

CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

CLARIFYING NEXT STEPS IN SUPPORTING INTEGRATION INITIATIVES AND NEW AND EMERGING RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES

PROPOSAL TO THE ANNUAL TRIPARTITE CONSULTATIONS ON RESETTLEMENT - JUNE 2003

As a next step, and as part of the broader activities of the Annual Tripartite Consultations and the Working Group on Resettlement in implementing the Agenda for Protection, the CCR proposes to collect information from states and NGOs on needs and opportunities in the area of the integration of resettled refugees. The CCR will use this information to stimulate exchanges between and among traditional, new and emerging resettlement countries and provide recommendations to the ATC towards the development of future efforts. A short-term pilot is recommended as a first stage, during which the longer-term feasibility can be evaluated. Recognizing the differing roles played by government and non-governmental agencies from country to country, the project will be available to facilitate the full range of exchanges, from state to state, state to NGO and NGO to NGO.

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

During discussions at the 2002 ATC on follow up on the Integration Initiative, participants emphasized the importance of sharing expertise and experience between countries and in particular of assisting emerging resettlement countries in developing their capacity to integrate refugees. The Chair, however, noted a gap between rhetoric and reality: the need to assist is recognized, but it is not clear whether the capacity or the will are there. The Reference Group on Integration, established as an outcome of the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (ICRIRR), could have been a forum for coordination of this area of work, but the Reference Group is moribund and no one has offered to assume ongoing leadership.

The Canadian Council for Refugees made a tentative offer to act as a focal point but emphasized that contribution and participation by NGOs, states parties and UNHCR is essential to any further initiative. CCR was asked to prepare a preliminary plan for discussion at the March 2003 Tripartite Meeting on Resettlement. At this meeting, presenters reviewed the historical context for the Integration Initiative and affirmed the continued relevance through more recent activities as the Global Consultations, the Agenda for Protection and Convention Plus. The CCR proposal to the tripartite partners was intentionally modest and sought to begin a much longer activity by testing a mechanism to identify needs, exchange information and facilitate partnerships between the various players in resettlement countries' integration programs.

Discussion at the March 2003 tripartite meeting confirmed that the majority of countries acknowledge the need for various integration activities, that such linkages are especially relevant for new and emerging resettlement countries and as a first step agreed to identify a focal person for ongoing contact on the subject. Some participants referred to the importance of considering the impact of various activities during the pre-departure phase on the integration process and also indicated interest in looking at regional opportunities for partnership especially in light of the broader Convention Plus discussions. There was also discussion on the role of the Working Group and whether a reference group should be reconstituted. The Chair asked the CCR to reformulate the proposal to accommodate pre-departure elements and to come back with the revised version to the Annual Tripartite Consultations in June 2003. The Chair also asked states to consider making resource contributions to support the CCR proposal.

CONSIDERATIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN MOVING FORWARD

- An important context for considering future integration initiatives is the Programme of Action of the Agenda for Protection. This calls for the expansion of the global capacity for resettlement, which can be achieved by encouraging additional countries to undertake resettlement, by increasing the capacity and willingness of existing resettlement countries and by viewing resettlement as one element in a comprehensive strategy aimed at achieving durable solutions for refugees.
- Many countries with resettlement programs affirm that support for the integration process of newly arrived refugees in the country is an essential element of that country's resettlement program and enhances the overall outcomes of the program. Assistance with post-arrival settlement increases successful integration and creates a receptive environment within the receiving community to sustain the resettlement program.
- Experience demonstrates that some of the activities taking place during the selection and pre-departure phase may impact successful integration post arrival.
- Providing opportunities for the exchange of information and good practices not only strengthens the new or emerging country programs but also increases the global capacity for resettlement. There is a growing interest in resettlement in Europe, with a number of countries starting or expanding their resettlement programs. Emerging European resettlement countries can be expected to look to traditional resettlement countries for advice and assistance about how to integrate resettled refugees.
- Exchanges between "traditional" resettlement countries are also felt to be of value. While it is important to recognize the unique qualities of each country's program, the trend is to move closer to developing comprehensive resettlement strategies. The sharing of good practices and successful models between all resettlement countries strengthens the global efforts for resettlement as well as building vital national programs.
- There seems to be a hesitation on the part of states to commit significant resources and to assume leadership of a continuing integration initiative through the Working Group on Resettlement. Discussion at the Tripartite Meeting in March 2003 affirmed interest in a mechanism to facilitate formal and informal exchanges, especially between states' governments. This is entirely appropriate within the context of Convention Plus and the discussions on the more strategic use of resettlement.
- The implementation of integration programs is the responsibility of states' governments who may provide direct services through governmental agencies or designate that function to NGO partners. There is significant interest among NGOs, most especially amongst those who are program delivery partners either abroad or in the resettlement country and who recognize the potential benefits of certain integration activities. With only limited resources of their own, NGOs look to their governments to provide the political context, leadership and resource support to carry out new initiatives.
- There are already in place various activities and fora for exchange in the area of integration. Any new initiatives must build on and complement already existing measures.
- The themes of "linkages", "exchanges" and "twinning" come up again and again, although it seems that they may mean different things to different people. It will be important to refine these concepts and achieve consensus on what they really mean in the context of integration.

- It has been noted that what “traditional” resettlement countries want to offer to “emerging” resettlement countries is not necessarily what the latter identify as their needs. Providing opportunities and mechanisms for information exchange enhances awareness of what is possible as well as what is needed. Successful models and good practices will often have new applications in different countries. It may be that by seeing what is possible, new and emerging resettlement countries will be able to clarify their own needs. Moreover, most especially at the community level, NGOs who deliver front line programs often find common ground in models and good practices.
- The International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees and the Reception and Integration Handbook arguably moved to successful completion because they were concrete projects. The Reception and Integration Handbook and the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook provide the roadmap for future integration activities.
- A key emphasis within ICRIRR was the involvement of refugees at every level. This should not be lost.

PROPOSAL

As a first step, and as part of the broader activities of the Annual Tripartite Consultations and the Working Group on Resettlement in implementing the Programme of Action of the Agenda for Protection, the CCR proposes to collect information from states and NGOs on needs and opportunities in the area of the integration of resettled refugees. The CCR will use this information to stimulate exchanges between and among traditional, new and emerging resettlement countries and providing recommendations to the ATC towards the development of future efforts. A short-term pilot is recommended as a first stage, during which the longer-term feasibility can be evaluated. Recognizing the differing roles played by government and non-governmental agencies from country to country, the project will be available to facilitate the full range of exchanges, from state to state, state to NGO and NGO to NGO.¹ who are involved in integration activities of resettled refugees, in particular what they have to offer and to learn.

Objective

To develop and test a mechanism whereby traditional, new and emerging resettlement countries can identify and match opportunities and needs.

Activity

1. Information will be collected on needs and opportunities. In addition to collating information already made available, for example through tripartite meetings, the project will invite new, traditional and emerging resettlement countries as well as countries considering resettlement programs to add information about:
 - a) what needs they have that could benefit from linkages
 - b) what they have to offer others, including areas of specialization, opportunities for exchanges, listserves that people could join, conferences that people might usefully attend.
 - c) suggestions of possible sources of funding for exchanges, for example foundations that might fund a person from an emerging country to go to a conference or do a placement in another country.

¹ The proposal essentially offers a way of testing out the question posed by New Zealand at the 2002 ATC: “Is there a need for a mechanism so that emerging countries can voice their needs and traditional countries can offer assistance?” (Page 28, Report on Proceedings and Recommendations.)

Both government and NGO representatives will be asked for their input. Efforts will be made to contact the appropriate people within government and NGO communities, targeting those most directly involved in the integration of resettled refugees. Particular emphasis will be laid on contacting NGOs.

The focus will be on reception and integration of resettled refugees, including the selection and pre-departure phase insofar as they impact on integration.

2. Responses received will be collected in a chart of needs and opportunities. The chart will be circulated with an invitation to anyone to follow up if they see a good match for themselves in the chart. Also where there is an obvious match, the project will try to put people in touch.
3. Models of state to state twinning such as that implemented by the EU for new member countries will be explored as well as the international “twinning” of NGOs by asking those with previous experience to identify what worked and what did not. NGOs willing to be “twinned” will be invited to sign up and these offers circulated to NGOs in other countries.

Methodology

- The project will be designed to test out whether there is a need for a mechanism to facilitate exchanges in the area of integration. It will therefore take note of what mechanisms already exist (e.g. within the Council of Europe) and attempt to assess where there are gaps for some countries and for NGOs.
- In the interests of manageability, it is not proposed that a resurrected Reference Group or similar international committee oversee this project. However, to be feasible, the project requires the active input of a tripartite advisory committee.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada, through the Resettlement Division, has agreed to act as a communication link with government representatives in the Working Group on resettlement.
- Active involvement by UNHCR is essential, because of the invaluable resource existing in offices around the world, the ongoing resettlement activities and the consequent access to a wide range of information and to personnel.

Timelines

- The project would run as a pilot for one year commencing in September 2003, towards the end of which period there will be an evaluation.

Evaluation

- The evaluation should answer two questions:
 1. Is there a need for a mechanism for matching needs with opportunities for assistance?
 2. If yes, is the approach taken in the pilot effective in meeting this need?

Products

- Survey of needs, opportunities and current available resources.
- Chart of needs, opportunities and available resources.
- Information on twinning/exchange opportunities and models.
- Evaluation.
- Report and Recommendations for possible next phase to the ATC

Budget: \$21,500 (details available upon request)

APPENDIX 1.

GENERAL CONTEXT

The following excerpts from recent documents offer a general context for the proposal based on relevant discussions and conclusions within UNHCR and with its resettlement partners.

Working Group on Resettlement discussion paper on The Strategic Use of Resettlement

§ 31 “The expansion and diversification of countries having annual resettlement programmes could benefit from the provision of expertise and advice to emerging resettlement countries as they build their capacity to offer resettlement. UNHCR will need to play an important catalytic role in this regard in order to initially guide emerging resettlement states to potential sources of expertise. Twinning arrangements, secondment of staff, exchanges among NGOs and the development of best practices are examples of possible options to be considered...”

Agenda for Protection

The Agenda for Protection, adopted by the UNHCR Executive Committee in October 2002, contains a number of points relevant to the Integration Initiative.

Goal 5, Objective 5: Expansion of resettlement opportunities

Includes the following:

“States and UNHCR, in cooperation with NGOs, to develop capacity-building programmes with new resettlement countries, involving training, as well as “twinning” and related support.”

“States to put in place policies to ensure that resettlement runs in tandem with a more vigorous integration policy, aimed at enabling refugees having durable residence status to enjoy equality of rights and opportunities in the social, economic and cultural life of the country, especially as regards: education, including language training and skills development; the labour market; family reunification and citizenship.”

And noting the need to increase global capacity for resettlement also states:

“UNHCR to work to enhance protection through an expansion of the number of countries engaged in resettlement, as well as through more strategic use of resettlement for the benefit of as many refugees as possible, taking , however, into account the resource implications thereof.

States that do not yet offer resettlement opportunities to give active consideration to making some resettlement places available.”

Also relevant: **Goal 5, Objective 7: Achievement of self-reliance for refugees.**

EXCOM Conclusion

Conclusion on International Protection (No. 90 (LII) - 2001):

(m) Encourages initiatives directed at diversifying resettlement opportunities by further increasing the number of resettlement countries, thereby sharing resettlement needs more widely, and meeting increased resettlement needs; acknowledges that capacity-building is essential to develop and sustain the necessary conditions for successful integration of resettled refugees in emerging resettlement countries, and underlines the important catalytic role which UNHCR should play in this regard; acknowledges the important role that regional arrangements have played in certain regions in supporting diversified resettlement opportunities.

Mission Statement: International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (ICRIRR)

“*The International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* is designed to provide an international forum for the exchange of ideas and means of supporting refugee resettlement among the traditional and emerging resettlement countries. Planned as the mid-point catalyst in an on-going process of exchanging ‘best practices’ in the integration of resettled refugees among the resettlement countries, goals for the Conference include:

[...]

- Facilitating both formal and informal links and exchanges between the various resettlement countries;

[...]

- Strengthening the reception and integration programmes of traditional and emerging resettlement countries.”

Post-ICRIRR

After the ICRIRR in April 2001, an Integration Initiative Reference Group was formed at the 2001 ATC, with a 12 month mandate. The Reference Group never succeeded in naming a Chair and effectively ceased functioning quite quickly. The main follow up activity undertaken to ICRIRR and completed in October 2002 was the development of the Handbook.

A paper entitled *The Integration Initiative: Next Steps by Tripartite Partners* (September 2001) proposed three actions be undertaken by the Reference Group. The second action was to:

Encourage and design a strategic approach to capacity building, at the local and national level, in emerging and traditional resettlement countries, to facilitate and enhance the work of reception and integration. The role here would be primarily coordination, information sharing, and sustaining networks and linkages already established in the planning process of ICRIRR, such as websites, list serves, promotion of existing training seminars and venues for professional development on integration issues, etc.²

² The first proposed action related to the completion of the Reception and Integration Handbook, a task now complete, except for translations. The third proposed action was to provide feedback and input on resettlement and integration in the context of the Global Consultations.

At the 2002 ATC Paper No. 9, *Integration Initiative: "Twinning" Projects*, proposed some principles for engaging in "Twinning" or "Befriending" Projects and outlined a "Menu of Options."

In addition, the minutes of the 27 September 2001 meeting of the Reference Group contain much useful information and guidance:

...Ms. DeWinter emphasized that the on-going mission of the *Integration Initiative* was to incorporate the *Principles* endorsed at ICRIRR into existing mechanisms, structures and processes to avoid any duplication that might arise from the establishment of new structures and committees. This approach would also ensure that integration as an issue, and the work plans and concrete proposals that emerge from the Reference Group, are well grounded. In addition, this approach would also be more cost-effective.

Ms. DeWinter underscored the fact that the ultimate goal of the *Integration Initiative* (and hence of the Reference Group) was to improve resettlement outcomes, thereby expanding worldwide capacity for the resettlement of refugees. Quoting from paragraph 13 of Mr. Carlgren's proposal, she noted that: "It should be emphasized that the over-arching goal for the continuation of this *Initiative* is to "integrate" the various principles and dimensions of the *Integration Initiative* into the mainstream activities and core discussions of UNHCR and the tripartite partners for the *sole purpose* of strengthening resettlement as a tool of protection and durable solution."

...There was general consensus amongst Reference Group members that each State and NGO partner in resettlement should evaluate ways and means of participating in capacity building, according to their own priorities and practical considerations during the course of the next 12 months. There was, for example, strong interest in pursuing both formal and informal links among the resettlement countries through "twinning" projects. There was also strong sentiment expressed for ensuring that every opportunity to share resources, attend each other's annual conferences or special workshops, should be fully utilized – with special consideration given to supporting attendance by partners from the emerging resettlement countries.