



# Resettlement Newsletter

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

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

Matthew  
25:35b

In our ongoing project on Refugees' Resettlement, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe is looking forward to finalizing the Capacity Building Visits. In few weeks the first delegation will go to Finland.

What will be the main focus of the visit?

Finland has been chosen as it is one of the six European countries that resettles refugees. The process started already more than 30 years ago. The delegation will look into the integration process; they will have the opportunity to talk directly with the refugees learning from their experiences. As you might know the Resettlement process does not end when the refugees arrive in the third country. If you allow me to say that, it is just the beginning.

One of the most important aspects to be tackled by the delegation is how governments and authorities prepare themselves for reception. Moreover it will look at the role of NGOs in all the stages of the process, which is the role of refugees and what is in reality their situation.

Is the integration process really working? Is there any difference in analyzing it in a short or long term? Particularly for a Christian organization, such CCME, it is interesting to know which role the Churches play in this process.

If you want to know the answers to these questions you have just to wait until next issue of the Newsletter comes out within the next months.

This is not all. In this issue of the Resettlement Newsletter you will also have the chance to read an interesting article on resettlement in Turkey. If you are curious, you know what you have to do, go immediately to page 4 and find it out!

We are really glad of the very positive reactions that the Resettlement Newsletter has got so far and we do hope it will continue to be an important tool to raise awareness on the need of starting and implementing Resettlements programs among the European Countries.

Thank you very much for your comments and support. Once again, take your time and let the Newsletter speak for itself.

Enjoying the reading!

Best regards,

Alessia Passarelli  
Communication Intern of  
Refugees Resettlement Project



Photo: Penny Foster

### Refugees' Voices: Tering (Tibetan refugee resettled to Baltimore):

Here, I feel happy that this country is really free. We have the full freedom to move anywhere and speak anything; we have the right. I feel really happy about the freedom here that people are getting. I am really impressed by it."

In <http://www.theirc.org/photoessays/index.cfm?essayID=11&thisstartrow=1>

Resettlement is a transfer of refugees from a country of first asylum where they cannot stay to a third one where they can re-build their life.

## Picking up threads, sewing together a life... The work of Chicago's Interfaith refugee in resettling refugees

He was named after Jesus, but he became a refugee while he was still in his mother's womb. Soldiers came to their home and took his father away. The family never saw him again.

The family was Hutu. The soldiers were Tutsi. The year was 1996. The ethnic conflict that claimed millions in neighboring Rwanda had come calling at the family's home in Burundi.

Fearing the soldiers' return the following evening, his mother Claris fled to Zambia with her older child. There, Issa (Jesus in Arabic) was born. And there Claris lived as a refugee, working as a tailor till the family was resettled in Chicago April this year.

For refugee women like Claris, resettlement in the US poses a distinct set of challenges. Due to lack of English skills, they find it harder to get a job. There is little encouragement for familiar, if no longer untenable gender roles, while social isolation makes it harder for them to find support for new ones. Chronic depression and anxiety dog their efforts to integrate into a new society.

Chicago's Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries has developed the Women's Empowerment Program for women just like Claris.

"Many have horrific stories of husbands shot in front of them," says Interfaith's director Gregory Wangerin. "Through English language classes, regular field trips, and workshops on household safety, domestic violence prevention and grocery shopping, we help them overcome their isolation."

Last year, volunteers began mentoring many of the 300 women in the program on a one-to-one basis. The mentors come from all over the city to show refugee families how to cook, shop, and get around. They help children with homework, and tutor them in English. "It's a beautiful example of what volunteers can do, building bridges with the community," said Wangerin.

The empowerment program has also started a sewing cooperative. Women with sewing skills make craft items, clothing and home furnishings to sell for pocket

money. Others have no previous experience with sewing, but benefit from the chance to chat and learn how to market a new skill while their pre-school children get free day-care. "Claris is very resilient," says her case manager Mohamed Abdurahman. He helped her get a bus card, and showed her how to make transfers. She lives in an apartment near him in the North side of

Chicago and he sees her at the grocery store often.

A former refugee himself, Abdurahman was resettled in November 1999 with his wife Luul and sons Abdi and Radwan. "They were a smiling family the minute they walked off that plane and they have never stopped the positive attitude," said one member of Western Springs Congregational, the Abdurahmans' co-sponsoring church.

The church co-sponsored its first refugee family in 1980—before Interfaith and other affiliates were set up—doing "just about everything." Western Springs is now on its ninth and tenth co-sponsorship, working with two families from Liberia.

Through many of these co-sponsorships, the church has also reached out to a much wider community of refugees, some without co-sponsors, others with delinquent co-sponsors.

Ziba Aziz, an Iranian Kurd who Western Springs co-sponsored in 1994, has brought needy Syrian, Pakistani, Iraqi and Sudanese to the church's attention and care. Saleh El Nimair, a Nubian who arrived with his family in 2000, is a mentor in the Sudanese community.

Co-sponsored refugees get first pick at two rummage sales that the Western Springs women's society holds every year, taking home what they need free. Other refugees get good breaks. Out of the \$20,000 raised at each sale, a donation goes to Interfaith.

In 2002, the church raised money for the agency by hosting an exhibition and lecture on the interwoven culture and heritage of the Middle East's Christians, Jews and Muslims. Although Interfaith exchanged "church" for "faith" in its name two years ago to reflect the wider community its clients represent, it remains mindful of its

links to churches like Western Springs Congregational. "We speak 25 languages. We work with refugees and immigrants that represent every religion and our staff also represent several. We've gone interfaith, but not at the expense of our ties to Christian houses of faith," said Wangerin.

Those ties hark back to its foundation by the Illinois Council of Churches and to continued denominational support. "The more I get to know the denoms, the more I realize just how important they are in this ministry," says Wangerin, who took over leadership of the organization two years ago after more than two decades with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "It's taken me a couple of cycles to realize just how valuable they are."

Interfaith was resettling over 500 refugees a year in the late 90's. The US shut down its resettlement program for several months after the Al Qaeda attacks of September 2001, sending the Illinois affiliate's caseload plummeting to 108 the following year. Wangerin points out the organization would not have survived without its three-way affiliation with Church World Service, Episcopal Migration Ministries and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

The lull in resettlement gave Interfaith time to shepherd the Pan-African Association though the process of becoming Chicago's newest mutual aid association. It seeks to provide access to a wide range of services and build bridges to the city's African American community.

With the slowdown of refugee arrivals since 9/11, Interfaith is finding it hard to attract support from churches and congregations. "We were faced with the 'out of sight, out of mind' syndrome," says Wangerin. As a result, outreach to churches is a priority for Wangerin. While expanding immigration and senior citizen services in the suburbs, and attracting more volunteers, Interfaith is striving to bring more churches and refugees face to face. "We need their help," Interfaith's executive director says. "We are a ministry and a partner in ministry with congregations. They need to fasten their seatbelts when they decide to co-sponsor. They need to get ready for the blessings that come with co-sponsoring refugees."



Asmaru, who came to the US as a refugee from Ethiopia 15 years ago, fabricates a handbag for the Women's Empowerment Program Sewing Cooperative. She likes to come twice a week to polish her skills. Photo: Catherine N-Ibegah

Thomas Abraham

July 20, 2004

**Resettlement is not an alternative to the spontaneous asylum seeking**

## Face to face with... Judith Kumin UNHCR Regional Representative in Brussels

### What do we expect from Europe?

UNHCR would like to see much more active European participation in resettlement efforts, and enhanced efforts to facilitate the integration of refugees, including those who are resettled.

It is widely recognized in Europe today that there is an ongoing need for attention to integration issues. While this applies generally to migrants in Europe, we believe that the situation of refugees is in many ways unique, and justifies particular integration support. The European Commission's new Communication on integration of third-country nationals does not address the particular needs of refugees. We will soon be issuing UNHCR's comments on this Communication, and making a number of suggestions to promote refugee integration. And we would like to draw attention once again to the Handbook on integration of resettled refugees, which UNHCR published in 2002 together with NGO partners and with the support of a number of resettlement countries.

To come back to the question of what we expect from Europe: As I noted earlier, a handful of European countries – the Nordic countries and the Netherlands – have been longstanding resettlement partners. Another handful – the UK, Ireland, and soon, we hope, Spain – are starting up new resettlement programmes. But Europe has the potential to do much more.

For this reason, we have

welcomed discussions about the possibility to establish a common EU Resettlement Scheme. For the time being, this proposal is limited to the



CCME resettlement conference, Brussels, November 2005

inclusion of a resettlement component in the Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs) proposed by the European Commission. The Commission's Communication on Regional Protection Programmes says that these programmes should include "[a] resettlement commitment, whereby EU Member States undertake, on a voluntary basis, to provide durable solutions for refugees by offering resettlement places in their countries." This

proposal is welcome – as long as it is clear from the outset that resettlement is a complement to and not a substitute for national asylum policies.

Given that resettlement is a core function of UNHCR, we are pleased that the central role of UNHCR in identifying resettlement needs, proposing operating procedures and coordinating quotas has been recognized. UNHCR has signalled its readiness to assist in the design and implementation of a common EU resettlement scheme. But we feel strongly that a common EU resettlement scheme should not simply be the sum of the present national programmes. The aim should be to increase resettlement to the EU and thus to bring added value to global resettlement efforts and to have a real impact, both in terms of protection and in terms of burden-sharing. Of course, the resettlement component of any Regional Protection Programme will need to fit with the overall protection strategy in the particular coun-

try or region concerned.

While an EU resettlement scheme would initially be linked to a specific Regional Protection Programme, we think that it is important to maintain the objective of a wider program, which would not be restricted to a geographic region or specific nationality or nationalities. In the future, one might even think more creatively of the possibility of having a central body at EU level to co-ordinate the selection of refugees for resettlement and their allocation among participating Member States.

Before concluding, let me to turn to the question you are likely to be asking yourselves: What role can NGOs play?

In the implementation of resettlement programmes by the traditional countries of resettlement – Australia, Canada and the United States --, NGOs can and do play an important role, both at the level of identification of candidates in countries of first asylum, and in the reception and settlement process in countries of resettlement. We would like to see European NGOs play similarly important parts.

In my view, serious European engagement in refugee resettlement requires a paradigm shift. In the traditional countries of immigration, refugee resettlement has always been part of the overall immigration policy. But in Europe, proactive immigration programs are still very rare, and there continues to be a lot of misunderstanding about what resettlement is and how it works. Together we should do whatever we can to generate support for resettlement at the political level, and among the general public.

Interview with Judith Kumin  
Led by Alessia Passarelli

**Resettlement is not the refugees' return to their own countries**



# ICMC: NGO resettlement processing in Turkey

## 1. Introduction

ICMC has been involved in resettlement in many countries around the world since its foundation in 1951. Based in Istanbul, ICMC-Turkey has operated since 1993 an 'Overseas Processing Entity' (OPE), processing refugees, referred by UNHCR for the United States Refugee Resettlement Program, the world's largest refugee resettlement program.

The ICMC office's responsibilities have over the years expanded into a regional center, with mobile teams processing refugees on site in multiple locations throughout the region. Refugees were resettled from Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon and Yemen and on an ad hoc basis out of Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and the UAE.

Beside from resettlement, the ICMC carries out several other programs for refugees.

The ICMC office implements a UNHCR financed social services project in Istanbul that provides social, legal, psychological and psychiatric counseling, material assistance, home visit monitoring and health services. In addition ICMC carries out a police training project, improving the capacity of the local police personnel in the area of protection and the defense of the rights of refugees.

## 2. How many refugees were resettled and where did they come from?

After having been referred to ICMC from UNHCR, it takes between two to three months for refugees to depart for the United States where they can start a new life. During the last year, ICMC resettled 1731 persons to the US, representing 828 cases and covering fifteen different nationalities. This group consisted of UNHCR

referrals of Iranian, Iraqi, Somali, Afghan, Uzbek, Ethiopian, Sudanese and Bhutanese refugees. The most significant increase in refugee populations recently have been from Iran, making up about 90% of the cases. Most of these refugees are Bahai, fleeing religious persecution. The remaining cases consist mainly Ethiopians and Iraqis and Somalis, arriving in waves into Turkey, being smuggled into the country via ships.



Men in small group work discussing domestic abuse, CO Training, Istanbul - Photo:ICMC

The Bahai refugees are processed under the status of a 'fast track' group. Because of geographic limitations that Turkey has applied as signatories to the 1951 Conventions, non-European UNHCR recognized refugees must be granted asylum by the Turkish authorities and must be granted exit clearances by the government. Whereas all standard UNHCR procedures are applied with non Bahai cases, the Iranian Bahai are not required to have a protection or full RSD interview.

## 3. What specifically does ICMC do in the Overseas Processing Entity?

Handling the procedures to enter the US Resettlement Programme might appear at times a rather administrative exercise. However, each refugee brings with him his very personal story and specific circumstances and needs. Particular care is therefore given to the situation of each individual or family at every stage of the resettlement process, which follows the following steps:

- ICMC receives referrals of individuals and families that the UNHCR has determined are refugees.
- ICMC interviews the appli-

cants and assists in organizing the application, by explaining and helping them demonstrate to what extent they meet the criteria.

- An intensive pre-US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) interview to further prepare the applicant is completed, biographical info is confirmed which is then entered into the US government's Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) database to be reviewed for security purposes in Washington;
- After approximately 30 days, applicants normally receive a Security Advisory Opinion clearance to proceed with their DHS interview, which ICMC will coordinate;
- Most applicants are approved that day for acceptance as refugees in the US refugee resettlement program, after which their biographical information is confirmed in the WRAPS system;
- The US-bound refugee is sent to a clinic for a medical exam
- The refugee participates in the 3-day cultural orientation program, provided onsite by ICMC
- Medical reports are received and necessary arrangements made for those in need of special care, such as the obtaining of wheelchairs or hearing aids, etc.;
- Contact are made with the voluntary organizations in the US who will take short-term responsibility for the refugees upon their arrival in the US;
- The IOM prepares flight arrangements, including exit clearance from the airport

Petra Hueck

Liaison Officer ICMC Europe

[www.icmc.net](http://www.icmc.net)

## Resettlement: an essential component of EU Regional Protection

Recent years have seen the European Union taking an increasing interest in the so-called 'external dimension' of asylum and migration and undertaking various initiatives to integrate migration issues into its external relations. The EU's Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs), as outlined by the European Commission in September 2005 and approved by the Council in October 2005, have the potential to be the most protection-oriented of these initiatives. As a first step they could support EU Member States to more comprehensively address the protection needs of refugees in the two pilot regions, namely the Western Newly Independent States (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) and sub-Saharan Africa (Great Lakes/Tanzania).

It is worth pointing out, however, that RPPs as they stand do not represent a major new funding initiative, but will (at least in the short term) simply provide a guiding framework for projects submitted under existing EU funding streams, such as AENEAS and TACIS. The RPP framework suggests that projects should include the following elements:

- improving the general protection situation in the host country
- the establishment of an effective Refugee Status Determination procedure
- improving refugees' reception conditions
- benefits to the local community hosting the refugees
- training in protection issues for those dealing with refugees and migrants
- registration
- a resettlement commitment from EU Member States

The inclusion of resettlement is obviously to be welcomed, however, this list is a menu from which to choose and so there is no guarantee that resettlement will feature within the activities actually funded for each region. On top of this, any resettlement activities would require the involvement of a Member State willing to welcome refugees and support them to settle in their



Distribution humanitarian aid, Montenegro 2001 - (c) EU Commission ECHO

territory. But the signs to date are not promising. For one, there is currently not enough interest from Member States to support the establishment of an EU-wide resettlement scheme, as proposed by the European Commission. There is also a worryingly low level of interest from countries with existing resettlement programmes in resettling refugees languishing in Eastern Europe, with no prospect of a durable solution to their plight. UNHCR is urging governments to offer resettlement places to address the protection needs in that region (it has estimated that 2600 people need to be resettled from the Eastern European region in 2006, including 600 people from Ukraine alone). ECRE is also calling for EU countries to resettle Chechen refugees out of the region due to the acute obstacles to protection and the widespread discrimination and xenophobia they face. The situation is such that violent and fatal attacks on refugees are increasing and generally go unpunished. Nevertheless it is evident that the region's resettlement needs were not part of the EU's agenda when selecting this transit region for an RPP pilot.

Yet, to exclude resettlement from either pilot RPP would undermine the EU's objective for these programmes to help third countries become 'robust providers of protection'. It would also seriously underestimate the benefits of resettlement as an international protection tool, as an important responsibility-sharing measure and, not least, as a way of improving and open-

ing up the asylum space in first countries of asylum. There are examples of countries (such as Thailand) where improvements in asylum systems have been brought in as a direct result of agreements to resettle some of the refugees they host. As part of the Council's evaluation of the pilot RPPs in 2007 it would be essential to be able to test in *both* RPPs the degree to which resettlement, used strategically, can help to find comprehensive solutions to refugee situations.

The reality is that the overwhelming majority of refugees are hosted by countries much poorer than EU Member States. Any efforts by the EU to help such countries provide better protection to the refugees on their territory and, in this way, reduce the need for refugees to move onwards to Europe, must be accompanied by a genuine and tangible preparedness to take a fairer share of the global responsibility. Otherwise it could be all too easy for countries targeted by the RPPs to view the EU's latest initiative cynically. For the potential benefits of the EU's RPPs to be fully realised, resettlement must be one of their components. However resettlement within RPPs should be part of a wider commitment to increasing the number of refugees resettled to the EU through national resettlement programmes and eventually through a European Resettlement Programme.

For more information about ECRE's views on Europe's role in the global refugee protection system, see its 'Way Forward' series of policy papers, available at [www.ecre.org](http://www.ecre.org), including: 'Towards a European Resettlement Programme' (<http://www.ecre.org/positions/Resettlement.pdf>). ECRE runs projects in Eastern Europe and has also issued a paper on the treatment of Chechen IDPs, asylum seekers and refugees in Europe (<http://www.ecre.org/positions/Chechen.doc>).



**Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe**

Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe

Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

## Main countries of resettlement of refugees in 2004\*

World		Europe	
USA	52,868	Sweden	1,801
Australia	15,967	Norway	842
Canada	10,521	Finland	735
New Zealand	825	Denmark	508
Chile	26	Netherlands	323
Mexico	11	UK	150
		Ireland	63

\* Source: Governments.

Table source: **Refugees By Numbers**, 2005 edition, UNHCR

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## Coming soon...

### Capacity Building visit to Finland

As part of the project  
"Understanding resettlement  
in practice: capacity building  
for action!"

**6th-11th of March**

#### 1) What is CCME?

CCME is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. The aim of CCME is to develop in the churches throughout Europe a due sense of responsibility towards the situation of migrants, refugees and minority ethnic people.

Founded in 1964, CCME is an organization of churches and ecumenical councils as well as churches related agencies; its members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches, diaconal agencies and Councils of Churches in presently 16 European countries. CCME cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

CCME is active in the Platform of NGOs on Migration and Asylum hosted by UNHCR in Brussels.

CCME promotes awareness-raising on issue of racism and xenophobia within the churches and in society, it conducts studies of the situation of migrants, refugees and minority ethnic people at local, national and international level.

#### 2) What is "Resettlement in practice"?

The project "Resettlement in practice" takes up the conclusions of the study process and consultation "Make Resettlement Work" which CCME organized in 2003-2004 and enhances/improves the network created between governmental institutions, UNHCR, Churches and NGOs. Reactions and discussions during that study process indicated that among many relevant actors in the field of refugee protection there was no clear understanding of what resettlement should entail.

#### 3) What is Refugee Resettlement?

It's one of the 3 traditional durable solutions for refugees, along with the local integration in the country of asylum and repatriation. Basically, it's a transfer of refugees from their country of first asylum to a third country that has agreed to admit them with a long term or permanent resident status. Resettlement provides protection for refugees whose safety is immediately at risk and it is a tool of international protection in a context of burden sharing among states.

#### 4) What Resettlement is not...

Resettlement is not the same as seeking refugee status through the asylum system, nor is it a more legal process for accessing asylum rights and can never substitute a spontaneous request of asylum.

Resettlement is not synonymous with "Temporary protection" classifications.

Resettlement cannot become a system of profiling refugees in accordance to their nationality or religion in order to create more or less valuable categories of refugees. Resettlement is based exclusively on the protection needs of the refugees.

#### 5) Which are the Resettlement countries?

The countries that actually host resettlement programs are the following: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and USA. Those countries are called the "traditional ones", but next to them there are also new partners such as Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Island, Ireland, Spain and UK.

The project "Understanding Resettlement in practice: capacity building for action!" is funded by the European Refugee Fund of the European Commission.

The views expressed and information provided by the project and partners involved do not necessarily reflect the point of view of and do in no way fall under the responsibility of the European Commission.