

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

GRSI AT A GLANCE

Swiss workshop on community sponsorship

Last December, the UNHCR's Switzerland office held a one-day roundtable on community sponsorship of refugees. The meeting allowed representatives from various NGOs, several faith-based organizations and a think tank to explore how the concept of community sponsorship might be applied in Switzerland. The meeting was also attended by representatives of Swiss federal and cantonal government authorities.

The roundtable was held in Bern on December 11. It brought together nearly fifty representatives from a wide range of stakeholders, including the Swiss Red Cross, Amnesty International, Save the Children, Caritas, IOM, the Salvation Army, Benevol Schweiz, HEKS, Service Social International, and the Swiss Refugee Council. The program included an overview of resettlement and private sponsorship programs as well as focused presentations on the Canadian and UK sponsorship programs.

Two Canadian experts were invited to make presentations. Caroline Guimond (Migration Program Manager, Canadian Embassy, Paris) and Professor Sabine Lehr (Manager, Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, Inter-cultural Association of Greater Victoria) talked about the history of Canada's private sponsorship program and the different models currently in use in Canada, including the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program.

Switzerland's civil society is already active in the area of refugee integration. Discussion at the roundtable gave participants greater insight into how to manage the expectations of both refugees and the volunteers that support them.



The Swiss State Secretariat for Migration is organizing a conference on volunteer work in the spring. This meeting will give interested actors the chance to advance the conceptual and advocacy work needed to design a community-based refugee sponsorship program in Switzerland.

What is GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of five organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Radcliffe 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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The refugee crisis can be addressed if we act as global citizens, in collaboration with governments, the private sector and the philanthropic community.

- Frank Giustra, Founder and President of the Radcliffe Foundation

Students helping students through unique settlement programs

Here is an excerpt from an **interview** with **Michelle Manks, Senior Manager, Campus Engagement & Student Refugee Program, World University Service of Canada (WUSC)**. The full interview can be found in the **Case Studies** section of the **GRSI Guidebook**.



How is WUSC's sponsorship program structured?

WUSC is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) and WUSC student groups known as "Local Committees" act as the organization's Constituent Groups. Each group must have a minimum of five committed volunteers to be approved for sponsorship.

How are students involved in sponsoring refugees?

Student groups act as the official sponsors in our model of refugee sponsorship, and are responsible for all aspects of the sponsorship, from securing the necessary funding to providing the social and integration support to the incoming refugee student each year.

What is unique about your program?

There are several aspects that are unique:

- It is the only program in the world that combines resettlement with post-secondary education;
- It is the only youth-to-youth, peer-support resettlement program, and engages post-secondary institutions and alumni of the program in refugee sponsorship;
- We offer a minimum of 12 months of pre-departure training to the refugee youth who have been selected for the program, including advanced language classes (and the TOEFL/IELTS test), in depth cultural orientations and introductions to the Canadian academic system;

- In Canada, youth-led sponsoring groups are heavily involved in public engagement campaigns that aim to foster greater understanding and generate public support for refugee sponsorship; and
- Pre-established part-time employment opportunities are offered on campus as part of the sponsorship.

What is the best part of your sponsorship experience?

The personal connections and friendships, the learning opportunities provided, working with youth (both those in Canada and the refugee youth) and within a network of individuals who are passionate about creating equal opportunities and welcoming communities, the incredible and inspiring individuals sponsored through the program.

Community Sponsorship Around the World



- [New Zealand: Community groups selected for sponsored refugees scheme](#) 🖱
- [Meet the people trying to bring Syrian refugees to their street in 2018](#) 🖱
- [Ottawa Centre Refugee Action welcomes 12 refugee families to Canada](#) 🖱
- [Syrian refugees get a warm welcome to Bedeque, P.E.I.](#) 🖱
- [Hantsport, Nova Scotia, residents raising funds to sponsor refugee family](#) 🖱
- [Residents of small B.C. town help Syrian refugee realize artistic dreams](#) 🖱

Learn More

- [A Report on the Settlement Experiences of Kosovar Refugees in Ontario](#) 🖱
- [Overview of Sponsorship Responsibilities \(Refugee Sponsorship Training Program\)](#) 🖱