

**ANNUAL TRIPARTITE CONSULTATIONS ON RESETTLEMENT**  
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**Some reflections on ICRIRR by Eduardo Rojas,**  
**Executive Secretary of the Vicariate for Social Pastoral Care**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this year's Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement and for the esteem with which the new resettlement countries have been received.

I want to share with you some personal thoughts resulting from my attendance at the Conference in Norköpping in April.

1. First of all, learning about the experience of the traditional resettlement countries attracted my attention and soothed me because, they have also undergone difficult times and they also have made mistakes. We also learned that the problems we encountered with the resettled refugees stating "I wanted to go to Canada and they brought me here" not only happened in Chile. Hearing similar stories from our Spanish or African colleagues allowed us to see that it was not our fault. And it was helpful listening to our Canadian colleague from Winnipeg, Manitoba, stating that in the small cities of Canada there are refugees that once they have arrived say "I wanted to go to a big city and they brought me to this little town." It is soothing in the sense that it lessens our grief to know that when we encounter such difficulties, we are in good company.
2. It seems to me that expectations are a key element in refugee resettlement. Both those of the refugees' as well as the expectations about these refugees by people in the receiving country. In Chile, the arrival of a group of former Yugoslavians caused considerable interest which then turned into disappointment when some of refugees stated that Chile was too poor for them, the houses too small and the food not to their liking. Personally, I consider that the education of refugees and of the community is a big challenge. This education should focus on the contribution each one has to make, as well as on protection, which is the main concern and not the socio-economic improvement of the refugee.
3. As regards public education, the media plays a very important role. In Norköpping (a city we didn't visit although we did visit a very nice zoo), there was an interesting discussion about the role of the media in public education in order to facilitate the integration of refugees, but it is important to go deeper into the subject.

4. I also would like to highlight the integration challenge refugees represent for Chile. As was stated by one of the Conference speakers, our democracies were established on the basis of homogeneity and, in Chile, thanks to the myth of the middle class. The whole population is supposed to belong to the middle class in spite of enormous economical differences, with a common race and a common religion. Today, however, democracy is built on the basis of diversity and that is precisely the contribution refugees bring: opening up the world with the integration of new cultures, solidarity with human beings without regard to international borders.
5. Finally, I wish to share two conclusions as regards the implication of establishing resettlement programmes in countries where there still exist high levels of poverty. In the first place, the differences between a developed country and a developing country should be considered when analysing the conditions offered to refugees. In Chile, the government offers refugees the same conditions offered to Chilean citizens in the sense that they have equal access to public education, health and housing systems. Nevertheless, the public system is barely sufficient. And, therefore, given the enormous challenges faced by refugees in rebuilding their lives in a new country, they require additional assistance that can only be guaranteed in Chile with support from the private sector and, equally important, in collaboration with the international community.
6. The other conclusion, is in relation to the importance it has for Chile to participate in the resettlement programmes. In Norköpping, I asked myself several times about this issue that I would like to call “reciprocal commitment.” Should a country, such as Chile, have any responsibility for refugees? A country whose economy has grown 7% during the last ten years, that suffered the flight of thousands into exile, that could get rid of a dictatorship thanks to the persistent support of the international community, in which a high percentage of its current State Ministers and parliamentarians benefited from UNHCR protection between 1973 and 1989 It seems to me that the answer is a definitive yes. And, I think that part of our role as an NGO is to help our states to fulfil these obligations.