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Transnational Roundtable on Community Sponsorship Evaluations Report

SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN)



Diözesan-
Caritasverband für das
Erzbistum Köln e. V.



BERDINTASUN, JUSTIZIA
ETA GIZARTE POLITIKETAKO SAILA
DEPARTAMENTO DE IGUALDAD,
JUSTICIA Y POLÍTICAS SOCIALES



Introduction: Transnational Roundtable on Community Sponsorship Evaluations

The SHARE Transnational Roundtable on Refugee Sponsorship Monitoring and Evaluation took place on Zoom on the 31st of March 2021 and provided a platform to present and discuss the lessons learned from EU countries' experiences with community-based sponsorship programmes and best practices in evaluation. The roundtable was organised in the context of the SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN), a programme co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) which supports pilot and ad-hoc sponsorship initiatives to develop into sustainable, community-driven programmes. Led by ICMC Europe, the SHARE QSN programme gathers a consortium of actors in Belgium (Caritas Belgium), France, (Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FEP) Germany (Caritas Cologne), Ireland (IRC), Italy (Consorzio Comunitas), Spain (Basque Government), and the UK (Citizens UK) who are all experienced in refugee integration and are currently carrying out private sponsorship programmes in their national contexts.

Paralleling the multi-stakeholder nature of the SHARE QSN Project, the roundtable event was transnational and attended by over 90 participants from a consortium of actors including civil society, international organisations, national and regional governments, EU institutions, universities, research institutes, NGOs and other practitioners.

The event was centred around two main themes: 1. The first theme examined different pilot project experiences and initial lessons learned regarding **programme design and monitoring practices** in the Basque Country, Ireland, and Germany. 2. The second theme focused on **the impact of sponsorship on local communities and early refugee integration** on the basis of qualitative research of programmes in France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

The roundtable was coordinated and hosted by the SHARE Network and introduced by Petra Hueck, ICMC Europe's Director. The two main themes were presented and explored through three roundtable panels in which 12 panellists from different countries in Europe, as well as Canada, gave presentations. The first panel involved SHARE QSN partners and MPI Europe and focused on setting the scene in refugee sponsorship and evaluation. The second panel featured the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, Montbretia Consulting, the Basque Government, Instrategies and the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), who presented on programme design, pilot programmes' experiences and lessons learned. Finally, representatives from the University of Winnipeg, the University of Birmingham, Centre Européen de Sociologie et de Science Politique (CESSP) and the University of Notre Dame presented in the third panel on the impact of sponsorship on local communities and early refugee integration.

Mutual learning is a core element of the SHARE QSN Project and was a central theme of the roundtable, which provided partners and participants the opportunity to engage in open and targeted discussions on the two main themes through moderator-led question and answer sessions at the end of each panel. Best practices, challenges and opportunities were shared and discussed by participants, resulting in an informative and engaging roundtable event.

ICMC Europe and the SHARE Network team kindly thanks all panellists and participants for contributing towards the knowledge-sharing and success of the roundtable.



Petra Hueck, ICMC Europe: *Introduction to the SHARE Network and the QSN Project*

As part of the European Resettlement Network (ERN), the SHARE Network promotes partnerships for refugee inclusion into local communities across Europe. Established in March 2012 and led by ICMC Europe, the SHARE Network provides a platform for mutual exchange and learning amongst local and regional actors working on or considering resettlement initiatives, and advocates for more and better resettlement and other complementary pathways in Europe.

The **SHARE Quality Sponsorships Network (QSN) project** is being implemented from January 2021 to June 2023, and is co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), while also receiving support from a private donor. The SHARE QSN programme seeks to support pilot and ad-hoc sponsorship initiatives as they develop into sustainable, community-driven programmes.

The SHARE QSN roundtable marks the first transnational event of the project, focusing on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of sponsorship programmes. M&E is an essential component in achieving sustainable and high-quality programmes that ensure durable solutions and overall inclusion of (resettled) refugees - supported by volunteer groups and the wider community.

M&E of private or community sponsorship programmes is still a new area, requiring sustained engagement, to make the programmes grow in number, quality and level of engagement. Sponsorships are still engaging only a small number of stakeholders, mostly from faith-based communities. To expand the

programmes the number of different stakeholders engaged will need to be broadened to include other actors such as universities, regions, cities, private sector and new civil society groups.

To learn more about the QSN Project and the SHARE network you can view [Petra Hueck's presentation here](#).

Panel I: Setting the Scene: Refugee Sponsorship and Evaluation

Gabriela Agatiello, ICMC Europe: *Comparative overview of Community-based sponsorship programmes in Europe*

The European model of community sponsorship, inspired by the 1978 established Canadian model, is a flexible concept which often overlaps with resettlement, as well as humanitarian visas, which is a complementary pathway to protection. Community or private sponsorship are broadly defined as “*a public-private partnership between governments, who facilitate legal admission for refugees, and private or community actors, who provide financial, social and/or emotional support to admit, receive and settle refugees into the community*”¹.

Community sponsorship is therefore characterised by a variable sharing of roles and costs between the government and private actors and gives private (non-state) actors a leading role in admitting and welcoming refugees in their local community. Mutual responsibilities are defined in a framework (i.e., a government regulation or a memorandum of understanding) that defines obligations (more or less flexibly depending on the model), the duration of these obligations, and the national and local implementation frameworks.

¹ See ICMC Europe and IOM (2017), [Private Sponsorship in Europe: expanding complementary](#)

[Pathways for refugee resettlement](#), published in the framework of the European Resettlement Network.

Community sponsorships offer citizens an opportunity to be actively engaged in the integration of refugees by hosting or supporting a refugee or refugee family.



There are two main approaches to community-based sponsorship which emerged in Europe in response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in 2015 and the subsequent rising refugee flows into Europe in 2015-2016.

The first approach is the **Humanitarian corridors** programme which emerged in Italy, France and Belgium, between 2015 and 2017, where faith-based actors established agreements with their respective governments to receive refugees who were initially admitted on humanitarian visas. The programmes have to date provided **2854 protection places**² - additional to resettlement commitments - across the three countries, with faith-based organisations conducting the majority of the sponsorship.

The second is the **resettlement-based sponsorship schemes** launched first in the UK in

2016. This was followed by the development of the Irish and German community sponsorship pilots in 2019, the Belgian community sponsorship programme in 2020, and regional programmes that developed in Spain in recent years, beginning with the Basque country in 2018 followed by Valencia and Navarra in 2020.

Resettlement-based community sponsorship programmes enable groups of citizens to support refugees who are referred by UNHCR and selected **within**³ or **additional**⁴ to the **respective resettlement quotas of each country**. To date resettlement-based community sponsorship numbers are much smaller in terms of arrivals than humanitarian corridor programmes but in contrast, the resettlement-based programmes offer an open framework that will enable a wider range of actors to become involved in sponsorship in the future. The number of refugees who have been welcomed through resettlement-based community sponsorship range from approximately 450 refugees in the UK to 14 welcomed by Belgium's Community sponsorship programme.⁵

Looking at the future of sponsorship programmes in Europe, it seems likely that combinations of the above will co-exist. Currently programmes are still developing and questions remain as to how to ensure their sustainability in the long term.

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that most programmes have seen very moderate arrivals in the recent period. Providing settlement and

² For the Humanitarian Corridor programmes, the total number of arrivals per country from the beginning of the programme until the end of 2020 was the following: France: 514 arrivals, Italy: 2190 arrivals, Belgium: 150 arrivals)

³ Community Sponsorship within the resettlement-based quota: in Belgium, Ireland, Spain

⁴ Community Sponsorship additional to the resettlement quota: UK as of 2020 and Germany's NesT programme

⁵The number of arrivals for other resettlement-based community sponsorship programmes include Spain: 29 refugees for Basque Country and 23 refugees for Valencia; Germany: 41 refugees; Ireland: 36 refugees. For a more detailed comparison of the different programmes and number of arrivals see [Gabriela's presentation](#).



integration support to those refugees that had already arrived has been a challenge, but the different sponsorship groups have adapted using various online tools and technologies.

For more information on European community sponsorship programmes and arrivals during the pandemic you can see [Gabriela Agatiello's presentation here](#).

Camille Le Coz, MPI Europe: *Findings and recommendations from MPI's publication 'Using Monitoring and Evaluation to Make Good on the Promise of Refugee Sponsorship'*

Across Europe there has been a growing interest in refugee sponsorship since 2015. This in turn has led to higher expectations of refugee resettlement programmes and questions over their ability to facilitate successful integration.

M&E has three main objectives which can help achieve this:

Firstly, M&E maps out which groups are best suited for private sponsorship and helps find areas which have demand for new sponsors and for programme growth. M&E also demonstrates the positive effect of programmes, which allows stakeholders to advocate for increased funding to sustain and scale up these activities.

Secondly, M&E ensures the accountability of programme implementation for each stakeholder. This ensures that governments cannot avoid their programme responsibilities as M&E findings can clearly outline gaps and areas for improvement.

Finally, M&E improves programme effectiveness by highlighting areas of best practice or challenges which stakeholders can then use to design more effective and efficient future programmes.

Regarding **the integration of effective and efficient M&E practices** in sponsorship

programmes, there are three key points to consider:

1. M&E activities require careful consideration of budgeting and time-management in order to be realistic and deliverable. Resources can be well-managed by partnering with "M&E champions" such as government agencies who have databases and experience in M&E methods.

2. Indicators and methodology should be designed as part of the initial project design to ensure practices are well-aligned with the project's objectives. However, M&E practices need to be flexible as programmes change throughout implementation.

3. M&E practices should coordinate with other European actors to allow shared knowledge of best practices between projects.

In conclusion, it is key that a M&E framework is included in the initial project design and is affordable, objective-focused, flexible, and realistic.

For more information on M&E best practices and priorities see [Camille Le Coz's presentation here](#).

Panel II: Programme Design: pilot programmes' experiences and lessons learned

Eibhlin Byrne, Director of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme in Ireland: *Community sponsorship in Ireland; inspirations and key objectives*

Whilst integration and community are diverse concepts, creating positive community inclusion is a shared end goal between different resettlement actors, which is why sharing of best practices between countries can be effective. However, each sponsorship programme must be tailored to the context of their specific community.



In 2017, in cooperation with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), UNHCR, Irish Red Cross, NASC, the Irish Refugee Council and Amnesty International Ireland, the Irish government worked to develop an Irish model of Community Sponsorship. The Irish state launched the pilot model in 2018 as an alternative way to resettle refugees in Ireland.

The programme is founded upon the principles of empowerment through equal ownership by both the refugees and the community that sponsors them. The importance of sponsors being active agents, rather than passive donors reflects Ireland's humanitarian tradition.

The programme champions consent as refugees can choose to be resettled via the government resettlement programme or via the sponsorship programme, with still the possibility to transfer to the Irish Resettlement Protection Programme (IRPP) after arrival, as all refugees are under the Irish Government's protection. This ensures that responsibility for refugee resettlement remains a synergy between governments and partners rather than being 'dumped upon the private sector'. Furthermore, roles must be clearly outlined to ensure clear cooperation and resource support, however the dissemination of information from national level to local area actors remains an ongoing challenge.

The IRPP's community sponsorship programme also faces the difficulty in choosing between vulnerable refugees in need of intensive support, or independent refugees who possess the skills to integrate better, this choice must be carefully considered.

Despite Covid-19 hindering programme growth, the pandemic has provided the opportunity to set up further Regional Support Organisations (RSOs) ⁶which provide training and support to sponsorship groups and promote community sponsorship. These organisations are the bridge between sponsoring communities and the Irish Government and will become a key part of the programme's future.

For more information on Ireland's Community Sponsorship Programme see [Eibhlin Byrne's presentation here](#).

Anthony Finn, Montbretia Consulting: Overview of the pilot project evaluation, the objectives, the methodology used, and its main findings and recommendations

Anthony Finn conducted the Evaluation of the Irish Community Sponsorship Pilot Programme which was commissioned by the government (IRRP) and conducted over 6 weeks, ending in September 2019. M&E was built into the pilot programme's design and shaped the programme throughout its implementation. In the coming period, M&E will remain a core component of the programme to ensure the programme improves support for communities and refugees during their integration.

The M&E design had two key aims, to be **realistic and implementable**. M&E's goal is to provide stakeholders an overview of the program countries M&E's initial outcomes. These insights, collected through several interviews, are then used to implement adaptations.

⁶ For information on Regional Support Organisations in Ireland see:

<http://integration.ie/en/ISEC/Community%20Sponsorship%20Policy%20Framework%20WEB.pdf/Files/Community%20Sponsorship%20Policy%20Framework%20WEB.pdf>



A key finding of the pilot evaluation was that Ireland's communities' boundaries are permeable and accommodating to incoming refugees. This finding was evidenced by the high levels of active engagement by different community actors⁷ in the initial sponsorship programmes, which reflects Irish people's desire to be active in refugee integration. Institutional coordination however remains a key challenge, as the communication and standard operating procedures between its multiple stakeholders is not always efficient nor effective. Responsibilities must be more clearly outlined, which can be facilitated by streamlining and aligning organisations, subsequently resulting in less competition for resources.

Another key challenge is the programme's sustained governmental support, Ireland's recent change in government highlighted the need for the programme to be formalised into institutional memory to avoid loss of knowledge of the pilot programme as governments or ministers change.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the already oversubscribed welfare services provided by both the government and NGOs, these resources must therefore be improved. Furthermore, increased mental health and trauma training must be available for sponsors to aid with the emotional difficulty of supporting refugees.

For more information on the Irish programme's pilot evaluation see [Anthony Finn's presentation here](#).

Xabier Legarreta, Director of Migration and Asylum in the Basque government: *The role of*

the Basque Government in the Basque Community Programme

The Basque Community Sponsorship Programme, called: *Auzolana II*, emphasizes public-social co-responsibility alongside political and public engagement in refugee rights awareness and integration.

Key programme actors include the Spanish Secretary for Migration, Department of Equality, Justice and Social Policies of the Basque Government, UNHCR, Cáritas, the Jesuits and other key Basque social organisations. The Programme was launched in March 2019. Due to challenges created by Covid 19, the pilot programme will be finalised in June 2021 instead of March 2021.

The programme furthers coordination between different institutional levels and promotes the participation of local community sponsorship groups in intuitional roundtables developed in coordination with Caritas and the Jesuits organisations. The programme itself has also been implemented with the cooperation of Basque Municipalities who are responsible for the ongoing reception and integration of the programme's beneficiaries.

In Euskadi (Basque country) **five local sponsorship groups across five municipalities** hosted the initial arrival of 5 Syrian refugee families (29 individuals). These groups provided accommodation and € 10,000 to support the refugee families. The Basque government committed around € 300,000 for refugee provisions across a 27 month period, which includes funding for a part-time social worker employed by the associated entities (Caritas

⁷ Unlike in other countries there is little engagement by faith-based actors in Ireland's community sponsorship programme



and the Jesuits) to coordinate and support the sponsoring groups.

The Entity holders and sponsorship groups are responsible for quarterly monitoring reports which present the progress of refugee's integration and needs to the Basque government. Actions needed in response to these reports are discussed and coordinated by a government lead monitoring commission which meets quarterly.

The programme's aim is to develop and evaluate the project in order to serve **as a model for other autonomous regions' resettlement programmes**. Therefore, monitoring, reporting and the creation of rapid impact assessments are vital elements of the programme, as it highlights issues needing attention and helps actors to shape solutions so that the programme is as effective and efficient as possible.

Based on the Basque model, Community Sponsorship projects have also been implemented in other Autonomous Communities in Valencia and Navarra.

For more information on the Basque Community Sponsorship Programme please see [Xabier Legarreta's presentation here](#).

Silvia Caraballo, In strategies: *Evaluation of the community sponsorship pilot project in the Basque Country.*

The M&E and analysis of the Basque County pilot project was conducted in three phases. First, M&E's planning phase (Macro), conducted alongside the design of the sponsorship project to ensure that it aligned with the project's objectives. Secondly, M&E's development phase (Meso) ensured that a range of stakeholders were identified. Alongside this,

integration inclusion protocol and administrative support were identified and developed. Lastly, the implementation phase (Micro) which examined the programmes from their launch, including refugee admission and local actors' self-assessed experiences in supporting them. Challenges were also identified throughout the implementation phase.

Data was collected through interviews and focus groups with volunteers, stakeholders and refugees. A Monitoring Committee was established to discuss issues and findings with local coordination panels. However, implementation of monitoring was unequal as some local coordination panels took on higher burdens in evaluation practices.

The implementation phase highlighted the need for greater assurance and transparency between stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally. It was recommended that clear agreements regarding actor responsibilities involved in the programme should be drawn. Establishing an open selection process of entities who can become involved as supporting organisations for sponsorship groups should also be considered in order to expand the number of sponsorship actors.

A significant positive of the programme expressed by refugees was the possibility to withdraw from the Community sponsorship programme and re-join the government protection system. This is empowering for the beneficiaries and parallels Ireland's consent-based approach.⁸

Conducting M&E practices throughout the implementation phase meant that shortfalls in the programme could also be quickly identified and overcome. The commitment and the

⁸ See Eibhlin Byrne's presentation and summary.



engagement of the stakeholders aided this process.

Overall, whilst coordination was demonstrated as being effective, coordination and communication with local municipalities and other actors should be improved. Municipalities could also be more active in providing resources to community stakeholders.

A programme strength M&E highlighted is the diversity of the programme's local volunteer groups, which ensures that participating refugees had access to a strong network of different persons of varied ages, resources and contacts. The inclusion of refugees in the community was also enabled by the project's timeframe of 2 years.

Improved training of volunteers, especially in intercultural skills, was also identified as necessary as significant differences in cultural understanding led at times to tensions or conflict between groups.

Overall, this pilot experience is positive and afforded an opportunity for five families to be granted protection and receive support from sponsorship groups to facilitate their integration in the host communities. It therefore paves the way for social entities and society in general to act in solidarity and protect refugees and is an example to other regions interested in running similar projects.

The programme has received the interest of other autonomous communities which now are implementing their own initiatives. Despite the success of the programme, there has been little interest by and coverage from the press. International networking has however successfully opened dialogue between different national and regional bodies involved in refugee resettlement.

For more information on the evaluation of the Basque Community Sponsorship pilot programme see [Silvia Caraballo's presentation here](#).

Tatjana Baraulina, Head of Unit, International Migration and Governance, German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees: *Evaluation of the NesT Programme*

The NesT (New Start in a Team) pilot programme, established in 2019, allows for 500 resettlement places through civil society sponsorship groups. Sponsorship groups consist of five+ people (Groups of Five) from private and institutional organisations such as residents, religious bodies or NGOs. The groups' responsibilities include finding and financing appropriate housing and social support for the duration of the sponsorship period.

The political responsibility for the programme lies with the Federal Minister for Interior and the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration in close collaboration with a civil society contact point that provides information and support between all programme actors.

The NesT programme evaluation had two key objectives: 1. To examine the cooperation between actors and efficiency of the application process; and 2. To examine which groups participate in sponsorship and why, and what measures can encourage other actors to become active in sponsorship.

Data was collected through interviews and workshops with participants and stakeholders. A monitoring system also collected administrative data, such as application timelines. Thus far, 32 sponsors from eight sponsor groups from 2019 have been interviewed, as well as many refugees.



An adaptable interview model was created to use with the two different respondent groups (refugees and sponsors) at different stages of the process. Refugees and sponsors were also asked for improvement recommendations. This ensured that refugees are empowered by shaping future programmes.

The evaluation demonstrated the success of establishing the civil society contact points as a platform for actor coordination, which resulted in programme growth through the recruitment of new sponsorship groups. By using the network of established civil society actors such as the Red Cross, Caritas and Diakonie, programme interest could grow more quickly.

Furthermore, many of these civil society groups had experience in working with refugees, so the sponsorship groups connected with them were able to draw from their experience and expertise and were able to provide more effective and efficient support to refugees.

The aim for the programme is to keep on recruiting new volunteer groups and local bodies into the programme in order to support more refugees. To facilitate growth, NesT has established a working group to discuss programme improvements and the role of potential new actors such as universities, garden collectives and businesses.

For more information on the evaluation of the German NesT programme see [Tatjana's presentation here](#).

Panel III: Impact of sponsorship on local communities and early refugee integration

Shauna Labman, Associate Professor, University of Winnipeg: *Overview of research findings in the Canadian context*

Canada presents itself as a longstanding partner and expert in refugee sponsorship and is encouraged by other examples of programmes

across Europe. However, the model has not developed without tensions and challenges, which can be acknowledged and explored by looking back at how the programme developed and grew over its forty-year history.

Canada began resettling refugees through ad hoc sponsorship arrangements between governments and religious organisations following WWII, but the arrangement was not formalised until the Refugee Convention was signed by Canada in 1969. In the 1970s, the idea of refugee resettlement and private sponsorship was brought into federal immigration laws, driven by ethnic and religious groups wanting to resettle refugees from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At the time, Canada saw itself primarily as a country of refugee resettlement rather than first asylum. Resettlement was established in response to Canada's geographical distance from refugee flows, which contrasts with other countries whose programmes were developed in response to geographically close refugee flows.

With the Indo-Chinese refugee crisis, community sponsorship grew exponentially as it offered Canadians a way to actively contribute to the crisis. The small movement of named sponsorship thus became an expansive sponsorship system of Indo-Chinese refugees. With the exponential growth in sponsorship, the Canadian Council for Refugees became concerned that the government would try to dump its responsibilities for refugees on the private sector and consequently send a letter to the PM stating that they were not prepared to release the government from their refugee obligations, which in turn ensured that the government matched their resettlement programmes alongside community sponsorship. This reflects the importance of community sponsorship being an additional element of refugee care, rather than the sole programme.



In the early 1990s a government review of resettlement programmes was conducted and multiple issues were uncovered, including lengthy processing times, inadequate pre-arrival orientation, a need for improvement in the quantity and quality of communication between the government, sponsors and communities involved in resettlement; as well as the need for clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each partner and their operational procedures. Significantly, the duration of sponsorship came into question as it was established that the usual 12 months was frequently inadequate to support refugees successfully in their resettlement.

The refugee crisis in 2015 brought forward refugees as an election issue for the first time in Canada. Trudeau's liberal government responded with the promise to resettle 25,000 government assisted refugees, which was a significant increase from the only 7500 under the previous conservative governments. Notably, this was matched by a domestic upsurge of interest in private sponsorship. For example, Audrey Macklin's study⁹ revealed that 80% of 530 private sponsors for Syrian refugees were first time sponsors, reflecting a new growth in Canadians' engagement in sponsorship.

Following this, Canada announced the joint project with UNHCR to export Canada's sponsorship model to other countries in the form of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

Current research is being conducted into Syrian refugee resettlement and integration by a partnership between the government and the Social Sciences Research Council. This rich and detailed data is important, however there has not been a comparative study on how other refugee groups in Canada have been received over the past 40 years. The focus on Syrian Refugees highlights the need for more comparative studies in how Syrian refugees are facing resettlement compared to groups who arrived before them or will continue to arrive in the future.

Using the premise of her book *Strangers to Neighbours*¹⁰, Shauna discusses the privatisation of responsibility and the key questions surrounding how a successful partnership between government and private sponsors could work, concluding that Canada should refocus some attention of refugee responsibility on the government while also ensuring that welfare resources are adequate.

Referring to a study by Rachel McNally on *15 Ways to Evaluate the Success of Community Sponsorship*¹¹, Shauna points out that what we choose to evaluate as success could sometimes come at the expense of other measurements of success. For example, while the ability to 'name' refugees through the PSR programme has helped to scale up the programme, and while sponsor-referred refugees may be vulnerable, PSRs are not selected based on vulnerability criteria.

⁹ Macklin, Audrey & Barber, Kathryn & Goldring, Luin & Hyndman, Jennifer & Korteweg, Anna & Zyfi, Jona. (2020). Kindred Spirits?: Links between Refugee Sponsorship and Family Sponsorship. 10.2307/j.ctv176ktqs.14.

¹⁰ LABMAN, S., & CAMERON, G. (Eds.). (2020). *Strangers to Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship in*

Context. Montreal; Kingston; London; Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press.

¹¹ See McNally, Rachel, *15 Ways to Evaluate the Success of Community Sponsorship Programs*. <https://carfms.org/15-ways-to-evaluate-the-success-of-community-sponsorship-programs-by-rachel-mcnally/>

For a detailed list of McNally's 15 ways to measure success see text box below.

For more information on Canada's refugee sponsorship history and programmes you can [see Shauna Labman's presentation here](#).

Rachel McNally: 15 Ways to Evaluate the Success of Community Sponsorship Programs

1. **Durable solution:** *Does the program provide permanent protection and pathways to citizenship?*
2. **Settlement needs:** *Does the program meet the concrete settlement needs of refugees?*
3. **Refugee perspective:** *Do refugees have a positive experience in the program?*
4. **Integration outcomes:** *Does the program lead to positive integration outcomes and equal or better outcomes compared to government programs?*
5. **Resettling vulnerable refugees:** *Does the program resettle the most vulnerable?*
6. **Scale:** *How many refugees does the program resettle?*
7. **Additionality:** *Do sponsored refugees replace government resettlement?*
8. **Public opinion and welcoming communities:** *Does the program promote positive public opinion and encourage welcoming communities?*
9. **Mobilizing civil society:** *Does the program effectively mobilize residents and various community organizations (religious, ethno-cultural, businesses, etc.)?*
10. **Sustainability:** *Is there sufficient sponsor interest and government support to sustain the program long-term?*
11. **Effective process:** *Is the process clear, efficient, fair and transparent?*
12. **Safeguards:** *Are there sufficient safeguards in place to protect refugees and to hold sponsors accountable to their obligations?*
13. **Sponsor experience:** *Does the program adequately train and support sponsors, encouraging them to sponsor again?*
14. **Reunifying families:** *Does the program reunify separated refugee families?*
15. **Global context:** *Does the program focus on high-profile populations at the expense of other refugees?*

Jennifer Phillimore, Professor, University of Birmingham: *Impact of Covid 19 on sponsorship groups and the early integration of refugees*

Jenny Phillimore has been researching refugee integration for 22 years and has been involved in the sponsorship of refugees in her local area since the initial stages of the programme in the UK. A growth in academic interest in refugee resettlement resulted in increased funding (both public and other funding sources) for the University of Birmingham's (UoB) independent research programme and in 2020, Jenny's research group published several studies on the topic, including a 'Formative Evaluation from 2017-2020 of Community Sponsorship in the UK'; a study titled 'From Refugees to Citizens', which focused on the experiences of refugees in sponsorship; and a study on 'The effects of Community Sponsorship in less-diverse communities'.¹²

Whilst the latter study was a pilot study, the research has already shed some light on the importance of realistic and supported placement expectations for both the families and refugees themselves, and the need for clear information sharing prior to arrival to mitigate expectations. Other challenges noted in the research included the language barriers that stopped refugees from being able to build relationships in their new community, as well as job application and educational needs, which were repeatedly flagged as difficulties by both refugees and volunteers.

Nonetheless, volunteers interviewed also expressed feeling empowered by being able to contribute towards a social issue in an important way. Positive impacts were also noted as many placements exceeded the expectations of refugees through their

¹² For a complete list of research studies on Community Sponsorship published by the University

of Birmingham's research group you can visit their website [here](#).



welcoming and generous attitudes. Many volunteers also felt that being part of the programme gave them an active arena to express their faith and human values, rather than being merely passive donors. A key research finding to note is the importance of connecting refugees to diverse networks, in order for them not to become isolated and have stronger chances of remaining connected to the wider community.

Regarding research practice, an important question to consider is who to interview when trying to look at the wider impacts of community sponsorship. UoB's research decided to include wider community members such as people in school and job centres to get an in-depth and wide understanding of what refugee sponsorship is like for a community and how attitudes towards refugees shift. The finding was that community sponsorship has "transformative potential" as the community understands refugees struggles and attitudes on a personal basis; and can serve as an important tool in combatting negative stereotypes and ignorance on who and what refugees are.

In terms of research impact, the relationship between the UoB, the communities and the Home Office has with time become increasingly formalised into policy and practice briefs and recommendations, which are shaped into accessible formats to ensure sponsors and communities are well-informed and have the supports they need. Reports created for the Home Office also ensure they understand the process that communities and families go through so they may get the right support.

Current research is now looking at how Covid 19 has created a challenge to sponsorship practices as communities felt they had increased responsibility with fewer resources. The research has highlighted the need for better

access to language training and digital literacy for refugees.

For more information on the findings from Jenny Phillimore's research on community sponsorship you can [view her presentation here](#).

Paolo Stuppia, Associated researcher at the Centre Européen de Sociologie et de Science Politique (CESSP): *Assessment of the French Humanitarian Corridors Programme, Three years later*

Commissioned by the Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FEP), CESSP conducted in 2020 evaluative research on France's humanitarian corridor programme.

The humanitarian corridor was established in France in 2016 when five faith-based organisations and the French State signed an agreement to deliver 500 temporary visas for asylum seekers from Syria and Iraq. In January 2020 around 400 refugees were hosted in France, 236 of whom were hosted by the FEP citizen committees (CC) which in turn were supported by five regional division of networks coordinated by FEP. A social worker oversaw the programme in each regional division with the support of a FEP central platform who coordinated the programme. For some refugees, additional overview was needed if they were placed in an area not covered by one of these territories.

Refugees in this programme were selected from Lebanon according to criteria which aimed to support the more vulnerable and help high risk individuals or families. The selection process was one area which the evaluation indicated needed improvement. For the evaluation, data was gathered through an extensive questionnaire which was sent to all adult refugee program participants, several of whom were also chosen to also participate in an

interview in order to generate in-depth data. The limited-time frame for the evaluation, worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, were indicated as key research challenges.



Overall, the evaluation revealed programme success as 2/3 of refugees stated that the programme was a positive experience and aided in their integration. A minority however, explicitly expressed negative programme experiences, usually regarding language barriers and housing accessibility struggles.

Three reported key programme positives included: 1. The programme facilitated the establishment of a network of communities and organisations active in refugee support; 2. Rural engagement and resources for refugee integration were increased; 3. Proactive engagement in their integration was displayed by the majority of refugees participating in the FEP humanitarian corridors programme.

Key improvements that were suggested included the provision of more clear information about responsibilities and potential challenges to families before they arrive, in order to better manage expectations. Intercultural training courses should also be provided to sponsor volunteers to reduce the cultural gap and subsequent tensions between refugees and hosts.

The gap between rural and urban integration should also be addressed, as a disproportionate amount of refugees are hosted by citizen

committees in rural areas. While the support offered greatly facilitates the integration of refugees in rural areas, there are not as many citizen committees in bigger cities, making the integration of refugees in urban areas sometimes more difficult, particularly for LGBTQ+ refugees who may face discrimination in rural communities.

For more information on the key findings of the French Humanitarian Corridors Programme evaluation you can see [Paolo Stuppi's presentation here](#).

Ilaria Schnyder von Wartensee, Assistant Professor at the University of Notre Dame: Findings from a longitudinal study on the Humanitarian Corridors Programme in Italy

The Italian Humanitarian corridor programme, which was launched in 2015, has so far welcomed 2190 refugees to Italy. Caritas, a leading actor in the Italian Humanitarian Corridors Programme, has supported approximately 500 refugees from refugee camps in Ethiopia, Niger, and Turkey (as well as urban refugees from Jordan), by hosting them in 52 dioceses across Italy.

The longitudinal research conducted by Ilaria and her team focused on the first cohort of refugees hosted by Caritas through the Humanitarian Corridors programme, which arrived from Ethiopia. The research is currently in the third stage of a 5 year-long study. Qualitative data was gathered through conducting 400 interviews with refugees, social workers, and volunteers across 45 Italian dioceses. Additionally, participant observation and field studies were conducted for a holistic understanding of the programme.

The obstacle of Covid-19 to data collection was overcome by use of the Human Lines website¹³ which collects participants experiences, stories and data whilst serving as a platform for information to partners.

Research found that humanitarian corridors provided communities an opportunity to be actively and positively engaged in the social issue of the refugee crisis. However, the emotional and financial burden for private sponsors, usually faith-based, was reported as often difficult for volunteer sponsors. Whilst increased information to volunteers prior to refugee arrival has improved expectations, more mental health support is needed for refugees, many of whom struggled with isolation and trauma. Further counselling support for volunteers is also needed to equip them in aiding refugees. Furthermore, increased government support of civil society is needed to ensure correct resource support and programme manageability.

A key evaluation finding was the sense of “rebirth” from the security and deep gratitude the majority of beneficiaries expressed about their community placements. Furthermore, inter-faith pairings of refugees and communities have largely been positive as community’s prior negative perceptions of other cultures are reduced through refugee engagement. However, more intercultural training is needed to further improve social relationships between groups.

The research also highlighted several key challenges including the difficulty for refugees

to confidently integrate within the 12-18 month placement period. This resulted in increased pressure on volunteers and communities who used their own financial and social capital to continue the support of refugees. This financial pressure was exacerbated by refugees reporting difficulties in gaining job opportunities due to discrimination and language barriers. Overall, the longitudinal study showed that only 6% of beneficiaries are fully autonomous and living in Italy after the programme completion. A further 31% continue to be partially or completely supported by Caritas and 13% of participants were transferred to the Federal SPRAR system after the sponsorship ended. Under 50% of participants had either left the programme before the end of the sponsorship duration or moved to a new country. Although not all finalised their sponsorship period, the programme helped to build their confidence and language skills and enabled them to rebuild their lives. This also raises the question of how the success of programmes should be measured as beneficiaries of humanitarian corridors may not always stay in the arrival country.

Since the start of the research, the Italian government has signed a second agreement in 2019 to bring more refugees to Italy from other countries (i.e. Jordan). This offers a good opportunity to do some comparative research on the integration experience of the two different cohorts that have come through humanitarian corridors.

To learn more about the research findings from the longitudinal study you can view [Ilaria Schnyder von Wartensee’s presentation here](#).



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¹³ See Human Lines Website:
<https://humanlines.org/en/human-lines-1.html>



Annex

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2. Panellist List

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