



International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees

25-27 April 2001 – Norrköping, Sweden

Proceedings Report

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (ICRIRR)*, a key event within a broader *Integration Initiative* supported by UNHCR's partners in resettlement was held at *Vildmarkshotellet* in Norrköping, Sweden, on 25-27 April 2001. Two hundred and sixty-five participants from the eighteen resettlement countries as well as two *ad hoc* resettlement countries (Great Britain and Germany) attended ICRIRR, which was hosted by the Swedish National Integration Office. These participants included the major donor countries and major supporters of refugee protection. Among the participants were representatives of the Governments, inter-governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, UNHCR field, regional and headquarters staff, as well as former refugees. All eight of the emerging resettlement countries were also represented at ICRIRR. This was the first time that both the traditional and emerging resettlement countries were able to meet in an international forum to exchange best practices in the reception and integration of resettled refugees.

II. BACKGROUND

1999 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement Serves as Impetus for ICRIRR

2. The impetus for the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* stemmed from discussions that took place during the 1999 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATC) hosted by UNHCR in Geneva. While it was affirmed that refugees were resettled to ensure their protection and provide them with a durable solution, and that the criteria for resettlement was governed by well-defined and commonly endorsed guidelines outlined in the Resettlement Handbook, it was also noted that no significant focused effort had been made by the international community to discuss and evaluate the various models of reception and integration in the resettlement countries.

Increasing Diversity of Resettlement Countries and Refugee Groups Pose Challenges

3. This evaluation was deemed particularly important given the fact that the number of resettlement countries had increased from ten to eighteen, and that UNHCR refugee referrals were increasingly more diverse, including nationalities with which the general public in resettlement countries were not familiar. The Governments, non-governmental organisations and other implementing partners were therefore facing unique challenges in actively leading, informing and assisting local communities to facilitate effective resettlement. Given the addition of eight new resettlement countries, UNHCR was also receiving requests for international assistance from them in the implementation of their emerging reception and integration programmes. All of these developments and issues of concern pointed to the necessity for the international resettlement community to collectively examine these issues and challenges.

Need for Comparison of “Best Practices” in Reception and Integration

4. The delegates attending the 1999 Annual Tripartite Consultations therefore agreed that steps should be taken to facilitate the planning of an international conference designed to exchange ideas and endorse recommendations relating to the reception and integration of resettled refugees. It was further agreed that the ultimate goal of the conference would be to promote a lively and *continuing* exchange of ideas and experiences on how best to facilitate effective integration – both for those resettled refugees identified as being particularly at risk, as well as those who might not be in need of immediate protection, but had compelling reasons to be removed from their countries of refuge, having no other options available to them except for resettlement.

Effective Integration and its Role in Sustaining Support for Resettlement Policy

5. It was further agreed that because resettlement is used for two critical purposes – as a tool of international protection and as a durable solution for those who have no other hope of a normal life – the resettlement countries should be *as effective as possible* in supporting, guiding and strengthening the integration process for resettled refugees. It was also noted that the relative “success” in facilitating effective integration had bearing upon the degree to which receiving communities continued to endorse and support national resettlement policies. While acknowledging that there had been a number of recent EU initiatives with regard to the integration of *spontaneously arriving refugees*, it was felt that the focus of this conference should be upon the reception and integration of *resettled refugees*.

Tripartite Partners and Former Refugees Plan and Implement Conference

6. As the “success” of integration was thought largely to rely upon the degree to which the Governments, NGOs and UNHCR were able to forge effective partnerships, it was envisioned that both the conference planning process and conference participation should include representatives from the public authorities and NGOs responsible for implementing national policy, as well as UNHCR and resettled refugees, themselves, (including those who would be considered particularly at-risk).

Sweden Hosts, with Strong Support from the Nordic Countries, USA and Canada

7. The generous offer of the Swedish National Integration Office to host the conference, together with the commitment of funding primarily from the Nordic countries, with assistance also provided by the United States of America, Canada's Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the German Marshall Fund USA, and the Ford Foundation enabled UNHCR to identify and deploy a reception and integration specialist, Deborah DeWinter, to serve as facilitator for the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* as well as for the broader integration initiative into which the conference was designed to fit as a mid-point catalyst.

III. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Identification of Steering Group, Executive Committee and Working Chair

8. Part of the strategy in the design of the conference planning process was to identify and recruit specialists in the resettlement countries from the State and local Governments, NGOs and grassroots refugee and community-based organisations engaged in policy development and reception and integration programme implementation, to serve on a Steering Group. Given the numbers of participants involved in the Steering Group, an Executive Committee of the Steering Group was also formed to pilot the planning process and take responsibility for the results. With broad direction from the Steering Group, the Executive Committee was responsible to guide the shaping of the agenda, monitor the assignment of tasks, approve presenters identified by the Steering Group, and ensure that clear and timely communication was provided to all Steering Group members throughout the planning process. A Working Chair from the Swedish National Integration Office, Erik Stenström, was appointed by the Executive Committee to work closely with the UNHCR Facilitator in all phases of the planning process to maximise accountability and transparency as well as to foster collegial relationships between the representatives of the 18 resettlement countries in all aspects of the planning process.

Development of Mandate Document and Mission Statement

9. Following the 2 July 2000 Steering Group Meeting, a document entitled: "*Mandate and Principles, Roles and Responsibilities for the Implementing Structures in the Planning of the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*"¹ was drafted to provide guidance in the development of the conference. The conference objectives, which had been outlined in the Mandate Document, were subsequently incorporated into the *Mission Statement*. Featured prominently on the ICRIRR Agenda following the 17 November 2000 Steering Group meeting, the *Mission Statement* reads as follows:

"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

¹ The *Mandate* document may be found on the Conference website at: <http://www.integrationsverket.se/internatconf/intconf.html> or by links found at www.unhcr.org under "Resettlement News."

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:

- *Drafting commonly endorsed principles for the ‘successful’ reception and integration of resettled refugees that are applicable regardless of the level of funding available to resource resettlement programmes;*
- *Facilitating both formal and informal links and exchanges between the various resettlement countries;*
- *Gathering resources for the development of a reception and integration handbook; and*
- *Strengthening the reception and integration programmes of traditional and emerging resettlement countries.”*

Refugee Leadership Brings Integrity to the Planning Process

10. Members of the Steering Group and Executive Committee were committed to identifying and supporting the participation of former refugees on both the Steering Group and Executive Committee of ICRIRR. Special funding from the German-Marshall Fund USA was obtained for the support of NGO and refugee participation in the planning process, augmented by support provided by the Governments. Canada, the United States of America and Sweden respectively identified and supported the involvement of three former refugees on the Executive Committee of the ICRIRR Steering Group. Their perspectives provided a “reality check” during the planning process and helped to motivate the involvement of over 50 former refugees in the implementation of the conference. The Ford Foundation also helped facilitate the participation of two former refugees at the conference itself.

Strategy Behind Steering Group Process

11. Inherent in the strategy behind the Steering Group process was the goal of establishing a comfortable working rapport between representatives of the eighteen resettlement countries in order to initiate an immediate exchange of information, country to country and constituency to constituency. It was also designed to break down the myriad tasks in the planning of the conference so that each of the countries involved would share equitably in the work, to foster a sense of “ownership” of the final product, and ultimately, to build towards the goal of drafting commonly endorsed principles for the “successful” reception and integration of resettled refugees. This process engaged local resettlement constituencies in an analysis of their respective “best practices” as well as building bridges for the development of new partnerships among the resettlement constituencies of the eighteen resettlement countries and the sharing of “best practices” on an international level.

Design of the ICRIRR Agenda

12. Through a series of three major Steering Group meetings (4 May 2000; 2 July 2000; 17 November 2000) and five Executive Committee meetings (2 July 2000; 16 and 18 November 2000; 14 January 2001; 23 February 2001 and 23 and 28 April 2001) over

the course of twelve months, an agenda was crafted taking into consideration the three major themes identified by the Steering Group in the design of successful resettlement programmes:

- Preparing Refugees and Receiving Communities
- Common Needs of Resettled Refugees
- Special Needs of Resettled Refugees

13. In addition to the 17 individual breakout sessions identified under these three major themes, three more topics requiring special emphasis were identified by the Steering Group for incorporation into the agenda as discussion groups:

- Building Capacity with Refugee Involvement for the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees
- Placement Strategies to Enhance Effective Integration of Resettled Refugees
- Effective Orientation as a Critical Component in the Integration of Resettled Refugees

Conceptual Framework for Evening Activities

14. As part of the strategic planning process for the conference agenda, two special evening events were planned. The first, hosted by Director General, Mr. Andreas Carlgren and the staff of the Swedish National Integration Office, was conceptually designed to demonstrate what it means to be “Swedish.” As one member of the Steering Group who works closely with refugees in Sweden had phrased it during a planning discussion, “*Refugees are often told by Swedish nationals: ‘You need to be more Swedish!’ But what does it mean to be ‘Swedish?’*” The first evening’s dinner and musical productions were planned to share the “essence or soul of Sweden,” as Working Chair Erik Stenström summarised it.

15. The second evening, hosted by the Representative for the UNHCR’s Regional Office for the Baltic and Nordic Countries, Mr. Gary Troeller, and his staff, featured a dinner and 50th Anniversary event commemorating the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. To complete the evening, a musical group consisting of former refugees from a number of different cultural backgrounds, gave a performance around the theme of how refugees sustain their spirits as they are received and integrated into resettlement countries.

Designation of Lead Countries for the Development of Conference Sessions

16. Following the Steering Group’s identification of broad themes and individual topics for the provisional ICRIRR agenda, a special Steering Group meeting was convened in Washington, DC on 17 November 2000 to seek commitment from each resettlement country to accept responsibility for leading individual tracks, discussion groups or breakout sessions on the agenda. In the subsequent Executive Committee meeting held on 18 November 2000, the offers of commitment to lead conference tracks, discussion groups and individual breakout sessions were considered and final decisions made. Lead countries were advised that it was their responsibility to engage those countries indicating a strong interest in a particular topic to assist in the development of the related session. A revised provisional agenda was circulated which listed both lead countries and countries indicating a strong interest in assisting with the development of every session on the agenda. A country focal point was designated to ease

communication between those countries involved in international planning coalitions, and local steering groups in the resettlement countries began regularly meeting in order to co-ordinate the selection of facilitators, rapporteurs and presenters for their respective sessions.

Development of Resettlement Country Programme Descriptions

17. It had been recommended, in the first Steering Group meeting held on 4 May 2000, that each resettlement country should develop a *Resettlement Country Programme Description* to provide a foundational understanding of the various models and methods represented among the 18 countries of resettlement. The Canadian Government (Citizenship and Immigration Branch) took the lead on drafting a comparative grid of the key elements in each country's reception and integration programme, following up this project with the drafting of a "Global Overview" paper. These tools enabled individual conference session leaders to identify those resettlement countries with special strengths or representative models that would be helpful to include in specific panel presentations. Further, these documents provided practitioners and resettlement policy makers in each of the resettlement countries the opportunity to become more knowledgeable about the models and methods for reception and integration of resettled refugees implemented in other countries

Development of Framework Papers and Session Summary Forms

18. The Executive Committee of the Steering Group also requested that a brief framework/discussion paper be written for each session on the agenda. The three-part structure for the papers was designed to provide an overview of topics, description of key issues emerging, and questions to focus the discussions at the conference. In addition, lead countries were asked to complete a standard session summary form indicating who would be serving as facilitator, rapporteur, presenter(s) or panellists as well as providing a brief summary of the content and approach to the session. All papers and session summary forms were completed prior to the start of the conference and posted on the Swedish National Integration Office's website with links to the UNHCR website, as well as distributed in a hard copy binder format to each conference participant as part of the ICRIRR registration process. No single resettlement country's programmes or models of reception and integration were to be spotlighted in framework papers or sessions. Rather, lead countries were asked to do their utmost to provide a broadly representative view of the topic and engage colleagues from other resettlement countries in the drafting process of the papers, as well as in the planning process for the sessions.

Emerging Resettlement Countries: Current Status and Future Challenges

19. As part of the planning process, an analysis was made of the current status and future challenges of the resettlement programmes of the emerging resettlement countries. Subsequent requests by the Governments and implementing partners of the emerging resettlement countries to identify and send suitable experts in reception and integration were met and deployees dispatched to Benin, Burkina Faso, Argentina, Brazil and Chile. In the course of this process, special links were forged, for example, between the Southern South American resettlement countries and Spain, and between Canada and Benin and Burkina Faso, so that resources and experience gained might be shared between countries with similar language backgrounds.

20. Special care was taken to plan a pre-ICRIRR meeting for emerging resettlement countries to provide an overview of the conference agenda and link them with their counterparts among the traditional resettlement countries. In addition, simultaneous translation was provided in Spanish and French for all plenary sessions and Track 2 breakout sessions on the *Common Needs of Resettled Refugees*. Volunteer interpreters accompanied other participants to sessions where simultaneous translation was not available. Provisional and final agendas, (both “At A Glance” and “Annotated” versions), were translated into Spanish and French thanks to collaborative efforts by Canada, Spain, Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

IV. PRE-CONFERENCE MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

Study Visits

21. The option of participation in study visits to reception and integration programmes and projects was structured into the planning process in conjunction with Steering Group and Executive Committee meetings (e.g. in Madrid, Spain; New York City, Sioux Falls, SD and the greater Washington, DC area in the United States; and in Dublin, Ireland), as well as in conjunction with the conference, itself. Although pre and post-conference study visits had been offered in Helsinki, Finland, Oslo, Norway and Copenhagen, Denmark as well as in Sweden, only the Swedish visits took place, due to complications in travel schedules and competing demands on the time of ICRIRR participants. Nevertheless, the study visit component of the planning process as a whole provided a meaningful opportunity to receive first-hand orientation to the models and methods of implementing reception and integration programmes for those who chose to take advantage of these opportunities. The visits also served to initiate the development of some informal links and exchanges between experts from the different resettlement countries – a goal of the broader integration initiative.

Expanded Executive Committee Meeting (23 April 2001 in Stockholm)

22. An expanded ICRIRR Executive Committee Meeting was held in Stockholm, Sweden on Monday, 23 April in order to provide a thorough briefing for members and other key participants on the revised conference agenda, logistics, and both the *Facilitator and Rapporteurs’ Workshop*, as well as the *Emerging Resettlement Countries Workshop* held the afternoon and evening, respectively, of 24 April 2001. Ms. Lynda Parker of the Canadian Government (CIC) gave an overview of the Summary Session and Conference Conclusions so that key leaders at the conference would have a clearer understanding of how the commonly endorsed *Principles* would be formulated. It was decided that a special rapporteur’s debriefing meeting would be held after each days’ sessions to synthesise principles emerging from the sessions and to adjust any aspects of conference logistics that might be necessary for the smoother implementation of the sessions. Mr. Erik Stenström provided an overview of how the Resource Room and Multi-Media Centre would work, as well as the registration process. Ms. Kiki Rodriguez of the UNHCR Regional Office for the Baltic and Nordic Countries gave a briefing on plans for the 50th Anniversary Event commemorating the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, hosted by UNHCR on the evening of Thursday, 25 April 2001, while Mr. Stenström briefed members on the evening activities for the opening day of the Conference, hosted by the Swedish National Integration Office.

23. Members and special guests attending the Expanded Executive Committee Meeting were reminded of the post-ICRIRR follow-up meeting scheduled for the morning of Saturday, 28 April, at which time next steps would be discussed. It was anticipated that these would include a wrap-up Executive Committee meeting in conjunction with the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (scheduled for 20-21 June 2001 in Geneva), the compilation of the Proceedings Report, maintenance of the website for the broader integration initiative, timelines for producing the Reception and Integration addendum to the *Resettlement Handbook*, and finally, a proposal to form an on-going advisory group for guiding the integration initiative.

Facilitator and Rapporteurs' Workshop (24 April 2001 in Norrköping)

24. From the beginning of the planning process, it was understood that the success of the conference would largely depend upon the skills and talents of the session facilitators and rapporteurs. Hence, a special training session was scheduled before the start of the conference co-facilitated by the Working Chair, Mr. Erik Stenström, the ICRIRR Facilitator, Ms. Deborah DeWinter, with assistance by Ms. Eva Norström, President of the Swedish Refugee Council, and Mr. Sean Henderson, Projects Manager, Refugee Services, New Zealand Immigration Service.

25. Mr. Stenström began with a welcome and overview of the ICRIRR Mission Statement, saying that "*We are all at the centre of an international forum with a mission statement to exchange ideas and best practices and emerge with commonly endorsed key Principles.*" He encouraged all concerned to understand that they would be asked to facilitate both the formal and informal aspects of their sessions, and requested that special consideration be made to include, respect and encourage the full participation of representatives from the emerging resettlement countries.

26. Ms. DeWinter thanked all who had worked, planned, prepared, contacted and facilitated the development of sessions and began by saying that "*We are all here with the single purpose in mind to increase the effectiveness and warmth of our welcome to refugees.*" She noted that having former refugees take such a powerful leadership role in the planning and implementation of ICRIRR was an affirmation of the success of resettlement. She went on to remind everyone that there was "*...no secretariat for this conference; you are all the secretariat. You need to help each other and provide leadership for mutual support....*" Ms. Tracey Spack (Canada) and Ms. Amy Slaughter (USA) were introduced as special assistants to UNHCR in helping to facilitate the logistics of the conference, with special emphasis upon working with Mr. Henderson in providing support and resources for the facilitators and rapporteurs.

27. After a careful review of the revised Agenda, noting session room assignments, and outlining the various phases of the summary process leading up to the Conference conclusions, recommendations and *Principles*, Ms. DeWinter introduced Ms. Eva Norström, who provided a philosophical and practical briefing on the roles and responsibilities of the facilitators. In turn, Mr. Henderson reviewed the Rapporteur's Form that he developed to assist in capturing best or promising practices and a summary of the recommendations and principles emerging from each, individual session at the conference. A lively question and answer session concluded this workshop.

Emerging Resettlement Countries Workshop (24 April 2001 in Norrköping)

28. Hosted by Mr. Ruben Ahlvin of the Swedish Migration Board, the Workshop and Dinner for Emerging Resettlement Countries was co-facilitated by Ms. Susan Krehbiel, Reception and Integration Specialist deployed by UNHCR to the Southern South American resettlement countries of Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and Ms. Maria Vega of the UNHCR Regional Office in Madrid, Spain. Special gratitude was expressed to Mr. Ahlvin and the Swedish Migration Board for their generous provision of interpreters in French and Spanish. After a warm welcome by Mr. Ahlvin, followed by brief remarks by Ms. Debbie Elizondo, Chief of the Resettlement Section of the Department of International Protection, UNHCR, Mr. Ahlvin gave an interesting overview of the resettlement selection and admissions process in Sweden. Mr. Stenström followed up with an overview of the planning processes and structures for the implementation of the conference. He stated that “...*the emerging countries are at the centre of this conference...*” and reflected that Sweden had “... made a lot of beginner’s mistakes when they began resettling refugees.” This, he said, was partly their reason for offering to host the conference, so that others might be encouraged to exchange experiences and benefit from that dialogue.

29. This was followed by Ms. DeWinter’s remarks concerning the importance of participation by the emerging resettlement countries. She began by saying that “...*traditional resettlement countries do some things well and some things not so well. We need the ideas of the emerging countries, since some of our own models and methods are not as effective as they once were. We need imagination and creativity – especially on how to do reception and integration without depending solely on large budgets from our Governments. The ‘heart’ that we invest in welcoming refugees is much more important than the funds.*” She went on to say that the African countries are an inspiration to the traditional countries because they have been so flexible, for example, in facilitating family reunification for resettled refugees, allowing refugees, themselves, to define who ‘family’ is to them. Ms. DeWinter mentioned how moving it was to have the Chilean representatives present at the conference in Sweden given the fact that not so many years ago Chileans were seeking refuge in Sweden. Inspired by Sweden’s generous example of hospitality, Chile, now, in turn, is offering protection and durable solutions for refugees. Following a detailed review of the conference agenda, a lively question and answer session took place.

V. ICRIRR PARTICIPATION AND PROCEEDINGS

Goals for Broad-Based Representation Met

30. The initial goal of the Steering Group and Executive Committee to limit participation to 250 representatives from the 18 resettlement countries and 6 *ad hoc* resettlement countries was exceeded by 15 persons for a total of 265 conference registrants. The goal of inclusivity was achieved as countries supported the attendance of municipal and national governmental representatives, local and national NGO representatives, former refugees and others representing grassroots service providers, employers of refugees and media specialists, for example.

Participation by Former Refugees

31. Some 50 former refugee participants resettled in the 18 countries of resettlement served as panellists, presenters, speakers, session leaders, facilitators and rapporteurs during the conference. Their voices provided other partners with a “reality check” on “best practices” shared, and principles drafted, and their leadership and contributions infused both the planning process and implementation of sessions with greater integrity.

Opening Plenary Session

32. The Working Chair of the Conference, Erik Stenström of the Swedish National Integration Office, began the *Opening Plenary* with a warm welcome to all participants and special guests, followed by a brief overview of the planning process for ICRIRR and the respective roles of the Steering Group, Executive Committee and the Swedish National Integration Office. He also introduced the Chair of ICRIRR, the internationally known author and journalist, Mr. Göran Rosenberg, who in turn introduced Ms. Mona Sahlin, Minister for the Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication, who gave the official opening address of the conference.

Ms. Mona Sahlin: Swedish Minister of Industry, Employment and Communications

33. In her remarks, Ms. Sahlin emphasised the importance of combating the growing trend of xenophobia, which seriously jeopardises the reception and integration of resettled refugees. She stated that the goal in Sweden is to have a society free of intolerance where each individual should have the right to be treated with respect and to be different. The Minister openly admitted that Sweden has not yet achieved its integration goal for resettled refugees, which is to be self-supporting and fully participating members in all spheres of society. In this regard, she commented that over the course of many years of experience with resettlement, Sweden has moved from a policy of *assimilation* to a policy which recognises more of a *two-way approach* to the integration process, with steps taken by both the receiving society and arriving refugees to facilitate a successful integration process. Ms. Sahlin also stated that she hopes to see more engagement by trade unions and an increased role played by non-governmental organisations in the reception and integration of resettled refugees. Whereas the questions about how best to facilitate the “successful” integration of refugees always remain the same, the Minister noted, sometimes the answers should change. She also reflected that whereas the Swedish people had enthusiastically opened their hearts to the Chileans some years ago - now that newcomers are more the norm in Sweden, today - refugees are not welcomed with the same degree of hospitality and interest that characterised the Chilean resettlement experience in the past.

Mr. Andreas Carlgren: Director General of the Swedish National Integration Office

34. Mr. Andreas Carlgren began by saying that it was a great honour for the Swedish National Integration Office to be hosting the conference and offered a warm welcome to all that had travelled to Norrköping for the event. He emphasised that all participants had something important to contribute and remarked on the level of commitment inherent in the group assembled. The Director General stressed that the conference was designed to provide an international forum for the exchange of ideas and the discussion of ways and means of supporting refugee resettlement among the traditional and

emerging resettlement countries. He underscored the individual goals of the conference, as outlined in the Mission Statement for ICRIRR and noted that he viewed the exchange of best practices, key principles and experiences of integration as “matters of the utmost importance.” Mr. Carlgren affirmed that according to the *Global Overview* document, most of the resettlement countries shared his view that the conference was badly needed.

35. The Director General went on to say that he “...*would like to make clear at this early stage that we view this conference as the start of a process, not the conclusion of an assignment ...*” He pledged that the National Integration Office was prepared to set aside resources for the purpose of passing on and making known the results of the conference on an international level and in Sweden - and for translating into action the conclusions and recommendations of ICRIRR. Mr. Carlgren stated that through this allocation of resources, he hoped to support UNHCR’s continued efforts to facilitate the broader integration initiative and challenged other Governments “to join us in our efforts.” He concluded by saying that “*a follow-up conference definitely also seems justified.*”

Mr. Göran Rosenberg, Conference Chair: “The Challenge of Integration”

36. Mr. Rosenberg opened by saying that he was the son of refugees, of two survivors from the Nazi concentration camps who, in 1945, found a new home in Sweden. He noted that “... *we live in a migrating world. People move from one place to another for numerous reasons.*” Some, he said move because they want to, but others move “because they *have* to; because they must run away from war, persecution, violence and misery.” Globalisation has opened borders, which blurs the distinction between forced migrants and voluntary migrants. Mr. Rosenberg shared that host societies often cannot distinguish between forced and voluntary migrants and that the needs of resettled refugees must be distinguished from those of general migrants.

37. He went on to note that there are unwritten codes of exclusion of various groups even when official institutions are politically neutral. In fact, he observed, such institutions are imbued with cultural biases, such as what constitutes a family? He followed by saying that there is also populist opposition at play, with local nationals sometimes opposing the “alien” values newcomers bring with them, “diluting” the familiar values of the native culture. “*Integration is the inherent capacity of a society to be pluralistic and remain democratic ... The challenge of integration is the ultimate challenge of democracy,*” Mr. Rosenberg asserted. He concluded by suggesting that “... *the democracies of the future must be able to create social order and cohesion in societies made up of far more diverse individuals, cultures, communities and regions ... where people can remain different and still make up a community.*”

Mrs. Erika Feller, Director, Department of International Protection, UNHCR

38. Mrs. Feller opened by stating her appreciation to all those responsible for supporting, planning and convening the conference, with particular thanks expressed to the Swedish National Integration Office for their hosting of ICRIRR. She also made special reference to the number of former refugees engaged in the planning and implementation of the conference, noting that their participation provided “reality checks” for other partners involved in the reception and integration of resettled refugees. With regard to new directions in resettlement policy and practice, Mrs. Feller stated that UNHCR’s policy places emphasis on “anchoring resettlement as part of

comprehensive protection and durable solutions strategies” and that “... *our goal is to realise the full potential of resettlement as a tool of international protection, as a durable solution, and also as a means of responsibility sharing.*”

39. Mrs. Feller went on to caution that while resettlement is indeed a multi-faceted response mechanism, “... *it is not the panacea for all problems besetting asylum systems today, particularly those related to widespread illegal immigration.*” She emphasised that it would be “... *inappropriate to distort the functions of resettlement by planning it around managing migration, particularly where this is at the expense of the right to seek asylum.*” It is critical to the integrity of the international protection system, she stated, that “... *resettlement processing and the promotion of asylum are pursued in tandem and not used to work against each other.*”

40. Mrs. Feller noted that “... *there must not only be sufficient places available for the resettlement of refugees, but also systems and procedures which are responsive in addressing the increasing diversity of resettlement needs, including mass influx situations.*” She was particularly concerned that States should not deny individuals or groups of individuals of concern to UNHCR who have been identified as in need of resettlement because of the perception that they might lack what has been called “*integration potential.*” The integrity of resettlement, Mrs. Feller stressed, continues to be defined by its “... *responsiveness to the profile of the cases, their urgency and special need for resettlement, as well as the speed of the resettlement response.*” She concluded her remarks by noting that the conference was a “milestone” in advancing both resettlement and integration processes and procedures, and challenged UNHCR’s resettlement partners to give some careful thought to future directions for the resettlement solution.

Global Overview of Refugee Resettlement and Integration Models and Methods

41. Very early in the Steering Group’s discussions it was suggested that a foundational exercise to both inform and guide the planning process, should be to request all 18 resettlement countries to draft descriptions of their respective resettlement programmes. A standard structure was designed, and all of the resettlement countries responded positively to this assignment. The Canadian Government (Department of Citizenship and Immigration) accepted the considerable challenge of compiling the information into a comparative format of some 50 pages in length, finally condensing the analysis into a very informative and useful framework paper for the “*Global Overview*” plenary session on the first day of the conference. Against the backdrop of this thoughtful compilation and analysis of the models and methods of implementing reception and integration policy prepared by Ms. Tracey Spack, Mr. Gerry Van Kessel, Director General, Refugees Branch, Citizenship and Immigration (Canada), together with Ms. Eva Norström, President of the Swedish Refugee Council and Mr. Ismail Mohamed Ibrahim, Regional Refugee Co-ordinator, Ministry of Education and Resettled Refugees (New Zealand) provided their own insights into the common and not so common approaches to refugee resettlement in their respective countries and the challenges facing refugees and the receiving communities in the integration process.

Mr. Gerry Van Kessel, Director General, Refugees Branch, Citizenship and Immigration (Canada)

42. Mr. Van Kessel noted that for Canada, refugee resettlement was an inherent part of nation building, and therefore he had “... *particular respect for countries for which*

resettlement has not been part of their conceptual definition of what nation building is all about.” He reflected that some have said that integration is like taking a shower where you remove one set of clothing prior to the shower, and then replace them with another set of clothing, afterwards. *“But we cannot ‘take off’ who we are so easily and throw our identities aside,”* Mr. Van Kessel noted. *“Refugees are the ones with the real task,”* he continued, *“They must make new friends, learn a new language and start at the bottom despite their credentials. We must provide funding for refugee services, we must be understanding, we must help.”* In order to support refugees in this difficult challenge of beginning again, however, Mr. Van Kessel also stressed the importance of the role of non-governmental organisations, saying that Governments needed strong and creative implementing partners to work collaboratively in the reception and integration of resettled refugees.

43. Mr. Van Kessel affirmed the Swedish Minister’s comment in her opening statement that resettlement should play a larger role in the refugee solution. He said he agreed with her hopes that ICRIRR might refocus attention on resettlement as a durable solution given the fact that for many refugees in the world today, repatriation and local integration do not always work. He concluded by saying that in discussions concerning resettlement, using terms such as “burden-sharing” can be damaging. *“Refugees are not burdens,”* he said, *“but rather positive boons to our countries.”*

Ms. Eva Norström, President, Swedish Refugee Council

44. Ms. Eva Norström advocated for “visionary politics” infused with honest, humane ideals and challenged all concerned with the resettlement of refugees to take a holistic approach to their responsibilities, to clarify mandates and to be prepared to take risks in order to maximise possibilities. She cautioned that *“... integration is actually something that happens inside the person and between persons,”* going on to say that despite the beauty or ideals of policies on integration, it doesn’t happen unless integration happens within people, themselves. Ms. Norström’s cautionary note was more poignantly illustrated by her reference to the story about a man who hugs a mouse to death because he doesn’t know his own strength. She recalled that in the Steering Group planning process, *“... we didn’t define integration because we couldn’t; it means too many things.”* Ms. Norström continued by saying: *“We should not mystify integration because we all know what it is - we all integrate - into our own families, our roles in the workplace and so forth. When we mystify integration, we create barriers, obstacles and excuses for not being responsible.”* She went on to caution: *“[Reception and integration] programmes are important, but are not only altruistic; they can be open or closed; they can free people or control them. Pluralism is not only about them, it is also about us ... We all have the right to be accepted, to be seen, to react.”* Ms. Norström concluded her remarks with a quote by the poet, Rilke: *“Once the realisation is accepted that between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them, which makes it possible for each to see the other whole against the sky.”*

Mr. Ismail Mohammed Ibrahim, Regional Refugee Co-ordinator, Ministry of Education (New Zealand)

45. Mr. Ibrahim began his presentation by poignantly stating: *“Being a refugee is the only thing I never dreamed of.”* He thanked the participants for the honour of being allowed to speak on behalf of resettled refugees, and then went on to describe the four

key partners he perceived in refugee resettlement: “... *those fulfilling their international commitments - and they are to be thanked and supported; agencies that help refugees and deliver programmes and services; volunteers who befriend refugees and provide critical orientation and services beyond what the agencies can provide; and refugees who deserve to be heard and given a chance to contribute and pay back the countries that helped them begin new lives.*” Mr. Ibrahim noted that there is a hierarchy of needs for refugees upon arrival in their resettlement countries. The first two levels are relatively easy to provide: food and shelter - but the third level, emotional needs, are much more difficult to provide. These needs are not easily understood. “*After food and shelter, feeling loved is the most important need of all people ... Refugees want to feel as though they truly belong to a community.*” He also noted that “*Refugees experience fear and isolation and they need to have their families with them.*” Family reunification is therefore very important to successful integration. Using a creative power-point presentation to describe New Zealand’s models of reception and integration, Mr. Ibrahim emphasised the important role played by sponsors and volunteers in reception and integration activities. He concluded by stressing the importance of having had former refugees actively engaged in the planning of sessions for the conference and saying that he was in Sweden “... *to advocate for the millions of other refugees who could not be present to speak up for themselves.*”

The Refugee Experience: A Refugee Panel Response to Integration Models

46. This panel, comprised of former refugees from different continents who served on the Executive Committee of the Steering Group, (with the exception of Ms. Akora), provided the opportunity for conference participants to hear first-hand reflections of what it was like for these individuals to be resettled via the models and approaches described in the preceding *Global Overview* session. Each of these former refugees has risen to prominence in their countries of resettlement, and each has made outstanding contributions in the field of refugee resettlement, integration and advocacy.

Mr. Fariborz Birjandian, Executive Director, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (Canada)

47. Mr. Birjandian began by expressing his appreciation for the countries that have provided protection for families such as his. His journey from Iran to Pakistan took 22 days without sleep, walking with his wife, two young children and his mother. He shared that “... *being a refugee is not fun; you have no place to call home and no status. You fear the unknown and your future is a blank page. It requires a lot of adjustments.*” Mr. Birjandian said that his family was pragmatic from the outset, realising that they would be different after their journey and understanding that they would be building new identities. He also acknowledged that everywhere their journey of flight took them, people were ready to offer help, sharing that in taking the risk of becoming a refugee, his family had “*trusted in God and people.*”

48. Mr. Birjandian related how his family was accepted by Canada and that in Canada, “you are free to define what it means to be Canadian.” He expressed that he identifies with Canada and shares its values. “*In Canada,*” he explained, “*one remains a refugee for only a few weeks. After that, you become a neighbour, a colleague, a co-student, in short, a member of the community.*” Noting that in the organisation that he directs, 700 volunteers are involved in providing reception and integration services, Mr. Birjandian advocated for refugees to be provided the opportunity to fully contribute what they have

to offer and cautioned against blaming refugees for problems with integration. *“Bad policies are to blame and should be examined and revised, not refugees.”* He concluded by using an overhead display to illustrate the four key elements he believes contribute to “successful” integration. These included: refugees; a hospitable and informed community; policies; and refugee-community based settlement services.

Ms. KaYing Yang, Executive Director, South East Asia Resource Action Centre (USA)

49. Born in Laos from a Hmong background, Ms. Yang escaped as a young girl with her family and resettled in Columbus, Ohio (USA) in 1976. She made an interesting distinction in her presentation, stating *“For refugees there is no choice but to integrate. The receiving community, however, does have a choice; they can choose whether or not to welcome newcomers.”* Ms. Yang said that in the United States, refugees do not have to simply integrate into one society, but into many - the Afro-American society, the Latino, Euro, Texan, and so forth, she explained - and then noted how the many regional differences in the United States complicate the various challenges inherent in integration.

50. Ms. Yang felt strongly that *“... refugees need to be brought to the table to participate in developing policies that affect them. It is disappointing to note that this is the first international conference to include so many refugees at such a high level...but hopefully, this experience is a good sign for the future.”* Her concluding thoughts were that *“UNHCR should make it a priority to bring refugees to these meetings.”*

Mr. Goran Kostesic, Planning Manager, Swedish National Integration Office

51. As a child, Mr. Kostesic arrived in Sweden in 1968 together with his parents. They had made their way from a part of the former Yugoslavia (now Croatia) via a reception centre run by the UNHCR in Trieste and a refugee camp in Latina, south of Rome. He noted that *“... children were not allowed a say in becoming refugees ... nor are they given a voice today, 32 years later.”* Accepted by a Swedish selection mission, the family stayed initially in a camp in southern Sweden for a month, finally being relocated to Norrköping in January 1969, where he entered the fourth grade. Mr. Kostesic described the sometimes humorous, but sometimes bittersweet experiences of finally being accepted to a resettlement country, while yet having to bear the indignities of certain reception processes. Sharing his first impressions in an anecdotal way, from a child’s perspective, he described both the anticipation of arrival and the post arrival realities, thus: *“I knew nothing whatsoever about Sweden. My mother told me it was a clean country. This worried me and I asked her: ‘Are you allowed to spit in Sweden?’ Immediately on landing in Sweden, we were taken by bus to a large, old brick building. Men and women were separated. I went with my father. I asked him what was going on but he had no idea. We were taken into a large bathhouse full of showers. Stout women in white uniforms scrubbed us unmercifully with hard brushes. Afterwards, we had to stand in line while they sprayed our naked bodies with a white powder. My mother was right. Sweden was obviously a very clean country.”*

52. Mr. Kostesic shared that having arrived on a Saturday, his parents began working on the following Monday and immediately began mixing with Swedes and making friends. He contrasted his families’ experiences with integration as compared with official integration practices in Sweden, today, saying, *“Most of those who come to Sweden today only have contact with public bodies and public officials. Many say they have never had a conversation with a private Swedish citizen although they have been living*

here for five or six years or more.” He noted that “In our country today, thousands of people from non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds are living in a state of permanent exclusions - outside the labour market, outside Swedish cultural and social life, outside housing areas where Swedes live.” Today, working as a staff person at the Swedish National Integration Office, Mr. Kostesic believes that all people just have a place in the community and feel that they are a part of it. He said that “... Government systems and public bodies that fail to make proper use of human resources represent the Achilles heel of integration ... Our society and our integration models must ... be revitalised. We must make better use of the people who come here. We must remove the obstacles, and instead point to all the opportunities that already exist and will continue to emerge in a Sweden of diversity.”

Ms. Lesley Akora, President, African Community of Western Australia

53. Ms. Akora came to Australia in 1991 as an Ugandan refugee under the *Women At Risk* programme. At that time she was widowed with three children. Ms. Akora has since graduated from University with a double major in Politics and Sociology while also serving as the editor of an African newspaper in Western Australia. She began her remarks by thanking UNHCR and Australia for striving to enhance resettlement opportunities and protection for refugees. Her presentation was illustrated by misunderstandings that took place through lack of guidance in her own reception and integration process. Ms. Akora identified several variables that can affect the speed with which different individuals are able to integrate, including: facility in the receiving community’s language; adaptability; propensity to problem-solve, and the degree of trauma experienced in the refugee experience. She concluded by reaffirming what her co-presenters had already emphasised: that refugees need to play a role in their own resettlement experience, and that the receiving communities also need to be prepared.

Structure of Conference Agenda

54. As noted in the “Background” section of this *Proceedings Report*, the agenda featured *three primary Tracks* reflective of the three major themes of the conference, each organised by co-chairing countries. Following the simultaneously scheduled plenary sessions for the individual tracks, a series of topical breakout sessions were offered, each lead by one of the resettlement countries, with assistance provided by other countries indicating a “strong interest” in that topic. Three additional topics were structured as simultaneously held *Discussion Groups: A, B and C*. The separate structuring of these discussion groups simply allowed for wider exposure to these topics by conference participants. While detailed information on the approach, speakers, facilitators, rapporteurs and key issues presented and discussed during the course of each of these breakout sessions and discussion groups may be found in their respective *Session Summary Forms*, and *Executive Summaries* of the respective *Rapporteur Reports*, the following constitutes a brief overview of the structure and leadership of the agenda:

TRACK 1 – PREPARING REFUGEES AND THE RECEIVING COMMUNITY**Co-Chairs: Canada and Chile****Breakout Sessions:****Lead* and Supporting Countries**Economics and Integration*United States of America; Canada
SpainResettlement as a Tool of Protection
and Durable Solution*UNHCR; New Zealand, Australia,
United States of AmericaThe Role of the Media in Preparing
Receiving Communities*Canada; Sweden, United States of
America, ChileBuilding Hospitable Communities*United States of America; Sweden,
ICMC, WCC**TRACK 2 – COMMON NEEDS OF RESETTLED REFUGEES****Co-Chairs: Australia and Iceland****Breakout Sessions:****Lead* and Supporting Countries**Cultural Retention and Adaptation*Canada; Australia, United States
of AmericaSupport Networks*United States of America;
Denmark, Canada, FinlandLanguage and Communication Issues*Canada; New Zealand, Sweden,
Australia, United States of America,
the NetherlandsRefugee Children and Youth*Canada; United States of America,
AustraliaEmployment and Education for Refugee
Self-Sufficiency*United States of America; ECRE,
CanadaSecure and Affordable Housing*Denmark; Sweden, United States
of America, Ireland**TRACK 3 – SPECIAL NEEDS OF REFUGEES****Co-Chairs: United States of America and New Zealand****Breakout Sessions:****Lead* and Supporting Countries**Responding to the Needs of Survivors
of Torture and Trauma*Australia; United States of America,
Canada, SwedenAt Risk Women*Canada; New Zealand, Finland,
United States of America

<u>Special Challenges in the Integration of Refugees from Countries with Oral Traditions</u>	*Canada; Sweden, and United States of America
<u>The Needs of Elderly Refugees</u>	*United States of America; Canada
<u>Models for Facilitating Integration in the Resettlement of Unaccompanied Minors</u>	*Sweden; United States of America, Canada
<u>Special Health Needs</u>	*United States of America, Sweden

DISCUSSION GROUP A

<u>Building Capacity with Refugee Involvement in the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees</u>	*Canada; United States of America, Brazil, Sweden
--	---

DISCUSSION GROUP B

<u>Placement Strategies to Enhance Effective Integration of Resettled Refugees</u>	*United States of America; UNHCR, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, Norway
--	--

DISCUSSION GROUP C

<u>Effective Orientation as a Critical Component in the Integration of Resettled Refugees</u>	*International Organisation for Migration (IOM); Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, United States of America
---	---

Summary of Tracks 1, 2 and 3

55. In his introduction to the plenary session summarising Tracks 1, 2 and 3, the Chair of the Conference, Mr. Göran Rosenberg, introduced Co-chair Dr. Elizabeth Ferris of the World Council of Churches. They alternated the presentation of rapporteurs for each of the Track summary sessions and also in providing commentary in-between presenters.

Track 1: Preparing Refugees and the Receiving Communities - Ms. Lynda Parker (Canada)

56. Ms. Parker expressed appreciation for all those who contributed to and participated in the planning and implementation of Track 1, with special thanks to the facilitators and rapporteurs involved. She began her summary by reviewing the five sub-themes under Track 1, namely:

- Setting Realistic Expectations
- Economics and Integration
- Resettlement as a Tool of Protection and Durable Solution
- The Role of the Media in Preparing Receiving Communities
- Building Hospitable Communities

57. She went on to summarise that preparing refugees and the receiving communities is, to a large extent, predicated upon the receipt of accurate and timely information that can, in turn, help to manage the expectations of both refugees and the receiving communities. Differing or unmet expectations can have an impact on the integration process of refugees in many ways. If resettlement is to be a durable solution for refugees, they must be able to integrate and participate in the receiving community in a way that is meaningful to both the refugee and the host community. It therefore follows that the first step in this process would be to prepare refugees for life in the new society where societal expectations, roles and lifestyles will likely differ from those with which they have been socialised. Furthermore, receiving communities must be prepared for the changing cultural landscape of their community and future encounters with diversity.

58. Ms. Parker noted that there is a need to find ways to bridge refugee education and skills into the new society, and that receiving communities should be more intentional about recognising foreign credentials. For the majority of refugees who are not able to obtain credential recognition in their receiving countries, they must often resort to employment in low skilled and low paying industries. This situation often leads to a decline in the self-esteem of refugees as well as reinforcing the mistaken assumption on the part of the receiving community that most refugees are not well educated and lack important skills that would allow them to make a significant contribution to the receiving country's economy. This can foster pre-existing stereotypes that refugees are limited in their capacities to contribute economically to their host countries.

59. While the media is an important factor in our societies, the session on the role of the media in the integration of resettled refugees reminded conference participants that it has a monopoly in the way information is managed. This means that those concerned with welcoming and resettling refugees must take special care in relating to the media through educating and proactively interacting with media representatives, recognising that media coverage can drive and shape the debate over refugees and other immigrants, for good or ill. Ms. Parker also noted that while legislation and structural frameworks are necessary to effect community capacity building, in order for this capacity to be effectively built, communities, themselves must be invested in the process.

60. How communities respond to refugees greatly affects the degree to which resettled refugees will participate in their new communities. Church organisations, ethno-cultural and migrant associations and educational institutions are examples of organisations that play a positive role in making refugees feel welcome and part of the communities in which they have settled. Many resettlement countries encourage volunteer participation in the reception and integration process, with most volunteers working through NGOs, academic clubs or faith communities that are involved in the welcoming and orientation of refugees.

61. In conclusion, Ms. Parker reported that throughout the sessions in Track 1, general consensus was expressed that there is a need for a continued sharing of information and exchanges beyond the scope of the conference. A mechanism for sharing research, evaluation tools and information about which models work, and which do not, should be devised for the benefit of all resettlement countries. Another central principle emerging out of the Track 1 sessions is that refugees, themselves, must be involved in the process of resettlement. Participants also noted that the resettlement process needs to take place in an environment of integrity, transparency and equity to be an effective tool for providing protection and offering a durable solution. Finally, Ms. Parker concluded,

there was general support for the need to discuss the issues surrounding family reunification and its importance as a factor affecting successful integration.

Track 2: Common Needs of Refugees - Ms. Margaret Piper (Australia)

62. Given the fact that Track 2 topics emerging from the central theme “*Common Needs of Refugees*” encompass the core components, around which resettlement programmes are designed, a particularly detailed summary of this Track was provided by the rapporteur. Specifically, sessions in Track 1 included those on language instruction, accommodation, employment, education, health care and other support programs needed by newly arriving refugees. The Track began with a plenary session which introduced the topic. This was followed by seven breakout sessions which explored the various “needs” in greater depth. Ms. Piper noted that before going into the individual session summaries, she would review the overarching principles identified by participants that ran as common themes throughout each of the breakout sessions.

63. The view was expressed that the title “*Common Needs*” is something of a misnomer in this context. The real needs of refugees are not so much tangibles, like accommodation and education, but rather the *intangibles*, such as:

- being able to feel safe and secure
- restoring a sense of self worth
- restoring a sense of dignity
- regaining a sense of control over one’s life
- resolving guilt
- processing grief about the loss of self and country.

64. The programmes often described as “needs” are not so much needs but the means by which the *real* needs of refugees can be met. It was considered that it is important that this recognition underpin the design and implementation of programmes, for example:

- housing programs need to ensure that the accommodation provided is safe and secure - that it can become a true *home*, not just a house;
- employment programmes must work towards giving refugees back a sense of control and a sense of being able to make a valuable contribution.

65. Ms. Piper noted that it is also essential that refugees are at the centre of the process - that they are able to determine their own priorities rather than having these prescribed for them - and that recognition be given to the refugees’ (often considerable) abilities and strengths. Similarly, support programmes need to be able to draw out these strengths through a process of empowerment, ensuring at the same time that there is support available for refugees when it is needed.

66. It was noted that while there are various views about what “integration” (or “settlement,” the term preferred in Australia) constitutes, there are some points of general agreement:

- Integration is a two-way process: it is not just something that refugees must do, but there is also a need for the wider community to make adaptations to accommodate the refugees. A “spirit of hospitality,” where refugees are made to feel welcomed into a community, underpins successful refugee settlement programs;

- “Successful” integration is backed up by Government policies and institutional philosophies that see the incorporation of refugee-sensitive programs into all mainstream service institutions, as, after all, refugees are residents and taxpayers - and as such - legitimate clients of mainstream service providers;
- “Successful” integration must involve all sectors of society - the Government, the private sector, the community and, most importantly, the refugees, themselves;
- Government funding of community sector projects is essential for the “successful” integration of resettled refugees;
- Developing links between newly arrived refugees and the host community is one of the keys to “successful” integration. Volunteers play an essential role in this, providing a very special connection with refugees that goes beyond the kind of support that can be provided by paid employees. Where volunteers are used, however, it is essential that they be selected, trained, monitored and supported throughout their period of involvement with the refugees;
- Those employed to work with refugees - in whatever sector - also need specialist training and ongoing support. It must be acknowledged that this is a specialised field and it can be very stressful for workers;
- Refugee reception and integration is also a profession that is emerging and evolving - new groups are coming, new lessons are being learned with each new population received. Research and information sharing among workers in both the Government and NGO sectors, academics, and refugees is important, as is the development of benchmarks, standards and monitoring processes.

Track 2 Breakout Sessions

67. Track 2 explored seven topics in which responsive programming is necessary to ensure effective integration:²

- Cultural Retention and Adaptation
- Support Networks
- Language and Communication
- Refugee Children and Youth
- Employment and Education
- Health
- Secure and Affordable Housing

68. During the course of discussion it was suggested that there are at least four other possible areas that could have been included, and should possibly be explored in the future:

- Family Reunification³

² It should be noted that Framework Papers on each of these areas and all Track Plenary and topical breakout sessions, as well as Discussion Groups A, B and C may be found on the Conference website at: <http://www.integrationsverket.se/internatconf/intconf.html> or by links found at www.unhcr.org under “Resettlement News.”

- Justice and Reconciliation⁴
- Religion⁵
- Leisure⁶.

69. Each of these seven breakout sessions examined underlying principles and profiled various national and regional programmes. Certain key lessons emerged from these individual sessions, summarised as follows:

Cultural Retention

70. The guiding principles emerging from this session included:

- The importance of establishing Government policies promoting cultural retention as well as Governments' active support for the implementation of these policies;
- Participation in the societies of the receiving countries; and "integration" does not require refugees to lose their identities;
- The promotion of multiculturalism is as much the responsibility of refugee communities as it is that of the receiving community.

Support Networks

71. The session on *Support Networks* focused on issues such as:

- The importance of public-private-community partnerships;
- The need for a high level of collaboration and co-operation between the various sectors;
- The value of volunteers in refugee integration and the importance of support programmes for volunteers.

72. Ms. Piper reported that the importance of family reunification was particularly stressed in this session.

Language and Communication

73. Being able to communicate with the receiving community is an essential component of "successful" refugee integration. Good language acquisition programs are characterised by:

- accessibility;
- flexibility - including the provision of after-hours and on-the-job training;
- professionalism;
- relevance;

³ The importance for refugees of being reunited with immediate family members and others of particular significance to them was stressed repeatedly throughout the conference.

⁴ Refugees present spoke about their need to see those responsible for the atrocities in their countries being held accountable for their actions.

⁵ It was noted that the ability to go to a culturally familiar place of worship is important for both believers and non-believers as it has both spiritual and emotional relevance.

⁶ Newly arriving refugees need to be made aware of the various options for leisure time in their new country and helped to understand the social mores associated with each.

- having instructional styles that are familiar;
- consistency (with national competency benchmarks);
- funding that recognises language acquisition is a lengthy process; not all learners have the same needs.

74. Ms. Piper noted that programmes should be available that address the language needs of refugees until such time as they have achieved the functional use of the language of the receiving country or on an on-going basis, if their circumstances make it impossible for language competency to be achieved, initially. These supports include, but are not limited to, translating and interpreting programmes and multilingual recreational facilities such as community radio and libraries that carry books in first languages.

Children and Youth

75. The widely held view that refugee children and young people adapt quickly and easily to their new environments should not lead service providers into the trap of believing that these young refugees do not need help, nor that they do not need programmes specifically targeted to their needs.

76. There are a number of areas where child or youth specific programs are important. These include:

- orientation;
- peer support (in schools and in the social environment);
- mentoring - especially for those entering the labour market;
- cultural retention;
- dealing with racism.

77. Parenting programmes are also very important, especially in those communities where extended families are traditional and parents no longer have this form of support available to them in the context of the receiving countries.

Employment and Education

78. Employment is crucial for the restoration of dignity and also to enable refugees to feel that they are contributing to the society that offered them a new home. The challenge, Ms. Piper reported, is to promote pathways towards meaningful employment and not simply streaming refugees into low-skilled, low-paying jobs. She went on to note that this session explored various employment models, specifically highlighting the importance of:

- work-place related language acquisition;
- training;
- mentoring and/or internships;
- recognition of qualifications;
- sponsoring micro-enterprise projects.

Health

79. Among the many issues explored in this session were:

- The importance of ensuring that information obtained during the pre-departure health assessment is given to relevant agencies in the resettlement country;
- The challenge of assisting refugees in understanding and trusting local health systems;
- The need to explore the relationships between traditional and modern health practices; and
- The importance of using qualified interpreters.

Secure, Affordable Accommodation

80. While this session was offered last in the structure of Track 2, Ms. Piper stressed that it was *not* the *least* in terms of importance. It was suggested that access to secure, affordable accommodation is the lynchpin in relationship to the other areas of resettlement. It was further suggested that there is a need to increase awareness of this importance among policy makers and service providers.

81. The way in which the housing needs of refugees are met varies markedly between the different resettlement countries. In some countries there is a high level of Government involvement (and prescription), in others it is up to the community sector, or even the refugee, to locate their own accommodation. Whatever model is used, however, there was widespread agreement that finding suitable accommodation in areas in which the refugees wish to live and/or where employment is readily available, is one of the hardest challenges currently facing service providers.

82. In her concluding remarks, Ms. Piper reported that there was general agreement by participants in Track 2 sessions that:

- All of the issues discussed thus far are very important in facilitating “successful” refugee reception and integration;
- In all of these areas, it is essential that there is an awareness of the particular needs of *individual* refugees, and that refugees identified as having “special needs” (e.g. women at risk, unaccompanied minors, etc.) should be given special consideration;
- There are many lessons that resettlement countries can learn from each other in relation to the provision of reception and integration services;
- There is a need for on-going dialogue between *like* countries, (e.g. Australia, New Zealand and Canada), as well as between the traditional and emerging resettlement countries.

Track 3: Special Needs of Refugees – Mr. John Fredriksson (UNHCR)

83. Mr. Fredriksson began his summary of the Track 3 sessions by pointing out that there had been some uneasiness, on the part of participants, regarding the usefulness of labelling any refugee as having “special needs.” This categorisation of refugees could have two negative outcomes at a policy level, as well as stigmatising individuals unnecessarily. Using the label “special needs” may have the unintended consequence that some governments could see these refugees as too difficult to resettle, or that the

services needed could be too expensive. Alternatively, refugees with “special needs” might be regarded as so vulnerable that some countries may *only* wish to accept those refugees who are ‘labelled’ as “special needs” cases, setting up a false hierarchy of response to resettlement needs. As an underlying conclusion, Track 3 participants agreed, therefore, that the term “special needs” was useful *only* within the context of helping resettlement countries adapt programmes and to set up services, and not as a category for the selection and admission of refugees. In short, the “special needs” of refugees should *not* be considered a barrier to effective integration.

84. A *second conclusion* reached was that it is necessary for policy-makers, in the design and reception of integration programmes, to start with a conceptual framework. A sound conceptual base is important to ensure that services are primarily determined by the needs of the person as opposed to the personal or professional preferences of staff engaged to provide services. This principle is of vital importance in order to redress the central objective of the persecuting agent in many of these cases, i.e., to render their victims powerless. A conceptual framework can facilitate a common dialogue which draws out the strengths of different specialised and professional systems and encourages collaborative work practices across multi-disciplinary teams. In taking this approach, integration programmes will have the capacity to include the “special needs” of refugees in the context of the whole service delivery system that is developed for resettled refugees.

85. Mr. Fredriksson went on to note another foundational principle in the implementation of programmes to assist refugees with special needs. It is very important to see refugees as *actors* in their own stories, and not just *victims* or *subjects* of services provided for them by a professional community. The principal goal of many rehabilitative and therapeutic interventions should be to restore the strength of the individual within the context of his or her family and community. Refugees do not exist in isolation, as individuals bereft of social ties and relationships. For this reason, a successful approach in integration services involves working with the family support system, the refugee community already resettled, and the context of the broader society in the country of resettlement. The perpetrators of violence and trauma are intentionally trying to destroy an individual’s support networks and sense of “self” in order to humiliate their victims, isolating the individual from their communities. When dealing with victims of violence and trauma, therefore, it is essential to incorporate a comprehensive and holistic case management approach designed to interact with individual refugees, their families as well as their communities. *Care must be exercised not to over-emphasise need over resiliency. After all, refugees with special needs have survived in spite of incredible odds, and the inner strength that carried them through some of the most unspeakable evils can also be tapped for their integration process.* The key is to tap into these resources at the individual and the community levels, rather than to rely only on the technical, therapeutic models of professional social welfare and medical systems.

86. The *third conclusion* drawn from the various sessions under Track 3 dealt with language, access and culture. Mr. Fredriksson explained that there is a strong recognition that professionally trained interpreters are essential in the delivery of services for special needs refugees. The fact is that without caseworkers and para-professionals that can act as cultural and language mediators, these specialised interventions will be less effective and more costly. Trained interpreters also relieve the other family members from becoming the cultural mediator and language interpreter of first resort. The responsibility of interpretation and translation services should rest with

the host society, not the refugee family or community, themselves. At the same time, there is a need to assist mainstream services and service providers develop “cultural competency” in providing reception and integration services to special needs refugees.

87. A *fourth conclusion* recognised the importance of orientation services to maximise the potential for the “successful” integration of resettled refugees. Particularly after arrival in the resettlement country, refugees with special needs will often be faced with myriad professional and other medical systems, and adherence to dietary regimes, medical therapies and rehabilitative services can be difficult to attain. Specialised, and in some cases, individualised, orientation is crucial to assure follow-up to the treatment services provided. In addition, early intervention in the case of highly traumatised individuals, for example, enhances long-term integration prospects.

88. Mr. Fredriksson finished his summary with a *fifth and final conclusion*, which maintained that in working with traumatised persons, it is also important to provide care for the caregiver. In order to sustain the viability of programmes and services in these specialised areas of work, policy makers should recognise the potential impact of the work on the caregivers. Sufficient efforts need to be deployed to care and nurture the professional and para-professional staff to ensure their development and well being.

Summary of Discussion Groups A, B and C

89. Co-chairs of the Plenary Summary Session for Discussion Groups, Mr. Göran Rosenberg and Dr. Elizabeth Ferris, introduced the session by noting that the rapporteurs for Discussion Groups A, B and C had been under considerable pressure to prepare their plenary reports shortly after the conclusion of their respective morning sessions. The reports were presented in reverse order to accommodate the rapporteurs.

Discussion Group C: Effective Orientation as a Critical Component in the Integration of Resettled Refugees - Ms. Jan Belz, Rapporteur (United States of America)

90. Ms. Belz introduced her comments by explaining that this Discussion Group had been facilitated by Ms. Pindie Stephen of IOM-Nairobi, Kenya and that the panellists had included representatives from the United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and The Netherlands, among them two former refugees.

91. She reported that the participants in this session had agreed on the following principles:

- Effective orientation is critical to the “successful” integration of resettled refugees;
- Methodology is as important as content;
- Both content and methodology should be tailored to meet the needs of targeted groups;
- Information should be repeated for maximum retention;
- The receiving communities should also receive orientation about the arriving populations.

92. Both former refugee presenters, who are now professional educators, enhanced this discussion by sharing their own experiences of integration.

Discussion Group B: Placement Strategies to Enhance Effective Integration of Resettled Refugees - Ms. Carmina Guerra (Australia)

93. Ms. Guerra noted that the framework paper for this session had outlined four, key points which were then, in turn, taken up by the presenters from the United States of America, Norway, Australia, Brazil and Canada. These key points are as follows:

- It is important to have a carefully thought out placement strategy in place;
- There should be resettlement protocols;
- It is important for refugees to understand the profile of the receiving community in advance;
- Placement should be driven by the need for targeted intervention, (i.e., refugees should be placed where appropriate services are available).

94. Ms. Guerra continued by explaining that different perspectives on placement emerged from the traditional and emerging resettlement countries. Another source of different opinions was identified between those countries favouring an “assigned” versus an “unassigned” approach, (i.e., where placement is directed by the state, or left to the choice of refugees, themselves). Other issues raised included the consideration of space - how the availability of geographical territory within the receiving country might affect placement policies; whether placement occurs in urban or rural settings; whether or not mobility on the part of refugees is allowed; and the nature of the social history or economics of the respective receiving country. The group concluded that different placement strategies were required for different countries, depending on their circumstances.

Discussion Group A: Building Capacity with Refugee Involvement for the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees - Mr. Michael Casasola (Canada)

95. Mr. Casasola began his comments by summarising the general theme of this discussion, which was that “... *resettlement should be more than just rescuing; it should allow refugees to rebuild their lives.*” He continued by outlining the principles that emerged from the presentations by representatives from the United States of America, Canada, Brazil and Sweden as well as the ensuing discussions, during the course of the session:

- Refugee programmes need to be responsive and timely;
- Individualised interventions should be a key focus;
- A case management approach characterised by centralised services is important;
- The receiving community should be involved;
- Integration should be done from a position of strength and empowerment.

96. Ms. Eva Norström (Sweden) spoke of the “Nordic Approach” to capacity building, which involves many ethnic associations in the integration process. These associations serve as platforms for educating newcomers. She also noted that it is important that the concept of “capacity building” include the sense of “personal capacity” on the part of the refugee, so that “capacity” is not solely defined by others on behalf of the refugee.

97. Barbara Treviranus (Canada) spoke about Canada’s private sponsorship programme and how this initiative involves the broader participation of Canadian society, (i.e. faith

communities, ethno-cultural groups, etc.) in capacity building. She gave particular examples, citing the contributions of an Afghan women's organisation and a Sierra Leonean community organisation.

98. *Dr. Candido Feliciano Da Ponte Neto* (Brazil) described the issues involved in "capacity building" from the perspective of a less affluent environment. Despite the inherent challenges, he believes the prospects for assisting resettled refugees to integrate successfully in Brazil are high, given their focus upon living with dignity through the goal of early self-sufficiency. The two "pillars" necessary for the effective design of integration strategies included the Government and the private sector, Dr. Neto concluded.

99. *Mr. Mohammed Hamon* (USA) spoke about the traditional role of mutual assistance associations (MAAs) in the integration of resettled refugees in the United States of America, using the Iraqi organisation he heads as an illustration. He shared that these organisations provide such vital services as translation, accompaniment, computer and English language training, among others. Mr. Hamon explained that the services and activities of the MAAs support mainstream institutions such as the designated voluntary agencies holding Co-operative Agreements for the resettlement of refugees in partnership with the Government.

100. Mr. Casasola concluded his summary by outlining the four key themes resulting from the "capacity building" discussions:

- *Empowerment*: the need for refugees to speak on their own behalf, and to more intentionally find ways to bring them into the NGO and Government sectors;
- *Empowerment in context*: a cautionary note to ensure that the entire responsibility for service provision is not expected of refugee communities;
- *Refugee coalitions*: the importance of having refugees work together on common causes and a call to support refugee organisations in holding their own conferences for the promotion of inter-organisational dialogue;
- *Collective responsibility*: the principle that refugees alone can't build capacity - nor can Governments or the private sector; rather it must be a joint responsibility.

ICRIRR Principles

101. Following the Plenary Summary Sessions on Tracks 1, 2 and 3, and Discussion Groups A, B and C, Mr. Rosenberg and Dr. Ferris continued to Co-chair the *Conclusions and Recommendations* session of the Conference, which resulted in the *common endorsement of fifteen general Principles to guide the promotion of "successful" integration of resettled refugees by all eighteen resettlement countries.*⁷ The spirit of mutual affirmation of these guiding Principles by the Governments, inter-governmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations of the traditional and emerging resettlement countries, as well as former refugees and UNHCR representatives from both the field and Headquarters, spoke well of the planning process leading up to the conference, the collegial spirit among participants during the conference, as well as the hard work of Dr. Ferris, members of the ICRIRR Executive

⁷The *ICRIRR: Principles* document has been attached as Annex I of this report.

Committee, and each facilitator and rapporteur involved in identifying these Principles. The *Preamble* to the *ICRIRR Principles* document begins with a quote from one of the refugee panellists during the Opening Plenary of the conference:

***“You can’t feel grounded until you belong.
You can’t belong until you’re accepted.”***

102. Drafted by Dr. Ferris, this *Preamble* provides a meaningful perspective and helpful context in framing the fifteen *Principles* resulting from the proceedings of the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*.

Concluding Remarks By Representatives of the Emerging Resettlement Countries

103. It was particularly meaningful to receive very positive assessments of the conference from the perspectives of representatives from the emerging resettlement countries. Several specific comments were made at the conclusion of the final plenary session. A Chilean Government representative noted that the conference had been very helpful to their group of participants in that they realised the challenges faced with their first group of refugees was similar to challenges commonly faced by the traditional resettlement countries. *“I’m going back to Chile with thousands of ideas to share with Government officials. While we can’t implement them all at once, we can put them on the table for later consideration,”* she said. A representative from Spain felt encouraged by the *“very positive experience”* and felt that they could take back many ideas to work with, concluding her comments by stating that she hoped the Government of Spain might consider establishing an annual quota. A Government representative from Burkina Faso noted that although he had arrived late at the conference, he appreciated the sessions he had attended, and noted that it was very important for refugees to have as much pre-arrival information on the new resettlement countries as possible to avoid any misperceptions upon arrival.

104. A written quote by Dr. Nara Moreira da Silva, General Co-ordinator of the National Refugee Committee of Brazil’s Ministry of Justice, provides a fitting description of the depth of commitment on the parts of the emerging resettlement countries, for sharing in the responsibilities of offering resettlement as a tool of protection and durable solution:

“I leave the conference feeling very proud of Brazil’s decision to provide resettlement. While in other countries it is clear that refugee resettlement is seen as an economic benefit, in Brazil we are clear that refugee resettlement is a humanitarian commitment that we can make. In spite of our own economic difficulties, and other problems we may face as a country, we have to do what we can to help those in need.”

Closing Remarks

Deborah DeWinter, ICRIRR Facilitator and UNHCR Consultant

105. In the closing session of the conference, Ms. Deborah DeWinter expressed, on behalf of UNHCR and all concerned, deep gratitude for the leadership and work provided by the Swedish National Integration Office. While acknowledging that the Director General, Mr. Andreas Carlgren, was ultimately responsible for providing the vision and commitment of resources necessary to support the ICRIRR planning process

and broader integration initiative, it was Erik Stenström, the Working Chair, who had truly served as the “father” of the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*. Mr. Stenström’s wise, compassionate, patient and hard-working example in relating to all constituencies and sectors represented at the conference, as well as his tireless efforts behind the scenes to co-ordinate logistics and approach all related responsibilities in a team spirit, nurtured the same qualities in all those who helped with the planning and implementation of the conference.

106. Special mention was also made of the roles of Goran Kostesic, the refugee representative to the Executive Committee of ICRIRR from the Swedish National Integration Office, as well as the myriad tasks taken on by Ms. Ingela Dahlin. Thanks were expressed to all those working administratively to support the conference preparations, especially Ms. Mona Johansson who compiled the conference binders; Ms. Anna-Sofia Quensel and Mr. Göran Wallby, who administered the website, as well as to all the staff at *Vildmarkshotellet*, who had contributed so positively to the wonderful atmosphere and spirit so many participants had commented upon, at the conference. Ms. DeWinter closed by describing her own role of Facilitator as being something like “... *compiling a symphony using segments of the score which arrived, in no particular order, via cyberspace.*” She commented on how beautiful the “music” that had been collaboratively composed by all conference planners and participants “sounded” once all concerned had gathered to “give the performance, together.”

Ms. Debbie Elizondo, Chief, Resettlement Section, Department of International Protection, UNHCR

107. Ms. Elizondo opened her remarks by thanking Sweden for their outstanding hosting of the conference, as well as “... *all who contributed to the remarkable success of this initiative.*” She continued by reflecting on the key elements that she felt had contributed to the special character of the conference. Ms. Elizondo believed that due to the Steering Group planning process, participants had quickly established a comfortable working rapport and were therefore willing to equitably share the myriad tasks in planning an event of this scope. She noted that “*somehow the distinctions between the respective roles of Government, NGO, UNHCR and former refugees - which sometimes cause lines to be drawn in the sand - were less noticeable in this process, because ... a level of trust had been established early on.*” Addressing the former refugees who had been involved in all phases of the planning process, Ms. Elizondo said that their presence at the conference “... *is the most powerful proof of the past and continuing relevance of the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees ... [It] also bears witness to the resilience of your spirits, the depth of your resolve, and the breadth of your potential to contribute in exceptionally meaningful ways to the countries that have offered you a new beginning.*”

108. Ms. Elizondo gave special thanks for the contribution of the *ICRIRR logo*, designed by Mr. Norasack Pathammavong, a former refugee from Laos who was resettled in the United States of America. She concluded her remarks by paying tribute to the representatives of the emerging resettlement countries, commenting that “... *your fresh insights have enriched our discussions, and your commitments to providing protection and durable solutions have inspired us, anew.*”

Mr. Andreas Carlgren, Director General, Swedish National Integration Office

109. In his closing remarks, Mr. Andreas Carlgren, the Director General of the Swedish National Integration Office, expressed thanks to all those who had contributed to the planning and implementation of the conference, giving special thanks to Deborah DeWinter for her close partnership with colleagues of the Swedish National Integration Office, as well as all involved in the Steering Group and Executive Committee processes for ICRIRR. He pledged to set aside resources for the purpose of “...*passing on and making known the results of our work at the conference ...and also [as] a way of enabling the UNHCR to continue its important work in this field ...*” (I.e., the exchange of best practices in the reception and integration of resettled refugees and the forging of formal and informal links between the countries of resettlement). Mr. Carlgren took the opportunity in his closing remarks to challenge other countries to provide the same commitment of support for the on-going integration initiative and suggested that it might be helpful to hold future conferences on reception and integration issues to continue to keep those involved in this work, challenged and up to date

110. In a symbolic gesture, Mr. Carlgren made a presentation of one of the ICRIRR logo banners to Ms. DeWinter, suggesting that UNHCR be its custodian until another resettlement country volunteered to host the next conference.

VI. CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

Meeting Goals and Expectations

111. Both the formal and informal evaluations of the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* were consistently positive. Some of the common themes that emerged from both verbal and written comments were that:

- There seemed to be a “special spirit” at the conference - a phrase that was repeatedly used to describe the mutually supportive dynamic that participants experienced throughout the conference.
- Distinctions between Government, NGO, UNHCR and former refugee participants were not very obvious, nor did the more formal protocols observed in other settings between senior and junior ranking participants seem to characterise the interactions. By way of illustration, at one juncture - and unbeknownst to the individual making the request - a Director General was asked to provide informal translation for a representative from one of the emerging resettlement countries during a topical breakout session. Without hesitation, the Director General proceeded to provide a whispered interpretation of the presentations made by the panellists and thereafter endeavoured to be as present and helpful as possible to the colleague needing interpretation.
- Similarly, representatives of the emerging resettlement countries noted that although they had arrived in Sweden feeling some apprehension about their status as newcomers to the world-wide resettlement community, they very quickly felt that their opinions and insights were valued on an equal basis with representatives of the more traditional resettlement countries.

- Participants were extraordinarily impressed by the generosity and quality of the welcome they received from their Swedish hosts - both in respect to the contributions and commitment by Mr. Andreas Carlgren and his colleagues at the Swedish National Integration Office and those who hosted the study visits in Sweden, as well as by the professionalism and hospitality of the staff of *Vildmarkshotellet*. Special mention was repeatedly made of the wonderful evening event and the musical groups that provided a glance into the “soul” of the Swedish people.
- Although the planning processes were complex and time-consuming, requiring patience with different time-zones, philosophies and cultures, participants repeatedly commented that the joint planning strategy enabled them to develop positive relationships with their colleagues from other countries prior to the start of the conference, enabling a more creative and informal exchange of information and insights at the conference.
- Again, although the collaborative strategy for developing the framework papers for each conference plenary and breakout session, and the requirement that these papers be finalised before the start of the conference seemed, initially, to be a daunting task - the results were appreciated - both for the value of the resources produced, but also because of the relationships established throughout the process.
- Participants were surprised and pleased that in less than an hours’ plenary discussion, 18 resettlement countries represented by participants from diverse sectors, could mutually agree upon and endorse 15 significant *Principles* to guide the “successful” reception and integration of resettled refugees.

Recommendations for Strengthening Future Conferences and Workshops

112. There were some significant caveats to the positive comments, however, which also were identified and discussed in the context of the post-ICRIRR *Expanded Executive Committee* meeting held on 28 April 2001. These may be summarised as follows:

- Perhaps the most significant weakness in the structure and organisation of the conference was the lack of consistent professional interpretation for French and Spanish-speaking participants as well as the fact that only some of the key documents had been translated into these languages, (courtesy of Canada, Spain and Chile). Although simultaneous interpretation was available for the plenary sessions, informal arrangements for interpreting by volunteers had to suffice for many of the breakout sessions on individual topics. Despite the fact that early on in the planning process it had been announced that English would be the working language for the conference, participants felt that creative solutions could be found to resolve the interpretation issue for any future reception and integration conferences or regional workshops.
- Due to the overwhelming interest on the parts of the resettlement countries to participate in sessions as presenters, it was difficult to limit participation in such a way as to allow for more in-depth presentations and sufficient time for discussion. Although the framework papers were available to supplement the information shared by panellists, time remaining was not always sufficient for more substantive discussions of the issues.

Specific Accomplishments Achieved

113. There was clear consensus among participants that goals for both the planning process and conference, itself, had been satisfactorily achieved. Some of the specific accomplishments achieved are as follows:

- Strong bonds have been established between the policy makers and reception and integration practitioners of the 18 current resettlement countries; individuals involved in the implementation now know each other and each other's programmes, policies and respective strengths and challenges.
- Resources have been shared, and views and philosophies exchanged. It is now known where questions can be answered or needs for expertise met.
- An impressive set of documents that didn't exist before - resources that put the challenges inherent in the reception and integration process in clear focus and have pointed to some models and methods that have worked for colleagues around the world - have been produced. These include:
 - a) An annotated bibliography on integration issues for resettled refugees;
 - b) Eighteen "*Resettlement Country Programme Descriptions*;"
 - c) A 50-page "*Brief History of Resettlement*" document which provides a comparative grid of the programmes of the 18 current resettlement countries;
 - d) A "*Global Overview*" paper that provides a comprehensive and informative perspective on the resettlement models in operation, worldwide;
 - e) Twenty-five framework papers on specific topics identified through the Steering Group discussions as representing key issues challenging the countries of resettlement - papers that will serve as the backbone of the integration addendum to the Resettlement Handbook;
 - f) A set of 25 executive summaries listing every "best practice" mentioned in each of the individual sessions represented on the ICRIRR Agenda for the mutual strengthening of reception and integration programmes⁸;
 - g) A collection of over 100 definitions by refugees on what integration has meant to them, (courtesy of Canada).

VII. THE INTEGRATION INITIATIVE: NEXT STEPS

114. As described by Working Chair Mr. Erik Stenström in his "*Next Steps*" report⁹ at the closing Plenary session of the conference, a number of next steps were envisioned to bring the formal ICRIRR planning structures to a conclusion, as well as to identify structures for guiding the on-going processes of the *Integration Initiative*. At the writing of this report, certain key elements of the 'Next Steps' process have already taken place, while others are still anticipated. Both may be summarised, as follows:

⁸ These "*Executive Summaries*" will eventually be posted on the Conference website.

⁹ Please refer to Mr. Stenström's memo of 27 April 2001, entitled: "Report on Next Steps" included as Annex 2 of this report

- The ‘Expanded’ ICRIRR Executive Committee, as first announced at the 17 November, 2000 Steering Group Meeting, and reiterated at the pre-ICRIRR meeting on 23 April 2001, reconvened for a post-ICRIRR meeting on the morning of 28 April to edit, finalise and plan for the distribution of the *ICRIRR Principles*.¹⁰ This meeting also allowed for some initial evaluation discussions on the conference, as well as further brainstorming on ‘next steps’ for the conclusion of the ICRIRR process, and the continuation of the *Integration Initiative*.
- A *Proceedings Report* for the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* has been prepared for the 19 June Expanded Executive Committee meeting and included in the documentation for the *Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement* scheduled for 20-21 June 2001. This report will also be posted on both the Swedish National Integration Office’s website, as well as on the UNHCR’s website together with summaries of the discussions which took place at ICRIRR.
- The Swedish National Integration Office (Integrationsverket) will continue to make their website available to ensure that on-going dialogue can be fostered and relationships developed between the various reception and integration specialists within the resettlement countries during the planning process, strengthened and nurtured. UNHCR’s website pages for Resettlement will also include key documents relating to ICRIRR and the continuing *Integration Initiative*.¹¹
- As endorsed by the ICRIRR Steering Group at their 17 November, 2000 meeting in Washington, DC, the Executive Committee and others closely associated with the planning process for the conference will hold a final meeting on 19 June 2001 in conjunction with the *Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement*, hosted by the Resettlement Section of the Department of International Protection, UNHCR - Geneva. The purpose of this meeting will be to review progress in each of the resettlement countries with regard to **a)** reporting back on the conference conclusions and recommendations, as well as plans in progress for the implementation of ICRIRR Principles; **b)** defining local “next steps” in the integration initiative; **c)** forming recommendations on how to provide leadership, funding and new structures to guide the on-going goals and activities associated with the broader integration initiative in order to report back at the *Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement*; and **d)** to formalise a *Reception and Integration Handbook Task Force* to assist the ICRIRR Facilitator in the conceptualisation and drafting of this proposed addendum to the Resettlement Handbook.
- Although the ICRIRR Executive Committee will cease to function as such following the 19 June, 2001 Expanded Executive Committee meeting, it is anticipated that an alternative structure, possibly an *advisory committee*, will be convened to guide the continued development of the *Integration Initiative* so

¹⁰ The *ICRIRR Principles* document, together with the *Preliminary Post-ICRIRR Note for the File* and Mr. Stenström’s “*Next Steps*” memo of 27 April 2001 were sent to resettlement country focal points, members of the ICRIRR Steering Group and Executive Committee via electronic mail transmission from UNHCR on 4 May, 2001.

¹¹ These websites can be found at: <http://www.integrationsverket.se/internatconf/intconf.html> and www.unhcr.org

that both formal and informal links and exchanges, among other initiatives, can be facilitated to strengthen the reception and integration programmes of the resettlement countries.

- Whereas other elements of the “Next Steps” in the Integration Initiative are more immediate priorities, the potential for convening future international conferences on the reception and integration of resettled refugees will be explored.

VIII. CONCLUSION

115. Participants from the Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as UNHCR staff and former refugees attending the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*, unanimously affirmed that resettlement works. In the *Preamble* to the *Principles* endorsed at the concluding Plenary of the conference, it was agreed that:

“Refugees strengthen societies through their cultural diversity and the contributions which they bring. We affirm that resettlement of refugees works. Most refugees integrate successfully into their host communities and most of the support and services provided by Governments, refugee communities, non-governmental organisations and the public makes a difference ... Experience with resettlement varies from country to country. Some countries have long resettlement histories while others are new to the process. But all resettlement countries are committed to facilitating refugee integration, to nurturing a hospitable environment for refugees, and are willing to learn from one another.”

116. Clearly it was the experience of those attending the *International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees* in Norrköping, Sweden, that there is a passionate commitment and groundswell of support from every sector of the resettlement constituencies to continue the international dialogue between the resettlement countries - for the ultimate sake of strengthening the integration of resettled refugees. Exactly how this dialogue will be structured is yet to be seen as the “next steps” in the *Integration Initiative* unfold.



International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees

25-27 April 2001 – Norrköping, Sweden

ICRIRR: Principles

***“You can’t feel grounded until you belong.
You can’t belong until you’re accepted.”***

Preamble

Refugees strengthen societies through their cultural diversity and the contributions, which they bring. We affirm that resettlement of refugees works. Most refugees integrate successfully into their host communities and most of the support and services provided by governments, refugee communities, non-governmental organisations and the public makes a difference.

Resettlement is an important tool of refugee protection and a durable solution for many refugees. It is not a substitute for asylum, but rather a complementary way of providing protection to people in need. Resettlement offers refugees the possibility to begin new lives and to become fully participating members of society. Given global needs and the success of resettlement as a durable solution, we believe that the use of resettlement should be expanded in the future.

The challenge for states and for UNHCR is to ensure that resettlement selection is carried out in a fair, transparent, and equitable manner based on refugee needs for protection and for durable solutions. A particular challenge for states is to be inclusive in their resettlement criteria and not automatically to exclude groups or countries from consideration. While we acknowledge that resettlement may not be appropriate in every situation, it should be seen as an integral component of a comprehensive international response.

Experience with resettlement varies from country to country. Some countries have long resettlement histories while others are new to the process. But all resettlement countries are committed to facilitating refugee integration, to nurturing a hospitable environment for refugees, and are willing to learn from one another. While integration occurs within a framework of national policy and in a particular cultural context, it is fundamentally a personal process through which refugees develop a sense of belonging, make friendships, and enjoy mutual respect in their new society.

The following general principles will serve as a guide to our efforts to promote refugee integration.

Integration

1. Integration is a mutual, dynamic, multi-faceted and on-going process. “From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one’s own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population.”¹
2. Integration is “multi-dimensional in that it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees’ own perceptions of, acceptance by and membership in the host society.”²
3. Opportunities for resettled refugees to become citizens and to enjoy full and equal participation in society represent an over-arching commitment by governments to refugee integration.
4. Family reunification is crucial to refugee integration. Similarly, relatives and ethnic community networks can play key roles in successful refugee integration.
5. A multi-dimensional, comprehensive and cohesive approach that involves families, communities and other systems can help refugees to restore hope and to re-build their lives.

Refugees at the Centre

6. Refugees bring resources and skills to the countries in which they resettle. Host societies are strengthened and enriched by the contributions of refugees.
7. Refugee participation and leadership are essential in the development, implementation and evaluation of both refugees’ own individual settlement and integration programmes.
8. Underlying the practical, tangible needs which refugees have are more fundamental needs for dignity, security, social connectedness, and identity. Both these more fundamental needs and immediate material needs must be addressed.
9. Enabling refugees to use their own resources and skills to help each other is a priority.
10. Responding to the range of needs specific to the refugee experience will improve resettlement programmes and enhance integration.

¹ Adapted from the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, “Policy on Integration,” 1999.

² ECRE, “Policy on Integration,” 1999.

Strengthening Receiving Communities

11. Building community capacity for equitable partnership in refugee reception and integration involves all sectors of the community.
12. Refugees integrate themselves. The responsibility of the public, private and community sectors is to work alongside refugees as facilitators to create an environment in which people can be empowered.
13. The public should receive accurate and timely information about refugee situations. Receiving communities require additional specific information in preparing for the arrival of refugees in their communities. In both cases, the media have an important role to play.

Strengthening Partnerships

14. Multi-faceted partnerships need to be continually developed and strengthened among governments, refugees, communities, non-governmental organisations, and volunteers.
15. Strengthening relationships between those working to identify refugees in need of resettlement and the communities where they will be resettled is important to the resettlement process.

(28/04/01)



*International Conference on the
Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*

25-27 April 2001 – Norrköping, Sweden

Report on Next Steps

**Mr. Erik Stenstrom
Swedish National Integration Office
Plenary: 27 April 2001**

1. The Executive Committee of the ICRIRR Steering Group will be meeting 28 April 2001 to begin the process of editing, finalising and distributing the final statement of principles.
2. A Proceedings Report will be drafted to include the vital information collected in the Rapporteur's Report Forms and all appropriate ICRIRR documents. This report will be provided to all participants and posted on the website of Integrationsverket.
3. The Swedish National Integration Office (Integrationsverket) will continue to make their website available to ensure that on-going dialogue can be fostered and relationships established between representatives of the resettlement countries at this conference and in the lead-up process, will be nurtured.
4. The Executive Committee will continue to function and plans to reconvene on 19 June prior to the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, scheduled for 20-21 June 2001 in Geneva. In the interim, they will review progress and follow-up on the objectives, recommendations and conclusions of ICRIRR.
5. In this regard, the Executive Committee will also seek the means to facilitate the development of both formal and informal links and exchanges between the various resettlement countries; guide the development of the Integration Handbook according to the recommendations provided in the Rapporteur Report Forms; and continue to seek ways in which the reception and integration programmes of the resettlement countries can be strengthened.
6. The Executive Committee will begin discussions on ways in which the integration initiative might continue and the principles resulting from this conference be disseminated beyond the Annual Tripartite Consultations where appropriate, e.g. through possible inclusion in the agendas for the UNHCR Executive Committee, Standing Committee and Global Consultations.
7. Finally, the Executive Committee will explore the potential for convening future international conferences on the reception and integration of resettled refugees.