

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

For this edition of the GRSI Newsletter, the GRSI reached out to members of Argentina's sponsorship community for some reflections on sponsorship in the time of COVID-19.

GRSI in conversation with Carolina Mussi, Fundación Amal Argentina

Have you noticed any common challenges faced in the sponsorship community?

In recent months, we have faced challenges regarding the health and socioeconomic impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has generated in different communities. Those most affected by health difficulties have had to face much greater challenges economically. In general, we detect a lot of uncertainty and anxiety in relation to the arrival date of the families, and also concerns about the situation they are going through in Lebanon.

How are you continuing engagement with the sponsorship community recently? Have you developed additional programming to help sponsors navigate the current COVID-19 context?

We keep permanent contact with the groups via WhatsApp and through virtual meetings, to learn about the situation that each group and its community are going through, and we share information through our organization's social media. We were excited to have a Canadian who is involved in community sponsorship participate in a virtual meeting with the groups, because it gave us the opportunity to learn how sponsor groups in Canada are coping in these times of pandemic.

Do you have networks within the sponsorship community that you rely on for communication and engagement?

Together with the Sponsorship Network, and with the support of UNHCR and IOM, we have monthly national sponsors meetings where each group can share their experience and also interact with representatives of international organizations. We also plan

different activities along with the Network, to provide deeper insight into some of the topics covered in the initial sponsor training.

What kind of tools are you finding most useful?

WhatsApp groups keep us in permanent contact with each member of every group, and social media allows us to communicate news and keep our communities informed and updated.

What lessons for getting through COVID-19 would you share with your community, drawn from your own experience of sponsorship? Do you have any additional lessons learned or reflections to share?

We are very optimistic! Despite the enormous economic and health crisis our country is facing, we find an open and inclusive society, where more and more people want to join community sponsorship and help new people to start a new life. We find our groups and their communities, united in solidarity, committed more than ever with the cause, strengthened as groups, and more eager to receive families as soon as possible.

Check out the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative on Twitter!

Follow @theGRSI on Twitter for more updates on #communitysponsorship

GRSI Interview with Sponsorship Group in San Martin, Argentina

The group is currently waiting to welcome a refugee to their community.



(Photo taken pre-COVID-19)

What kinds of challenges have your groups had? How has your group addressed these?

After our country entered lock-down, the first challenge we faced was in managing the uncertainty and anxiety that was generated in the group and in the community, since the family we are sponsoring has not yet been able to travel and be resettled.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the main challenges we encountered was to identify in our community people who demonstrated an interest for the cause and a clear commitment towards the common goal, in order to create a harmonious sponsorship group, and composed of volunteers who share the same objectives. To do this, we hold meetings in order to better understand our expectations and achieve greater trust within the group.

What kinds of supports are available to you? What tools have you found the most helpful? Are there tools/supports you would like to see developed?

The main support we receive is the permanent guidance from the Fundación Amal Argentina, since they help us understand the situation of the families that are going to arrive, providing training together with the Sponsorship Network, UNHCR and IOM, on topics such as culture shock, management of expectations and roles within the group, and mental health of the refugee population, among others.

How are you staying in touch as a group and/or with other sponsorship groups? Have you reached out to other sponsorship groups? Do you have networks that support you in this communication?

We keep in touch with other sponsorship groups through virtual sponsorship meetings that are held monthly, organized by the Sponsorship Network, and we also set up a special WhatsApp chat with the other groups supported by Fundación Amal Argentina. We also keep in touch through our social media (Facebook, Instagram) and, through a newsletter that we issue monthly, we keep our community informed and updated on activities and news.

How has your group stayed motivated during this time?

Hope is our greatest motivation, together with the constant support of Fundación Amal Argentina. It is very enriching for us to share experiences in virtual meetings with other sponsorship groups, knowing that we are all going through the same situation of waiting and uncertainty.

What lessons for getting through the COVID-19 crisis would you share with your community, drawn from your experience of sponsorship? Do you have any additional lessons learned or reflections to share?

As a group, we must adapt to circumstances and our country's political, economic, social and cultural reality. We are supported by the enormous solidarity that our community has shown, convinced that together we can achieve challenging goals.

We know that the interests of governments do not always consider the needs of the community, but we believe that human rights must be respected and demanded universally and beyond borders.

Community sponsorship requires great personal, family and group effort, but it is supported and sustained with the conviction of helping, and of providing a better quality of life to those who need it most. We also consider that creating a sponsorship group with people with whom there is already a prior relationship of trust and commitment, helps in facing this enormous challenge.

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/>

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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