



SHAPING OUR FUTURE

A Practical Guide
to the Selection,
Reception and Integration
of Resettled Refugees

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Edited by Elina Ekholm, Sophie Magennis & Leni Salmelin

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Publisher Ministry of Labour, Finland
Graphic design Taina Ståhl, Edita Design/Edita Prima Oy
Layout Annikki Penttinen, Edita Prima Oy

Printed by Edita Prima Oy, Helsinki 2005

ISBN 951-735-938-1

FOREWORD

With the sun barely risen over the dawn of the twenty-first century, we contemplate, perhaps somewhat nervously, the unfolding landscape still strewn with the casualties of our inability to coexist peacefully on our planet. Refugees, the subject of this report, are, perhaps the most innocent of these casualties. They may simply have the wrong skin colour or ethnic origin. They may hold religious or political beliefs not in conformity with the ruling powers. Or they may simply have been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It is the suffering, despite the innocence, which moves Governments and the peoples of Governments to respond to the refugee issue and we are privileged to write the first few words of a document which reflects the dedicated work of the large number of partners who have made this volume a solid contribution to this most challenging area. It is not a policy document nor does it seek to be. Its purpose, however, is not simply to inform but to add value in a practical way to the activities of the many partners involved, planning to be involved, or simply considering involvement in the refugee resettlement process.

There are, of course, many fine publications in this important area and our knowledge and insights are constantly being codified both nationally and internationally. But we would like to think that there is something a little bit special about this collaboration between Finland and Ireland. Special, because it has allowed us to create a productive synergy between the practices and ideas in both countries enriched by differing structures, traditions and histories but harmonised by a commitment to an overall holistic approach. Special, because it represents a commitment to the practicality of durable solutions and their role in the overall tapestry of immigration policies. Special, because it has forged international bonds and connections which are at the heart of an effective advancement of the resettlement agenda across the European Union.

Welcoming refugees into our European communities is essentially about the future and our common responsibility to the coming generations. We were pleased to note that this community of thought has already been eloquently expressed by Irish and Finnish luminaries at times when both our countries were at a different stage in forming new societies. The Irish dramatist George Bernard Shaw once said "We are made wise not by the recollection of our past but

by the responsibility for our future" - a sentiment which has echoes in the words of the Finnish writer Henrik Tikkanen when he said "Because we don't think about future generations, they will never forget us."

Let us continue to be remembered for the right reasons and dedicate ourselves to promoting and valuing the continued presence of refugees in all our societies. We earnestly hope that the MORE Project will have contributed to this process in its own small but unique way.

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Acknowledgements

This Guide was edited by Elina Ekholm, Sophie Magennis and Leni Salmelin with contributions from: Vuokko Alanko, Drakhsan Ali, Pirkko Asikainen, Marja-Liisa Broman, Deirdre Coyle, Furio De Angelis, Mario Dragoje, Conor Dunne, Meri-Sisko Eskola, Batulo Essak, Lucy Finlayson, Martina Glennon, Outi Grossett, John Haskins, Judy Howard, Marja Hyvonen, Taina Immonen, Anne Kähkölä, Mark Kelly, Maarit Kemppainen, Sinikka Keskinen, Eeva Kilpeläinen, Kimmo Koskinen, Marja Lähde, Satu Linna, Kirsi Mäkelä, Aisha Marouf, Johanna Matikainen, Eileen McGlone, Janette McMackin, Geraldine Moore, Anne Alitolppa-Niitamo, Leena-Maija Qvist, Lea Rautiainen, Anne Ristioja, Päivikki Romppainen, Pasi Salmi, Katja Salminen, Eeva Salonen, Anne Saloranta, Teija Simola, Ann-Charlotte Sirén-Borrego, Sanna Sutter, Elli Toivonen, Johanna Vähäkuopus, Katja Virén, Jussi Visti, Jaana Vuorio and Anu Wikman-Immonen.

The Editors wish to thank the members of the MORE Project International Steering Committee and the Members of the Finnish and Irish National Working Groups for their advice, support and direction during the MORE Project. Special thanks go to the MORE Project cooperating organisations; the UNHCR, IOM and ECRE for their generous assistance throughout the Project. In particular, we wish to thank Mr. Furio De Angelis of the UNHCR Resettlement team for his substantial contribution, both to the Project's activities, and in the preparation of this Guide. In addition, we would like to thank the UNHCR offices in Ankara and Cairo for their support and assistance provided in the context of the fact-finding missions conducted by the Project. Thanks also go to all those who participated in the MORE Project National Workshops and the Development Tasks conducted in Finland and Ireland.

Elina Ekholm and Leni Salmelin wish to thank Meri-Sisko Eskola and Sirkku Päivärinne for their support and encouragement and Sinikka Keskinen for initiating the MORE Project and keeping spirits up throughout the project.

Sophie Magennis wishes to pay particular thanks to Martina Glennon, Senior Resettlement Officer at the Reception and Integration Agency for her generosity, wise counsel and crucial support during the course of the MORE Project and the production of this publication. Special thanks also go to Tony Delaney, Geraldine Moore and Maria Dardis who provided much needed direction and support throughout the Project. Finally, a very special thank you goes to Mario Dragoje,

Resettlement Officer at the Reception and Integration Agency for his insight, unyielding people centred approach to the resettlement process and for always telling it as it is.

With thanks,
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1. The MORE Project

The MORE Project (Modelling of National Resettlement Process and Implementation of Emergency Measures) was an EU funded Project which ran from December 2003 to April 2005. The Project partners were the Ministry of Labour, Finland (MOL) and the Reception and Integration Agency, Ireland (RIA) 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 aim of the Project was to develop comprehensive models for the resettlement process which can be utilised by other European Union Member States and other countries. The main outcome of the Project was the production of this practical guide to the resettlement process.

During the course of the Project, activities were conducted at international and national level in Finland and in Ireland. In developing its approach to work the Project acknowledged a number of basic principles: that the work of the Project should be practical in nature; that the participation of resettled refugees was key and that a holistic approach to the resettlement process, in which distinct elements of the process are linked together, was required.

Drawing from these basic principles, the Project conducted a range of activities. “Development tasks” were conducted in both countries. The tasks involved the rolling out of practical activities aimed at testing new tools and methods in respect of specific aspects of resettlement policy. Staff exchange programmes between resettlement practitioners in Finland and Ireland were conducted and staff from both countries participated in fact-finding missions aimed at observing selection missions. Conferences, workshops and consultation exercises were also held in Finland and in Ireland. All of these activities contributed to trans-national learning, capacity building and, ultimately, to the development of this practical guide to resettlement.

Throughout the lifetime of the Project, the Project team sought to involve all of the key actors engaged in the resettlement process. The key resettlement actors include: resettled refugees; national authorities; international organisations such as the UNHCR and IOM; international and national level NGOs; local authorities; front-line public service providers and local community organisations.

2. The Practical Guide to Resettlement

2.1 Introduction

This Guide to resettlement is the principal outcome of the MORE Project. As such, it is the result of consultation activities and co-operation with key actors, including resettled refugees, at international, national and local level throughout

the course of the Project. The Guide is therefore a presentation of the views, suggestions and ideas collected and collated throughout the course of the Project. It is the result of a consultation exercise which sought to fully engage with all actors involved in the resettlement process. The Guide is not an official document of the Project Partners or co-operating organisations, nor does it present or represent the official views or policy of the Project Partners or co-operating organisations.

2.2 Objectives

The main objective of this Guide is to provide practical information about the resettlement of refugees and the establishment of resettlement programmes. The Guide seeks to inform emerging resettlement countries of the key issues that are presented when establishing a resettlement programme. It also seeks to provide emerging and existing resettlement countries with a set of recommendations aimed at improving aspects of resettlement practice. The Guide is addressed not only to officials involved in running resettlement programmes, but also to other actors including resettled refugees, international organisations, NGOs, service providers, training providers and local community groups, all of whom play a key role in the resettlement process. The Guide is aimed primarily at existing and emerging resettlement countries in the European Union. However, it is hoped that the Guide will also be a useful resource for existing and emerging resettlement countries outside of the European Union.

2.3 Compilation

During the course of the MORE project, resettlement practice in Finland and in Ireland was mapped. This mapping exercise contributed greatly to the compilation of this Guide and, in particular, the key issues and recommendations it contains. Given how heavily the MORE Project and this Guide have drawn on practice in Ireland and Finland, it is important at this stage to note some basic information concerning the resettlement programmes in these countries. Clearly, the work of the Project and this Guide may be of greater relevance to countries with resettlement programmes of a similar scale, to emerging resettlement countries or to countries with small immigrant populations.

Finland and Ireland are not what would be termed “big” resettlement countries. Historically they have both been countries of emigration, not immigration. However, this situation has changed recently with the immigrant and refugee populations of both countries increasing. Finland has received resettled refugees on a regular basis for the past twenty years and the size of the refugee population is approximately 25,000 persons. Presently, Finland receives on average around 750 resettled refugees per annum.

Ireland has received resettled refugees under country specific programmes since 1956. In 1998, a Government Decision establishing the current refugee programme was adopted. This decision provides for the admission of ten appli-

cants and, in addition, members of their families each year. On average 35 – 50 resettled refugees are admitted under this programme each year. Although this is a very small number, Ireland receives a far greater number of refugees through its asylum determination procedure. The figures for the number of asylum applications submitted are: in 2002: 11,634 applications; in 2003: 7,900 applications and in 2004, 4,766 applications. Of this number 1,839 people were granted asylum in 2002; in 2003, 1,236 were granted asylum, and in 2004, 1,155 were granted asylum. These figures are relevant in the context of resettlement practice in Ireland as legislative and practical measures adopted in respect of persons granted refugee status also apply to resettled refugees and both groups face similar obstacles as regards integration into society.

Resettlement practice in Finland and Ireland is influenced by the very different administrative systems and social constructs in each country. Finland follows the Scandinavian tradition of strong local government with the social welfare system operated at both central and local level. In Ireland, central government is more powerful and there is a far lesser degree of delegation to local government. Also, in Ireland, a tradition of participation in voluntary work has led to a high level of NGO involvement in the provision of services and social support at national and local level. These fundamental administrative and societal differences provided very interesting material for the Project's mapping exercise and for other trans-national learning activities.

In addition to the mapping exercise, the results of the other activities conducted during the MORE Project contributed to the compilation of this Guide. These activities included the development tasks, trans-national activities and conferences and workshops mentioned above in paragraph 1. These activities examined particular aspects of the resettlement process including training for refugees, initial reception activities and selection missions. Through these activities, the MORE Project engaged with resettled refugees, NGOs, training providers, service providers and other actors with a view to learning from their experiences and incorporating their views and recommendations in this Guide.

In compiling this Guide, additional participatory methods were used as much as possible. Information concerning the work of the MORE Project and the Guide was posted on the Project's website and working sessions with the project stakeholders concerning the Guide were held in January 2005 in Dublin and in February 2005 in Jyväskylä.

2.4 Content

The Guide contains practical information concerning all aspects of resettlement practice.

In the Guide, the resettlement process is divided into three distinct phases: selection, reception and integration. However, an important practical and methodological principle is that, in practice, all of these phases should be linked-in with each other. The linkages between these phases are highlighted throughout the Guide.

Although the Guide deals with all aspects of the resettlement process, its treatment of the selection of resettled refugees, introductory measures for new arrivals and training for resettled refugees is more detailed and comprehensive. The focus on these areas arises from the fact that the Project conducted a number of fact-finding missions and practical development tasks in these subject areas and therefore explored these areas in greater depth.

Each Chapter of the Guide deals with a specific phase of the resettlement process. At the beginning of each Chapter is a set of key issues and recommendations pertaining to the subject matter of the Chapter. This is followed by information concerning relevant practice in that area.

In order to bring to life the resettlement practice set out in the Guide, we have included text boxes which set out “Good Practices” or “Obstacles Encountered” and “Outcomes of MORE Project activities”. These text boxes contain material from the Project’s mapping exercise and from the development tasks, workshops, selection missions and other activities conducted by the MORE Project.

We have also included a number of “Refugee Stories” throughout the text to present a range of practical issues from the point of view of resettled refugees. The background to these refugee stories is set out below at paragraph 3.

2.5 “Added value” and limitations of the Guide

There are a number of existing publications concerning resettlement which are an invaluable tool for emerging and existing resettlement countries, including the UNHCR’s publication “Refugee Resettlement; an International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration”; ECRE’s “Good Practice Guide on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union” and the European Commission’s “Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners”.

This Practical Guide seeks to complement these existing documents by providing detailed practical information on less well developed aspects of resettlement policy such as how to establish a resettlement programme, how to select refugees, how to manage initial reception activities and training for resettled refugees. As regards aspects of resettlement where there is an abundance of existing guidance and information, for example on integration, the Guide does not seek to reinvent the wheel. Rather, it limits itself to presenting the key issues, recommendations and practical examples collated by the MORE Project during the course of its activities.

It should also be noted that the MORE Project produced an Introductory Guide to Resettlement at an early stage of the Project’s work in April 2004. The Introductory Guide contains practical information concerning the early stages of the resettlement process conducted by the UNHCR including: case identification; assessment of resettlement need and resettlement determination. The Introductory Guide complements this Practical Guide and information concerning the early-stage UNHCR activities described above is not repeated in this

Guide. The Introductory Guide is available on the MORE Project website at www.more.fi

Clearly, it is very difficult to create a ‘one size fits all’ model of best practice for the resettlement process. There is no single measure or tool, which can be applied in every situation. In particular, practice models need to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate each State’s ability to deliver services with respect to the main aspects of the resettlement process; selection, reception and integration. The models must also accommodate the differing degrees of delegation to local authorities and/or NGO’s and the different expectations as regards the timeframe for economic and social self-sufficiency of resettled refugees in each State.

3. Presentation of the main characters of the Handbook: Refugee Stories

Refugees should take a leading role in a Guide which deals with refugee matters. Three refugee stories are now presented below. Although these accounts are not actual life stories, they are based on real experiences and serve to demonstrate the obstacles and challenges faced by resettled refugees. Specific examples of difficulties and successes which might be experienced by these refugees are presented throughout the text of this Guide. With their aid, we hope to illustrate some critical points of the resettlement process from the point of view of resettled refugees.

MR KUT JAMES MATHIANG DENG FROM SUDAN

Mr. Kut James Mathiang Deng was born on 15 July 1978 in a village in Southern Sudan, however, he is of the opinion that he was born some months earlier and that the date of registration of his birth may have been the date that the villagers took several children, born during the previous two years, to be registered in the nearest city.

Mr. Kut was born to a Christian family of Dinka ethnic origin. His mother tongue is Dinka but he is literate only in Arabic. He went to the village school for almost eight years but it was mostly on an on-off-basis since he often had to stay home and help his parents with the cattle.

When Mr. Kut was about twelve years old, the militia attacked his village and flogged, captured and killed some villagers. Mr Kut’s father was killed and they burned their house and took the family’s cattle. He was taken with his mother, sister and some other villagers and forced to walk for almost a

month. The militia then distributed and sold the captives to work either in houses or in the fields. A local Sheikh bought Mr. Kut to work in his fields. For five years, Mr. Kut herded cattle and was repeatedly maltreated for the slightest reason. He tried to escape several times and finally managed to do so when he brought some cattle to the market for auction. A trader helped him and took him to Khartoum, the capital city. At first, he did some odd jobs as a shoe-polisher and an office-boy and, after a few years, he managed to find a full time job at a clothing factory.

In 1997, he was called to undertake compulsory national service. He ignored the call, at first, as he did not wish to fight his own countrymen. However, one day four military police came to the factory and he was blindfolded and taken by car to a security office. He was accused of being a rebel and of inciting his colleagues not to join the service. He was severely beaten with wooden sticks and his skin was burnt with cigarettes. This treatment lasted for two days with the following two days spent alone in a cell. After that he was forced to sign an undertaking stating that he would not leave the capital and that he would report to the police on a weekly basis. He was also instructed not to tell anyone about what had happened to him while in detention.

Mr Kut tried to resume work but was dismissed and given a written explanation stating that this was for security reasons. For a month he reported to the police as instructed and was mistreated and humiliated every time he did so. He felt that he could not bear this treatment any longer and asked his friend to arrange travel documents for him which enabled him to travel to Egypt by steamer. Since then he has been unable to contact his mother or his friends in Sudan.

In Cairo, he contacted the UNHCR office and applied for refugee status. The UNHCR office found him to be credible, consistent and coherent. Medical examination confirmed that he had been subjected to torture and beatings. He demonstrated a well-founded fear of persecution and was recognised as a refugee on the grounds of race and imputed political opinion.

Neither voluntary repatriation nor local integration was a viable solution. Mr Kut was unable to settle locally despite consistent efforts on his part. With the possibility of local integration fully explored, resettlement was deemed to be the most appropriate durable solution in his case.

THE BAKSH FAMILY FROM AFGHANISTAN

Mrs. Hamida Bakhsh was born in 1961 but she does not know the exact date. She is of Tajik ethnic origin and is a Sunni Muslim. At the age of eighteen, after finishing her high school, she got married against the wishes of her parents. Her husband was a Hazara and a Shia Muslim. They moved to live with her parents-in-law.

Soon they had their first daughter Samira, followed by the second daughter Shabana and son Salim, who were born in 1981, 1983 and 1987 respectively.

When she was pregnant with her first child she found out that her husband had another family in another town. After some years, and according to local customs, he also married his brother's wife after his brother was killed in combat.

Her husband began to stay with his other families for longer and longer periods. At other times, he was away because of his involvement in Mujahedeen activities. He did not give Mrs Bakhsh any money to support the family while he was away and she had to live with the scarce assistance she was able to get from her parents-in-law.

In the end of the 1980's, Mrs. Bakhsh's husband disappeared and, at the same time, the general situation in Afghanistan deteriorated with fighting moving closer and closer to their hometown. Finally, she had no means to support her children and her mother-in-law who at this point was widowed. Under these circumstances, they had no other option but to flee the bombings and travel to Iran where they contacted the UNHCR office and were registered and later recognised as Mandate refugees.

Mrs Bakhsh was given a small subsistence allowance by the UNHCR but to supplement that she also prepared shoes at home for a shoe factory. The girls made artificial flowers at home and Salim sold sweets and lemonade in the streets. The children had gone to school in Afghanistan but could not continue to do so in Iran.

Suddenly Mrs. Bakhsh's husband arrived and demanded to take the children with him back to Afghanistan where he had already found suitable men for the daughters to marry. The family strongly objected to this demand which made the father furious and he physically abused the whole family. The abuse included using a razor to cut off his daughters' hair. He took the family's money and disappeared again. The

son, Salim, also disappeared some days later and the family have not heard of him since.

This experience has left Mrs Bakhsh with serious psychological trauma and she also complains of pains in her kidneys and stomach. The daughters are depressed and constantly worried about their safety. Shabana was injured in a car accident and will need an operation on her left leg. The grandmother, who is 75 years old, does not notice what is going on and just wishes to be left alone.

This family, of four women, without a male breadwinner and supporter have no prospects of local integration in Iran. As refugees, they have no right to proper employment and the minor jobs they can get are not enough to make ends meet. The children have had no access to education and there are no prospects for such access for them in Iran in the future either.

After being away from Afghanistan for about fifteen years they have nothing there to return to as they have lost all contact to their relatives and have no one to rely on for moral or financial support. As single women, they may face gender-related persecution in a society where males have the traditionally predominant position.

THE HASSAN FAMILY FROM IRAN

Mr. Mohammadi Hassan was born in Iran in 1956. He is married to Mrs. Fathi Khatiyeh who is a couple of years younger than him. They have seven children together; daughters Bahared, Monira, Amina and Aida and sons Aram, Arin and Asaed. The first born Bahared is twenty years old and she has a fiancé whom she wishes to marry soon. The twins Monira and Aram are sixteen, Amina fourteen, Aida thirteen, Arin seven and the smallest Asaed is five years old. They also have a nineteen year old nephew, Rashad, who has been living with the family since he was eleven when his parents were killed.

The whole family can speak Kurdish and Farsi. Some of the children have also learned some Turkish and English. The father was at university studying economics but had to finish his studies prematurely, just a few months before his graduation, due to the revolution in Iran. The mother has never

attended school but can read and write a little in Farsi. The children went to school in Iran but in Turkey only Amina, Aida and Arin were able to enrol in school.

In the early eighties, Mr. Mohammadi began to support one of the Kurdish opposition parties in Iran. After severe fighting in his home town he decided that he should do more for the Kurdish cause and he volunteered to get trained by the party. At first his duties included putting up propaganda posters on the walls and recruiting new members for the party. After some time, he began teaching party ideology to new members of the party and also to accompany important figures within the party when they travelled around the area. However, due to some family problems, he had to give up his activities after a few years and he returned to his home town and surrendered himself to the authorities. He was detained for five months but pardoned on the basis of an amnesty issued by the Iranian authorities. Upon release, he was required to report to the authorities on a weekly basis and he had to sign an undertaking which banned him from engaging in any further political activities.

However, soon Mr. Mohammadi felt that he had to resume activities within the party and he began to gather food and medicines for the peshmergas who were hiding in the mountains. He continued these activities for approximately six months but then he was detained after one of his party contacts revealed his name under torture. Mr. Mohammadi was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for collaborating with the opposition party. He was subjected, especially in the first few months, to torture and harsh treatment which included receiving 250 lashes.

After some years of imprisonment, Mr. Mohammadi's brother-in-law provided the deed for his house as security in order to get Mr. Mohammadi a five-day leave from the prison. The brother-in-law also arranged a passport for him, through a well-positioned relative, and the whole family escaped over the mountains to Turkey.

The family contacted the UNHCR office in Ankara and were granted refugee status as Mr Mohammadi was found to have a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of political opinion.

Turkey is a signatory state to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees but maintains a geographical reservation which means that only Europeans are granted refugee status by Turkey. Non-Europeans who are recognized as refugees by the UNHCR under its mandate are provided with temporary protection by Turkey pending resettlement by the UNHCR. Therefore, resettlement is the only durable solution for this family.

4. Key actors involved in resettlement

4.1 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. In more than five decades, the agency has helped an estimated 50 million people restart their lives. Today, a staff of around 5,000 people in more than 120 countries continues to help some 20 million persons.

A refugee is defined in Article 1 A (2) of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as someone who has left his or her country and is unable or unwilling to return to it *owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion*.

This definition has been accepted by the 145 countries worldwide that have signed the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and/or the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 Convention.

Refugees, who have sought asylum in a country which cannot or will not provide the required refugee protection to them, may need to be resettled to a safe third country. Resettlement is a process that begins with the identification and assessment of refugees requiring protection and ultimately results in a durable solution leading to their successful reception and integration. Resettlement is one of the three durable solutions, the other two being voluntary repatriation to the country of origin in conditions of safety and dignity and local integration in the host community.

In order to qualify for resettlement under the UNHCR's auspices, refugees must meet one of the resettlement criteria as set out in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Chapter 4 (see www.unhcr.org). These are: Legal and Physical Protection Needs, Survivors of Violence and Torture, Medical Needs, Women-at-Risk, Family Reunification, Children and Adolescents, Older Refugees and Refugees without Local Integration Prospects.

All in all, 17 countries worldwide offer refugee resettlement programmes in partnership with the UNHCR. Ireland and Finland are two of six Member States of the European Union that participate in annual refugee resettlement programmes. The others are: Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Non-EU Member States that offer resettlement programmes are: Argentina, Australia, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and the USA.

The resettlement process operates within the structure of a tripartite partnership involving resettlement countries, the UNHCR and NGOs. In the mid-90's, the Working Group on Resettlement was established in order to provide a consultative forum aimed at fostering and enhancing common efforts in the field of resettlement. Resettlement countries, the IOM, the European Commission and the UNHCR meet under the auspices of the Working Group three times a year to discuss policy and to direct the partners' efforts with a view to enhancing the use of resettlement as a tool for international protection. Once a year, the Working Group hosts the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement which also involves the participation of NGOs.

The UNHCR has published an International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration. The handbook was developed on the basis of the materials developed in the context of the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, which was held in Sweden in 2001. This excellent book covers all important areas in this field. The UNHCR has also produced the aforementioned Resettlement Handbook, an updated version of which was produced in November 2004.

4.2 European Union

EUROPEAN UNION POLICY ON RESETTLEMENT ISSUES

In the European Union, issues connected with refugees and asylum seekers have been of essential importance particularly since the meeting of the Council of Ministers held in Tampere in 1999. The European Commission has produced many communications in this field:

- ➔ On the common asylum policy and the agenda for protection COM (2003) 152 final of March 2003;
- ➔ Towards more accessible, equitable and managed asylum systems COM 315 (2003) final of June, 2003;
- ➔ On immigration, integration and employment of June 2003;
- ➔ Improving access to durable solutions Com (2004) 41 final of June, 2004.

The EU has also published its first annual report on migration and integration COM (2004) 508 Final of 16 July. In the discussions concerning asylum policy inside the EU, more and more attention has been paid to the relations between the Union and the countries outside it in recent years. In many of its communications, the Commission has raised the idea of resettlement as a possibility for providing international protection and durable solutions to refugees. In 2003, the Commission ordered a study on the participation of many of its Member States in the resettlement of refugees and on the possibilities of creating a common resettlement system for the whole Union. In November 2003, it organised

a seminar, where the implementation of various possibilities mentioned in the study were discussed among different actors.

The European Commission has also started to study the option of developing resettlement work in the EU on the basis of the so-called regional protection programmes. So far it has stated that resettlement could be one of the "tools" available to the Member States to be used in order to protect refugees. At the same time, the capacities of the countries of first asylum to provide protection would be improved. The EU Parliament supports this suggestion. In November 2004, the Council of Ministers accepted a five-year programme to develop the "freedom, justice and security" dimension of the EU. In the framework of this Hague Programme, the intention to promote common measures to develop the resettlement of refugees on the EU level was confirmed. The Council has asked the Commission to make a plan of action concerning the regional protection programmes and to provide its suggestions on resettlement measures in July 2005 at the latest. According to the conclusions of the Council, resettlement work in the EU must be flexible and situation-bound. Participation in it must also be voluntary for Member States.

The European Commission has published a "Handbook on Integration Policy for Policy-Makers and Practitioners". The Handbook was developed in close cooperation with the National Contact Points Network (NCP) of the EU on integration. The Handbook is a first edition, with a second edition planned for 2006 (see the internet link to the Handbook in Appendix A).

EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND AND THE MORE PROJECT

The European Refugee Fund was established in 2000. Its aim is to support and encourage Member States' efforts in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons by arranging reception, integration and voluntary return measures in the Member States and by testing innovative action at the Commission's initiative. There is also a financial reserve for the implementation of emergency measures to provide temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of refugees. The MORE Project was co-funded by European Refugee Fund.

4.3 The International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

The International Organisation for Migration was established in 1951 as an intergovernmental organisation to resettle European displaced persons, refugees and migrants. 110 States are members of the IOM. A further 30 States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations have observer status at the IOM. The IOM has over 5,000 members of staff and 220 field offices worldwide.

The IOM's mandate is:

- ➔ to help ensure the orderly flow of international migrants;
- ➔ to promote international cooperation on migration issues;
- ➔ to aid in the search for practical solutions to migration problems;
- ➔ to contribute to international solidarity by providing humanitarian assistance to people in need.

The organisation's Constitution, updated in 1989, highlights a number of fundamental principles, including explicit recognition of the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development as well as the principle of free movement of persons.

IOM's activities correspond to the four main areas for managing migration: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration, and forced migration. A number of cross-cutting activities relevant to each of these four pillars cover technical cooperation and capacity building, protection of human rights, promotion of international migration law, information gathering and research, policy debate and guidance, regional and international cooperation, public information and education, migration health, the gender dimension of migration and integration and reintegration.

4.4 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental organisations are involved in resettlement at both international and national level. NGO activities range from policy work to advocacy and the provision of practical support and services to resettled refugees. The work of two of the primary international NGOs involved in resettlement is described in brief below. At national level, NGOs are involved in many aspects of the resettlement process: from providing social and community support, to assisting refugees in finding employment and learning new languages. The work of a number of NGOs in Finland and Ireland is highlighted throughout this report.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES AND EXILES (ECRE)

ECRE is an umbrella organisation of 78 refugee-assisting agencies in 31 countries working towards fair and humane policies for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. ECRE's aim is to promote the protection and integration of refugees in Europe based on the values of human dignity, human rights, and an ethic of solidarity. The organisation seeks to achieve this aim by:

- ➔ Advocating a humane and generous European asylum policy and by promoting the development of a comprehensive and coherent response by the international community to refugee movements;
- ➔ Strengthening networking between refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations in Europe;
- ➔ Developing the institutional capacity of refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations in Europe.

As regards resettlement policy, in August 2003 ECRE published a joint report together with the U.S. Committee for Refugees entitled “Responding to the Asylum and Access Challenge, An Agenda for Comprehensive Engagement in Protracted Refugee Situations”.

As regards its integration-related activities in particular, ECRE’s task force on integration produced a series of six thematic guides under the title “Good Practice Guide on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union” in 1999. Together with its partners, ECRE published a further set of three guides entitled “Good Practice in the Reception & Integration of Refugees” in 2002. The guides deal with the following issues: (a) Older Refugees in Europe, Survey Results and Key Approaches; (b) Child Refugees in Europe, Guidelines on the Psychosocial Context, Assessment of and Interventions for Traumatized Children and Adolescents and (c) Quest for Quality Educational Guidance for Refugees in Europe.

ECRE also published a position paper on the reception of asylum seekers in November 2001 and a position paper on the integration of refugees in Europe in December 2002.

RED CROSS

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the world’s largest humanitarian network working to assist refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The mandate for the services provided to moving or displaced people is based on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s fundamental principles, in particular on the principle of Humanity and Impartiality.

The seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

The mission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as formulated in the Strategy 2010, is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. Service delivery and advocacy are its tools.

The International Federation’s programmes are grouped into four main core areas: promoting humanitarian principles and values; disaster response; disaster preparedness; and health and care in the community.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal conflict and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

Actions, which may vary depending on region, need and resources, taken by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in favour of refugees and migrants include the following:

- ➔ Reception and accommodation during the asylum procedure;
- ➔ Legal assistance, through information, advice and legal representation;
- ➔ Advocacy with a view to ensuring proper treatment and protection;
- ➔ Psychosocial support, including visiting detention centres;
- ➔ Tracing services to maintain family communication;
- ➔ Family reunification;
- ➔ Integration and/or reintegration to the extent possible, informing individuals of conditions, rights and obligations;
- ➔ Fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination through the promotion of respect, tolerance and the rule of law;
- ➔ Health care, general or specialized, for instance for victims of torture;
- ➔ Assistance to victims of armed conflict in accordance with the provisions of International Humanitarian Law;
- ➔ Humanitarian assistance, including food, clothes and hygiene articles;
- ➔ Disaster response with assistance to refugees and victims of natural disasters.

The above mentioned list is not exhaustive. Individual National Societies may implement other programmes according to the needs and situation in the country.

NATIONAL NGO'S

National NGO's are involved to varying degrees in the resettlement process in resettlement countries. NGO involvement can be on a voluntary basis, whereby NGO's offer their services to resettled refugees on the same basis as other clients. In some countries, NGO's are specifically contracted or commissioned by the State to provide services to resettled refugees. For example in the United States, NGOs are contracted to provide initial reception services to newly arrived resettled refugees. In Ireland, NGO's provide complementary services such as free language training courses and assistance to resettled refugees seeking alternative accommodation. Some NGO's also provide unique services such as care for survivors of torture and peer-led health information provision.



ESTABLISHMENT OF A REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

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KEY ISSUES

- ➔ A decision must be taken as to which government department or agency will take the lead in establishing the resettlement programme.
- ➔ A decision must be taken as regards the mechanism to be used to establish the resettlement programme, i.e., will legislation, a government decision or some other instrument be used. Issues such as legitimacy, credibility and the need to generate favourable public opinion should be taken into account.
- ➔ Consideration should be given to the need for supporting legislation and policy plans concerning integration.
- ➔ The authorities must decide upon the level at which the decisions regarding the size of the quota and the countries from which refugees will be accepted will be taken, i.e. Ministerial level, Government Department or other agency level or a combination of the above.
- ➔ When deciding upon the size and composition of the quota of refugees to be accepted, due regard should be had to the available resources in the resettlement country, including by engaging with relevant service providers and other key actors.
- ➔ Strategies for consulting with key partners, including NGOs and refugee community organisations at an early stage in the establishment process should be examined.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➔ An authoritative mechanism, such as a legislative act or executive decision should be used to establish a resettlement programme.
- ➔ The rights, entitlements and duties of resettled refugees must be clearly set out in authoritative texts which are public and readily accessible to members of the public and public officials. In particular, the extension of basic human rights protections and guarantees in national, constitutional and international law, on a par with citizens, should be clearly established.
- ➔ Relevant public officials, resettled refugees, service providers and NGOs should be fully briefed as regards the rights and entitlements of refugees and the content of all instruments pertaining to the status of resettled refugees. Efforts should be made to disseminate this information as widely as possible, including in the private sector and amongst the media community.
- ➔ The legal status of resettled refugees, pending naturalisation, should be clarified.
- ➔ Pending naturalisation, resettled refugees should be issued with a Geneva Convention Travel Document which is recognised by all countries party to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol.
- ➔ Effective cooperation structures between all bodies involved in the resettlement process at national and local level should be established. In particular, a clear division of labour between all relevant actors should be agreed upon.
- ➔ Receiving local municipalities/local authorities and other local actors involved in the reception of refugees should receive training, advice and capacity building support prior to the arrival of refugees in their locality.
- ➔ There should be positive engagement with media organisations as regards the role and responsibility of the media when covering stories related to refugees.
- ➔ The know-how and resources of any existing refugee communities or other community groups should be utilised and geared towards providing support for new arrivals and supporting refugee integration.
- ➔ People with refugee backgrounds should be recruited to posts connected with the integration of refugees.

1. Introduction

When consideration is first given to the establishment of a national refugee resettlement programme, one of the key issues to be considered is who, or what entity, will take the decision to establish the resettlement programme and by what mechanism will the programme be established. Resettlement countries have developed different practices in this respect.

It is advisable that the decision to establish a resettlement programme be taken at the highest possible level, either by a national parliament or government, in order to secure legitimacy for the programme. Prior to decision taking, it would be desirable to encourage public debate and discourse concerning the situation of refugees in general in order to facilitate the dissemination of accurate information concerning refugees and the resettlement process. Efforts should be undertaken to generate positive public opinion and achieve a consensus in favour of the establishment of a resettlement programme. Public support can go a long way in facilitating the initial and longer term integration of resettled refugees.

Once a decision in principle has been taken to establish a refugee resettlement programme, the next major consideration is to decide upon the countries of origin from which refugees will be accepted.

In some resettlement countries this decision is taken by public officials (i.e. civil servants) whereas in other countries it is taken by politicians serving in their Ministerial capacities. If the decision is made at a high political level, it is likely that Ministers will be committed to the decision taken. However, a possible disadvantage is that the decision making process itself may become politicised. Whoever takes this decision, cooperation with the UNHCR as regards all matters, and this issue in particular, remains extremely important. It is also important to remember that accepting refugees for resettlement is a political signal whereby countries demonstrate their willingness to share the burdens of those, often poorer countries, which receive the greatest proportion of the world's refugees.

In this Chapter, the key issues pertinent to the establishment of a resettlement programme are examined by way of reference to current practice in Finland and in Ireland. Issues such as; what countries to accept refugees from, how many to accept, the legislative and policy frameworks required and how cooperation with local authorities should be managed are examined.

2. Decisions concerning quota size and country of origin

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

DECISIONS REGARDING QUOTA SIZE

In Ireland, the number of resettled refugees to be resettled into the State each year is set out in the Government decision of 1998 under which the resettlement programme was established (see paragraph 3 below). That number is 10 principal applicants per year plus members of their families, which is equal to about 35-50 persons each year.

DECISIONS REGARDING THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF RESETTLED REFUGEES

Ireland employs the so-called “dossier-based” method for the selection of refugees for resettlement in Ireland. Under this method, Ireland, together with other resettlement countries, indicates the countries from which it will accept resettled refugees at an “Indication Conference” hosted by the UNHCR in Geneva in June of each year. Ireland’s indication is based, among other things, on the annual “Projected Global Resettlement Needs” document produced by the UNHCR. The UNHCR then forwards around 15 to 20 dossiers (files containing applications for resettlement from refugees compiled by the UNHCR) to the Irish authorities each year. From these dossiers, the authorities select 10 resettlement cases per annum. A ‘case’ may comprise a single individual or a family.

Decisions as regards which dossiers to select are taken by the Department of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Department of Justice, Equality, and Law Reform, the Garda (police), National Immigration Bureau (as regards security matters) and the Department of Health (where the health status of any of the applicants is of relevance).

In deciding which dossiers or cases to select, the Irish authorities have regard to a number of issues including: the compelling or compassionate aspects of the application for resettlement; the capacity of the receiving authorities in Ireland (for example, can the health needs of the applicant be met) and security issues.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

The Finnish Parliament decides on the size of the resettled refugee quota every year when confirming the State budget. In the last few years, the budget has included funding for the annual reception of 750 quota refugees.

In accordance with Section 91 of the Law on Foreign Citizens, the Ministry of Labour, in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, prepares a proposal to the Government on the regional allocation of the refugee quota. Preparatory work on the compilation of the proposal commences each year in the early summer when the UNHCR publishes its estimation of global resettlement needs for forthcoming 12 months.

Together, the relevant Finnish ministries review previous resettlement intakes in the light of the national resettlement criteria and guidelines. The Ministry of Labour also collects data on the reception of resettled refugees in the municipalities within Finland and on the present readiness for new arrivals at municipal level. The situation of refugee communities already living in Finland is also examined. At international level, information concerning reception measures is exchanged between the resettlement countries at the UNHCR Working Group on resettlement meetings in Geneva and between the Nordic Countries in the context of the Scandinavian workgroup on resettlement.

On the basis of the reviews carried out, estimations and other available information, the authorities provide preliminary data on the reception capacity in Finland for the forthcoming year. This preliminary data is published at the Indication Conference organised by the UNHCR each year. At the bilateral consultation sessions between Finland and the UNHCR held in the autumn, more specific discussions on the resettlement needs as estimated by the UNHCR and on Finnish concerns are held. On foot of these consultations, the UNHCR presents a suggestion to Finland on the allocation of the refugee quota.

In addition to the decision making process concerning the size of the quota described above, the Finnish authorities must also decide upon which persons to accept for their resettlement programme. Section 90 of the Finnish Aliens Act (301/2004) states that the annual quota of refugees may consist of persons defined as refugees by the UNHCR and/or other persons in need of international protection. In practice, all of the refugees received in the framework of the resettlement programme during recent years have been defined by the UNHCR as persons in need of resettlement.

Section 92 of the Alien's Act sets out a number of criteria to guide quota-related decisions:

- ➔ the person's need for international protection;
- ➔ the need to be resettled away from the country of first asylum;
- ➔ the capacity for integration into Finnish society;
- ➔ there are no obstacles as regards the granting of a licence to stay in Finland.

As regards the third element listed above, it is important to note that the integration capacity of people who have spent long periods of times in refugee camps or who are otherwise in a vulnerable position can often be assessed as very weak. This alone is not a sufficient reason to exclude such people when making the quota choices, however, it is necessary to evaluate the capabilities of receiving municipalities to provide adequate reception services and support for integration.

The overall aim is to include within the quota persons whose capacity for integration has been assessed as both low and high, so that persons with greater

integration prospects might be in a position to assist less able members of the group.

In addition to the criteria set out in the Aliens Act, the authorities may decide upon additional guidelines or special provisions as regards persons who may be accepted for resettlement.

The policy criteria aimed at guiding quota-related decisions described above are also followed by the Finnish authorities when they conduct missions to select refugees in their country of asylum. Information concerning the selection missions is set out in Chapter III of this Guide.

3. Legislation and national integration programmes

As mentioned above, one of the key issues to consider is what kind of mechanism to use to establish a resettlement programme. Resettlement countries have used a range of mechanisms to establish such programmes including, the adoption of legislation by parliament and the adoption of executive decisions. Many countries have also adopted national integration programmes, either at policy level or on a legislative basis. National integration programmes can help to place and keep the issue of integration high on the national political agenda. They can also guide best practice and aid the development of policy in this field.

It is important to note that it is difficult to plan, harmonise, and monitor the interdepartmental and multidisciplinary aspects of integration without a sound legislative and or/policy basis. It is therefore advisable to have clear legislation concerning the reception and integration of resettled refugees and to buttress such legislation with comprehensive integration policy plans.

The issues touched upon here are illustrated below with reference to relevant legislation and policy in Finland and Ireland.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

In 1987, the Council of State adopted a decision providing for the social welfare, housing and other needs of resettled refugees (decision no. 202 of 1987). In Finland, a Council of State decision is a law adopted by the Government. A further decision was taken in 1998 to forego the use of reception centres and to place refugees directly in mainstream accommodation in municipalities as soon as possible after their arrival in Finland. Income support, public services and other support measures for refugees were provided for in the Council of State decision on income security of refugees (no. 537 of 1998) and in the decision on the organisation and financing of refugee reception in municipalities (no. 600 of 1988). These Council of State decisions also determined the financial arrangements made between the State and local authorities.

In the 1990s, the sharp rise in the number of refugees, persons admitted to Finland in need of shelter or on humanitarian grounds, and returnees (persons of

Finnish origin resident mainly in the Russian Federation and known as Ingrian people) coincided with a national economic recession that increased the level of unemployment in Finland to record levels. As a result, in practice it was virtually impossible for refugees, returnees and other groups to find employment. In many cases refugees who had arrived in Finland during the preceding decade lost their jobs. Even though all persons living in Finland are covered by social security protections, the situation that arose during and after the recession required more effective measures to be taken primarily in the sphere of employment and training.

An Immigration and Refugee Policy Commission was appointed in 1995 and reported in

1997. This report resulted in the approval of a government programme on the principles of immigration and refugee policy in 1997. The stated objective of the government programme was the flexible and efficient social and labour market integration of all immigrants, including refugees, returnees and migrant workers.

Underlying the government programme was a holistic approach to immigration policy which examined immigrant integration as a fundamental aspect of immigration policy. The Programme also highlighted the link between favourable public opinion concerning immigration policy and the fact that both of these factors can be mutually reinforcing. These issues are as topical today as ever.

In recognition of the fact that, as mentioned above, it is difficult to harmonise, plan and monitor the interdepartmental aspects of immigrant integration without a legislative basis, and as the general trend in Finland had been to enact legislative provisions governing questions determined by decisions of the Council of State, a legislative proposal for measures to promote immigrant integration was prepared in line with the 1997 government programme.

The Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, hereafter referred to as the Integration Act, took effect on 1 May 1999. When approving the Integration Act, Parliament instructed the Government to monitor closely the progress made in realising the aims of the reform and the effectiveness of the Act, and to report on the reform within three years of the entry into force of the Act.

In its action programme to combat ethnic discrimination and racism, "Towards Ethnic Equality and Diversity" the Government further undertook to report to Parliament on measures to promote ethnic equality, and to combat and prevent ethnic discrimination and racism, when submitting its 2002 report on the implementation of the Integration Act.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

GOVERNMENT DECISIONS AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In Ireland, the current refugee resettlement programme was established by a Government Decision taken in 1998. The Government Decision was taken by the members of the Cabinet (Committee of Government Ministers). The use of an executive decision such as this to establish a resettlement programme has a number of advantages. The decision can be taken rapidly and with immediate effect. Its use may be most advisable in emergency evacuation-type situations (see Chapter VI concerning Temporary Protection).

IN THE DECISION, THE GOVERNMENT AGREED:

“to admit to the State up to 10 persons categorised as vulnerable persons, as programme refugees, each year, in accordance with an arrangement agreed in an exchange of letters between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and to admit members of the families of vulnerable persons admitted as programme refugees under this decision, on a similar basis as the admission of relatives of persons granted refugee status in the State (Convention Refugees)”.

The Government decision of 1998 was rooted in a pre-existing framework of previous emergency resettlement programmes run by the State and a comprehensive refugee legislative framework both of which are described below.

Prior to 1998, the Irish authorities operated country-specific resettlement programmes. Government decisions established the former Yugoslavia resettlement programme (1992-2000) and the Kosovo resettlement programme (1999-2001). These programmes were preceded by the following country-specific programmes: Hungary (1956); Chile (1973); Iran (Baha’i community, 1985) and Vietnam (1979-2001). The 1998 Government Decision to establish an annual, non-country-specific resettlement programme therefore was not an isolated instrument. Rather, it fitted within a resettlement framework originally designed to respond to emergency country-specific situations. The development of policy and practice under the 1998 Government decision drew on the experience and lessons learned from the previous resettlement programmes.

In addition, comprehensive refugee legislation was adopted in the form of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended). Although the Act deals primarily with the situation of asylum seekers and persons granted refugee status under the State’s refugee determination procedures, it provides that the relevant terms of the Act apply also to resettled refugees or “programme refugees” as they are known in Ireland. Section 24 of the Refugee Act provides that a programme refugee is entitled to the rights and privileges specified in Section 3 of the Act. Section 3 states “a refugee in relation to whom a declaration is in force shall be entitled to the same rights and privileges as those conferred by law on persons generally who are not Irish citizens”. Section 24 therefore provides that programme

refugees have the same rights and entitlements as the “Convention refugees” envisaged in Section 3 of the Act.

Section 3 of the Refugee Act provides that refugees (including Programme Refugees) shall:

- ➔ *be entitled to seek and to enter employment, to carry on any business, trade or profession and to have access to education and training in the State in the like manner and to the like extent in all respects as an Irish citizen;*
- ➔ *be entitled to receive the same medical care and services and social welfare entitlements as those to which Irish citizens are entitled;*
- ➔ *have the same rights of travel in or to or from the State as an Irish citizen;*
- ➔ *have the same freedom to practice his or her religion and to the religious education of his or her child as an Irish citizen;*
- ➔ *have access to the courts to the same extent as an Irish citizen;*
- ➔ *have the right to form and be a member of associations and trade unions.*

In addition to the provisions of the 1998 Government Decision and the Refugee Act, 1996, refugees also enjoy the rights and entitlements guaranteed by national law, international law and the Irish Constitution. Prior to naturalisation, a process under which refugees become Irish citizens, there are some limitations on the entitlements of refugees as compared to Irish citizens. These include the right to vote in national elections (although they can vote in local elections) and access to an Irish passport. Refugees can apply for naturalisation after a period of three years residence in the State. Passports can be applied for once naturalisation has been granted.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION PROGRAMME

Ireland’s integration policy is contained in the Government report “Integration - A Two Way Process” published in December 1999. Arising from the recommendations of this report, the Reception and Integration Agency is responsible for, among other things, coordinating the implementation of integration measures for refugees. Specifically, this involves:

- ➔ *the overall development of policy in the integration area*
- ➔ *developing and maintaining common agendas with the NGO sector for planning and delivering services*
- ➔ *promoting the mainstreaming of integration services with statutory service suppliers*
- ➔ *maximising the effectiveness of delivering such services with special regard to the use of existing local structures, particularly at county level*

- ➔ *promoting the use of EU funding, particularly in relation to the European Refugee Fund*
- ➔ *promoting a research and evidence-based approach to the delivery of integration services*

Until early 2005, integration policy in Ireland was directed solely at refugees (Convention refugees and Programme refugees) and persons granted leave to remain. However, in March 2005, the establishment of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) was announced. It is envisaged that the INIS will serve as a single contact point or “one stop shop” for applications for entry to the State. It is also envisaged that the INIS will include a new Immigrant Integration Unit to promote and coordinate social and organisational measures across the whole spectrum of Government for the reception of immigrants into Irish society. Further details concerning the new INIS were not available at the time of going to print. For additional information please consult the website of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform at: www.justice.ie

Ireland also adopted a National Action Plan Against Racism in 2005. The Plan sets out five primary objectives, all of which are relevant to the promotion of integration in the State. Details concerning the Action Plan are set out in Chapter V Section 3 below.

4. Division of responsibility between central government and local partners

Resettlement countries have adopted different approaches or models as regards the division of responsibility for the reception of resettled refugees. In some countries central government is the main player, whereas other countries employ a high degree of delegation to local or regional government authorities. This kind of delegation is used a lot in Scandinavian countries where local municipalities are vested with wide administrative and budgetary powers. In other countries the authorities ‘contract out’ responsibility for reception and integration measures to NGOs and other entities. This practice is used in some of the larger resettlement countries, i.e., the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia.

One of the greatest advantages of the ‘contracting out’ model is that NGOs, citizens and communities are heavily involved in the reception of refugees. The Scandinavian model can perhaps offer the best guarantee that refugees will receive services of equal quality in the different regions of the country.

Whichever model is used, there are a number of overarching principles which should be respected in each case. Firstly, the State must retain overall responsibility and accountability for the reception and integration of resettled refugees. Secondly, all divisions of responsibility between central government, local government, NGOs and other entities should be clearly defined and set out in user friendly documents easily accessible to the public. Answers to the ques-

tion ‘who is responsible for what?’ should be readily available to refugees, service providers and the authorities.

Finland and Ireland have a different approach to the division of responsibility between central government and local partners. These different approaches, rooted in the societal and political make-up of each country are described below.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

At central government level, responsibility for resettled refugees has shifted between the Ministry for Labour and the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health. At present, the Ministry of Labour is in charge. However, at municipal level, responsibility usually rests with the social security administration.

The reception of refugees typically requires cooperation between different types of administrative authorities and between different professionals. Which ever model is chosen, it is important that every agency has, in its own area of responsibility, the same obligations to the people of refugee background as to the other members of the population. It is also important to note that the integration of refugees can never be the responsibility of merely one agency. On the basis of Finnish experiences it is important to emphasise two elements when planning the reception of refugees. One is providing support for the refugees’ own actions and initiatives. The other is consultation with existing migrant and refugee communities in the reception process.

DIVISION OF COSTS BETWEEN CENTRAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

International research points to the fact that the resettlement of refugees is an investment in the interest of the receiving country in the long run. However, reception and integration measures undertaken in the initial years after the arrival of the refugees do incur an expense for the receiving society. It is therefore important that the division of costs between the different authorities involved are clearly defined.

In Finland, central government covers the costs of reception incurred by receiving municipalities in accordance with agreements between the Government and the municipalities concerned. The financial resources for this purpose are allocated in the state budget. According to the Finnish Integration Law of 1999, compensation is paid to the municipalities for arranging integration measures. The Law also sets out regulations concerning the voluntary agreement of resettlement of refugees to municipalities, integration allowance, repatriation allowance and income support for the refugees.

In the agreements between the Government and the municipalities, the municipality undertakes to provide for the housing, social and health care services, education, cultural and interpretation services needs of the resettled refugees. The amounts for covering these costs are defined in the Integration Law. Costs relating to education for resettled refugees are covered by central government on a similar basis as costs for other pupils. The municipality can, however, re-

ceive compensation for arranging preparatory education for basic studies as well as basic vocational studies. The costs are compensated retrospectively. In certain cases, the municipalities can apply for government assistance for arranging remedial education or education in mother tongue or other services. This assistance can be applied for once a year retrospectively.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

In Ireland, the reception of resettled refugees is co-ordinated by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) which operates under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The RIA is primarily responsible for the coordination of all resettlement activities including initial reception of refugees upon arrival and facilitation of access for resettled refugees to all mainstream public services including accommodation, health care, education and other services. The RIA therefore facilitates access to mainstream services for resettled refugees on the same basis as Irish citizens.

Frontline service providers, for example, social welfare, health and accommodation authorities, which operate under the aegis of other Government Departments such as the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Department of Health, remain responsible for the delivery of services to resettled refugees on the same basis as Irish citizens. This responsibility includes ensuring that all frontline staff are aware of the rights and entitlements of resettled refugees.

While the reception and integration of resettled refugees is co-ordinated and managed at central government level in the capital, Dublin, the RIA also works in cooperation with local authorities and community organisations in localities outside of the capital where resettled refugees will be accommodated in order to guide and facilitate arrangements at local level for the arrival of resettled refugees. Recently, the RIA has developed a more extensive practice of preparing local communities and authorities for the arrival of resettled refugees. This practice is described in more detail below.

DIVISION OF COSTS BETWEEN CENTRAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In Ireland, resettlement policy is co-ordinated at central government level and local authorities do not receive any direct financial allocation in respect of resettled refugees placed in their localities.

However, access to health care, accommodation costs and social welfare payments to resettled refugees are all funded by the public purse (central government funds) so there are no direct costs to the local authorities. There are, however, potential indirect costs related to an increase in the number of people accessing locally funded services. In addition, provision of accommodation to resettled refugees may require a local authority to increase its available housing stock and/or require local actors to identify additional low-cost private rental accommodation units in the area.

County and City Development Boards were established in each County and City in Ireland in 2000. They bring together key players at local level to engage

in a process of long-term planning for each County and City. They also aim to fill gaps in meeting the needs of their communities and to counteract social exclusion as well as to promote economic and cultural development. Increased cooperation with existing local structures such as County and City Development Boards is being piloted by the Reception and Integration Agency in order to stimulate a more active role for local actors in refugee integration activities. The County Development and City Development Boards receive funding from central government to pursue social inclusion policies at local level. Some Boards have used some of this funding to pursue activities aimed at the integration of resettled refugees in their areas.

In addition to the public sector, the non-governmental (NGO) sector is very active in Ireland as regards social matters in general. This has historically been the case in Ireland where community organisations and organisations funded and run by religious groups have been prevalent for a long time. Added to this, there is also a strong culture of voluntary work in Ireland.

Most of the large NGOs involved in refugee matters are based in Dublin and concentrate primarily on issues concerning asylum seekers. However, many NGOs and community groups in Dublin and outside of Dublin provide assistance to resettled refugees in the form of language and vocational training, help with finding accommodation and in accessing social services and other forms of assistance aimed at facilitating integration into the society. In addition, there are a number of NGOs focussing on immigration issues whose work is highly relevant to the situation of resettled refugees, particularly as regards access to the work place and civic participation.

Small and large NGOs receive funding for their activities from private entities and from the Irish State, including under the European Refugee Fund (ERF) and the Reception and Integration Agency's small grants scheme. Many national level and local level NGOs which assist resettled refugees are therefore in receipt of some State/EU funding.

Since 2000, the ERF has been used in Ireland to fund over 60 projects with amounts awarded ranging from 6,000 for a housing information campaign for refugees, to over 150,000 for a centre for the care of survivors of torture.

Examples of the different types of activities funded through the ERF to date include:

- ➔ Provision of information and advice relating to the local community;*
- ➔ Provision of language training and interpretation services;*
- ➔ Setting up of local Drop-In Centres for asylum seekers and refugees;*
- ➔ A community radio news programme which focused on refugee and asylum seeker issues in the west of Ireland.*

5. Facilitating reception by local authorities and capacity building

Central government has an important role to play in facilitating the reception of resettled refugees by municipalities or local authorities. A clear division of labour needs to be set out and preparatory meetings, seminars and training events should be undertaken to prepare and motivate local actors as regards the reception of resettled refugees.

When a municipality or local authority is receiving refugees for the first time, both training and information are needed. In many resettlement countries, special training programmes for receiving local authorities are provided. Such programmes usually involve: information concerning the situation in the refugees' country of origin; the culture of the refugee group in question; the psycho-social process of integration and the social, health-care, and educational services connected with the reception of resettled refugees.

In the case of resettlement countries which undertake selection missions to select resettled refugees (see Chapter III), it could be useful to include a representative from a local authority in the selection mission team. This individual could then provide relevant information gathered during the selection mission to other resettlement professionals at local level, particularly as regards the situation in the country of first asylum and country of origin of the resettled refugees.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

As mentioned above, the Reception and Integration Agency co-ordinates the reception of resettled refugees in Ireland. In recent years, the RIA has undertaken a number of activities aimed at preparing local authorities for the arrival of resettled refugees. Where a local community is receiving refugees for the first time, the RIA assists and guides the local actors during the first few days after arrival. Pre-arrival support is also provided. In respect of the most recent placements of refugees in Carrick-on-Shannon and Roscommon, both in the mid-west of Ireland, the RIA coordinated the establishment of local support groups in these localities. The local support groups are composed of all the relevant bodies who have a role to play in initial reception activities: the local partnership (under the aegis of the local County Development Board), community welfare officer, FÁS (the national training and employment authority), local school, local adult language training provider, local community groups, local citizen's advice bureau and other actors. The role of the support group is to assist in the coordination of and preparation for the initial reception measures.

In addition to efforts undertaken by the authorities, a number of NGO's including Doras Luimni and the Galway Refugee Support Group have undertaken capacity building measures at local level.

RESEARCH EXCERPT

PILOT LOCAL PREPARATION ACTIVITY: ROSCOMMON, JULY 2004

In spring 2004, the RIA, in consultation with local actors, decided to place a group of resettled refugees in Roscommon town, a town some 150 km outside of Dublin. This would be the first group of resettled refugees to be placed in this locality. In order to prepare the local authorities and local actors for the arrival of the refugees, the RIA facilitated the establishment of the Roscommon Support Group which was composed of frontline public service staff (social welfare providers, health professionals, local employment officers etc), teachers from the local schools and other relevant actors.

Representatives of the RIA provided training to the Support Group in order to prepare them for the arrivals. Information was provided on Ireland's resettlement programme, what resettlement is and where the refugees were coming from. At a practical level, the RIA prepared and presented check lists of advance activities and measures that should be undertaken, for example: identifying and securing appropriate accommodation; securing the agreement of local general medical practitioners to treat the new arrivals and notifying and preparing the local schools for any new intake.

In addition to these administrative matters, the RIA also provided information on the needs of the particular group arriving, their rights and entitlements and the responsibilities of local services providers to meet those needs.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

In Finland resettling refugees to different municipalities depends on the municipalities' own willingness to receive refugees. The authorities in a municipality may – if they wish – make a contract with the Regional Employment and Economic Development Centre on the reception of refugees. Should they do so, they can get financial support for the costs of receiving and integrating the newcomers.

When decisions on placement are made, it must be considered whether the municipality in question has sufficient resources to take on all the responsibilities connected with immigrants. In particular, resources are required for planning the work with the new arrivals and for training the employees.

In view of increasing globalisation, it is important for Finland to attempt to become a more multicultural society. The increasingly multicultural society brings new challenges to the municipalities for instance in connection with service provision. The municipalities also have to become more competitive as employers. In the future competition for resources, employers who have made conscious efforts to invest in recruiting immigrants will be successful. So far,

employers have not been able to utilise the know-how of immigrants to a sufficient extent. It would be important to support the employment of refugees at jobs equal to their level of training for instance by developing the recognition of qualifications. The creation of genuinely multicultural communities could be facilitated encouraging employers to accept colleagues and clients from different cultures and by promoting management styles that support diversity.

The integration of immigrants requires the multicultural know-how of municipalities and their employees. Training staff to meet the needs of refugees coming from very difficult conditions promotes the integration of refugees.

Working with refugees requires cooperation between the different sectors of administration and involves the whole service provision of the municipalities. In many cities, specific employees have been hired to co-ordinate the multicultural work and activities connected with immigrants.

In Finland, some municipalities have developed their own integration programmes. For example, the City of Vantaa in Finland has adopted its own integration programme which defines the goals of integration as follows: “Our mission is to promote integration of immigrants by supporting their own resources and networks and by increasing their readiness to act as equal members of the Finnish society.”

6. The role of the Media

The media plays an important role in influencing public opinion. It is therefore important for national authorities and other resettlement actors to engage with the media in a positive and constructive manner. Special attention should be paid to the local media in areas where resettled refugees have been or will be placed. It is important to ensure the provision of accurate information concerning the situation and status of resettled refugees.

Many countries have experienced the negative consequences of the proliferation of incorrect, inaccurate or sensational reporting concerning refugees. The dissemination of incorrect or negative material in the media can be difficult to counter and measures should be undertaken to engage with the media with a view to encouraging objective and accurate reporting.



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KEY ISSUES

1 REVIEWING APPLICATIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT

- ➔ The criteria against which the dossiers (applications for resettlement) will be assessed must be drafted. In addition, the issue of preliminary security checks on dossiers should be reviewed with a view to deciding upon whether ineligible applications can be eliminated at an early stage.
- ➔ The authorities need to consider how many cases to accept, whether cases will be accepted from one country of origin only or from a range of countries/regions and what types of cases will be accepted - families or individuals, persons with good integration prospects, vulnerable persons with low integration prospects or a mixture of both.
- ➔ There are three priorities of applications for resettlement: normal, urgent and emergency. The authorities should decide upon which priorities of applications they are willing to accept.

2 PREPARATION OF THE SELECTION MISSIONS

Substantive matters

- ➔ The composition of the selection mission team must be agreed upon.
- ➔ The selection criteria to be used during the selection mission should be prepared and clearly defined: for example, how are 'integration prospects' to be evaluated.

Logistical matters

- ➔ Review communication procedures with local UNHCR offices on logistical matters including: administrative support; the provision of equipment, offices/furniture etc; food and drink for applicants attending interviews; the organisation and scheduling of interviews and the division of costs related to the mission.

3 DOSSIER-BASED SELECTION

- ➔ Dossier-based selection is a paper-based exercise involving international and national actors. As such, delays in the decision-making process and the transmission of information can frequently arise. It should be noted that, once a case is submitted to one resettlement country for consideration, it cannot be considered by any other country. Prolonged delays in the decision-making process can therefore have a substantial impact upon the applicant concerned.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 REVIEWING APPLICATIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT

- ➔ In deciding upon the size of the quota and the locations from which refugees will be accepted, regard should be had for the resources available in the receiving country. For example, it is easier to provide language training and other services to a group whose numbers have achieved a so-called 'critical mass' (i.e. sufficient numbers to facilitate the establishment of language training classes in localities where the refugees will be resettled).
- ➔ Selecting refugees for resettlement is a multidisciplinary task. Relevant expertise should be included in the composition of selection mission delegations (for countries which conduct selection missions) and committees which review written applications for resettlement (for countries which use the dossier-based method of selection).

2. PREPARATION OF THE SELECTION MISSION

- ➔ The purpose of the selection mission should be clearly defined and the respective roles and responsibilities the UNHCR local office and the selection team from the resettlement country should be clearly identified.
- ➔ Country of origin and country of asylum information should be provided to the selection team prior to departure by appropriate governmental authorities.
- ➔ The verification and checking procedures should be established i.e. how to handle the receipt of information during selection interviews which conflicts with information contained in the dossiers (written application for resettlement) compiled by the UNHCR.
- ➔ High quality professional interpretation services are key to the success of selection missions. Interpretation services should be an integral part of the selection mission planning and subject to quality controls agreed upon in advance. If necessary, assistance may be sought from UNHCR for identifying suitable local interpreters, provided that clear agreements are reached in advance of the selection mission.
- ➔ Guidelines should be established in order to ensure that interviews are conducted in a relaxed respectful atmosphere.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

3. DOSSIER-BASED SELECTION

- Clear procedures for selecting dossiers should be established, setting out the role of each member of the dossier review selection committee. The procedures should also set out deadlines for the decision making process which must be adhered to, particularly in the case of 'emergency' and 'urgent' applications for resettlement.

1. Initial processing of applications for resettlement

Most resettlement countries process applications for resettlement in close cooperation with the UNHCR. While it is possible for countries to receive resettled refugees through other channels, for example via private sponsorship, in this Chapter of the report we review the most commonly used procedure, that of cooperation with the UNHCR.

The resettlement process commences with the identification, by the UNHCR, of refugees in countries of asylum who are in need of international protection due to the incapacity or the unwillingness of the local authorities to provide such protection. The resettlement need of these refugees is identified by way of interview and assessment. Resettlement is a durable solution to the problems of refugees and its use must be evaluated within the context of other possible durable solutions, such as voluntary repatriation and local integration. It is recommended that resettlement be implemented after a global analysis of the best solution available for any particular refugee situation.

The UNHCR assesses resettlement need on the basis of the following criteria which relate to the status or situation of applicants for resettlement:

- ➔ Legal and physical protection needs;
- ➔ Survivors of violence and torture;
- ➔ Medical needs;
- ➔ Women-at-risk;
- ➔ Family reunification needs;
- ➔ Children and adolescents;
- ➔ Older refugees;
- ➔ Refugees without local integration prospects.

Every year, the UNHCR gathers information about current resettlement needs from its regional and local offices. On the basis the information received, it compiles its annual “Projected Global Resettlement Needs” document. The UNHCR then presents this projection of resettlement needs to countries with refugee resettlement programmes in the context of the Annual Tripartite Consultation (ATC) Conference held in June.

The “Projected Global Resettlement Needs” document is also the main reference document for the “Indication Conference” held each year. At this Conference, the resettlement countries provide preliminary estimations on the size of their quota allocations and the geographic areas from which they wish to accept resettled refugees.

On the basis of these indications, practical selection work commences in cooperation with the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva and relevant field offices. There are a number of different procedures under which the selection work can be carried out:

- ➔ Selection by interview in the context of selection missions;
- ➔ Selection by diplomatic representatives of the resettlement country present in the country of asylum;
- ➔ Selection on a dossier basis, i.e. by reviewing the written applications for resettlement;
- ➔ Selection in the context of group processing.

All of these procedures are examined in this Chapter of the report below.

Common to all of these procedures is the initial compilation of the relevant paper work by the UNHCR. When a UNHCR field office recognises that a refugee is in need of resettlement, it prepares a resettlement submission which generally includes a completed Resettlement Registration Form (RRF). The completed form sets out an explanation of the need for resettlement and a comprehensive outline of both the refugee claim and the UNHCR determination of the case.

This RRF form (or dossier) is then submitted by the local UNHCR office or its regional hubs to the resettlement country. Where necessary, local UNHCR offices can seek the assistance of the UNHCR headquarters in deciding which cases to submit to which resettlement countries. RRF forms which set out emergency or medical cases are transmitted to resettlement countries by the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva.

There are three priorities of resettlement submissions differentiated according to degrees of urgency:

Normal

- ➔ The refugees concerned have an on-going but not an urgent need of resettlement. The decision on acceptance or rejection can be made in the course of regular selection procedures;

Urgent

- ➔ The refugees concerned require expeditious resettlement and consideration before the “normal” cases, for example because of medical or security needs;

Emergency

- ➔ The immediacy of security and/or medical threats faced by the refugees necessitates their removal from threatening conditions within a very short time, that is, not more than 5 days.

Resettlement countries which use the dossier-based method of selecting resettled refugees simply select the cases they will accept from the collection of dossiers forwarded to them by the UNHCR (see paragraph 5 below). Other resettlement countries conduct selection missions in order to finalise their selection of resettlement cases. This procedure is described in paragraphs 2 to 4 below.

2. Preparation for selection missions

Many resettlement countries conduct selection missions. In the context of such missions, delegations from the resettlement country travel to the country of asylum and interview refugees who have applied for resettlement. In the case of some larger resettlement countries, selection interviews are conducted by Immigration Officers attached to the respective Embassy in the country of asylum.

The aim of the selection missions is to assist the resettlement country to select persons for resettlement. A number of activities should be undertaken in order to prepare adequately for a selection mission. These activities are described below.

PROJECT OUTCOME

FACT-FINDING MISSIONS TO CAIRO AND ANKARA, OCTOBER 2004

In October 2004, representatives of the MORE Project observed two selection missions undertaken by the Finnish authorities in Cairo and in Ankara respectively. The purpose of the Finnish selection missions was to select refugees for resettlement to Finland. The fact-finding /observation teams accompanied the selection mission teams for four working days during their selection mission. The observation activities included sitting in on selection interviews and learning about the situation of the refugees in the country of asylum.

The aim of the fact-finding missions was to assist in the identification of best practice and the development of practical suggestions for the conduct of future selection mission interviews.

The outcomes of the fact-finding missions contributed greatly to the practical suggestions concerning selection interviews set out in this section of the report and the key issues and recommendations set out at the beginning of the chapter.

2.1 Dossier-based pre-selection

Resettlement countries should request the UNHCR to forward dossiers (containing applications for resettlement from refugees) at least a month in advance of the departure of the selection mission. The number of dossiers forwarded should exceed the quota set by the resettlement country. This time period and excess number of dossiers enables the resettlement country to review the dossiers and make a pre-selection. It is advisable that the number of dossiers pre-selected also exceeds by 30% any quota so that further selection/deselection can take place during the selection mission.

Information concerning the situation in the country of origin and country of asylum of the refugees concerned should be provided in the context of pre-selection meetings and discussions. Country of origin and country of asylum information can be provided by UNHCR field offices and other agencies, including NGOs working in the refugee field. In Finland, the Directorate of Immigration has a specialist unit which gathers background information concerning countries of origin and countries of asylum. Relevant information can also be found from a variety of sources on the Internet (see Appendix A).

Selection criteria should be drawn up to guide both the pre-selection phase and the selection in the context of the selection mission. Each resettlement country draws up its own selection criteria, usually with regard to its own reception capabilities and resources, for example, its ability to meet certain health or literacy needs. In drawing up and applying such criteria, resettlement countries should aim to select a balanced group of people. In particular, the group should include persons with both low and high levels of literacy and language skills in the hope that persons with more advanced skills and capabilities might act as support and resource persons for other members of the group. However, notwithstanding this desire for balance, it should be noted that the primary criterion for the selection of refugees always remains the strength of the refugee background in terms of protection and resettlement needs.

At the close of the pre-selection phase, the resettlement country draws up a final list of the persons it wishes to interview. This list is forwarded to the local UNHCR office in the relevant country of asylum.

2.2 Assembling the selection mission team

Selection mission teams are often composed of representatives from a number of different government departments and/or outside agencies. It is important that the respective roles and responsibilities of all members of the selection team are clearly defined and well thought through.

2.3 Preparing for selection interviews

Prior to travelling, the format, content and ambit of the selection interviews should be discussed and protocols governing the conduct of such interviews should be agreed upon.

(A) GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consistency between interviews

There is a requirement for high levels of consistency between interviews in order to ensure that all families and individuals are effectively and fairly assessed. This is particularly important in cross-departmental teams and where multiple teams are operating within a particular selection mission.

Structure

A highly structured arrangement will also maximise the learning from each mission in that the model being used can be tailored and adjusted in accordance with experience gained both nationally and internationally. This is not to say that every country will use the same model but that some commonality of overall structure will accelerate the ability to learn from each other.

Note-taking

Defined protocols will also help in note-taking. Interview time is precious both for the teams and the families and high and consistent standards of note-taking are critical.

Completeness

Tied in with most of the above points is the issue of completeness. Structure would ensure that all necessary questions are asked and that answers are received.

Quality of questions

Pre-formatted questions have an important role in selection interviewing. As in all interviews, there are good, indifferent and poor questions asked. Pre-formatting allows the number of good questions to be greater while not taking away from the need for proactive interview styles based on the dynamics of any particular family. This is a particularly important issue when the interpretation is in a language that is not the first language of the team. Language issues in this context can be compounded at three levels: the initial question may not be accurate; the interpretation may not be accurate; and finally the response given may reflect a language problem rather than a content problem.

(B) INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

It is recommended that the following protocols aimed at governing the conduct of interviews be discussed and agreed upon.

Questions which are not to be asked should be identified. Use of names / salutations in respect of the interviewers and interviewees should be decided upon.

Are printed fliers to be prepared to economise on interview time? (e.g. arrangements for country briefings, procedures for notification, advice on change of address etc.).

Consistency on 'tests' – countries may wish to use the interview to determine the applicant's ability to read by asking him/her to read from a prepared text. It is important that the chair of the team explains clearly to the applicant the purpose of the test – e.g. if it is a literacy test or if it is a test of the applicant's ability to read a particular language. It is recommended that the text used for these purposes be made available in large print. If using such tests, it is important that interview teams apply them consistently at each interview and, indeed, it is equally important that they are applied by other interview teams on the same or other selection missions.

What is the sequencing of activities, for example, will information sessions concerning the resettlement country be held before or after interviews?

What child care strategies are to be adopted during the interviews? Who will take initiative if the presence of children becomes an issue? (It is worthwhile considering having a supply of sweets or toys for children). The best interests of the child must remain the guiding principle in all dealings with children.

Pre-meeting briefing with interpreters - are there specific rules concerning the role of interpreters which must be followed? What are the expectations of both teams and interpreters? The availability of interpreters must be determined prior to travelling on a selection mission. UNHCR may be in a position to provide trained interpreters on site. Otherwise, the interviewing country may need to include trained interpreters on their selection team or alternatively they might use their local embassy to recruit independent interpreters.

What are the detailed logistics for the interview itself? (e.g. size of interview room, seating, air circulation, drinks, sequence of questions and requesting/copying documents, etc.).

What time should be set aside between interviews to debrief on the last and to prepare for the next?

Greetings

Greetings should be consistent and in accordance with pre-meeting arrangements. They should be designed to put everyone at ease. Regard should be had for the culture of the interviewees, for example in some cultures men do not shake hands with women. It is recommended that the interview team follow the practice and culture of the persons being interviewed.

Settling procedures

The entire interview process should be explained as much as possible before the actual interview starts. These explanations should include the who, what and why of the interview.

Confidentiality should be explained from the start - particularly in relation to any observers.

The chair of the team will also have to make a judgment call in relation to any other "settling" aspect before the interview starts - particular families or persons may be unusually nervous.

2.4 Liaison and logistical matters

The local UNHCR office should be provided with all relevant administrative and logistical information concerning the selection mission including; the list of persons to be interviewed by the selection mission team, the names of the members of the selection team, travel itineraries, number of interviewing teams, number of interview rooms needed, and interpretation services needs if any. All visas, vaccinations and other documentation required for the members of the selection team should be procured.

The local Embassy or Consulate (should there be one) should be informed of the mission. An Embassy or Consulate may have an important role at a later stage in granting residence permits and/or preparing temporary travel documents if needed.

Finally, decisions should be taken as regards what information concerning the mission should be treated as public and what information should be restricted in nature. In addition, decisions should be taken as regards the handling and transportation of sensitive documentation for security and confidentiality reasons.

3 Selection missions and selection interviews

3.1 Selection missions

The purpose of the selection interviews is to examine factors affecting the refugees' need for international protection and resettlement, to estimate the refugees' abilities to integrate into a new country, and to get more detailed information on a number of issues including literacy, language skills, education, and work experience of the particular person. This applies to all the family members who are included in the dossier of the principal applicant for resettlement.

The work of the selection mission usually starts with a general presentation by the UNHCR local office about the refugee situation in the country of origin and country of asylum and general information concerning the UNHCR resettlement procedures. If possible, it is also helpful to arrange a meeting with the Embassy of the resettlement country at some point during the mission. Embassy officials can provide the selection mission team with additional current information about the country of first asylum.

During the course of the selection mission, information sessions concerning the resettlement country should be provided to all candidates for resettlement. The session should include general information about the country and specific information concerning the reception of refugees. Services which will be available to the refugees and guidance on what will be expected of resettled refugees on arrival should be provided.

Information sessions can be held before or after the selection interview and groups of resettled refugees can attend a session together. The sessions are a good way to dispel misunderstandings or rumours concerning the country of resettlement. They are also a good forum in which to clarify information received during selection interviews, should the session take place post-interview. In addition, time can be saved during selection missions by dealing with queries concerning the resettlement country in the context of the information session. During information sessions, refugees should be encouraged to ask questions.

As regards the content of such sessions, the following issues should be covered:

- ➔ basic information about the country, including its geographical position, population, capital, languages, religion, form of government, employment structure and current employment situation, climate, flora and fauna;
- ➔ basic rights and entitlements of resettled refugees in the resettlement country;
- ➔ social welfare services and other public services including health, employment, education and housing;
- ➔ everyday lifestyle of citizens and resettled refugees, in particular, information should be provided about the life of refugees already resettled into the country;
- ➔ reception measures for newly arrived refugees;
- ➔ expectations of the receiving resettlement country as regards self-sufficiency, education etc.

3.2 Selection interviews

The principal component of any selection mission is the selection interview. In paragraph 2 above, the measures that should be undertaken in order to prepare for selection missions, and interviews in particular, were examined. Now we take a closer look at the substantive content of selection interviews.

(A) OVERVIEW OF ISSUES TO BE COVERED IN THE INTERVIEW

Every interview is unique. However, it is useful for all interview teams to have a common structural plan on which the interviews are based. This plan should include the following issues:

- ➔ introduction, welcoming the interviewee;
- ➔ explanation of the nature and purpose of the interview;
- ➔ discussion on interviewees' present situation as regards work, housing, income, children's educational opportunities, hobbies, etc.;
- ➔ clarification of interviewees personal data;
- ➔ supplementary questions regarding the person's refugee status claim;
- ➔ educational background (including reasons for interrupting/continuing training, choice of career, hopes for further training and employment, children's school background, literacy skills);
- ➔ work experience (specifying prior experience, future employment hopes and expectations);
- ➔ motivation and readiness to integrate (readiness and ability to study and learn the language, attitudes towards integration, situation of the whole family in relation to moving to a new country, expectations about moving to a new country);

- ➔ health;
- ➔ the interviewee should have an opportunity to raise any additional points not yet discussed and to ask questions;
- ➔ information about the selection process and maintaining contact with the UNHCR should be provided;
- ➔ closure of the interview.

(B) CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEWS

General comments

For each sector (i.e specific subject matter area, for example security), it would be useful to prepare (a) a written statement of what a team member is seeking to establish for his/her sector and (b) a series of sample open questions designed specifically to achieve that objective. This will ensure both consistency and comprehensiveness and is particularly important in the “integration prospects” area.

The sequence in which these sectors are explored should be established by the Chair before the interview starts. Each sector should be prefaced by an introduction from the Chair who explains again the purpose of the questions. All interview team members should be given the opportunity to re-engage in the interview before the sectoral part of the interview is completed.

Care should also be taken to prepare questions against a background of realising that families will understandably always wish to answer questions in the way they feel the team wants them answered, particularly as regards security matters.

Personal data

The interview presents an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the personal details and family names of the applicant and dependants. Spending a little time confirming personal details with the interviewee is a worthwhile investment in the long term.

Interviews usually start with questions concerning the names and dates of birth of the refugees. The correct ways of spelling the names of all the family members should be checked (keeping in mind the differences in transliteration) as well as the precise dates of birth (from birth certificates, passports etc. if available). In this connection, interview teams should be prepared for various interpretations of ages. Depending on the interviewee’s nationality, the calendar they use may be Jewish, Islamic, Hindu or Gregorian. In addition, some cultures count the actual date of birth as the first birthday.

It is important to use the interview to determine to the greatest extent possible the potential for future family reunification applications. It is important to emphasise the regulations concerning family reunification so as to avoid unrealistic hopes of getting all the mentioned relatives to the new country. Interview teams should be prepared for meeting applicants from cultures with multiple

wives and families. In such situations, the applicant should be fully informed as to what family members would be eligible for family reunification.

The presence of relatives, friends and other connections in the resettlement country should be checked out. If a person with such connections is accepted for resettlement they should be resettled to a locality where their contacts already reside to make the integration process easier.

Most dossiers (applications for resettlement) contain photographs. Some resettlement countries also take fingerprints from the interviewees for the purposes of confirming identity upon arrival. The interviewees should be informed that a security check and or medical screening will be carried out.

Refugee background (i.e. substance of claim for refugee status)

The details concerning the interviewees' refugee status determination is set out in the dossiers prepared by the UNHCR. It is unnecessary in the interview to go over in full the grounds upon which a positive refugee determination was made, however, supplementary questions can be asked. The aim of such supplementary questions is to satisfy the interview team as to the accuracy of the refugee claim and determination set out in the dossier. If experiences of torture are to be discussed, children should be excused from the room. Where relevant, interviewees should be asked whether torture-related symptoms (headache, nightmares, etc.) still continue and interviewees should be informed about the possibilities of medical treatment in the resettlement country. These questions should be asked with due sensitivity and it is important to avoid any unnecessary upset to the interviewee.

Reviewing extensively an interviewee's refugee status claim is necessary only where the dossier is unclear or ambiguous.

It is important to also ask questions about the refugee background of the spouse of the principal applicant for resettlement. He/she might have a stronger refugee claim than the principal applicant.

Integration prospects

Readiness for integration can be tested by asking what the interviewee expects of life in the country of resettlement: whether they hope to participate in local community life; whether they want to study in order to attain vocational/professional skills; whether both spouses take responsibility for the children and for the subsistence of the family, etc.

Questions about the education of all family members are asked in order to assess education levels. Some interviewees may have attended school for several years but only for two days a week and/or maybe only a limited number of subjects were studied. Literacy levels and language skills can be checked by asking the interviewee to read out a short text or to write something according to dictation. As far as children are concerned, it is important to find out about their grade-levels and literacy skills. Children should be encouraged to respond to questions and make comments themselves.

In addition to questions regarding work experience in the country of origin, it is important to ask how the applicant has been able to support their family in the first country of asylum. This may indicate a lot about the person's attitude and their abilities to earn a living in the resettlement country.

When discussing health issues, the interviewee should be told that any illnesses indicated will not have any impact on the selection process, provided that is the case. The applicants and family members should be encouraged to speak about any health problems they might have. It should be made clear that these questions are asked in order to prepare for their medical needs if they are accepted for resettlement. Subject to relevant national rules regarding medical confidentiality and in accordance with medical ethics, any medical assessments made available to the resettlement team should be copied to the relevant health service providers in the country (and locality) of resettlement.

The interview also presents an opportunity to discuss, in general terms, the potential effects of resettlement on the life of the refugee. Opinions and attitudes can also be mapped by asking questions about religion, equality, different ethnic groups, education of children, etc.

Closure protocols

Given the sensitivity and stress of the engagement between team and family, appropriate closure is very important.

At the end of the interview, there should be an opportunity for the refugee to ask questions about the resettlement country, the selection process and the resettlement procedures in general, or any other general queries they may have.

Applicants should also be invited to add further information to what has already been said. (i.e. "Is there anything you would like to say which we haven't talked about and which you feel would be useful in considering your application?").

Advice should be given to the applicants for resettlement regarding what will happen during the period up to notification of decision, for example, that they should notify the UNHCR of any change of address. They should also be advised on how long it will take to communicate the decision on their application for resettlement.

As regards practical matters, applicants should be reminded to take all relevant documents away from the interview with them, for example birth and marriage certificates. If any documents are retained by the interview team, the applicants should be informed of details regarding the return of documents.

Finally, the interview team should repeat reassurances about the confidentiality of matters discussed at the interview and the team should close the interview with a goodbye which is consistent for all interviews.

(C) GENERAL COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Every interview is different depending on the personalities of both the

interviewers and the interviewees, as in any other situation where people with different backgrounds meet. It is important to create real dialogue between the parties rather than an atmosphere of interrogation.

For some interviewees, it may be essential to have the opportunity, for example, to show some pictures of their late family members or of their life back home before they had to leave all that behind. It may take some precious time from the actual work, but people should be accommodated in this respect.

A relaxed and confidential atmosphere makes the interview quicker and easier. This atmosphere can be generated by, for example, asking about the children. It is also useful to have drawing equipment and sweets for young children.

It is useful to pay attention to the following things: interviewees must be addressed in a polite way: for instance Mrs. + family name/Mr. + family name (children simply by their first names).

It is crucial that after the interview all the family members feel that their participation was important and their experiences were valued. During the interviews, attention should be paid not only to the actual answers given but also to the behaviour and conduct of the family members and their relationships. Many little details illustrate the situation in the family. In what order do the family members take their seats, do the parents/older siblings take the smaller children to sit on their lap, how do others react to crying or otherwise restless babies, do women/children answer the questions themselves, or does the husband have a tendency to talk on behalf of everybody? Does somebody seem to be sad, quiet, and withdrawn? Maybe he/she does not want to be resettled with others. Maybe there is a fiancée/fiancé that he/she does not want to leave behind.

It is important that interviewers are familiar with inter-cultural communication issues and to be aware of the risks of misinterpretation caused for instance by non-verbal messages. A typical example is a situation in which the interviewer feels that the interviewee smiles at an inappropriate moment or does not want to look into the eyes of the interviewer when telling a story. For this reason, the interviewer may draw the wrong conclusions about the credibility of the story as a whole.

The role of the interpreter is very important at the interviews. The delegation may want to use their own interpreters or interviewers who themselves know the languages needed. The other option is that the UNHCR, when possible and agreed upon in advance of the selection mission, provides the group with the interpreters, either its own or freelancers that they know to be reliable and professional. For the protection of the interviewees, it is crucial that the communication between the people interviewed, the interviewer, and the interpreter functions well. Before starting the work the interpreters should be briefed about their role and the work of the delegation.

REFUGEE STORY

HASSAN'S STORY

Early one morning, Hassan's family came to the office of the UNHCR. They had all slept badly. They were excited about the interview, and they had travelled a long way for the interview. The father was mainly worried about whether their family might be too large. Perhaps the resettling country would not be willing to receive such a big family. At some point, they had also considered whether they should claim that their nephew Rashad was a son of their own. However, they decided to stick to the truth. When the interview started, the atmosphere was excited. First, the interviewers asked general questions, talked with the children, and gave pens and paper to the youngest ones. The youngest child started immediately and enthusiastically to draw a car and kept explaining in the Kurdish language what he was drawing. His happy chatting decreased the tension. At some point, the child had to be asked to be a bit quieter, so that the interviewers could hear the answers.

The interview that the family had been expecting for months was surprisingly soon over. When the family members left the discussion room, they all had a somewhat empty feeling. They started their trip back to their temporary place of residence. During the whole journey, they thought about the questions and their own answers – some of them silently, others talking to the other family members. Did I remember to say everything essential? Did the interviewers really understand what I told them? Was there still something we should have mentioned? The family wondered about all these questions for a long time when waiting for the information on whether they would be accepted for resettlement.

4. Decision-making and feedback for the UNHCR

We would recommend that interviewing teams make preliminary decisions on the selections at the end of each day. Especially during a long selection mission, it is good to arrange meetings between the different interview teams at regular intervals in order to go through the accepted, unclear, and rejected cases. When all the interviews are completed, all the pending cases are looked through once more. Then it is time to draw up the 'under consideration list' or the list of final decisions.

The experiences of the refugees are often disturbing. Making selections is not easy. Therefore it is important for the members of the delegation to support each other and to be able to discuss problems together. This is particularly crucial for the members who are involved in a selection mission for the first time.

A final meeting is held with the UNHCR in order to review the experiences of the interviewing teams, to discuss the possible principal or practical problems

connected with the work, and to make suggestions for solving these problems. Depending on the practice of the country in question, the UNHCR receives either a final or an under-consideration list of refugees accepted.

5. Selection on a dossier basis

Some resettlement countries use the so called “dossier-based” method of selecting refugees for resettlement and do not conduct selection missions. Ireland is one such country. Information concerning Irish practice is set out in Chapter II above, however, it is useful to recall the basic elements of the dossier-based method as employed in Ireland.

Under this method, Ireland, together with other resettlement countries, indicates the countries from which it will accept resettled refugees at an “Indication Conference” hosted by the UNHCR in Geneva in June of each year. Ireland’s indication is based, among other things, on the annual “Projected Global Resettlement Needs” document produced by the UNHCR. The UNHCR then forwards around 15 to 20 dossiers (files containing applications for resettlement from refugees compiled by the UNHCR) to the Irish authorities each year. From these dossiers, the authorities select 10 resettlement cases per annum. A ‘case’ may comprise a single individual or a family.

Decisions as regards which dossiers to select are taken by the Department of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Garda (police), National Immigration Bureau (as regards security matters) and the Department of Health (where the health status of any of the applicants is of relevance).

The procedure for the selection of dossiers is laid down in an exchange of letters between the three Government Departments listed above and the UNHCR. The procedure provides that each Department should examine the dossier and submit their decision to the Department of Foreign Affairs within a maximum of four weeks. In respect of cases described as ‘urgent’ by the UNHCR, the Departments should submit their decision to the Department of Foreign Affairs within two weeks.

In deciding which dossiers or cases to select, the Irish authorities have regard to a number of issues including: the compelling or compassionate aspects of the application for resettlement; the capacity of the receiving authorities in Ireland (for example, can the health needs of the applicant be met) and security issues.

Once the decision has been made, the Department of Foreign Affairs advises the UNHCR of Ireland’s decision and arrangements for the transfer of the refugees to Ireland are put in place.

6. Emergency and urgent cases

Emergency cases have to be dealt with exceptionally quickly because of issues related to the security or medical needs of the particular refugee. These cases are handled on a dossier-basis and the processing of an emergency case should take only five days maximum. Sometimes cases are processed within a few hours. It is important for resettlement countries to establish clear operating procedures for the handling of emergency cases in order to avoid any delays or misunderstandings among the various offices concerned. Urgent and emergency cases should be handled with priority over the normal cases.

7. Medical cases

When refugees are considered on medical grounds it is crucial to consult the appropriate medical experts in the resettlement country in order to make sure that appropriate treatment is available upon arrival and that the medical case and their family members will receive the specialised attention they need.

8. Group processing and other new initiatives

The resettlement of refugee groups was launched by the UNHCR in 2003 as a complement to individual case processing with the aim of increasing the number of refugees to whom resettlement could be offered as a durable solution to their plight.

Although group resettlement has so far been utilised mainly by the major resettlement countries (USA, Canada and Australia), there may be instances in which countries with smaller programmes, such as Finland and Ireland, could participate in joint initiatives to provide solutions through group resettlement to large populations who live in protracted refugee situations. Group resettlement may be particularly effective when resettlement is used in a strategic manner in order to achieve, through its implementation, a more positive protection environment in the country of asylum.

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IV

RECEPTION

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KEY ISSUES

- ➔ Decisions must be taken by the competent authorities as to the kind of pre-arrival information that will be delivered to refugees prior to departure, i.e., will cultural orientation sessions be organised in the country of asylum or will booklets in the language of the refugees be given to the refugees prior to departure. In respect of illiterate groups, consideration should be given to other forms of information dissemination; video, picture illustrated guides and presentations in cultural orientation sessions.
- ➔ Where cultural orientation sessions are to be employed, who will deliver the sessions; the receiving country, the IOM or another contracted party?
- ➔ Criteria for deciding upon where to place resettled refugees within the receiving country should be established. Such criteria should include:
 - access to adequate social, health, and educational services;
 - employment opportunities;
 - availability of support from the person's own ethnic group;
 - tolerant attitudes in the locality of placement;
 - the need to achieve a "critical mass" of resettled refugees in an area in order to facilitate reception and integration;
 - avoiding the ghettoisation of groups.
- ➔ Consideration should be given as to how large families will be housed, for example, the possibility of commune-based housing arrangements for large families might be examined.
- ➔ Preparatory arrangements for medical or special needs cases and measures for the preparation of the host community/service providers will need to be undertaken.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➔ The reception of resettled refugees must be planned and co-ordinated in advance of their arrival. Advance planning, communication and co-ordination are key to achieving the rolling out of adequate pre-arrival measures. Standard operating procedures on the different phases of reception may be prepared and implemented by the competent authorities.
- ➔ Information received prior to the arrival of refugees (either via the dossier or information gleaned by a selection mission) should be carefully reviewed in order to ensure that adequate reception measures are in place, in particular for refugees with specific medical or other needs.
- ➔ Accurate information in a language/media that they understand should be disseminated to resettled refugees prior to departure and to receiving communities and service providers prior to the arrival of resettled refugees. In particular, with the aid of cultural orientation sessions, refugees should be given an idea of the new homecountry that is as realistic as possible. This applies especially to the employment situation, the amount of financial support available in various forms of social welfare support, and the standards of health care. Persons with a refugee background should be included in cultural orientation teams.
- ➔ Where multiple agencies are involved in the delivery of information to refugees, there should be close cooperation and coordination in order to prevent any divergence in the information provided or messages transmitted.
- ➔ Capacity building, on a rights-based approach, should take place for service providers, NGOs and other actors to ensure that key local actors are fully aware of, and prepared to provide, services appropriate to the needs of new arrivals. Training delivered should adopt a 'training of trainers' approach.
- ➔ Preparation of the host community including the provision of information on the background of the group is essential. Care must be taken to ensure that the privacy of the new arrivals is respected at all times.
- ➔ Resettled refugees should be clearly informed of both their rights and entitlements and their duties to the receiving State (for example the obligation to be available for and seeking employment once initial language training is complete and compliance with national laws).
- ➔ The authorities should work to achieve "two-way" pre-arrival information sessions for resettled refugees. For example, at such sessions, information concerning the needs of resettled refugees should be gathered and information concerning the services refugees can expect to receive on arrival should be imparted.
- ➔ At every stage of the reception process, it is of primary importance to use interpreters with high-level professional skills. Standard operating procedures and policy on minimum standards should be developed for the use of interpreters.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➔ Initial orientation activities should commence with matters that are familiar to the refugees or matters it is important for them to know, for example, the purchase of clothing, education system, housing, currency, etc.
- ➔ Arrangements should be put in place at the airport for the smooth transition from the aircraft through arrivals procedures. Where appropriate, refugees should be provided with refreshments at the airport on arrival (they may have been travelling for a considerable period).
- ➔ During the initial reception activities, sufficient time should be allocated for health assessments, general counselling and instruction on social and health issues.
- ➔ It is important to ensure accuracy of information and documentation at all times. Refugees and administrators should be made aware of the importance of checking that information provided is correct as this will be deemed to be the correct information used by authorities for the future and may present serious problems if discrepancies occur. This will involve effective communication with the UNHCR, IOM and (possibly) ICRC all of whom prepare initial documentation for the refugees.
- ➔ It is important that adequate identity documentation be issued to the refugees on arrival. The documentation must be in a format that will be acceptable to all government agencies and private bodies such as banks, transport authorities, utility companies, etc.
- ➔ Each refugee's skills and knowledge should be mapped and an individualised integration plan drawn up for them. This process can greatly assist longer-term efforts to access the labour market.
- ➔ Where possible, resettled refugees should be consulted on where they will be placed within the country of resettlement in order to guard against the negative impacts of secondary migration.
- ➔ As regards family reunification, clear rules, guidelines and deadlines for the processing of applications for should be drawn up. A rights-based approach to family reunification should be developed in line with relevant legal standards and principles and UNHCR guidelines. Provision should also be made for the exercise of discretion on humanitarian grounds as regards applications for resettlement.

Introduction

In Section 1 of this Chapter concerning pre-arrival measures, the cultural orientation training and information given to resettled refugees in the country of asylum, travel arrangements, and reception arrangements at the arrival airport are reviewed. In Section 2 of this Chapter, the measures put in place to provide for the arrival of resettled refugees are examined. Arrival measures are closely linked with pre-arrival measures, particularly in terms of the information provided to resettled refugees prior to their arrival in the country of resettlement. Ideally new arrivals should be familiar with the location and type of accommodation they will be placed in. They should also be aware of the basic principles of the social welfare and health system in the receiving country, their rights and entitlements, the prevailing cultural norms and the employment and training opportunities which will be available to them. The effective dissemination of accurate information in the pre-arrival phase facilitates the rolling out of arrival measures on arrival. It is easier for both the resettled refugees and the authorities to manage arrival measures in the absence of false expectations and inaccurate information. The main task of the pre-arrival measures described in Section 1, therefore, is to place both resettled refugees and the actors involved in preparing for their arrival in the best possible position upon arrival in the country of resettlement.

1. Pre-arrival measures

1.1 Pre-departure cultural orientation

Refugees resettled in countries that embody different cultures, traditions and practices than their own can obviously encounter problems in adjusting to their new environment. This is normal for anyone lacking the necessary information and orientation required for such a move. Refugees accepted for resettlement in third countries often come straight out of refugee camps and sometimes have little, if any, knowledge of the societal and economic practices of western countries. Most will likely have unrealistic and perhaps inaccurate expectations of life in their new country. These expectations will not only cause added distress to the newcomers upon their arrival; they will also cause stress to the social services of the host community as it works to help the newcomers adjust and may cause tensions between the newcomers and the receiving communities. The provision of pre-departure cultural orientation reduces these stress factors by presenting a realistic picture of what awaits the newcomers, by providing them with coping mechanisms to deal with the unfamiliar, and by helping shape attitudes towards life in their new community. Pre-departure orientation sessions help newcomers to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

CULTURAL ORIENTATION TRAINING

Many resettlement countries offer cultural orientation training as an integral part of the pre-departure process for refugees. Some countries, such as the United States or Canada, have much prior experience of arranging cultural orientation, while other countries, such as Finland and Norway have only begun providing cultural orientation training recently.

There are a number of ways to conduct cultural orientation training sessions. For example, some countries sub-contract the provision of training to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), while other countries send their own delegations to the country of asylum or use locally based diplomatic staff.

Some countries focus on pre-departure cultural orientation, while others focus on on-arrival cultural orientation. Where and how training is carried out and what kind of cultural orientation curricula is used varies according to the destination country, who is carrying out the training, the size of the quota, related costs and various other factors.

The IOM, for example, provides cultural orientation services for various countries including Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway, and the USA, currently targeting several tens of thousands of participants every year spread over thirty countries of origin or transit. Despite variations in training approaches and curriculum content, the IOM considers that there are broad themes which are shared and applicable throughout the cultural orientation process. These themes may be summarised into cultural orientation objectives, as follows:

- a) To provide participants with factual information about the country of destination;
- b) To assist them in developing skills needed to succeed in their new environment, e.g. how to get a job, how to access health care facilities; and
- c) To explore attitudes necessary for successful integration, e.g. flexibility, open-mindedness, initiative and self-reliance. Cultural orientation empowers participants to adapt more rapidly and successfully to the day-to-day demands of any new environment.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND – CULTURAL ORIENTATION TRAINING

The IOM Regional Office for the Baltic and Nordic States has organised cultural orientation training for Finland-bound refugees since 2001 in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, municipalities in Finland, and local IOM offices in countries where the refugees are preparing for departure. The IOM Helsinki cultural orientation team consists of Finnish citizens with refugee backgrounds. The participation of refugees on the team helps to build trust at training sessions and to develop good relationships between the trainer and the course participants. Since 2001, more than 1,500 Finland-bound refugees were provided with information about their resettlement and Finnish society. The orientation sessions aimed to dispel participants' possible misconceptions and unfounded expectations about life in Finland.

The outcomes of the cultural orientation sessions included the following:

- ➔ The participants developed a better sense of the norms and values of their receiving municipalities, as well as the expectations of the receiving community with regard to the incoming refugees;
- ➔ The participants gained a good level of confidence regarding their imminent move to Finland;
- ➔ The participants were well informed about Finland upon their arrival and had more realistic expectations about their new life;
- ➔ The authorities and the municipalities in Finland welcomed refugees who had received information about Finland prior to their arrival;
- ➔ The authorities and municipalities were aware of the level of knowledge and areas of interest/need of the arriving refugees;
- ➔ The authorities and municipalities have developed a base curriculum for future cultural orientation programmes;
- ➔ The authorities have continued to develop a smooth working relationship with the IOM with regard to cultural orientation programmes.

It is important to note that, despite the delivery of comprehensive cultural orientation programmes, some refugees will still arrive in the resettlement coun-

try with unrealistic expectations of life in their resettlement home. Service providers and other resettlement actors should be prepared for this possibility and be in a position to delicately respond to any misinformation, misunderstandings and/or unrealistic expectations.

REFUGEE STORY

MR KUT JAMES MATHIANG DENG

In Cairo, Mr Kut participated in a cultural orientation course together with about 20 other Sudanese people. When he came into the room, he wondered whether there might be anyone there he knew. He felt relieved when he saw a couple of familiar people whom he had met during his stay in Cairo. Soon the group fell silent and started watching a video about Finland. The pictures of the snowy landscape and the thinly populated country made them both laugh and wonder. Somewhat embarrassed, Mr Kut listened to the information on his future place of resettlement. However, a welcoming letter – written in Arabic – from his future municipality of residence made him feel better. To his relief, he heard that a couple of people he knew would be going to live in the same municipality. He was also glad to learn that opportunities for language courses and vocational studies would be available. Somewhat troubled, the men of the group listened to a presentation on the position of women in Finland. During the three days of training, many things were explained, although a great number of questions still remained unanswered.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION BOOKLETS CONCERNING THE RESETTLEMENT COUNTRY

Many resettlement countries which use the dossier-based method of selecting refugees described in Chapter III of this Guide do not travel to the country of asylum and have less opportunity to organise pre-departure cultural orientation sessions (although this task can be contracted out to organisations such as the IOM). Where cultural orientation sessions are not delivered, it is important that information booklets concerning the resettlement country are made available to the refugees in their own language prior to their departure. This method was used in Ireland for the 2004 resettlement quota. One of the outcomes of the MORE Project in Ireland was the production of an information guide for resettled refugees (see section 2.2 below for further information). It is envisaged that, in respect of future arrivals, the basic information set out in this Guide will be translated and transmitted to refugees prior to their arrival in Ireland. Coordination with the UNHCR is crucial in this respect and the resettlement country should ensure that information booklets, in their own language, are passed on to resettled refugees well in advance of departure.

1.2. Travel arrangements and travel documents

Practice as regards travel documents and travel arrangements can differ in respect of different resettlement countries and resettlement operations. In general terms, travel arrangements are usually made by the IOM in cooperation with the UNHCR on behalf of the receiving resettlement country. Refugees with their own valid travel documents use them for travel, however, it is often the case that refugees do not have travel documents and arrangements must be made to acquire valid documents for them. For example, a temporary (one journey) travel document or *laisser-passer* can be issued by the receiving country or its Embassy or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) can issue an ICRC travel document. It should be noted that some countries of asylum do not accept ICRC travel documents and, in those instances, travel documents from the receiving country may be required.

Once the travel documents have been acquired, they are submitted to the receiving country (or its nearest Embassy) for the issuance of an entry visa or residence permit if required. The travel documents are then returned to the refugees and any required exit visas must then be sought from the country of asylum. The IOM then makes the travel arrangements and acquires any transit visas which may be required. The IOM coordinates the travel and advises the receiving country of the refugees' travel arrangements.

The process of acquiring entry visas can be time consuming, particularly where the receiving country does not have a diplomatic representation in the country of asylum concerned. Difficulties can arise in respect of exit visas where the authorities in the country of asylum require that flight tickets be issued in advance of the issuance of exit visas. In addition, problems can arise if the spelling of names on the flight ticket and travel document differs in any way. Such problems can result in the cancellation of travel and special care should therefore be paid to the correct and consistent use and translation of names entered on all travel documents and tickets.

FINNISH PROCEDURE

Since in Finland the refugees are resettled directly to the municipalities and their own rented accommodation, the resettling municipalities inform the Ministry of Labour of the date by which the accommodation will be ready and the earliest time they will be able to receive their group of refugees.

The Ministry of Labour informs the IOM and the UNHCR of the earliest dates of reception and the nearest destination airport for every group of refugees. This information is also copied to the Finnish Red Cross.

In practice, since the refugees travel on regular flights there are no guarantees that there will be enough seats on the same flight for all of those refugees heading to the same resettling municipality. This often means that groups have to be divided into smaller groups with one or two families travelling on a particular flight on different days.

Also the formalities with travel documents and exit permits can cause delays and even flight cancellations. That is why a municipality cannot “order” its group of refugees to arrive on a definite day or even week. Those irregularities could of course be avoided by arranging charter flights for bigger groups, however such arrangements are dependent on financial factors.

The IOM makes the flight bookings and forwards the advance booking notices to the Ministry of Labour and the Finnish Red Cross (FRC). The latter then informs the resettling municipalities about the arriving flights and confirms reception arrangements at the airports. IOM staff make sure that the groups board the plane when they are leaving the country of asylum and assist them at transit airports. In Finland, the FRC takes care of the practicalities at Helsinki Airport. If there is an internal connecting flight, FRC staff and volunteers assist the newcomers through formalities at the main airport and escort them to the connecting flight or to train/bus connections. Representatives of the resettling municipality wait for the refugees at the destination terminals.

The registration of refugees takes place upon arrival at Helsinki Airport. Finger prints and photos are taken at this point. Only when there is time pressure due to onward connecting flights or when border guards are otherwise engaged are these formalities taken care of at another destination airport within Finland.

IRISH PROCEDURE

Practical arrangements for the refugees’ travel to Ireland are undertaken by the IOM and the local UNHCR office in the country of asylum, in cooperation with the Irish authorities. The International Committee of the Red Cross is also involved in this process when ICRC travel documentation is required.

When the dossier-based selection process has come to an end, the Department of Foreign Affairs notifies the Reception and Integration Agency of the approved cases and sends copies of the dossiers (refugee resettlement forms) to the RIA. The RIA checks that the necessary accommodation and staff resources are available for the reception of the new arrivals and confirms to the Department of Foreign Affairs that they are in position to receive the new arrivals. The Department of Foreign Affairs then liaises with the UNHCR and IOM to procure the necessary travel documents and make travel arrangements. Notice of the arrival details (when arranged) are passed to the RIA and immigration officials at the airport, to ensure ease of transit.

Arrival details are also passed to local partners in the resettlement location. In line with the Government’s countrywide dispersal policy, resettled refugees are currently being resettled outside of the capital, unless they have medical or special needs which would better be met in the capital. Local partners will then begin making the necessary arrangements for the impending arrival of the resettled refugees, including housing, and other services.

On arrival at the airport the refugees are met by representatives of the RIA, who coordinate reception arrangements, accompanied by an interpreter. The

refugees are met “airside” (access is at the discretion of the immigration authorities at the airport) enabling the RIA officials to facilitate smooth passage through the immigration procedures.

Resettlement refugees are not required to register with the immigration officials at the airport but must do so within three days of arrival either at the Garda (police) National Immigration Bureau in Dublin or, if resettled outside the capital, at the local Garda Station. Once registered, refugees are issued with a Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) Certification of Registration which they must keep with them at all times. The Certification of Registration is not an identity card and cannot be used for any other identification purposes other than for police and immigration purposes.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

Effective cooperation and coordination throughout this process is very important. On a number of occasions, resettled refugees and persons joining resettled refugees under family reunification arrangements have arrived at Dublin airport with little or no advance notice to the authorities. Such scenarios place the receiving authorities and refugees under great pressure. It is, therefore, advisable that clear protocols as regards the travel notification process be drawn up between all of the relevant actors; the UNHCR, IOM and the Irish authorities. These protocols should be regularly updated as required and kept under review.

1.3. Country and cultural information to the receiving municipalities and communities

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

The regional authorities advise municipalities about issues related to the resettlement of refugees and organise training and information for the staff, organisations and communities within each municipality. This is important in order to generate positive attitudes towards the resettlement process and to refugees in general.

The municipalities that have not resettled refugees before arrange a two-day training session for local actors before the refugees arrive and further training can be arranged later according to need. Representatives from the Ministry of Labour who conducted the selection interviews for the respective refugee group give presentations about the refugees in question and their background and situation in their home country and the country of first asylum.

Other topics may include:

- ➔ Issues related to international conventions, national legislation and resettlement in general;
- ➔ General information about refugees and their rights and entitlements;
- ➔ The national framework for the resettlement (legislation, agreements);
- ➔ The procedure for allocating the refugee quota;
- ➔ The criteria and procedure of selection for refugees resettled in Finland;
- ➔ Residence permits, family reunification;
- ➔ Financial aspects of resettlement;
- ➔ Interpretation services;
- ➔ Practical integration measures in the municipality;
- ➔ Possible special services required;
- ➔ Meeting different cultures; issues that may require special attention from the personnel involved with reception, issues that need to be explained to the refugees (e.g. the status of women and children in the family);
- ➔ The practicalities of reception: accommodation, introduction to society, income, health checks, day-care, school, education for immigrants, employment, etc;
- ➔ Preservation of the mother tongue and culture with an emphasis on the responsibilities of the refugees and the responsibilities of the municipality;
- ➔ Different work methods; working with individuals, families and communities, working in pairs etc. Photographs and videos from the country of first asylum can be very illustrative and useful and make it easier for the people in receiving communities to understand the circumstances in which the refugees have been living.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

In Ireland, the Reception and Integration Agency provides country and cultural information to receiving local communities through direct liaison with local actors and through training and information provided to local support groups. For further information concerning the RIA's local liaison work regarding resettled refugees, see Chapter 2, paragraph 5 above and, in particular, the pilot activity conducted in County Roscommon.

In addition to the RIA's activities targeted to resettled refugees, the Agency also undertakes information activities and promotional work concerning the integration of refugees into Irish society (including refugees admitted to Ireland under the State's asylum determination procedure). This awareness raising and promotional work assists efforts to enhance integration prospects by raising the awareness of the receiving society (including Irish citizens and refugees) regarding integration matters.

2. Arrival measures

2.1. Placement in the receiving community

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

As mentioned in Section 1 above, in Finland, resettled refugees meet representatives of their future municipality of residence at the airport. The question arises as to how this municipality has been chosen to receive this particular group of refugees. In the case of each refugee, the authorities consider what kind of municipality might provide the best conditions for his/her integration. In this connection, the authorities review a number of issues including opportunities for work and study and the possibility to avail of support from a community of similar ethnic background in a particular place of residence. Where relevant, the authorities also check the availability in an area of

rehabilitation services for victims of torture or other specific health care services. In practice, however, compromises often have to be made between the available placement opportunities and the needs and wishes of the resettled refugees.

REFUGEE STORIES

Taking the cases of the Mr Kut, the Bakhsh family and the Hassan family, whose backgrounds were outlined in the introduction to the Guide, we now examine the kind of issues the authorities in Finland might review in deciding where to place the new arrivals.

■ Mr. Kut James Mathiang Kut

Mr. Kut is single and a Christian. He has a lot of prior work experience, but his skills and experience may not be transferable to the labour market in Finland. Mr Kut does not have a strong educational background and does not know the Latin alphabet but he does have experience of work. He would benefit from integration training that included both language training and manual work.

Because he is coming to Finland alone, it would be important for him to live in a municipality with other Sudanese people. As a Christian, he might benefit from the support provided by a local congregation. Coming from the countryside, he might feel at home in a small municipality. The area of placement should be in a position to meet Mr Kut's training needs and also his integration needs, particularly taking into consideration his single status.

■ The Bakhsh family

Mrs Hamida Bakhsh and her family are from Afghanistan. All four women in the family are in need of long-term mental and physical care. In particular, the family will require rehabilitation care, the provision of language

training in the home at intervals when required and help in adapting to Finnish society. The children were unable to attend school in Iran. Arranging support measures for their education would therefore be of primary importance.

It would be essential for the family to be resettled to a municipality with a large Afghan or Tajik community where other resettled refugee women of the same ethnic background could function as their support network. In addition, the Municipality must have sufficient experience in the rehabilitation of traumatised refugees.

■ The Hassan Family

Mr and Mrs Hassan, are Kurds from Iran. They have seven children of their own and a nephew. The eldest daughter has a fiancé whom she would like to marry. Mr Hassan has a good educational background, but Mrs Hassan is functionally illiterate.

The first practical issue would be to find an apartment that is big enough for the family. It might be possible for the family to live in neighbouring apartments, with the elder daughters housed together, However, under some cultural norms, unmarried women must live in the same house as their father until their marriage.

An additional consideration is the rate at which each individual family member will integrate into Finnish society. Differences in the speed of integration within a family can affect the powerstructure inside the family and the ability of the family members to support each other.

The municipality in which this family might be placed should therefore have expertise on cultural issues of relevance to the situation of this family.

In addition, there should be local opportunities for Mr Hassan to continue his academic studies and for Mrs Hassan to receive language and literacy training which meets her needs. Given the large number of young people in the family, there should be multiple education and training opportunities in the Municipality of residence.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

The Reception and Integration Agency, in consultation with local actors, decides where resettled refugees will be placed in Ireland. At present, the practice is to place most resettled refugees outside of the capital, however, refugees with particular needs, for example specific health care needs, are usually placed in the capital in order to ensure access to specialised services where required. Where the local partners are receiving refugees for the first time, the RIA provides assistance and guidance as regards sourcing accommodation and other matters (see Chapter II section 5 above for further information).

Under current practice, the RIA decides upon the location for the placement of resettled refugees in advance of their arrival in Ireland. This practice is in accordance with the Irish Government's policy of geographic dispersal of refugees within the State. For practical purposes, resettled refugees are not involved in this decision making process. These practical considerations include the need to take placement decisions months in advance of the arrival of refugees in order to facilitate the implementation of pre-arrival measures.

Additional considerations are; pressures on local and national public services which may limit the options for placement to only one or two possibilities; the desire to create a "critical mass" of resettled refugees in a particular locality in order to ensure adequate numbers for participation in training and language courses etc. and the desire to build up a self-supporting refugee/national/ ethnic minority community in an area.

When deciding upon where to place resettled refugees, the Reception and Integration Agency reviews a number of factors including: the availability and cost of suitable housing; access to health care, social services, educational and employment opportunities and the existence, or otherwise, of refugee communities, community support groups or NGOs which could assist with promoting the integration of the refugees into local society.

In order to provide resettled refugees with a degree of security of tenure, refugees are placed in private rented accommodation under 6 month or one year lease agreements. The refugees are free to leave this accommodation at any time in accordance with the provisions of the tenancy agreement and the tenancy legislation in force. Should a refugee choose to leave the allocated placement area, they are, in effect, opting out of the resettlement programme and must be in position to organise their own affairs. However, the Reception and Integration continues to provide assistance where necessary. If they choose to opt out, there is no guarantee that language training or other special services will be provided at the new location they have chosen.

The dispersal policy in respect of resettled refugees is a new approach. There have been mixed results with some refugees integrating well in the area of placement and others choosing to return to the capital. Many resettled refugees move to the capital in search of greater employment opportunities, proximity to members of their community and greater access to cheaper groceries and other products. Some refugees also feel very visible in small communities outside of the capital and, for different reasons, seek the anonymity that the capital can provide.

Secondary migration can have a negative impact on the investment by the authorities in localities selected for placement, for example, training programmes set up for resettled refugees placed in an area may find it difficult to sustain their activities when attendance numbers fall. In addition, efforts put into establishing local support groups and familiarising local service providers with the situation of resettled refugees can lead to disappointment if the refugees choose to move on after a short period of time. These issues were discussed

at the Irish National Workshop on Training and Employment held in November 2004. The Report of the Workshop is available on the MORE Project Website: www.more.fi

The authorities have reviewed the recent experiences of placing refugees outside of the capital and reflected on the successes and difficulties. The authorities plan to learn from the lessons of recent experience and to invest greater efforts in local capacity building activities to better prepare local communities for the reception of resettled refugees.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

RECEPTION MEASURES OUTSIDE OF THE CAPITAL

During 2003 and 2004 the RIA placed 10 families in a town outside of the capital - in the Mid West region. This was a medium sized town with good accommodation, and employment prospects and access to education. In conjunction with the placements, some work was done to engage the host community and to make the service providers aware of the rights, entitlements and responsibilities of the group. A local support group was set up which included both NGO and voluntary participants. This group provided invaluable support to the newcomers. Some service providers were unable to provide services to the group due to lack of resources which caused anger and resentment amount the refugees who could not access essential services locally. This further led to a break down in relationships between the refugee community, authorities and the host community. As a result, the majority of those resettled in the area left and moved to the capital. This was the first time a group or resettlement refugees had been placed in this environment and essential lessons were learned which will be applied in respect of future placements.

2.2 The important first days

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

The impression received during the first few days after arrival is very important to the refugees. Many refugees who have arrived in Finland during a dark winter evening have described how frightening it felt to be in the dark and cold. There were no people in sight, and the whole country seemed to be one large forest.

It is advisable to give the refugees sufficient information about their new country of residence before they arrive. If possible, they should also receive some information about the municipality where they are going to live. Often the refugees are given some information about their municipality of resettlement and what will happen during the first few days there when travelling from the airport. However, many people are tired after long flights, so it is probably not

a good idea to present too much detailed information on the first day. The most essential point at this time is that the refugees should feel safe.

Basic groceries for the first few days should be brought to the apartments of the refugees. In Finland, refugee instructors come to meet the families on the first day of arrival and give them advice on practical issues. Some refugees are familiar with the urban western style of housing; others need instruction on using an electric stove, freezer, washing machine, etc. It is also important to learn how to utilise the services in the neighbourhood. Practising this can be started by, for example, going to the nearest grocery shop. Initial tasks for the refugee instructors also include various registration issues and the mapping of the economic situation of the family. During this period, refugees must register themselves as residents of the municipality and open bank accounts.

INITIAL RECEPTION DIARY

There follow some extracts from a work diary kept by a refugee instructor in the city of Lahti. The diary logs the activities undertaken during the first days after the arrival of a group of refugees from Sudan in Finland in the spring of 2004.

This description of the first four days post-arrival illustrates the large number of things that refugees have to do during their first days in the country.

16 March 2004

At 5pm the aeroplane carrying the 16 new resettled refugees landed at Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. The reception group from Lahti included two refugee instructors, two Arab speaking interpreters, a health nurse and a general assistant. We had reserved a bus for the journey to Lahti.

The refugees were able to leave the airport immediately. They did not have to go for interviews with the frontier guard as they were to be interviewed later in Lahti. Each refugee had a travel document received from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The document contained little information and the names were written in shortened forms. On the bus, we went through some practical issues and told the refugees about the city of Lahti and about Finland in general. We also talked about the schedule for the following day and how it was to be followed. The health nurse also asked about the newcomers' health. Nothing of significance came up at that time.

On arrival in Lahti, we showed the families, one by one, to their new apartments, which we had prepared beforehand. There we went through the different utilities (toilet, shower, stove, etc.). We also showed them the groceries we had brought to the apartments. We provided general information on currency, and bus tickets and went through the schedule for the following day. All this was explained to the clients with the aid of the interpreters. We then filled in the required documents for the registration of the refugees the next day.

17 March 2004

All the clients (refugees) were ready at 8.30 a.m. when we went to see them at

their homes. We accompanied them to the city by bus to help them run errands and to register themselves as residents of Lahti.

Their clothing, particularly the children's, was insufficient for the Finnish weather in March. We sourced clothes for both the children and adults. The following two hours were spent at the registration office. The Red Cross documents spelt practically every client's name differently from that on our Employment Promotion Centre's papers. All these clients wanted to have the spelling corrected according to the latter version. Almost all the clients had a marriage certificate and the birth certificates of their children.

From the registration office, we went to a bank to open bank accounts for the clients, into which their future allowances could be paid. The visit to the bank also took a couple of hours. Each family opened one account that every family member was entitled to use.

We left the bank and went to visit the nearest grocery shop. We looked at different products and advised the refugees to concentrate only on the most essential goods. A specific grant would be made to the clients later to buy clothes and furniture. The clients were interested in electronic devices and compared prices. They had not yet quite grasped the value of the local currency. We had to emphasise that Finland is an expensive country to live in. The groceries were not, of course, the same as they were used to, but we tried to find similar products. An interpreter was with us all day.

18 March 2004

We started the day again at 8.30 a.m. All the clients were ready to learn new things. Today, we again practised travelling by bus. We went first to the city and then back home again. We also visited the grocery shop again and did some shopping. Two clients had already fallen and hurt themselves on the slippery street and we brought them to a nurse. Some members of the group also suffered from basic illnesses: asthma and diabetes. An interpreter was with us again for the whole day.

19 March 2004

We asked all the clients to come on their own to the market-place to meet us. Everyone was there at exactly at 9.00 a.m. We visited the National Insurance Institution in order to leave in their applications for inclusion in the Finnish social security system. Some clients visited the nurse; a few children had symptoms of flu. An interpreter was with us all day long.

The diary illustrates the large number and variety of tasks, which need to be undertaken in the first few days of the refugees' arrival. It is very important that the refugees achieve a minimum degree of self-sufficiency as regards shopping for groceries and using the utilities of the household at the earliest opportunity. The pace of these introductory activities should be set according to the background of the persons concerned taking into account in particular the needs of older people, small children and people with disabilities.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

Initial reception activities are undertaken by the Reception and Integration Agency in respect of refugees who will be placed in Dublin. For refugees placed outside of Dublin, the initial reception activities are undertaken by local actors in collaboration with the RIA.

In Ireland, resettled refugees access existing public services which are available to nationals. The UNHCR Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration notes that this approach: fosters contact between resettled refugees and receiving communities, helps to avoid the dependency that separate services and programs may engender and ensures that resettled refugees have access to the same quality of services available to nationals. Resettled refugees also have access to dedicated services such as initial orientation, language training and limited interpretation and translation services. The initial reception activities undertaken in the first few days are aimed at enabling resettled refugees to access public services and orienting them to their new environment.

On the day after arrival, or as soon as possible after arrival, an orientation meeting is held with the new arrivals with the assistance of an interpreter. At this meeting, information is provided about basic matters such as: the social welfare system, education for children and adults, accommodation, transport, the postal and telephone system, how to open a bank account, the value of the local currency etc. Refugees are informed that, as they have just arrived in the country and do not yet have a job, the administrative system will treat them in the same way as an unemployed Irish person. It is important that refugees are aware of this fact; knowing that you have the same entitlements as an unemployed national is more empowering than thinking you are receiving special treatment or 'hand-outs'.

As regards accessing services, the refugees sign a "disclaimer" form which permits the resettlement officer (representative of the RIA) or local support person to provide relevant information to various authorities including Government bodies and health service authorities. At the orientation meeting, the refugees are assisted to complete application forms for social welfare payments (including all payments relevant to each individual in question) and for local authority housing. They are also provided with their PPS numbers (national insurance or social security number). Where possible, a Community Welfare Officer attends the orientation meeting in order to issue refugees with emergency payments to cover their financial needs until they receive their regular social welfare payments (usually about 6 weeks after arrival).

During the first few days, the resettlement officer or local support person, together with an interpreter, accompanies the resettled refugees and assists with the initial reception activities which include going to the post office to cash the cheques issued by the Community Welfare Officer, using local transport and shopping.

The RIA also organises information sessions for new arrivals. At the sessions, matters raised at the orientation session are reviewed and representatives

of the police force, community welfare officers, NGOs, service providers and the citizens advice bureau are invited to give a presentation about the services they offer, how to access these services and other matters.

PROJECT OUTCOME

IRISH DEVELOPMENT TASK – PRODUCTION OF AN INFORMATION GUIDE FOR NEWLY-ARRIVED REFUGEES

The MORE Project commissioned the production of an Information Guide for Resettled Refugees. The aim of the Guide is to help resettled refugees follow and understand the initial reception activities which take place in the first month or so after arrival. As mentioned above in paragraph 1.1, it is also envisaged that the Guide will be made available to refugees prior to their departure.

The key features of the Guide are:

The use of pictures and graphics wherever possible. For instance, the Guide includes images of documentation issued to the refugees and explains what each document is used for. Images of medical cards, social security cards and police identity cards are included. The Guide also includes images and job descriptions for the different actors the refugees will meet, including police officers, doctors and community welfare officers. The corporate logo of each different actor is included to help the refugees identify logos on letters and office buildings.

The Guide contains interactive sections where refugees are encouraged to enter important information in spaces or boxes provided. For example, refugees are encouraged to 'tick off' any public services or welfare benefits they may have applied for and to enter the date the application was made. This helps the refugee to maintain a sense of control during the initial reception phase and can empower them to follow-up their own applications if replies to applications are not received.

The Guide encourages and directs refugees to file important documentation in the correct place in the Guide. This can assist refugees to effectively manage their own paper work. The ability to file and retrieve relevant documents is empowering for persons to whom the concept of a social welfare system is unfamiliar and who otherwise might feel lost and disempowered by the bureaucracy the system entails.

The Guide is user-friendly and brief. It is designed to be made available to the refugees in both English and their own language. In this way, refugees can use the Guide as a tool to communicate, at a very basic level, with service providers in the absence of interpreters.

INVOLVEMENT OF NGOs IN INITIAL INTRODUCTORY MEASURES

In some resettlement countries, such as the USA, NGOs are contracted to implement key aspects of integration from the provision of initial reception services and early settlement support, through to job placement and administering social support payments.

PROJECT OUTCOME

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TASK – FINLAND

A residents' association helps refugees integrate into the neighbourhood

The idea behind this national development task was that the Residents' Association would help newly arrived refugees to integrate better into the society and especially into the local neighbourhood. Another important aspect of the task was the utilisation of the know-how of already well integrated refugees.

The target group was a group of newly arrived Afghan refugees in Kajaa-ni, Finland. The objective of the task was to guide and share experiences of daily life with the new arrivals and to support them to achieve independence. The development task was carried out by Lohtaja–Huuhkajanvaara–Pikku-Kettu Kyläyhdistys ry (a residents' association).

The Residents' Association welcomed the refugees at the airport in co-operation with personnel from the Immigration Services. After the initial introduction, the newcomers were taken to their homes, where they were informed about a number of local activities including the Nettikahvila (internet-café). The new arrivals were taken to meet with the various relevant service providers and administrative offices. After this official part of the introductory measures, the instructors introduced the newcomers to the local transport, shops, offices and other places that the refugees may wish to know about.

At the Nettikahvila there were opportunities to learn Finnish in short courses, game playing etc. The refugees were helped with the official tasks (such as filling in forms, phone calls to offices etc.), where needed. In the evenings, the Nettikahvila is a meeting place for young people (with billiards games, computers, karaoke etc.). Mamu-kerho is a weekly club for immigrant mothers with their children. In the premises of the club, activities like baking and cooking, using computers and sewing were arranged. To offer women a break from their household tasks is the basic idea of the club. It is a place for conversation, just to spend time with other women. For immigrant men and boys, events involving fishing and sports were organised. The instructors visited the families to provide additional guidance. The

meetings were a way to inform and communicate: the instructors providing information about forthcoming events, and listening to the refugees' ideas, needs and wishes.

Finally, one more example of shared daily life: people with the same ethnic background, living in Kajaani, always welcome the newcomers. A small gathering is arranged the day after the arrival. This is a way to establish a network of people and to obtain emotional support and valuable factual information.

These measures and the involvement of an NGO in the initial reception measures have proved useful in helping refugees to adjust to a new society. The most important result of the task was that the refugees concerned have truly started to integrate into the local community they are living in.

2.3. Housing

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

When refugees arrive at their apartments for the first time, they are provided with some groceries and basic furniture. Different municipalities have different practices concerning the provision of furniture. In some municipalities, the apartments are furnished beforehand, in others, the refugees receive a settlement allowance with which they can buy some furniture.

Housing is one of the most important and yet problematic issues as regards receiving refugees. There are many reasons for this. One is that refugees very often live in areas with relatively low rents which have many social problems due to factors such as unemployment. In most cases there is genuine neighbourly support between refugees and local residents. However, unfortunately, instances of prejudices against refugees can occur. Such intolerance can be exacerbated by cultural differences between the refugees and local residents particularly in poorer areas where resources are scarce. Another difficulty is the fact that refugee families are often much larger than families in the Nordic Countries. It can be difficult to find apartments that are big enough to accommodate them.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

It is the current practice in Ireland to place resettled refugees into private rented accommodation. Upon arrival in Ireland, refugees also apply for local authority housing, however, the waiting lists for these State owned homes are long (usually 2 years minimum) and applications may not be approved in all cases.

Because of the long waiting lists for Local Authority housing, resettled refugees are usually placed in private rented accommodation (property owned by private landlords) following arrival. If the refugee is unable to fully meet the rental costs (as is usually the case), the state provides assistance, by means of a Supplementary Welfare Allowance known as rent allowance. The level of rent allowance is determined by the amount of weekly income of the individual and usually covers most of the cost of the rent. The refugee is obliged make a weekly contribution from their own income. Assistance is provided in sourcing suitable accommodation for the new arrivals. There are clear guidelines regarding size of accommodation and cost of rental which will be approved under the rent supplement scheme. The Resettlement Officer, or assisting support worker, will ensure that the standard of accommodation is adequate to meet the needs of the new arrival.

Prior to the arrival of the refugees, arrangements are made to ensure that basic necessities are present in the accommodation such as bed clothes, basic food items etc. Food can also be purchased by the refugees when they go shopping with the support worker as mentioned above.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

Refugee are eligible for rent allowance in respect of private rented accommodation only when they are registered as unemployed and in receipt of social welfare benefits. In most cases, when an adult refugee gets a job, they are no longer entitled to rent allowance. Rents are relatively high in Ireland and many resettled refugees report that they feel they cannot take up employment because they will lose their rent allowance and their salary will not be sufficient to cover the rent and other living costs. This situation is often described as the 'poverty trap'.

It would be advisable to take measures to ensure that housing arrangements do not dissuade refugees from seeking and taking up employment. 'Back to work' schemes which enable the participant to retain some social welfare benefits for a short period of time after they have commenced work could be one such measure.

2.4. Health assessment and care

According to sources quoted in the UNHCR Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration, it is estimated that around one in three of the world's refugees has had at least one experience of torture. Studies of refugees offered permanent resettlement indicate that one in four has been subject to torture or severe human rights violations, with almost seven in ten being subject to other traumatic

events such as prolonged political repression and the loss of family members in violent circumstances.

These statistics should be taken into account when planning health care services and assessments for refugees. In this connection, it should be noted that many countries have established rehabilitation centres for the victims of torture and violence.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

Refugees often come from conditions in which they have had very few opportunities to receive health-care services. The aims of the first health assessments provided in Finland are to find out about their state of health, to identify people with infectious diseases that are curable or require preventive action, and to make sure that persons have all the vaccinations they need.

A further aim is to prevent, recognise, and treat mental problems. Often specialist health care is needed. Time must be set aside for necessary appointments and interpreters with high level professional skills should be made available for such appointments. Health service workers involved in the health assessments should have some knowledge both of the cultural background of the refugees and of any relevant thoughts and beliefs about health and illness existing in the country where the refugees come from. They should also be provided with any information concerning the health of the refugees gathered by the selection mission team.

In Finland, the health assessment includes an extensive examination by a nurse with the aid of a questionnaire as well as examination appointments with a doctor and a dentist. The purpose of the assessment is to gather information relevant to the health of the refugee: areas where he/she has been before arriving in the resettlement country, the conditions in those areas, any trauma experienced, earlier illnesses and treatments, possible exposure to illnesses, and the person's vaccination history. The basic medical tests conducted include an x-ray of the lungs, HIV and hepatitis B tests, a heart examination, and blood tests. If needed, more specific tests are carried out.

In addition to ordinary illnesses, typical problems which refugees present include psychosomatic symptoms, infections, dental problems, different types of anaemia, post-traumatic stress symptoms, learning disabilities, and other functional defects. Mapping and treating these conditions usually requires many visits to the health-care centre and appointments with specialised health care professionals. The vaccination history of refugees is often defective or non-existent. At a minimum, basic protection for both children and adults should be guaranteed through a vaccination programme.

The health assessment also involves the delivery of guidance and health information. The health care practices of the country and the municipality are explained. Refugees are also advised on how to utilise other health-related services: children's health centres, school-based health care, dental care, acute health care, etc.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

Resettled refugees are entitled to the same level of health care as Irish citizens. The resettlement officers at the RIA or the local support worker assist resettled refugees in applying for medical cards upon arrival in the country. Medical cards entitle the card holder to free primary medical care, including optical and dental care and pharmacy services. They also assist the refugees to identify a local General Practitioner (doctor) and to request the General Practitioner (GP) to accept them on their list of clients. Usually, the GP will examine the new arrivals to determine their health status and make recommendations regarding appropriate treatment or further examination as required.

Experience in Ireland has shown that advance planning as regards securing access for resettled refugees to health care is essential. In particular, prior to placing resettled refugees in a particular locality, guarantees from a local GP that they will take on the new arrivals as patients should be obtained. This is of particular importance in Ireland where GP's have some discretion regarding access to their services.

As noted in Chapter III above concerning Selection (paragraphs 5 and 7), and in the Recommendations at the beginning of this Chapter; where a resettled refugee has been accepted with a specific medical complaint, arrangements should be put in place for treatment prior to the arrival of the refugee. Advance planning for the treatment of medical complaints indicated prior to arrival is of the utmost importance, particularly given that most resettled refugees with medical complaints are resettled in order to ensure that they will have access to appropriate medical care in the country of resettlement.

The RIA has also involved the health information programme (HIP) of an NGO, SPIRASI, in its initial information sessions to new arrivals. The SPIRASI HIP team has developed information materials concerning Ireland's health care system which are designed specifically for a refugee audience. The materials are available in a number of languages and many of the materials are visual in nature, conveying their message through pictures rather than language. Some members of the HIP team are refugees themselves and this factor can help in the communication of information to an audience of resettled refugees.

2.5. Social work and counselling services

Changes in a person's social networks, scarcity of human relationships, rootlessness, discrimination, and the weakening of life-management systems caused by various linguistic and cultural factors are typically connected with immigration. These difficulties often increase the likelihood of other social problems. For these reasons, many immigrants may need more services provided by the social welfare sector than the average members of the majority population.

Conflicts inside immigrant families can arise in the context of increasing divorces, violence in the home, and where the custody of children is transferred

to the State for their protection. A psychosocial, family-centred approach should be adopted in integration work with resettled refugees. Appropriate measures should also be identified and adopted in order to support the unity, welfare, and functional capacity of families. Preventative work is essential. One of the principles of integration should be the promotion of the unity of families by creating contacts with the receiving society for each family member. The child care responsibilities of immigrant parents and the work with the families undertaken by the immigrants' own associations should also be supported.

In societies that receive refugees, the services of the social welfare sector are often based on individual values. However, many refugees and asylum seekers come from the so-called "collective cultures". Such cultures are strongly family-centred. In a family-centred culture, the unity of the family and loyalty between family members are primary essential factors in all decision-making.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

In Finland, social work in refugee matters consists of the following main areas:

- ➔ Counselling refugees on social welfare benefits and integration support measures;
- ➔ Psycho-social support for individuals;
- ➔ Child protection;
- ➔ Community work and networking activities;
- ➔ Information sharing and awareness-raising activities;
- ➔ Other activities.

Social workers give refugees counselling as regards social benefits. They also make decisions on social subsidies where there are individual or family-based needs requiring financial support additional to the integration subsidy. Social workers, together with employment officers, agree upon the content of individual integration plans and related follow-up measures with refugees and/or their families. They assist refugees in preparing their applications for family reunification and prepare related statements for the immigration authorities. Social workers also provide counselling on the possibilities for voluntary return; participate in the planning of the return arrangements and make decisions on re-integration grants.

Psycho-social support is often needed to treat the symptoms of traumatic experiences in the past and post-traumatic stress disorders. This support work is carried out both by specialised doctors, psychotherapists and some social workers who are specialised in running discussion groups or giving supportive sessions on an individual basis. In some bigger cities, there are specialised services for refugees who need trauma rehabilitation care. Additionally, there are two NGO/private bodies engaged in this type of work: The Crises Centre for

Foreigners and The Centre for the Victims of Torture. In addition to the above, many social workers who work with refugees have psycho-social counselling skills.

Life in exile is hard and in the first country of asylum there are seldom opportunities for any kind of rehabilitation or psychological support. Starting one's life all over again in a new culture and society can be very stressful and sometimes refugee families face problems related to the treatment of children and relationships between the spouses. In cases of domestic violence, neglect of children, anti-social behaviour, divorce etc. social workers have an important role to play in helping the family and, in particular, any children in accordance with their best interests.

During the last few years many new collective social work methods, such as community work, networking-techniques and team-working have emerged in Finland. These new working methods include: pair-working (with a combination of majority and minority ethnic background social workers), peer-counselling, team-working, out-reach fieldwork-teams etc. The European Refugee Fund (ERF) has been most useful in funding the testing and developing these new methods. However, networking as a working method is not yet as widely used among social work with refugees as it is with the ethnic majority population. Instead, networking is mostly understood as co-operation between different actors (different authorities, NGOs and refugee community organisations - RCOs) and in the context of the utilisation of multi-professional skills and capacity. Collective forms of social work have already proved to be successful in the Finnish work environment. They have also led to an increase in the employment of social workers with minority ethnic or refugee backgrounds.

Since integration should be seen as a two-way process, measures have to be targeted both to supporting refugees and to sharing information and raising-awareness among the public, media, policy-makers and service providers concerning the situation of refugees. Usually in small towns and rural municipalities, the coordinator of refugee reception is a local social worker. This role has brought a new dimension to social work and therefore, in order to be successful, new skills have to be adopted: lecturing, contacting/communication with different actors and opinion-building at local level. Sometimes assistance provided to newly arrived refugees is not mainstreamed within local service providers and social workers find themselves undertaking duties which are not within their competence. Such additional tasks may include furnishing apartments or accompanying people to leisure activities. Use of social workers time in this manner should be carefully considered due to the fact it might take valuable resources away from "the actual social work".

GOOD PRACTICE

SOCIAL WORK WITH REFUGEES IN LAHTI

In the city of Lahti, social work with refugees has been divided between individual work with clients and development work.

The individual work with clients includes:

- ➔ Reception and crisis work to clarify the client's situation, discussions with the client;
- ➔ Gathering information on the cultural background of the client and on the social structure of their country of origin;
- ➔ Informing the client about the possibilities provided by the Finnish social service system for people in different situations;
- ➔ Organising the integration plans and other services for immigrants and refugees who cannot work. For refugees who can work, these services are provided in co-operation with the employment office;
- ➔ Co-operation between authorities and co-ordination of support: family counselling, day-care facility, employment office, health care centre, school, social authorities and congregation;
- ➔ Issues connected with family reunification;
- ➔ Consideration-based allowance for subsistence;
- ➔ Increased co-operation between relevant officials, active discussions with office workers and refugee instructors, visits to the clients' homes together with the refugee instructors.

The development work includes:

- ➔ Participation in the networks of immigrants, for example in workgroups on housing, work with youth or voluntary meetings of people living in the same area, etc.;
- ➔ Participation in different projects connected with immigrants.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

In Ireland, social supports are provided by the Resettlement Officer or Support Worker. In addition, resettled refugees can access mainstream social work and counselling services in the same way as Irish citizens, that is, by referral from a GP or other nominated person. Given that, upon arrival, resettled refugees are not familiar with mainstream services in Ireland, the resettlement officer informs the refugees about the availability of counselling services during the orientation session provided in the first few days (see paragraph 2.2 above). If the refugees indicate that they would like to avail of such services, the resettlement officer can advise the refugees to raise the matter with their GP. The resettlement officer can also, where necessary, arrange for a counselling assessment for the refugee.

As regards welfare support and assistance, refugees are entitled to social welfare payments on the same basis as an Irish national if a means test is satisfied. The resettlement officer or local support worker provides refugees with the tools necessary to access mainstream social welfare and health services. As noted above, during the first few days, the refugees are assisted with the completion of all relevant forms and procedures enabling them to access public services including social welfare payments and the health service. The resettlement officer or local support worker advises the refugees on which payments they are eligible for and ensures that the refugees are accessing all the services and benefits to which they are entitled. The support provided by the resettlement officer and local support worker is available to each resettled refugee during the initial reception phase and beyond.

There are some specialised counselling services available to refugees in Ireland. Psychological services for asylum seekers and refugees are available at the Department of Psychology at St. Brendan's Hospital in Dublin. In addition, SPIRASI, an NGO based in Dublin offers a counselling service for the treatment of survivors of torture. Although, both of these services are Dublin-based, the Department of Psychology has provided some specialised training for psychologists working with refugees outside of the capital.

2.6. Individual integration plans and monitoring integration progress

In recent times, many countries have started to employ individual integration plans and tailor-made introduction programmes in the context of reception activities. In Sweden, Finland and other countries, refugees are entitled to have an individualised integration plan drawn up. In Finland, the integration plan incorporates an agreement between the refugee, the local social office and the employment office. The aim for the integration plan is to specify for each refugee and immigrant those measures (training, vocational guidance, on-the-job-experience, voluntary work etc.), which will promote the integration of the individual concerned. The plan emphasises both the rights and the responsibilities of refugees.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

According to the Finnish Integration Act of 1999, the tasks of the employment office include the promotion and support of integration through employment policy measures and other employment-related services. The Act also requires the employment office to cooperate with the receiving municipality and to pay intensive attention to the integration of immigrants as a whole.

In practice this law is applied as follows. Soon after a resettled refugee settles in a Finnish municipality, a personal integration plan is drawn up at the immigrant unit of the employment office. The plan is drawn up in co-operation between the client, the employment authority, a social worker, and, where necessary, a health nurse. The goal of this process is to ensure that the measures and

services provided by the municipality and the employment office will develop a logical pathway to enable refugees to integrate into Finnish society.

In addition to the employment services, the client is also advised and instructed to participate in other activities that will help them to familiarise themselves with the Finnish society and their new environment. Information on the client's educational background, work history and present situation in life are all taken into account when developing the integration plan.

The plan takes account of and maps the client's language and vocational training needs. It also includes instructions on integrating into Finnish society. Attention is paid to the family situation of the client. The issue of subsistence is also an important part of the integration plan.

The employment authorities are involved in planning and developing training for refugees. Language and integration courses, preparation training for vocational studies, and vocational studies based on employment policy are provided. Elementary training is organised for illiterate refugees.

When the integration plan is drawn up, an interpreter is used where necessary. Future appointments between the employment office and the client are conducted without an interpreter, unless required to deal with some specific issue. Integration is a continuous process and the integration plans are reviewed at least once a year. When the integration stage is completed, a work application plan is made for the client.

A refugee is considered to be at the integration stage for three years from the day they first register in their Finnish municipality of residence. Yet the client remains in contact with the immigrant team until they are employed or no longer need linguistic or other special services and can thus utilise the employment services independently themselves.

The immigrant team of the employment office is also involved in organising jobs for refugees. The unemployment rate of clients with refugee backgrounds is higher than the corresponding percentage among other immigrants. Often, the reasons include a weak educational background and a lack of literacy skills. For many refugees, traumatic events which occurred in their pasts affects their ability to integrate into society and/or enter the labour market.

PRACTICE IN LAHTI, FINLAND

Practice at the employment office in Lahti is based on networking. The social office, trainers, European-funded employment-related projects, the city of Lahti, the health-care and day-care services of the city, representatives of the local employers, and other relevant actors are closely involved in the employment office cooperation network. In 2004, there were about 300 clients with refugee backgrounds at the employment office of Päijät-Häme (Lahti and the area around it).

GOOD PRACTICE

INFORMATION SESSIONS

In addition to individual guidance and counselling, information sessions targeted at larger groups of refugees have proved to be useful. Many Finnish cities arrange information sessions for refugees.

In the city of Lahti, the authorities that provide services for immigrants arrange a series of information sessions for all refugees living in their area. The themes discussed at these sessions include, among other things:

- ➔ services for immigrants, interpretation;
- ➔ allowances for subsistence from the social office – provisions, contents, and requests for changes;
- ➔ applications for flats, changing flats, renting, leases, guarantees, paying rent and other issues connected with housing;
- ➔ public health-care, dental care;
- ➔ the law on the position of clients, the law on administration, the tasks of the spokesmen on social service issues;
- ➔ the services of the employment office, training connected with the employment policy, choosing one's career, applying for jobs, legislation on employment issues;
- ➔ an introduction to the services of the congregation;
- ➔ financial support provided by the National Insurance Institution;
- ➔ issues connected with driver's licences and licences to stay in Finland;
- ➔ taxation;
- ➔ day-care for children;
- ➔ the law on child protection, child protection measures, family counselling, temporary support homes for young single-mothers and refuges for the victims of domestic violence;
- ➔ counselling for people with debts or other financial difficulties;
- ➔ comprehensive training;
- ➔ opportunities to receive vocational training;
- ➔ opportunities for physical exercise.

Drawing up the individual integration plans is not easy. According to some international surveys only very few adult refugees have their education and working experience thoroughly assessed. However, in Finland the experience of drawing up individual integration plans has been a positive one which has led to increased co-operation between different actors in order to achieve better results.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

In Ireland, a range of actors provide integration support and advice to resettled refugees. Upon arrival in Ireland, refugees are met by resettlement officers from the Reception and Integration Agency. The resettlement officers, together with local support workers (where the refugees are placed outside of the capital) provide advice on a range of integration-related activities such as language training, employment training, education opportunities, local community groups and support structures, Irish culture and customs and so on. The resettlement officers provide support throughout the initial integration phase which can last anywhere from one to three years or more.

Refugee children are enrolled in mainstream Irish schools as outlined in Chapter V above. Adult resettled refugees attend language training courses provided by Integrate Ireland Language Training (IILT – see Chapter V for further details). IILT assesses the linguistic ability of the refugees and places them in the appropriate class for their level. Refugees can also register with FÁS, Ireland's national employment and training authority at which point their employment and training needs are assessed.

Throughout the initial integration phase, the resettlement officers at the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) monitor the progress of the refugees. This monitoring involves visits to the homes of the refugees, telephone calls and liaison with local support groups, service providers and other local actors to see how the refugees are getting on. This type of on-going monitoring and frequent contact is facilitated by the fact that Ireland's annual intake of resettled refugees is in the region of 35–50 individuals. It is therefore feasible for the resettlement officers to maintain contact with each of the individuals/families, at least during the initial stages of the integration process.

In addition to the on-going review of the progress of resettled refugees towards integration, the RIA conducts periodic reviews of its resettlement programme, including internal and external reviews. In 2003, the RIA conducted an internal review of the progress of resettled refugees admitted into Ireland under the 1999, 2000 and 2001 annual resettlement quotas. A further internal review is planned. A number of external reviews have also been carried out, including a survey of the Vietnamese and Bosnian resettled refugee communities. The aim of the survey was to examine the resettlement patterns of both communities with a view to informing policy makers and service providers. Additional reviews and evaluations are also conducted by specific service providers and researchers with an interest in refugee issues or service provision.

Research conducted in Ireland concerning the situation of asylum seekers, refugees and persons granted humanitarian leave to remain in the State can also serve to inform resettlement policy and practice as regards integration matters. It should be noted, however, that care must be taken to ensure that research involving refugees does not lead to the raising of false expectations on the part of refugee participants. The aim, objective, scope and potential outcomes of research activities should be fully explained to refugee participants. Partici-

pants should be kept informed of the results of the research. The authorities should also guard against 'research fatigue on the part of refugees' by dissuading researchers from targeting the same groups or individuals multiple times.

GOOD PRACTICE

SURVEY OF REFUGEES AND PERSONS WITH LEAVE TO REMAIN LIVING IN LIMERICK CITY, IRELAND

An initial survey of refugees and persons with leave to remain was recently conducted in Limerick. The aim of the survey was to determine the current socio-economic circumstances of this group and to assess their needs with regard to all issues affecting their integration such as housing, health, education and employment. A separate survey will be carried out with the bodies represented on the Limerick City Development Board to examine the current level of public service provision available to these communities in the City and to establish the perceptions of those bodies in relation to the needs of refugees and persons with leave to remain living in that City. It is hoped that the outcome of the survey will help to inform future policy and will result in the development of strategies which can be used as models of best practice throughout the country.

2.7. Family-related issues and services

Family reunification is a fundamental principle of refugee protection and derives directly from the universally recognised right of the family to State protection. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that the family “is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by the society and the State”. The same principle is embodied in the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (Article 23) and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 9 and 10). The UNHCR urges states to take relationships of dependency into account when interpreting family membership and to adopt policies and procedures which will enable refugee families to reunite quickly (see UNHCR Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration - internet link listed in Appendix A). Practice in Finland and in Ireland concerning social supports for families and family reunification procedures are set out below.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

In the context of integration activities, it should be noted that the family is an important human dynamic in the complex process of adapting to a new culture. Particularly at the beginning of the integration process, the family is often the most important source of psychosocial support for the individual refugees.

However, the norms, roles, and values of the new society are often transmitted to different family members in a different way. Thus, the values and the inner dynamics of the family may sometimes change fundamentally and very rapidly. These changes may cause conflicts between family members, which can damage the unity of the family.

When individual-centred integration measures are targeted differently to each family member, the existence of several stages of integration within the family threatens the unity of the family. Conflicts may arise between family members of different generations, particularly if children and young people quickly adopt, through the school system, the values and norms of the receiving society while their parents remain isolated from the new culture. Spouses may become integrated at a different pace because a family member who does not work outside the home (often the mother) may be excluded from language courses and other participation activities.

GOOD PRACTICE

HOMETREE PROGRAMME

The Family Federation of Finland has created a model for assisting refugees and immigrants in a more culturally competent way by the provision of so called intermediate services. The Kotipuu – programme (Home Tree) promotes family-centred integration work. The main idea of Kotipuu is to strengthen the know-how and capacity of both public sector and NGO actors. The staff employed by Kotipuu give lectures on psychosocial issues connected with immigration, paying particular attention to the family point-of-view. They also produce practical models and material to support the work carried out by both the public and NGO sectors. Kotipuu provides free consultation services for people working in the public sector by organising joint meetings, and through telephone and e-mail communications. The programme also organises discussion groups for parents and produces instructive materials in different languages. Through the Family Federation of Finland, it also tries to influence decision makers in order to increase the psychosocial welfare of families with immigrant backgrounds. For further information see www.vaestoliitto.fi

CHILDRENS' DAY-CARE

At the day-care facilities of the city of Lahti, there are five native representatives of different linguistic minorities working as assistants. At these facilities, other employees of different ethnic backgrounds also participate in the work during work practise periods.

In Lahti, the day-care workgroup has created a job description for people who work as assistants for children with minority cultural and linguistic backgrounds and who speak the mother-tongue language of these children. Accord-

ing to the job description, the tasks of such assistants are to support the development of the children's skills in their own language and to promote the creation of a bilingual identity based on two cultures. The job has three main aspects: supporting the culture and the mother-tongue language of the children, co-operation with parents, and helping the employees at the day-care facility with issues connected with the immigrant children.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Family reunification is a very significant issue for resettled refugees who have left close family members behind in the country of origin or elsewhere. Resettled refugees who arrive in Ireland without their spouse or other close family member can find it extremely difficult to focus on the demands of the initial integration process if they are constantly worrying about the welfare of loved ones abroad.

In Ireland, persons admitted under the resettlement programme may apply for family reunification under the terms of Section 18 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended). The Act provides for the reunification of close family members, particularly parents and children (under 18 years of age) or spouses who have become separated. In general, this means that persons can apply for close family members such as children, spouses or other persons who the applicant can prove were dependent on them prior to their arrival in Ireland. There is also provision for the admission of special cases at the discretion of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Family reunification is recognised as an essential component of the integration process and the resettlement team at the Reception and Integration Agency encourages the newcomers to submit their family reunification applications without delay. In practice, delays in processing these applications have been experienced. Many resettled refugees have unrealistic expectations regarding who can be admitted under the family reunification procedures. This, together with the waiting period for the processing of applications, can contribute to increased anxiety amongst resettled refugees. Conflicting information provided in the family reunification application and in the refugee resettlement form (compiled by the UNHCR) often leads to difficulties and delays.

In the light of this experience, it is recommended that clear rules and procedures for family reunification procedures be established and disseminated among all relevant actors. Secondly, procedures should be put in place to ensure the expedient processing of applications for family reunification, keeping in mind the harm that can be associated with prolonged separation and the consequential impact on the integration prospects of the individuals concerned.

REFUGEE STORY

APPLICATION FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Rashad, the nephew of Mr. Mohammadi Hassan was resettled to Ireland as a member of Mr Hassan's family. Rashad, who is nineteen years old, has been living with the Hassan family since he was eleven and his parents were killed.

Upon arrival in Ireland, Rashad decides that he would like his two brothers to join him in Ireland and submits an application to the authorities. The administrative authorities are unsure as to whether Rashad is entitled to apply for family reunification. There is uncertainty as to whether the right to family reunification rests only with the Hassan nuclear family (i.e. parents, siblings and spouses of members of the Hassan family) or whether it extends also to Rashad's nuclear family.

One year after his application for family reunification was submitted, Rashad is informed that his request for family reunification has been granted. The provisions concerning Rashad's family reunification rights were unclear and ministerial discretion was exercised favourably in his case.

This account demonstrates the importance of clear and authoritative legislative provisions concerning family reunification and provisions enabling the exercise of discretion as regards the admission of "special cases".

CHILD CARE

The situation in Ireland as regards child care is very different to that which pertains in Finland and the other Nordic countries. The lack of available child care in Ireland is an issue which affects all sectors of Irish society. There are only very limited possibilities to access low cost child care and the vast majority of resettled refugees cannot access any child care services at all. For information regarding child care associated with participation in community employment schemes see Chapter V, Section 2 below. Efforts have been undertaken to assist refugee communities to share child care responsibilities amongst themselves, however, these efforts have been, for the most part unsuccessful.

The lack of affordable child care has a negative impact on the integration process, particularly for those parents (usually women) who cannot attend English language classes because they are caring for children in the home. This impact was highlighted in the Training Needs Assessment conducted in Ireland in 2004 (see Chapter V, section 1 for further information concerning this development task).

2.8 Interpreting services

INTRODUCTION

Authorities and other service providers promote the linguistic equality of immigrants by using translation and interpretation services especially when the issues concerned touch on the rights, entitlements, and obligations of their clients.

A professional interpreter is someone who has sufficient training to conduct their work. In addition to the language skills required, they also must have good communication skills and broad cultural knowledge. At work, an interpreter should follow the rules and instructions existing in their profession. The most important are as follows:

- ➔ An interpreter must preserve confidentiality in their work;
- ➔ An interpreter never make inappropriate use of any information they have received in connection with interpretation assignments;
- ➔ An interpreter must not accept assignments for which they are not competent;
- ➔ An interpreter must make timely and careful preparations for their assignments;
- ➔ An interpreter aims at all-inclusive interpretation where no speech is added or omitted;
- ➔ An interpreter must remain an impartial outsider and must not allow their personal opinions or attitudes to affect the interpretation;
- ➔ An interpreter must not work as an assistant or a spokesman for their clients;
- ➔ During an assignment, an interpreter is not in charge of performing any tasks other than interpretation. Friends, children, or other close relatives of the people involved in the issues discussed cannot function as interpreters.

In immigrant families, the children often learn the language of their new home country more quickly than the adults. Despite this, children must never be used as interpreters. The issues to be interpreted are often unknown or even frightening for a child. The inner relationships in the family may also be damaged if the children are given tasks that the adults should be able to perform.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

Normally, the use of interpretation is governed by law. According to the Finnish law on administration, all authorities must arrange interpretation services for matters falling within their competence. Also, in other cases, an authority may – depending on his/her own consideration – invite an interpreter to assist in clarifying issues discussed and in guaranteeing the implementation of the client's rights. In such situations, the authority is in charge of finding the interpreter and

paying the costs involved. There are also rules on interpretation in other laws, for example in the law on legal investigation, the law on foreigners living in Finland, the laws on the rights and position of patients in the health care system and on the rights and position of social security clients, the laws on the integration of immigrants and on the reception of asylum seekers.

During the last twenty years, Finland has received a great number of immigrants whose languages were new to Finland. The profession of an interpreter has been developed in order to arrange services for all immigrants. Aspiring interpreters must take a professional examination. Centres for interpreters have been founded in different parts of Finland. The profession of an interpreter is relatively new, and there is no legislation connected with it so far. Continuous development work is done in order to raise the status of the profession and to improve the training and the professional skills of interpreters. Other language-related services include leaflets and official forms made in the languages of immigrants as well as the provision of services for immigrants in their mother-tongue languages.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) provides interpreters in the first few days after the arrival of the resettled refugees in order to assist the resettled refugees and the RIA in making the necessary applications for public services to the relevant service providers. After that time, the RIA may engage interpreters on a case-by-case basis to assist with administrative matters or other issues as they arise. Individual service providers are encouraged to provide their own interpreters when dealing with resettled refugees and other non-English speaking clients, however, they are currently not under a direct obligation to do so.

The Department of Health recently carried out research into interpretation needs in the health service which will help to inform policy in the future. The health authorities in Ireland have also undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at making funding for interpretation costs available to General Practitioners (doctors) treating refugees. Plans to conduct a pilot project aimed at providing interpretation services to some GP's in Ireland have recently been announced and it is hoped that this, and other initiatives, will assist in developing interpretation services available to GPs and their clients.

2.9 The role of the ethnic community

Ethnic community groups and refugee community organisations have a substantial role to play in the integration of resettled refugees and other groups into national societies and local communities. There is, however, a lack of established ethnic community groups and refugee community organisations (RCOs) in Finland and Ireland and in many other EU Member States. As noted in par-

agraph 2.2. above, some resettlement countries subcontract initial and longer term reception tasks to NGOs and refugee community organisations. In this regard, Finland and Ireland still have a lot to learn.

At international level, there is also a lack of RCO representation and involvement in the development of refugee policy and discourse. In October 2004, the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) noted that, out of its then 76 member agencies, not a single one was a refugee community organisation. In an effort to rectify this situation, ECRE commenced a Project entitled “Strengthening the Participation of Refugees in European Policies and Programmes” (SHARE) in 2002. The Project was implemented in five EU Member States and it issued a range of recommendations to Governments, EU institutions and to ECRE and its member organisations to act to facilitate the inclusion of RCOs in their work. It is hoped that international initiatives such as the SHARE Project will assist the emergence and development of RCOs at national and international level. Indeed, in October 2004, ECRE noted that, as a direct result of the SHARE Project, it has received its first application for membership from a UK-based RCO, the Ethiopian Community Centre.

The MORE Project sought to address the role of ethnic community organisations and RCOs in its work. At the MORE Project Finnish National Workshop, one of the major themes explored was that of empowering refugee communities and RCOs. In addition, two development tasks were conducted in Finland aimed at promoting the involvement of NGOs in the reception and integration of resettled refugees. Initiatives undertaken in Finland and Ireland are described below.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

One of the objectives of the MORE Project was to find new ways to develop introductory measures, in particular by involving the NGO sector and established refugee communities. In Finland, this was not fully achieved due to a lack of established and formally registered organisations run by refugees to which activities could be subcontracted. However, refugees had an important role in carrying out the development task described in paragraph 2.2 above and in the development task described below.

PROJECT OUTCOME

DEVELOPMENT TASK

SHARED ACTIVITIES IN LAHTI

In Lahti, the International Martha Association – more specifically a group called “Mamuset Martat” implemented the development task connected with the reception of newly-arrived refugees. The aim of the work was to help a group of Sudanese quota refugees who had arrived in Finland in March and June 2004 with the first stages of their integration to Finland.

The task activity ran from the beginning of June to the end of December 2004. One of the task's objectives was to develop a model for the participation of the NGO sector in the reception of refugees.

The project was very functional in nature. Activities for the newcomers were organised during the period when Finnish language lessons were not available because of summer vacations. The refugees visited many places nearby and far away, thus enabling them to get a clearer idea of their new home-country. The sites visited included a Finnish farm, The Science Centre, and the Finnish National Museum. The group also participated in a course for cooking baby food and learning about Finnish summer and winter sports.

Doing things together was typical of the activities. With the aid of the project, various activities were arranged to enable the refugees to get more acquainted with Finnish people, the Finnish society and life-style, and the city of Lahti and its surroundings. The aim of this work was to help them integrate into Finland.

Four planning sessions were held together with the target group. Two of them were organised before the actual activities started in order to map the wishes of the refugees and to allow for acceptance of the plan of arrangements together. The two further meetings were held when the activities had started. At that stage, it was possible to evaluate the past activities and to plan forthcoming events in the light of the evaluation. The participants were very satisfied.

At the beginning, the activities were strongly immigrant-centred. Immigrants who had moved to Finland earlier provided instruction for the newcomers. However, the refugees also wanted to be introduced to Finnish people. As the activities continued, more Finns joined in the activities.

REFUGEE STORY

HAMIDA'S STORY

Hamida's family consisted exclusively of women. The members of her family had experienced abuse by their own male relatives. In their country of origin and in Iran, they received support from women living in the local neighbourhood. On arrival in Finland, Hamida did not know anyone. She relied heavily on a female interpreter and made telephone calls to her home almost every evening. The interpreter felt sympathy towards Hamida, however, she knew from experience that she could not function both as a sup-

port person for Hamida and conduct her own professional interpretation tasks at the same time.

Hamida and the interpreter discussed Hamida's problems with a social worker. Together they started considering how to create a support network for Hamida. The social worker told them about a group of women from Afghanistan who held meetings in the neighbourhood. Sometimes these women spent an evening among themselves, sometimes there were Finnish women as well. In the latter case, the women taught each other about the handiwork and cooking traditions of their own countries and discussed important women's issues. At first Hamida was somewhat shy about joining the group. The first meeting went well, however, and Hamida soon made new friends.

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

In Ireland there are many NGOs active in the field of refugee issues. Most of the larger NGOs are based in Dublin; however, some of these have smaller offices in other areas of the country. Unlike the situation in Finland, in Ireland the number of asylum seekers and persons granted refugee status and humanitarian leave to remain in the State far outweighs the number of resettled refugees admitted to the State each year under the current refugee programme (see the introduction for details). Consequently, NGOs in Ireland are primarily concerned with the situation of asylum seekers and refugees granted status further to a positive asylum status determination by the State. Notwithstanding this fact, much of the work of refugee issue-based NGOs is of significant relevance to the situation of resettled refugees and the promotion of integration in general.

Similar to the situation in Finland, the majority of the larger NGOs and community organisations working on refugee issues are run by Irish nationals. Many of these organisations employ an ethnically diverse staff including refugees, immigrants and other foreign nationals. Examples include SPRIASI, which provides a range of services to refugees including English language and computer courses and counselling services for survivors of torture and Doras Luimni, which provides refugees with assistance in finding private rented accommodation and other services.

There are a number of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) run and operated by refugees, including the African Refugee Network. The Network offers free English language, computer courses and other supports for refugees. However, the network, like other small NGOs and community groups has experienced difficulties in securing and maintaining funding for its activities.

In the context of the Bosnian resettlement programme (see Chapter VI), the State assisted in the development of two organisations: the Bosnian Community Development Project (BCDP) and the Zena Project. The role of the BCDP was to maintain an information/resource centre, promote cultural activities and de-

velop activities and employment opportunities. The project employs a number of Bosnian nationals and is still in existence today. The Zena Project focussed on the particular situation of Bosnian refugee women. The experience of the operation of these projects has demonstrated the need for targeted and comprehensive capacity building training for refugees involved in running community organisations.

At present, efforts are being undertaken in Ireland to support the development of refugee community organisations and ethnic community groups. Comhlámh, an Irish association of development workers, co-funds Integrating Ireland, an independent network of community and voluntary groups working to promote the human rights, equality and full integration in Irish society of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants. The network currently comprises over 190 organisations from all over Ireland. Integrating Ireland aims to promote a positive model of integration, to encourage an active community, voluntary and statutory sector response to the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants and to develop a strong and vibrant representative network. Integrating Ireland is also funded by the European Refugee Fund.

A number of conferences aimed at promoting the development of refugee community organisations (RCOs) have been organised by the Irish Refugee Council. In October 2004, the Council hosted a conference entitled “the Role of Refugee Community Organisations in Representing and Servicing their Communities”. The conference aimed to explore the potential role to be played by RCOs in Ireland and to encourage wider debate on the potential for Irish RCOs to act as representatives for and deliver services to their communities.

In addition, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) has coordinated the setting up of local support groups in areas where refugees reside and supports such groups with information and capacity building measures (see Chapter II section 5 for further information). The RIA also manages the provision of grants under the European Refugee Fund and its own Small Grants Scheme to local groups and emerging community groups.

GOOD PRACTICE

ASSOCIATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN KILKENNY

ARAK - the Association of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Kilkenny is a recently established representative organisation set up, with the assistance of the Community and Enterprise Division of the Local Authority, to work on behalf of Asylum Seekers and Refugees by proactively highlighting their issues and circumstances with a view to improving their lives and opportunities. ARAK intends to become a strategic link between service providers and the refugee and asylum seeking community in Kilkenny. It will have a role in liaising with service providers and providing support and information to its own community.

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

LANGUAGE AND OTHER TRAINING FOR ADULTS

- ➔ Free language training should be made available to all resettled refugees. Access to training for all should be facilitated by providing access to child care facilities or, where, this is not possible for financial reasons, organising shared child care initiatives within communities.
- ➔ Language training should commence as soon as possible after the arrival of resettled refugees. An accurate and comprehensive initial assessment of training needs is crucial.
- ➔ Resettled refugees should be involved in the development of the curriculum and adult teaching methods, including participatory methods should be employed.
- ➔ Language training should ideally be delivered in one continuous course consisting of an adequate amount of hours per week (around 20 hours) and series of short courses should be avoided. Flexibility should be built into to course schedules in order to accommodate, as best as possible, students who have child care or other carer responsibilities in the home. Regard should also be had to the particularly difficult circumstances of some resettled refugees and provision should be made to accommodate absences related to those circumstances.
- ➔ Language training delivered in a work environment should be used as much as possible. In addition there should be ongoing collaboration between training providers and employment service providers in order to best prepare students for the labour market and/or further training.
- ➔ Where necessary, students should be permitted to take the same level language course more than once.
- ➔ Interpretation in the context of language training should be provided only where necessary.
- ➔ Language training courses should be subject to periodic external evaluation and to continuous internal evaluation and development including peer evaluation.
- ➔ When purchasing training services, the preparation of the request for tenders is important. The tender document should include all the elements essential to making the training correspond both to the needs of the labour-market and to the integration needs of the students.
- ➔ Access to third level education on the same basis as nationals should be facilitated.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

- ➔ When planning a person's path to employment, the key concepts are realism, individuality, and long-term consideration. The most essential point is co-operation with employers.
- ➔ Mentoring and other individual forms of assistance should be provided to resettled refugees to assist them in making the transition from training courses to employment. In particular, efforts should be taken to facilitate contact between resettled refugees and potential employers.
- ➔ Specific measures should be undertaken to assist resettled refugees in avoiding the 'poverty trap' (where individuals cannot take up employment because they will lose their social welfare benefits on taking up employment for a salary which will not cover their living costs).
- ➔ Strategies should be developed to promote the recognition of qualifications and prior work experience attained abroad.
- ➔ Individualised plans should be drawn up for each refugee. In the context of drawing up such plans, efforts should be made to ensure that trainers and other relevant actors take account of the potential barriers and obstacles faced by refugees.
- ➔ Awareness raising activities and other measures should be undertaken to engage with employers, raise awareness concerning refugees' right to work and the contribution they can make to the labour market. Activities undertaken should also aim to promote diversity in the work place and the employment of resettled refugees.

EQUALITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION MEASURES

- ➔ Comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination should be adopted. Equality bodies charged with ensuring compliance with and implementation of legislation should be established.
- ➔ Policies aimed at promoting equality and diversity should be drawn up and implemented through legislation and through awareness raising and other promotional work with the aim creating a positive environment in which minority groups, including resettled refugees can flourish.
- ➔ Complaints and redress systems for persons who have suffered discrimination should be established.
- ➔ Information concerning the prohibition of discrimination should be disseminated widely to public service providers and among the general public at large.

Introduction

Concept of Integration

The concept of integration is a rather complex one. There have been many attempts to encapsulate the concept in a neat definition with a variety of results. In its *Integration Handbook*, the UNHCR notes that integration is a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and on-going process. In Finland, the Integration Act of 1999 defines integration as “*the individual development of an immigrant with a view to participating in working life and in the functions of the society at large, while preserving the immigrant’s native language and culture*”.

In Ireland, the Interdepartmental Working Group on Integration produced a report entitled “Integration: a two way process” in 1999. In the report, the Working Group adopted the following definition of integration: “*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*”. In arriving at this definition, the Working Group noted that integration should not be seen as a static concept but rather as a process that undergoes constant change as society evolves. It also noted that integration must be seen as a two way process which places certain duties and obligations on refugees and on the host society at both national and community level, in order to create an environment in the host society that welcomes refugees as people who have something to contribute to society. The Working Group considered that integration policy should be aimed both at the preservation of the ethnic, cultural and religious identity of the individual and at the removal of barriers affecting refugees’ ability to access mainstream services.

At a personal level, integration has a different meaning for every individual. The history and past experiences of every refugee have an enormous impact on the integration process. Have they been in a closed refugee camp or have they had freedom of movement and the opportunity to work in the country of first asylum? How long have they waited for resettlement to a safe third country? Have they been tortured? Is the whole family resettling together or are some family members left behind in the country of origin or elsewhere. All these factors affect the integration process. And, naturally, the unique personal characteristics of every individual have a bearing on it too.

In the Finnish language a new word has been developed for integration. This new word “*kotoutua*” is derived from the Finnish word “*koti*” (meaning home). Integration thus means “beginning to feel at home”. When discussing integration refugees often talk about the former home country and the new home country and compare them. Integration can also be something which occurs in a trans-national context, for refugees living in diaspora, trans-national relationships can be very important. They can, in a way, integrate into to the trans-national diaspora community, with some family members living in USA and others in the Netherlands and Norway.

Arguably, the most important aspect of the notion of integration is that it is a ‘two way’ process. It is a process which happens for both the receiving society and newly-arrived refugees. It involves some effort and adjustment by both the members of the receiving society and the newcomers. The process also involves a willingness to be open to new experiences and to appreciate and respect the culture of the ‘other’. We have tried to capture these ideas in the title of the Guide “Shaping Our Future”, the idea being that resettled refugees’ futures can be shaped by refugees themselves and by the receiving society, working together in partnership.

Scope of this Guide concerning integration

Equal in measure to the scope of the notion of integration is the scope of the policy measures and practical initiatives which can be undertaken to promote the integration process. The MORE Project did not set out to cover, in detail, all aspects of the integration process in its work and in the production of this Guide. Rather, the Project focussed on developing new practical approaches to two key integration issues: language training for adult refugees and accessing the labour market. In this Chapter of the Guide, practice in Ireland and Finland in relation to training, accessing the labour market and equality legislation and other equality measures is examined. Information concerning the practical development tasks undertaken in Finland and in Ireland to test new approaches to language training and employment is also outlined.

The limited scope of the treatment of integration issues in this Guide is due also to a desire to avoid duplicating other work already undertaken and produced. There is, already in existence, a vast array of publications concerning integration which provide valuable information and tools for actors involved in integration work. For instance, the UNHCR publication “Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration”. This handbook covers all of the major integration issues including; language training, employment, health, orientation, community etc. The Handbook sets out, in some detail, how to establish a new integration programme and contains practical examples and strategies relative to the establishment of such a programme.

In addition, the European Commission recently published the first edition of its “Handbook on Integration for Policy Makers and Practitioners” in November 2004. A second edition of this handbook concerning additional policy fields related to integration is planned for publication in 2006.

It is hoped that the practical information contained in this Guide will contribute to the lively discourse concerning integration and be of assistance to policy makers and practitioners charged with developing and implementing strategies to promote integration in EU Members States and beyond.

1. Language and other forms of training

1.1. Language training and orientation to the new society/integration training

Knowledge of the language of the country of resettlement is key to the successful integration of resettled refugees into the new society in which they find themselves. It is therefore important that receiving resettlement countries take steps to ensure that the specific needs of resettled refugees can be met either through the existing mainstream services or by the adoption of specific measures to meet the needs identified. Of primary importance is the delivery, at a very early stage, of language training and education services. As noted in Chapter IV, the initial reception period can have an enormous impact on the longer term integration prospects of an individual. At the risk of stating the obvious, it is clear that providing an opportunity to acquire even basic knowledge of the language of the country of resettlement during the initial reception period is key to the integration process as a whole.

LINKAGES WITH OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

To adequately address the language training needs of resettled refugees, resettlement countries should acknowledge the linkages between the different phases of the resettlement process and give consideration to the issue of language training at the earliest stages of the process. When establishing a refugee resettlement programme (see Chapter II), resettlement countries should clearly establish the right to free language training and education for adults and children. Details concerning the delivery of these services should also be developed. At the selection phase (see Chapter III), applicants should be informed of their rights and obligations concerning language training and education in the resettlement country. Decisions concerning the numbers and backgrounds of refugees selected might also be influenced by the logistics of language training and or education provision in the resettlement country. For example, groups of refugees with similar education or linguistic backgrounds can be easier to accommodate in language classes than groups with highly diverse needs and backgrounds.

At the earliest possible stage, ideally prior to the arrival of the refugees, language training and education providers should be informed of the arrivals in order that they can undertake any necessary preparations. And finally, at the initial reception phase, the national authorities should provide information and support to training providers, especially to those providers who may not have worked with refugees or non-nationals previously.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND AND IRELAND

Practice in the field of language and orientation training and the education systems in Finland and in Ireland is set out below. Good practices within these systems identified during the course of the MORE Project are also identified. It is

important to note that the education and training systems are different in every country. The practice set out below is illustrative in nature, rather than a demonstration of practice that should be followed in every case.

MORE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

As noted in the introduction to this Guide, the MORE Project was aimed at developing models for the resettlement process. These models were to be developed using a number of methods including the testing of new tools and innovative approaches in a series of development tasks undertaken at national level in Finland and in Ireland. The MORE Project undertook four development tasks aimed at testing new methods in the delivery of training to resettled refugees. Two of the tasks were undertaken in Finland and another two were undertaken in Ireland. Information concerning these development tasks and their outcomes are set out in paragraph 1.3 below concerning language training for adults and in Section 2 concerning the labour market. Additional Project activities, including the Irish National Workshop on Training and Employment also contributed to the modelling process, and, in particular, to the list of key issues and recommendations set out at the beginning of this Chapter.

1.2. Primary and secondary education for children

PRACTICE IN IRELAND

OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN IRELAND

Immigrant children residing in Ireland, including resettled refugees, are entitled to free primary and post-primary education, regardless of their legal status. Education in Ireland is compulsory from age 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of second level (post-primary) education, under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. While there is no national provision for pre-schooling in Ireland, first level schools (also called national or primary schools) accept children on or after their fourth birthday.

The vast majority of primary schools are State funded, privately owned 'all through' schools catering for pupils from 4 to 12 years of age. The great majority of pupils transfer to second level school when they have completed the full first level course, generally at about 12 years of age. For registration in a second level school, students must be aged 12 on 1 January in the first year of attendance. The second level school span is predominantly a six-year cycle, taken by ages 12 to 18.

Many aspects of the administration of the Irish education system are centralised in the Department of Education and Science. The Department, inter alia, sets the general regulations for the recognition of schools, prescribes curricula and establishes regulations for the management, resourcing and staffing of schools.

Schools are obliged to enrol any child in respect of whom application for admission has been made, except where a refusal is in accordance with their

admissions policy, published by the school under Section 15(2)(d) of the Education Act, 1998, and is necessary to protect the ethos of the school. Such an admissions policy cannot discriminate on grounds of nationality or legal status. The Equal Status Act specifies four areas in which a school must not discriminate in the admission of a student, the access of a student to a course, any other terms or conditions of participation in the school and the expulsion of a student or any other sanction.

Historically, denominational bodies played an important role in the provision of education in Ireland. Religious bodies owned and managed most schools at primary and second level. In excess of 90% of primary schools and 50 % of post-primary schools are in Roman Catholic control. Most other schools are inter-denominational, in the control of minority Protestant denominations or are operated by other religious groups.

Although religious education classes are taught in schools, it is important to note that children have a Constitutional right to not attend religious education classes should they so wish. Usually, resettled refugee children who choose not to attend religious education classes are provided with extra language classes or some other activity as an alternative.

All Irish schools promote tolerance, mutual respect and an understanding of cultural, ethnic, racial, social and religious diversity. The celebration of intercultural diversity is, for many schools, becoming an important component of school life and is emphasised in civic, social and political education lessons.

Students' dress code is a matter for individual school managements and, generally, where a religious or cultural requirement is out of keeping with the school uniform a compromise is agreed between the family and the school, for example wearing a required garment under or along with the uniform garments.

ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR RESETTLED REFUGEE AND NON-NATIONAL CHILDREN

On arrival in Ireland, most resettled refugee parents do not speak English and are unfamiliar with the Irish education system. Where necessary, staff at the Reception and Integration Agency (which includes staff seconded from the Department of Education) or its local partners assist parents in the enrolment of their children in local schools.

All immigrant children are placed in age appropriate classes, unless their standard of English language is so low as to prevent them from successfully following the curriculum of their peer group. In this case school authorities may place them in classes one level/year below. With the possible exception of Gaeilge (Irish Language) and Religious Education, they follow the same curriculum as their peers, children from abroad who have no understanding of English are required to study only one of English or Irish language at school. The vast majority of immigrant children study English.

The Department of Education and Science has put in place a system of language support for non-English speaking children enrolled in mainstream

schools. This support takes the form of financial assistance, additional temporary teacher posts or portions of teacher posts. The level of support provided to any school is determined by the number of non-English speaking pupils enrolled in a school. School management can decide on the structure of the support to be provided in their own school, but it must focus on the language needs of the non-English speaking children, allowing them full access to the mainstream curriculum in a short a time as possible.

There is flexibility for schools in deciding the way in which to structure language support. The majority of schools operate a 'withdrawal' system whereby small groups of non-English speaking children are withdrawn from mainstream class during the normal school day for a number or hours per week. The most common mainstream class subjects from which such children are withdrawn are Gaeilge and Religious Education.

All children, including refugees, enrolled in schools are counted for the purposes of capitation grants to the school. In addition, grants are allocated to primary and post-primary schools by the Department of Education and Science to fund schoolbooks for children whose parents/guardians are unable to do so. Refugees may avail of this School Books Grant Scheme.

Free Transport is provided to eligible children, based on distance from school, regardless of their legal status. An exemption from fees for State Examinations is also available to holders of medical cards regardless of their status.

Integrate Ireland Language Training (IILT) was established in 1999. One of its principal tasks is to provide a programme of support for teachers in primary and post-primary schools responsible for English language development of non-English speaking immigrant pupils (for further information concerning IILT's other activities, see paragraph 1.3 above). The IILT has developed materials to support the learning of English as a second language in schools.

A record of the child's progress is kept and the child receives her/his own language learning portfolio. The portfolio is an important informative tool should the child move schools while still in the process of improving their competence in English. Parents can apply for financial assistance for the purchase of new books and school uniforms from the school principal and the State (Community Welfare Officer) respectively.

INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Much of Ireland's policy framework has sought to promote equality and interculturalism through education. The Primary School Curriculum recognises the diversity of beliefs, values and aspirations of all religious and cultural groupings in Irish society and acknowledges that it has a responsibility in promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in both school and the community.

At second level, the aims of the Junior Certificate Programme include developing a tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of others and to prepare the young person for the responsibilities of citizenship in the national context and in the context of the wider European and global communities. All sub-

ject areas contain opportunities for engaging in intercultural education while the principles of intercultural education are more explicitly expressed in certain subjects' syllabuses.

NURTURING OF CULTURAL AWARENESS AND MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGE

Unlike Finnish schools, Irish schools do not provide specific tuition in the mother tongue languages of resettled refugees. Schools have autonomy regarding adaptations made to the school environment in recognition of the multicultural nature of their students. Many schools display signs, posters and artwork in the main languages and traditions of the cultures represented in the school community and promote cultural events during which the languages, food, dress, music and dance of the students can be showcased. It is not uncommon for schools to acknowledge religious seasons such as Ramadan or the Chinese New Year.

It is worth noting that NGOs in Ireland produce and distribute multi-cultural awareness raising materials to schools throughout the country.

GOOD PRACTICE

PRODUCTION OF INFORMATION LEAFLETS

Information leaflets for parents of asylum seeker and refugee children attending primary and post-primary education in Ireland were produced by the Reception and Integration Agency with the assistance of Integrate Ireland Language Training and asylum seeker parents, school principals and teachers. The leaflets were also translated into a number of languages. The leaflets will be updated to take account of changes in practice and policy.

PRACTICE IN FINLAND

PRELIMINARY TEACHING BEFORE ATTENDANCE AT MAINSTREAM COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

The school history of many refugee children contains interruptions, sometimes quite long ones. Refugee children and youth may also have been excluded from the educational system. The most difficult age bracket for people undergoing the resettlement process is 11 – 25 years of age. It is very important for persons of this age group to receive sufficient support in respect of schooling. The preliminary teaching provided in Finland before entry into the comprehensive school system is of greatest benefit for those children/young people who are at the right age for comprehensive school. The tuition helps to prevent the potential risks of exclusion in later years. Another important form of support at the initial stages of integration is the delivery of lessons in the pupil's own language by a school aide speaking the child's own mother-tongue (a language assistant).

The goals of the preliminary teaching are:

- ➔ to familiarise the pupil with the Finnish culture and school system;
- ➔ to provide the pupil with Finnish language skills to help them function in a Finnish-speaking environment;
- ➔ to support “learning to study” skills and the development of other skills needed at school and to create a social and emotional learning environment that will promote learning ability;
- ➔ to support the child’s development in their own mother-tongue if possible.

A personal study programme is made for each pupil concerned. In drawing up the programme, attention is paid to the pupil’s age, abilities to study, and educational background. The programme sets out the pupil’s educational level at the beginning of the programme, goals, subjects to be studied, how integration into ordinary classes will be achieved, arrangements for personal instruction, and other possible support measures. The programme is also sent to the comprehensive school where the pupil will be transferred.

During the first school year, the preliminary teaching provides the pupil with information on the Finnish school system, student assessment, subjects to be studied, cultural norms, and the Finnish language, which is used as a language of tuition as much as possible right from the beginning. In the initial stages of the teaching, the pupil can participate in some lessons together with Finns of the same age, for example at music, physical education, handicrafts, and visual arts lessons. By being involved in some lessons in the comprehensive teaching and in the common events of the school together with Finnish children, the pupil gets an idea of the values and work methods of the school and of the celebrations held at different times of the year.

It is a good idea to visit the homes of pupils attending preliminary teaching either before the child starts going to school or right after. An interpreter, or the language assistant from the preliminary teaching classes, should attend the visit together with the teacher. At the visit, the parents are informed about the schedules, travelling to school, school lunches, appropriate clothing in different seasons, and the rules of the school. The parents often have many questions to ask. By answering them it is possible to relieve the fears that come up when the child is sent to a new school.

The importance of using the pupil’s mother-tongue at home is emphasised: learning things in Finnish is much easier if the child knows the necessary concepts in their own language. The parents are encouraged to contact the teachers and discuss even small issues. In that way, misunderstandings are avoided, and the parents feel that they are appreciated at their child’s school. They know what to expect and how their child’s progress will be assessed. Thus they can be involved in supporting their child’s school education.

Young people who are illiterate when they enter the upper grades of the comprehensive school need particular long-term personal support including a

longer period of time at preliminary tuition and other support measures. For the social and psychological welfare of a child/young person, it is important to be able to integrate them in an age-appropriate grade at comprehensive teaching. If the pupil has learning difficulties or an illness, they must get help with these problems as soon as possible in order to avoid possible exclusion due the problems in question.

Pupils also receive career counselling. The aim of the counselling is to make sure that the pupil has a realistic image of their opportunities for post-school studies and has a reasonably clear idea of the requirements of the labour market when they finish comprehensive school. The assessment of the pupil should be supportive and encouraging. It also develops their capability for self-assessment. The assessment includes discussions with the pupil and their parents. The results of the assessments are written down into the pupil's personal programme of studying. On the basis of the assessment, the suitable grade level is identified once the preliminary teaching is completed.

The role of the student care system is to take care of the basic conditions of learning: physical, social, and psychological. Attention is also paid to the early recognition of pupils who need special support or services. Necessary support measures should be introduced in a timely fashion. Parents receive information about the availability, practices and methods of the support measures provided by the Finnish school including health care, and social security provisions. When an integration plan is being made for a pupil, plans for school support (if any) are produced in co-operation with the pupil and the people drawing up the plan.

For every child, it is important to study or keep up their own mother-tongue language. It is essential in any family that the parents and children have a common language. Keeping up the mother-tongue also enables the children/young people to keep in touch with people still living in the original home-countries of their families. When the young persons grow up, their language skills may also turn out to be very valuable at the job-market. And, after all, the mother-tongue is "the language of thoughts".

GOOD PRACTICE

SUPPORTING MOTHER TONGUE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

In Finland, the "Kesälukioseura" (the Summer High School Association) organises about ten mother-tongue language and culture camps for refugee children from different countries every summer. At the camps, children living in different parts of Finland can meet each other. They study their own language and various aspects of the history and culture of their original home-country. At the same time, they get to know the local environment and may, for example, play a football match against local youths. The camps also provide job opportunities for refugee adults.

After the preliminary tuition, pupils are usually transferred to mainstream comprehensive teaching within one school year. At that stage, the pupil should know the essential Finnish vocabulary needed at school. The transfer to the nearest school for the comprehensive teaching is prepared in co-operation between the receiving school and the parents.

COMPREHENSIVE TEACHING

At the comprehensive school, immigrant pupils study according to the same curriculum as the other children with one exception, they follow the alternative course of “Finnish as a second language”. Language assistants are also used in comprehensive schools. Thus, the child/young person can get support in their own language during the first stages of studying at comprehensive school.

OLDER STUDENTS

Young immigrants who are above the age limit for entry to comprehensive schools or who have received sufficient comprehensive teaching in their original homecountry need individual plans related to learning the Finnish language. It is good practice to accept all young people under 17 years of age in a preliminary tuition course if they are willing to join it. People under 17 are not eligible for employment training courses.

Another alternative is the separate integration course for immigrants organised by a number of institutions in Finland, including the Open Academy of Lahti. This Academy and the local school administration of the city have good co-operation. All young people over 16 years of age can participate in this integration training. The training in Lahti takes one to two years depending on the person’s plans for further studies and progress in the Finnish language. At the integration training, a personal programme of studies is created for each student paying special attention to the plans for future training.

A third option is the preliminary classes of the vocational schools. At these classes, pupils with low levels of competence in Finnish learn the Finnish language for the first year with the vocabulary of their future trade as one of the main areas of emphasis.

Regardless of the person’s age, the courses of the comprehensive or grammar school may also be taken at evening classes, for instance side by side with working. However, this requires good Finnish language skills.

REFUGEE STORY

THE HASSAN FAMILY STORY

During the first weeks after arrival in Finland the family received information about the school system. The eldest daughter Bahared and the nephew Rashad commenced their studies in folk high school where they were able

to finish the upper level of comprehensive school and get guidance for further studies in high school or vocational education. The twins also attended this school after they completed their preparatory education.

The folk high school also arranged education for illiterate adults. Hassan's wife took a course there. She was very excited to start her studies after day care had been arranged for five year old Asaed. She was very motivated and had no problems progressing within the course. She even started to plan taking driving lessons in the future.

Hassan's path to the labour market will be presented in the next chapter. Before the school aged children started their studies the teachers, school welfare officer and language assistant visited their home. The children had an opportunity to talk about their schooling in Iran and Turkey and they learned a lot about the Finnish school system. They were also informed about the availability of voluntary mother tongue education – the lessons were held after the regular school days. The importance of maintaining skills in the mother tongue language was emphasised to the parents as it supports the development of identity and also helps individuals to learn new languages.

Seven year old Arin started his studies in a class together with other immigrant children. He quickly learned to read and was interested in almost everything. After school he went to an afternoon club arranged by the local congregation where he met other children from the area and made friends with his future classmates.

For the teenagers, the schooling began in a class together with older children with different cultural backgrounds. As well as Finnish, they studied mathematics and undertook some orientation lessons.

Aida was shy and had difficulties learning Finnish. Soon it was discovered that she had poor eye sight and needed glasses. This improved the situation a little, however, she demonstrated some symptoms of dyslexia and had difficulties concentrating, possibly due to some traumatic experiences she had suffered. She met with a psychologist and group therapy was arranged for her.

Amina was very hardworking, quickly learned how to use a dictionary and was able to help her siblings. Soon she was also able to write stories in Finnish. After attendance at the preparatory class she was ready to attend a mainstream eighth grade class. She was very extrovert and socially active and wished to become a teacher when she grew up. She also had many friends.

Monira was a very dutiful girl and she took care of her younger siblings too. She had to work very hard in order to reach the goals set for her in her study plan. Her twin brother Aram was not interested in school at all. He did not concentrate during the lessons and often he skipped classes completely. He mixed with youngsters who his parents did not approve of. Aram's teacher had to contact his parents constantly and family counselling were engaged in trying to identify support measures for him throughout his first year at school.

1.3. Training for adults

In most resettlement countries, adult resettled refugees have the opportunity to take part in training programmes which include language lessons, civics, computer skills, information about the labour market and/or work practice. The curricula naturally varies from country to country but the basic elements of such training programmes are usually language lessons and work practice.

Given the central importance of language, orientation and other initial training for the immediate and longer-term integration prospects of resettled refugees, the MORE Project conducted a number of development tasks aimed at testing new and innovative approaches to the delivery of training to resettled refugees. The outcomes of these development tasks and a brief description of practice in this area in Finland and in Ireland is set out below.

IRELAND

GENERAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

Integrate Ireland Language Training (IILT) provides English language training to all adult resettled refugees in the State free of charge. This service is funded by the State and all resettled refugees are expected to attend the classes provided.

The English language and integration courses provided by IILT are full time. Two broad categories of student are catered for. Reception 1 are students who have little or no proficiency in English and for whom the shock of the new host culture is greatest. These students have immediate language needs in order to “survive” and need a high level of support to navigate their way in the new and sometimes quite alien host culture that is Ireland. This category is further subdivided to address the particular needs of learners who are not literate in their mother tongue or in Roman script. Reception level 2 students have some level of proficiency in English and fewer barriers to overcome on the road to successful integration. All students in reception classes are consulted, interviewed and assessed on a regular basis to speed them on their way to further training, sustainable work careers and an independent and productive role in Irish society. Maximum class size is normally 15 students, and teachers are

aware of the importance of meeting both the needs of the group and the individual. Using the Milestone European Language Portfolio, course content is negotiated with the class and typically covers such themes as: personal identification, learning to learn, dealing with officials, cultural awareness, health and the body and many others.

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

IILT also provides an intensive academic course for those wishing to enter university or achieve professional recognition in Ireland. This course focuses on the skills necessary for student life such as: note taking skills, listening comprehension and report writing. The course also prepares the students for the TOEFL test (Test of English as a Foreign Language: accreditation mechanism for English language skills, recognised in most English speaking countries particularly for higher education) and the ILETS test (International English Language Testing Service: accreditation mechanism for testing English language skills, recognised in most English speaking countries particularly for higher education) which is rapidly replacing TOEFL as the preferred test in the Irish system.

PRE-VOCATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

Resettled Refugees have the same rights as an Irish national as regards the right to work and to vocational training.

FÁS, Ireland's national training and employment authority is the main provider of vocational training in Ireland. Through its work, it aims to:

- ➔ *Improve employability, job skills and mobility;*
- ➔ *Meet labour market needs;*
- ➔ *Promote competitiveness and social inclusion.*

FÁS provides pre-vocational training for immigrants, including resettled refugees, in collaboration with Integrate Ireland Language Training (IILT). Details concerning the current programme are provided below.

Pre-vocational English language and computer training courses of six months duration are offered in some FÁS training centres. IILT is responsible for the testing of participants and the delivery of the English language component of this course. The comprehensive testing and assessment interview designed by IILT seeks to identify a minimum threshold of proficiency for entry to pre-vocational level B1 in the Common European Framework. Candidates who are assessed at a lower level are referred for more basic training to IILT's other centres, while those who achieve B2 or better are recommended for direct entry to mainstream vocational training courses. Twenty hours per week are devoted to focused language learning through modules related to training, gaining employment, the workplace, cross cultural issues and other issues. The remaining time is spent on computer training, which is delivered by FÁS.

The purpose of these courses is to prepare participants for entry into mainstream vocational courses in FÁS or for direct entry into the labour market. The pre-vocational language courses were initially developed as part of the EU Integration project 1997-2000.

OTHER LANGUAGE AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

In addition to the language training provided by IILT, courses are also provided free of charge by the Vocational Educational Colleges (VEC's) and Non-Government Organisations, (NGO's). These courses offer more limited hours than the IILT courses. Some resettled refugees avail of these courses to complement or top-up training received from IILT. The courses can also act as a useful stop gap for newly arrived resettled refugees who are placed on a waiting list for IILT training. SPIRASI, an NGO based in Dublin provides language training for asylum seekers, refugees and other non-nationals. The organisation provides language and literacy training and an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) accredited programme. It also provides computer training at different levels, and language outreach services for families who are unable to access mainstream language programmes, in particular parents looking after children in the home.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION (UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES ETC.)

In Ireland, under the Free Fees Initiative, the State meets the tuition fees of eligible students who are entering approved third-level courses and are first-time undergraduates. Students who hold refugee status and have been ordinarily resident in an EU Member State for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third-level course are eligible.

The Higher Education Grants Scheme, The Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees, The Vocational Education Committees Scholarship Scheme and The Maintenance Grants Scheme for Students attending Post-Leaving Certificate Courses provide means tested grants to students, including refugees, who are pursuing approved courses for the first time where they satisfy essential conditions. To be eligible for a grant under these schemes a student must satisfy age conditions, have fulfilled the Leaving Certificate examination (final secondary school exam in Ireland) attainment condition for the purpose of the Scheme, conform to income limits and have been ordinarily resident in the administrative area of the local authority from 1 October in the year preceding their date of entry to third level education.

Students who are ineligible to have their fees paid under the Free Fees Initiative and who qualify for the payment of a maintenance grant from their Local Authority may have their tuition fee paid by that Local Authority.

RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

Many resettled refugees who come to Ireland hold qualifications obtained

in their country of origin or other country. The recognition of qualifications obtained abroad can prove difficult to achieve. There is a procedure under which refugees and other persons with awards or qualifications obtained abroad can apply for recognition of their awards in Ireland. However, many refugees lack the required documentation for the application process or find that the relevant professional body will not recognise their award.

In Ireland, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) is the Irish centre for the recognition of international awards. The Authority represents Ireland in a European Network of centres known as NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) and NRP (National Reference Point). As the centre for NARIC and NRP in Ireland, the NQAI's main functions are:

- ➔ *To facilitate the recognition of international awards in Ireland;*
- ➔ *To provide information on Irish and foreign vocational and academic awards.*

The centre does not have a direct recognition function itself. The centre consults with the appropriate awarding body in Ireland in order to make an assessment of qualifications and to determine their comparability within the Irish education system.

Recognition of an award or qualification determines how an international award compares to an award in the Irish education system. It gives an indication, in principle, on the comparability of an award. The result of the recognition is intended as a recommendation regarding an award or qualification and as such does not have any legal status in Ireland.

In order to establish the comparability of awards, the relevant body examines the course of study undertaken overseas. By examining the subjects studied and the level of the qualification, the body endeavors to establish the comparability of the award. Each application is processed individually and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. However, study programmes and the structure of education programmes can vary greatly between countries. Because of this, it may not be possible to establish the comparability of some international awards.

In order to process a request for recognition of an award or qualification, applicants must forward the following documents:

- ➔ *Completed application form;*
- ➔ *Certified photocopy of the Award (Degree, Diploma, Certificate etc.) in its original language;*
- ➔ *Certified photocopy of the transcript/mark sheets/list of subjects passed in the original language;*
- ➔ *Certified translation of the award into English or Irish;*
- ➔ *Translation of transcript/mark sheets/list of subjects passed.*

As mentioned above, many resettled refugees have particular difficulties in obtaining the documentation listed here. Copies of lost or misplaced awards some-

times cannot be obtained where the awarding institution no longer exists or when the institution, for whatever reason, refuses to issue a copy of the award.

In addition to problems related to documentation, many professional regulatory bodies decide which awards to accept or not accept on a discretionary basis or in accordance with their own rules and regulations. Such regulatory bodies are often autonomous and outside of the sphere of influence of the public sector authorities.

FINLAND

Integration training aims to provide adult refugees with the linguistic, social, cultural, and life management skills that will enable them to cope with everyday situations in their new surroundings, to function in working life, to engage in further studies and to function as an active, fully competent and equal member of Finnish society. The aim after training is for refugees and other immigrants to find placements in vocational or university education programmes or directly in working life.

Integration training is arranged as pre-vocational labour market training. The employment authorities purchase the training after a competitive tendering process.

In April 2001 the National Board of Education issued a recommendation on integration training for adult immigrants. This training focuses on studies in the Finnish or Swedish languages, and there is a further emphasis on preparation for further education and working life. The initial training needs analysis examines such factors as the student's previous educational, vocational and career paths, and assesses the student's language skills, literacy and general knowledge. The training consists of study modules of varying length: Finnish or Swedish language studies (26-36 study weeks), everyday skills and life management (1-3 study weeks), social studies (3-4 study weeks), cultural awareness (1-3 study weeks), preparations for further studies and working life (6-7 study weeks) and optional subjects (0-3 study weeks). In addition to these study modules, training may include literacy studies of 20 to 30 study weeks.

There are many challenges in implementing the training like how to arrange skill audits and assess individual training need, development of new teaching and learning methods and producing teaching material.

The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education have appointed a new working group to solve any problems related to immigrant integration training, self-motivated training comparable to it, and the recognition of foreign degrees. At the same time, a comprehensive evaluation study of integration training will be performed, with funding from the ministries.

In addition to the labour market training many adult education institutes offer a wide variety of Finnish lessons and general courses like handicrafts etc., for immigrants.

PURCHASING LABOUR MARKET TRAINING

The following principles were developed by the Regional Employment and Economic Development Centre for Häme in connection with the Finnish national development task on training in Lahti.

When tendering for training programmes for refugees, the awarding authorities should clearly indicate the needs of the target group in order to solicit responses from training providers able to meet those needs. In particular, the invitation to tender documentation should include the following information:

- ➔ background information on the students (basic information about the resettled refugees);
- ➔ potential obstacles and capacities linked to the educational background and work experience of the student group;
- ➔ the main focus of the training, the learning environment, the forms and methods of studying;
- ➔ any additional training elements needed by the target group;
- ➔ information on how responses to tender will be evaluated.

After the students have been selected and during the course itself, tenderers should be asked to demonstrate a capacity to:

- ➔ provide more specific planning of the training after the selection of the students;
- ➔ organise the targeting of resources during the training;
- ➔ internally evaluate the training to guarantee quality and to improve similar courses to be held in the future.

RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

In Finland, recognition of foreign qualifications varies according to the country in which they were gained, the field of study and the level of qualification. Studies completed and qualifications gained within the European Union generally have a high level of comparability and are easily recognised. This includes, for example, the possibility of transferring academic credits acquired under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) which has been widely adopted and accepted in Finland. Similarly, medical and higher professional qualifications from within the EU are generally considered equivalent to Finnish qualifications in the same field. This means, for instance, that doctors and medical professionals who have diplomas from an EU country do not need to go through a special legalisation process. By contrast, the recognition and legalisation process for medical professionals from countries outside the EU is lengthy and complicated.

In general, the National Board of Education (NBE, *Opetushallitus*) is responsible for determining the equivalence of foreign qualifications. The applicant must usually submit foreign documents, along with an official translation in

Finnish, to the NBE for evaluation and approval. The NBE may request further proof or documentation from the applicant, and may also contact the home institution for verification or details on documents. If the documents are approved, the applicant receives formal recognition and, if applicable, an equivalence of the qualification with the corresponding Finnish one. However, credit transfer procedures for inclusion of previous studies into new Finnish educational transcripts are carried out by the individual departments or faculties of each higher education institution. Another exception is that recognition of medical diplomas is handled by the National Board of Medicolegal Affairs (*Terveydenhuollon oikeusturvakeskus*). Finally it is worth mentioning that foreign teaching qualifications are generally not accepted as it is compulsory to obtain the formal Finnish requirements for teaching at various educational levels, ranging from day care and kindergarten to university.

1.4 National Development Tasks

IRELAND

TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As noted above in paragraph 1.1. two connected development tasks concerning training for resettled refugees were conducted in Ireland.

A central objective of the MORE Project was to involve resettled refugees in the development and implementation of all activities targeted at them. Building on this objective, the Project conducted a development task with two phases.

For the first phase, the Project conducted an assessment of the training needs of resettled refugees. For the second phase of the development task, a training programme based on the recommendations of the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) was developed and implemented. This training programme is described in Section 2 below.

The primary aim of the TNA was to identify the training needs of resettled refugees from the point of view of resettled refugees. To achieve this aim, one to one interviews were carried out with resettled refugees and resettled refugees themselves were employed as interviewers. The assessment was conducted by an independent consultancy company which was contracted to undertake the work further to an open competitive tendering process. This independent, peer-led assessment of the needs of resettled refugees constituted a new approach to identifying the training needs of resettled refugees in Ireland.

OUTCOMES OF MORE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

OUTCOME OF THE TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT (TNA)

The Training Needs Assessment identified a number of areas where current need was not being met with adequate training and support services.

One of the most pronounced areas where support was found to be lacking was that of accessing the labour market and/or employment training programmes. A gap in support between the phase in which resettled refugees attended English language training and the next phase, in which many resettled refugees sought participation in the labour market, was identified.

In this connection, the following findings of the TNA are of note:

- ➔ Resettled refugees interviewed were asked to identify the level of training and support they received in respect of 14 specific areas. The areas of 'help to find a job' and 'employment training' were bottom of the list in terms of the degree of training and support received.
- ➔ Resettled refugees stated that employment training and support was the most important area of resettlement training and support for them (with education and language training coming second and third).
- ➔ Barriers to employment identified by respondents were, in order of frequency; language skills, unrecognised qualifications and discrimination (amongst others).
- ➔ When asked to suggest improvements to the current resettlement process, a quarter of respondents stated that more emphasis should be placed on training/adapting skills to access employment and support in accessing employment.
- ➔ Training providers highlighted the need for workplace mentors, the development of mentoring programmes and the provision of career guidance at an early stage for resettled refugees.

The first outcome of the TNA was that the training needs of resettled refugees were identified and current gaps in the provision of training services were identified.

The second outcome of the TNA was that a mentoring training programme was developed and implemented in order to seek to address certain of the gaps in training provision identified in the TNA. Information concerning this programme is provided in Section 2, paragraph 2.3 below.

FINLAND

DEVELOPMENT TASK 1: TESTING NEW INTEGRATION TRAINING METHODS IN LAHTI

The training was organised by the International Studies Programme of the Salpaus Training centre, which belongs to the Training Consortium of Päijät-Häme.

It is the largest provider of training for immigrants in the district of Lahti. Every year, it organises 30–40 training events for about 500 students with immigrant backgrounds. The integration course of the MORE Project was held between the 1 June and 29 September 2004. In July, there was a holiday period that lasted five weeks. There were 13 students included in the training. All the students were quota refugees from Sudan. The new methods and approaches used at the course are described below.

EMPLOYING A PEER SUPPORT PERSON

A peer support person assisted at the course during the first eight days. The peer support person was a Sudanese man who had lived in Finland for seven years. His role was to aid the students to get a good start and to tell the students about his own experiences as a Sudanese person living in Finland. The idea was also to use him to some extent as a school aide and a translator for the whole group.

At the Finnish lessons, the peer support person tried to help the new students with their studies. He also told the students about his own opinions and experiences. For instance, he held the lessons in one afternoon and described his personal path of life in Finland. The relationship between the students and the peer support person seemed to work well.

As far as learning Finnish was concerned, the problem was that the new students depended too much on the peer support person. They certainly had an easier time adapting to the course, but the presence of the peer support person did not actually promote learning. The students did not always even try to concentrate on the teacher's speech, to understand it, and to learn it.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION

During the course as a whole, 33 lessons of additional instruction were provided. Most of the additional instruction lessons were spent teaching the phonetics, spelling, basic vocabulary, and everyday phraseology of the Finnish language. Near the end of the course, the teacher also spent some additional tuition lessons on personal instruction of a few students. Earlier, all the students had already been interviewed with the aid of an interpreter. The discussions had concerned their plans for the future and expectations of life in Finland. When the course was coming to an end, some students' expectations of their future were further specified at additional tuition lessons. At the same time, the traumatic experiences of a few students in their original home-land were explored with the aid of an interpreter. They were also asked whether they wanted the authorities to help by, for instance, making contact with the rehabilitation centre for the victims of torture.

INTERPRETATION

At the Finnish lessons, interpreters were not usually needed. Interpreters were used by the teacher of the course when discussing social issues and general

information connected with the course itself. For example at local and general geography lessons and at the lessons held in order to increase the students' knowledge of their environment, interpreters were not used at all.

Interpreters differ from each other both by their skills and by their styles of work. Therefore it would be good for the teachers to be able to learn to know the interpreter(s) before working with them in a class room situation.

FUNCTIONAL LEARNING

In teaching the language, a large part of the work was done using various kinds of functional studying methods. During the initial stages, such methods are necessary. Learning by doing is also often more effective than traditional classroom work. Functional exercises varied greatly. There were small plays and games, pantomime practices, and practical speech exercises but also excursions that lasted the whole day.

When teaching Finnish, many kinds of speech and conversation exercises were arranged either in class or in actual situations. For instance, when teaching vocabulary connected with food, we looked at published advertisements. Words and numbers were studied with the aid of various kinds of games, etc.

In language learning, functional methods are necessary, especially given that the studying days last seven hours. The use of different work forms helps the students to concentrate better on the lessons. Students particularly liked all the practical speech exercises, such as asking about the prices of products at the market-place or in the shopping hall and doing introduction exercises together with the members of the other group. Different outings, map exercises, and excursions also functioned well in this type of training. They made the work load (of learning the language and the facts about the society) lighter for the students. The students learned to know Lahti and the surrounding district, local attractions, and possibilities for leisure activities. Excursions are useful especially at a course like this, where all the members of the group have only lived in Finland for a short time.

LINKS TO THE FIRST ORIENTATION AND TO THE WORK OF THE CITY

According to our experiences, the information given to the refugees at the first orientation session is often grasped in a fairly defective way. It came up in many situations that the students had clearly misunderstood some things. We had to correct many false ideas that had arisen during the first orientation, before, or after it. Students had, for example, unrealistic notions about the length of time it would take to receive permanent residence permits to stay in Finland or Finnish citizenship. Misconceptions arise easily. Refugees who are living in their own crises may often understand things in a way they would themselves like these things to be. Those who provide the first orientation should be very careful about everything they say. Correcting false information can help to avoid disappointments later.

We found that our co-operation with the employees of the service for immigrants in the city of Lahti functioned well. Information was exchanged fluidly between them and the trainers. Sometimes, however, the work was disturbed by the fact that both partners were very busy and worked under great pressure.

THE PICTURE PORTFOLIO

During the course, we took a lot of photographs of different studying situations with a digital camera. The students chose pictures that were important to them and put them into their own computer files. Near the end of the course, they moved them into Word documents and wrote short verbal descriptions of them assisted by the teachers. The purpose was that everybody would describe their own learning process and studying at the course in general with the aid of the photographs. At the same time, making the picture portfolio helped with learning computer skills.

The students liked choosing the photographs and writing the texts. The computer class was an interesting learning environment for them – for some of them it was also a new experience. Producing the texts was difficult for some people. Yet everybody managed to make some kind of portfolio. All the students did not, however, succeed in describing their own personal learning processes. The students understood the idea, but some of them did not quite manage to put it into practice. Pictures were chosen for the portfolio in a rather arbitrary order.

Basically, making a picture portfolio is a good idea and a work form that motivates the students. When planning the size of the portfolio in the future, more attention should, however, be paid to the language skills of the students. Considering how little the students were actually able to write independently about the photographs, we allowed them to spend too much time on choosing these pictures. This work form fitted much better for students that progressed quickly than for the ones who had problems with their Finnish skills. This method might thus be more useful at the courses for somewhat more advanced students.

In addition to the actual picture portfolio, we used pictures in the language teaching. We had various kinds of exercises. We used pictures as the basis for small conversational exercises and revised vocabulary with their aid. Pictures with familiar places or people motivated the students more than unknown ones taken for instance out of the newspapers.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN THE CONTENTS

At an orientation course like this, the most important things in language studies are the basic vocabulary and everyday phraseology of the Finnish language. These things were practised regularly all through the course. The orientation course is of particular importance to students whose mother-tongue differs completely from Finnish in its structure and spelling system. The basics must be learned well right at the beginning. Things that have been taught defectively are difficult to correct afterwards.

DEVELOPMENT TASK 2: PRACTICAL LANGUAGE TRAINING AT THE WORKPLACE IN KAJAANI

The national development task was carried out by the Adult Education Center Kaukametsä. It has much experience in training refugees and immigrants and every year trains 500 people of immigrant and refugee background. There were 30 students involved in the development task training in Kajaani. 18 of them were refugees from Afghanistan. At the course, a particular point of emphasis was an experiment with practical language training. The training for immigrants included 20 days and 140 lessons of practical language training in a work place situation. Each week of the course consisted of one day at classroom tuition and four language training days at the work place. The purpose of the language training was to enable the students to get more familiar with the Finnish work culture and to test their skills through practical work situations.

The goals of the training were defined individually depending on the different personal capabilities of each student. In choosing the workplaces where the students' did the language training, attention was paid to the students wishes and earlier work experience. Also, their plans for the future and possible wishes for training affected the choices. The most active students with the best Finnish skills looked for their language training sites independently. For the members of the illiterate students group, the training places were found by their course manager. The language training sites included schools, day-care facilities, shops, pizza huts, restaurants, a youth facility, and an internet cafeteria. Some students managed to find a place corresponding to their own trade or profession, for instance at a veterinary clinic, a sewing company, a garage and a beauty salon. The tasks of the students varied, of course, depended on the place of training.

A woman who had worked as a make-up artist in her own country received a training place at a beauty salon. During the first workdays there, she followed what the regular staff-members were doing and started then on her own initiative to perform tasks that she felt capable of doing. She made coffee, cleaned tables, and brought the other employees objects that they needed, such as combs, make-up brushes, and tubes containing colours and other cosmetic products.

It was more important than the actual work to encourage the students to use the Finnish language at the training site and in different kinds of everyday situations and to develop their skills of interaction and oral expression. The purpose of the training was for each student to familiarise him/herself with the training place and the person who would be in charge of supervising him/her there. The supervisor also functioned as a contact person between the institute and the training site. In the language training days, the course manager followed up with the students training and development by visiting everyone's work place from time

to time. If there were problems, the course manager helped the students and employers with solving them.

A very shy and introverted woman, who had arrived in Finland just a short time before the course, found the interaction situations at the training place difficult and frightening. Yet the other employees liked her very much. For the course manager, this situation required a particularly encouraging and supportive attitude. The teacher encouraged the student to use her dictionary actively. Gradually the student started to feel comfortable at her training site. She adopted the dictionary as an instrument of independent learning and showed a good example to the other students at the classroom lessons.

A questionnaire form was given to every student, and its contents were discussed during the classroom days of the language training period. Each student explained in turn which new words and expressions he/she had learned and in what kinds of situations. Then all the students had a more general conversation on the issues discussed. Interaction was thus created in the lessons through vocabulary. The teacher's task was to specify the meanings of words in different contexts for instance by providing example sentences. The students also discussed expressions including symbolic ones that they did not know. They made comparisons on how the same thing would be expressed in their own mother-tongues. Thus the conversation was based on their own situations. They also had the opportunity to teach each other new things.

EXAMPLE OF TRAINING BY NGOS

NGOs and other adult education service providers are active in arranging training for refugees in Finland and in Ireland. There follows the example of the Kotocross Project implemented in Finland.

GOOD PRACTICE

DRIVE-IN FINNISH LANGUAGE GROUPS

In Tampere, the Kotocross-project runs a non-stop language group called "drive-in Finnish language group". When a refugee resettles at Tampere, he doesn't always instantly get enrolled in a Finnish language course organised by Finnish authorities. The group organized by Kotocross is therefore a kind-of interim measure. This arrangement enables the newly resettled refugee to start learning Finnish basics immediately instead of waiting for access to Finnish tuition organised by the authorities.

In the course the newcomer becomes acquainted with new people from all over the world. The multicultural composition of the group can help partici-

pants to share experiences with people in a similar situation. In addition to studying Finnish, the students visit different civil service departments and companies, and they also get to know the activities of the Finnish Red Cross, public services in their new hometown as well as local sights.

The drive-in course runs five days a week for three hours per day. Thus the course may be considered as an additional integrational activity and can therefore be included in the refugee's integration plan. The course has proved its usefulness in its ability to create contacts with the business world. Some of the participants of the course have found employment or job placements as a consequence of the visits to employers. The course also considerably increases the newcomer's skills in coping with everyday life.

2. Getting into the labour market

2.1 Introduction: Labour market policy programmes and measures

INTRODUCTION

There are many challenges connected with facilitating access for refugees to the labour market. Many resettled refugees are highly educated, but their qualifications and professional experience may not be recognised in the receiving country or may not be appreciated sufficiently even if formally recognised. Many refugees have held high level professional positions in their own countries. At the labour market of their new home country, however, they often have to start over again at the beginning. Some of the newcomers may have had to interrupt their studies in their country of origin because of conflict or other political problems.

Other refugees may have very low levels of literacy and little or no training or experience. In some cases, the receiving country may deem that a person's work experience is not relevant to the labour market. Learning a new language does not always come quickly, especially where an individual has had traumatic experiences in the past. Worrying about relatives still living in the country from which they fled also consumes a lot of energy. Illiteracy is a major obstacle for the employment of many refugees.

The integration process of a refugee may take several years. Its duration depends both on an individual's personal ability and character and on the attitudes of the surrounding society towards newcomers. Simultaneous efforts must therefore be undertaken to improve refugees' employment skills, and promote openness and awareness within the society of the receiving country. In this regard, special attention must be paid to employers and employers' organisations.

Labour market policies and measures adopted in relation to resettled refugees are often framed within the receiving country's expectations for self-sufficiency amongst the newcomers. Some resettlement countries have high expect-

tations of early economic and social self-sufficiency through early employment. Self-sufficiency goals vary from eight months in the USA to between two and five years in the Nordic resettlement countries. These expectations can dictate the focus and duration of longer term integration programmes.

There is consensus, from the Norrköping Conference on the reception and integration of refugees held in Sweden in 2001, that intensive dedicated support in the early reception phase is critical (for further information concerning the Norrköping Conference follow the internet link in Appendix A).

There is a clear link between the measures undertaken in an employment policy framework and the language and other training provided to resettled refugees on arrival. One of the most important factors in the linkage between language training and accessing the employment market is the early commencement of language training, comprehensive assessment of need and the delivery of training tailored to meet the individual need. These issues are outlined in Section 1 above concerning language and other training.

Employment, and the integration process as a whole, can be promoted and accelerated through early access to training, individual guidance and instruction, support from authorities and the community, and contact with the labour-market received during training. Employment authorities and organisations have many alternative possibilities to support and promote the employment of refugees. These options include work experiments, training experiments, work practice periods, employment subsidies for employers, preliminary and vocational employment training, and various kinds of combined measures. With the aid of these measures, it is possible to create a functioning realistic path for a refugee to enter the labour market.

At the MORE Project's National Workshop on Training and Employment, held in Ireland, and in the context of the other consultation activities conducted during the Project, resettled refugees emphasised the difficulties they faced in entering the labour market. Many felt disillusioned that, after years of language and other training, they could not find employment. The importance of contact with employers was stressed. Refugees often felt isolated, not knowing any employers, and found it difficult to excel at employment interviews – a concept which was culturally alien to many of them. Job placements were often suggested as the best way forward, particularly where the employer might be involved in approving the pre-employment training and providing a guarantee of employment on completion of training. The most frequent sentiment expressed by resettled refugees during the project was that they wanted a chance to demonstrate what they could do in the workplace.

Additional obstacles identified by the resettled refugees were a dependence on social welfare provisions - the 'poverty trap' - and a lack of openness and/or discrimination on the part of the receiving society. As regards the latter point, measures aimed at tackling discrimination and promoting equality are set out in Section 3 below. With regards to social welfare provisions, many refugees noted that the salary they could obtain in their first job in the receiving country would

not cover their cost of living should all of their social welfare benefits be withdrawn the instant employment is commenced. Reference was made to this ‘poverty trap’ issue in Chapter IV paragraph 2.3 above concerning housing. This issue is touched upon again in the practice outlined below.

Accessing the labour market in EU countries can be a difficult task for everyone, EU citizens, immigrants and refugees. A large body of work on this subject has been undertaken at EU and national level. In this Section of the Guide, we concentrate on the particular circumstances of resettled refugees and the specific obstacles which they may face. Information concerning practice in Finland and Ireland is outlined with a view to illustrating these issues and the types of measures which can be taken to promote employment prospects. Information is also provided concerning the refugee mentoring development task undertaken in Ireland.

To begin with, there follows a refugee story which illustrates the complexity of this issue and the flexibility of the approach needed.

REFUGEE STORY

MR HASSAN'S STORY

In his original home country, Mr Hassan had studied economics and data-processing. After his arrival in Finland, Hassan spent nine months at integration training, where he studied the Finnish language, knowledge of the society, computer skills, and methods of searching for employment. There was also a work practice period connected with the training. Mr Hassan took this part of the course at a small computer firm.

Completing his studies of economics in Finland would have taken many years. In practice, Mr Hassan would have had to start his university studies almost at the beginning. Because he had a large family, he wanted to start working and earning money as soon as possible. An employment instructor suggested that Mr Hassan might utilise his data-processing studies by becoming a qualified computer programmer through learning at work. Mr Hassan and the employment instructor decided that Mr Hassan would take a preparatory vocational course in order to attain the necessary skills. After the course, he started – with the aid of the employment instructor – to look for a workplace where he could get an apprenticeship. After several requests, he received a job at a small company that was starting to export its products to Iran. The employment office granted an employment subsidy to the firm in question. Mr Hassan worked at the company. Every month, he spent one week in theoretical tuition. In three years, he became a qualified computer programmer. After achieving his qualifications, he received a job at the company.

Mr Hassan's story had a happy end. For many refugees, the road to the job-market is much longer and more difficult. It may also require even more support measures. Unfortunately, many refugees remain permanently out of work. However, the situation is usually easier for the second generation.

Starting an enterprise is a good way for many refugees to get employed: many of them have functioned as entrepreneurs in their original home countries. Refugees have for instance founded ethnic shops and restaurants. Thus they also create new jobs.

2.2 Practice in Finland

The basic requirements for immigrant and refugee employment include adequate mastery of the Finnish or Swedish languages and vocational skills. Research into immigrant employment and the results of immigrant employment projects indicate that it is difficult for immigrants to find placements on the open labour market that correspond to their vocational skills and resources without work experience procured in Finland and a network of Finnish contacts. Employment training at workplaces are of prime importance in securing the basic skills for working life.

The improved employment situation for immigrants has been influenced by general positive labour market trends and by a reformed service procedure at local employment offices. Immigrant employment has also been promoted by employment projects financed by the European Social Fund, in which it has been possible to give greater consideration to the individual service needs of immigrants.

There are large differences in the unemployment rates of various nationalities of immigrant. Despite the general fall in immigrant unemployment, the rate of joblessness of immigrants with a refugee background continues to be high. Although this unemployment rate has fallen by as much as 20 percentage points since the peak year of 1995, it continues to exceed 60 per cent in certain national groups.

There are many reasons for the high rate of unemployment of refugees. In contrast with the situation in many other countries, the custom in Finland is to register newly arrived refugees as jobseekers immediately, and not after an initial period of integration. Those who arrive as resettled refugees have often spent long periods in refugee camps and gone through traumatic experiences, with the result that the integration process may well take years and involve significant rehabilitation measures. About 10 per cent of adults entering Finland as refugees are illiterate.

Special measures are also necessary to promote access to the labour market by highly educated immigrants. Placement of such immigrants in work corresponding to their existing professions usually requires supplementary voca-

tional training and adaptation to the Finnish labour market. Placements may be hampered by problems in recognising the commensurability and equivalence of academic qualifications.

Refugees are eligible for the full range of local employment office services. However, these needs are best served at the largest local employment offices where immigrant services have been managed since the 1980s in the form of international employment services. As a rule, immigrants fall within the scope of these special services during the period covered by the immigrant integration plan or until they have learned the Finnish or Swedish language. Where possible, counselling services for immigrants also seek to draw on the expertise of vocational guidance counsellors and educational and vocational information services.

Regular training events are organised both nationally and regionally for officials responsible for processing immigrant affairs. Measures to improve immigrant services have been included in recently-completed employment policy development projects. The main reforms implemented have been rehabilitative employment measures, joint service trials and job seeking activities. There have also been favourable experiences of visits to employers by local employment office officials in some districts.

2.3 Practice in Ireland

In Ireland, FÁS is the agency responsible for facilitating access to the Labour market. FÁS is Ireland's national training and employment authority and it aims to:

- ➔ Improve employability, job skills and mobility;
- ➔ Meet labour market needs;
- ➔ Promote competitiveness and social inclusion.

The statutory functions of FÁS also include the collection and publication of information relating to the labour market, an Annual Review of the Labour Market and the provision of information and reports and on matters within FÁS' remit.

FÁS provides a range of services to help people find work. These services are available to all individuals including the unemployed, persons wishing to return to work after a break, persons who have completed school or college and persons changing career. All FÁS services are open to men and women equally, to all citizens of the European Union and to those with refugee status and leave to remain in Ireland. Individuals who register with FÁS receive career advice and guidance including information on job and training opportunities as well as temporary employment options.

FÁS has produced a Job Seekers Pack (CV preparation guidelines, interview skills etc) which provides information on the range of FÁS services to jobseekers provided by Employment Services, in addition to training courses,

apprenticeship and community employment programmes. A very large amount of information on careers is also presented in the careers information section of the Pack.

Programme Refugees are eligible to participate in Community Employment Programmes without the requisite number of weeks in receipt of unemployment payments from Department of Social & Family Affairs. The Community Employment Programmes enable participants to take up employment without losing all of their social welfare entitlements. In particular, they can continue to receive rent allowance in respect of their private rented accommodation. This measure can assist refugees and other persons to make the transition from receiving social welfare payments to entering full time employment. The significance of this type of assistance, aimed at avoiding the 'poverty trap' is also highlighted in Chapter IV paragraph 2.3 above concerning housing.

There is an additional scheme in Ireland; the 'back to work' scheme which enables participants to retain certain social welfare payments after they return to work. However, to access this scheme, an individual must have been unemployed in the State for five years or more. This provision, unfortunately, greatly limits access to the scheme.

In addition to the measures described above, FÁS also provides support for the childcare costs of persons who wish to undertake FÁS vocational training programmes. The rates paid are a contribution towards the costs of childcare and payment is made on the basis of the childcare costs incurred by the person as a result of attending the FÁS training programme. It is not intended that the FÁS contribution should cover the full costs of childcare.

Categories of eligible people for child care support payments are those who are:

- ➔ unemployed, returning to work, early school leavers, refugees, members of the Traveller community, lone parents and disabled people. The contribution is paid to those in the above categories who have been unemployed, unoccupied or working in the home for at least 6 months prior to commencing on the FÁS training programmes; and
- ➔ the primary carer of a child or children who needs childcare in order to take up a training opportunity with FÁS.

PROJECT ACTIVITY

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE MENTORING PROGRAMME

In Ireland, the MORE Project commissioned the production of an assessment of the training needs of resettled refugees. The aim of the assessment was to identify the training needs of resettled refugees from the perspective of resettled refugees themselves. Information concerning this development task activity is set out at paragraph 1.4 above. In short, one of the

main findings of the training needs assessment (TNA) was that there was a need for greater support for resettled refugees who were seeking employment. In particular, the establishment of some form of mentoring system for resettled refugees was recommended.

In order to take forward the findings and recommendations of the TNA, the MORE Project issued an invitation to tender for the design and delivery of a training and employment assistance mentoring programme for resettled refugees. The contract was awarded to SPRIASI, an NGO with a great deal of experience in the provision of training, counselling and other services to resettled refugees and asylum seekers.

SPIRASI set up and ran a seven week mentoring programme and twelve resettled refugees took part in the Programme. The Programme consisted of the following elements:

VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Each participant met with a Vocational Guidance Counsellor in a one-to-one interview in order to assess their specific vocational and career skills and needs.

JOBS CLUB

A Jobs Club was held twice a week. The aim of the Jobs Club was to provide participants with practical job seeking skills in an environment which facilitated peer support and nurtured group progress. Topics covered at the Jobs Club included; CV preparation, letter writing and completing application forms, interview and telephone skills, cultural information relative to job seeking in Ireland, motivation for job seeking, information concerning workers rights, setting up email accounts and using the internet to search for suitable employment.

EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Participants who required additional training were given advice and support in accessing relevant third level education and/or vocational training schemes.

PRACTICAL JOB-SEEKING ASSISTANCE

The Project coordinator assisted the participants to identify suitable employment opportunities by conducting a search of relevant positions available and by contacting potential employers.

PEER MENTORING

Resettled refugees in full time employment addressed the Jobs Club as guest speakers and spoke about their experience of training, job seeking and employment in Ireland. They offered practical advice and encouragement to the participants and helped to motivate them.

PROGRAMME TASKFORCE

A TASKFORCE or advisory group was formed to advise and assist the Project team. The TASKFORCE was composed of employers (in particular employers with a good record of employing non-nationals), employers organisations, workers Trade Unions, FÁS (the national employment authority), representatives of the refugee community and Interact (an EU funded Project aimed at developing diversity and intercultural awareness in the workplace). In addition to providing advice, members of the TASKFORCE reviewed the profile of each participant on the course with a view to identifying possible employment opportunities for each participant.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the Training and Employment Assistance Mentoring Programme are set out in the Project report which is available on the MORE Project Website: www.more.fi

OTHER INITIATIVES IN IRELAND

Interact II is a partnership between the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), FÁS and Integrate Ireland Language Training (IILT). The aim of the Interact II Project is to promote an intercultural environment in the workplace. Research commissioned by the project found that preparation and training prior to employing migrant workers, combined with appropriate induction training for the newcomers, encourages the development of a more productive, intercultural workplace. To this end, the project partners have developed a diversity training program for their members, and an induction/ language program appropriate to migrant workers for delivery in their workplace. For further information see www.interact2.com

2.4 Examples of other international and national level initiatives

EUROPEAN UNION LEVEL INITIATIVES

EU RESOURCE PROJECT

In the recent years, many interesting projects have been developed in different European countries in order to promote the employment of refugees. A good example is the RESOURCE Project (Refugees' Contribution to Europe) implemented with the support of the European Refugee Fund. There were 14 different countries involved in the Project. There follows an example on one persons involvement with the Resource Project in Finland.

Ahmed came to Finland as a 17-year-old refugee in 1991. Six years later, he took an examination in electrical engineering at the Professional College of Vaasa. At the moment, Ahmed works as a systems engineer at Nokia. At the same time, he is finishing his upper engineering examination in information technology at the Technical University of Helsinki. Ahmed is one of the 22 refugees who were interviewed in connection with the Resource Project. The Finn-

ish Human Rights Association implemented the project together with 13 other NGOs from different European countries. The purpose of the study was to describe the positive contribution of refugees to the European job-market at the moment and in the future. Refugees who had been successfully employed in the fields of social and health services, IT, or technology were interviewed for the study. The project was funded by the European Refugee Fund.

According to the study made in connection with the Resource Project, there are talented, well motivated, committed, and socially skilled people living in the refugee community in Finland. Their skills and attitudes would be valuable resources for the labour-market. Unfortunately it seems, however, that Finnish employers and even the society in general mainly ignore the know-how, knowledge, and experience imported by the refugees. The greatest obstacles of employment include among other things the insufficient knowledge of the Finnish language, prejudices held by employers, and the exclusion of immigrants particularly at job interviews.

GOOD PRACTICE

EMPLOYMENT IN THE CREATIVE SECTOR INITIATIVE FROM THE UK INCLUSION IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (iCi) PROJECT (WWW.I-CREATE.ORG.UK)

Studies have shown a serious under-representation of black and minority ethnic specialists in the creative sector. EQUAL project iCi is a trans-regional project underway in the UK that focuses on improving employment opportunities for black and minority ethnic specialists by improving access to skills training and resources in the creative and cultural sector, setting up support forums, and developing an ongoing programme of events and activities to showcase emerging talent. iCi has proven that developing the creative talents of minorities can be a powerful vehicle for job creation amongst otherwise disadvantaged groups.

THE TRACK PROJECT, FINLAND

The Track Project described below was not part of the MORE Project but it has been presented as an example of good practice at MORE Project workshops.

The integration development of an individual immigrant may take several years. It does not just depend on his/her personal characteristics and potential but also on the attitudes of the society around him/her. Immigrants must be treated as individuals. Early access to training, individual guidance and instruction, support and contacts in the job market received during training promote and accelerate employment and the integration process.

The aim of the TRACK Project has been to create a feeling of life-management for every participant with the aid of an individual plan. The best possible alternatives for the future have been discovered for everyone. The project personnel have also encouraged the participants to accept difficult challenges. The

sense of life-management means good self-esteem and trust in one's own ability to learn new things. As a new form of training, there have been weekly sessions that have combined language learning and work practice. It has been noted that this is a good method of studying for people who have only lived in Finland for a short time. Students have been well motivated, and they have not had to concentrate all the time merely on the challenging process of learning the language. At the same time, they have had early opportunities to familiarise themselves with the Finnish labour market.

There have also been experiments with individually planned measures for refugees. If a certain training has not been available in the person's own municipality of residence, the client in question has been able to study elsewhere. In the TRACK for Immigrants Project, the instruction on learning skills together with the Finnish language has been emphasised for people whose training in their original countries has been scarce or non-existent. As a practice programme, there has been a practice package of learning skills called Instrumental Enrichment, which has been created by Feuerstein in Israel and targeted to immigrants.

In the project, it was possible with the aid of suitable instruction methods to help a young male refugee to cope and adapt although he was in quite a difficult situation and had been diagnosed with some mental problems. Let us call him Ali. Ali had first left Iraq and gone to Iran. From there his flight had continued through Russia to the Netherlands. He came to Finland through family reunification. On arrival in Finland, he was sent to a closed ward of a psychiatric hospital. During the first year and a half in Finland, he spent about a year in hospital. His history as a refugee was shocking: it was not possible to survive it without mental damage. He received medication to treat his condition.

The psychiatrist did not actually believe that Ali would benefit from any kind of teaching. However, Ali did join a training course of the Track Project. At the beginning, Instrumental Enrichment was used as the practice programme: it also functions as a basis for teaching Finnish. English and Finnish were used as the languages of tuition. It turned out that Ali learned fairly quickly even though he was slowed down by the medication. In addition to the IE programme, he was taught mathematics at which he progressed quite well. It then discovered that he had learned mathematics in Iraq up to the level of graduating from the Finnish grammar school. He had, however, no school certificates.

All this suggested that Ali might have taken courses at the grammar school level in other subjects as well. Thus the teacher explored how he could take an examination required to receive a certificate on finishing the comprehensive school in Finland. This would enable him to get into trade school. To improve his chances of learning Finnish, a computer was lent to Ali to be used at home. For Ali, the school subjects taught at the three upper grades of the comprehensive school became the foundation of learning Finnish. By taking examinations in eight subjects, he received the certificate on finishing comprehensive school.

He also succeeded in the Finnish test required. As far as social adaptation is concerned, he married a young Kurdish woman, and they had a child. Later the family moved closer to their relatives living elsewhere in Finland. As a modern husband, Ali functions at the moment as a male home maker taking care of his child: it is his wife's turn to study.

The TRACK Project demonstrates that it is never too late to start correcting defective learning conditions, creating new learning skills, or rehabilitating damaged functions. It is usually possible to teach a person coming from a completely different culture new skills of processing information.

Another person illustrating this human ability is Saya, a refugee woman who has been deaf since childhood. When she came to Finland, she was about 30 years old and had never gone to school. At her home district in Iraq, deafness had been seen as a curse: no rehabilitative measures had even been tried. She had lived at home in the countryside with two deaf siblings and the rest of the family. Together, the family members had developed a sign-language of their own. Later the siblings said that the understanding of spoken language had been disturbed by the fact that women could not – even at home – see the mouths of other female speakers and thus learn lip-reading, which is so important to the deaf. All the women had to wear veils that covered their mouths: only the eyes were visible. Saya and her siblings came to the problem-relieving tuition at the Track Project. A psychologist evaluated the learning abilities of these deaf adults with her western measuring system that was considered independent of culture. Of course, these tests did not work. It would have been important, for instance, to understand how the system was supposed to work. The people tested should also have been given at least some kind of a notion on how to think of patterns in a consistent way.

In any case, Saya turned out to be a person with quick wits. Yet a professor of psychology explained to the optimistic instructors that there is no sense in trying to teach a deaf person of that age to read and write: she would no longer benefit of it. Since something had to be done anyway, the teaching was started with the sign-language based on Finnish. Saya learned quickly, and the deaf refugees soon found new acquaintances among deaf Finns.

First it was important to learn to understand the clock in order to know when to go to school. The next step was to read the time-tables of buses. Thus the first symbols of the studying career were numbers. In mathematics, the basic forms of calculation and the use of an electronic calculator were learned. It was a pleasure to go to clothing sales to calculate how cheap the clothes would really be. The siblings learned to read and write, participated in work practice, and did shopping independently.

Saya's adaptation took several years. Sometimes there were more intensive periods of studying; at other times, Saya concentrated on helping her relatives with housework. At the moment, she is married to a Finnish man with im-

paired hearing. She felt that she absolutely needed a driver's licence, so she arranged to have it despite her husband's warnings. She also found herself a work experiment place and later a job based on employment subsidy. Since she is good at housework, she became a cleaner and an assistant employee at a restaurant.

3. Getting into society

3.1 Equality and anti-discrimination measures

TRADITIONS RELATED TO EQUALITY

Promotion of gender equality has strong traditions in Finland, for example, Finnish women were the first in Europe to have the right to vote in 1906. Although the current Act on Gender Equality already fulfils the standards set by the relative EU Directives, its reform is currently ongoing. Finland also has equality legislation, which was drafted to transpose the European directives from 2000 and covers twelve grounds. In Ireland, a comprehensive equality legislative framework prohibits discrimination on nine grounds and prohibits discrimination the workplace. The legislative systems in both countries are described below.

The countries of origin from which refugees are resettled do not usually have similar traditions or corresponding equality legislation. Nor do they have the same values or practices related to gender or other grounds of equality. In fact, for many refugees the background reasons for the well-founded fear of persecution are often connected with a lack of equality, ethnic discrimination and harassment. For resettled refugees, it is necessary to understand and adopt new values and norms related to equality in order to integrate into societies like those in Ireland and Finland. This is a long-term process and therefore it is very important to share information on equality and non-discrimination issues with the newcomers all through the resettlement process. Sometimes interventions are also necessary to support women or girls whose individual freedom, self-determination and human rights are violated by their family or other members of the community.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND GOOD ETHNIC RELATIONS

In all European societies, one of the biggest obstacles for refugee integration is discrimination and negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities (especially visible minorities). It is not easy to estimate its impact since the indicators of discrimination are still under development as well as the collection of reliable and comparable data. The connection between attitudes and integration is quite obvious: positive attitudes have an encouraging impact on refugees' motivation to integrate themselves into the new host society and, on the other hand, good integration increases positive attitudes in society at large. On the opposite side, negative attitudes have a negative impact on refugees' motivation and failures in

integration create negative attitudes among the mainstream society. According to so-called “victims’ research”, which has been carried out in some countries, refugees face discrimination in the labour market, housing and education and have difficulties in accessing various services. This means that great potentials of human resources are not fully utilised because of underestimation, prejudice and ignorance.

The operation of local administrations is important to all local residents including groups or persons exposed to discrimination. Working practices and different processes carried out by public authorities have often been designed without the involvement of different interest groups e.g. groups facing discrimination. Building capacity for equality and non-discrimination within and by local administrations is therefore one of the priorities in building a diverse society in which equality of opportunity exists.

3.2 Practice in Finland

EQUALITY LEGISLATION, RELATED STRUCTURES AND INFORMATION SHARING MEASURES

Discrimination is prohibited by the Constitution of Finland and by several Acts. Finland has also fully transposed the “Employment Equality Directive” and “Race Equality Directive” (2000/78/EC and 2000/43/EC) excluding the Province of Åland. A single piece of new legislation, the Equality Act, came into force on 1 February 2004. According to the Equality Act, nobody may be discriminated against on the basis of age, ethnic or national origin, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. The prohibition of discrimination based on gender is covered by the provisions of the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986), which is currently under reform, too.

The Equality Act (www.join.fi/seis/pdf/yvlakiesite_en.pdf) includes several new tools for anti-discrimination work, for example, the Discrimination Board and the obligation for public authorities to draft an authority-based Equality Plan. Information on the new legislation and related guidelines for the Equality Plan have been shared widely all through the country by organising seminars, information sessions and training at workplaces. Additionally, the key ministries have produced information material and a development tool for local authorities called *Ladder of Equality* (www.join.fi).

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

A National Action Plan to combat ethnic discrimination and racism and to promote diversity and good ethnic relations was adopted by the Finnish Parliament in 2000. The purpose of the programme is to support and develop measures that promote good ethnic relations and prevent ethnic discrimination and racism in Finnish society. The measures defined in the programme apply to refugees and immigrants, as well as historical ethnic minorities e.g. the Sámi (aboriginal in-

habitants of Finland), Roma, Jews, Tartarians and the senior generations of Finland's Russian population. The measures also apply to expatriate Finns who move back to Finland.

The measures in the programme are divided into national level, regional level and local level measures. As regards Government and Ministry level measures, the essential ones are the duty of each administrative branch to promote recruitment of persons who belong to ethnic minorities, measures to develop consultation in accordance with the principle of good leadership, developing co-operation with employers to prevent ethnic discrimination and measures to promote the employment of ethnic minorities and immigrants as well as ensuring resources and development for the research in this area to serve national and international needs.

Measures at regional level are developing forms of co-operation between local authorities in preventing ethnic discrimination and racism and obtaining benefit from the additional value offered by immigrants and ethnic minorities in regional development. According to the programme, local level measures are the most meaningful, because there people are faced with each other in different situations of everyday life. It states that the differences between localities are substantial due to their different cultural heritage, structure of the economy, size and composition of the population. This is the reason why the need for measures varies between different locations.

Most recommendations of the Action Plan have already been implemented including the obligation to include the promotion of good ethnic relations in the Integration Act.

MEASURES TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION

In Finland, anti-discrimination measures have been carried out by authorities, NGOs and social partners. National authorities have carried out awareness-raising campaigns since 2001 together with NGOs representing people exposed to discrimination. These campaigns have been co-funded by the Commission and concentrated both on visible activities and on long-term structural antidiscrimination work. Their special features have been a cross-sectoral approach, regional coverage and empowerment of people exposed to discrimination. The national awareness-raising campaign, *STOP –Finland Forward without Discrimination*, has a website on which the produced materials and other activities can be studied. <http://www.join.fi/seis/english/>

The strategies and methodologies adopted by the above-mentioned campaign are: full participation of the people exposed to discrimination, horizontal and cross-sectoral approach, combination of a two-way strategy (visible events and long-term structural developments), regional networking, repetition of slogans and messages, integrated approach towards new target audiences, rapid response, utilisation of synergies and equal participation of men and women in anti-discrimination work. In addition, trans-national learning and information sharing have proved to be very important in developing national anti-discrimination work.

The contribution of different NGOs to anti-discrimination work is essential both at national and local level. Most of the activities carried out by NGOs concentrate on certain grounds of discrimination and getting funding from public sources.

Finland has also established official structures to promote and monitor the position of refugees and migrants in the society and to make initiatives to improve it. The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) was established six years ago to monitor the development of ethnic relations and the social position of refugees and migrants in working life, public services and cultural life. Half of the members come from minority ethnic communities and the other half represent different ministries, social partners and NGOs. The Advisory Board is currently under re-construction; the aim is to make it more efficient at regional level and to involve policy-makers in its forthcoming activities to a larger extent.

3.3 Practice in Ireland

EQUALITY LEGISLATION

The legal framework for the promotion of equality and the prohibition of discrimination in Ireland is set out in the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000. This legislation prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination in the areas of employment and access to goods and services on nine grounds; gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

Further technical amendments to both of these Acts were made in the Equality Act, 2004, which gives effect in domestic law to Ireland's obligations as a member of the European Union to implement Community initiatives provided for under Council Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC, adopted under Article 13 of the EC Treaty, and Council Directive 2002/73/EC adopted under Article 141 of the Treaty. The Directives, already referred to above in relation to Finnish practice are commonly known as the Equality Directives and they provide for equal treatment on six grounds – gender; racial or ethnic origin; religion or belief; disability; age and sexual orientation.

The combined effect of these three directives is to require Member States to prohibit direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and harassment on grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation in regard to employment, self-employment or occupational and vocational training. Sexual harassment and victimisation are also prohibited. The race directive also applies to discrimination in access to and the supply of goods and services. Many of the amendments to the Irish legislation required by the EU directives were relatively minor and mostly of a technical nature.

EQUALITY INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER BODIES

Institutional structures, in the form of the Equality Authority and the Equality Tribunal, have been established in order to ensure effective implementation of the legislation.

The Equality Authority was established in 1999. Its functions are to work towards the elimination of conduct prohibited under the equality legislation and to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the matters covered by the legislation. It is also required to provide information to the public on the workings of the equality legislation.

The Office of the Director of Equality Investigations was established in 1999. It provides redress for victims of discrimination on any of the grounds in the equality legislation in employment and in the area of provision of goods and services. Anyone who feels that they have been discriminated against may lodge a complaint to the Director. The findings of the Director in each case are published.

In addition, a number of national bodies have also been set up. The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) was established by the Government in 1998. It is an expert advisory body set up to provide advice and develop initiatives linked to racism and promoting interculturalism. The NCCRI works from a partnership approach and seeks to bring together representatives from key government and non-government organisations.

The Garda (Police) Racial & Intercultural Office is responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and advising on all aspects of policing in the area of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. The Office is a point of contact for a wide range of groups and agencies that represent ethnic communities. The office has produced: a video as a tool for anti-racism training for Gardai (police officers); awareness materials, such as, a poster and newsletter; booklets for the information of Gardai and immigrants to Ireland; seminars for Garda personnel appointed as Ethnic Liaison Officers; and, a formula for the recording and monitoring of racially motivated incidents. The Garda Commissioner has appointed Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers in District and Divisional Garda Stations throughout the country.

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) is an independent statutory body established under the Human Rights Commission Act, 2000. The Act confers a wide ranging jurisdiction on the Commission to promote and protect human rights as defined both in international agreements to which Ireland is a party and in the Constitution. The functions of the Commission include the following:

- ➔ to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice in the State relating to the protection of human rights;
- ➔ to consult with relevant national and international bodies;
- ➔ to make recommendations to Government on measures to strengthen, protect and uphold human rights in the State;

- ➔ to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and, for these purposes, to undertake or sponsor research and educational activities in the field;
- ➔ to conduct enquiries. For this purpose the Commission will have the means to obtain information, with recourse to the courts, if necessary;
- ➔ to offer its expertise in human rights law to the courts in suitable cases as *amicus curiae*, or friend of the court, in cases involving human rights issues;
- ➔ to take legal proceedings to vindicate human rights in the State or provide legal assistance to persons in this regard;
- ➔ to participate in the Joint Committee of Representatives of members of the Commission and members of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

AWARENESS RAISING

Awareness raising of the need to accommodate diversity in society and to combat racism has been one of the key components of Government policy in this area. That policy took shape in the “Know Racism” campaign which completed its three year period last year and which brought together representatives of Government, the Social Partners, Community, Voluntary and Farming sectors and key bodies such as the Equality Authority, the NCCRI and the Garda Síochána with a view to stimulating an awareness of racism and a respect for cultural diversity. The programmes’ activities included national advertising campaigns, publicity events, and support for local anti-racism awareness initiatives, partnership ventures and research. In the lifespan of the programme a total of 1,290,000 was allocated to 450 successful projects. The grants were awarded to community groups and organisations for the development of local anti-racism initiatives or projects.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN AGAINST RACISM

Ireland adopted a National Action Plan Against Racism in 2005 (NPAR). The Action Plan was drawn up and adopted on foot of the World Conference Against Racism, 2001 which called for the establishment of such plans on a global scale.

The Plan, which takes a broad integration approach and proposes cross-departmental co-coordinating structures, will aim to provide strategic direction to combat racism and to develop a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland. The development of the Plan was preceded by a 12 month consultation process involving a wide-range of stakeholders, including Government, the social partners, NGO’s including representatives of minority ethnic groups and the traveling community.

The Plan includes targeted strategies aimed at the integration of both recent migrants and existing minorities.

The National Action Plan has five primary objectives:

- ➔ Effective protection and redress against racism, including a focus on discrimination, threatening behaviour and incitement to hatred;
- ➔ Economic inclusion and equality of opportunity, including a focus on employment, the workplace and poverty;
- ➔ Accommodating diversity in service provision, including a focus on common outcomes, education, health, social services and childcare, accommodation and the administration of justice;
- ➔ Recognition and awareness of diversity, including a focus on awareness raising, the media and the arts, sport and tourism;
- ➔ Full participation in Irish society, including a focus on the political level, the policy level and the community level.

EQUALITY PROOFING

Another area of relevance to the issue of non-discrimination is Equality Proofing. The Working Group on Equality Proofing was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. It represents an ongoing commitment to Equality Proofing issues by developing ways to encourage organisations to include an equality perspective in the development of policy making at all levels. The projects in turn will inform future developments in equality proofing. The current social partnership agreement "Sustaining Progress" provides for the development of mechanisms for proofing of policies and services in the public sector for impact on any of the groups protected by equality legislation.

VI

TEMPORARY PROTECTION

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1. Temporary Protection and emergency measures in mass influx situations

Mass influx situations arise following a crisis in a country or region resulting in the displacement of a large number of people who cross international borders seeking protection. For many of the world's refugees, their experience of exile is temporary. They flee their country of origin and remain in a neighbouring country for a period until such time when conditions in their country of origin have changed for the better and they can return home. Mass displacement poses enormous challenges for receiving States in the regions and for other States who may subsequently be involved in burden sharing activities. Europe was faced with such crises in the 1990's following the conflicts in South Eastern Europe. Since the displaced persons expected that the conflict would be short-lived those seeking protection remained initially in the surrounding countries in the region. In July 1992, the UNHCR issued a formal request to European countries to provide temporary protection to persons fleeing the conflict in Bosnia, where severe human rights abuses were taking place. This request came about because of suggestions at the time that some states in the region were no longer willing to consider admitting these people. Beginning in 1992, and continuing for a number of years, Ireland and Finland, and many other states worldwide responded to the UNHCR initiative and accepted refugees from the region. Again in 1999, following a similar request from the UNHCR, States accepted large numbers of refugees from Kosovo who had been displaced.

Individual asylum determination procedures were not designed to respond to such large numbers and many European States decided to suspend individual status determination and instead adopted a group processing approach. The fact that those fleeing were in need of international protection was not in question. A particular difficulty with group recognition is the problem of identifying and dealing with persons who may themselves be perpetrators in the conflict and so may be excludable individuals.

Most European countries responded by developing ad hoc legislation, in some cases drawing on existing measures that had been employed for much smaller number of nationals from other countries, e.g. the Vietnamese refugees in 1979, or the protection provided to displaced persons from countries involved in civil wars (e.g. Sri Lanka, Sudan, Rwanda and Haiti). The rights afforded to those granted temporary protection varied significantly from country to country and often failed to comply with basic international requirements.

The key issues to be considered in relation to temporary protection programmes are:

International:

- ➔ Concept of burden sharing;
- ➔ Harmonisation of approaches within acceptable standards;

- ➔ Rights-based approach, including status granted, rights, entitlements and duration of protection;
- ➔ Principle of non-refoulement;
- ➔ Provision for protracted situations and future durable solutions;
- ➔ Procedures for processing of excludable cases;

National:

- ➔ Contingency planning;
- ➔ Media and information management;
- ➔ Training for service providers and residential centre staff;
- ➔ Location of residential centers – opportunities for employment and services, links with local community;
- ➔ Anti-racism initiatives;
- ➔ Family reunification;
- ➔ Repatriation;
- ➔ Programme review process;
- ➔ Durable Solutions in protracted situations.

2. Harmonisation of approaches

The very nature of the mass influx situations in the context of the conflict in South Eastern Europe made it difficult or impossible to provide the full standards of treatment foreseen under the 1951 Convention. The events, which occurred in the 1990's, and particularly in the Spring 1999 following the situation in Kosovo, revealed significant weaknesses in the ability of European States to respond appropriately. In the light of that situation, at its special meeting in Tampere on 15 and 16 October 1999, the European Council agreed to develop a directive on temporary protection for displaced persons on the basis of solidarity between Member States. In July 2001 the Council Directive 2001/55/EC on temporary protection was adopted. This allows European States to extend protection and assistance to a group without initially going into individual status determinations. In such cases, it has been acknowledged that individual procedures under the 1951 Convention can be kept “on hold” for use if or when it becomes necessary to determine individual protection needs and consequent State responsibilities.

The Council Directive provides for:

- ➔ minimum standards for temporary protection (duration and implementation, Member States' obligations towards persons enjoying temporary protection, access to the asylum procedure, return, and measures after temporary protection);
- ➔ solidarity mechanisms which are triggered automatically in the event of a massive influx of displaced persons.

The provisions of the EU Directive can be summarised as follows:

- ➔ The Temporary Protection Directive is the EU's long-term response to the refugee crisis in Kosovo during the 1990s;
- ➔ It is intended to prevent the asylum systems of EU Member States from being overwhelmed in the event of a similar crisis in the future;
- ➔ The right to apply for asylum follows from the granting of temporary protection;
- ➔ Any EU Member State may introduce greater protection than that provided for in the Directive, but not less;
- ➔ The existence of a mass influx of persons will be established by a Council Decision, which should also establish conditions for the expiry of the Decision;
- ➔ In the event of a mass influx, the UNHCR and other relevant international organisations will be regularly consulted;
- ➔ The duration of temporary protection is one year, but this may be extended by six monthly periods for a maximum of one year;
- ➔ A period of temporary protection may be ended at any time by a Council Decision. Provision should be made for the return of persons granted temporary protection;
- ➔ A "solidarity mechanism" should provide for burden sharing between the Member States in respect of financial cost and actual reception of persons;
- ➔ Persons not granted temporary protection or the right of family reunification are entitled to challenge the decision through the (national) courts;
- ➔ Persons granted temporary protection will be issued with a residence permit for the Member State that takes them, but EU free movement provisions will not apply;
- ➔ Member States must allow persons granted temporary protection access to the labour market;
- ➔ Member States must make basic welfare, medical and housing provision for persons granted temporary protection;
- ➔ Throughout the period of temporary protection, the Member States will cooperate with each other with a view to transferring persons where appropriate, to another Member State on a voluntary basis;

The Member States may exclude from temporary protection persons:

- representing a danger to national security;
- suspected of having committed a war crime or a crime against humanity;
- who have acted against the aims and principles of the United Nations.

While Ireland, like Denmark, is not a signatory to this Directive, it continues to respond to requests from UNHCR for protection in cases of mass influx and, in general, the standards of protection offered are in line with, or at a higher standard to, those set down in the Directive on minimum standards for temporary protection.

The European Union also provides financial assistance to European States who provide temporary protection in mass influx situations through the European Refugee Fund (ERF).

3. Rights-based approach

If the crisis generating the mass displacement is of short duration, it may not be possible to provide treatment in the first instance in line with the provisions of the 1951 Convention, which is linked to guarantees of permanent protection. Nevertheless, it is important that receiving countries make a clear statement regarding the rights and entitlements of those being accepted for temporary protection, including anticipated duration of stay, rights regarding access to employment, training, education, health and social welfare services. Situations resulting in mass influx situations often result in prolonged situations and call for the development of strategies which include provision for longer-term durable solutions.

4. Recent Finnish experience of temporary protection programmes

Finnish experiences of evacuation dates back to more than 60 years ago. During World War II, Finland evacuated more than 68,000 Ingrian Finns and other ethnic minorities from the neighbouring war areas in the Soviet Union. The majority of these evacuees were brought back to their country of origin as a part of the bilateral peace agreement. During World War II, almost half a million Finnish citizens were forced to escape from the war areas in the eastern part of the country and temporarily resettled in other regions. On the basis of the peace agreement, the ownership of some Eastern regions was handed over to the Soviet Union and the permanent resettlement of the population concerned was carried out in the 1940's.

After World War II, Finland participated for the first time in the evacuation of people from crises areas during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993-1995. About 150 people were evacuated (on a temporary basis) on the basis of their need for medical operations and rehabilitation. The UNHCR appealed to European governments to provide medical care for patients, who could not receive adequate treatment in Sarajevo and were approved for medical evacuation by the United Nations Medical Evacuation Committee. Some of the Finnish

evacuees returned immediately after the treatment, some returned later on and some of have stayed in Finland. The process was successful except for problems related to their temporary status and conditions of return.

During the crises in Kosovo in 1999, more than 850 000 people were forced to leave their home region. Most of them fled to Albania, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)” and Montenegro. The refugee influx overwhelmed the reception capacity of the host governments and humanitarian organisations. The government of FYROM requested international burden-sharing including the evacuation or transfer of some of the refugees to third countries. The UNHCR and IOM launched the “Humanitarian Evacuation Programme” in early April 1999. Almost 96,000 refugees were evacuated by 28 countries, among them Ireland and Finland.

Finland evacuated around 1,100 Kosovars from Stankovac Refugee Camp in FYROM. Evacuees were interviewed in the camp, evacuation flights organised and several reception centres established all over the country for their temporary protection. Interviews concerning war crimes were also carried out immediately on arrival. The Finnish Ministry of Labour established a project called Drita to respond to the first needs of Kosovars evacuated by Finland from neighbouring regions via the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme (HEP). The project received some co-funding from the European Commission under the ERF/Emergency Measures.

Because of the positive developments in the peace and stabilisation process in Kosovo, the objectives of the Drita project were reviewed in August 1999 and a more repatriation-oriented approach to the reception operation was adopted by the project leaders. In addition to reception and rehabilitation measures, reintegration supportive measures and post-repatriation monitoring was organised by the Ministry of Labour. The evacuees were provided with psycho-social rehabilitation and support, legal advice and counselling on return, look and see visits to Kosovo and other activities for information collection were organised. Good results were also achieved from support-programmes for young evacuees and post-repatriation monitoring. The results of the project were monitored and evaluated internally by the project steering group and by the field worker in Kosovo.

Reception of Evacuees

The reception of evacuees included the following services and components:

- ➔ Accommodation in 10 reception centres, some of which had been established specifically for this purpose. Reception centres provided services like social support and psycho-social counselling, everyday activities, primary and specified health care, acute dental care, infant and maternity counselling services and basic education for children and youngsters;
- ➔ Information sharing was carried out both by authorities and the staff in the centres as well as NGOs. The Finnish Red Cross established

the “Kosovo Help Desk”, through which evacuees as well as refugees from Kosovo living permanently in Finland got information on various questions including the situation at home, tracing family members, possibilities for reuniting families, possibilities to repatriate and to be supported in their reintegration. Drita project also organised seminars and other events and assisted evacuees in publishing a news bulletin by themselves.

- ➔ Training, rehabilitation and assistance in making re-integration plans
Training was provided for the staff assisting evacuees since the orientation to the work was quite different compared to the reception of asylum seekers. Issues related to traumatic experiences, rehabilitation and decreasing ethnic tensions were emphasised as well as support for voluntary return and reintegration. Children attended local schools where teaching, however, was given in separate classes and in the Albanian language whenever possible. The Crises Prevention Centre and the Centre for the Victims of Torture established a Mental Rehabilitation Programme, which consisted of: 1) training mental health workers, 2) preparing “guide-material” on post-traumatic symptoms and rehabilitation in Albanian language, 3) supervision of occupational therapy-groups and self-help groups for psycho-social support.

A special programme was also designed for young evacuees, who already completed their basic education. The aim of the programme was to help them to plan their future, to build their self-confidence and discuss their feelings. Practical skills like English and data-processing were also included.

Supporting voluntary return

In Finland, support for voluntary return consisted of advisory services, financial support, mine awareness, return flights, post-return counselling and monitoring.

At the beginning of September 1999, the Ministry of Labour sent a field-worker to Kosovo for post-repatriation monitoring. During a six-month period, the field worker gave counselling for the returnees from Finland and also interviewed altogether 297 of them. The results of the interviews revealed that they had found their reception in Finland well organised and the common atmosphere friendly, caring and emphatic. They felt that their acute needs had been taken care in the reception centres. Approximately half of them were still living in tents, since their houses had been completely destroyed or suffered large damage. Most of the tent-dwellers had not been aware about the destruction/damages of their property or had got false information from their friends and relatives in Kosovo. Many of them stated that if they had known about the situation, they would not have repatriated but stayed in Finland over the winter. These results confirmed that more concrete and detailed information should have been given to support the individual and family decision making on the voluntary repatriation.

More than half of the returnees had not been able to find any employment by the time of the interviews and had no income for the family. Some of them had employment but no salary; around 20% were paid for working or had established an enterprise. On departure they had little information about working opportunities or about the fact that, for example, teachers are not always able to get compensation for their work. Due to this, all returnees agreed that the two-month social allowance granted by Finland had been extremely important for their subsistence at the beginning of their reintegration process. The results of the post-repatriation monitoring showed that more efforts should have been made in the host country to promote reintegration.

A new programme was designed and carried out during 2000 in co-operation of Ministry of Labour and the IOM/Helsinki. This programme was co-financed by the Commission under the ERF.

Within the new programme, more than 100 local social workers were trained to provide "Counselling on Return" for potential returnees and information sessions were organised all over the country. A handbook and a video were also published as well as leaflets in Albanian and English.

Training programmes for building capacity for re-integration were carried out in reception centres, which accommodated the evacuees:

- ➔ A four month course for basic health care including practical training in Finnish hospitals, kindergartens and elderly homes;
- ➔ Two courses of social work with the emphasis on trauma work;
- ➔ Two construction courses including e.g. standards of construction, element construction, dismantling, rebuilding, equipment maintenance, metal and welding works and work safety. Both theoretical and practical elements were included;
- ➔ Carpentry course;
A two-month course on hairdressing;
- ➔ A five-month course on handicraft design, marketing and basics of entrepreneurship;
- ➔ English courses;
- ➔ Courses on data-processing, website design and other computer skills.

The training courses were been designed taking into account the reintegration needs of the target group and their own wishes and interests. The aim was to provide training on skills that are in line with the labour market needs in Kosovo. A needs assessment was already carried out during the Drita project in autumn 1999.

Three 'Look and See' visits to Kosovo were organised during the Spring 2000. The objective of these visits was to gather information on the concrete situation in Kosovo for further dissemination to the evacuees, who were planning

their voluntary return. The participants were selected among evacuees, refugees from Kosovo, NGOs and responsible authorities. Each visit had a different focus and programme organised by IOM Pristina. The first visit focused on the issues of most concern to women (e.g. provision of health-care, school infrastructure and employment), the second on issues concerning young people and ethnic relations (e.g. conditions for studying, registration, different international and local NGO's, operational in Kosovo, situation of ethnic minorities) and the third on studying employment and self-employment opportunities (small enterprises, employment offices, bank representatives, organisations that provide loans for small businesses etc.). After each visit, the participants shared information with organisations/audiences, refugees and evacuees from Kosovo in Finland and with the media.

Return flights were organised during the Spring and early Summer 2000. Information sessions including mine awareness were given to the returning groups. Financial support corresponding to two-month social subsidy in Finland was also granted to each family/single person to cover the basic subsistence during the first months in Kosovo. In addition, returnees could apply for re-integration assistance of a similar amount. The precondition for the reintegration assistance was the presentation of a plan on the use of funds (re-integration plan).

Post-return support was organised in co-operation with IOM Pristina, which hired a Coordinator and a Community worker to assist returnees from Finland. The community worker gathered information on conditions and opportunities in Kosovo and assisted returnees in their reintegration process. Monitoring was carried out by making interviews and home calls.

The following findings were made:

- ➔ Since many returnees found their property destroyed or partly destroyed, the reintegration support received from the Finnish Government was used to buy furniture and other household appliances, for reconstruction, and only in a very few cases it was invested in new businesses;
- ➔ The assistance from Finland lasted usually more than two months and was essential in securing the acute needs until other sources of income was found;
- ➔ The high rate of unemployment in Kosovo created the biggest obstacles for reintegration. This has also affected the possibilities of the project workers to assist the target group to find employment as was planned during the project design phase. Instead, they were able to assist returnees with valuable information on organisations providing support locally for returnees.

Out of more than 1000 evacuees, 65 % returned voluntarily to Kosovo during 1999-2000. Permanent residence permits in Finland were granted mainly to per-

sons coming from ethnic minorities, e.g. Roma. Lessons learned from the process are:

- ➔ Reintegration and rehabilitation has to start from the beginning of the evacuation process in order to ensure sufficient mental and physical support for the return and re-integration process;
- ➔ Assistance on return has to be provided at both ends: the sending society and the receiving one;
- ➔ Special attention has to be paid to gathering and sharing practical and up-dated information in order to enable informed and well-considered decisions e.g. on the time of return.

STORIES OF VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

A family returned from the Reception Centre of Länsi-Uusimaa Finland on March 28th, 2000 to the village called Llazicë, in Malisheva municipality, which was one of the most heavily destroyed areas in the war. Their house was totally destroyed. The father was well informed about the situation in Kosovo in advance as he had participated on a "Look and See" visit during Drita project in 1999. The allowance they received was used to build one room and furnish it for living. This was not what they planned prior to departure. They had planned to use the funds for starting a hairdressing salon and buy some livestock.

A single lady who returned to Mitrovica in May 2000 from the reception centre in Helsinki reported that she found her house totally burnt and destroyed. She was not aware of the state of her house before arriving to Kosovo. The allowance received from the Finnish government was spent in buying construction material and food and did not last long. The immediate needs of her house were so high that she was not able realise the original plan of open a tailor's shop. She had planned to use the allowance for buying new sewing equipment, since all she had before was looted during the conflict.

Another family from the Reception Centre of Länsi-Uusimaa, decided to return to the village of Grabovc i Ulët, municipality of Fushë Kosovë in May 2000 although, they knew already in Finland that their house was totally destroyed and they had to live in a tent. The family was pleased about the accurate information they received in Finland prior their arrival and thus they escaped the worst shock. The father of the family was optimistic about the situation in Kosovo at the time of monitor's visit. His son was able go to school and he hoped for further assistance from the NGO's operating in the area. In the original reintegration plan the family had declared that they planned to use the assistance to rebuild the house and install a water pipe. Upon their return the family spent the funds as planned.

One of the returning families that managed to reintegrate fairly fast was a large family which returned to the village Magurë, near Lipjan. The son of the family returned couple months before the rest of the family and managed to rebuild their house. He received additional assistance from an Austrian NGO operating in the area. The family had received information regarding the situation in Kosovo before the son's return and thus they were able to make comprehensive reintegration plans. The assistance received in Finland was mainly used for the purchase of household appliances and building material. The family is happy in Kosovo and do not plan to return to Finland.

5. Recent Irish experience of temporary protection programmes

In common with Finland and other European countries, Ireland responded to a request from the UNHCR to provide temporary protection to refugees from former Yugoslavia in 1992, called the Bosnian programme, and to refugees from Kosovo in 1999.

THE BOSNIAN PROGRAMME

Ireland initially agreed to accept 200 refugees, taken from centres in Austria, for temporary protection. The first group arrived in Ireland in September 1992 and was accommodated in a refurbished nursing home in the suburbs of Dublin. In common with the Finnish experience, Ireland used its network of voluntary organisations to provide day-to-day care for the new arrivals. Civil Defence, an emergency response organisation, managed the reception centre while the Irish Red Cross Society provided social support and counseling and developed links with the local community. The reception was coordinated by the former Refugee Agency, the organisation charged with the coordination of services for refugees at the time, which was under the aegis of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The former Refugee Agency had considerable experience in the field of refugee reception as it had been involved in the Vietnamese programme and continued to coordinate family reunification for that community for many years.

Bosnian refugees were granted the right to work and were entitled to access social welfare, education and health services in the same manner as an Irish Citizen.

Full Board accommodation was provided and a small (token) contribution was deducted from Social Welfare payments for these services. This resulted in the residents having an unrealistic view of the cost of living and some had difficulties later with money management when they moved into the community.

Language training was provided by private language schools in the city centre and monthly bus passes were provided to encourage participation. It was essential that classes were provided away from the centre of accommodation to encourage adults to start participating in day to day life outside of the centre. Those who participated in the classes quickly learned about the city, its transport system and its people.

The management of the centre managed all aspects of the lives of those in the centres. Staff managed appointments, organised special transport to hospital and other appointments etc. resulting in the residents becoming dependent on the centre staff.

GOOD PRACTICE

A representative committee was elected by and from within the residents. The local Citizens Information Service was brought in to teach the residents how to organise the election and subsequently to teach the committee negotiation skills and committee protocols and procedures as they applied in Ireland. The majority of those who participated were not familiar with the electoral procedures etc. Residents in the centre were required to undertake some of the day to day care of their surroundings which was coordinated by the representative committee. Some of the residents resisted this initiative as they felt they were guests and should not be required to do so.

Money advisers, from the Money Advice and Budgeting Service provided advice and information to the residents who were now managing on considerably less income than they had previously been accustomed to. The Citizens Information Service and other key service providers also visited to allow the new arrivals to ask questions directly from the service providers.

Very shortly after the arrival of the Bosnian refugees in Ireland, two significant events occurred. It became clear that the Bosnian conflict was unlikely to be resolved in the short term, and the Minister announced that the Bosnian refugees in Ireland could remain for as long as they wished, and that there would be no refoulement.

In line with good international practice at the time, the work of moving the Bosnian refugees into the community began three months after their arrival. A resettlement Officer was assigned to assist each family to find appropriate accommodation suited to their particular needs, and to make the necessary links with service providers and the local community. Despite the levels of assistance offered, many of the Bosnian refugees were unable or unwilling to access employment training or full time employment.

The Refugee Agency, in cooperation with relevant Government Departments, FÁS - the State training Agency - and NGO's set up specif-

ic training courses, with a language support element, to assist those wishing to enter employment. Funding was provided through European funding programmes and co-funded by the participating partners. This model of good practice was later mainstreamed by FÁS.

GOOD PRACTICE

With the assistance of European and Irish Government funding, the Bosnian Community were assisted to set up the Bosnian Community Development Project which employed both Irish and Bosnian staff to support, develop, represent and assist in the integration of Bosnian refugees in Ireland.

The conflict in former Yugoslavia continued until the Dayton Peace agreement put an end to the war in late 1995. During the period of the conflict Ireland accepted two further major groups of 200 and 250 each, five medical evacuations were also undertaken.

Ireland operated a very generous family reunification programme with a view to enhancing the possibility of integration. The family reunification programme was in place from 1993 to 2000 when the programme finally came to an end. During this period, 1,341 persons were admitted into Ireland.

In common with most other European countries, Ireland supported a repatriation programme which facilitated the repatriation of those who wished to return home. Persons who repatriated voluntarily retained the right to return to Ireland within a period of 6 months. Some of those who repatriated availed of this option.

The Kosovo experience – Learning from the Bosnian programme.

In 1999, Ireland accepted 1,032 Kosovar refugees from camps in “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)”. Prior to their arrival it was decided that the Kosovar refugees would not be located in Dublin, the capital city, but would be dispersed regionally to larger cities and towns.

In deciding upon the towns or cities in which to locate the new arrivals, and the size of the Kosovar community to be placed there, the following factors were taken into account:

- ➔ Population of the area;
- ➔ Availability of suitable group accommodation;
- ➔ Availability of services such as education, health etc. without placing undue burdens on the services;
- ➔ Possibility of employment.

Learning from the Bosnian experience, it was agreed that all accommodation provided for the Kosovar refugees would be self catering, thereby giving the refugees control over their own lives and finances and returning their lives

to a normal pattern as soon as possible. While the centers were self catering and the refugees were obliged to purchase and cook their own food, no charges were made for accommodation and associated utilities, e.g. heat, light rent etc. This again gave an unreal image of managing life in Ireland. The refugees were required, in as far as was practicable, to access mainstream services e.g. G.P. (doctor) services were not set up in the centers. The objective of this approach was to create independence as quickly as possible.

During the Kosovar Programme, management of the centers was centralised and permanent staff were employed. In most cases managers were seconded from senior nursing positions within Health Authorities in the region of the centre and reported through a management structure to the former Refugee Agency. While employing local Health Service staff had many advantages, as the managers had the contacts and networks required to set up services and supports quickly and efficiently, in some cases this led to the residents being “cared for” and subsequent dependency. It sometimes proved difficult to find the correct balance between providing information, advocacy and support, and, enabling the refugees to manage their own affairs despite the difficulties which that might present.

Kosovar refugees were granted temporary protection status but were allowed to work, access health education and social welfare services in the same manner as an Irish citizen. While it was accepted that the programme was of a short-term nature, English language training was provided to facilitate the refugees to access employment and training. Mother tongue classes were also set up in the centers, with tuition provided by teachers drawn from the Kosovar community in the centre. There was a limited family reunification programme to unite separated spouses and separated dependent children under the age of 18 years with their families. Facilities existed for the reunification of other extended dependent family members in exceptional circumstances.

Although it was clear from very early in the conflict that the crisis would be short lived, the process of repatriation was slow, resulting in the majority of the Kosovar refugees living in temporary accommodation centres for over a year, and some lived in the centres for up to two years.

GOOD PRACTICE

In common with most other European countries, including Finland, Ireland participated in extensive “Look & See” programmes and a generous repatriation programme which eventually facilitated the return of the majority of those who came to Ireland during the Kosovo crisis. A small number were unable to return. They applied for and were granted leave to remain in Ireland.

Temporary Protection in the future; contingency planning.

In line with good international practice, the RIA strives to have approximately 10%-15% of its overall asylum seeker accommodation portfolio available at any given time for use for emergency mass influx situations if required. Maintaining this high level of availability often proves difficult because of the ever-increasing demands of the asylum system. Because of this, and conscious that a sudden large influx of either asylum seekers or refugees could arrive, a dedicated contingency supply of 500 fully serviced beds has been reserved in Mosney, one of Ireland's accommodation centres for asylum seekers. In the event of a large influx, these beds would be brought into use and plans could then be made for sourcing additional beds, if required, from either the RIA's existing portfolio or from the private sector. Such emergency measures should ensure that the immediate protection needs of the refugees are immediately met.

GOOD PRACTICE

Ireland is in the process of setting up an Interdepartmental Committee which will oversee any future mass influx situations. It is envisaged that this will result in a "whole of Government approach" to the issue.

VII

CONCLUSION

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The reception of refugees is an invaluable form of humanitarian work. With its aid, families and individual persons who have been persecuted in their original home countries have been saved and helped to begin their lives over again. Among refugees, there are many entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, teachers, welders, cooks, and representatives of other trades and professions, who can greatly benefit their new home countries. It is also important to remember that if the refugees ever return voluntarily to their country of origin, they can function as useful messengers between their own country and their former country of asylum. There are, however, other refugees who are extremely traumatised because of war, torture, or long periods of imprisonment. Their rehabilitation may take a very long time, in some cases it lasts for the rest of the person's life. Some refugees hope that they might receive compensation from the new society for their earlier suffering elsewhere. This may result in dissatisfaction with the conditions and the standard of living they have in the new country.

Integration is a process that takes time. The receiving community can, however, do much to make it easier. It is essential to provide enough support during the initial stages of integration. At the MORE Project, the aim was to find new models for the resettlement process. As noted in the introduction above, the Project focussed mainly on selection, introductory measures and training for adult refugees. Many important issues connected with integration in the long term are therefore not discussed in this Guide. These issues include for instance, participation in the political life of the new country, cultural and religious questions, the position of the second generation, and various other issues connected with age, sex, and ethnic identity. As noted in Chapter V, there is a large body of material on integration already in existence. Internet links to some of these publications are listed in the end of this book.

Mutual learning during the MORE Project

The trans-national, international and national-level activities conducted by the MORE Project provided a great opportunity for mutual learning and capacity building. The fact-finding missions, the results of which are set out in Chapter III, enabled the delegation from Ireland (a country which uses the dossier-based method of selection) to learn about refugee selection missions and the situation of refugees awaiting resettlement. This knowledge has fostered a deeper understanding of the resettlement process and will facilitate informed discussion on the merits of conducting selection missions.

Finnish-Irish workshops held during the Project were an important part of the work of the MORE Project. In addition to Finnish and Irish people, resettled refugees from different parts of the world who have integrated into Finland and Ireland participated at the seminars.

The staff-exchange programmes and reports produced by the programme participants assisted the Project partners in attaining a deeper knowledge of the resettlement programmes in each country. The comparison process also facili-

tated the identification of positive and negative aspects of the national resettlement programmes, something which was key to the mapping exercise conducted in each country. Some of the issues which were raised by the staff exchange participants and selection fact-finding missions participants are described below.

THE SELECTION AND CULTURAL ORIENTATION OF REFUGEES

The Irish members of the selection mission fact-finding teams appreciated the opportunity to familiarise themselves with selection mission practice. They also considered that conducting pre-departure cultural orientations sessions was very good practice.

THE LAW ON INTEGRATION

The Irish representatives who participated in the staff exchange programme found that, although the Finnish law on the integration of refugees is basically very good, it may not sufficiently target and support groups of refugees living in the most vulnerable positions. They also paid attention to the fact that the law concentrates very much on employment. The Irish representatives were of the view that, even though employment is an essential step towards integration, there are other equally important factors included in the integration process as well.

On the basis of their own visit to Ireland, the Finnish staff exchange participants stated that the law on integration has improved the co-operation between different actors in Finland. Ireland might wish to look at the requirement of statute-based integration at local level.

SERVICES FOR REFUGEES

The Irish staff exchange participants considered that it is an excellent idea to give the municipalities responsibility for the refugees resettled in their area. They were also satisfied to see that the refugees were given rented flats owned by the municipality in question, and that the State supported the refugees with the costs of housing. However, the Irish participants also noted that, in Finland, psychosocial support is often provided by social workers, who have no psychological training. The Finnish participants felt that local authorities should have greater responsibility for the reception and integration of refugees in Ireland.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The Irish staff exchange participants made the point that the two-way nature of the integration process is still somewhat defective in Finland. Support groups for refugees formed by citizens, as in Ireland, are lacking in Finland. Yet the Irish participants were very impressed with the international culture centres they saw in Finland. They were also interested in the culture and mother-tongue camps organised for children.

All participants felt that refugees community organisations did not receive enough support either in Finland or in Ireland.

TRAINING

The Finnish employees suggested that the language training in Ireland might be more strongly connected with the job-market than it is at present. In Finland, the integration training is one part of the system of training based on the employment policy. Thus it always contains training related to applying for jobs and periods of work practice.

EMPLOYMENT

Although the general employment situation is much better in Ireland than in Finland, much work remains to be done in order to improve the employment rates among refugees in both countries.

INTERPRETATION SERVICES

Staff exchange participants noted that much development work is needed in Ireland in order to improve the quality of interpretation services.

Final thoughts

As we stated in the introduction to this Guide, the project was interesting particularly because the administrative systems in Ireland and Finland are somewhat different. Mutual learning and the exchange of experience have thus been very stimulating. What could we recommend to other European countries on the basis of our experiences? The results of the project might perhaps be briefly summarised as follows.

Good preparation for the reception of refugees on arrival and during the initial stages of their integration at the level of central government, local government and of local communities can prevent problems arising later on. In addition, refugee communities organisations should be involved in reception and integration work to the greatest degree possible.

Receiving societies should adequately prepare for the reception and integration of refugees both at the central, regional and local levels. Wide public discussion on the topic can help to create a positive atmosphere towards refugees. As regards selection, whether it happens on a dossier-basis or via interviews, it is important to select as balanced a group as possible. However, the needs of the most vulnerable refugees always must be of primary consideration. Emphasising the importance of the introductory reception phase can prevent initial teething problems which can be more difficult to solve at a later phase if allowed to persist. Perhaps the most important point is to make good use of the strengths and skills of refugees and refugee community organisations in all of the different phases of the resettlement process.

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1. KEY MATERIALS

Handbook on Integration

European Commission

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/integration/doc/handbook_en.pdf

*Good Practice in the Reception and Integration of Refugees:
networking across Europe*

European Council on Refugee and Exiles (ECRE)

http://www.refugeenet.org/pdf/guide_general.pdf

*Refugee Resettlement; An International Handbook to Guide
Reception and Integration*

UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=PROTECT&id=3d4545984&>

*Integration Initiatives: Supporting Next Steps: An inventory of
opportunities and needs in the integration of resettled refugees*

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=PROTECT&id=3b8366bc4>

*Papers from the International Conference on the Reception and
Integration of Resettled Refugees,*

Vildmarkshotellet, Norrköping, Sweden (25-27 April 2001)

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=PROTECT&id=3b8366bc4>

2. LINKS TO ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE FIELD OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OR INTEGRATION

International organisations / bodies

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

<http://www.unhcr.org>

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

<http://www.iom.int>

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

<http://www.ecre.org>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

<http://www.redcross.int>

EU Networks on Integration of Refugees

<http://www.refugeenet.org>

European Country of Origin Information Network

<http://www.ecoi.net/>

Migration Policy Institute

www.migrationpolicy.org

European Refugee Fund

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/erf/erf_en.htm

European Network against Racism

<http://www.enar-eu.org/en/index.shtml>

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org/>

Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org/>

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/hrp_reports_mainhp.html

World Wide Refugee Information

<http://www.refugees.org/world/worldmain.htm>

Refugee Studies Centre

<http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/>

Center for International and European law on Immigration and Asylum

<http://migration.uni-konstanz.de/index-en.html>

Journal of Refugee Studies

<http://www3.oup.co.uk/jnls/list/refuge/>

**United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine
Refugees (UNRWA)**

<http://www.un.org/unrwa/>

Finnish organisations / bodies

Ministry of Labour/Työministeriö/maahanmuuttoasiat

<http://www.mol.fi/migration>

Finnish Red Cross/Suomen Punainen Risti

<http://www.redcross.fi/>

Finnish Refugee Council/Suomen Pakolaisapu

<http://www.pakolaisapu.fi/>

Refugee Advice Centre/Pakolaisneuvonta

<http://www.pakolaisneuvonta.fi/>

Finnish League for Human Rights/Ihmisoikeusliitto.fi

<http://www.ihmisoikeusliitto.fi>

Infobank/Infopankki

<http://www.caisa.hel.fi>

Irish organisations / bodies**Reception and Integration Agency**

<http://www.ria.gov.ie>

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

<http://www.justice.ie>

Access Ireland Refugee Social Integration Project

<http://www.accessireland.ie>

African Refugee Network

<http://www.integratingireland.ie/members/115>

Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland – ARASI

<http://www.integratingireland.ie/members/146>

Cairde

<http://www.cairde.org>

Doras Luimní

<http://www.integratingireland.ie/members/271>

Immigrant Council of Ireland

<http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie>

Integrate Ireland Language & Training

<http://www.iilt.ie>

Integrating Ireland

<http://www.integratingireland.ie>

International Organisation for Migration – IOM, Ireland

<http://www.iomdublin.org>

Irish Refugee Council

<http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie>

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism

<http://www.nccri.com>

Nigerian Support Group

<http://www.integratingireland.ie/members/586>

Refugee Information Service

<http://www.ris.ie>

SPIRASI

<http://www.spirasi.ie>

Vincentian Refugee Centre

<http://www.vincentians.ie/VRC.htm>

SHAPING OUR FUTURE

A Practical Guide to the Selection, Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees

The main objective of this Guide is to provide practical information about the resettlement of refugees and the establishment of resettlement programmes. Although the Guide deals with all aspects of the resettlement process, its treatment of the selection of resettled refugees, introductory measures for new arrivals and training for resettled refugees is more detailed and comprehensive. The Guide is addressed not only to officials involved in running resettlement programmes, but also to other actors including resettled refugees, international organisations, NGOs, service providers, training providers and local community groups all of whom play a key role in the resettlement process.



The Guide is based on the experiences of the MORE Project which was a Finnish-Irish development project on resettled refugees. The work of the Project included development tasks, staff exchange programmes, fact-finding missions, conferences, seminars and consultation exercises.

The MORE Project was co-funded by the European Union. Reports of all Project activities can be found on the Project's Website: www.more.fi

ISBN 951-735-938-1

