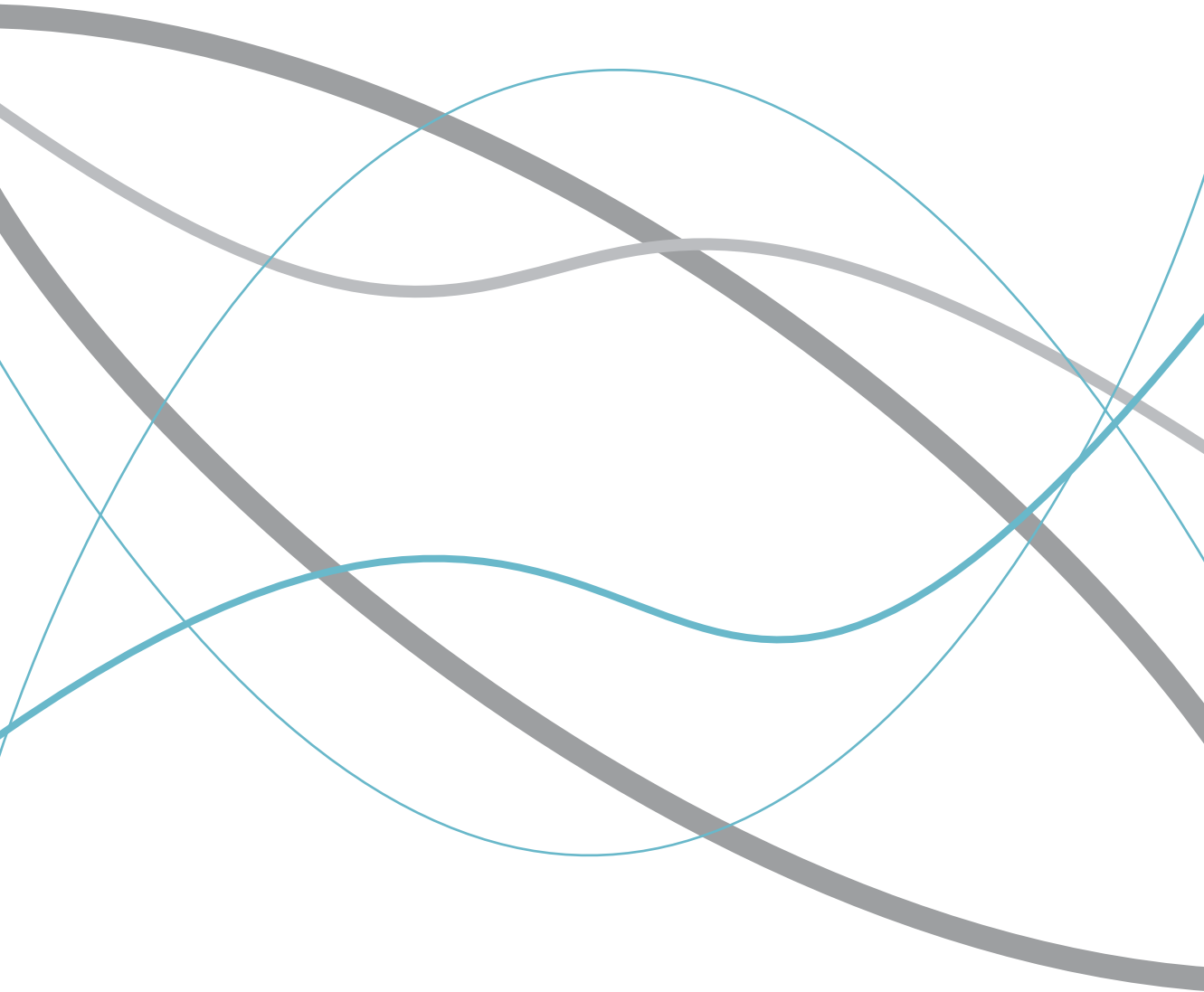
PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE IN RESETTLEMENT

– Final publication of the MOST project –



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Publisher MOST project
Graphic design Francisco Cervantes Martinez
Layout Elina Kuismin
Printed by Edita Prima Oy, Helsinki 2008

ISBN 978-952-491-336-2 (nid.)

ISBN 978-952-491-337-9 (PDF)

PDF version: www.mostproject.fi

SISÄASIAINMINISTERIÖN JULKAISUSARJA ISSN 1236-2840

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FOREWORD

Resettlement represents an important protection tool, a durable solution and a concrete demonstration of responsibility sharing. The MOST project- aimed at exploring ways to improve the resettlement process – has significantly added to the positive momentum of resettlement in the European Union in 2007.

The past year has witnessed increased knowledge sharing activities between existing and new or prospective resettlement countries in the EU. In addition, the third generation of the European Refugee Fund has broadened support for resettlement, which should further help to translate interest in resettlement into action. Importantly, in 2007, the future scope of resettlement in the EU was emphasized in the European Commission's Green Paper.¹ UNHCR keenly awaits the Commission's issuance of its 2008 policy plan and anticipates that it will reinforce the critical role of resettlement as an integral part of the Common European Asylum System.

As UNHCR's High Commissioner emphasized during a mission to the Middle East in early 2008, 'the number of resettlement opportunities for the most vulnerable is very important'.² Regrettably, the European share of worldwide resettlement accounts for merely 5%. Around 4,400 resettlement places a year are offered by the 7 EU countries with a regular resettlement programme (or 9 countries, at European level). At present in 2008, the number of refugees identified by UNHCR to be in need of resettlement (154,000) largely exceeds the number of resettlement places available worldwide. To narrow the growing gap between resettlement needs and places, UNHCR and NGOs are urging European countries to engage in resettlement and inviting existing resettlement countries to expand their quota to respond to protracted refugee and large-scale situations. In this context, UNHCR continues to promote a strategic use of resettlement to benefit the greatest number in need wherever possible.

The MORE project, which preceded the MOST project, successfully 'twinned' a traditional resettlement country, Finland, with a newer resettlement country, Ireland. In contrast, the MOST project focused on an even more challenging aspect of resettlement, namely, the quality of integration services. The practices identified in the MOST project will be invaluable in reviewing resettlement programmes in Europe. Of key importance, the project highlights the need to encourage an active participation of resettled refugees in the integration of other newly resettled refugees. Other useful findings emphasize the need to assist resettled refugees to become self-sufficient as early as possible in accessing mainstreamed services, while ensuring that such services are adapted to the individual needs and capacities of the refugee. The project also stressed the important role of work-based language acquisition programmes.

¹ COM(2007)301 final of 6.6.2007.

².Statement by Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, during a mission to the Middle East, 14 February 2008, UNHCR News Stories. See: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/47b46c3f2.html>

With 110 participants from 24 countries, the MOST project has not only significantly raised awareness about resettlement in Europe, but has proposed comprehensive solutions to ensure that this humanitarian protection tool provides a durable solution for refugees resettled in Europe.

Vincent Cochotel, Deputy Director
Division of International Protection Services
(Resettlement Service and Status Determination & Protection Information Section)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the members of the MOST Project's International Steering Committee and the Members of the Finnish, Irish, Spanish and Swedish National Working Groups for their guidance and support during the project. Special thanks go to the MOST project cooperating organisations: the UNHCR, ECRE and IOM for their generous assistance throughout the project. Thank you also for all those who participated in the MOST project workshops, closing conference and national development tasks conducted in all the partner countries.

Tiina Järvinen wishes to thank the national programme coordinators Teemu Haapalehto and Michaela Södergård for their hard work and remarkable contribution for the project. Their reports have been used as a base for the Finnish work-based training model. A special thank you goes also to Veikko Pyykkönen and Sinikka Keskinen for their insight, generosity and crucial support during the course of the project.

Jonas Doll wishes to thank Denise Thomsson for her remarkable contribution to the consultation process, Ruben Ahlvin for his support and always inspiring company, Jenny Nilsson, Carina Larsson, Solveig Eriksson, Carl-Fredrik Von Seth, Åsa Ekholm and Fawzeya Mohamidi for their contribution along the way; without you the Swedish process wouldn't have been possible.

Louise Kinlen would like to thank the staff of the Office for the Minister for Integration, particularly Martina Glennon who provided practical support and useful insights throughout the project, as well as to Mario Dragoje and Conor Dunne. Many agencies gave freely of their time and advice in conducting the research, especially the various staff of IILT, especially Stefan Piskorski and the three refugee support workers Fidelma Durkin, Josette Newman and Annie Stenson who organised so many aspects, acted as guides and provided invaluable insight into their everyday work with the resettled refugees.

Mia Luhtasaari would like to give a special thank you for Paloma Pino, María José Muñoz and Paloma Gutierrez for their contribution to the Fact-Finding Missions. The collaboration of Miguel Ángel Aznar and Rafael Polo, and the personnel of the Refugee Reception Centres were also essential for the successful realization of the MOST Project and the closing conference in Spain. And last but not least, we wish to acknowledge the input of the ENARO Network, especially that of André Baas and Robeske Tupan.

With thanks,

Tiina Järvinen
Coordinator, Finland

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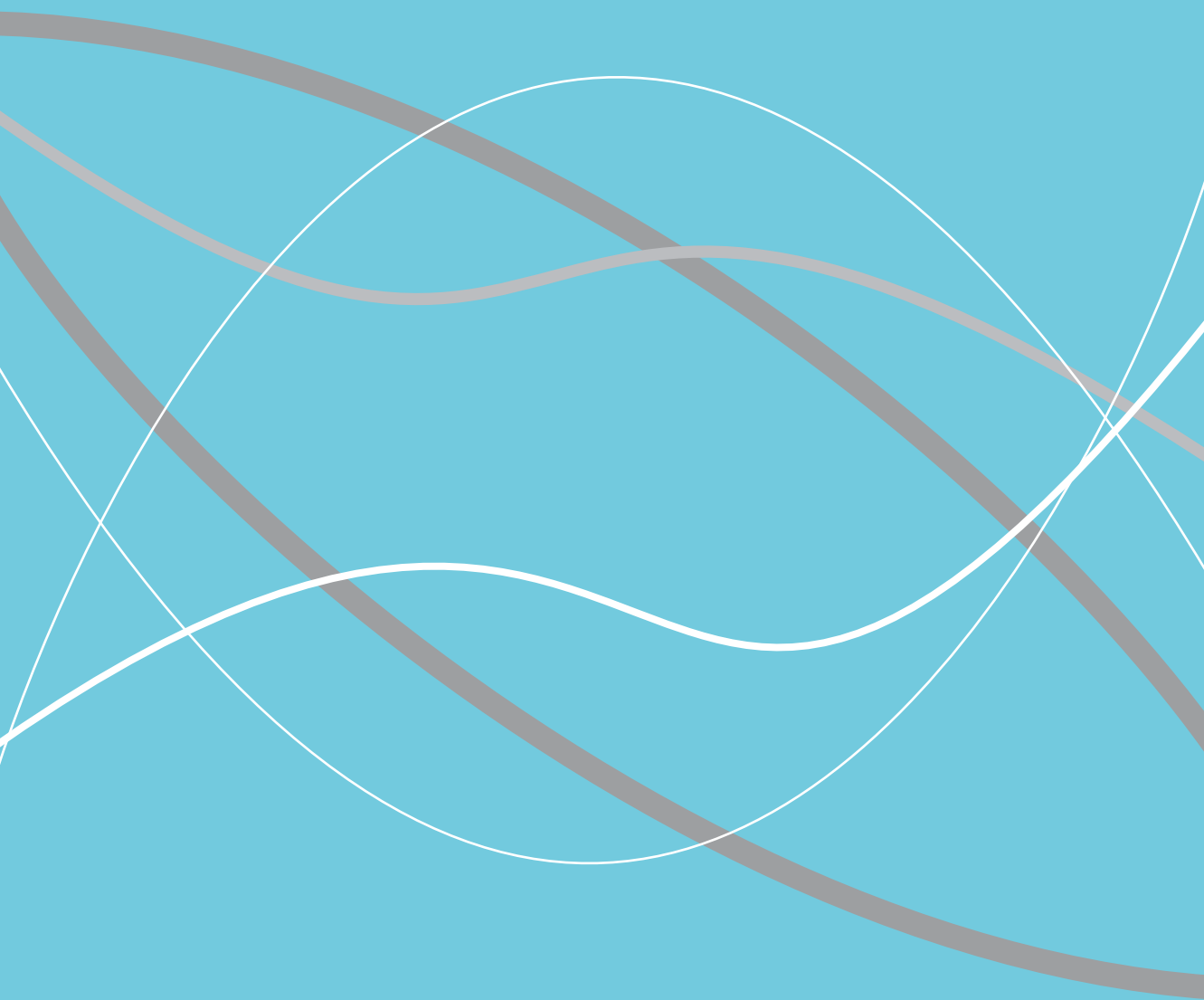
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I

INTRODUCTION

Tiina Järvinen



1. The MOST project – Improving refugee integration

MOST – *Modelling of Orientation, Services and Training related to the Resettlement and Reception of Refugees* – was a transnational project funded by the European Refugee Fund. It started in December 2006 and concluded in January 2008. The project was led by the Ministry of Labour in Finland and the project partners were the Reception and Integration Agency, Ireland, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Spain and the Swedish Migration Board, Sweden. The project was implemented in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

The overall purpose of the project was to develop comprehensive models for quicker and better integration of refugees. This included testing new practices and approaches related to the selection of refugees, orientation upon their arrival and introduction to the structures and habits of the host society. By developing these actions we hoped to create a resettlement process that would support the integration of refugees into the new host society.

During the course of the project, activities were conducted at international and national levels in Finland, Sweden, Spain and Ireland. Each partner country developed a series of specific tasks related to the project and learning was shared at transnational seminars held in each of the countries. The tasks involved implementing a consultation process with refugee communities on the experiences of previous introduction programmes (Sweden), designing and testing a new type of pre-departure and post-arrival programme and preparing related materials (Ireland), designing and testing integration training at workplaces in cooperation with educators, employers and social partners (Finland), organising a fact-finding mission for representatives of the Spanish government and organising a Closing Conference (Spain).

Approach

At the beginning of the project we identified a number of basic principles that influenced our approach to the work. These principles had an effect on the planning and designing of the project. In addition they defined the way the national and transnational activities were implemented.

The principles were as follows:

1. Individual capacity and understanding of the new environment should be built simultaneously into the social and practical context.
2. Increasing cooperation at the local level and diversification of responsibilities for the inte-

gration measures should be fostered. The involvement of employers, social partners, NGOs and refugee communities should be re-formulated so that they can play a bigger role in the integration measures.

3. Participation of refugees is important in reducing the high level of dependency as well as increasing the cultural competence in introduction programmes. Therefore the resources and the experience of resettled refugees should be utilized when integration activities are planned and organised.
4. Integration is a two-way process in which both the refugee and the host society have to make an effort. Hence, focusing only on language training, traineeships and different integration activities is not enough. The integration activities should include awareness-raising, for example by changing the image of refugees from targets of help to active actors in the process.
5. The approach should not have an effect on the original selection criteria, the main one of which remains the need for international protection.

2. An overview on resettlement at the project partner countries

- A refugee is someone who has fled his/her country of origin and has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion and is unable or unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution. (The 1951 definition of a refugee, art. 1 A (2), 1951 Convention)
- A resettled refugee is someone whose security is considered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) not to be granted either in the country where he/she is situated, or by return to the country of origin. Once refugee status is declared, the UNHCR arranges transfer from the country of asylum to a third country willing to admit the refugee on a permanent basis with the prospect of him/her becoming a naturalised citizen.

To receive quota refugees is a voluntary assignment that is principally offered to any country. Each country decides how many refugees they can resettle. Sweden, Ireland and Finland are three of seven Member States of the European Union that participate in annual refugee resettlement programmes. The others are Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Portugal (outside the EU, Norway and Iceland). There are also other EU countries that occasion-

ally accept refugees for resettlement but have not set any annual targets. These include Spain, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Czech Republic.

An important factor that affected the selection of project partners was the differences in the resettlement practices between the countries. Sweden has been receiving quota refugees since 1950 and is one of the oldest resettlement countries in the world. During the past years Sweden's quota has been between 1,200 and 1,900 people. Finland started a resettlement programme in 1979. At present the refugee quota is 750 people per annum. Ireland has been resettling refugees since 1956 under country-specific agreements. The Government established the current refugee resettlement programme in 1998, and since 2005 the quota has been 200 people annually. Spain does not have an annual quota but has received resettlement refugees on an ad hoc basis since 1978. Since then more than 5,000 people have been granted protection. An official agreement on the matter of the resettlement programme has not been reached due to political sensitivity surrounding immigration. Spain is, however, gathering information and preparing its structures for the potential implementation of a resettlement programme.

In addition, the administrative and social differences Sweden, Ireland, Finland and Spain provided an interesting platform for transnational learning during the project. Sweden and Finland have strong and independent local governments and the social welfare system is operated both at central and local level. In Ireland central government is more powerful and there is a far less delegation to local government. The strong tradition of voluntary work has also led to a high level of NGO involvement in the provision of services and social support in contrast to Sweden and Finland, where the services are usually provided by different authorities at the local level. Spain, on the other hand, has a federal system, with many of the regions being semi-autonomous and having a wide range of powers. At the local level the municipalities play an important role and provide a wide variety of services.

3. Objectives

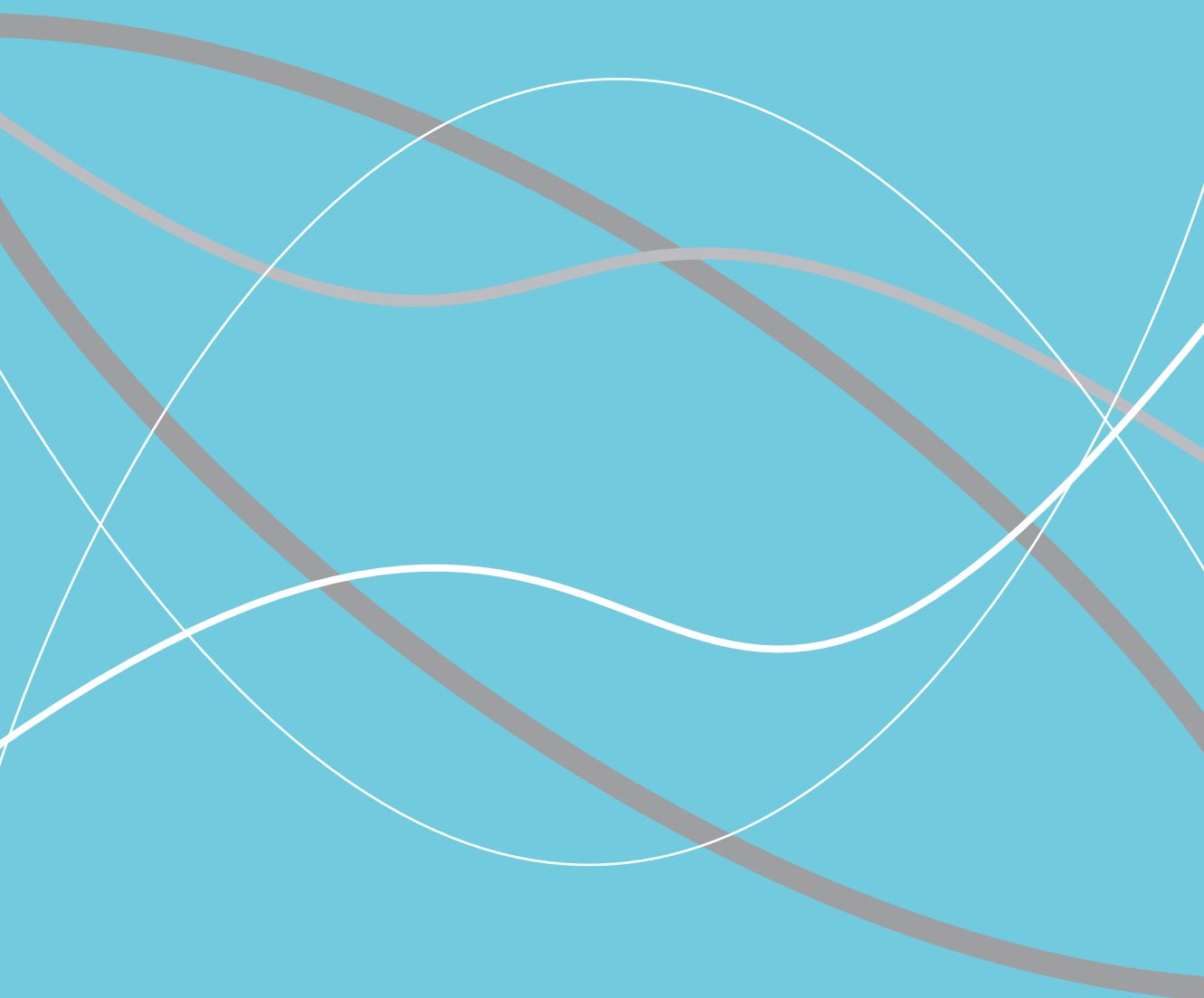
This book is the final outcome of the MOST project. It is, therefore, a presentation of the views, suggestions and ideas collected and collated throughout the course of the project. Many of these are results from the cooperation with the key actors including resettled refugees, national and local authorities, municipalities and several national and international organisations. The book is not an official document of the project partners or co-operating organisations, nor does it present the official views or policy of the project partners, co-operating organisations or the Commission.

The main objective of this book is to report the models and results arising from the national development tasks. Each country performed a different set of activities that cannot be compared. Thus, no specific recommendations on resettlement, reception or integration can be extracted. However, the final chapter is an attempt to summarize everything learned during the project.

II

EXPERIENCES OF INTRODUCTION PROGRAMMES Consultations with resettled refugees in Sweden

Denise Thomsson



Preface

The Swedish Migration and Integration authorities have for many years been trying hard to develop its introduction initiatives regarding refugees and other groups of newly arrived immigrants. The Swedish Integration Board, abolished in June 31st 2007 after nearly ten years as national authority for implementation of integration policies, had two primary objectives; First to contribute to the development of introduction initiatives which would promote a faster route to individual financial support and second, to evaluate the efforts made by municipalities and other strategic parties involved.

With this in consideration, Sweden was asked to examine the matter of introduction programs for resettled refugees in closer detail. Are they successful? What are the obstacles? Are there any models to pass on?

The efforts to develop introduction programmes in Sweden, perhaps even more so the debate concerning it, has increasingly focused on individualisation and with this strong focus on the individual, the very term “Program”, has become problematic, implying the use of a collective solution which would oppose the idea of individualism.

Because of this, there are no specific programmes targeting resettled refugees. However, we can see a tendency to consider resettled refugees as a separate, definable group or category of refugees with some specific characteristics that set them apart from, for example, asylum seekers who reside in Sweden waiting for their residence permit or refusal of entry. The very lack of an asylum process waiting period creates one of those differences, the controlled/supervised selection and settlement processes is another, a rather dim but strong public opinion regarding resettled refugees to be a more exclusive group of refugees than for example asylum seekers.

The matter of consequences following on from the resettlement process, creating unique experiences and needs regarding introduction initiatives, has been one of the key questions in Sweden’s contribution to the MOST-Project. The consultation process can actually be seen as an attempt to examine this general question. To understand what an introduction programme for resettled refugees could be, we have to understand what a resettled refugee is.

Being such a highly controlled and supervised event, the resettlement process also facilitates an obvious opportunity for strategic development. The process itself with selection missions, pre-departure or post-arrival information, initial reception and integration; the links are connected and should complement each other. What takes place at an early stage affects the prerequisites for what comes later.

Beside the aim to identify the characteristics in the refugees' accounts, Sweden's hope is also to use them in order to establish a method for developing a wide range of issues regarding refugee reception, introduction and integration.

The basis for the interviews has therefore been not to connect them solely to introduction initiatives, but to follow a chronology, starting with the initial contacts with UNHCR moving step by step on to the expectations of a life in the new country of residence, where also the introduction, which lasts about two years in Sweden, is coming to an end.

Our conviction is that the refugees' own accounts will provide something more than evaluations of Swedish language courses or internships. We look upon the results as twelve stories which might bring up more questions than answers, but merely by the tone they set, they sketch a model for how introduction initiatives could be devised in the future, with the refugees' needs and expectations as centre, pointed out by themselves.

However, the refugees are not the only ones that need to be heard in this matter. From the focus group discussions with people working with the Swedish quota, both on central and local level, we can see that there is a need for broadening the discussion and getting more players out on the court. Traditionally in Sweden, the focus is on the local municipality. An overall narrow perspective carries the risk of leading to an ineffective introduction process. The system of introduction can then become an isolated world in itself and may exist as a parallel to scenes where it should be present: the labour market, education market, housing market; the locations of everyday life where the real introduction/integration could or should be performed.

The descriptions of the introduction initiatives and its pros and cons made by the refugees' and from those who work with them, support and confirm each other in many ways. In Sweden the process will now move forward in establishing and developing dialogues with the municipalities which receive resettled refugees but also in other contexts where parties from the civil sector will be connected more closely to the Swedish resettlement- and introductory process.

Conclusively it is the consultation process itself that is the main Swedish modelling contribution to the MOST-Project; a knowledgeable and consistent strategy to make the voices of refugees heard in the ongoing efforts to promote relevant and effective strategies for future introduction and in the end, integration.

Jonas Doll
National Coordinator MOST

1. Introduction:

Modelling for enhanced refugee participation

This document provides an analysis and discussion of the material produced as a result of the Swedish consultation process within the MOST project. Our contribution to the efforts of creating new models for resettlement and introduction in a third country, concerns mainly the question of refugee participation and agency. Are there ways in which refugees to a larger extent can become actively involved in the processes of resettlement and introduction? Is there any need for this?

The Swedish stand is that there is such a need, both in a moral sense and in order to develop a more efficient process; where the experiences of those at the centre of resettlement are acknowledged and managed in the best possible way. Our efforts of modelling have been both to create and use an evaluation process that is centred on the refugees' experiences, and to analyse and discuss power and participation issues within this process. Through consultations with resettled refugees in Sweden, as well as personnel within introduction activities, we have investigated whether and how resettlement may impact on the introduction to a third country, and what aspects one may need to attend to when developing these activities. We here present some important issues that have been brought up by the refugees. Hopefully, awareness of these issues may help governmental and non-governmental actors in Sweden and other resettlement countries to develop introduction programmes more efficiently.

Even though this project focuses on resettlement, many of the issues discussed may be considered of relevance to other types of migration or immigration as well. There is a continuity and supervision of the resettlement process that makes it more organised and easier to overview, than more spontaneous migration. However, the relevance of policy discussions in the transition zone between migration and integration would probably concern refugees in a more general sense.

Our model is a way of involving the key stake holders that are the refugees themselves, when evaluating and developing introduction programmes.

Aim and central questions

The aim and purpose of the consultation process was to investigate and analyse how resettled refugees (hereon also referred to as quota refugees) may experience their resettlement and introduction in Sweden. We asked ourselves whether resettlement creates a different target group for introduction, and if so, what aspects might distinguish those who are resettled into the Swedish society.

Some of the questions posed in the analysis are:

- What distinguishes the resettlement path of a quota refugee in Sweden? How can we understand and develop the resettlement process on the basis of the refugee's perspective?
- How can the resettlement process be considered to affect the introduction? What consequences do quota refugees' earlier experiences have for their introduction?
- What challenges, special opportunities or obstacles arise in the work with quota refugees' resettlement and introduction?

Method

Consultations have been carried out with 15 resettled refugees in Sweden. (In this paper, they will most commonly be referred to as *the informants* or *the refugees*.) Each interview lasted between 1–2 hours, and was carried out either in Swedish, in English, or with a translator, and was taped and transcribed. The themes discussed were the situation before arrival in Sweden, the contact with UNHCR and the selection, arrival in Sweden, meeting with the introduction team, the present situation and views upon the future. Each participant was given ethical information regarding the aim and use of the survey, and their own anonymity.

The informants were selected with help from municipal introduction coordinators. No strict selection criteria were used. We looked for different ages, men and women, from different countries and, naturally, with different experiences. The informants should have lived in Sweden long enough to be able to reflect upon their introduction. The average time in Sweden was approximately 1.5 years. They are living in three municipalities, in the north, the middle, and the south of Sweden. The municipalities' sizes differ, as well as their experience in receiving resettled refugees. (However, all three municipalities are to some extent used to this.) Due to ethical reasons, we will not present any of the informants' names, nor the municipalities. The informants are Iraqis resettled from Syria, Burmese from Thailand, Iranian Kurds from Iraq (Al Tash camp), Chinese from Nepal, Colombians from Venezuela, Somalis from Ethiopia, and Uzbeks from Kazakhstan.

Apart from the interviews, an additional four consultations were held with groups of municipal introduction personnel and officials from the (previous) Swedish Integration Board and the Swedish Migration Board. In each one of these groups, 7–9 people discussed together the question whether quota refugees could in any sense be seen as disparate from other refugees. They also discussed whether quota refugees' introduction and prerequisites for participation and independence may differ from other refugees' and if so, how. A total number of 24 representatives from the municipalities' introduction units and five officials from central level participated in the group consultations (focus groups).

Please observe that the material is not representative and that no generally valid conclusions can be drawn from the analysis. It represents only the interviewed refugees' perspectives. At

the same time, their experiences provide an important perspective on resettlement and introduction, which is unfortunately often lost.

An overview on resettlement to Sweden

During the past years, Sweden's quota has covered 1000–1900 individuals, with stable higher numbers more recently. Once in Sweden, quota refugees are not separated or viewed as disparate from other refugees. As for asylum seekers in Sweden, the quota refugees are offered an introduction programme during the first years after receiving a residence permit. The introduction is carried out by the municipality in which the refugee is settled. The municipality achieves funding from the state for housing and introducing refugees to Sweden. They gain the same amount of funding for quota refugees as for others participating in the introduction programme.

In Sweden, the introduction programmes are carried out individually, focussing on each individual's needs and specific situation. The programme can involve various measures, such as Swedish language training (sfi), practice at a workplace, rehabilitation, school for the younger ones, and care for the elderly. Each individual meets with a municipality official for interviews, mapping of background, work experience, education levels etc. The officials follow the refugees during the introduction period, supporting them through continuous meetings and activities. The length of the introduction period varies, although the standard is set to two to three years. During this period, each individual achieves financial support similar to a wage, for attending language training and other activities. The aim is for the refugees to become self-reliant and to participate, in Swedish society.

Notes to the reader

The analysis presented in this material is mainly focused upon the interviews that have been held with quota refugees. We will also briefly present the consultations that were carried out with introduction personnel. In the end of the document, we have tried to tie up the analysis in a short chapter called "What can we learn from the material?", where we also present some questions for further discussions.

The material will stick mainly to empirical presentations and discussions, without referring to previous investigations or research. In the cases where such references exist, they concern mainly the (previous) Swedish Integration Board and the authors reports, *Den aktive deltagaren and Nyanl nd efter flera  r?*. These are based on interviews with introduction officials and personnel, and with refugees, and discussing introduction in relation to concepts such as participation, cooperation and individualisation in a similar sense to what is discussed in this material. Among the few investigations that have been done in Sweden concerning quota refugees and resettlement we can mention the (previous) Swedish Integration Board and (before that)

Immigration Board's reports, *Vietnamflyktingarna – deras första år i Sverige* from 1982, *Status kvot – En utvärdering av kvotflyktingars mottagande och integration åren 1991–1996* from 1997, as well as *Bounds of Security* from 2001.

2. Consultations with introduction personnel

Before interviewing the refugees, consultations were carried out with municipal introduction personnel, as well as officials at governmental level. This was both to “map” the field, to gain some background information useful when planning the interviews, and to get a “professional” perspective in addition to the “personal” one provided by the refugees themselves. The consultations were held in the form of “focus groups” (group discussions guided to a small extent by an interviewer and focussing on a common issue). Three groups consisted of municipal introduction staff. In each of these groups there were coordinators, language teachers, and others who in one way or another work with introduction in the municipality. It was the coordinators who invited people to the consultations, or focus groups. The topic for discussion was their work with the reception and introduction and their meetings with quota refugees. The main question was whether they considered quota refugees in any sense to constitute a different target group in the reception and introduction work, and if their introduction in any way distinguishes itself from the introduction of other refugees.

In addition to the three municipal focus groups, one group was created with officials from the (previous) Swedish Integration Board and the Swedish Migration Board. The reflections that were made in this group were similar to the municipal groups' discussions. Therefore this group's conclusions will most often be presented together with the others'.

No distinction, but a different target group?

The consultations showed that the introduction teams do not distinguish between quota refugees and other refugees within the introduction programme. Instead, they work individually with each person or family. The groups point out that there are probably as many particularities and differences within the quota refugee group as among other refugees. They mean that a person's prerequisites for introduction and chances to gain independency and participation in the Swedish society depend on their previous experiences, educational background and so on, rather than how they got their residence permit. In those cases when the groups do discuss collective solutions, it is primarily because the refugees have arrived in Sweden at the same time, or that they come from the same country or share the same culture, or have the same level of education etc. Groups are formed around individual needs that can be worked with collectively.

The central focus group points out that the state gives priority to quota refugees in the sense that it has accepted to receive and house them in a municipality. However, there is a lack of consistency in the system, since they are not given this priority once they are in the municipalities. This group returns on occasions to the question to which extent the state should be responsible for quota refugees' resettlement and introduction, and how much should be considered the municipality's responsibility. Is there a need for separate solutions for quota refugees even after arrival to the municipality? Should the Swedish state do more for them once they have arrived?

While quota refugees are not a priority once they have been received and housed in a municipality, all four groups do see differences between this group and other refugees. They explain that quota refugees' introduction is more time consuming, and need more support in terms of both personnel and supply. Many participants in the municipal groups say that they would need an extended financial support in order to work properly with these refugees. Many quota refugees are illiterate or carry with them ill-health or trauma, which makes it harder for them to learn the language and to utilize the introduction. Many lack a network in Sweden, which also makes it harder for them to start a new life here. Many participants also speak of the importance of reunifications for those whose families are left behind. Such things can hinder refugees from settling down and engage themselves in the introduction activities. The groups mean that these aspects could make quota refugees more dependent upon the introduction team, than other refugees who have lived in Sweden during their asylum process.

While speaking of the dependency of quota refugees, many of the group participants say that they enjoy working with this group. Many of them consider quota refugees to have another view upon their situation than other refugees. Apart from ill-health and other problems that may hinder introduction, many quota refugees are described to be aware that they cannot return to their native countries, and also that they are allowed to stay in Sweden. They are described as grateful for the fact that they have been resettled, in a way that influences positively on the introduction. Many seem to want to pay back to the Swedish government, and to make up for the help that they have received. Experiences of oppression also make many quota refugees want to seize the chance they have got to become independent and self-reliant. Many of the participants in the focus groups are astonished by the good spirit and happiness of many quota refugees, despite their often horrific experiences.

Even though quota refugees are considered to carry with them trauma and experiences of oppression and problems, the groups criticize the Swedish asylum system that other refugees pass through. Many participants say that quota refugees can be considered preserved from an asylum process that breaks down motivation and energy that is needed to start a new life. Even though quota refugees are considered to be at risk in another way, particularly since they have to wait for residence permit outside the Swedish borders, they are directly welcomed in the municipality once they arrive. The participants mean that this can affect their motivation and devotion to the introduction.

A more organised reception and introduction

The groups also discuss experiences of working more organised towards the quota refugees, whom they meet directly at the airport and follow through introduction. This is both considered to be a part of that which calls for more money, and that which makes them enjoy working with this group. Quota refugees are viewed as “empty sheets”, with whom the introduction teams have to start “from scratch”. The role of the introduction team becomes more evident, says some of the participants in the groups, since few refugees have relatives or contacts in the new country, and the introduction official becomes the only one who can help the refugees. There is a closer contact between the quota refugee and the introduction staff, which is appreciated by both parties. The close contact with the introduction team gives the refugees security in an otherwise vulnerable situation, says the focus groups.

While the refugees actually need help and support, many participants express awareness of the risk of making the refugees dependent upon others instead of promoting their own independence and decision making. The risk of making the introduction participants passive has long been the topic of both policy discussions and evaluating practice in Sweden. Investigations have shown that many who work with introduction have accepted a view upon the participant as the one who should be active and take the lead, only with support from the personnel. At the same time, the role and mandate as staff have risked to become unclear. In interviews in previous investigations, many people working in introduction teams have described their own role in terms of guiding, coaching etc, rather than doing things for the refugees, or helping them out by their own means. At times, the limited mandate can create frustration among the personnel. This might be one reason why the focus groups express that they like to work with quota refugees. Perhaps their own mandate becomes clearer and helping them out more legitimate, just because they have few resources of their own?

Many participants speak about the culture shock that they see for many of the refugees who come to Sweden. Some mean that such a culture shock makes the road towards independence and self support even longer than it is for those who start their introduction with some idea of how life in Sweden would be like. But while some consider this shock to be even more dramatic for quota refugees who often come from countries and cultures far away, others mean that such a shock probably meet any refugee. The difference between a quota refugee and a previous asylum-seeker would be that the asylum-seekers experience their first shock before they come into contact with the municipal introduction activity. Following their first shock, they pass through an often lengthy asylum process, before entering introduction. Quota refugees on the other hand deal with their first impressions and experiences already in the municipality. Perhaps it is the feeling of joining them “from scratch” that creates the introduction personnel’s experiences of a tighter contact and the need to take slightly more responsibility for quota refugees, than for asylum-seekers?

Why receive resettled refugees?

A couple of groups, and especially the central one, discussed where in Sweden quota refugees end up. Since they are outside of Sweden and often at risk when they receive residence permit, their municipality placement depends largely on where they can be housed most rapidly. However, this does not mean that there are always the best conditions for introduction, nor future employment. Where the jobs are, there is often lack of available apartments or houses, and vice versa. In some of the municipalities where the quota refugees are settled, there are neither the variety of channels and resources for achieving participation. Today, many quota refugees are placed in the northern part of Sweden – an area which other refugees, and to an extent even these, chose to leave.

The fact that municipalities in the north receive so many quota refugees is compared by the group participants with a hostage situation. Since both number of residents and refugees are grounds for governmental funding, when refugees leave the municipality, the funding decreases. Municipalities that have assigned themselves to receiving a certain number of refugees and cannot attract asylum-seekers find themselves needing the quota refugees. This might create a view of quota refugees as “investments” and a willingness to keep them in the municipality that does not correspond with the goals of introduction. If independency, self support, and participation cannot be reached in the municipality, refugees are meant to move somewhere else, the central focus group explain. The prospects of reaching the goals must be valued over the importance of keeping refugees where they are settled. When many quota refugees lack networks in their new country and risk to become dependent upon the introduction team, and the team itself want to keep them in the municipality, one may wonder if they are given the help they need to move somewhere else?

Some do at the same time see advantages in living in a small society. Even if there might be fewer organisations, job opportunities etc, some feel that it is easier to engage in the integration process in a small community. They see that refugees, who might be strangers at first, are easier established and known in the community.

The benevolence with which the small society welcomes refugees is identified by the focus groups as something particularly true when it comes to quota refugees. All groups discuss the experience that the surrounding society views quota refugees as “authentic refugees”. They are looked upon as people who have been to refugee camps and who are in need of help and shelter, and therefore not considered a threat in the same way as asylum-seekers might be. The groups mean that people in the society feel sorry for and want to help quota refugees, who become authentic and legitimate in their eyes. This also makes it easier to gain support for introduction activities from the surrounding society.

“Quota refugee” as category

The consultations with introduction personnel and officials are somewhat paradoxical, especially when it comes to the question of whether or not resettled refugees should be viewed as a category in its own. On one hand the groups speak of individualisation and stress that they do not distinguish between quota refugees and other refugees or immigrants. On the other hand they identify aspects that partly do distinguish them as a somewhat different target group for introduction. Even if one doesn't seem to distinguish in practice, quota refugees do seem to be viewed as a specific group, not least since they require (and make possible) a more organised reception and introduction. Many of those who stress individualisation and claim not to care who is quota refugee and who is not, at the same time admit that it is good to know who are coming, so that one can “prepare”. There seems to be an unwillingness to distinguish refugees or groups, and yet a need and a willingness to know.

Irrespective of how the focus groups view the refugees, all participants agree that the quota refugees themselves are not affected by, or in agreement with any categorization. Some reflect upon whether quota refugees look upon themselves as somewhat special because of their contact with the UN, and wonder whether they have higher expectations because of this. However, most participants claim that the quota refugee label does not have any significance for the individuals it denotes. They do not think that the labelling or knowledge of someone being a quota refugee has any consequences for how that person experiences the municipality's reception or introduction.

This chapter has outlined and briefly discussed the main topics of the focus groups. The following chapters instead focus on the refugees' own experiences. If the quota refugees are not as the focus groups believe, aware of themselves as being “quota refugees”, this material cannot, or rather should not, be viewed as an analysis of quota refugee status or quota refugee as category. Instead, it becomes an analysis of refugee status and refugee experience in a more general sense. However, the narratives told and described in the analysis have to be linked to the specific experiences that quota refugees have drawn from their resettlement. Together with the focus groups' reflections upon reception and introduction of quota refugees, and potential differences between those and previous asylum-seekers, this material composes an important foundation for further discussions. What do the refugees themselves say about their experiences of being refugees and being resettled? In what ways can their experiences be understood as specific for quota refugees, and in what ways do they resemble the memories of other refugees? How can their experiences influence on their abilities to pass and absorb introduction, and in the end reach self support and independence in the Swedish society? The reflections of the focus groups will be brought in with the interviews in the concluding chapter.

3. Consultations with refugees, phase I: Before departure

This chapter presents the consultations held with resettled refugees in Sweden. The analysis will be presented chronologically, following the phases of resettlement. It is built largely on excerpts from the interviews. First it will focus on the state of the refugees before selection, that is the view upon themselves and the contact with UNHCR, and not least the expectations they had on the resettlement. The second part presents the refugees' experiences from their arrival in Sweden. Introduction will be touched upon in both this part and the following, focussing more on the refugees' efforts to establish themselves in the new society. Each chapter will end with some questions that arise from the analysis. These are thought of as examples of areas of interest and development, and are mainly on policy level. After the analysis chapters follows a concluding discussion.

The initial refugee situation: being a refugee

The interviews began with the refugee status and the situation before resettlement begins. So does the analysis presented here. Many of the informants seem to connect experiences made later in the process with this state. What is central in being a refugee seems to influence the refugees' expectations on resettlement, and their views on the process. Their attitudes towards resettlement, and their expectations on themselves, the UNHCR, and the Swedish government or municipality, impact on their ability to absorb information and to take active part in the introduction, as promoted in Sweden.

Most informants begin their interviews by presenting themselves in terms of ethnic belonging, nationality and where they were living before and when the conflict started. They continue with the flight away from their country of origin. Many are emotional when they speak. What they describe is experiences of insecurity, exclusion and not being accepted. Oppression on ethnic or religious grounds, or based on their nationality or political views, is what has made them flee their homes. One informant describes herself as belonging to an ethnic minority that had immigrated to the country, and which was now threatened by conflict. She says that she was actually born in the country, but without equal rights with the "natives". She also lacked proof of her identity and belonging to the country. When conflict arose, she and many others had to flee their homes, viewed as "immigrants" and non-belonging. She explains:

"They force us... We must be false labour... We leave everything, and we must go. We had nothing!"

Forced to leave, many refugees flee to nearby countries, and stay there for what can often be very long periods of time. They are often not accepted or respected as refugees, and so they

continue to live at risk. Many informants explain that because they were immigrants, they were not given any rights to participate in the society. One of them explains how they were viewed as a temporary people, even though they had long lived in the country. He says:

“We are illegal people living in X. They don’t accept refugee people. (...) like a temporary people, living in their country. But it’s more than 20 years.”

Since they were not accepted in the country, they had to stay in a refugee area close to the border, this informant explains. It was the only place that was somewhat safe for them. Some other informants lived in refugee camps too. They describe poverty, social problems, and oppression within these camps. Apart from the subordination and lack of respect from the surrounding society, because they were refugees, they also experienced power hierarchies being created within the camps. One informant describes:

“They just stayed there, all of the Kurds. Muslims, both Muslims and Christians... Different religions. (...) The Muslims were the most... In X, Muslim was the first religion. And some of us, we were not Muslim. So they oppressed us.”

Conflicts between religious groups were common in the camps. Some informants also speak of disrespect or oppression of women, both in and outside of the camps.

The mere existence of the camps illustrates the refugees’ lack of participation and belonging in the society. Experiences of being “nothing” and not being able to do or own anything are recurrently described in the interviews. For some informants, this vacuum and lack of ability to control their lives lasted for more than 20 years. Some of them were born and grown up in refugee camps, arriving in Sweden as adults. Others have grown up first under oppression in the country of origin, then continuing on to refugee camps.

Those informants who did not stay in camps also mediate insecurity, mainly fearing to be forced to return to the conflict that they had fled from. The sense of exclusion created a continuous insecurity and worries that one would be departed or violated. One of them says:

“We were really living on our nerves, that it could happen any minute, they could evict us. We had no residence permit.”

Lack of control over their lives, insecurity and fear, are recurrent and central themes when the informants describe the situation before the contact with the UNHCR. As refugees, they were subordinated other groups or the regime in their country of origin. In the refugee camp, or refugee situation, this subordination and oppression continued. This created a desperate need to break from the refugee situation. Since the refugees could not manage this on their own, they called for help from the UNHCR, by resettlement to a third country.

Contact with the UNHCR

Isolated and without assets or ability to control their lives, the refugees turn to the UNHCR for help. Some describe that they had to leave the camp when insecurity increased, but had nowhere to go. Many lived under directly life threatening circumstances, for instance stuck between two borders, threatened or in prison. In those cases, the informants describe that the UNHCR contacted them. Others explain that they were told to contact the UNHCR. Few knew that they could do so without someone telling them. Here one informant speaks about the decision to contact the UNHCR and to apply for resettlement:

“We were afraid to be departed from X, and sent back to Y. So we were almost seeking protection, we wanted to apply to the UNHCR, so that we were under their protection. (...) We wanted the smallest reason, the smallest thing, to be bound to for instance the UNHCR, to feel secure, not don't have to worry about ending up on the border to Y again. In Y or in X, you can never sleep all night or without worries. You always sleep with worries inside, you are afraid.”

This informant describes fear of being departed to the problems in the native country as the reason for contacting the UNHCR. He describes UNHCR as an anchor that would keep them safe and secure. Other informants also describe the notion of resettlement as a chance they had to take. For them, moving to another country seemed perhaps to be the best solution.

Some informants say that first they did not know that they could apply to the UNHCR. Instead they heard about it from other people. Someone describes a friend who was “fighting for her”, telling her to apply. She does not seem to view herself as the person responsible for the contact with the UNHCR. Some other informants also seem to view the contact with the UNHCR as something separated from their own actions. A couple of them wonder why they had to leave their place, or why they had to go to Sweden. Some express clearly that they did not want to go, but that they had no other options under the circumstances that they were in. Naturally, many refugees would have wanted to stay if the conflict could be solved. When it cannot, resettlement remains the solution.

Roles and responsibilities

It is not clear how the refugees view themselves in relation to the UNHCR, in terms of roles and responsibilities. Even though it is most often they themselves who have chosen to apply for refuge status and resettlement, UNHCR is often presented as the actor responsible for the process. This is shown both in the reluctance towards “being resettled”, expressed by a few informants, and in the will to be “attached to” the UNHCR in order to be protected. Since the refugees were unable to solve the problematic situation, they turned to the UNHCR, and place their lives in the organisation's hands.

The informants' descriptions show how they, in the contact with the UNHCR, enter roles as objects, and receivers of the organisation's actions. This can be understood both as the creation of dependency, and as a continuance of the role as refugees, in which they were already made passive and subordinated other actors. The informants describe that they trusted the UNHCR to solve the situation for them. However, it must be remembered that it was the lack of control that made them contact the organisation.

When it comes to the selection process it becomes even clearer that the refugees experience UNHCR to be the active agent. When asked in the interviews if they had wanted to go to a certain country, or if they had presented any preferences to the organisation, almost every informant answer that it is not up to them to choose:

■ "No we had no idea, it is them who choose which country and... It is them who choose."

It is not clear how the informants experienced this lack of possibilities to affect the choice of third country. Similar to the excerpt above, some of them simply point at their own powerlessness as a fact. Others, however, have another tone of voice that seems to indicate the irony of the question, and their descriptions could be interpreted as criticism towards the lacking opportunities for refugees to take part in the decisions. The majority of the informants however recall their experiences of not being active participants in the choice of third country without any opinions on the matter. They seem simply not to have been involved in the selection process. Most of them say that they simply found out that they were going to Sweden. Here is how one informant describes the selection:

■ "He didn't know anything, which country he's going to. Finally he saw his name on the Swedish embassy list. That he's going to Sweden."

It is difficult to determine the refugees' attitudes to their own powerlessness in the resettlement process. For most of them, active participation simply doesn't seem to have been possible.

Expectations and information

It is striking how many informants state that they did not care about which country they would go to. The main focus seems to have been to become free from the insecurity and the oppression that they had suffered in the previous situation. Here are some voices:

■ "I didn't care of which country. It's good for me if I have a chance to go out of the country. I think only of this."

■ "He didn't care at the time, because he only think, concentrate on if he's free from the country."

“Just to leave! My place. (...) I didn’t have a goal or anything like that.”

Herein lays one of the central elements of the refugee status, which impacts on the refugees’ experiences and attitudes towards the following phases of resettlement. All informants state that they did not focus on the new country, but that the only thing of importance to them was to get away from the problems. In their narratives, the flight was always a movement away from something, rather than towards something else. The wish to become free and the lacking ability to carry out this wish may explain why the refugees focus upon the UN-HCR, instead of their own role. Their focus on getting away rather than arriving to something else may also impact on their abilities to absorb information regarding the new situation and the future.

Only a couple of informants say that they had good knowledge about Sweden before arrival. These had gone through a cultural orientation programme in a camp. They also had relatives in Sweden. The majority of the informants however claim not to have known much, if anything, about the new country. Here are three voices:

“Didn’t know much about Sweden. There is no relative in Sweden. Therefore we didn’t know much about Sweden.”

“How is Sweden? We didn’t know, how is climate, how is culture? We didn’t know.”

“No information. We didn’t know anything about Sweden.”

It should be noted that some of the informants were selected by dossier, and have never met any Swedish selection mission before arrival. Therefore, their knowledge has been limited. A number of informants have, however, been selected by missions and would have been informed before departure. They should at least have received some general information about the new country, even if they did not have the opportunity to participate in a cultural orientation programme.

Continuing the interviews, it becomes clear that many informants have actually been informed, however briefly, about Sweden before departure. They explain that this information consisted mainly of pictures of Sweden, Swedish people, cities and nature, together with a brief overview of the political system etc.

“They have a very short information, to tell us about the Swedish situation here. Very short. The sun and the snow. Small children playing. In pictures.”

Apart from the information given by the selection mission or perhaps the embassy, some of the informants describe rumours as another source of information. The rumours in the camps described Sweden positively, in terms of respect for human rights, equality between the sexes,

democracy and social welfare. Some informants say that personnel also spoke warmly about Sweden, and that officials openly recommended Sweden to them.

"It was an UN-official, a woman who took care of us. They liked us young women. She recommended us to Sweden. She said that it will be the best country, Sweden. So you should go to Sweden. That's why we came to Sweden."

"They praised Sweden, they said that it is the best country to support refugees."

"They spoke well about Sweden. When it comes to freedom and democracy. That they like refugees and they want to solve the problem. So there was a good rumour about Sweden there."

It turns out that many informants were given information before departure. Still they said that they did not know anything before they arrived in Sweden. This is an interesting paradox. The first question was asked when they were speaking of the selection. Perhaps they meant that they did not have any information at that point, although they were informed later on? Another interpretation would be that they did not consider the information given to them to be knowledge that they possessed. There can be a difference between being informed and knowing something. Perhaps they felt that they did not know anything about Sweden, hence the negative answer, but still remembered and admitted to having been given information.

The focus on freedom

It seems likely that the focus on becoming free and leaving rather than striving towards something else, as described by the informants, would impact on the ability to absorb and pay attention to information about the new situation. The informants said that they did not care about which country they were going to, only that they would in fact be able to go. When asked how they felt when they were told that they were going to Sweden, the informants speak of happiness, relief and feelings of freedom. None of them use this part of the interview to express worries about what was about to happen once they arrived. It seems that the decision about resettlement itself was more important than information about that to which one was to be resettled. Here is how one informant describes his feelings when he got to know that he was selected:

"I felt as if I was a bird in a cage, and they opened the cage door, and then I flew. It wasn't just joy from me, but also from all the children. They were very happy, since they had led a horrible life there. And then when they heard that there are human rights, respect for elderly and children, for people, everybody was happy."

This informant mentions first the joy over being selected, and freed from what he terms as a horrible life. Then he adds that the joy was enhanced by the positive information about the

new country. It hence seems as though the information was just another good thing, and that his first concern was the decision.

The focus upon becoming free is mediated also by other informants. For instance, when asked if they would have wanted more information about Sweden before departure, while some say yes claiming that it would have made them feel secure, others say that they really didn't care. Some informants also mean that it was better to get out of the country quickly, than to spend time on information. It is unclear, though, if they mean that they wanted to get away quickly, or if they were told that there was no time. Here are one informant's words:

"INTERVIEWER: Would you have wanted to know more about Sweden before you came here, would that be good for...?"

INFORMANT: No. Because we don't have much time, you know."

It seems likely that the resettlement was preferred to move quickly, both by those supervising it, and the refugee himself. Other informants also stress the importance of a quick resettlement, and describe speed as an important aspect to develop further. All of this contributes to the understanding of that the refugees primary focus was on getting away, which in turn may overshadow both their ability to absorb information, and their attitudes towards information activities.

Information and power

We have noted some difficulties concerning the refugees' receptivity to pre-departure information, and ask ourselves if this can be improved. One aspect which may impact on the ability to receive information is the issue of when the information activities are carried out. In contrast to other countries, Sweden sometimes performs cultural orientation programmes or more brief information activities before the final selection is made. This is for practical reasons, and in efforts to speed up the resettlement process. However, this may impact negatively on the receptivity of those who are not sure if they will be selected. This is described by one informant in the following words:

"INFORMANT: Because the applicants are so many, so they say maybe some are unaccepted or... Few people can have a chance to go. So that means that we are not sure if we are accepted. But I have no questions. Because I'm not sure myself, if I have a chance to go out. Something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. Did you feel like if you ask questions you wouldn't get picked?

INFORMANT: No no. It's not like that. I was not sure because... If I have a chance to go, or not. If I ask some questions, it would be like... I'm not sure. I don't care as much, at this stage. Because I only think, if I have a chance to go out."

The informant describes not knowing whether or not he would have a chance to go, thus illustrating clearly how dependent he was upon the UNHCR. This dependency and uncertainty blocks his ability to absorb the information that was given to him. This would promote a postponing of the information activities until all of the refugees who are being informed also know that they have been selected for Sweden. It would probably enhance their interest and receptivity to the information, as well as their opportunities to participate more actively by asking questions.

Unfortunately, the matter of receptivity and participation does not seem to only concern the timing of the information strategies. There is an imbalance of power in the relation between the UNHCR and the refugees, in that the refugees are so dependent on the organisation's help and actions. This places the refugees in the roles of objects rather than active agents. Their desperate need to be "rescued" affects the possibilities for the refugees to raise questions, lay claims, or take a stand in the process. Two refugees illustrate how the fear of not being selected affected them during the cultural orientation programme that they attended. One of them says:

"They had told us a little about sex and... They said to the wives, if one day their daughter, say 15 or 16 years old, goes to school and when she comes back she says, Mum I'm pregnant. What would you do? Absolutely, in my culture they kill that girl. But they said, oh well, that's okay. It's our girl and we would take care of her. And when they left they said, if my daughter becomes pregnant I'll kill her!"

The other informant explains:

"They showed us movies. I remember it was school and... with many holes (piercings). The adolescents. We said, what is that? We don't have that. And they asked, what do you think about that? And we thought, if we say that we don't like it, maybe they won't accept us. Perhaps that's really good in Sweden!"

These informants were selected before they attended the cultural orientation programme. Even so, they still express worries that they wouldn't be accepted after all, if the officials giving the information didn't like them. The fear that they would not be accepted in the end seems to exist even among those who were already selected, impacting negatively on their receptivity to the information campaigns.

Experiences of empowerment

While most informants show signs of becoming passive objects in relation to the UNHCR, there are also descriptions of activity and responsibility that creates pride and improved self-esteem. This shows especially among the young women. One informant explains that she was the one who stood up when the UNHCR asked for the women's perspective in the camp. De-

fyng the men in the camp, who did not want her to speak in public; she presented views and opinions from the women. She is proud over herself and her actions. She says:

"I was so good. I talked to the UN. (...) It was the best thing in my life that I did, that I came to Sweden. I feel good. Because I came to Sweden. I fought hard."

Opportunities to take responsibility for herself and the women around her, and the acknowledgement from the UN, proved to be important for this young woman, who choose to speak about it in her interview more than two years later. Especially important was the woman who was working for the UN and who listened and acknowledged her. By speaking up, this informant could present information to the UN, that the men had not, for instance about lack of hygiene products for the women. With this knowledge, the UN in turn could improve the conditions in the camp, as well as making the informant feel good about herself. This is one example that illustrates the importance and value of improved activity and participation of the refugees in early stages of resettlement.

4. Consultation with refugees, phase II: Arrival

Upon arrival, the stress and worries are replaced with feelings of freedom and happiness. When describing the arrival, many informants use the metaphor of a bird let free from a cage. They say:

"I feel like free, you know. I feel like... I was like a bird, in a cage, you know. Now it's, oh, the door is open, I flew away."

"I feel... just like a free bird (laughs), you can fly everywhere. (...) Just like the bird from the cage, we go out!"

Together with expressions such as a stone that has left their shoulders, or of feeling like a prisoner being released, the metaphor of the freed bird is recurrent and strikingly similar in many interviews. It illustrates how resettlement resolved the situation in which the refugees themselves had no ability to control and take responsibility for their lives. Again, it becomes clear that prior experiences of being a refugee impact upon their feelings in this next phase of the process. Just like the bird free from its cage, the refugees have moved away from something, and into freedom.

Apart from the strong joy and relief after finally having left their problems behind, the informants express how they entered a completely new environment. The new culture, country, na-

ture, cities and people were astonishingly different from that which they knew. They explain that there were so many differences, “in every sense, from the smallest thing to the largest”. Many describe somewhat of a shock, and explain that it was difficult to absorb all the changes in the beginning:

“Amazing. I think like I’m dreaming, sometimes.”

“Everything is different. I feel like a dream...!”

The feelings of happiness and freedom, as well as the big contrast between the old society and the new, influence on the refugees’ thoughts and attitudes towards the reception in the municipality. Few had any network in Sweden, and had few personal belongings. Without knowledge of the new society, they found themselves in a rather vulnerable situation. This is noted also in the consultations with municipality representatives, who stress the importance of organising the reception well, in order to support the newcomers. Here are some refugees’ accounts on the arrival:

“Yes we get apartment, everything is prepared, we have our rice, our fruit, everything is ready for us, furniture... yes. Everything is good.”

“When we came the ones we met were really nice and they told us, we are going to help you.”

“We were... very welcome, you can say. And all the help was perfect.”

Since they feel lost in the new context, the refugees naturally acknowledge the help given to them from the municipality with happiness and gratitude.

Gratitude and satisfaction

Gratitude is a central theme in almost all interviews. Many informants express great satisfaction with the help received from the municipal staff. Here are some voices:

HUSBAND: The introduction team is very good.
WIFE: Oh! Very good.
INTERVIEWER: They are good. In what way?
H: The introduction team helps us.
W: Everyone.
H: I have difficulties hearing. The introduction team helps me with that.
I: With your hearing as well?
W: With everything. They help a lot. For that, we say to the introduction team great great thanks.

I: Great thanks. That's wonderful.

(...)

W: You can say it in Swedish, but you can't say great great great thanks!"

"She speaks to us, she's so kind! X is so kind, she helps us! If we need something, we can come to her and she helps us."

The fact that all informants express so much satisfaction and gratitude towards their introduction teams and the support that they have given them deserves to be noticed. Many of them stress the humanity and the personal contact they have experienced in the relations to their contact persons. The majority of the informants say that they can turn to their contact person on the introduction team with anything from big issues and problems in life to difficulties understanding their mail. Some describe that their contact person has offered to spend time with them, and has visited their home after working hours and on weekends. Little things such as stopping to chat for a while in the street are highly valued by the informants.

These (sometimes extremely) positive experiences of the introduction personnel need at the same time to be related to refugees' feelings of being lost when they arrived in Sweden. In such a vulnerable situation, most people would probably be grateful for help and support. Many informants also explain their own gratitude by comparing the new situation to the previous. One of them explains:

"INFORMANT: Now, since we've come from poverty, there... You don't wish for more. (...) It's like that, I am happy, I come from poverty. I am completely happy I would say.

INTERVIEWER: (...) If you were rich, perhaps you would have higher expectations or demands? INFORMANT: I think so, I don't know."

Another informant compares the new situation with his experiences from the refugee camp. He says:

"How could a refugee be happy, you know?" (in the refugee camp, my comment)

It is possible that the refugees would be happy in any country that can offer security and respect for human rights. Many informants explain that they did not expect any help or support in the new country. Of course, these expectations impact on their experiences. Many explain that they thought that they would have to manage on their own, and simply have to find some work and support themselves. Someone says that he figured that he was going to get some support since the UN had "placed him" in a new society without any assets of his own. The general impression though, is that the refugees did not know that they would be supported by the municipality's introduction team. Some of them explain:

“When I arrived in Sweden, it was a surprise, it really is good here. (...) I didn't think that anybody could help us like that. With an apartment and everything.”

“No I thought... No, I stay here all by myself. And I thought I have to work and... (...) I didn't know that I would get support like that.”

The informants say that they did not know that you could get the kind of support that they got in Sweden. Being allotted an apartment and money is looked upon as similar to “winning the lottery”. One may ask whether these refugees really did not have any information about what was going to happen when they arrived. Regardless if they were given information or not, it becomes clear that few of them considered themselves having any such knowledge on arrival. This, again, proves the importance of discussing information strategies in terms of receptivity.

The experiences of the introduction personnel as friendly and helpful may also enhance a gratitude that the refugees did already feel towards both the UN and the Swedish government. They are now both grateful for being resettled, and for the warm and supportive reception.

“I am grateful, not just me but all Kurds are very grateful for Sweden, because Sweden was the only country first there to open its arms for us.”

“Yes I thank the UN. Because they helped us and sent our papers to Sweden. And I thank Sweden. I think that Sweden is a fantastic country, for me.”

The gratitude, satisfaction and happiness described to characterize the arrival in Sweden also make the informants want to tell others about the kindness that they have met. When asked what they would want to portray about their resettlement to Sweden to someone else in their previous position, almost all of them choose to describe how happy they are about Sweden. They want to tell others to apply to the UN, so that they can come here, they say. This is what two of them said:

“I would say many good things about Sweden. Considering human rights, considering that you are treated as a human here. Compared to X, where people live under oppression and no freedom and all that, then I would speak very well of Sweden. Human rights and good treatment. We don't wish that our country would be one hundred percent like Sweden, even fifty percent would do, so that people could live like human beings, then we would be happy. At least fifty percent, so that people could live in peace.”

“I would tell them that Sweden is a fantastic country! (laughs) I can say that. The, there are so nice people. I have only met advantages. No disadvantages in Sweden.”

Many stress that you do not need to worry about what is going to happen on arrival. They instead want to share their positive experiences from the reception:

“You don’t need to worry anything, just cool down!”

“I always tell them when I speak to them that we were very well received here. Welcome. And at home we even had in our refrigerator, in our freezer, what we needed that night when we arrived. We had new mattresses, we even had tooth brushes. We had tooth paste for all the families who arrived, because we arrived late at night. Even towels. And clean sheets.”

“You don’t need to worry about anything to eat, yes you have everything... it’s perfect.”

It becomes clear that the informants experienced their arrival and their contact with the introduction teams very well. They were positively surprised that they would receive help and support, and by the personnel’s kind and respectful treatment. Even though many informants have said that they did not know anything about Sweden on arrival, the structured reception seems to manage to create security in the vulnerable situation.

The need for support

The informants describe that the introduction teams help them out with any problems they may encounter with. Their main role seems to be perceived as giving practical advice and to support the refugees in different matters:

“Once a month we meet, and then when we get mail from authorities, since I can’t read, I go there and then they help me to understand. They schedule an appointment once a month, and they help us with everything else that we need.”

“She helps us down town to look at the post office, show us how to shop, and visit the bank.”

This part of the introduction activity, to guide the refugee into the Swedish society, is rather clear in the interviews. The informants explain that it is good to be helped out, especially in the beginning, since they do not know anything about the new country.

Apart from the practical support at reception, it is not all clear how the informants perceive the introduction programme. Above all, it is not clear whether introduction is at all perceived as an organised activity. This tendency has been noted in previous investigations, which might have affected the way in which the interview questions were formulated. For instance, we have avoided using the word “introduction” or “introduction programme” without any further guidance as to what we mean. On occasions when these terms have been used, the informants have looked confused. As reported by other investigations, the informants tend to focus merely on language training. When asked what they do, they say that they learn Swedish, not that they participate in an introduction programme. This is not surprising, since language training

is a large part of the introduction. Another explanation would be the individualised ideal that prevents officials and others from presenting introduction as a fixed activity or programme. However, this obscurity makes it hard to analyse or evaluate the activity.

Continued dependency?

The way in which the informants express the need for help and the role of the introduction personnel, shows once again how the refugees risk becoming dependent upon other actors. Even if the informants say that they can ask questions and receive answers from their contact persons, these questions seem mostly to be about understanding mail, signs or routines, etc. The informants do not seem to ask for help in terms of activities; groups they wish to join, things they want to do or attend to, within or outside the introduction programme. When it comes to these matters, the informants instead seem to become passive, and wait for the introduction team to make offers. This “passivity” might be explained by the refugees’ previous experiences of being dependent upon others, for instance the UNHCR. Some describe themselves as “shy”, and not knowing what to ask for. One of them says:

“INFORMANT (Ip): I want them to ask! (laughs) You know, it’s like, how say... Especially... For me as a person, I don’t know for others, it’s a little bit... In Swedish it’s “blyga”.

INTERVIEWER (I): Shy?

Ip: We don’t dare to...

I: To say, I want this, I want that?

Ip: Yes, yes.”

There are also those who do play a more active role. However, once again the refugees are subordinated, this time the introduction personnel, who has the power in this relation. The introduction in Sweden, on the other hand, is largely built upon refugee agency and activity, hence not doing things for them, but with them instead. A fear of making the refugees passive, and acting in paternalist way, makes it is very much up to the individual to create his or her introduction, and ask for support from the team. This can however create problems for those who cannot or feel awkward to do so.

Difficulties asking questions and placing requests may also have something to do with lacking knowledge about the Swedish systems. The informants have described large contrasts between the Swedish society and the one they were used to. Many find it hard to put in words exactly what is different, experiencing that everything is. Considering this, it is understandable if one doesn’t know what to ask for, or how to orient oneself in the new situation. It also affects the person’s opportunities to control and make plans for the future. It is difficult as a newcomer to know what you need in order to shape your future, one informant explains. How can you ask, when you don’t know what you can ask for?

"INFORMANT (Ip): But something for future... I don't know exactly what it's going to be. What is going to happen in the future. Because, how can I stand by my own leg?. Something like that. (...) I cannot think what I need, for the future. (...) Right now I have no idea, where I am going or what I am going to do. I have no...

INTERVIEWER (I): How does that feel?

Ip: I feel discouraged.

I: But we have to change that. What can we do?

Ip: I cannot say, but I... I like to know how you will help.

I: Oh. (...) Would you like them to tell you what they could help you with? You don't want to ask, you want them to tell you?

Ip: Yes. Of course. (...) Right now I don't know the politics, and understand this country as well. I don't know that either. If I know the political, maybe I can have questions."

As was the case in the relations with the UNHCR, it is difficult to ask questions when you do not understand the context or process that you are in.

Yet another aspect that might affect the refugees' opportunities to participate actively in their introduction is the gratitude that they express. Once they are accepted in Sweden, perhaps they won't dare to ask for more, of fear to be viewed as ungrateful? Perhaps the desperation with which they focussed on becoming free from the previous situation affects them even after arrival? They were happy to be resettled. Already the experience of being helped out on arrival was described to be more than they were expecting. Some of the informants even say that they could never imagine such kindness and willingness to help. This shows that there might be a horizon for what a refugee in Sweden can at all imagine. If they weren't expecting to be part of an introduction activity, perhaps they are satisfied being what we perceive as "passive participants"? Perhaps they just can't imagine playing any other part?

To conclude this chapter, some informants also touch upon the topic of financial support and allowances. Receiving money without having to work is by some compared with winning the lottery. At the same time, other informants wish to make a contribution, in order to feel good about the money. (This will be elaborated on more in the following chapter.) What is presented as a passive reception of allowances, without demands for contribution, can also risk creating even more gratitude, once again preventing the refugees from becoming active participants shaping their own introduction.

5. Consultations with refugees, phase III: Establishment

The analysis highlights how quota refugees experience repeated subordination and dependency towards others, before as well as after arrival in Sweden. The need of others' help positions them as objects, and risk preventing them from becoming independent actors in control of their own lives. While their goal is participation in the Swedish society, they describe difficulties reaching it, and often seem to depend on their introduction teams. The question is how the refugees' earlier experience impact on their establishment?

Language difficulties

Although happy with their reception in Sweden, many informants express feelings of loneliness and difficulties getting to know others. It seems to be especially difficult to learn the Swedish language. One informant describes the difficulties to understand the language teacher, who was speaking in Swedish:

"It was a bit difficult for me, as I experience it. After two weeks, you sit in school and you can hardly say hello and goodbye. And then the teacher begins, I don't know what she's saying!"

The informants describe difficulties in learning the new language, without a stable foundation to build on. When they can't understand the teacher, and as many don't have any English skills to help them out, it is difficult to communicate. While stating this, all informants also say that it is very important to learn the language. It is the will to learn that makes them frustrated when they feel that they are not making progress. One informant describes the process in the following words:

"INFORMANT: When I study, sometimes I get depressed. (...) Sometimes when the studies are getting hard, especially the Swedish..."

INTERVIEWER: It's very hard. So you get depressed, and you thing that, what's the point?

INFORMANT: Disappointed I mean. (...) I want to learn quickly and, how to say that... My brain can't... suck! It can't take as much as I would like. (...) But actually I know that it takes time, but I wish that it would go very fast. But that doesn't work."

A couple of informants say that they felt fine in the beginning, but that it became much harder after a while. They went from feeling that they were getting a grip of the language to not understanding anything at all. They describe their feelings in the following way:

"INFORMANT A: After one month, we began in school..."

INFORMANT B: We began and a teacher talked and talked and we didn't understand anything,

and we cried, A and me. My teacher asked what was wrong. We said, you speak so much and we don't understand anything and everybody said...

INTERVIEWER: They were speaking in Swedish?

INFORMANT A: Yes. You see, sfi contains a-course, b, c and d is the last course. We've managed a and b. A and b are... They speak very slowly, the teachers. She speaks really slow. Any immigrant can understand. And we understood. But when we entered the c-course she spoke like any Swede!"

Most refugees however seem to experience the greatest difficulties in the beginning. Many have mastered and moved on from there. A number of informants perform their interviews in Swedish.

Experiences of isolation

The refugees' willingness to learn the language illustrates a wish to participate and belong to the new country. But without language skills, they found it difficult to communicate with others. One informant explains that she felt as though she was deaf when she first arrived and didn't understand a word anybody was saying. Her and her family's need to communicate made them devoted to the school work. They found that they could learn the language rather quickly. Others, learning to communicate with more difficulties, experience both frustration and isolation from social contexts.

Loneliness and isolation are recurrent feelings expressed in the interviews. Since they do not know many people in Sweden, and find it difficult getting to know Swedes, people from the same country network with each other. However, the fact that people share the same native country does not necessarily mean that they have anything else in common. This informant explains that she has gotten to know people from her country of origin, but from different areas and with diverse experiences and backgrounds. But they share the same language and traditions. She says:

"I didn't know anyone. (...) Actually we come from different places. Most of my friends here, they came from the eastern part of X. I'm from the western. (...) When we come here we know each other, we speak the same language if we need to communicate. (...) All my family, all are far away, so it's good to have, own people..."

Many informants experience Swedes as distanced and difficult to get to know. Swedes are "closed", they say, and do not wish to speak to strangers. Here follows two excerpts from the interviews, illustrating the experienced isolation and shielding from the Swedish culture:

"INFORMANT: We experience one thing here that is a bit difficult. It is the social relations, or contacts. In our native country, or, you can say.. on the other side. You could say that there are

warmer social relations there, with friends or the society. Here it's a little...

INTERVIEWER: Isolated?

INFORMANT: A little. It is, yes one will adjust, but..."

"We have difficulties getting into contact with Swedes... They are closed. They don't want to speak to someone who they don't know. But if you don't speak to someone, how can you become friends?"

Striving to replace the feelings of loneliness with participation and belonging, the refugees become frustrated when it takes time to learn to communicate. It also makes them even more dependent upon the introduction team. Apart from being a "helper" and support person, the introduction personnel enter a more personal role, as "acquaintances". One informant says:

"We had no one else who could receive us, so they helped us. They are our relatives! (laughs) They show us everything. Yes they are like relatives."

Many informants describe that their contact persons play a larger role than that of only a person who helps them out with practical matters. They stress the importance of having someone to speak to, and interact with. It seems to create a sense of security in the new situation, but may at the same time increase dependency. The question is, does it impact on the refugees' ability to become independent and to be active in the introduction programme?

Language difficulties within introduction programmes

As already mentioned, previous research has shown that the Swedish introduction activity is not always clearly defined by its participants. Almost all informants focus on their language training, on school, apart from the practical help that they receive from the introduction teams. However, many informants seem to be informed about the Swedish welfare system, and know that introduction is one part of it. Some of them explain that they will be "transferred" to the social services once their introduction is finished. Even though all informants say that they want a job in the future, they are not sure how far away that future is. They instead express expectations of continuing dependence on allowances and social support. Whether they have figured this out by themselves or if they have been informed that immigrants "should" or "do" transfer to the social services remain unclear.

It is clear, however, that the informants identify obstacles in their efforts to reach independence and participation in the Swedish society. Many of them experience what can be presented as a catch 22. While it seems as though participation in Sweden requires skills in the Swedish language, it also seems that the ability to learn the language would increase with participation in Swedish speaking contexts. This is discussed in more or less all interviews. The informants say that they believe that they would learn the language more easily, and faster, if they had more interaction with Swedes. One of them says:

"It's better to have a Swedish friend, you can speak Swedish more and better. Because when you come back home you just speak [the native language]."

According to this informant, social interaction would improve his language skills, and encourage him to learn more. Many informants claim to lack the incentive to speak Swedish more frequently. They want to belong and participate, but without really needing to speak the language it is difficult to develop it. As newcomers in Sweden they don't know any Swedes, they explain. Instead they form social relations with people from their native country, and among them they adopt the native language. One informant exclaim:

"But at home with, okay for example with our own people... It's no chance to come out a Swedish word!"

Only very few informants say that they have contact with Swedes. All the others say that they do not have any Swedish friends. Since most of the informants merely attend school, the only Swedes they meet are their teachers. One of the problems with the language training is that there are only immigrants attending it. And since immigrants are not a homogenous group, it is difficult also for them to communicate with each other. Two informants explain:

"Okay, we go to sfi. Of course our teachers are Swedish, or they are, okay... But we, from one country... All are invandrare you know. Okay we speak in, we know each other. Of course we speak, sometimes in English or in Swedish. We know each other but not, how to say... Not Swedish people, not Swedish speaking people. Sometimes we don't understand much. We speak with hands and legs... everything!"

"INFORMANT: They [other people] come to our class but it's not... Because they are from Iraq, Iran...

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you couldn't speak with them?

INFORMANT: No, they speak other languages."

Many informants experience that it is difficult to get to know people through their language course. At the same time, school is all they attend to, and for many people it is more or less their only opportunity to interact with others.

Some informants are also critical to the opportunities to learn the language that are presented through practice at a workplace. One informant explains:

"Some practice is not, I would say... They arrange practice, we go for practice but... There's no chance to talk. If, suppose... okay, two Burmese people. Two Iraqi. Two Syrian. So if we go there, one will stand together, one group together, one will talk in their own language. Something like that. And the boss, the chef. He'll be standing alone by himself. (...) So, it's no use."

Another informant explains that he practised at the introduction unit, helping the introduction team to receive and introduce new refugees. The lack of interpreters made the team value his native language skills, and they hired him to work for them, using his native language. The problem now arising is that he is only speaking his native language with refugees who do not know Swedish, hence not developing his own Swedish skills.

The lack of social contexts

Another problem described by the informants is the fact that some of the young adults, around 20 years old, are placed together with older people in schools for adults, and do not get to know any (Swedish) friends of their own age. In Sweden, adolescents aged 16–18 go to so called “gymnasium”. Young immigrants are placed directly into “Swedish” classes. However, those over 19 years of age go to a school for adults, so called “komvux”, with “sfi”-language courses for immigrants. This puts them in a difficult position; considered too old for gymnasium, but not feeling that they have anything in common with the adults in their school. Here are two informants’ reflections on this problem:

“I am not happy with komvux. I was 19 years old when I came to Sweden, and they put my date of birth wrong. I became one year older than I actually am. So I was 20 years old, even though I was really 19. And I had to go to komvux. And in komvux, everybody is over 20 years old. And there are no adolescents, everybody is older. It felt... (...) Nobody is... You see, older adolescents and children are separated. We don’t think like the older ones, who we can talk to...”

“Unfortunately there... Because, there are only the old people. (...) There are not much people in our age, you know. (...) Sfi is for the old people. (...) The younger go to gymnasium.”

Another informant arrived with her younger brother and sister. Without their parents, she was taking responsibility for them. Since there are not many years separating them from each other, she would rather go to their school. Instead, she was placed in komvux and they went to gymnasium. Another informant speaks about her son, who also would rather go to gymnasium than komvux. She says:

“My son is 22 years old. He says, mama! Why did you say I am 22! I want to be in gymnasium. Because he has to study with the mama and papa! (laughs) (...) Why don’t you say I am 19..! He wants a friend, just the same age, because we are, all the classmates are old!”

This illustrates the importance of having a sense of belonging to a social context, and to identify and interact with other people.

Thoughts about the future

When speaking about the future, it becomes clear that the informants wish to spend the rest of their lives in Sweden. They want to settle and stay. They say:

“Yes I will stay here the whole life, in Sweden.”

“I don’t know if I will finish studying. But I wish to get a job... Full time. A steady job, that is. And drivers licence and Swedish citizenship. Sweden will be my home country. (...) I will live my whole life here. (...) Because I saw life here for the first time. And I will... I was born here, and I will die here too.”

Apart from their wishes to belong and settle in Sweden, few informants seem to have any clear ideas of what the future will bring, or what they wish for themselves. Only a couple says that they have plans. This insecurity about the future can derive from their experiences of not being able to plan their lives, when living for instance in refugee camps. One informant explains:

“I don’t really know about the future yet. (...) It’s really difficult for me to dream (...) when we were, we don’t have much, we don’t have any goal. To be doctor, engineer, something. We are only thinking but it’s impossible, you know...”

Previous experiences still seem to make it difficult for the refugees to orient themselves in the new context, and to take control over their lives. Many informants say that they are aware of the differences for instance in how work is carried out in Sweden, compared with their native countries. They think that this can render it difficult for them to get a job. One informant says that even though she has previous experience of an occupation, she does not know if it is being performed in the way she has learned:

“I worked a lot with my hands. There isn’t much technology in X, there are many machines... I don’t know this occupation in Sweden.”

Another informant explains that she has practical experience but that she lacks the theoretical skills and knowledge that is valued in Sweden. She experiences that it will be difficult for her to prove what she know, without any documents of education or degrees. She says:

“For instance, I was working with child care. I didn’t study, I have no education, I don’t read. But when I work with children, I am better than those who have education, because I have experience. But in Sweden, it doesn’t work... In Sweden it’s only papers, you need papers. No, but... I believe that it is wrong. (...) No one will believe that you have working experience... How can you show me that you have the experience? How? But we were practical people and there wasn’t degrees, or grades or anything. We just worked. It’s like that in X, it isn’t about grades, it’s about how good you are at what you do. Only here in Sweden.”

There is also awareness among the informants, about discrimination. Some express that they have felt discriminated on the job market because they are immigrants. They explain that people are suspicious towards people with a foreign sounding name or dark hair, and that the jobs go to the Swedes in the first place.

The informants describe how the lack of work and ability to earn their living by own means lead to ill-health or feelings of awkwardness. Even though a couple of them think of allowances as winning the lottery, many feel a need to contribute. Here are some voices:

■ "You just have to wait for money. It is hard. You can work!"

■ "I don't want to be a parasite in Sweden."

■ "I don't want to... to take social money and live my whole life, just like that. I don't want..."

The experienced importance of working and do one's full share has been noted in earlier investigations of immigrants in Sweden. It is explained both in terms of the parenting role, being expected to work and support the family, and as striving for independence and an effort to break free from the dependency that comes with allowances. It may also be related to the gratitude expressed by many refugees, and a wish to pay back to the Swedish government.

Even though the informants express difficulties to become independent and belong in the new society, they all say that they want to stay in Sweden for the rest of their lives. They express a longing for participation and belonging to a social context. This can be seen as a reaction against the exclusion and lack of participation that characterized their earlier situation as refugees. Becoming a part of Sweden seems to be important to many informants. Many stress that they wish to become citizens. They say:

■ "I will fight to get Swedish citizenship. And have a good life. House. Car. I will get a drivers licence. And... I will not think about returning to my country. I will never say, I will be angry if someone says to me, you are not from Sweden. I wait for my citizenship."

■ "I want to be... citizen! Because we never got to be real citizens before."

As refugees, the informants have not experienced belonging, they have never been accepted as "somebody". To have citizenship means to be involved, participate and belong, it is an official guarantee of precisely the things they missed before.

Exclusion once again?

Given the informants' wish to participate and belong in Sweden, the recurrent expressions of loneliness and exclusion are considered highly problematical. When speaking of their efforts to settle and establish themselves, many informants describe feelings of isolation, especially from Swedish surroundings and contexts. Without any other contacts or relations, many tend to become dependent upon their introduction team, not only for help but for social relations. As discussed above, many consider their chances of getting a job rather small. They need more language skills, they say. Some also experience discrimination, and trouble proving their competence without the type of documents asked for in Sweden. How do these experiences and attitudes influence on the refugees' actions?

Many informants' describe idleness, especially when they speak about their first period of time in Sweden. Some arrived in the middle of the school semester, and had to wait before they could enter a language course. One of them says:

"INFORMANT: It's about three months, over three months that I had to wait [to begin school]. Actually I wanted to join right away but they said, a little bit late for the term, I had to wait for the next...

INTERVIEWER: Aha, they had already started. Okay. What did you do then?

INFORMANT: Nothing!"

Although satisfied with the reception services, some had to wait for quite some time before they could start school. During this time, many did nothing but wait. They didn't know anyone and they didn't know the language. Some say that they walked the streets, trying to learn some Swedish on their own. What they occupied themselves with seems to have been very much up to their own creativity.

For most informants, this idleness seems to continue. Many seem occupied only by school, and not participating in any activities before or after school hours. When asked what they do during a normal weekday, most of them say that they go to school, and back home again:

"I go to school, where I learn the Swedish language and math. Then I come home. I repeat some homework. After that I watch TV. That's how the days pass right now."

Only some of the informants say that they attend to other activities apart from school. Mostly, these are activities that they do together with other immigrants or people who speak their native language. It can be sports clubs, network meetings or get-togethers.

A couple of informants explain that they go to meetings set up by a non governmental organisation. At these meetings they meet both immigrants and Swedes, and can both socialize and practice their language skills. One of them says:

"INFORMANT: The Red Cross is close to my apartment. There we can socialize with other people. (...) Immigrants, and Swedes too.

INTERVIEWER: Very good. Because I guess it is important to meet other people?

INFORMANT: Yes. Otherwise it would be very boring!"

Some informants go to church, to practice their religion. One of them says:

"INFORMANT (Ip): For me of course, I went to this church. Yes. So there were many Swedish people.

INTERVIEWER (I): Okay. Was that the goal, the aim for that activity, was it to meet Swedish people, or was it just to go visit the church?

Ip: Oh no... Because I'm Christian.

I: Okay. So you wanted to go to...

Ip: Yes, church.

I: And that in turn made you meet Swedish people.

Ip: Yes we can meet people, Swedish people there.

I: So that's good... But that's your...

Ip: But that's me, yes. But for others I don't know... Maybe those who don't go to church, only to school, they don't have a chance."

Going to church seems to be something this informant does because she wants to practise her religion, and not connected to the introduction unit. Neither does she seem to attend to the church activities in order to meet people or practice her language skills. However, the church is a good place to meet other people. In the end of the excerpt she states that she doesn't know how other refugees get to know other people. Perhaps they "don't have a chance".

While perhaps suggested by the introduction team, the activities the informants participate in do not seem to be part of introduction, but rather of their own interest. Projects and activities that are a part of introduction are described only to be directed to immigrants or refugees. They don't involve any contacts or socializing with Swedish people. Such statements from the informants raise the question of if, and how, the introduction activity leads to participation in the Swedish society. Rather than creating networks and contacts with Swedes, the introduction risks to shield the immigrants off from Swedish surroundings. Even though some informants find other activities to participate in, many have seemed to depend on their contact persons on the introduction team. (Naturally we have to ask ourselves how many native Swedes do participate in an organisation or experience this type of "participation"! However, here again we see the risk of refugees becoming dependent and entering a role as passive objects, rather than active agents. They might also find it difficult without networks that can help them for instance to enter the labour market.) Those who do not find their own solutions seem to be referred to introduction activities, which do not involve any contacts with the surrounding Swedish society.

Exclusion and ill-health

Exclusion and isolation are not only preventing the refugees from developing their language skills and increasing their networks, it can also create ill-health. The importance of social relations and a sense of belonging have long been stressed in research. One of the younger informants explains that she has become depressed by feelings of loneliness and isolation. By help from the introduction team, she got in contact with a welfare officer. She says:

“Sometimes I feel bad and I don’t know what is wrong with me. There were some times when I tried to commit suicide here in Sweden. I was devastated. It just comes over me sometimes... Why do I live, why..? I am not so important in life, why should I live. (...) I think it was the loneliness, I live alone all the time. I think that it has affected me. (...) Before we were many people together. Now I am alone, all is quiet and... Nobody is with me and nobody speaks to me. I think that was it but now it feels better.”

Lacking sense of continuity in life, meaning and values, can derive from feelings of loneliness and exclusion. These are alarming experiences of some refugees in Sweden, that must be discussed. When evaluating and developing introduction, these aspects must be addressed, since many refugees seem to depend on the introduction units. How can introduction best function in order to reach the goals of participation and independence? Can it improve the refugees’ self-esteem, sense of continuity and meaning?

Meaninglessness can be connected to idleness, and can also derive from isolation from working communities or contexts. One informant explains:

“Without work, it is hard. When you can’t work. I don’t know if you understand, but after two years you still can’t work in Sweden. It is hard. It is receiving money. You can’t work. I can’t explain it but it is hard. (...) You think every day when you wake up, you think, what is happening with my life? I want to work. Every day I get up at five o’clock, I would start working, in my country.”

Once again, the refugees experience obstacles in their efforts to settle and establish themselves. Even though most of them understand that they need to learn the language and understand the Swedish culture, they miss the opportunity to work and experience idleness and lack of meaning. Their descriptions of how they just go to school and return home illustrates the role that introduction plays in refugees’ lives. This also highlights the importance of discussing introduction in relation to well-being and social interaction.

Adjusting to the new – and the old

In order to become independent and support themselves, some informants express both activity and determination. Mainly they seem to try to overcome identified obstacles by making rational choices. One of them explains her adjustment in the following way:

"INTERVIEWER (I): You are studying to be a nurse?

INFORMANT (Ip): But I don't want to.

I: You don't want to?

Ip: I am not happy with my education, but I am forced to do it.

I: Why?

Ip: To work and earn money.

I: But can't you study to become something else?

Ip: It takes maybe ten years. I need money now. I want internet, I want... a nice bed. I want to travel, I want... I want to live.

I: Okay. And this is a rather short course?

Ip: Yes. It is an easier way to..."

This informant has made clear and rational choices in order to become independent and make her own money. She is sceptical towards the possibilities of becoming what she would really want to be, since it takes too long. She continues:

"INTERVIEWER (I): What would you want to do, if you could decide?

INFORMANT (Ip): Yes I have a big dream, as a reporter.

I: But can't you do that?

Ip: No. I can't.

I: Why not?

Ip: Count! Maybe five years in elementary school. Five years of gymnasium. Ten years. University, five years or is it more? Fifteen years. And then you never know if I will get the job or not because I have black hair! (laughs) And I am 25 years old now! I would have bad economy until, no... You see we have, we feel bad with money."

Other informants also say that the allowances that they get from the introduction unit or the social services are not enough. That is the reason for many of them to look for quicker ways to support themselves. Some look rationally at obstacles such as discrimination, and ironically state that they will have to colour their hair to get a job. Others get angry. One informant says:

"When you are looking for a job, then they think that your name is funny. Then the Swedes get it. (...) They get the jobs before the immigrants do. There is this thing with employers. (...) Many have said to me that I must change my name. Why should I change? Otherwise you won't get a job. I say, my name has nothing to do with how good I am at what I do; my name is not a problem. How can I change my name, I have had this name for many years. How can I suddenly change my name?"

Some informants also say that they do not feel comfortable wearing a shawl in Sweden. Someone says that she would want to start exercising but that she doesn't want to join any clubs because of her shawl. Instead she exercises at home, alone, even though she says that she lacks social relations outside of her home and school.

For many informants, living in Sweden means adjusting to the new situation. That is what you have to do when you come to another country, they say. However, all of their examples are descriptions of how they change their persona, their views, or their situation. No one expresses that the Swedish surroundings adjust equally to fit the newcomers. Someone says that she has changed the way she dresses and started wearing a shorter coat. Even though it is difficult to determine whether the adjustments are experienced as positive or negative, voluntary or forced by the new existence, these descriptions raise the question what integration is really about. Described in the interviews are only the refugees' adjustments to the Swedish society.

Some are not only adjusting to the new existence, but trying to find a balance between the new life and traditions, values and experiences from their own cultures. One informant explains that she worries that her children will grow up to be Swedes and not embrace the same values as she wants them to. She explains:

"I am worried and concerned mostly about the girls. Because they live in a society where everything is accepted and... If you say, it doesn't fit with the breed and the country where we used to live, with our traditions. And our way of life."

This woman wants to bring up her children with her values and traditions from her country, and worries that they will grow up to lead lifestyles foreign to her. The will to foster their children is probably found in each and every parent. Experiences of being refugees, and feeling lost in a new existence might perhaps increase the importance of family as a safe haven. This would explain why children becoming distanced to the native culture or tradition might be experienced as a greater threat (or sorrow) by the refugee parent.

At the same time, some of the younger refugees deal with the opposite process in adjusting both to the new and the old. Two of them express that they have changed since they came to Sweden, while they still have to relate to their parents' traditions and views. Here is how they describe their feelings when they arrived to Sweden, and their feelings now:

"INFORMANT A: I felt that it is free, nobody can hurt me. Study. Have a good life. But it's not like that.

INTERVIEWER: Why not?

INFORMANT A: It's just that... Fathers and mothers, it is still...!

INFORMANT B: It still is like that if you don't follow the culture.

INFORMANT A: Still, the boys can go to discos and have girlfriends, and they can dress as they wish and stay out at night. But us girls, no. If I go... I stay home all the time."

Of course there is the possibility to break free and create a "Swedish" life of one's own, they say. However, that means that one would look bad in the eyes of the relatives:

"If you don't want to and you say good bye to your father – you become a bad person between Kurds, the ones who know you."

It is important to understand that the adjustments described by the informants are not at all simple. While some want to change, they still have to relate to their own as well as others experiences of another culture and other values. To change or abandon these is not done overnight. The informants describe how they are being torn between the wish to explore a new culture and the need to be acknowledged as daughters or persons according to the values and traditions that they were raised with. It isn't necessarily fear of looking bad in the eyes of others that creates this problematic situation, but a sense of belonging to a culture that may also affect the ability to change one's way of living.

6. What can we learn from the material?

In conclusion, we can observe that the refugees' account, together with the consultations with introduction personnel, bring up a number of new questions, particularly with regard to participation and dependence. In the initial stages of the resettlement process the refugees appear to have been dependent on the UNHCR, and only in a small degree active in the process. Although this may appear understandable, and any other scenario may appear unrealistic, it has been proved to affect their receptiveness and attitude to the information campaigns run prior to their departure. This can in turn affect their attitude to the introduction programme. Here one can wonder how the information should be designed in order to be more easily absorbed by the refugees. When should information be given, about what and where? Can the stress in the selection procedure be reduced so that receptiveness increases?

At the same time, several refugees say that they would not have wanted more information prior to their departure. They also appear to have been satisfied with the fact that UNHCR has done things for them. Does this mean that the information campaigns are unnecessary or unmotivated? Could there be justification for not providing the refugees with this information? What significance does the information have? Here we can observe that regardless of what we think about when, where, how and whether information should be provided, what is done in this initial stage tends to have a bearing on the continued process. The resettlement process links together issues on migration and integration. It may therefore be worth stopping to consider how the initial stage of the resettlement process can affect the refugees' opportunities to participate in the new society. Reflections on refugees' ability to take action, their subordination, participation or victimization prior to departure may perhaps contribute to developing and understanding the refugees' conditions in the later stages of the resettlement process.

It has thus been observed that the passivity and dependent position in which refugees have found themselves tends to be reproduced in the resettlement process and to play a role in their receptiveness to the introduction. The fact that many refugees appear to regard the officials as people who should do things for them, and that they wait for measures and suggestions instead of taking charge themselves is a problem, given that the introduction in Sweden today is based on a wish and an expectation that the refugees will participate actively and will themselves take charge of their own introduction. At the same time, it is clear that quota refugees in a vulnerable situation cling to their officials, who also work in a more organised manner towards these target groups. However, the officials say they lack functioning cooperation with other agents. As there are no Swedes included in the introduction, there is a risk that the refugees' participation in these activities will screen them from Swedish contexts rather than involve them in Swedish society. The lack of own initiatives, or the ability to take them, as well as the way the introduction is designed as a special measure in Swedish society, hampers their opportunities for establishment in a Swedish environment. This also raises the question of how the introduction can be designed to ensure that refugees can to a greater degree come into contact with Swedes and reduce their dependence on the introduction official. What other contact areas exist? Which other agents can be involved – and how? How do we regard the refugees' subordination and dependence on the introduction? In what way can the various phases of the resettlement influence one another, and how can attitudes based on earlier experiences be changed at a later stage?

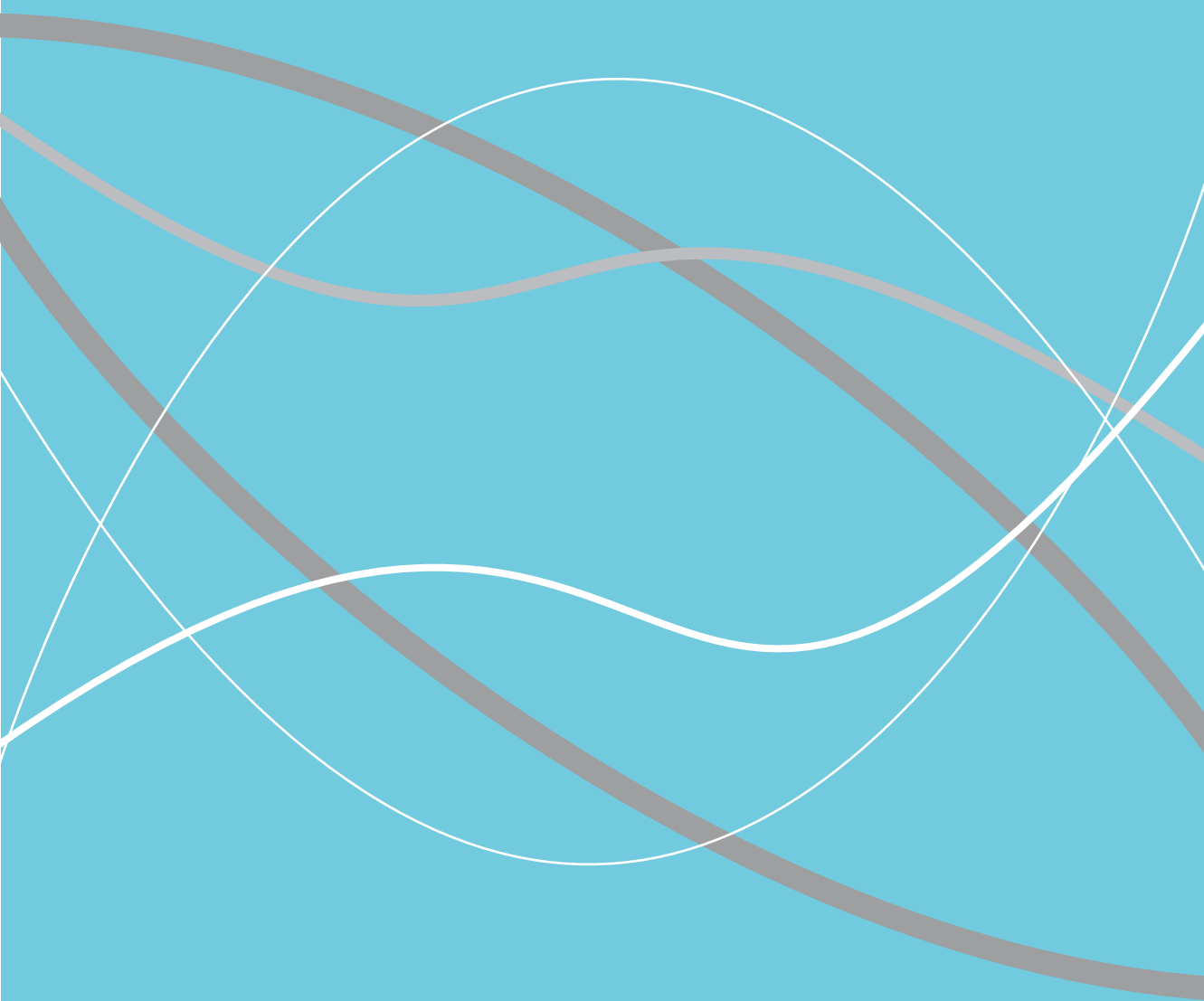
We conclude by observing that we do not regard quota refugees as a target group that is different in a qualitative sense than other refugee groups. There are many similarities in the experiences of the two groups. In the official statistics, the differences between former asylum-seekers and quota refugees appear surprisingly small, for instance in terms of the number of those employed. However, the officials describe greater commitment and harder work in introducing quota refugees. It is interesting to ask whether the differences would have been greater if the officials had worked as hard and in the same way with both groups. Or is it entirely the result of a successful individualisation (as advocated in Sweden today), regardless of the organisational differences regarding the reception and introduction of asylum-seekers and quota refugees?

Even if the quota refugees do not constitute a particularly different refugee group, the resettlement process is an organised chain that can be viewed on an overall basis in a different way from migration and immigration. This chain gives rise to subordination and dependence that has an effect on the refugees' ability to establish themselves in the new society. It has been shown, for instance, that the refugees' lack of expectations and lack of receptiveness to information about the third country and their future situation affect their ability to become independent and take responsibility for their lives in Sweden. This emphasises the importance of seeing the settlement process as a whole when discussing individual phases. What happens at the beginning of the process, and in the refugee status, has consequences for the refugees' future lives, and their opportunities to integrate into the new society. Hopefully, an awareness of this will create opportunities to be able to promote at an early stage the right conditions for good integration into the receiving country.

III

THE RECEPTION, ORIENTATION AND
INTEGRATION OF RESETTLED REFUGEES
IN THE IRISH CONTEXT

Louise Kinlen



1. Introduction

Review Objectives

This report outlines the key findings of the review undertaken in Ireland in relation to three principal areas, namely:

1. Pre-departure orientation
2. Post-arrival orientation and introduction
3. Role of receiving communities and the potential of mentoring programmes.

One of the main purposes of the review was to obtain feedback and hear the narratives of recently arrived refugees about their own experiences of resettlement, the introduction and language programmes, their social contacts, expectations and their experience of mentoring/befriending programmes (if any). This information was complemented and supplemented by focus groups and interviews with key agencies and service providers at national and local levels. Secondary research was also conducted in order to analyse examples of good practice from other countries and to provide a contextual background for the structure and actors involved in the resettlement process at a national and international level.

Key questions were posed with the over-arching question in mind of how the participation and independence of refugees can be facilitated throughout the process. It is hoped that the results of this review will help to inform policy makers, agencies, people working with refugees and anyone with an interest in refugee issues about the resettlement process and particularly the orientation/introduction programmes and how they impact on refugees and the role of mentoring and befriending programmes as a tool for integration.

Methodology

The empirical material collected in this study was based mainly on qualitative interviews and focus groups with key actors. Secondary research material was also used to contextualise and complement the information and provide a basis for some comparative analysis.

1) Interviews with Resettled Refugees

This formed the most important part of the research and this consultation with the refugees was considered essential in allowing them to tell their stories and give their perceptions of the resettlement process. The researcher undertook 21 interviews with a total of 33 resettled refugees. They were all of Kurdish origin and based in three towns in the West of Ireland and had mostly arrived in Ireland in the last year. Most of the people interviewed had participated in pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programmes, with the exception of one sub-group

that had arrived in Ireland in 2005 and did not participate in these formalised programmes. The interviewees were selected in conjunction with the refugee support worker in each town, and an average of seven interviews was conducted over a two-day period in each town. They were selected on the basis of providing a good cross-selection in terms of age, gender, educational background and those perceived as being more or less vocal and confident.

2) Focus Group with Service Providers and Agencies

After interviews had been conducted with refugees in two of three towns, a focus group was organised that brought together key agencies. Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), service providers and Government officials, all of whom were in some way involved in working with resettled refugees. A total of twelve participants took part.

3) Interviews with Service Providers/Agencies

Whilst the Focus Group ensured a good group discussion around many of the issues, it was also deemed necessary to hold individual interviews with key agencies and individuals involved in the resettlement process. This included staff members from the Reception and Integration Agency, language teachers and Integrate Ireland Language and Training, the Refugee Support Workers and some key NGOs. Most of these interviews were carried out face to face and a few were by telephone.

Limitations of the Review

There are a few limitations to this research, including the following:

- 1) The interviews with the resettled refugees were mostly conducted through the use of an interpreter.
- 2) In some of the interviews the sense of gratitude seemed to overpower everything else and there was not always a willingness to focus on negative aspects.
- 3) The research was conducted solely with Kurdish resettled refugees and did not include other refugee groups.
- 4) Some of the issues raised in this report relate to issues of general service provision (e.g. housing, health, adult education) and are outside the scope of this research and are more structural issues relating to service provision in general in Ireland rather than specifically related to refugees.

2. The national context of resettlement

Irish policy on resettlement and integration

Resettlement Policy and Practice

The reception and integration of refugees is co-ordinated in Ireland by the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI), formerly the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA).

In 1998 the Irish Government agreed to participate in the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme. This Decision was taken following approaches by the UNHCR requesting that Ireland would admit, on an annual basis, a number of “special cases” refugees who do not come under the scope of Ireland’s obligations under the Geneva Convention of 1951 as amended by the New York Protocol of 1957. Since joining the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme, Ireland has accepted resettled refugees both through the dossier selection method in which cases are selected on the basis of dossier (paper) submissions by the UNHCR and more recently through in-country selection.

The Office of the Minister for Integration is the key agency with responsibility for the co-ordination of the resettlement programme in Ireland. This includes the following key services:

a) Pre-selection and selection

Each year the Office of the Minister for Integration in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the UNHCR identifies the priority countries of first asylum with refugees in need of resettlement. For more dispersed individuals or in emergency cases the dossier method may be used. Otherwise an in-country selection mission is organised to the country in which the refugees are currently being hosted.

b) Reception

Unlike some other countries, the Office of the Minister for Integration is both involved in the selection and the reception of resettled refugees. Once a decision has been reached to take a particular group of refugees, arrangements are put in place for the reception in Ireland. Ireland now operates a policy of regional dispersal in which most refugees and asylum seekers are accommodated in towns outside Dublin where it is often easier and less expensive to find accommodation and local communities may be more able to respond to their needs. The Office of the Minister for Integration is involved in selecting towns, which may be suitable for the reception of resettled refugees. Once an initial decision has been made about a town or particular county, the local County Development Boards are contacted and the details about the suitability of the town(s) are discussed and negotiated. The City and County Development Boards were established in 2000 and they bring together key players at city/county level to engage in a process of long-term planning.

c) Preparing Host Communities

Ireland adopts a mainstreaming policy approach to service provision and therefore whilst the co-ordination of services and the fostering the integration of refugees at a local level is provided through local agencies and co-ordinated by the County Development Board, The Office of the Minister for Integration is responsible for some of the initial preparation of host communities. The OMI is in a position to provide some funding for local integration measures through its Small Grants Scheme. Another important tool for fostering local integration and the co-ordination of services is the establishment of a local Inter-agency Group at a local level. The Office of the Minister for Integration also supports the County/City Development Board to set up the group and participates at committee level for the first two years. This ensures that issues arising are brought to the table of the co-ordinating and planning body.

Promoting Integration – National Policy

Integration policy in Ireland is still relatively new and is evolving as Ireland responds to the opportunities and challenges of increased immigration. A new Minister for Integration was appointed in June 2007 and it is expected that new a new integration policy instrument will follow. The last policy instrument dealing specifically with integration was the findings of an Interdepartmental Working Group set up in December 1998 to “review the arrangements for integrating persons granted refugee status or permission to remain in Ireland”. In its report, *Integration: A Two Way Process*, the Working Group defined integration as follows:

- Integration means the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society, without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity.

3. Background to the research group and the support structures

Profile of Refugees Interviewed

The refugees to be interviewed were selected in consultation with the refugee support workers in each of the towns. Their selection was based on finding a good cross-selection of men and women, ages, levels of English and general education and levels of confidence and willingness to speak about issues concerning them. An effort was also made to target women who were not participating in language training due to childminding or other caring responsibilities. The actual selection of people interviewed varied in each town, with different age and gender breakdowns in each. Whilst each interview was planned initially with one individual, in many cases this person was accompanied by another adult family member who also participated in the interview.

A breakdown of the numbers and gender of people interviewed from each of the groups is provided below:

Breakdown of Refugee Research Group

Place of resettlement & Date of Arrival	Mullingar Sept. 2006	Carrick on Shannon Oct. 2005	Carrick on Shannon 2006	Sligo June 2006	TOTAL
No. of interviews held	7	4	4	6	21
No. of people interviewed	10	8	8	7	33
No. of Men interviewed	6	2	3	4	15
No. of Women interviewed	4	6	5	3	18

Other actors involved in the integration process

Integrate Ireland Language and Training¹

Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) delivers language training to refugees who have obtained legal status after an asylum process, those with leave to remain and programme refugees. The focus of IILT's work is on (i) the development of language, knowledge and skills to support membership and integration into Irish society and (ii) the identification by partici-

¹ See www.iilt.ie

pants of immediate language needs as well as possible future areas of employment, with appropriate preparation for this objective.

Refugee Support Workers

In each of the three towns, a Refugee Support Worker was appointed to assist the refugees with the integration into their local town and to work with service providers to ensure that issues arising for the resettled refugees in relation to access to services are addressed. In this way they not only support the resettlement programme but work to bring about change which should benefit all migrant users of the service. The role of the Refugee Support Workers is one that has been designed specifically for the programme refugees and it recognises the particular difficulties that programme refugees may have following resettlement and the process of upheaval.

4. Analysis of the introduction period in the Irish context

The information presented in this and the following two chapters is an analysis of the empirical information gathered mainly through interviews with the resettled refugees and the focus groups and interviews with the agencies and service providers.

Pre-departure Orientation

Overview

The pre-departure orientation delivered by the Office of the Minister for Integration to these particular refugees was relatively basic, usually delivered prior to the interviews by a senior member of the selection team and lasted on average 1 ½ hours. The orientation firstly covered basic information relating to the interview process, practical arrangements for travel and what would happen when they arrived in Ireland. Some information about Irish culture and society and what they could expect was also provided.

A more elaborate form of pre-departure training is being developed through the MOST Project and was tested in both Thailand and Uganda. This report here however mainly concerns the analysis of the interviews with the refugees who had been through the process with a relatively limited pre-departure orientation. A guide dealing specifically with good practice in relation to Pre-departure Orientation has also been developed as part of the MOST project in Ireland.

Refugee Perceptions of the Pre-departure Orientation

In each of the interviews the refugees were asked about their memory and perception of the pre-orientation information that they received in the camp and whether this made any sense to them both at the time and when they arrived in Ireland. They were also asked whether there was additional information that they would have liked to receive at that stage. The ability to remember the information session and its content varied greatly, with some refugees, particularly older people having very little recollection and often stating that at that stage they were focused on leaving a bad situation behind and creating a new life and the details of the country in which that would take place were not so important. Some of the younger and more literate or educated people expressed a greater interest in this orientation programme and made a number of suggestions about how it could be improved, both in terms of content, method of delivery and timing.

Poor Memory of Orientation and Emphasis on Leaving

Many of those interviewed had a poor recollection of the orientation session and did not view it as a training session per se. When asked about their expectations of coming to Ireland, for many all that mattered was that they would be safe and free and therefore details on legal systems, housing, landscape etc. did not seem so relevant at the time. This was particularly the case for some older members of the refugee community, who saw it as an opportunity for their children to create a new life.

We were in a camp and we had a bad life, lack of electricity, water etc. We were already dead but when the Irish delegation came and told us we were going to Ireland, we were very happy and we knew our life was going to change (male, 70s).

Memory and Perception of Content of Orientation

Some of the interviewees who were able to remember the content and details of the orientation spoke about it in very positive terms and gave some very specific examples of what they were told and how it helped them. Many had remembered specific information that they seemed to find particularly relevant to them. In some cases, it is possible that they are confusing some of the details with the information given during the post-arrival orientation training.

The ability to remember and absorb the information given during the pre-departure information session varied greatly depending on a range of factors, such as age and education background, awareness of general practice in the selection and orientation of refugees and the state of mind at the time.

1. It does make sense to provide a pre-departure orientation for people who are still in the camp. This information needs to be clear, relevant and delivered in a way that is easy to understand. Encouraging refugee participation and interaction in the training helps them to absorb the information in a way that is relevant to them and encourages them to be more active in the resettlement process.
2. The pre-departure orientation in the Irish context should be longer, more comprehensive and address a wider range of topics, including culture, food, norms, realities of life in Ireland, housing etc. It should also focus on the journey and the practicalities of travelling. People should also be prepared for some possible negatives or the less attractive aspects, whilst still promoting a positive attitude and perception of the resettlement process and their new lives.
3. The content, duration and method of delivery of the pre-departure orientation should be designed with the particular group in mind. Education levels, exposure to Western society and culture, current and past situation, family make-up and ages will all be factors that may impact on the exact nature of the orientation programme.
4. The orientation programme might be more beneficial if delivered after the interviews as people might be more focused on its content, rather than anticipating and worrying about the interviews. Where feasible, it may make sense to deliver it after the selection process to the group that has been selected.

Post-arrival Orientation

Overview

Currently resettled refugees who arrive in groups participate in a 8–10 week orientation programme in the National Refugee Training Centre in the West of Ireland. This course previously lasted for 4–6 weeks, but was lengthened on the basis of this review and feedback from participants. A 4–5 week orientation programme was held for three of the Kurdish refugee groups who arrived in 2006 at separate times. The group that arrived previously in 2005 however did not participate in the training as the course had not yet been established at that stage. They were given the information they needed on an individual basis by the Office of the Minister for Integration and the Community Welfare Officers in Carrick on Shannon, the town in which they were resettled. The Orientation Programme was developed by the Office of the Minister for Integration in conjunction with Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) in 2006.

Timing and Location

The training took place over a period of 4–5 weeks and people were housed in self-catering accommodation. After this period when the orientation programme was completed, they were then transferred to their respective towns, which were located in other counties. For some participants, the fact that the training was held in a place separate to where they were to be permanently located posed a difficulty. It was also felt by some that holding the orientation in the same location would mean that more of the material could be put into practice. As one young man commented:

It's not bad to go straight to the town where they are living. Many other countries are doing that. They are putting them directly into the houses where they are living. That would be better (male, 20s)

The same issue was raised for children who did not attend their local school during this period, but who had separate training appropriate to their age..

In relation to the amount of time allocated to the training, some felt it was sufficient, but many would have preferred a longer orientation period, particularly as they felt new in the country and some the information somewhat complex.

It was great but the time was not enough, just 20 days. A lot of information and it was a little bit complicated.

Content

Overall the feedback on the content of the programme was very positive and many people felt that it prepared them for their new life and introduced them to many new facets of life in Ireland. The practical information they received was often perceived as the most important and certain points of information were noted by a number of people. In nearly every interview the participants were asked to give an example of what they found to be useful and how they have been able to put it into practice. Many felt that it gave them a good introduction to Irish life and culture, which was in some ways very different to the life they had known before.

We didn't know much and it was great and really useful and gave us lots of information about the future life, what we need to do and about the culture and what we need to do in the basic life in Irish society (male, 20s).

Putting it into Practice

Many of the interviewees were proud to demonstrate how they had been able to practise what they learnt during the training. This covered a range of activities such as going to the doctor, paying bills, going to the Post Office etc.

Ancillary Supports and Activities for Children/Adolescents

The post-arrival training to date was held in Ballyhaunis, a small town in the West of Ireland. The refugees were housed in self-catering houses close to the training venue. Whilst adults participated in the orientation programme, a separate programme of activities was organised for the children and adolescents, divided into different age groups. Whilst the feedback on such activities and facilities was very positive overall, a number of issues were raised by various parties involved in the organisation and from the refugees themselves. These included the following:

- Lack of interpretation in the childcare facility was a particular difficulty, both in terms of communicating with the children and the parents.
- The children in the crèche facility were often not used to being left with complete strangers and there was no sufficient settling-in period.

Focus Group and Agency Recommendations on the Post-arrival Training

Many of the issues raised in the interviews with the refugees in relation to the pre- and post-arrival orientation programmes were reiterated during the focus group discussions with service providers. Some specific points relevant to the organisation of the post-arrival orientation raised during the focus group included the following:

- Incorporation of a visit to the town in which people are going to live early on in the orientation programme;
- Career planning should start at the beginning, with a skills audit taking place during the orientation programme, to be revisited later at various stages;
- Broadening the involvement in the post-arrival orientation programme to include other individual-based service providers such as employers;
- Ensuring that there is not too much information and simplify the information given

Conclusions and Recommendations for Planning of Future Training

1. The overall feedback on the content of the programme was very positive. Suggestions for improvement include the need for more emphasis on food and cooking, culture and values, employment opportunities, risk of anti-social behaviour and how to deal with it, information on dental treatment and oral hygiene.
2. The content of the programme may also need to be varied depending on the needs of the particular group. The pre-departure orientation programme could also be used as a mechanism to determine the particular training needs of the group. →

3. The feedback on the delivery methods of the training was very positive and people were very appreciative of the interpretation and the fact that written translations were also provided. It was suggested however that some more emphasis could be put on the practical application through more visits to various offices etc.
4. The venue of the training posed a difficulty for some refugees and service providers who felt that holding the training in the town of resettlement would be more beneficial and would assist the integration process from the beginning. On the other hand there are obvious logistical reasons why the training is held in a separate location. Assuming that it would not be practical to organise the training in the town in which they are to be resettled, it may make sense to organise a visit there during the training course so that people can begin to familiarise themselves with the new town.
5. The duration of the training could be lengthened to at least 6–8 weeks in order to accommodate the extra material and allow more time for the information to be absorbed. This recommendation has been taken on board and the training course is currently 8–10 weeks.
6. Whilst the training for the adults is considered to be very satisfactory, more attention could be paid to the planning of the activities for children and adolescents. The particular concerns in relation to childcare need to be addressed, as does the issue in relation to interpretation for children. The activities for the older children appeared to be enjoyable and well organised, but more forward and integrated planning might be needed to ensure that the training for them was equally focused and beneficial and appropriate to their ages.
7. As recommended by the Focus Group, the orientation training should incorporate more local service providers based in the town where they are going to live and where possible should include people who will be dealing directly with the refugees.
8. Career planning should be a more integrated component of the introduction and orientation process and could start at the orientation programme stage, with the completion of an initial individualised skills audit.
9. It would make sense for the refugee support worker to be employed and in place at the time of the orientation programme so as to acquaint themselves with the group, their particular issues and prepare for their arrival in the new community.

First Impressions and Settling into Ireland

All of the interviewees were asked to talk about their first impressions when they arrived in Ireland, what struck them as particularly different, their feelings when they arrived and what it was like to start a new life. People spoke about the different scenery, buildings and many emphasised the sentiment of freedom and security that they experienced when arriving in Ireland. The sense of being a human again and having rights and entitlements also struck many people.

It would appear that overall expectations of life in Ireland were relatively high and there was a sense that their human rights and dignity would always be respected. Whilst some found this to be the case, for some there was also a sense of initial disappointment when they realised that for many aspects of daily life they were expected to manage their own affairs and find their own resources to deal with specific issues. This appeared to represent a sense of disillusion for some people who had imagined a greater level of support and security. This applied to areas such as housing, transport, healthcare and in some cases racism and anti-social behaviour.

Sense of Gratitude and Comparison with Life Before

For many interviewees questions in relation to their life in Ireland were often responded to in relation to their life before. Situations were perceived as relative to the past, in most cases with the past being portrayed as negative and the present infinitely better.

This attitude sometimes limited the extent to which people were able to critically analyse their current situation and communicate it to a researcher. It is also important to note that most of the interviewees had arrived in the country during the past year and were therefore at the beginning of the settling period and still very linked to their past situation. There did however seem to be a genuine sense of elation about life in Ireland in comparison to life before. This was particularly true for older people who may have a greater memory of life before the time in the camp and possibly felt they had lost more during those years. A number of analogies were used to describe the comparison between life in the camp and life now such as living in prison, a bird set free or being born again the day they arrived in Ireland.

The question might need to be asked; how we can provide the support and assistance that people need on arrival and during the initial stages without creating a system of over-gratitude, passivity or dependence. There may perhaps be ways in which the introduction process could be organised where people are encouraged and motivated to play a more active role rather than to always have the sense that things are done for them.

Policy Implications/Recommendations

- 1) The pre- and post-arrival training might need to place greater emphasis on the realities and potential difficulties people may face when settling in and it could be important to prepare people for the curve of initial euphoria to feelings of disappointment that people may face during that period.
- 2) In areas where people are experiencing particular difficulties, there may be a need to re-view the support services provided and their impact on refugees and examine ways in which some of the difficulties could be overcome. This could also be done at a local level through the inter-agency groups.
- 3) Where people are particularly disillusioned and at risk of mental health difficulties (depression etc.), it is essential that the relevant health services with appropriate interpretation are made available and people are made aware and encouraged to use them.

5. Moving into society and integration

Language Training

Overview

When the resettled refugees have completed their orientation programme, they are then brought to the town in which they are to be settled, provided with housing, children enrolled in schools and the adults over 18 attend English language training. This training is provided by Integrate Ireland Language Training (IILT) and lasts for 12–18 months, depending on the particular circumstances. Language training centres were set up in each of the three towns and the students were separated into two or three different levels, following an assessment of their standard of English. All of the language courses in the three towns are held for the Kurdish refugees only as there are not significant numbers of other people who qualify for the language tuition, although efforts have been made to advertise the classes to others who may qualify.

Language retention

For many of the participants in the language training, such a structured learning environment is a new experience and they may have had very little experience or memory of formal school-

ing The language training teachers and organisers often refer to a six month “bedding down” period in which people need time to settle and process the events and changes that have occurred in their lives. They point out that in some cases language retention during this period can sometimes appear to be minimal.

The lack of opportunities to practice English frustrated some people, with the situation presenting a somewhat vicious circle as those with little English often said they could not talk to anyone because they did not have much English and at the same time said they were unable to improve their English because they did not practice it with anyone.

Role of the Teacher

Both IILT and the students confirmed that the role of the teacher extends far beyond that of simple language instruction. IILT see themselves as also having a role in assisting the integration of their students, with their overall mission statement being “Through education and training, to empower people of other cultures and languages to achieve a place in Irish society.” The content of the programme is often dictated by the students needs and much of it follows the orientation programme. For many of the Kurdish refugees, the teacher plays a central role in their lives and is often the first person they speak to when they need assistance with a wide range of daily issues.

Attendance of Women

As referred to earlier, the attendance of women at language classes was not as high as that of men, with eight of the eighteen women interviewed not attending language tuition, in comparison to just two of the men. The families interviewed on the whole tended to be very large, with many having up to eight or nine children. Of the women who were attending, their attendance tended to be a little more sporadic and they were sometimes not able to due to family obligations. One of the teachers described this as more of an issue for girls than for boys as the girls were perceived as being more involved in family life.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

1. Both the language participants and some of the teachers/organisers expressed some concern that the period allocated to training (i.e. one year) and that for programme refugees in particular, a longer period of training was required. From observation of the level of English of many of the participants who had almost completed one year of training, it seemed that one year was not sufficient. This time period however is under review and it is hoped that it will be extended to at least 18 months or 2 years in some cases. →

2. The method of funding for language classes needs to be reviewed and should be based on a per class (not per capita) basis, with extra funding per capita when classes go over a minimum number. The current system does not always meet the costs of language provision in rural areas. This has been reviewed to reflect actual costs of establishing and running a dedicated centre specifically to meet the language needs of a target group.
3. The mono-cultural group classes could possibly slow down language acquisition and also hinders opportunities for interaction with other people outside the Kurdish refugee group. Whilst there are practical difficulties in terms of organisation of classes with other "Stamp 4"² migrants, other options could be considered where classes are run with other migrant groups.
4. Whilst the role of the teacher in terms of assisting the refugees with many aspects of their lives is to be welcomed and appreciated, in some cases there may need to be clearer boundaries and division of roles. This could occur in relation to the role of the support workers, FÁS (training and employment authority), Community Welfare Officers and other training providers. More attention needs to be paid to a clearer definition of roles in relation to the support of the resettled refugees.
5. The poor attendance rate of women is a cause for concern, particularly if the language training is not necessarily to be continued on an on-going basis in those towns. Other models of training and childcare support should be examined that would allow more women to attend. This could include some training organised in the evenings, playgroups/ crèche linked to the language school or mother and toddler based training. Whilst classes that included babies might not be the most effective in terms of language acquisition, the socialisation aspect for women and their young children also needs to be considered.

² People with Stamp 4 include those with refugee status and leave to remain. It does not cover migrant workers and asylum seekers.

Further Training

Almost all the refugees interviewed were still at the period of language training and only a few had progressed to full-time further training or work. Many realised that their language training in itself would not be sufficient to secure a job and that some form of further training would be required. Some of the younger people had high ambitions and expressed an interest in high-level professional careers such as doctors, pharmacists etc. The teachers and support workers however sometimes expressed some concern in relation to some unrealistic expectations. For some older teenagers and young adults, the distinction between regular secondary level schooling and adult education was not always clear and in some cases there

were disagreements between various actors as to what was the most appropriate form of education or training and sometimes the refugee felt caught between the conflicting advice that he/she was given.

For those who had worked either in the camp or beforehand, there was also a sense of let-down as they were not necessarily entitled to continue working in that position here. And the co-ordination of training and career options and the provision of information appears to be relatively informal, with IILT and the support workers both playing a role. The refugees are all registered as unemployed with their local social welfare office and whilst an agreement has been made that they are entitled to attend language training and they are not required to seek work during this period, they automatically receive letters about attending interviews or further training options. This tends to cause anxiety among some of the refugees who felt that they were being obliged to attend interviews or training that they were unable for.

Implications for Policy

1. Whilst individual teachers have provided excellent career guidance to many of the refugees, the overall provision of career guidance and assessing the suitability of training and career options may need to be better co-ordinated, with a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between the various parties concerned. It is essential that competition between agencies for spaces does not have any negative impact and that the best interests of the individuals concerned are also to the forefront.
2. The anomalies in relation to social welfare payments and language and other training should be clarified and rectified where possible, whilst still ensuring that the refugees have adequate income during the period of language training. Refugees participating in language training should not be used in mailing shots to those on the general unemployed list.
3. When offering or suggesting further training courses for refugees, their individual training needs should always be to the forefront and where possible an individualised assessment of their training needs should be undertaken. The language teachers should also be involved in assessing their level of English and their ability to participate in further training.
4. The specific needs of women and their training options should also be considered. They should also be given adequate opportunities to participate in language training before being obliged or encouraged to pursue further training options.

Finding Work

As most of the people interviewed had arrived in Ireland in the past year, the majority were still in language or other training and they had not commenced full-time work. Of all those interviewed, one man who had arrived in 2005 was in full-time work and a few other young men had found part-time work. Finding work was a bigger pre-occupation for the group that arrived in 2005 as some of them were no longer in language training and were trying to seek work. One woman spoke about her difficulties in finding work despite having some qualifications and good English. She could not understand why she could not find work and insisted that she needed more support in finding a job, with Curriculum Vitae preparation and making contacts with employers.

It's not about the qualifications, it's about the cv and I have one but when I'm applying for a job I can't get it.. Someone who doesn't speak English can find a job, but I can't and I speak some English (female, 30s).

Whilst finding work for many people was not the immediate preoccupation, they were nevertheless conscious that they would need to do so in the near future and were worried that they would not succeed when the time came.

Interpretation

In a number of interviews the refugees referred to the issue of interpretation both in terms of the expectations to provide interpretation within their own community and the need for outside professional interpretation. Families tend to rely on one family member who speaks good English. The support workers all confirmed that they conduct most of their business through the family member with good English who then interprets for the rest of the family. This person is often a child in secondary school or one of the young adults in the family.

Recommendation

Whilst it may be argued that providing interpretation from within the community is a good way for people to become involved and to help each other, there may be situations in which it is necessary to have professional outside interpretation, especially in delicate and confidential situations.

Integration and social contacts

Overview

Integration is a long process that requires a sustained effort on both sides. The level of social interactions with the local Irish or non-Kurdish community varied between the three different towns and it appeared that in Sligo where a befriending programme had been organised, people seemed to have made more contact with Irish people. In all towns involved in the study, people expressed their difficulties in making friends and integrating in the local society. Integration was perceived as being easier for children who picked up the language more easily. Language difficulties were often named as the main reason for not being able to get to know people.

We didn't really integrate with the neighbours because we can't speak English. We can't mix with them or with other people around (female, 30s)

For the young adults, making friends was often seen as very important, especially for those who had good English and felt there should not be any major barriers to getting to know people. The young men in particular seemed to find it difficult to make friends and sometimes spoke about cultural differences and not really understanding Irish people. Some of the young women seemed to find it easier or at least spoke less about difficulties in getting to know people. For women with children however, the situation was reversed and they generally found it very difficult to get to know anyone and often spent most of their day at home with the children with little social contact.

Many people however agreed that their towns were “friendly” overall and they felt respected, even if it was difficult to get to know people.

Joining Sports Clubs and Other Groups

For many people joining a sports or another type of group was seen as a very effective way to get to know people. For many of the young men, joining a soccer team was an important ambition and in some cases became frustrated when they were not accepted to play with certain clubs.

We would like to play football. Football is the best way to integrate with people in this country (male, 40s).

Anti-social Behaviour / Racism

Despite the overall impression that people felt welcomed and that people were friendly towards them, in all of the towns there was also an underlying fear of racism and anti-social be-

haviour, often based on particular incidents. This was particularly true for two of the towns where a number of people reported incidents of anti-social behaviour directed against them. Some people also spoke about a feeling of fear and a lack of security. This seemed to be very important to them as for many people leaving the camp signified moving to a safe place.

Yes I hear the families saying they are not safe. After the attack with those people, they didn't go to the park because they are afraid to go there. All of them stay at home. I told them it's not against them, but they don't think so (male, 20s).

Some incidents described by the interviewees indicate a larger problem of underlying racism among some people, which needs to be tackled. Whilst many of the refugees did not wish to make them sound like major problems, the problem exists nevertheless. The problem seemed to be more prevalent in certain areas, such as large housing estates.

Policy Implications on Fostering Social Interaction and Positive Social Relations

1. Integration is a two-way process and efforts are also required to engage local communities and help them to get to know their new neighbours. Awareness-raising among local communities about the refugee population and their background and opportunities to meet with them in a relaxed social setting would help to dispel myths and to build up trust.
2. In the town where a befriending/mentoring programme was organised, social relations with neighbours and others appeared to be more established and the refugees had more confidence in making contact with Irish people and had enjoyed the experience of finding out about Irish culture first-hand. Similar programmes would be very useful in all areas in which refugees are settled.
3. Sporting and cultural organisations can play an essential role in helping people to get to know each other through participating in a joint activity. They should be supported and encouraged to help refugees and other newcomers to join their organisations and could also try to organise inclusive social events where people could spend time talking to each other.
4. The environment or neighbourhood in which people are housed plays an important role and efforts should be made to ensure that the existing local population is given an opportunity to build up positive social relations with their new neighbours. Awareness-raising and inter-cultural initiatives could also be organised through residents and local community associations as well as local schools. Most importantly there should be opportunities for people to get to know each other on a personal basis, which could be fostered through forming local sports teams and various neighbourhood events. In cases of anti-

social or racist behaviour, a restorative justice or community mediation approach could be used to help the perpetrators and their families to understand the consequences of their acts.

5. Efforts should be made at a number of levels to tackle underlying discrimination and racism and raise awareness among local communities. This could be particularly effective through the medium of youth groups, residents associations etc.

Other Relevant Issues

The following sections point to other issues that emerged during the research as relevant to the integration of refugees in their new communities, although they may not be directly related to the essential research questions. It was felt however that they were issues that the refugees themselves found to be important and which occurred frequently during the interviews. They are discussed very briefly here.

Health and Well-being

A number of the refugees had particular health issues, which affected their and their families' full participation in life in their new society. People who required frequent medical visits were sometimes frustrated by the different health system that they experienced in Ireland, mentioning issues such as long waiting times, the need to make appointments, lack of communication about their diagnosis, lack of transport to the hospital and language difficulties.

For some families with small children, they also experienced some cultural and communication difficulties in dealing with the health services (e.g. Public Health Nurses) and what was considered appropriate for children.

Sources of Support and Assistance

Having a source of support and information was considered very important; particularly the role played by the refugee support workers in each of the towns and in some cases the Community Welfare Officer. The provision of information within their own community was also an important element, but was often not referred to as a particular source of support or information.

If I have some questions, first I go to the Kurdish people around and if they don't know then I go to (the Refugee Support Worker) or (the Community Welfare Officer) (male, 40s).

The type of support quoted as having received from the support worker included assistance with travel documents, general information, and assistance with housing and health issues. They were also often viewed as a link to other services.

Housing and its importance

In most of the interviews the issue of housing and neighbourhoods were mentioned, even if it was not a specific question. The importance of where people live cannot be underestimated, both in terms of having a sense of pride and satisfaction about the actual house and the building of community relations within the neighbourhood.

Sense of Difference in Treatment

The Kurdish refugees arrived in four different groups and all but one went through the same orientation programme. For some, there was a sense that their treatment in Ireland would be the same for everyone and that they would all have the same entitlements. Whilst in principle, the basic entitlements (right to language training, housing, social welfare etc.) are the same; the practice in each of the towns may vary slightly, particularly in relation to discretionary or supplementary payments.

Bridging Cultural Differences

The full awareness of cultural differences and inter-generational cultural conflict did not yet seem to be a major issue, but it may be too soon for people to become fully aware of these issues. For many however, there was a strong willingness to maintain their Kurdish culture and parents spoke about the importance of their children still speaking Kurdish and learning about their Kurdish culture. For many however, when asked about the Irish culture and any differences they had noticed, they replied that they had not really discovered Irish culture due to lack of interactions with Irish people or poor English.

Sense of Belonging

After just one year in the country, it may be too soon to speak of a true sense of belonging to their new country, but many of those interviewed spoke passionately about feeling at home in Ireland and feeling that they belong here. This was often stated in relation to not feeling welcomed in Iran or Iraq.

I can't visit my country now and I can't find anything better than this country in my life and I can't even return back to my country for a visit because of the political situation. But I don't want to go back because I love this country. The life is here is different to home and my children never want to go back (male, 40s).

The Risk of Isolation of Women

As referred to in the section on language training, the participation of women in language training and other training or social activities is much lower than that of men and other family members were aware of this risk of isolation for their mothers or wives.

M: What about your mother, is it difficult for her?

S: Yes, because if anyone is coming to visit us, we are all talking, but not her. It is very difficult for her. She cannot speak English (female, 20s).

For those not participating in language courses (i.e. women at home and some older people) their isolation is compounded by lack of social contacts and no English communication skills. Other refugees and agencies working with them are aware of this fact, yet there seem to be few initiatives to work with this group and help them to participate in other ways.

Perceptions of Older People

As referred to one of the support workers, older people are also at risk of isolation and may be left out in a new society, with different values and a completely new language and way of life. For some of the older people, the life in the camp was also compared to life beforehand when they had more.

Some of the older people interviewed became quite upset and emotional when talking about the past and they tended to refer more to the past than the future, saying that the future was for their children, not for themselves. They seemed relieved to know that their children and grand children had a future, but did not see much of a role for themselves in the new society.

Interactions between two groups of refugees in same town

In one of the host towns Carrick on Shannon, two groups of Kurdish refugees were settled. The first group was settled in 2005 and the second group many of whom were related to the first group came in 2006. The first group did not participate in the formal pre-departure and post-arrival orientation, but the second group did. It was expected that when the second group arrived, the first group would be able to assist and support them. When both groups were asked about this support, the response was mixed, with members of the first group mostly saying that they provided a lot of support to the second group and the members of that group not necessarily referring to the support they had received.

General Advice on Bringing other Resettled Refugees to the Country

At the end of each interview, the refugees were asked about recommendations they might have about bringing other resettled refugees to Ireland and what supports were needed. Many responded that they would be lucky to receive the same level of support that they received and

that nothing more was needed. It is not sure whether they all really believed this or whether it was said out of a sense of gratitude for all that had been done for them.

Some people however had a few recommendations about what could be done to ensure the easier integration of resettled refugees. These related to issues already referred to in the report, such as racism, timing and housing:

- Check first the people that are in the city or town – like to be careful of racism.
- Bring refugees in the correct time, not in the time that school has begun. Before they go to school (female, 20s).
- The English needs to be extended.
- Secondly when the family is going to view the accommodation, they should accept if we don't like the house and we should be given an opportunity to change our mind (male, 40s).

6. Mentoring/Befriending programmes

Overview

Mentoring programmes can be a very useful tool in helping refugees to integrate into the new host society through the development of more meaningful contacts with members of their local community. This can often be problematic in programmes, which are organised exclusively by the State and do not involve other actors such as volunteers or former refugees. A mentoring programme can be organised in conjunction with an official introduction programme and mentors in some cases play some roles that are traditionally carried out by State or other officials, such as showing a refugee around a local town, taking them shopping, helping them to fill in forms. This more informal and personalised form of support can often be more beneficial and efficient.

In each of the towns where the resettled refugees are located, some attempts to set up a voluntary befriending programme were made. In two of the towns there were some difficulties in organising it due to various capacity constraints, but in Sligo the Sligo Volunteer Centre, an organisation dedicated to co-ordinating volunteering in the town, took the project on board and organised a successful befriending/mentoring programme. The details of this programme and its evaluation and feedback from the refugees are discussed below.

The Sligo Volunteer Centre Mentoring Programme

Overview

The Sligo Volunteer Centre aims to promote and increase volunteering in Sligo Town and County. In the summer of 2006 they became aware of the group of Kurdish refugees who were moving to Sligo. The Volunteer Centre saw this as an ideal opportunity to link local volunteer families with the new families in order to ease their transition into life in Sligo. They set up a programme as a “befriending programme” between the families and the newly arrived.

Many of the families who volunteered saw it as something that would be great for their children and in some cases they themselves had experiences of emigration. A total of 100 people took part in the programme, made up of 60 Kurdish and 40 from Sligo. The larger Kurdish number was due to their larger family sizes.

Some of the activities of the mentoring programme in Sligo included:

- Number of group events were held, in order to introduce the families to each other and to provide contact in a larger social setting
- Welcome Day where all the families were to meet, the Sligo families were given disposable cameras so that they could make a collage of themselves and their daily life.
- Sports day at which local sports groups showcased their sports
- As well as these group events, the families were also encouraged to meet up individually.

Programme Evaluation and Feedback

The Sligo Volunteer Centre conducted an internal evaluation of the programme, which included questionnaires administered to all the families who participated in the programme. According to that evaluation, the projects aims and outcomes were listed as follows:

Original Aims	Actual Outcomes
1. To assist the resettlement of the Kurdish families in Sligo and hopefully give them a positive introduction to their new home.	Families have made a local link. Most relationships are still on-going. Five out of 6 families who responded intend to continue meeting with their family.
2. To integrate Iranian Kurds who may already be in the region by involving them in the Induction programme.	Due to the many Kurdish dialects, it was not possible to find a local interpreter. An interpreter was organised by the OMI as required.
3. Raising awareness among the community in Sligo about the culture and tradition of the Iranian Kurdish people, thereby creating an open environment and assisting to break down the inhibitions people have about people from other countries and cultures moving to Ireland	Events were held in a number of different community centres, therefore raising awareness among the people from those centres and introducing the services of the community centres to the Kurdish people

4. Promote a positive image of those from different ethnic minorities	The community centres where the events were held were delighted to host the group
5. Give the Iranian Kurdish families an opportunity to get involved in being a volunteer themselves in the local community through time	None of the Kurds have contacted the centre about volunteering themselves. One girl is working in the Centre as part of her Transition Year school work placement.

The evaluation also reported on each of the individual events and provided feedback from both the Kurdish and the Sligo families on the programme. Overall the outcomes of the programme appear to be very positive, despite its relatively limited duration and scope.

Some of the issues that the organisers and agencies involved in the process also noted were:

- Language barriers sometimes made communication difficult and those with less English sometimes preferred the larger events.
- It might have been useful to have had some more focused activities with smaller groups e.g. crafts activities for women or activities for teenagers.
- There were a few cultural misunderstandings between people; such as in some cases the Kurdish families took their commitment more seriously and were likely to be insulted if the Sligo family did not reciprocate in the same way.
- Transport was sometimes an issue when the families met on an individual basis as some of the Sligo families lived outside the town.

Overall the Sligo families had an air of greater confidence about meeting with and initiating contact with Irish people, which could be linked partly to this befriending programme.

Feedback from Focus Group on Befriending/Mentoring Programmes

During the focus group, one of the learning groups focused specifically on the issue befriending/mentoring programmes, where both the Sligo programme was discussed as well as examples from other places. Many of the agencies or services providers who participated in the focus group saw a great value in such programmes and saw them as absolutely necessary.

Much of the feedback from the focus group centred on the need to ensure that the refugees have opportunities for interaction in a wide range of spheres and that they are linked and integrated with each other. This includes the need for appropriate training, links with employers, individualised career planning and befriending in the local community. Some suggested that befriending programmes could assist not only in fostering social contacts, but also in helping refugees in more practical and defined ways such as introductions to employers and providing a linkage to other service providers. It was agreed however that all befriending programmes should have a clear referral service and a co-ordinator who is well linked with service providers who can make the appropriate referrals or give the relevant information to the mentor.

Overall it was concluded that such programmes do not work of their own accord and require continued and sustained effort and energy. Relying on volunteers can have its drawbacks and it is usually necessary to have a professional worker to co-ordinate the programme and motivate the volunteers.

Conclusions

Mentoring or befriending programmes can be an effective tool for inter-cultural communication and integration if managed correctly. They need to be based on building up cross-cultural understanding and organised in an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance and flexibility. Being a mentor can be a very enriching experience, but it is important to ensure that the mentor is able to provide the relevant support required, rather than just having good intentions. Screening and training of mentors is essential. On the side of the mentees, there also needs to be a clear understanding of the programme and it should also be voluntary on their side. Similarly there may also be mentees for whom such a programme is not suitable. It is also important that such programmes do not work in isolation from other support services and that a holistic approach is adopted where issues encountered can be addressed from a range of angles, whilst ensuring that the role and boundaries of the mentor are clear and there is a structured communication and referral channel.

7. Key conclusions/Recommendations

Overview

This review has examined the journey and the context of resettlement of the Kurdish refugees who came to Ireland in 2005 and 2006, particularly looking at the orientation programmes they have participated in, both before and after arriving in Ireland, how they have settled in their new towns, their language training, overall levels of social contacts and possibilities for integration and finally the potential role of mentoring/befriending programmes.

The issue raised earlier in this report of the importance of ensuring that refugees are encouraged to be active and to participate in society from early on and the need to treat refugees as independent persons rather than as passive objects.

In this concluding chapter, the conclusions on the three themes are summarised, with an overarching question in mind of how the refugees can become active agents in the process and their independence promoted whilst still ensuring a sufficient level of support and assistance.

Reception and Introduction

The pre-arrival orientation in the Irish context has traditionally been much shorter and less detailed than in some other resettlement countries. The level of service provision and assistance may also be at a slightly lower level. NGOs and volunteers also play a greater role in the Irish context and in many of the organisations supporting refugees. This could then lead us to ask the question whether the programme refugees in the Irish context are less likely to be passive and subordinate in the process and whether this more limited form of introduction is more likely to promote independence.

There does not appear to be any simple answer to these questions and it would be very difficult at this stage to jump to any such far-reaching conclusions. Many of the refugees interviewed had a clear view about the need for them to participate in society, learn the language, find employment and make friends with Irish people. The post-arrival orientation programme and language training seems to have given them a reasonably good sense of what they could expect to happen to them, what they might be expected to do and what they could do and an overall sense of how they could map out their future.

In the review, the isolation of women with small children or other dependents emerges as a central issue, which has the potential to create a sub-group at risk of complete isolation from the host society and possibly also leading to tensions and changes within the family dynamics.

Whilst the content of the post-arrival orientation programme on the whole is sufficient (with a few minor exceptions), the method of delivery could be reviewed to help the refugees become more active with the emphasis on learning to do things rather than hearing about how they are done.

Integration and Role of Host Community

Unlike other countries where all the introduction phase takes place in the same town (orientation, language), the two elements of orientation training and language training are separated both geographically and chronologically. The initial phase of language training does not appear to be sufficient for some people, but it is to be extended in most areas.

The difficulties in organising appropriate further training opportunities and some of the institutional competition and conflict is also a cause for some concern. A more structured and individualised approach to career planning and assessment would be useful. A combined model of language and vocational training could help to ease the transition from pure language learning to other training and employment opportunities. In order for such a structured approach to be followed, it would be essential for the relevant service providers and Govern-

ment Departments to develop a co-ordinated, holistic and integrated system with a clear understanding of each other's roles and a clear commitment to promoting the best interests of the refugees concerned.

The Mentoring/Befriending Model as an Integration Tool

The need to increase opportunities for social contacts outside contacts with officials, support workers and language teachers is evident from the research results. Ireland has a very good tradition of volunteering and people volunteer in a wide variety of settings to assist various causes. The role of these support and voluntary groups vary and many operate on very limited resources.

It seems that there is sufficient scope and merit to extend the mentoring model to other groups of refugees/migrants in Ireland. It is essential that good practice guidelines are followed as outlined in the preceding chapter, with a strong emphasis on the establishment of inter-cultural communication.

Concluding Remarks

Resettlement is a complex process, made up of many parts, involving a variety of actors, ranging from the international agencies to the national Governments through the selection and reception and then the local receiving communities made up of a myriad of governmental and non-governmental actors as well as people living in local communities.

As shown here, one of the dangers of the resettlement process can be the lack of promotion of independence and opportunities to be active in the process. Orientation programmes do not solve all of these issues and are only one element of the process, but are an important way of starting the process of promoting the participation and sense of self-worth of the refugees and giving them a sense that they can play an active role in the new society. Other support structures and service provision are also needed to be able to adapt and provide flexible solutions. NGOs and civil society also have a very important role to play in the process. Most importantly, the voice of refugees themselves should never be lost and they should be to the fore when developing or implementing policies and strategies.

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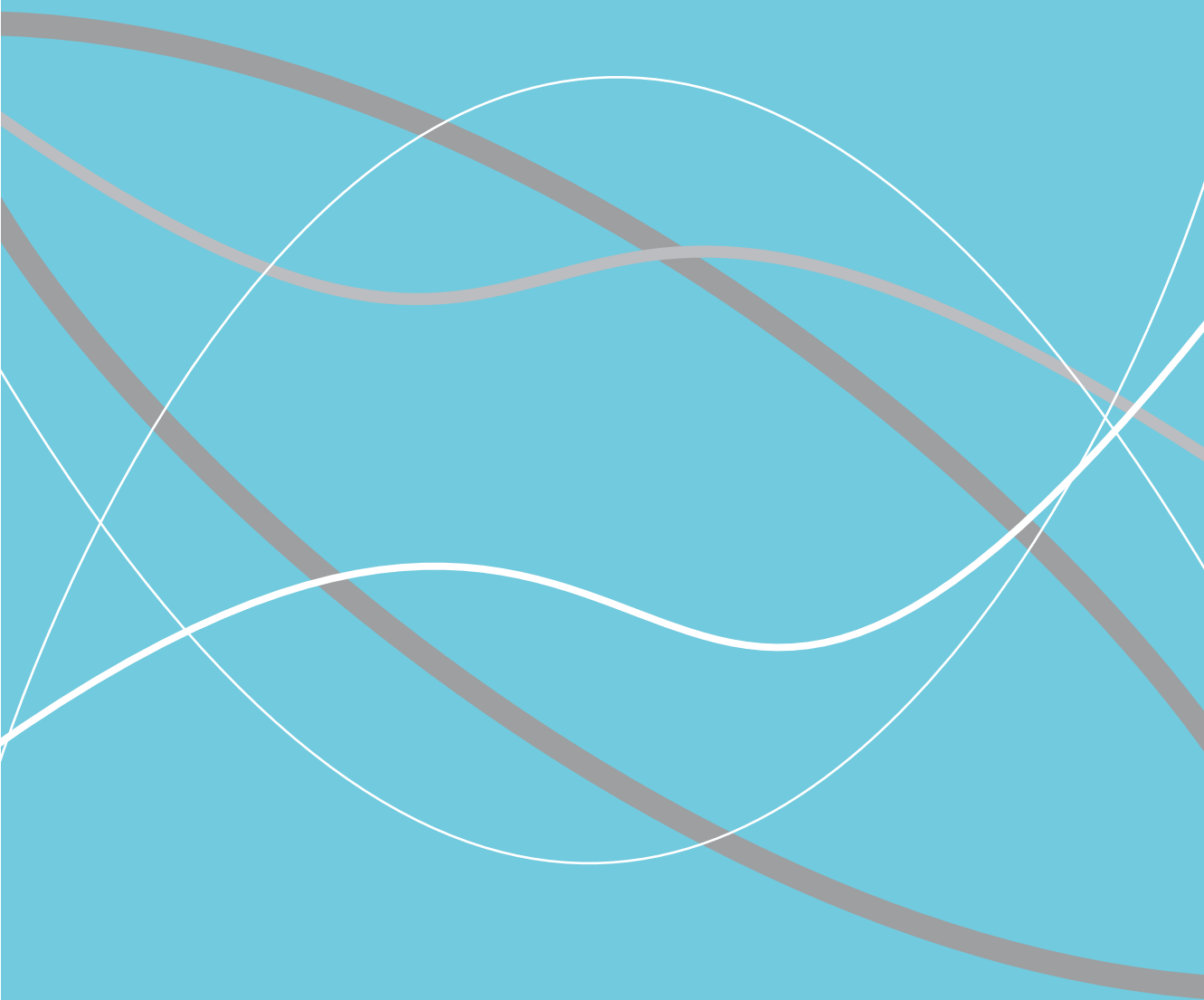
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IV

WORK-BASED TRAINING MODEL

Tiina Järvinen



1. Introduction: Parallel processes of integration

Many refugees who arrive through resettlement programmes have supported themselves and their families in the first country of asylum without any help. However, after resettlement they are not expected to work or study until they have learned the language, adopted local habits and studied the culture. This kind of process can take a very long time. Also, language training and other integration-supportive studies are often provided by authorities and specialised organisations, and contacts with local inhabitants are limited or even non-existent. In this context, motivation for learning the new language can be low and it is easy to lose the active, self-supportive role. The national development task in Finland tried to seek solutions to the challenges encountered by newly-arrived refugees in their integration process.

The project sought solutions to the above-mentioned problems by testing methods for direct inclusion into the labour market. This was made by testing language learning programmes which combine theoretical studies and practical communication. The practical communication took place during on-the-job training. The purpose of the language training was to help the refugees to cope at the workplaces. On the other hand, the practical training at workplaces guaranteed that the participants had many opportunities to actually use the language. Another important aspect in organising the training was to start it as soon as possible after the arrival. The presumption was that this would avoid making the participants dependent on the social services provided by Finnish society.

In addition, the project aimed at diversifying responsibilities by involving work communities and employers in the integration process right from the beginning. In order to access employment, networks and references are often needed. This can be a great challenge if you do not know the language or any local people. In the workplaces refugees made contacts with local people, and this means that in the future they will have networks and references that are helpful in finding employment.

The thought behind the MOST training in Finland was that when integration is carried out in this manner, it advances in parallel processes instead of just one process at a time. A lot of time is saved when several steps can be taken simultaneously. It was also thought that the refugees would be motivated once they saw the benefits of learning the language straight away. Finally, we wanted to prove that in spite of all the hardships of the past, many of the refugees want and are able to work, study and shape their future like any other newcomers.

This report pursues two objectives: firstly, reporting the progress and the results of the training, and secondly, advising on the key issues to be taken into account when similar on-the-job training is being organised.

Integration practice in Finland

In Finland, the municipalities agree on receiving refugees on a voluntary basis. They fix yearly quotas which are filled by resettled refugees, accepted asylum seekers and family reunifications cases. Placement of resettled refugees in municipalities is usually arranged before their arrival and is based on a set of considerations such as the presence of relatives or social networks, opportunities to work and study and availability of specific health care services. Refugees are resettled directly to the municipalities and their own rented housing.

The introduction and integration of refugees are carried out by the municipality in which the refugee is settled. Each refugee receives an individual integration plan where his/her potential and needs are drawn up. The municipality officials follow each individual during the introduction period and support him or her through meetings and activities. According to the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, immigrants are entitled to three years of special integration support. While they are participating in integration activities, they receive financial support, a so-called 'integration allowance'. During the MOST training the participants received the same integration allowance.

2. Preparatory work

Selection of Municipalities

In Finland, the project was carried out in two different areas, the Province of Southern Finland and Ostrobothnia, which is located in the west of Finland. In the Province of Southern Finland, the municipalities of Espoo and Vantaa participated in the MOST project. They are part of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and are both big cities by Finnish standards. Espoo has 234,019 inhabitants and it is the second-biggest city in Finland. Vantaa, with its population 190,058, is the fourth-biggest city in Finland. Both Espoo and Vantaa have been actively accepting refugees: Espoo's annual quota during past years has been 25–40 and Vantaa's 20–30 refugees.

In Ostrobothnia, the municipalities of Kokkola and Korsnäs have been acting as host-municipalities. These two municipalities are quite different. The municipality of Kokkola is the administrative, economic, cultural and provincial centre of Central Ostrobothnia. The number of inhabitants in Kokkola is 36,516. Kokkola has acted as a host-municipality for refugees for more than a decade – refugees have been accepted almost every other year during the last 15 years.

The municipality of Korsnäs, on the other hand, is a small rural municipality. The municipality has about 2,200 inhabitants and more than 96 per cent of them have Swedish as their mother tongue. Korsnäs was one of the first municipalities in Finland to receive refugees. A group of Vietnamese refugees was resettled in the municipality in the 1980s. However, Korsnäs has not accepted any refugees since this time.

Selection of participants

The Finnish selection delegation selected 387 refugees from a refugee camp in Thailand in 2006. Altogether 35 of them participated in MOST training.

Most of the group was selected on the basis of the information received at the selection interviews. During the interviews the refugees were asked whether they would like to start working and studying the Finnish language immediately upon their arrival in Finland. Most of the refugees naturally stated that they would be interested in doing so. The interviewers paid special attention to educational and professional backgrounds and how active the person had been during his or her stay at the refugee camp. However, this did not have any impact on the resettlement criteria. The refugees who were selected were those whom the UNHCR had submitted to the Finnish delegation and the main criterion for selection was the need for international protection.

The final decisions on who would participate in the training were made in Finland. The information that was gathered during the interviews in Thailand as well as the municipality where they were going to be resettled affected the decision.

Originally there were supposed to be 30 participants. In the end, there were also some additional participants, who wanted to join the training after they had heard about it from their friends or their municipal worker. In Korsnäs three additional participants were originally chosen. However, two of them have still not arrived in Finland, and at this point it is uncertain if they will ever be able to come. The third one was on maternity leave during the training. Three participants dropped out of the training, one because of her maternity leave and the other two because of illness. At the end there were 13 female participants and 22 male participants.

Municipality	Burmese refugees resettled in 2007	MOST Participants
Espoo	17	12
Vantaa	17	6
Kokkola	38	8
Korsnäs	30	9
TOTAL	102	35

Planning and purchasing the training

The original idea was to use a model in which the language lessons would have been organised during the working days at the workplaces. However, this would have been too difficult to organise, because the workplaces were scattered around the municipalities. It was also impossible to find several language teachers to carry out the language training. Instead we concluded with a model in which the participants studied Finnish in a group for two days a week and spent three days a week working at their own workplace.

Initially, the refugees were supposed to arrive in Finland in March, but because of some difficulties concerning travel arrangements, their arrival was delayed. Therefore the training was shorter than intended. However, because of the delay, there was more time to write the invitation to tender and take into consideration the views of the field workers. The field workers brought up practical issues, such as the need to clarify in the invitation to tender who has the responsibility for solving problems that arise during the training. This and other advice proved to be very valuable and spared the project from many problems.

The training was carried out in the form of labour market training, the objective of which is to improve the participants' chances of finding work. Therefore, it is diverse and practical in nature and in most cases includes on-the-job learning. The legislation concerning labour market training is very strict and inflexible and thus it was quite difficult to fit the training in between the rules. However, it was the only possible/existing way of finding a durable solution for this kind of training.

The training model created was also affected by the refugees arriving in April/May, which meant that the summer holiday season was about to start. The programme coordinator had to create a balance between not delaying the starting time too long and not starting the training during the peak holiday season. Because of the summer holidays and the delay in the training it was decided that instead of starting the training during the summer holidays in July it would be postponed by a month in the Southern Province. An additional orientation course was organized instead.

Timetable	Orientation course	Intensive language course	Job-based training
Vantaa and Espoo	25.6. – 13.7. 3 weeks	16.7. – 27.7. 2 weeks	30.7. – 14.12. 4 ½ months
Kokkola	–	4.6. – 21.6. 2 ½ weeks	25.6. – 7.11. 4 ½ months
Korsnäs	–	24.5. – 12.6. 3 weeks	13.6. – 8.11. 5 months

The invitation to tender was made separately in Ostrobothnia and the Province of Southern Finland. In both places the same kind of model was used. In Ostrobothnia two different training centres: Korsnäs Kurscenter in Korsnäs and Kokkolan Seudun Opisto in Kokkola were chosen to organise the language training. In Vantaa and in Helsinki the training centre Amiedu took care of the training in both municipalities.

Finding the workplaces

Before the project started most of the partners involved were quite sceptical about finding enough employers who would be willing to participate in the project. However, when the programme coordinators contacted potential employers they found that attitudes towards the project were surprisingly positive. The majority of the employers were interested in taking part in the project if they had suitable tasks for the participants.

The purpose was to test the training in both the public and private sector workplaces in order to gain experience of how this kind of model works in different work environments. It was also considered important to gain experience in both sectors, because in the future there will be a lack of labour in Finland that will affect the public sector in particular. The idea was that in the future the training model could also be used with other migrants who come to work in Finland.

Potential workplaces were contacted in April 2007. The workplaces were found by using the networks in the municipalities (public sector) and the Internet (private sector). In the Southern Province employers were contacted by phone and in Ostrobothnia the programme coordinator visited the workplaces, gave them information about the MOST project and checked whether the workplace could accept a trainee or not. In the end it was relatively easy to find employers who were willing to participate in the project and accept a trainee. Many of the employers had had foreign workers and/or trainees previously but this was the first time the trainee knew only a little Finnish. The main problem for many employers was that the practical training started during the summer when most of the regular personnel were on vacation.

In Ostrobothnia, the programme coordinator endeavoured to find workplaces that corresponded to the participants' knowledge, experience and foremost interest. For example, a girl who planned to study health care carried out her practical training in a residential retirement home, and a man who had been working as a tailor for 20 years carried out his practical training in a leather factory. However, the language learning was the most important and this was given priority in the search for workplaces. All the participants were allotted a workplace based on the information available about his/her experience and knowledge. However, the participants were told that the workplace they had been allotted was only a suggestion and that they could change it if they wished. Finally, two of the participants decided to change their workplace.

In the Southern Province the programme coordinator was able to find more interested employers than there were participants. Therefore the participants were able to choose the workplace they were most interested in. The distribution of workplaces was made at the same time with individual integration plans in cooperation with the municipal worker, employment counsellor and interpreter.

The list of chosen workplaces included kindergartens, retirement homes, libraries, parishes, recycling centres, depots, a physical education centre, youth centre, leather factory, greenhouses and a company that packs vegetables.

Employer	Work tasks
Korsnäs församling – The parish of Korsnäs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Youth activities – Garden work – Cleaning
Kottebo dagis – kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child care – Cooking – Cleaning
Molpe gruppfamiljedaghem – day nursery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child care – Cooking – Assist where help is needed
Omsorgscenter Buketten – residential retirement home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Housework – Assist when visiting the patients – Keep the patients company
Oy K Hultholm Ab – company that packs vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Packing vegetables – Sorting vegetables
Växthus Mikael Åkersten – greenhouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tomato picking – Different kinds of greenhouse work
Växthus Therese Vestberg – greenhouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tomato picking – Different kinds of greenhouse work

Example: Workplaces in Korsnäs

Tutoring fee

All the workplaces were offered a so-called ‘tutoring fee’ to cover some of the costs and time that the trainee would take up. This amounted to 300 euros per trainee. This was only symbolic compensation for the efforts that the workplaces made. The fee was paid either directly to the tutor appointed for each trainee or to the whole work community.

Orientation training for the employers

The programme coordinators organised an information meeting for the employers a couple of weeks before the practical training started. The following topics were discussed at the meetings:

- Information about the MOST project
- Practical information about the procedures
- Information about the culture and ethnic background of the participants
- Information about the refugee camp and general information about the principles of international protection (reasons why the participants come to Finland)
- Information about meeting different cultures, stereotypes, diversity, cultural differences, etc.

It was emphasized that the practical training was foremost a part of the language course, not ordinary labour. The employers were requested to speak as much as possible with the participants. They also received a training package that included all the above-mentioned information as well as a guide produced by the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) in order to introduce migrant workers to the work community.

Some of the employers held an extra meeting for the staff in order to inform them about the project and the trainee; how it would affect the work and special issues to which they would need to pay attention. Some workplaces in the public sector drew up a working-day schedule for the trainee before his/her arrival. None of the greenhouses made any pre-arrival arrangements, except for participating in the information meeting. All of them were small family-owned companies and the general opinion was that there was no need for any arrangements prior to the practical training. Some of the workplaces also reported that there was no need to plan the training, since they were used to similar arrangements, as they had had trainees for several years.

3. The MOST model in action

Arrival

The Burmese refugees arrived in Finland at the end of April and during May. All post-arrival formalities, such as registration, medical examinations etc. were taken care of during the first month in Finland. All the participants were provided with an integration plan that focused on their individual situation. While the integration plan was being drafted, the participants were once again asked whether they wanted to participate in the training. In the municipalities of Vantaa and Espoo the participants chose their workplaces during the integration planning.

Organizing all this before the training started was essential in order to ensure that none of the participants would miss classes or on-the-job training days because of medical examinations etc. Additional challenges were presented by the holiday season and the shortage of professional Burmese-language interpreters in Finland. Another issue that needed to be resolved was finding day care place for all the children whose parents took part in the training. Many of the day care centres were closed during July and, therefore, two of the parents were not able to join the group before August.

Post-arrival orientation training

Before the actual training started, the project organized a post-arrival orientation course in the Province of Southern Finland. Two and half months would have been too long for the participants to wait before the actual training started. In Ostrobothnia the MOST training started before the holiday season and the programme coordinator was able to give more assistance to the participants. Therefore no orientation course was organised.

The orientation course was organized by the Multi-Ethnic Burmese Society of Finland and the trainers were Burmese refugees who arrived in Finland 3–4 years ago. All the trainers had personal knowledge of what it feels like to come to Finland from a refugee camp and from Burma. It was, therefore, easier for the newcomers to understand the information being shared.

The training lasted three weeks, with two/three training days per week. The timetable for the orientation was scheduled to be as flexible as possible, so that the participants could take care of the post-arrival formalities that still needed to be carried out.

During the orientation course participants received information about the Finnish language and culture as well as manners and customs related to work in Finland. They heard visiting lecturers from the MOST project and the employment office talking about practicalities they needed to know before starting the on-the-job training. After all the lessons the organiser had

a discussion with the participants and asked their opinions about issues they had just learned. During the training they also practised buying tickets together, using public transport in order to travel to the workplaces, and learn how to make a timetable for the day. In addition, the organisers told them about their own experiences in Finland and encouraged the newcomers to study the Finnish language and to take all the benefits of the on-the-job training. Many of the organisers wished that they had had a similar opportunity when they came to Finland since many of them were still not employed on a permanent basis.

Intensive language course

The participants spent the first few weeks of the training programme on an intensive language course, learning the most important phrases and everyday language expressions.¹ During these weeks, the participants also learned about manners and customs related to work in Finland and characteristics concerning different workplaces. The language teaching was very interactive and focussed on speaking and discussions. A lot of effort was put into supporting the participants to speak themselves and ask questions. The purpose of the language course was from the beginning that the words and structures learnt during the language lessons would support the practical training.

During these weeks the participants also received information on issues that were worrying them. For example, an issue that everyone was extremely interested in was the possibility of family reunification and, therefore, information was provided with the help of an interpreter.

Practical training

After the introduction to the new language the practical training started. During the first days at work the language teacher visited each participant's workplace and spent about an hour with each one. During this hour the contract was signed, the employer explained the work tasks and practical details related to the job, and the participant was given time to say a little bit about him- or herself.

The participants attended Finnish language lessons two days a week and carried out on-the-job training three days a week. The municipalities had slightly different ways of organising these days; in Korsnäs and Kokkola the three days at the workplace were consecutive while in Espoo and Vantaa on-the-job training and the language lessons were alternated, leaving Fridays for work experience.

¹ Participants in Korsnäs were studying the Swedish language, while the participants in Kokkola, Espoo and Vantaa were studying the Finnish language. This is based on the language of the majority in respective municipalities.

The aim of the language tuition was specifically to support the participants' training at the workplaces, and each participant also studied the special terminology used at his or her own workplace. This practice gave the participants a chance to use the vocabulary that they had learned in everyday situations at workplaces with Finnish co-workers. This, in turn, helped them to integrate into the work community.

The language teacher visited workplaces once a week in order to help the employers and the trainees with problems that might have occurred in relation to the language barrier or cultural differences. In Ostrobothnia the language teacher also stayed a bit longer every second week to give a private language lesson (approximately one and a half hours) and every second week the teacher visited the workplace together with the programme coordinator. During these visits the teacher, programme coordinator, trainee and employer discussed the progress made in the work placements and also addressed questions and problems that came up. An interpreter joined these visits once a month.

Continuation of the MOST group

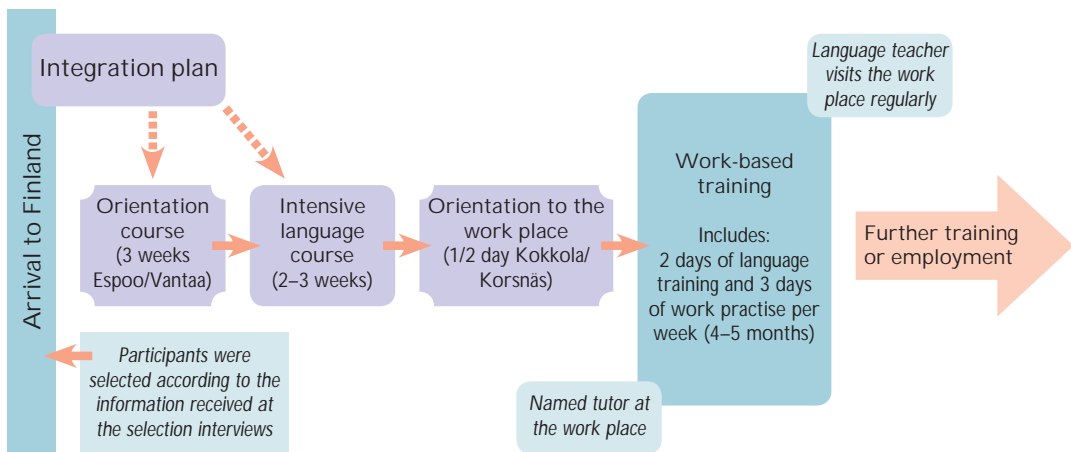
From the beginning of the project the participants experienced a great deal of anxiety about the future. At the end of the course each participant made an employment plan together with the organiser of the training. The participant's studying, training and employment opportunities were outlined in this plan. The objective was for all the participants to discover their chosen further training or path to employment. However, it was quite difficult to find a solution, especially since it was of the utmost significance that the continuation would start as soon as the MOST training was completed. The participants were extremely motivated to study; so it was not good to have any breaks.

In Espoo and Vantaa the MOST training was completed in mid-December. After that the participants in Espoo continued their work at the same workplace on an everyday basis. The on-the-job training will continue until the end of February and after that the participants will go through an assessment of their language skills. In March, several new language courses will start and the participants will be able to start a course commensurate with their language level at the time. In Vantaa the participants started a more traditional language course one month after the on-the-job training was completed.

In Korsnäs the course was extended by one month. After the course ended the group spent the last weeks before Christmas at school, concentrating on language studies. In the new year, the former MOST participants were included in a project called Jobbresursen. Everyone was given their own tailor-made schedule, composed of both language training at school and either practical training at a workplace or continuation courses in the training centre (e.g. IT, metal, cuisine). The project continues until March.

In Kokkola the training was extended by three months. There have already been some negotiations to arrange practical training through the labour office after the course is completed.

Three participants in Korsnäs and two in Kokkola would have had the opportunity to become employed at their workplaces. Two participants in Vantaa would also have had an opportunity to continue at the workplace. Nevertheless, most of them decided to attend a continuation course, to learn the language and start working afterwards. Most of the participants have formed networks that will help them in finding future employment and opportunities to work on a temporary basis, for example in the summer time.



Model used during the MOST Project

4. Evaluation of training

Selecting the participants

Selecting the participants based on the information retrieved at the selection interviews can be problematical for several reasons:

1. During the interviews there is often too little time to speak about education and work experience.
2. The primary goal for the refugees during the interview is to get away from the present situation, not possible training in the future.
3. In the worst case, selecting the participants on the basis of the selection interviews could lead to ignoring the principles of international protection, when countries would select only those refugees who can start working straight from the beginning.

A better way to select the participants would be by selecting them after their arrival, when their individual integration plans are drawn up.

Learning the Finnish /Swedish language

The participants were extremely motivated to learn the language and they were hardworking and thorough. All the participants were able to reach a level of language where they could run everyday errands to the shop, pharmacy, doctor, etc. without an interpreter. There were also some participants whose language skills could have progressed much further than this but as some other participants were slower learners, the teacher could not pay enough attention to those who could have progressed faster.

After language training that is the same length as the training undertaken during the project most participants are usually able to achieve the basic level of Finnish language skills:

- The student can understand easy and clear speech and handle basic service situations, e.g. at the shop or with the doctor. He/she can form simple questions and answer them. He/she understands easy text and can describe things at a general level, e.g. filling in a simple form and writing a short note.

After the MOST training three participants in Vantaa and four in Espoo were at this level. In Korsnäs all the students reached this, or a higher, level but they were studying Swedish which, in general, is an easier language to learn than Finnish. In Kokkola the training was not completed at the time of this report and therefore the participants' language skills had not been tested yet.

The training had a positive impact on the verbal language skills, which will also help participants in learning the language in the future. The threshold to start talking was lower since the participants were forced to talk to a certain extent from the very beginning. Therefore the participants learned to use everyday language sooner than students on more traditional language courses.

The differences between the workplaces had a significant impact on the language learning. At some workplaces the trainees had more opportunities for communication than at others. Participants who were talented in language learning and had a workplace where they were able to use the language learned extremely quickly. On the other hand, those who were not able to practise the language at the workplace had to spend more time studying on their own. The level of learning the language at work also depended on the participant: those who were social and extrovert learned more than those who were timid.

Normally refugees who arrive in Finland start learning the language after two or three months (in most cases even more) after their arrival. In these cases they have had time to hear the language and maybe learn some basics. The MOST group was unable to do this. Therefore many of the participants had great difficulties in learning the language at the beginning. One reason for this was also the total difference between the Finnish and Burmese languages in every way and therefore learning had to start from square one. However, some participants also had particular problems with the auditory conceptualization of speech and speaking. A few students also had some problems in working independently and doing their homework. These learning problems could also reflect the problems faced at the refugee camp or worry about those who had been left behind.

Differences between the training in Ostrobothnia and the Southern Province

The biggest difference between the two training models in Ostrobothnia and in the Province of Southern Finland was that in Ostrobothnia the programme coordinator followed through the whole project and in the Southern Province the programme coordinator finished his work before the actual training started. In the Southern Province the programme coordinator's main task was to plan the training and find workplaces to practise in. The training was intended to proceed like normal labour market training. This meant that the language teacher was supposed to support the trainees and attend to all the problems that might come up during the training. On the other hand, in Ostrobothnia the programme coordinator worked together with the language teacher as the main support person for the employers and for the participants. She also worked as a link between all the parties involved in the training.

In the end, the Ostrobothnian model proved to be much better; the main reason being that the refugees would have needed much more support than they received during normal labour

market training. Even though the supportive role of the language teacher was emphasized by the agreement, the Southern Province teacher did not have sufficient resources to provide that support. The refugees and the work communities were almost completely left alone.

Another problem in the Southern Province was that because the programme coordinator finished his work before the training started, the project failed to have a person who would have taken full responsibility for the project. Therefore the project actors were somewhat confused about whom to contact when they had questions concerning the project; there was no link between different project partners.

Viewpoints

Refugees

“The things that have been taught in school have been enormously useful at the workplace. The more we learn in school the more we dare to talk at the workplace and it also motivates us to study even harder when we see the results.”

According to the information received from the municipal workers, language trainers and programme coordinators, all the refugees were happy with the language training and thought that the on-the-job training increased their knowledge of Finnish society and working life. However, most of the participants wanted to continue as soon as possible on a traditional language course. The positive aspect of the project was that it helped the participants to step over the threshold to speak and use the language. The practical training also provided experience and in some cases even an indication about the future career that the participant could achieve. Quite a few participants in Ostrobothnia were actually planning to study for a degree in the same sector as the on-the-job training. One positive aspect was that the practical training could lead to employment, or at least in summer job, in the future. Today the participants have a social network that they would not have had without the MOST project.

Appreciation was expressed for the integration course starting as soon as all the post-arrival formalities had been taken care of. However, the common opinion was that the practical training started far too soon. Everyone thought that they would have liked a better knowledge of the language before starting work. Going to work without almost any language skills was difficult and even scary for some of the participants.

The participants stated that the beginning of the training was really difficult for them, but both the language training and the practical training become easier when their language skills improved. During the six months participants became used to the workplaces and much energy was expended in struggling with the language and practicalities. All the participants wished that the course had continued longer so that they could have developed a solid base for the language.

As one of the participants pointed out:

“We get to know a new culture, a new society. There are many new impressions. The language learning is sometimes suffering.”

Many participants in Southern Finland would have liked to receive more language training and guidance at the workplace. In Ostrobothnia most of the participants felt that they were given enough guidance and information at the workplaces. Another comment was that it was not possible to use the language so much at all the workplaces since the work needed concentration and silence. At these workplaces the participants would also have had opportunities to speak with the Finnish co-workers during the breaks but some of them were too shy to do this.

“It depends on us, how much we practise and read at home.”

“Burmese people are a ‘follow the leader’ people. You need to understand our culture.”

Some participants also felt that it was not good that the whole class had the same mother tongue. They felt they would have learnt more if the participants had been from different cultures and the common language between the participants had been Finnish instead of Burmese. They also wanted to participate in courses with participants from different countries in the future.

There were no major problems at the workplaces. The lack of language skills was an obstacle and created frustration for the participants but did not cause any real problems. There was only one unfortunate incident that happened in Espoo where an elderly person broke her leg while being helped by one of the participants. However, the work community acknowledged that they had not guided the trainee well enough and took the responsibility for what happened. Normally the problems were small and the following example characterises their extent: when asked if there had been any problems, one of the participants mentioned that she once dropped a glass and had been a bit worried that it would lead to some consequences.

At the beginning of the training some participants in Espoo were targeted in a racist attack while they were not at work. Even though the language teacher and municipality’s social workers tried to help them to recover from the incident and regain their courage, it affected the whole group in Espoo and made them more timid and scared. At first the participants did not tell anyone about the attack, but finally they opened up during a language lesson when they were asked if there were any things they did not like in Finland. A big question mark remains on how the attack would have affected the group if they had not participated in the training and being given the support they needed.

Employers and work communities

Feedback from the workplaces was received regularly: when the traineeship agreement was

written, when the language teacher visited the workplaces, when the plans for continuation were made, and in the meetings organised by the project and by the language teacher.

The orientation training held before the start of the on-the-job training was thought to be extremely helpful. It helped the work communities to understand where the participants came from and what kinds of problems they could expect. The problem at some workplaces was that the person who participated in the training was the manager of the workplace, who did not actually work in the same work community, and the information was not forwarded to the employees who were working with the trainee.

The employers pointed out that there were no real problems with the refugees during the project. The biggest problem was the language barrier and the difficulty in communicating but, on the other hand, everyone was prepared for that:

“The only problem has been the language and we already knew that from the beginning.”

“Everything has gone even better than expected, and much better than it has with earlier trainees.”

One surprising problem at the workplaces was that the trainees were so efficient. Sometimes there were not enough tasks for them to carry out during the working day. If the trainees had known more Finnish this would not have been a problem since the employers could have given them various tasks.

One of the language teachers commented afterwards that some of the problems at the workplaces might have been bigger with some other group of participants. Because the participants in the MOST project were always so positive, their attitude affected the whole work community. The work communities also acknowledged the difficult past of the participants and were extremely supportive and encouraging throughout the whole training.

In general, the employers were pleased with the organisation of the training. They thought it was very good that the week had been divided into three working days and two days at school. In this way they had time to take care of certain errands during the two days when the trainee was at school. The biggest problem during the training both in Ostrobothnia and in Southern Finland was the fact that the training started in the summertime, when most of the permanent personnel were on vacation. This caused additional worries and problems for all the parties, and it would have been better if the training had started either before or after the summer. For example, there were not enough resources to organise visits to the workplaces before the training started and the guidance at the beginning of the training could have been better in many workplaces. In Ostrobothnia, the employers, however, thought that it was for the best that the course started as soon as the refugees had arrived in Finland.

In Ostrobothnia the employers were very satisfied with the arrangement whereby the teacher visited the workplace every week and the programme coordinator every second week.

“It has been a great way to air one’s thoughts!”

They found that it was useful to have a programme coordinator whom they could call every time something came up or they had a question they wanted to discuss. Since there were no real problems the need for support was quite small. However, the employers thought it was nice that they were not left alone to take care of everything themselves. In Southern Finland the employers would have liked the language teacher to visit the workplaces more often. The teacher there was in a position to visit each workplace only 2–3 times during the whole training. The employers would also have liked to have known of the supportive network: the social worker and the employment counsellor. They worried about the trainee’s health or other issues and they did not know whom to contact in order to help the trainee.

In general, all the employers commented that at the beginning of the training it would have been helpful to be able to use an interpreter in order to explain all the work duties and safety instructions using the trainees’ own language. This was unfortunately not possible because of the lack of Burmese interpreters in Finland. Many workplaces would also have liked the trainees to have been taught more vocabulary that was related to the tasks.

Some of the employers admitted that because of the rush at work they did not have enough time to support the trainee. However, most of the employers were very interested in the language training. Quite a few tutors and employers spent a lot of time thinking how to explain things in such a manner that the trainee could understand them, or how they could involve the trainee in the everyday events at the workplace. Furthermore, innovative ways of teaching the language were invented. For example, at one workplace the employer taught five new words to the trainee every day. At another workplace the employer sat down with the participant every coffee break to draw pictures and discuss the different situations in the pictures. Or at one workplace the employees had a list of ten questions that they devised every coffee break to teach Finnish to the trainee.

Some of the trainees were quite shy, which made it difficult for the work communities to include them in their activities or to teach them Finnish. However, one employee from a kindergarten noted:

“The trainees are not as afraid to practise the language and to make mistakes when they are speaking with the children.”

At most workplaces the whole work community took part in guiding and supporting the trainee. Therefore also most of the tutoring fees (300 €) were paid to the whole work community. At one workplace the fee was used for organising a recreational day for the whole

work community, including the trainee. The employers had quite different views on the fee that was provided. About half of the employers stated that they would have been satisfied even if they had not have received any payment at all. Many of them felt that the work community had received more from the trainee than any sum of money could have compensated for. The other half of the employers consider a fee of 300 € to be appropriate. They pointed out that they especially appreciated receiving a small amount as an expression of gratitude for all the time they had spent guiding the trainee. The fee was especially appreciated at those workplaces where it was paid to one worker who had spent his/her time on the tutoring. Only one employer said that the fee was necessary for his future involvement in similar training.

Everybody confirms that having a trainee has been only positive. Naturally, the training required quite a lot from the employers, especially at the beginning, but there was no question that they all felt that it was definitely worth while. The employers gave replies like:

- "The best summer ever!"
- "During these six months he has learned to use an archive programme that is difficult for even most of the Finnish-speaking workers."
- "He is the best employee we have ever had."
- "He is extremely positive and efficient and in the mornings our employees are fighting over who will get him to help them during the day."

All the employers agreed that the experience was challenging, inspiring, interesting and enriching and that they learned a lot during the training. When they were asked whether they would be willing to host a trainee under corresponding circumstances in the future, none of them showed the slightest hesitation. As one of them said:

- "This went so well so we would definitely like to be involved in something similar again!"

The language teacher

Compared with other integration trainings, there was less absenteeism and there was no kind of irregular behaviour during the MOST training. Participation in the language course and the on-the-job training was almost 100% both in Ostrobothnia and in the Southern Province. The participants had some compulsory engagements, but many of them tried to organize them so that they did not interrupt the training. Part of this can be explained by the Burmese culture, which emphasises, for example punctuality and diligence, but it also proves the motivation and commitment to the training.

The language teachers thought that the fact that the language course and the practical training started a month after the arrival in Finland had a positive impact on the integration process. The refugees became acquainted with Finnish society and the Finnish lifestyle much sooner than many other refugees who arrive in Finland. The training also helped the participants to obtain a much wider view of Finnish society than refugees usually obtain at this point of re-settlement. In addition, the participants became acquainted with their co-workers and other local people. The lack of language, on the other hand, caused a lot of pressure especially at the beginning.

According to the trainer in Kokkola, it would have been better if the language teaching had taken place at school all the time. It was sometimes hard to take the student away from the work tasks when the teacher went to the workplace to give a language lesson. It is also easier to concentrate on studying at school than at a workplace.

The language teachers criticised the lack of clarity at the beginning of the training over what would happen after the training ended. The refugees should have known at the beginning what options would be available for them after the training. The uncertainty made them worry about the future and because of that they had difficulties in concentrating fully on the training.

Municipal workers

The training created a lot of extra work for the municipal workers in all the municipalities. In particular the arrival of the refugees and the post-arrival formalities needed a lot of extra co-ordination because of the summer holidays and the lack of Burmese interpreters at hand. Another problem that caused problems was trying to find day-care places for the children of the participants during the summer time, when most of the day-care centres were closed.

Social workers at the municipality of Vantaa were quite surprised and happy at how few problems the Burmese had during their first months in Finland. It seems that former groups have had many more problems after their arrival. One reason for this might be the support and social contacts that the refugees had at the workplaces. For example, when some problems started to come up with one participant in Espoo, the employer had a discussion with him and the problem did not grow. Another reason can also be that the training started so soon after the arrival. Very often when a group of refugees arrives in Finland, they have to wait quite a while before they have access to language training. This happens especially if the group arrives just before the summer. In this case there is often no language training or any other kind of activity before the beginning of the autumn.

Conclusions

The model created by the MOST project can be considered to be an excellent idea. Most of the feedback about the training has been positive. However, new ideas and new models have teething troubles and so does the MOST model.

A better way to select the participants would be by selecting them after their arrival, when their individual integration plans are drawn up. It would be advantageous to put the group together during the integration planning for other reasons as well. At the time of drafting the integration plan municipal workers and employment officers have already more information about the refugees and their wishes for the future. The situation in the MOST training was that some of the participants would have preferred to have participated in the traditional integration course, while some of the people in the traditional integration course would have participated in the MOST training.

The MOST model is first and foremost a great way of integrating into Finnish society. The practical training prevents the refugees from remaining a separate group with no contacts with local inhabitants. The project participants have obtained a great deal of knowledge about the Finnish culture, working life and habits at workplaces. The practical training has also created a great deal of motivation. In addition, the language trainers believed that the threshold to start talking has been lower since the participants have been forced to talk to a certain extent from the very beginning. Therefore, participants have learned to use everyday language sooner than other students.

Traditional language courses aim to teach the language quickly to relatively big groups. For many people this is not, however, the best way to learn a new language. It is often easier to learn a language through everyday contacts with the local inhabitants. This way of learning is slower than the first one, but the motivation for learning is often higher. Traditional language training is habitually run by authorities and specialised NGOs, and the participation of both social partners and local inhabitants is almost non-existent during the first phase of the integration process. This causes frustration and reduces the motivation to learn the language. In the model used during the MOST project it is the other way around, meaning that not being able to say what the person wants to say in a practical situation at work makes him frustrated and increases the motivation to learn.

The on-the-job training held during the MOST project was definitely too short. A large part of the six months was spent on getting used to the new language, the workplace, and a lot of energy was expended in struggling with all the practicalities. It would have been preferable if they could have continued with the course a little longer to be able to form a solid base for the language. It would also have been easier to discern the positive and negative aspects of the model if the project had run for longer.

Another problem was the need of both participants and work communities for more support than they received during the training in the Southern Province of Finland. There should have been more cooperation between the main parties involved: employers, language trainer, municipal workers, and employment counsellors. The network around the refugees should also have been clear to all parties so that they could have contacted each other, if needed.

5. Results

In brief the results can be summarised as:

- Learning to use the local language on an everyday basis has been quicker because the language is used all the time
- Motivation for language studies has been better because there is a real need to learn
- Dependency on the authorities and other “helpers” has decreased because there are colleagues, local networks of “ordinary people” and people from the same cultural background who can be asked for help
- Self-confidence is better because refugees feel like subjects instead of objects
- Social networks will help refugees in future employment

In general, the project shows that time is lost when things are done one at a time, when people can also proceed in their integration process through parallel activities. It also shows that many refugees are willing and able to start studying and working straight after their arrival in the host country. Therefore, long periods of adaptation to the local culture are not necessarily needed but, on the contrary, the local habits and culture can be learned, for example, during on-the-job training.

The long-term results of the training are still to be seen. However, it is expected that the MOST group will be able to integrate themselves better than other refugees that arrived at the same time. Better integration in this context means that the refugees have a better basis for the language skills, more social networks, self-confidence and less dependency. Social networks can help in finding employment since recommendations from previous employers are often needed in order to obtain a job. More self-confidence and independence have an effect at several other levels, e.g. the use of social benefits, health care, etc.

To find out whether there are any long-term effects it would be interesting to make a comparative study in a couple of years to see how the MOST group has fared in comparison with those who did not participate in the training.

Advantages and challenges

Before the training is started the purpose of this kind of on-the-job training has to be clear. The results of the training might not be evident as quickly as in normal, traditional training, but on the other hand, the results are more diverse.

There are several advantages in the training model but it also has its challenges and threats:

1. More effective integration and language learning

Because the integration proceeds in parallel processes, it is faster compared with the traditional integration course. This increases the motivation for learning the language and especially using it in everyday situations. Being able to speak the language promotes social contacts, independence, increases self-confidence and keeps one motivated to learn more. Therefore, the model can work as a solid base for integration.

However, if only fast language learning methods are considered, this is probably not the right method. Learning is slower at workplaces than in language classes but the motivation keeps the learning stable and solid. Therefore, at the end the trainee might have assimilated more language than he would have done in a normal language class. Language learning is also dependent on the workplace and on the commitment of the employer. In the worst cases, the trainee is left alone at the workplace and he will not learn the language at all at work.

2. Making social contacts and learning about Finnish society

On-the-job training is a good way to obtain social contacts and learn about the society, culture, working life and everyday life in Finland. In the on-the-job training the participants obtain a much wider view of the society than they would from a traditional integration course. All this knowledge is assimilated during the first phase of the integration process, which helps the participant to progress faster.

As above, this depends on the workplace and the commitment of the employer and the work community in supporting the trainee. However, even if a trainee is left alone to do his job, he can compare his experiences with the other participants in the group and learn different practices from different kinds of workplaces and environments.

3. Diminishing dependency and increasing self-confidence

On-the-job training gives the refugee the chance to feel like a subject, a person who is working to support himself and his family, instead of an object of different services provided by society. This facilitates the gaining of self-confidence and diminishes dependency. The support from colleagues and other locals also helps to diminish dependency and participants feel they are a part of the community.

In the worst case the effect can be completely the opposite. The participants need to be selected so that they are able to cope with the frustration and the helplessness that the on-the-job training can cause at the beginning when the language skills are still poor.

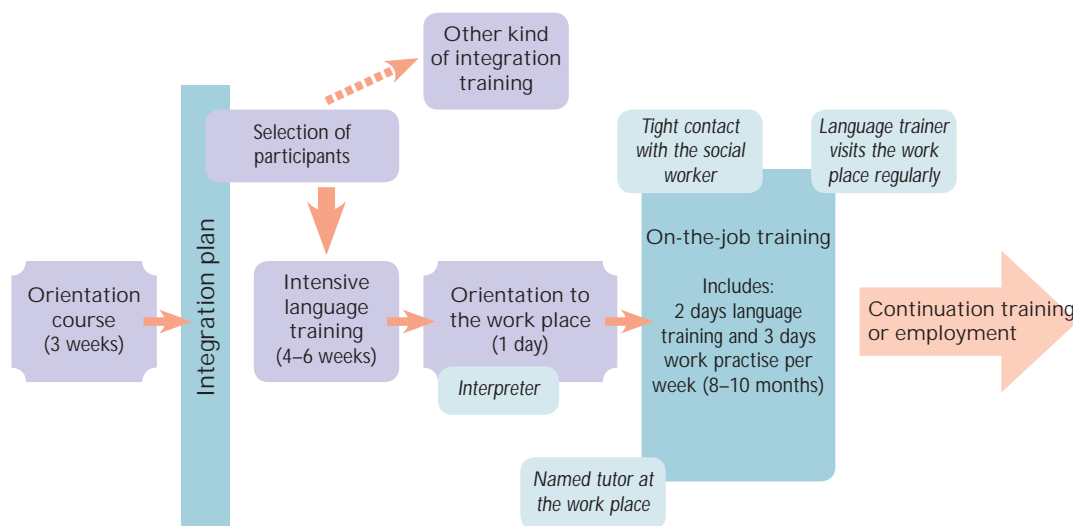
4. Direct inclusion in the labour market and possible employment

The model is a good way to obtain knowledge about working life and also to procure permanent or temporary work. The workplace can also point the way for future work or studies, and at the workplace, refugees also make contacts that they can use as references when applying for jobs.

However, it should be acknowledged that if the model is used with refugees, the main purpose cannot be employment. Learning the language and establishing a network should be prioritised. If the main purpose is access to employment, the threat exists that the language training will be forgotten. This can lead to a vicious circle where the refugee is forced to stay in job that allows him to live independently but where he has not learnt enough Finnish in order to make progress in his career. The participants should also be able to choose whether they want to start studying or searching for other kinds of workplaces.

6. Recommendations

According to the feedback received, the MOST model would at its best consist of:



On-the-job training model (Recommendation)

Planning the training

When on-the-job training like the MOST training is being planned, it is important to take into consideration a realistic view of the municipal worker and people working with refugees as early as possible. In this way many traps can be avoided straight away. The extra tasks caused by training should also be taken into consideration while the training is being planned.

Finnish labour market training is quite inflexible for this kind of training. The regulations limit the development of new forms of integration training. The strict funding models can also affect whether developing and testing the model in Finland can be continued. It is necessary to develop more flexible ways to fund integration-related activities.

Finding the workplaces – the role of the social partners

While workplaces are being sought, it should be acknowledged that there are tasks that can be done at potential training place without professional training and language skills. The main purpose of the training is to learn the language and, therefore, the emphasis should be on finding workplaces where communication and group work is part of the everyday work.

Three participants in Korsnäs and two in Kokkola would have had an opportunity to obtain a job at a private-sector workplace. From this point of view, workplaces in the private sector could be looked on with favour since the practical training might result in a permanent job. These types of workplaces are, however, often such that the tasks are done more by the individual and there might not be so many opportunities to speak with co-workers. Workplaces in the public sector, e.g. kindergartens and residential retirement homes, can be more favourable in terms of language learning.

It is important to include social partners in the organisation of on-the-job training and especially in finding workplaces. Trade unions have an important role in planning the training in order to make sure that the employers who participate the training are following the labour legislation. Trade unions can help to exclude workplaces that have not taken proper care of the rights of foreign or native workers and they can also make sure that the rights are followed during the on-the-job training. Trade unions can also influence the atmosphere inside workplaces by organising training for employers and trustees.

Selecting the participants

Participants in the training should be selected while the individual integration plan is being made. This would be preferable in order to select those who are the most motivated and the most suitable for the type of training.

When the integration plan is being drafted, it is important to remember that not all refugees can participate in this kind of training. Therefore, this kind of on-the-job training should not be the only integration course available in the municipality. There should be different options e.g. for those who wish to proceed faster and move to more advanced studies, for those who need medical treatment immediately upon arrival, or for those who have small children and need child care while learning the language.

Orientation training

Post-arrival orientation training

Orientation training held by the same ethnic group as the participants is good practice that should be continued in the future. Information-sharing is more understandable for the newcomers when it is presented in a culturally competent way. After the orientation the participants also have a more realistic view of their future in Finland. In addition, the experiences of refugees who have arrived earlier provide motivation for studying and trying one's best.

Nevertheless, orientation training is not something that is related only to on-the-job training. Hence the orientation could be held for the entire group of refugees that arrives in a municipality at the same time. The individual integration plans could be made at the end of the post-arrival orientation, and the participants would be chosen while the integration plan is being drafted. This way, refugees would have more information on the purpose of the training and why they should or should not participate in it.

The orientation training does not have to take place every day during a working week. This way it can be organized at the same time as the post-arrival formalities.

Orientation training for Employers

It is important for employers have a realistic idea about what they are becoming involved in. Before the on-the-job training starts, employers should obtain information about

- the practical procedures during the training
- the culture and ethnic background of the participants
- the refugee camp and general information on the principles of international protection (reasons why the participants come to Finland)
- meeting different cultures, stereotypes, diversity, cultural differences
- how to use plain language
- the roles of different parties involved (social worker, employment counsellor and language trainer) in the integration process and how to contact them during the training.

This information helps employers to understand the problems some refugees encounter during the on-the-job training, and also to handle difficult situations related to the cultural differences and the language barrier.

It could be useful for employers taking part in the training to have each other's contact information so that they can exchange experiences and obtain peer group support from each other.

It is especially important for tutors working with the trainee to take part in the orientation training. However, it would also be preferable for the employer and other employees from the work community to take part in the orientation. The material distributed in the training should be available for the whole work community.

Orientation to the workplace

Before the on-the-job training starts, all the participants should have several opportunities to visit the workplace. The purpose of these visits would be mainly to introduce the workplace and the work community to the trainee so that he/she does not have to be scared of starting on-the-job training.

On the first day at work, the trainee should be accompanied by an interpreter. During the day the employer should go through all the safety instructions at the workplace, main tasks and practical details related to the job, e.g. how to use a washing machine, what time the coffee breaks are, whom to call if he/she falls ill etc. The trainee should also be allowed to talk about him/herself and ask his/her colleagues questions. If the trainee is very shy, it might be preferable for him/her to speak to one colleague at a time instead of the whole work community.

During the first day it might be a good idea for the trainee to collect, with a help of an interpreter, his/her own dictionary related to the most important words and phrases used at the workplace.

Cooperation

In this kind of training there should be strong emphasis on the human resources available. This is the only way to ensure good cooperation with different partners. Neither the participants nor the employers should be left alone to struggle with the practice. There should always be someone to whom they can turn and ask about whatever problem or question arises.

The network around the refugee should be clear to all parties so that they can contact each other if needed. However, there also needs to be an appointed person/ actor to take main responsibility for the training.

It is important that there is firm cooperation between the workplace, language teacher, municipal workers and employment counsellor. For successful cooperation, it is crucial that all actors sit down to discuss the training in general, including cooperation and discussing each other's responsibilities. A so-called "resource person" with the same ethnic background should also participate in the meeting. In addition, it could be useful to organise similar meetings during the training.

At the workplaces, short meetings should be organised during the training where the trainee, the employer, the tutor, the language teacher and an interpreter go through the issues that have come up during the training and discuss the best way to continue.

Support during the training

Since the training starts shortly after the arrival, extra support is needed at the beginning. "Normal" support given during the language classes is not enough. There needs to be someone who visits the workplaces regularly to see how the training is functioning. It should be noted that if the responsibility for this support is left to the language teachers, they should be provided with extra resources.

It is preferable for the whole work community to take part in tutoring and guiding the trainee. However, there should also be a tutor appointed for each trainee. The employer should ensure that this person has the time and the will to make the effort to speak to the trainee.

It is also preferable for support to come from different directions. The language teacher, employer, work community and municipal worker each have their own role in providing support. In addition, it would be ideal if all the participants were allocated a support person who could visit him/her at the workplace and also spend time with the participant during their free time. The support person could be a person with a refugee background, who already knows the language and has possibly participated in similar on-the-job training before.

Many refugees are still very vulnerable after their arrival; they might be experiencing post-traumatic stress about things that happened in their past, worried about those who were left behind and uncertain about the future. Those who come alone without any family members need special support. Therefore, if the MOST model is used with refugees, there should always be other kinds of integration practices that support the model, e.g. peer group support, mentoring programmes, psychological aid, help with things that concern family reunification, etc. In addition, there should be a network that helps and gives support if the participants encounter racism or discrimination.

Starting time and length of the training

Before the actual training starts, there should be enough time to go through all the post-arrival formalities. Otherwise, the participants will be concerned with the practical arrangements, medical checks, etc. during the language course and will not be able to concentrate. However, there should not be too much unfilled time between the arrival and start of the training, because motivation starts to be affected. The planning of the training should also take into account that the training should not start during the holiday season when most of the regular workers are not present at the workplace.

It is difficult to say how long the intensive language course should be. Even though starting the on-the-job training with only limited language skills creates frustration among the participants, and sometimes even among the employers, the social contacts at the workplace are such a big motivating factor that the intensive language course should not last too long before the on-the-job training begins. The social support given at the workplaces is also very important, especially at the beginning, to confirm that obtaining an on-the-job training place as quickly as possible is quite valuable. It is, however, recommended that the language training held before the actual on-the-job training is longer than 2–3 weeks. In such a short period the participants have time to go through only the very basics of the language. Therefore, we recommend that the length of the intensive language course is 4–6 weeks.

During the six months participants became acquainted with the workplace and much energy was expended struggling with the practicalities and the language. It is advisable for the training to last at least 10–12 months. This time could include both the intensive language course as well as the on-the-job training. In 10–12 months the participants would have enough time to become familiar with the different tasks at the workplace and to develop their language skills up to a level that is sufficient for further studies or employment.

What happens afterwards?

It is important to find out possible options for continuation at the beginning of the training. This would allow the participants to concentrate solely on the training and not on worrying about what happens next. It is also very important that there are no long breaks between the on-the-job training and the continuation, otherwise the motivation that was gained during the training can be lost during the wait. There should be several options to choose from individually depending on the language level that the participant has reached during the training and the interests he/she has.

How to use the model

Even though the purpose of the model is transferability, it should be noted that a model created in Finland or Sweden does not necessarily work in Ireland or Spain. That does not mean that the modelling process has failed, quite the contrary. All the models created are always bound by time and place. Therefore, they cannot be adopted as they are but have to be adapted to suit local structures and habits.

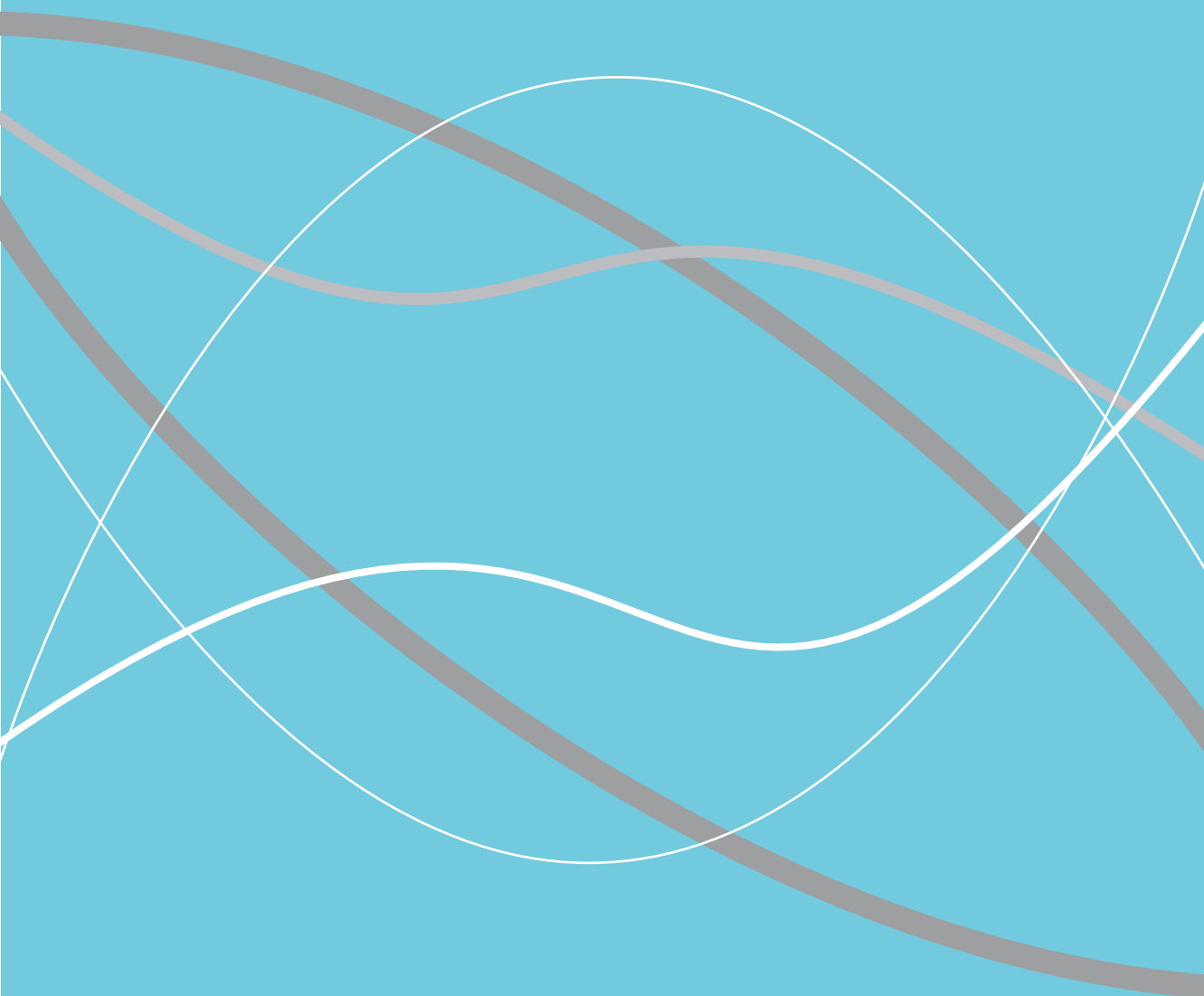
The model created during the MOST project should be tested several times on participants from many different ethnic groups and, after that, modified whenever necessary. A modified model could, for example, include several intensive language-training periods in between the on-the-job training.

The on-the-job training was created for integrating refugees who have been resettled in the European Union Member States. However, this does not prevent the model or its modification from being used for integrating other kinds of immigrants, e.g. asylum seekers or labour migrants.

V

TWINNING ACTIVITIES

Rafael K. Polo Guardo, Mia Luhtasaari, Tiina Järvinen



1. Introduction

The role of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs within the MOST Project was distinct from the other partners'. As Spain does not have an official resettlement programme, its participation in the project consisted of two-dimensional activities that, besides hosting the Closing Conference, created additional valuable learning opportunities through participation in the fact-finding missions/selection missions. Representatives of the Spanish government from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs participated in two selection missions: to Rwanda in conjunction with the Finnish partner in May 2007, and to Jordan with the Swedish partner in June 2007. The participation of a non-resettlement country in the selection missions carried out by a resettlement country was appreciated both at national level and transnationally.

Spain has received *ad hoc* resettlement cases presented by the UNHCR since its adherence to the Geneva Convention in 1978. From 1979 onwards, more than 5.000 people have been granted protection, including nationalities such as Vietnamese, Iranian, Kurdish, Iraqi, Bosnian, Albanian-Kosovo, Afghan and Palestinian. An official agreement on resettlement has not been reached because of the political sensitiveness related to all forms of immigration. However, Spain is collecting information and preparing structures, civil servants and NGOs for the potential implementation of a resettlement scheme within the existing asylum structures. In order to reach the optimal conditions for this to take place, further development of the framework of Financial Solidarity Programmes within the European Refugee Fund would facilitate the management and burden-sharing of the costs implied by the reception of a large migration to Spain, and it would therefore alleviate the current pressures on the financial and administrative structures.

2. Organising a fact-finding mission

The opportunity for the Spanish authorities to accompany the Finnish and Swedish delegations on their selection missions was an enriching experience both in terms of its human dimension as well as the professional experience of learning throughout the selection process. The Spanish participants gave special emphasis to the depth and rigorousness with which both delegations studied and analysed all of the requests for resettlement as well as the exhaustiveness and discipline in the decision-making.

The key steps in organising a successful fact-finding mission similar to the ones carried out within the framework of the MOST Project include joint efforts from the very beginning of the process in order to obtain a holistic view on the entire process. These phases can be described as follows:

Preparatory phase

Purpose of the mission

The purpose of the fact-finding mission should be clearly defined and the respective roles and responsibilities of the countries taking part in the twinning activity should be identified. It is important to clarify to everyone and discuss openly whether the purpose of the exercise is to start a resettlement programme or only to gather information for a possible future engagement.

Selecting the participants

Depending on the purpose of the fact-finding mission, it would be preferable for the people participating in the fact-finding missions to be high-level civil servants in the governmental organisation they represent responsible for refugee and asylum issues. This is especially important if the purpose in taking part in the mission is to start a resettlement programme in the near future. The commitment of management authorities in the twinning activity is needed in order to make the best use of the knowledge gathered and to be able to spread the information within the governmental structures. Additionally, the participation of highly prepared technical staff is also recommended, as the practical context of their work allows them to put the knowledge acquired into practice.

The fact-finding missions organised by the MOST Project set a precondition that the Spanish participants would represent a governmental organisation. This was due to the sensitive information provided in the Refugee Resettlement Forms (RRF) which arises during the selection interviews and meetings held during the selection missions. However, it could also be useful if one of the participants represented an NGO. He/she would not attend the interviews or meetings where the decisions/suggestions for selection are made but could gather information and meet representatives from the UNHCR and local NGOs working with refugees. Since in many countries NGOs have an active role in the reception and guidance/assistance of refugees this would be an especially useful element for inclusion in the twinning activities and could be put into effect when the selected refugees arrive in the new host country.

Preparatory arrangements

All the participants should meet in advance to prepare together the action to be taken. That would also facilitate the communication in situ. During this meeting they should discuss the practical arrangements (travel, visas, vaccinations, accommodation, programme, etc.), the roles and responsibilities of the different parties during the mission, the situation in the first country of asylum and in the country of origin. The definition of the selection criteria is an especially important factor to be discussed beforehand.

If this kind of preparatory meeting cannot be organized, the resettlement country should provide the twinning country with the basic information on the selection criteria and the procedures considered essential to obtain maximum benefit from the fact-finding mission. In addition, e.g. in Finland, a large part of the country-based information is available only in Finnish. This makes it necessary for the participants in the fact-finding mission to use the information services available in their own country or through the Internet to find as much information as possible regarding the situation in the country of origin of the refugees, and in the first country of asylum. This information helps them understand the reasons for the refugees' flight from their country of origin, why they are being recommended for resettlement and the final decision taken during the selection mission over each application.

The information provided to the twinning country should include

1. Resettlement process: How the quota is allocated, who makes the decisions, what principles they are based on, which organisations are taking part in the selection mission and what their roles are, etc.
2. Selection criteria: The need for international protection is the main criteria for most countries that have a resettlement programme. Additional criteria can include aspects prioritised by each resettlement country, e.g. individual resettlement needs, possibilities for voluntary return, integration possibilities and obstacles to granting residence permits in the host society. The criteria should be clearly defined, for example on how the integration potential is evaluated.
3. In addition, it is the responsibility of each representative taking part in a selection mission to become familiar with UNHCR's resettlement handbook and the principles of international protection.

The resettlement country informs the UNCHR about the twinning activity and possibly organises meetings with other international organisations that are active in the country concerned. Usually the resettlement country also meets representatives of their own embassy during the selection mission. The country that is taking part in the selection mission should also inform their embassy about the fact-finding mission, and, in addition, actively organise other visits that could be useful to them.

Selection mission

Selection missions are often quite hectic and working days are long. Thus the preparatory phase is very important. The participants in the fact-finding mission can have their own programme that includes observing the interviews, visiting different organisations, refugee camps etc. However, depending on the country where the mission is taking place, this might

not be possible and the participants might have to follow the programme that is provided by the UNHCR.

Contact with the UNHCR

Direct contact with the tough and dramatic reality often helps in comprehending the importance of resettlement. Therefore, relations with UNHCR personnel and visits to the refugee camps are very valuable, as they help in understanding more profoundly the need for resettlement as a durable solution for the refugees in case return to their country of origin or their local integration is not possible.

Interviews

At the beginning of each interview the refugees should be asked if they approve of the presence of a neutral observer. Otherwise the interviews are conducted as usual.¹

Reception and introduction

The MOST Project showed that the administrative systems, social constructions and situations in the EU Member States (MS) are very different from each other, and that the Member States do not yet know much about each other. Becoming acquainted with the reception and introduction systems in a resettlement country can help in the adoption of the key aspects of the resettlement process.

It is recommended that the twinning activity includes an insight into the whole resettlement process, meaning not only the selection missions but also the orientation course given in the first country of asylum, the reception of refugees upon their arrival in the host country and the first phase of the introduction. This would give non-resettlement countries a general view of the whole resettlement process as well as help them become better prepared for the possible future resettlement activities.

Final evaluation

A final meeting between the Member States as part of the twinning activity would bring closure as it would allow all parties to discuss what was learnt and observed by each of them.

¹ For more information, please see: *Shaping our Future – A Practical Guide to the Selection, Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* (Helsinki 2005) MORE-project, Ministry of Labour, Finland.

3. Evaluation of the resettlement process

The purpose of the twinning action is not only to provide information for the fact-finding country but it can also be used by the resettlement country to evaluate its methods and practices. It is important that the methods and practices are questioned every now and then and, if they are found to be incompetent or unsatisfactory, changed or further developed.

During the selection missions the Spanish representatives paid attention, for example, to the following issues:

Selection interviews:

- The selection criteria should be as clear as possible, following the guidelines and directives in each country, established in the prior meetings, thus ensuring the same information is evaluated in all cases.
- The interviews should be organised in a semi-structured format to allow sufficient flexibility in the questions that arise.
- It should be ensured that the interviews are conducted in a relaxed and respectful atmosphere. This, in turn, facilitates the collection of facts.

Pre-departure information:

- The common practice is that the refugees are given initial information about the host society during the selection mission. The pre-departure information can, for example, include details about the type of accommodation offered to them upon arrival in the new society, their rights and obligations as refugees, employment opportunities, education and general aspects about life in the new country. However, as the interviews carried out within the Irish activities in the MOST Project prove, the timing of this information-sharing should be carefully considered. If it is given to the entire group, it can create false expectations before the refugees receive any indication of whether they will or will not become accepted for resettlement. As the Irish interviews indicated, it could be more beneficial to give out this information once the initial selection has been made, for the refugees are more receptive to it, and the information is more relevant to them.

4. The benefit of the twinning activity

The opportunity to participate, as an observer, in a resettlement mission gives not just a knowledge of the working methodologies which have been developed in this area. It can also offer an opportunity to observe directly professional teamwork within the selection process. The experience and resettlement countries' dedication to the work transmits a model that could serve as a reference for a possible future resettlement programme. Fact-finding missions also facilitate the creation of networks between countries with resettlement programmes, which is a valuable part of the collaboration between MS to identify good practices, exchange experiences and to look for different solutions to a common exercise.

Twinning activity is also very valuable for the resettlement country itself as it gives an opportunity to evaluate the existing methods. As an essential part of any activity, the mainstreaming of the created good practices is valuable development work for the future. Direct lines of communication should be established amongst resettlement MS by organising periodic meetings and gatherings such as seminars or conferences that would allow the dissemination of good practices among wider audiences. Awareness-raising programmes in the local and national media would be important, especially in countries that are on their way to adapting a resettlement programme. Media support is essential to bring conciseness on the problems resettled refugees face before arrival and once they have begun their integration process in the host country.

5. The role of European Refugee Fund on promoting resettlement

The European Refugee Fund (ERF) has already been participating in developing resettlement programmes and procedures for some years. Priorities set for annual ERF actions based on decision 2004/904/EC by the European Council (EC), also include promoting the exchange of experiences and developing common tools and innovative methods related to resettlement as a durable solution to refugee protection. The ERF prioritises the setting up of transnational cooperation networks, including the organisation and programming of workshops, exchange and liaison of personnel from various MS in twinning projects. The actions carried out within the framework of the MOST Project were also based on these priorities, which have proved to be a very valuable approach to both individual Member States and the whole international community. Resettlement has been included in national ERF programmes as well. Furthermore, twinning programmes executed within the ERF framework give added value as they can familiarize non-resettlement MS with resettlement activities, and further on, facilitate their decisions on resettlement.

The basis the EU has for resettlement work was established in the November 2004 Hague Programme, which includes the following factors:

- Resettlement as part of the policies that highlight the importance of strengthening protection capacity regionally, and in support of third countries.
- The need for the EU to contribute, in an effort of shared responsibility, to a more accessible, equitable and effective international protection.
- The UNHCR has invited the EC to develop Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs).

The ERF programme 2007–2013 financially underpins the Hague Programme on asylum by supporting resettlement, burden-sharing and the development of capacities by Member States. It also highlights the efforts of Member States to identify, share and promote best practices.

The European Commission has set concrete objectives concerning resettlement by putting the matter on the agenda and discussing the matter in EU-meetings. These objectives are

1. Promotion of resettlement in general, particularly from the geographic areas defined as RPPs (Great Lakes/ Tanzania and Ukraine/ Belarus/ Moldova).
2. Involvement of more Member States in resettlement activities. The EC highlights the importance of participation, even on a small scale, and it gives political and financial support to activities which may familiarize non-resettlement MS with the programmes run by other countries.
3. Cooperation among Member States which have resettlement policies to support resettlement as a joint EU effort on flexible, pragmatic and voluntary basis. The ERF supports the search for new forms of cooperation, and looks for practical benefits such as the organization of joint missions and logistical arrangements.

Even though, Member States are nowadays better informed on how to apply for ERF funding than before and they are more willing to participate in transnational activities, there is still a need for the Member States to be properly informed on how to start a resettlement programme. The ERF could contribute to this task by making available resources and information the Member States might have more difficulty accessing on their own. As the participation in ERF programmes is voluntary on the Member States' behalf, the procedure should be made more accessible for all initiatives arising from different stakeholders in society, including NGOs and RCOs.

6. Concluding remarks

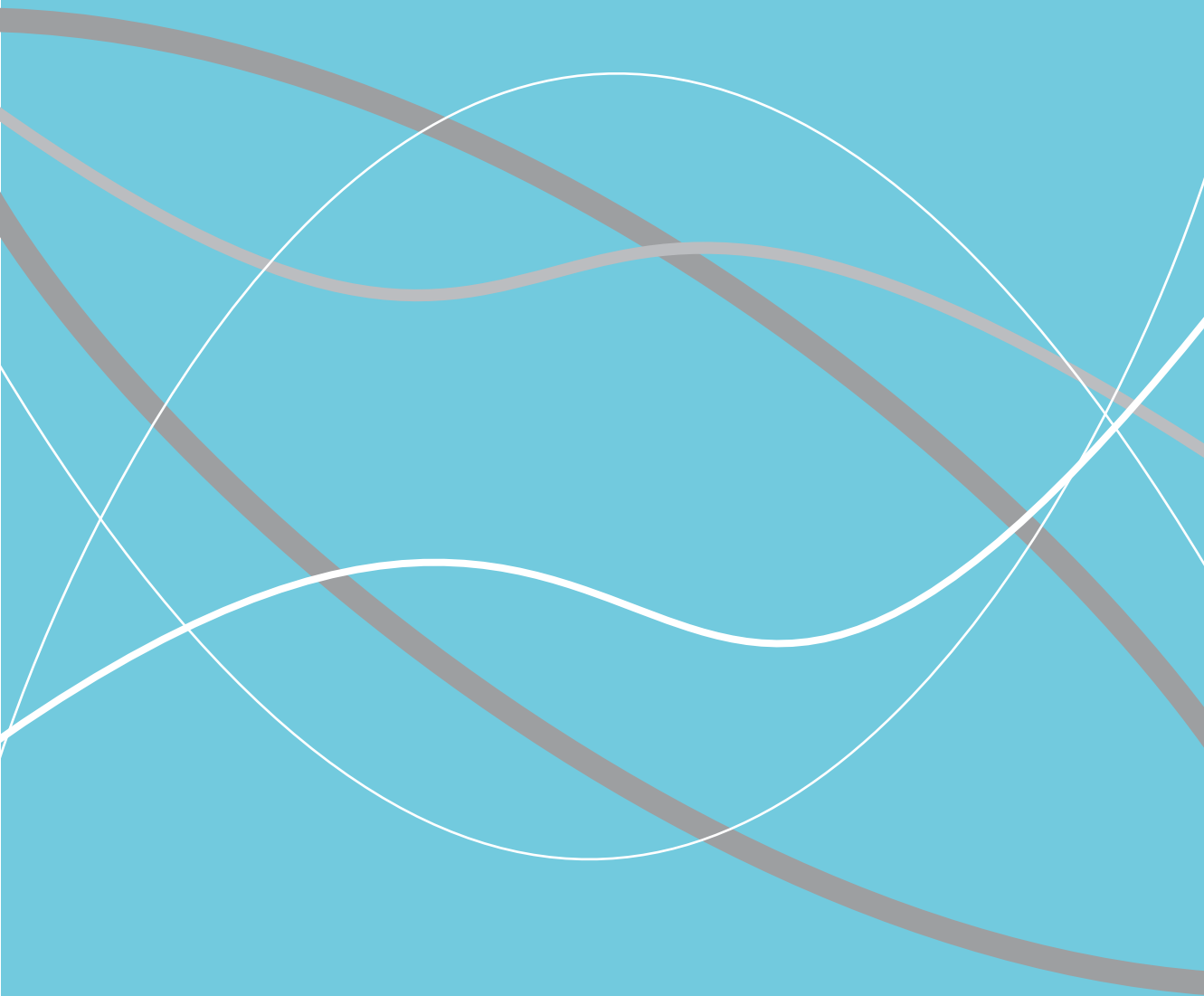
The fact-finding missions bring knowledge of work methodologies developed in resettlement, but they also provide an opportunity to observe directly the work carried out during the selection missions. Equally important, these kinds of twinning activities help to develop networks that are valuable for exchanging experiences, sharing good practices and finding solutions to common problems. Additionally, for resettlement countries the twinning activities should be seen as a good way for evaluating their practices and methods used during the resettlement process.

Resettlement is voluntary. The 27 Member States of the European Union currently account for approximately 5% of international resettlement. The intention to establish a joint European resettlement programme has been laid down in the Hague Programme. In order to achieve this ambition, the six European resettlement countries, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland and Finland, signed a letter in January 2008 requesting an additional effort on the part of the Member States in the field of resettlement. This effort consists of strengthening collaboration between European resettlement countries and offering resettlement partnership to Member States who do not currently take part in the UNHCR resettlement programme. The letter has already had an effect with many new twinning partnerships between non-resettlement countries and resettlement countries. It is to be hoped that this will increase the involvement of more Member States in assisting in the resettlement of refugees who have been recognised by the UNHCR.

VI

CONCLUSIONS

Tiina Järvinen, Louise Kinlen



The Most Project concentrated on four phases of the resettlement process: information-sharing in connection with selection missions, pre-departure orientation, post-arrival introduction programmes and integration into the new society. The overall objective of the project was to establish and test new approaches and methodologies in supporting refugees to integrate more quickly and effectively. This was implemented through increasing social interaction, diversifying responsibilities and through learning from the experiences of previously resettled refugees. The interactive perspective and diversification of responsibilities were tested by involving local refugee communities, NGOs and work communities in pre- and post-arrival processes of training and guidance. Learning from refugees themselves took place during consultative processes.

This book includes four separate and quite different reports on the national activities conducted during the MOST Project in each partner country. Another important outcome of the project was the mutual learning and sharing of experiences between the project partners. The last chapter of this book is thus an attempt to draw together everything learned during the project. We will firstly summarize the main results and recommendations from the national activities and attempt to draw out the key learning points of the project as a whole.

1. Overview of the results

Consultation process

The Swedish consultation process rose from a moral and practical need to develop a more efficient introduction process, where the experiences of those at the centre of resettlement are acknowledged and managed in the best possible way. The effort in Sweden has been both to create and use an evaluation process that is centred on the refugees' experiences, and to analyse and discuss power and participation issues within this process. Through consultations with resettled refugees, as well as personnel within introduction activities, the consultation process investigated whether and how resettlement may impact on the introduction to a third country, and what aspects one may need to attend to when developing these activities. The consultation process followed the resettlement process chronologically starting with the initial contacts with UNHCR, moving step by step on to the expectations of a life in the new country of residence and to the introduction and integration in Sweden.

The findings of the Swedish consultation process bring out aspects that may seem obvious but which the decision-makers and those working with refugees do not always take into consideration. The results show that many refugees appear to have been dependent on the UNHCR

at the initial stages of the resettlement process. The passivity and dependent position in which refugees have found themselves tend to be reproduced in different phases of the resettlement process and play a role in their receptiveness to the introduction. Both the lack of independence and the way the introduction is designed, hamper the opportunity for establishment in a Sweden, thus creating a feeling of isolation and a lack of connection with the rest of society. These findings gave rise to the question of whether the introduction process itself may be a cause of isolation among resettled refugees in Sweden.

Key Recommendations of the Swedish Consultation Process

- Active participation of refugees and organised activities should be promoted from the early stages of resettlement.
- Efforts should be made to ensure the more dynamic and motivated involvement of quota refugees in introduction programmes.
- Introduction programmes should be designed to consciously avoid isolating the refugees from society.

Pre- and post-arrival orientation

The national activities in Ireland focused on analysing the current provision of pre- and post-departure orientation for resettled refugees and their receiving communities and a review of mentoring programmes. Arising from this, new forms of pre-arrival orientation were piloted, changes made to the current system of post-arrival orientation and several recommendations were made in relation to the integration of refugees and the establishment of linkages with the receiving community. Mentoring or befriending programmes were found to be an important tool in the creation of more real and meaningful contact with the local community.

One of the central questions arising from the review related to how refugees can be provided with the appropriate information, and yet still enable them to be independent and play an active role in the resettlement process. The review shows that one of the dangers of the resettlement process can be the lack of promotion of independence and opportunities to be active. Orientation programmes do not solve all of these issues and are only one element of the process. However, they are an important way of starting to promote the participation and sense of self-worth as well as providing essential information to enable people to function effectively in the new community. Other support structures and services are also needed and are required to adapt and provide flexible solutions to meet the needs of newcomers. NGOs and civil society also have a very important role to play in this process. Most importantly, the voices of refugees themselves should be heard whenever developing or implementing policies and strategies concerning resettlement.

Key Recommendations from the Irish Review

- There should be a balance between a common framework applied to all resettlement refugees and individual needs and wishes.
- A more active role should be given to previously resettled refugees, particularly in post-arrival orientation programmes.
- Service providers at all levels need to be able to provide flexible solutions to meeting the needs of newcomers, and local communities should be encouraged and supported in engaging with and including refugees in social, cultural and sporting activities.
- The particular needs of women with small children as an isolated sub-group should be considered and appropriate measures implemented.

The results from the project activities in Sweden and Ireland complement each other excellently. While the Swedish consultation process approaches the subject from a more “philosophical” point of view the Irish review gives practical recommendations and policy implications for the reception, orientation and integration of resettled refugees. Both the Swedish and the Irish studies bring up questions with regard to participation and dependence. How the refugees can become active agents in the process and their independence promoted whilst still ensuring a sufficient level of support and assistance? Both agree on the need for an introduction process but recommend that it is structured in such a way to enable maximum participation and involvement of refugees, whilst at the same time still imparting important and relevant information. The national development task in Finland has searched for answers to these questions, as outlined below.

Work-based training model

The Finnish report is a very practical description of the activities carried out in Finland. The purpose is that the readers can re-test and further develop those components of the model which they find useful for their own work with refugees or other immigrants.

The objective of the pilot project in Finland was to develop a new way of integrating refugees into Finnish society and labour market by utilising social interaction. Language training was combined with on-the-job training right from the arrival of the refugees. Its purpose was to create social contacts with local people, learn Finnish in a natural environment outside the classroom and to give the refugees the chance to start working soon after their arrival. The involvement of employers and work communities in supporting refugee integration was also an example of diversification of responsibilities outside the public administration.

The experiences gained show encouraging results concerning language learning, integration into the local society, building self-confidence, diminishing dependency and the creation of social networks at the local level. In general, the results show that time is lost when one activity is undertaken at a time, when people can proceed in their integration process through parallel activities. It also demonstrates that with sufficient levels of support many refugees are willing and able to start studying and working straight after their arrival in the host country. Therefore long periods of adaptation to the local culture are not necessarily needed but, in the contrary, local habits and culture can be learned during the on-the-job training

However, the model also has its challenges that should be taken into account when similar training is being planned. This includes the model not being used solely for employment purposes; the language trainings should have an important role in the training. In addition it is important to remember that this kind of training does not necessary suit all the resettled refugees.

Recommendations from the Finnish Work-based Training Model

- There should be several integration models for different individual needs, taking account of vulnerable groups as well as those who are willing and capable of working and studying straight after their arrival.
- Parallel processes should be utilised during the integration process.
- Social interaction with local inhabitants and the division of responsibilities should be promoted.
- Refugees should be treated as individual persons rather than passive objects.

Twinning activities

Spain took part in the Swedish and Finnish selection missions in order to find out how the resettlement process could be organised. In addition, the fact-finding missions created a model that can be used for organising similar twinning activities in the future.

The fact-finding missions bring knowledge of work methodologies developed in resettlement but they also provide an opportunity to observe directly the work carried out during the selection missions. Equally importantly these kinds of twinning activities help to develop networks which are valuable for exchanging experiences, sharing good practices and finding solutions to common problems. Additionally, for resettlement countries the twinning activities should be seen as a good way to evaluate their practices and methods used during the resettlement process.

The Spanish evaluation of the fact-finding missions calls for more active cooperation at the European level in informing the Member States on how to become involved with the resettlement programmes and sharing more information and good practices on resettlement. The twinning activities have already shown good results, and to continue with such activities the European Refugee Fund could work as a good channel for exchanging knowledge and promoting resettlement.

Recommendations from the Spanish Twinning Activities:

- There is a need for EU Member States to be properly informed on how to initiate resettlement programmes.
- ERF-funded projects play a strategic role in sharing information and good practices on a wider scale amongst EU Member States, and promotion projects such as MOST should be actively pursued.
- The ERF should work as a platform that promotes resettlement, and as a contact point between MS and international actors in the field, such as the UNHCR, IOM and NGOs.

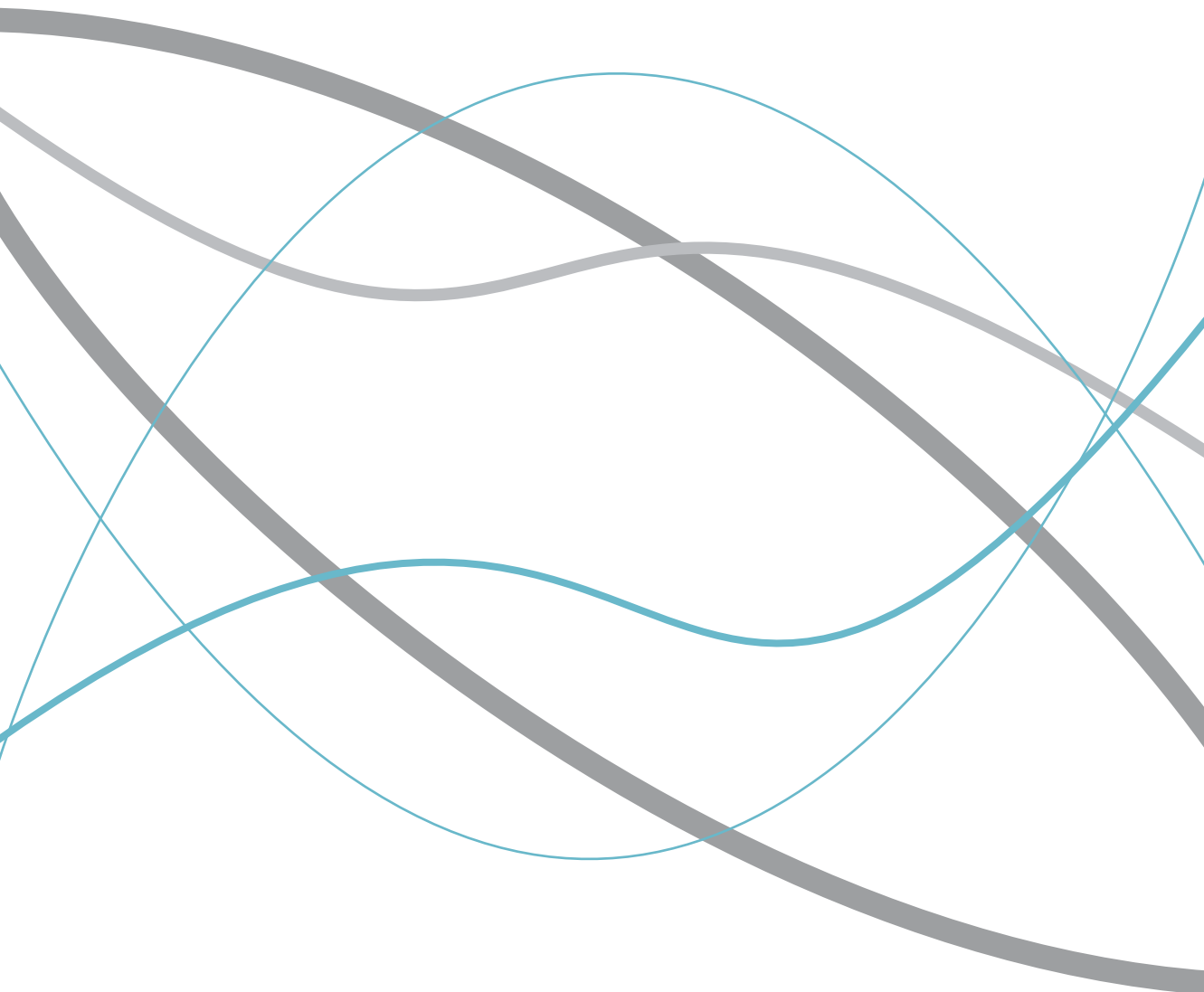
2. Final thoughts

The overarching question in the MOST project has been how the refugees can become active agents in the process and have their independence promoted while a sufficient level of support and assistance is still guaranteed. The project has promoted the importance of ensuring that refugees are encouraged to be active and to participate in society from an early stage. In addition the results demonstrated the need to treat refugees as independent persons rather than as passive objects in the process.

The project has also revealed issues that need to be addressed in the near future: Firstly, the consultation process should be transferred into a sustainable form of hearing refugees whenever planning or organising activities related to resettlement and integration. Secondly, diversifying responsibilities should be made more concrete and more ways of involving new actors to the process should be created. The diversification of responsibilities is important not only for sharing the burden of integration or broadening the social contacts of the newcomers but also for raising awareness on issues concerning refugees and changing negative attitudes. Thirdly, the role of civil society and refugee communities should be promoted. Therefore, models of partnership with the central and or local governments should be developed and tested. Finally, providing diversified integration services for different integration needs

should be seen as an investment for the future. People with different backgrounds have different needs that should be addressed. Achieving the best results is often a matter of resources that are usually not available. However, it should be acknowledged that on the long run the advantages of successful integration overcome the investments.


Resettlement is one of the durable solutions promoted by the UNHCR in protracted refugee situations and is generally only used when no local or regional solution can be found. Third countries have a very important role to play in providing a durable and peaceful alternative for people in long-term refugee situations. Many of the more established resettlement countries can offer advice and resources to countries new to the resettlement process. The MOST Project represents an attempt to share elements of good practice in relation to the resettlement process both between the partner countries and also to disseminate these results to a wider audience within the EU and elsewhere. It is hoped that this publication will serve as a useful tool for countries initiating or developing a resettlement process. Further information on these models and other elements can be found on the MOST website at <http://www.mostproject.fi>.






PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE IN RESETTLEMENT


– Final publication of the MOST project –



This book presents the final outcomes of the national development tasks conducted in Sweden, Ireland, Finland and Spain as part of the MOST project.



The activities carried out within the project framework concentrated on four phases of the resettlement process: information sharing in connection to selection missions, pre-departure orientation, post-arrival introduction programmes and integration to the new society. The overall objective of the project was to establish and test new approaches and methodologies for supporting integration of resettled refugees. The project was funded by the European Refugee Fund.



Reports of all project activities and other elements can be found on the project's website: <http://www.mostproject.fi>

