

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

5-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER 9, 2021

On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the launch of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), we celebrate the incredible growth of community sponsorship worldwide and reconfirm the commitment to continue advancing the joint endeavor of establishing and scaling community sponsorship programs around the world.

At a time of increasing protection needs and social distancing, community sponsorship has reaffirmed its role as a critical tool to widen protection opportunities while at the same time foster welcome and integration at community level through the deep engagement of citizens welcoming new neighbors.

Programs have continued to expand, and the GRSI is actively engaged in nearly 20 countries currently implementing, designing, or exploring new programs across four continents. These include Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, and Brazil. The European Union has included community sponsorship as a core component of its future refugee protection policy.

This is more critical than ever with 1.4 million refugees assessed by UNHCR to be in urgent need of resettlement and millions more who are displaced and need to access innovative pathways to protection, employment, education and opportunities to reunite with family members. Community sponsorship has demonstrated its value in sustaining resettlement and complementary pathways.

The Afghanistan crisis has further confirmed the potential of community sponsorship to offer a flexible tool to respond to sudden needs and allow communities with deep ties with Afghanistan to offer tangible solidarity to those who are fleeing. Veterans, universities, local authorities, and NGOs across all sections of society are mobilizing in Canada, the United States, Oceania and Europe to offer protection and welcoming opportunities for Afghans.

Partners of the GRSI have reconfirmed the collective commitment to advancing their cooperation to sustain the scaling of community sponsorship for the benefit of the greatest number of refugees possible.

**Hon. Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration,
Refugees and Citizenship Canada**

“Five years ago, the Government of Canada set out with like-minded partners to strengthen refugee and migration protection around the world through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative. Despite the pandemic, I am proud of the ongoing work of the GRSI to support the development and implementation of community sponsorship programs around the globe, and the progress we have achieved collectively in helping those in need. I also want to thank Canadians for their enthusiasm in sponsoring refugees. While there is much more to be done, together, we are leading with compassion and doing our part to build a better tomorrow.”

**Gillian Triggs, UNHCR Assistant High
Commissioner for Protection**

“UNHCR appreciates the collective effort of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative in calling for resettlement to be brought within the reach of much greater numbers of refugees globally. The community sponsorship programs that are at the core of GRSI’s activities are one way of helping to grow resettlement to the levels it needs to reach. Together with communities around the world who are extending the hand of welcome to refugees, we can help sponsorship make a real contribution to more and better solutions for refugees in desperate need.”

**Gregory Maniatis, Director, Office of the Vice
President for Global Programs & Director,
International Migration Initiative, Open
Society Foundations**

“Sponsorship fundamentally transforms how we resettle refugees, and, equally, brings neighbors together around a common cause that reanimates community life. Canada has been incredibly generous in sharing this innovation in how to welcome and integrate newcomers. Our rare and remarkable partnership has joined the public and private sectors powerfully together to bring sponsorship to more than a dozen countries. Building on this success, we are now determined to ensure that the international resettlement system can support sponsorship at a much larger scale and also accommodate refugees seeking to use labor, educational, and other pathways.”

**Jacques Frémont President and Vice-
Chancellor, University of Ottawa,
Recteur et vice-chancelier, Université
d'Ottawa**

“The University of Ottawa is proud to be a partner in the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative. As we celebrate our 5th anniversary, I thank our partners and allies for the privilege of doing this work together. The University remains committed to working together to engage leaders from government, civil society, academia, and the private sector - as well as with sponsors and newcomers all over the world - and to our common goal of enabling more people to welcome refugees as new neighbors, just as so many of us in Canada have had the joy of doing for decades.”

Ed Shapiro, Managing Trustee, The Shapiro Foundation

“I first got involved in community sponsorship in Boston in 2016 when my family and friends sponsored eight Syrian families. That life-changing experience motivated me to find ways to learn more about Canada’s Private Sponsorship program and help bring that model to other countries. I couldn’t be prouder of the work GRSI is doing and the global momentum we now have for sponsorship. The new ‘Sponsor Circles’ program for arriving Afghans in the US is just the latest great example of how public compassion can be activated to welcome newcomers. I look forward to working with all of our partners to dramatically expand sponsorship across the globe over the next five years.”

Frank Giustra, Founder, The Giustra Foundation

“The urgency of this work became clear to me in 2015 while doing humanitarian work in Lesbos, Greece, at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis. Seeing the needs of refugee children there, and thinking about my own children, I knew we needed to be part of the solution. I’m proud of the progress we’ve made by sharing Canada’s refugee sponsorship model with the world. An increasing number of countries is taking up this life-changing model, empowering communities to offer safety and security to many refugees. Never before has this been more urgent. It’s a privilege to be a partner in this effort.”



About the GRSI

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative was founded in 2016 to increase and improve global refugee resettlement by engaging private citizens, communities, and businesses in resettlement efforts; strengthen local host communities that come together to welcome newcomers; and improve the narrative about refugees and other newcomers.

Partners are the Government of Canada, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Open Society Foundations, the Shapiro Foundation, the Giustra Foundation, as well as the University of Ottawa Refugee Hub, supported by the generous contributions of philanthropic entities including the Robert Bosch Stiftung.