

CHAPTER 1

RESETTLED AND INCLUDED? THE EMPLOYMENT INTEGRATION OF RESETTLED REFUGEES IN SWEDEN

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Introduction

Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees - with permanent residence status. The status provided should ensure protection against *refoulement* and provide a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. It should also carry with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country. (UNHCR 2004)

The definition of resettlement described above sees resettlement as a process that starts with the identification of the applicants by the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), continues with their reception in the new country and goes on to include the long term integration of the refugee. It highlights the importance of integration and equality of rights of the resettled refugees in the new countries. The integration of resettled refugees is furthermore emphasised in the Agenda for Protection (2003). Both the UNHCR (2004) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC 2007) argue that seeing refugees solely as a

burden for the international community, without also recognizing the contribution they make in their new societies, risks fuelling anti-immigrant sentiments. The UNHCR and the EU Commission argue, not only for an increased number of resettlement places worldwide, but also for an increased awareness in possible new host countries (UNHCR 2009b; The Commission of the European Communities COM (2007) 301).

There have only been a few European countries with resettlement programs over the past decades and there is a significant lack of knowledge in Europe in this field. This is partly due to the fact that it is difficult to discern the resettled group in national statistics in many of the EU countries (ICMC 2007). In most countries the resettled refugees and former asylum seekers go through the same introduction/integration programmes and there has been little attention paid to the effects of these programmes for specific groups. Moreover, comparative research between countries is complicated by the fact that labour markets differ within Europe.

In Sweden, as in the rest of Europe, few studies have been conducted on resettled refugees. However, the conditions for research are better in Sweden than in many other countries. In Swedish register-based statistics, it is possible to distinguish between refugees who were accepted as part of the yearly resettlement quota and those who sought asylum at the border. Moreover, Sweden has a long tradition of resettlement and has been accepting a comparably large number of resettled refugees per year, making it possible to conduct both quantitative and qualitative studies on integration of this group. In other words, the statistical data collection in Sweden facilitates in depth studies on the integration of resettled refugees in many fields.

This volume is an outcome of the project *Labour Market Integration of Resettled Refugees in Sweden* carried out by the Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM) at Malmö University and co-funded by the European Refugee

Fund (ERF) and the Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation. The main aim of the project is to increase the knowledge of labour market integration for resettled refugees in Sweden. This anthology, which will disseminate knowledge gained in the project, includes a thorough mapping of the labour market situation of resettled refugees and covers different aspects of the reception and integration of this group in Sweden. The book also provides a more general chapter on resettlement in Canada, an important complement to the Swedish context.

This increased knowledge on the integration of resettled refugees can be used to improve the reception of resettled refugees in Sweden. The long-term integration of refugees into the labour market is important both for the resettled refugee and for the host country. The knowledge from this project can thus be of importance for countries in the process of developing the new resettlement programmes called for by the UNHCR. The information provided here is timely, as the EU appears ready for more investment in resettlement as shown by the recent proposal of a joint EU Resettlement Programme by the European Commission.

The refugee situation in the world – a call for more countries and more places

According to the UNHCR (2009a), forced population displacement has increased and is becoming more complex every year.¹ In 2008, UNHCR estimated a total of approximately 42 million forcibly displaced persons in the world and about 25 million persons received some assistance from the UNHCR. Of the group that received assistance or protection, 10.5 million were refugees under the mandate of the UNHCR. Around 2.8 million of the UNHCR refugees originate from Afghanistan and 1.9 million from Iraq. These groups make up almost half of the refugees under the mandate of UNHCR. The 4.7 million other classified refugees were Palestinian refugees under the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and

¹ If there is no other reference in this section on the global refugee situation, the data comes from the website of the UNHCR. See UNHCR (2009a) 2008 Global Trends: *Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons* or the UNCHR (2008) *UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2007*. It is important to note here that the UNHCR (2009a) states that: "As some minor adjustments may need to be made for the publication of the 2008 Statistical Year Book [...] they [the numbers] should be considered as provisional and may be subject to change" (UNHCR 2009a: 4).

Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Approximately 50 percent of all refugees are found in urban areas and one third in camps and 80 percent live in developing countries. The Asia and Pacific region host around one third of all refugees, North Africa and the Middle East host 22 percent, Africa 20 percent, Europe 15 percent and the Americas 8 percent. Often, refugees are temporarily protected in camps, are granted a temporary visa, or live as undocumented migrants in another country, while waiting for conditions in their home country to improve.

There are three principle means of achieving what the UNHCR calls a “durable solution” for refugees: repatriation, integration in the local population of the country of first asylum, and resettlement to a third country. Unfortunately, in some cases it takes a long time for a durable solution to be found. These cases, which are called “protracted refugee situations”, are defined by the UNHCR as situations “in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more in a given asylum country” (UNHCR 2009a:7). About 5.7 million refugees find themselves in such protracted situations.

In 2008, about 604,000 refugees were voluntarily repatriated and it is the solution that has historically been employed most often. The number of persons who become integrated into the country of first asylum (the second solution) is difficult to quantify and will not be discussed here.

Resettlement, which is the durable solution addressed in this volume, has been a tool increasingly used over the years. Although it is a solution for only 1 percent of the refugees in the world, it is nevertheless important as a manifestation of global responsibility for world problems. Resettlement may also be of “strategic use”, i.e. when it serves to improve the situation for refugees who are not being resettled.

The traditional resettlement host countries are: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Iceland, Ireland and

the United Kingdom have established programs in recent years. Since 2007, France, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, The Czech Republic and Uruguay have also established or re-established resettlement schemes. Japan plans a pilot project for 2010.

It is estimated that by 2010 the number of refugees in need of resettlement will be 747,000. However, the number of places offered by resettlement countries amounts to only about 79,000. The admirable work of the UNHCR in identifying and submitting refugees for resettlement has unfortunately now outstripped the number of places available.

Table 1.1, Resettlement arrivals of refugees, 2008².

Country of arrival	Total
United States (US Fiscal Year)	60,192
Australia	11,006
Canada	10,804
Sweden	2,209
Finland	749
New Zealand	741
Norway	741
United Kingdom	722
Netherlands	693
Denmark	552
Chile	161
Ireland	101
Argentina	42
France	37
Iceland	31
Brazil	19
Grand Total	88,800

Source: UNHCR

Chapter 2 in this volume provides a thorough introduction of the procedures and legal framework of resettlement. However, it is important to point out here the urgent need for resettlement places and resettlement programs, which is emphasized not only by the UNHCR, but also by other organisations such as the European

² Includes both arrivals with and without UNHCR assistance.

Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).³ Both the European Commission and the Swedish government, which holds the EU presidency in 2009, recognize that resettlement must be a priority for migration politics in the EU (The Commission of the European Communities COM(2007)301 and the Committee on Social Insurance 2006/07: SfU13).⁴

The Joint EU Resettlement Programme

In the Policy Plan *Asylum an Integrated Approach to Protection Across the EU*, the Commission of the European Communities (COM(2008)360) states that, during 2009, a proposal will be developed regarding a Common EU Resettlement Scheme. Thus, on the 2nd of September 2009 the Commission of the European Communities (COM(2009)447) duly proposed the establishment of a *Joint EU Resettlement Programme*. The programme is established in solidarity with third countries that host a large number of refugees in need of resettlement. This proposal suggests that member states should start resettlement schemes on a voluntary basis. Identification and reception will be jointly carried out by member states. Financial assistance will be granted by the European Refugee Fund on a per capita basis for each resettled person received from priority groups. The programme is based on coordination and consultation among the countries that already have resettlement schemes with the objective of increasing the number of member states involved in resettlement. It is believed that a joint programme will make it easier and more cost-effective for member states to develop resettlement initiatives.

Resettlement in Sweden

Earlier Swedish studies

As already mentioned, there is a lack of research on the outcome of integration efforts on behalf of resettled refugees. This applies to Europe in general as well as Sweden but we will focus on the

³ See www.unhcr.org, www.ecre.org, the UNHCR and ECRE (2008) *Joint European Advocacy Statement on Resettlement* and the UNHCR (2009b) recommendations for the Swedish EU Presidency: *Moving Ahead: Ten Years after Tampere UNHCR's Recommendations to Sweden for its European Union Presidency*.

⁴ Also: Billström (2009) speech made at a conference in Sigtuna 25 of August 2009.

Swedish situation in this section.⁵ The literature dealing with refugee integration includes the resettled group but most often it is not distinguishable in the general population statistics. Surveys usually do not include a category for resettled refugees. One reason for this lack might be that the integration programme is organised around individuals rather than groups of refugees. It does not take into account specific admission criteria. Another reason for the lack of resettled refugee specific data might be that their numbers are low compared to the larger group of individuals that apply at the border of a country (asylum seekers). Therefore research on this group might be considered less important. Furthermore, resettled refugees receive less attention because immigrant integration in Sweden is seen primarily as an issue of large urban centres where there are almost no resettled refugees.

The studies conducted in Sweden that have had resettlement in focus are mainly authorised by the Swedish Immigration Board (today the Migration Board) or the Swedish Integration Board (closed in 2007). The resettled refugees from Vietnam, a large group that arrived in the 80s, have been studied to some extent. One example is the report *Vietnamflyktingarna – deras första år i Sverige* published by the Swedish Immigration Board (The Immigration Board 1982).⁶ This study covers many dimensions of the integration process of the Vietnamese group including the labour market situation. It is a qualitative report based on interviews with refugees, municipal representatives and employers. The authors look at the situation shortly after arrival and make predictions about the future.

In 1997 the Immigration Board published another report *Status Kvot: En utvärdering av kvotflyktingars mottagande och integration åren 1991-1996* which is an evaluation of the reception and integration of resettled refugees who had arrived in the early 1990s. This is the first comprehensive report on the reception of resettled refugees in Sweden. Earlier studies, such as

⁵ There is a lack of research on resettled refugees in Europe but many European countries do have some studies in the field. There are for example some studies in Norway, where resettled refugees are a category in the population statistics: Aalandslid (2008), Djuve (2002). There is one comprehensive study in the Netherlands: Guiaux *et al.* (2008). Moreover, in the UK, Evans and Murray (2009) look at the integration progress 18 months after arrival in the UK for resettled refugees who were accepted through the Gateway Protection Programme. These are just a few examples and more studies will be discussed in the different chapters of this book.

⁶ Sofia Rönnqvist will discuss other reports on Vietnamese refugees in her chapter in this anthology.

the Vietnamese report, focused on ethnic groups and their success in Swedish society. One reason for the late attention to resettled refugees per se was that there was no distinction between classes of refugee before the reform of the refugee reception system in 1985 (Government Bill 1983/84:124). Before 1985, the reception and integration system was formed according to the resettled group, even though the numbers of asylum seekers had increased. All other immigrants were considered labour migrants.

The 1997 report covers many aspects of the resettlement process through quantitative and qualitative data. The section on integration deals with settlement policy, Swedish education, the labour market, and ethnic networks, and compares resettled refugees with other refugees. With regard to labour market integration, the report finds that the Public Employment Office intervenes later in the process for the resettled group compared to other refugees, and that the percentage of resettled refugees with a job is lower (at least during the first five years) compared to other refugees. The authors argue that this inequality can be explained by the different lengths of time spent in the country before a residence permit is granted. The asylum seekers had access to an orientation programme during their often lengthy waits while the resettled refugees were brought directly to a municipality without as much preparation. This is why the report suggests prolonging the introduction period for resettled refugees by one extra year.

In 2001 the Integration Board published the report *Bounds of Security: The Reception of Resettled Refugees in Sweden*, which is seen as a supplement to the above described “Status Kvot” report. The public officers dealing with reception in the municipalities had argued for the need of a new report. They claimed that the group of resettled refugees arriving between 1996 and 1998 had different needs compared to earlier resettled groups. Many of the refugees who arrived in the end of the 1990s had been living in camps for between 7 and 17 years, and it was pointed out that this could have consequences for their new life in Sweden. The report is based on the insights of the people working with reception and introductory programmes in the municipalities as well as on the reflections of the resettled refugees themselves. The authors argue that a long

introduction period, which was suggested in the “Status Kvot” report, contains the risk of becoming counterproductive. Instead they propose a new kind of introductory programme, calling for the inclusion of former refugees in the integration process, the enhancement of network-building among refugees, and a lowered skill expectation on the part of employers.

Finally, a publication by the MOST project (2008), funded by the European Refugee Fund, a co-operative endeavour among Sweden, Ireland, Finland and Spain, discusses various models designed to improve and hasten the integration process of resettled refugees. All contributions in this publication discuss the connection between pre-departure activities, the introduction in the host country and long-term integration. The Swedish contribution examines how resettled refugees experience the resettlement process in Sweden, using interviews with resettled refugees and municipal stakeholders (Thomsson 2008). The study shows that the dependent situation of resettled refugees in relation to the UNHCR before arriving might predispose the refugees to dependency in Sweden. It is further argued that introduction activities might serve to exclude the participants from mainstream society instead of including them. A stronger focus on empowering the refugees in the resettlement process in order for integration efforts to succeed is therefore advocated.

Immigration and employment integration

As mentioned earlier, resettled refugees only account for a small share of the overall immigration to Sweden in the last 5 to 6 decades. However, the resettlement programme in Sweden has a long history – it started in the 1950s and has from the beginning been a significant part of the Swedish immigration policy. Post-war immigration to Sweden took place in two waves. In the 1940s, 50s and 60s, labour immigration from Nordic and other European countries was a response to excess demand for labour due to the rapid industrial and economic growth of that time. The lower rate of economic growth and increased unemployment in the early 1970s diminished the demand for foreign labour. As a consequence, migration policy became harsher (Lundh and Ohlsson 1999). Labour immigration

from non-Nordic countries ceased in the 1970s while the number of labour immigrants from other Nordic countries also decreased gradually. Since the early 1970s, asylum-seekers and tied-movers have dominated the migration inflow, coming primarily from Eastern Europe and non-European parts of the world. However, no matter what changes occurred over the years in larger migration patterns and in immigration policy, Sweden has maintained a yearly quota of resettled refugees since 1950.

This volume focuses on labour market integration, and more specifically on the employment integration of immigrants. Other types of labour market integration are touched upon, but are not the main focus of the book. Employment integration is a priority in Swedish strategy as mentioned above. It is important because through the workplace an individual encounters and understands society in a less fabricated way than through introduction or orientation programmes, and because self-sufficiency is a way to empowerment (ICMC 2007). We recognize that employment and self-sufficiency are not the only important aspects of integration but because of the complexity of the total concept of integration and the difficulty of measuring degrees of integration we must refine our approach. In this anthology we will map, analyse and discuss employment integration for one particular group of refugees, namely resettled refugees, from different perspectives and using different methods.

In Sweden, the institutional responsibility for the reception and integration of refugees in general, and those who are resettled in particular, lies with several levels of government. The Migration Board deals with the selection of individuals whereas they share the responsibility for the dispersal of refugees over the country with the County Administrative Boards. Finally local municipalities have the responsibility for delivering actual integration measures, such as adequate social services and training (including language training), directed to newcomers. According to the Integration Ministry, integration is not a matter of a single policy but rather it is trans-sectorial and must permeate the whole society (Communication 2008/09:24). Integration programmes should aim to counter exclusion in all fields of society, increase self-sufficiency, and

maximize access to the labour market. These institutional structures are important and establish the broad parameters of the integration of refugees in Sweden. We urge readers of this book to reflect on the nature of these structures as they read the following chapters.

Summary of studies

There is a widespread need for more research on the situation of resettled refugees in the host countries. ICMC (2007), for example, calls for more academic research on the integration of resettled refugees, specifically in the area of employment and self-sufficiency. Many countries make no distinction between resettled refugees and other newcomers in the introductory period. ICMC means that it is necessary to disseminate information on the resettlement process so that differences between resettled refugees and other immigrants can be better understood (ICMC 2007). The information should include not only statistics but also good practices and lessons learned. When such information is readily available, it will help to expand the much-needed use of the resettlement tool across the EU and improve its effectiveness. The dynamics of placement policies and how they influence the integration process should also be studied.

The chapters in this anthology each provide one piece of the picture of labour market integration of resettled refugees in Sweden. They should all be read and understood separately but when included in the same framework they can truly provide the reader with a more comprehensive picture.

The second chapter of this anthology, by Denise Thomsson, is written within the framework of two ERF-funded projects at the Migration Board; the *Swedish Resettlement Network* and *Swedish Quota Communication Strategy*. The main purpose of this chapter is to spread knowledge about resettlement to a wider audience and to provide the reader with a background of resettlement in Sweden and in the world at large. The institutional framework of resettlement is discussed with detailed information on the different actors involved. The author also discusses the importance of long-term integration in the process of resettlement.

In chapter three Pieter Bevelander, with the use of register statistics from the database STATIV, maps the demographic, edu-

cational and geographic variation among resettled refugees in Sweden in relation to other categories of admission. Moreover, he provides a descriptive analysis of the employment attachment of resettled refugees relative to other classifications for the year 2007. The focus is on migrants from the four largest resettled refugee groups, namely from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Iran and Vietnam. The results provided in this chapter indicate that, in general, refugees who sought asylum at the border and subsequently obtained a residence permit have a somewhat higher employment rate compared to those in the family reunion category, who in turn have a higher employment rate than resettled refugees. However, deviation from this pattern is observed according to both country of birth and gender. Also employment rate patterns are affected by length of time in the country; resettled refugees can be depicted as “slow starters” who subsequently “catch up” to the employment levels of asylum claimants and family reunion migrants.

Chapter four, written by Maja Povrzanović Frykman, focuses on the personal experiences of employment, as perceived and narrated by some 40 people who came from Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990s as resettled refugees and as asylum seekers. Resettled refugees cannot be seen here as a clearly discernable group as their employment histories overlap with those of asylum seekers. Their experiences concerning employment are compared in relation to their formal education, professional or vocational field, age, and the place of settlement in Sweden. While the narratives related here depict individual paths and bear witness to a vast diversity of experiences, they also illustrate trends. The issues highlighted in these interviews are very much in line with the knowledge of employment trends among Bosnian refugees discussed by other authors using other types of data.

Chapter five focuses on the resettled Vietnamese refugees who arrived in Sweden between 1979 and 1992. Their experience of labour market integration is described by Sofia Rönnqvist. Both this group and the Bosnian group discussed in chapter four have been in Sweden for a long time and their experiences of labour market integration are very important in order to understand the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion as lived by the refugees

themselves. This chapter finds that, despite a comparably low education level, the group has a high employment rate compared to other refugee groups in Sweden. The author discusses the different strategies that this group has used to compensate for the disadvantages of a low level of education in the Swedish labour market. One strategy that was common for this group was secondary migration to places where there were a demand for low-skilled labour or where there were established ethnic networks through which individuals could get work.

Chapter six, contributed by Mirjam Hagström, concerns settlement policy and the settlement pattern of resettled refugees in relation to the labour market. The chapter shows that the settlement pattern of resettled refugees is different from that of former asylum seekers. The resettled refugees are more often placed in municipalities in the north and in depopulated municipalities. It is also more common that resettled refugees are placed in municipalities with a higher than average unemployment rate. The arguments put forward on the advantages of this settlement policy are generally based on the assumptions that the dispersal of immigrants is desirable and that concentration is negative despite the fact that there is little theoretical support for these assumptions. In fact it would appear that one reason why resettled refugees initially have a more difficult time finding work is because of the dispersal of these individuals to less attractive municipalities compared to other groups.

Eva Wikström discusses the health perspectives of the Swedish refugee reception process in chapter seven. The chapter is based on interviews with resettled refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia who participated in a local introduction program with extra focus on health issues. According to the author, attention to health issues is still missing in much of the introduction work in Sweden. According to the participants interviewed, the program was not successful in promoting health and it did not contribute to faster employment integration for the group. She shows that circumstances creating stress for the refugees, such as unemployment and economic and social troubles, were downplayed by officials and re-cast in medical terms. Pre-migration experiences of war and trauma were seen as

more significant impediments to integration. Such attitudes tend to reinforce the image of the refugee as sick and difficult to integrate instead of as a resourceful survivor. The chapter also shows that programmes designed to promote employment integration should focus not only on the refugees and their individual preconditions but also on the access to work and education available in the municipalities.

Pieter Bevelander and Ravi Pendakur explore in chapter eight, with the use of logistic regressions, the effect of admission status on the immigrants' job opportunities and whether the influence varies across immigrant groups. They look at the cases of resettled refugees, former asylum seekers and family reunion migrants. As well they examine the effect of length of time spent in the country on employment results. Individual data on male and female immigrants and natives for the year 2007 are utilized. The results indicate that, with respect to country of birth, in general individuals from Bosnia-Herzegovina are the most likely to be employed. However, more detailed analysis, including admission status and time spent in the asylum seeking process, shows that resettled refugees and family reunion male migrants from Vietnam have the same chance to be employed as resettled refugees and family reunion migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The variable "time in asylum seeking process" indicates a clear linear process in which the chances of obtaining employment improve with increasing years. The authors' understanding of the results of the analysis is that both the selection process (self-selection as well as selection through policy mechanisms), and "time" for adjustment in a new country are important factors explaining the employment integration of immigrants.

In the last chapter, Jennifer Hyndman describes the history of resettlement in Canada to determine whether refugees are seen as "second-class" immigrants. Canada's recent Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), passed in 2002, made a distinction between immigration driven by largely economic objectives and refugee resettlement based on protection needs. Rather than diminishing protection for refugees, however, Canada expanded its humanitarian commitment to those most in need of resettlement. The chapter analyzes refugee resettlement to Canada, including the historical

and geopolitical context of its emergence throughout the twentieth century. She provides an overview of current refugee programming and outcomes, and discusses how immigration and refugee resettlement streams are situated within the institutional context of government, where economic immigrants are part of an entitlement migration stream and refugees are part of a more discretionary “safety net” pathway to Canada. How this safety net has been extended to assist refugees from protracted situations is examined as evidence that refugees are not “second class” immigrants.

