

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

Three refugee athletes gain sports scholarships and permanent residency in Canada



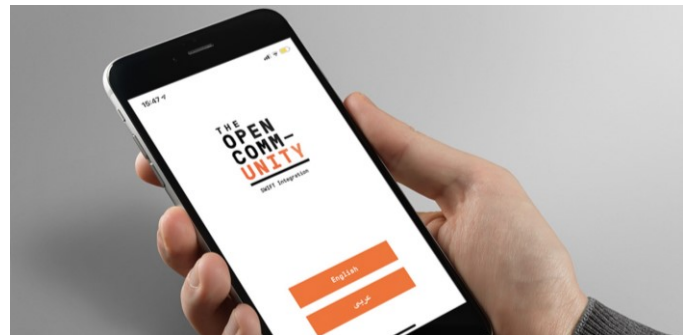
Rose Nathike Lokonyen, Olympic athlete.
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Three Kenya-based runners on the IOC Refugee Olympic Team will begin their studies later this year at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario as part of an “athletic pathway” pilot run by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). Similar to the existing Student Refugee Program, this new athletic scholarship scheme allows academic institutions to sponsor refugee athletes via Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees program. Rose Nathike Lokonyen, James Chiengjiek Nyang, and Paulo Amotun Lokoro have each demonstrated the dedication, athletic talent, and commitment to a goal in order to reach a spot on the IOC’s Refugee Olympic Team. All three athletes were selected by scouts visiting the Kakuma refugee camp, where they had settled, independently, after fleeing South Sudan. The WUSC pilot will see these three individuals admitted to Canada as permanent residents to continue their training while accessing tertiary education.

Are you a policymaker or civil society leader designing a refugee sponsorship program?
Download the GRSI’s policy design workbook.

Launch of Irish national community sponsorship support organization, “The Open Community”
The Irish Red Cross, Irish Refugee Council, Doras, Nasc, UNHCR Ireland, Amnesty International

Ireland, Fórsa, the Open Doors Initiative, and University College Dublin launched the national support organization for Ireland’s community sponsorship program under the name “The Open Community”. The Open Community offers three main resources to scale community sponsorship in Ireland: a website, co-funded by the European Union’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and developed in cooperation with the GRSI and the Portuguese Refugee Council; the “SWIFT Integration” mobile app available in English and Arabic with information on Irish government services to guide sponsors and refugees through the resettlement process; and a forthcoming national curriculum developed by Nasc and Quality Matters consisting of online and in-person sponsor training modules.



Irish communities preparing to host up to 20 Syrian families

Irish communities are gearing up to welcome more refugee families through Community Sponsorship Ireland as officials from the Irish Refugee Protection Program travel to Lebanon and Jordan this autumn on refugee selection missions. The first trip, in September, will select up to 300 refugees to be resettled in Ireland, some of whom will be welcomed into communities by sponsor groups. For some of these groups, including New Beginnings in Kells, this will be the second newcomer family sponsored. The first family sponsored by New Beginnings are joining the effort to fundraise and prepare for the newest arrivals in their community. Speaking

about the community sponsorship scheme, Director of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Eibhlin Byrne, said "Ireland is really committed to bringing in refugees, but much more importantly to integrating them in Irish society and making them welcome and [a] part of society because we don't want refugees simply to be numbers that were brought to Ireland. We want them to become parts of our communities, our families, our friends and Community Sponsorship really helps that."

First sponsors in Germany's NesT sponsorship program ready to sponsor again



The volunteer group and sponsored refugees in Cologne-Merheim. Photo courtesy of the volunteers and refugees.

After welcoming the first sponsored refugees to Germany in 2019, the Cologne-based sponsor group linked to the local St. Gereon parish's New Neighbours Campaign has decided to sponsor another family. The initial family, sisters Shurook and Heba, have integrated into their new community and their inspirational story has resonated beyond the parish. The group and the sponsored newcomers' positive experience with sponsorship have inspired additional volunteers to join, including a Syrian family who had previously received assistance from the parish. The parish, supported by the New Neighbours Campaign, runs a weekly "Lotsenpunkt" pilot initiative to help refugees navigate administrative processes, language training, and finding employment. The local church has a guest apartment that will serve as temporary housing for the newcomer family while permanent housing is secured. The St. Gereon sponsor group's experience has

encouraged other groups across Germany to join the NesT program through how well it has demonstrated the positive impacts of sponsorship on both newcomers and their communities.

What is the GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of six organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, The Giustra Foundation, The Shapiro 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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Syrian family of four welcomed by Bermondsey volunteer group

Bermondsey Welcomes Refugees, a sponsor group in Bermondsey, England, has welcomed a family of four from Aleppo. The group was formed by Syrian-born engineer Alaa Khattab and draws together 24 members of eight national origins that include two ESOL-trained volunteers and six fluent Arabic speakers. Bermondsey Welcomes Refugees has been fundraising for two years, including organizing movie screenings, cake sales, an astronomy lecture, and a 3.5K mile bicycle ride to mark the length a Syrian refugee must travel to arrive in the UK. The Bermondsey group has secured rent for four months for the newcomer family and look forward to welcoming them to their new community.

Reset, the UK national community sponsorship support organization, releases results from their Community for Refugees campaign

The Communities for Refugees campaign was launched by Reset in October 2020 and ran until April 2021. This was the first coordinated attempt at sponsor recruitment in the UK. For the first time, charities across the refugee protection sector and faith organizations promoted community sponsorship to their networks using consistent branding and messaging. Reset aimed to get prospective sponsors to sign up to a mailing list, attend an introductory webinar, and speak to a member of the Reset team. Once a prospective sponsor

completed these steps, Reset connected them to a Lead Sponsor and began setting up a new community sponsorship group. The campaign resulted in the creation of 43 new community sponsorship groups across the UK.