

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

How an online connection gave one refugee family a head start on a new life



© CBC/Ash Abraham

Akyla Al Fares Taha, her husband, and their five children fled Syria in 2012, staying in a refugee camp in Lebanon for almost a decade. While awaiting refugee sponsorship to Canada, Akyla's husband was suddenly killed in 2020.

After hearing about the tragedy, Ottawa teacher Lindsay Barr organized a series of pen pal exchanges over Zoom between her elementary school students and two of Akyla's children: Hussein Al Taha, then aged 13, and Mohammed Al Taha, then aged 12. Over the following year, the Canadian schoolchildren sent videos and messages to the family abroad.

While the children were communicating back and forth, Lindsay Barr reached out to faith-based groups for more help. In 2018, the Grace United Church in Chelsea, Quebec, began the sponsorship process for the family and raised \$30,000, while arranging the family's safe travel to Canada.

Several faith groups, including the Grace United Church, Temple Israel, and the Mosque of Mercy, came together to set up an apartment

for the Al Taha family. Upon their arrival, the children met one another and were greeted with warm welcomes and high fives. The faith groups indicated that they are looking forward to continuing their efforts, including in bringing in families from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Are you a policymaker or civil society leader designing a refugee sponsorship program?

Download the GRSI's policy design workbook.

Timaru's new refugee family "settling in well," another family expected to arrive soon



@ Timaru Herald / Maddison Gourlay

In Timaru, New Zealand, the Presbyterian Support South Canterbury Refugee Settlement group has been sponsoring refugee families since 2020. For each family, the sponsorship group and the community put in hard work "to make the house a home", which includes adding toys and decorations for each family's children, based on their age and gender.

The latest refugee family were so grateful for the group's help that they landed at the Timaru Airport with flowers in hand to thank them.

Presbyterian Support South Canterbury Refugee Settlement is expecting to help resettle 110

refugees this year, who are scheduled to arrive in Timaru every six to seven weeks.

The inspirational Syrian restaurant in Urmston with bargain prices and a big heart



© Manchester Evening News

Pictured here is business owner Samir Hamwyeh and his wife Fadya, who cook in their restaurant located in Urmston, located in the greater Manchester area in the United Kingdom. Originally from Homs, Syria, Samir and his family escaped to Lebanon in 2012 when tensions rose across Syria. Samir was briefly imprisoned in Lebanon for not having identification papers, and their family lived in poverty during their time in the country.

With the help of a United Nations initiative, they found themselves with an opportunity to start a new life in England. The family came to Manchester in 2016 and was sponsored by the St. Monica's Roman Catholic Church, who were supported by the Catholic organization Caritas. They aided Samir and his family by finding housing, furnishing the house, and creating an expansive support network.

Despite the rising costs of materials and inflation, Samir is committed to keeping his restaurant prices modest and giving back to his community.

Afghan refugees being welcomed by a Sponsor Circle

In Alexandria, a city in Minnesota, United States (U.S.), the Lakes Area Sponsor Circle is preparing for the arrival of four Afghan refugees. Comprising two brothers and two cousins, the

four young men were forced to flee Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover last year for aiding the U.S. military.



@ Echo Press/Karen Tolkkinen

Sarah Richter and her seven friends are sponsoring the group through the Lakes Area Sponsor Circle. With generous donations from the Alexandria community, Richter's sponsorship group has secured a furnished apartment among other necessities. They are in search of one more apartment to fully prepare for the arrival of the refugees.

The Alexandria community and Lakes Area Sponsor Circle are committed to providing guidance and helping the men become capable of supporting themselves.

Check out the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative on Twitter!

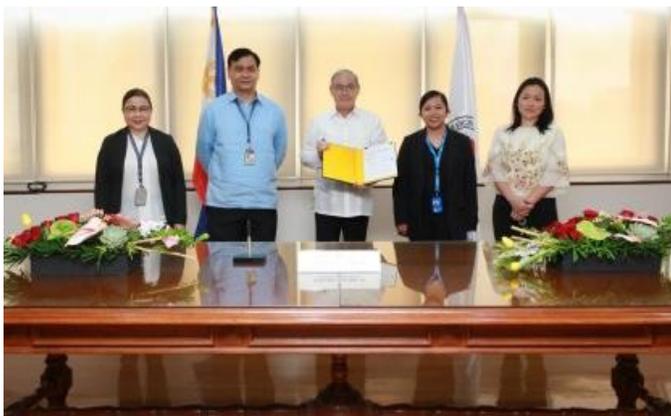
Follow @theGRSI on Twitter for more updates on #communitysponsorship

DFA inks framework to allow Rohingya refugees to study in PH

In the Philippines, the Department of Foreign Affairs recently announced a new legal framework to allow Rohingya refugees to enter and study in the country.

The framework would greenlight the Complementary Pathways (CPath) program, which permits refugees to gain a tertiary education in the Philippines.

The program would link government agencies and private institutions to eligible refugee students, providing an education pathway and access to future opportunities.



@ PNA/ Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

As the world's first program to be created exclusively for Rohingya refugees, CPath is a milestone in the Philippines's long tradition of humanitarian assistance. Initially pledged by the Philippines at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, it is set to launch before the end of 2022.

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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