

## Czech participation in a Cultural Orientation Training in Kenya

Nairobi, 22nd of November 2007

A few weeks after joining a Dutch team at a selection mission to Kenya, **Kateřina Sýkorová** (Ministry of Interior, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, Czech Republic) returned to Nairobi, for a Cultural Orientation Training. She travelled together with COA-trainers Jooek Steenbakker, Mieke Renkers (trainers COA reception centre Amersfoort) and Nicolien Rengers (COA, coordinator pre-arrival activities). Also **Evžen Diviš** (Ministry of Interior, Czech Republic), who is responsible for five integration centres in his country took part in this 'look and learn mission'.

Aim of the Cultural Orientation Training is to prepare the selected refugees for their lives in the Netherlands. The training is a programme of four days in which information about the Netherlands and the COA reception centre in Amersfoort was given.

The two training groups were very diverse: Ethiopians with different ethnicities, Eritreans, Somalians and even a Burundian woman. People from an urban area and people from the camp Dadaab. There were highly educated people and illiterate people.

The differences in the groups were a challenge for the trainers. They had to work with three interpreters per group! Besides that, the objective of the training is not only to give the refugees information. The trainers also wanted to stimulate that the refugees create a network, so they can support each other when they are in the Netherlands. Not an easy task with so much diversity in the groups.

**Kateřina:** "Even before coming to Kenya I understood the CO-Training as a crucial and difficult part of the pre-arrival process. And after two days of training and hours of discussions with the trainers I realised that the purpose of the training goes even further than simple teaching. It can help the refugees to get used to different types of behaviour, roles and ways of thinking. It definitely helps to encourage women, young people, people with little education (and all others) to find their own place in the group, to step forward for themselves, to become more self-confident and aware of their qualities. And for new resettlement countries the Cultural Orientation Training could be also seen as a means to prevent possible secondary movement from resettled refugees. I'm very happy I could witness this process. I'm supposed to draft a national resettlement programme back home and I will definitely propose to include a similar way of training."

The Czechs did not only look in order to learn from this mission. They actually participated by being a wonderful personal assistant for the trainers and by giving their opinions about the group process, the methodology of the training and the work of the trainers during the daily evaluations.

**Evžen:** "I'm glad to have gotten this opportunity to watch the training and participate in the process. It would be unthinkable to prepare our own training without it. COA workers are doing a great job as trainers. The trouble I've met isn't too serious and either caused by technical and material aspects and previous traumatically experiences of the trainees. I am convinced that - even I can't support this statement by results of evaluation - the training is as much effective as it can be in given circumstances. The COA-workers are very professional in their role of twinning partners. They have regular evaluations with us, they share impressions, experiences and ideas, they are open to us, speak English all the time and they let us participate in the training. We can benefit from our presence in a way that is gives us an overview of the cultural orientation, the potential troubles and what should be the

qualifications of the trainers in case we will have to organise it. I would appreciate it if the Czech Republic could prepare a potential resettlement programme in partnership with COA in the future as well!”

The Dutch trainers experience the participation and the feedback of their Czech guests as a welcome opportunity to improve their activities. There are another two days to go before the participants of the training receive a certificate, as a proof they followed the cultural orientation.

This look and learn mission will be followed by a study visit to the Netherlands, from 12 till the 14<sup>th</sup> of December. A delegation of four Czechs will meet the invited refugees at Schiphol airport (December and February) and subsequently they will join the group to the reception centre in Amersfoort to get a chance to see the arrival activities. Furthermore the debriefing of the selection mission and cultural orientation will take place in the same period.