

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

ATCR Meetings Highlight How Community Sponsorship Can Help Resettlement Move Forward in the COVID-19 Era

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ATCR held a series of virtual events to conclude this year's session, organized by co-Chairs, the Government of Canada, the Canadian Council for Refugees and UNHCR. Discussions included how community sponsorship has helped create resilient communities. Presenters were able to provide insights on how COVID-19 has impacted resettlement, the lessons we can learn from this, and paths moving forward. ATCR sessions also highlighted the importance of refugee voices in the discussions around resettlement, as these important perspectives can help to create stronger resettlement efforts and communities. Virtual meetings, necessary due to COVID-19, also provide excellent opportunities for those to participate who would normally be unable to.

These virtual sessions allowed ATCR participants to deep dive into topics such as how to build welcoming communities during a crisis, how to improve emergency preparedness in the future, what resettlement needs may look like going forward, the role of complementary pathways, and how to ensure meaningful refugee participation. The importance of community-based responses was highlighted throughout these conversations. Programs that include significant community participation help to reduce feelings of isolation among refugees, even in times of crisis, due to the support networks that are in place. Access to technology is of vital importance for this, and can help resettled refugees maintain connections with their host communities. Participants also highlighted that community sponsorship-like supports such as networks of local expertise and virtual social engagement can help communities build networks between members, and that these networks have helped community members to support each other more broadly during the pandemic.

Community sponsorship is built on partnerships,

and the ATCR sessions also outlined the importance of partnerships between community groups, civil society organizations, government and private sector in resettlement. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of these partnerships as it has allowed groups to combat negative narratives and engage in advocacy to help create welcoming communities at all levels.

Community sponsorship was highlighted as a way to help resettlement move forward in a COVID-19 context. Sponsors can help to provide necessary social and housing supports, even in a pandemic, which can help with quarantine requirements. Community sponsorship's adaptable nature also allows it to address constraints such as access to education or other resources in a given context, while building welcoming communities.

The ATCR's important work on resettlement and complementary pathways will continue next year with Switzerland as co-chair.

GRSI: High-Level Panel Shows Strong Enthusiasm for Community Sponsorship



On 9 July 2020, the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative hosted a virtual dialogue on sponsorship, resettlement and complementary pathways between leaders representing states, multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and the private sector.

In order of appearance, the audience heard from *Marco Mendicino*, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; *Ylva Johansson*, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs; *Angham Younes*, who was resettled, along with her family, through a community sponsorship

program in Ireland and is now herself involved in sponsorship; *Laurie Cooper*, a Canadian sponsor and Founder/Director of the Canadian Caring Society; *Gillian Triggs*, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR; *Hana Jalloul Muro*, the Spanish Secretary of State for Migration; *Michael Czerny*, Cardinal-Deacon of San Michele Arcangelo and Under-Secretary of the Migrants and Refugee Section, Vatican; *Abi Tierney*, Director General, Her Majesty's Passport Office and UK Visas and Immigration; *Chris Philp*, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts); *Frank Giustra*, Founder, the Giustra Foundation and Founding Partner of GRSI; and *Mariana Marques*, Director of International Policy and Justice, Amnesty International Argentina.

One of the central themes that ran through the dialogue was that of communities – neighbourhoods, parishes, cities, regions, countries, or the global community – working together, during a global pandemic, in service of supporting vulnerable members of society and building strong foundations for resettlement pathways in a post-COVID-19 world.

Panelists spoke about the transformative nature of community sponsorship for sponsors and sponsored newcomers, emphasizing that community sponsorship helps people make their communities better for all. Speakers described some of the nuances of sponsorship programs in their own countries and regions, showcasing the different pathways that have been created for resettlement, be they well-established programs or brand-new pilots. Panelists emphasized the importance of building momentum around sponsorship and shared next steps to grow future resettlement.

The dialogue further highlighted the importance of building relationships – and partnerships – between newcomers, sponsors, civil society, and government in order to promote inclusive and welcoming communities. As Commissioner Johansson highlighted, "... when you open your heart and your community to welcome new people, there is not only an action of solidarity but also a win-win situation – that will do something with yourself and with your community and make it richer."

A link to the full recording of the dialogue can be found [here](#), and a link to a brief produced after the event, including summaries of all interventions, can

be found [here](#).

Check out the [GRSI COVID-19 Resource Portal](https://covid19.refugeesponsorship.org/) for more information about GRSI activities, tools and resources during this challenging time <https://covid19.refugeesponsorship.org/>

Despite coronavirus setbacks Wanstead volunteers raise enough money to sponsor refugee family

[Refugee Welcome Wanstead](#), UK had started raising funds to sponsor a refugee family before the COVID-19 lockdown. While the COVID-19 crisis has made fundraising a challenge, Refugee Welcome Wanstead has raised the necessary funds to sponsor a refugee family to the area. A volunteer with the group said the context of COVID-19 only highlighted how important refugee resettlement is and has given the group a sense of purpose during the pandemic.

Check out the [Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative on Twitter!](#)
Follow [@theGRSI](#) on Twitter for more updates on [#communitysponsorship](#)

Kindness of Kinsale helped to save us from certain death, says Syrian family

The Alhajjar family arrived in Kinsale, County Cork, Ireland, in December of 2019 due to the efforts of The Road to Kinsale, a community sponsorship program aimed at helping those displaced by the Syrian civil war. As the COVID-19 lockdown begins to lift in Ireland, a spokesperson for Road to Kinsale [described](#) some of the group's efforts to keep the Alhajjar family connected to their new home despite the lockdown, including continuing English lessons remotely and coordinating support from local businesses.

What is GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of five organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation and the University of Ottawa. It aims to help other countries set up their own community-based refugee sponsorship programs, strengthening local communities and improving the narrative on refugees in the process.

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