



A STUDY ON THE POTENTIAL FOR INTRODUCING A COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM FOR REFUGEES IN SWEDEN

Scoping report prepared for UNHCR's
Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries



This is an independent report commissioned by UNHCR's Representation for the Nordic and Baltic Countries. The report is based on research undertaken August–October 2019, comprising a desk study of available literature on community sponsorship and refugee integration in Sweden, 23 interviews with Swedish and international contacts from government and civil society, and an informal workshop with Swedish civil society representatives hosted by UNHCR in Stockholm.

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Abbreviations

ATCR	Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
BVOR	Blended Visa Office Referred
CSI	Community Sponsorship Ireland
CSS	Community Sponsorship Scheme
FLSS	Federal Länder Sponsorship Scheme
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GRSI	Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative
JAS	Joint Assistance Sponsorship
MUCF	Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor
NesT	Neustart im Team
PES	Public Employment Service
PSR	Private Sponsorship of Refugees
SMA	Swedish Migration Agency
VPRS	Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme
ZKS	Zivilgesellschaftliche Kontaktstelle

1.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Swedish civil society actors and policymakers on the potential of community sponsorship. The report aims to:

- Provide an overview of existing international (particularly European) practice of community sponsorship, including the range of models in place;
- Outline challenges and opportunities relating to community sponsorship in the Swedish context, based on interviews with key actors in the field; and
- Highlight opportunities for the development of a Swedish community sponsorship model, including design principles, the role of key actors and a suggested road map for future work.

The report identifies a number of opportunities for community sponsorship in Sweden, including the need for improved integration among resettled refugees; momentum for more concerted community involvement in refugee integration since the 2015 influx; the possibility of developing a community sponsorship scheme within the existing legal framework; and strong interest among some municipalities in improving integration outcomes. There are also a number of challenges identified, notably the relatively under-developed role of civil society in integration; concerns that community sponsorship does not accord with Swedish values of non-discrimination and access to the welfare state; and the current political climate, including the risk that expanded resettlement will come at the expense of the right to seek asylum in Sweden.

The report finds that there is potential for a Swedish community sponsorship model and some interest in the development of such a programme among some civil society actors and municipalities. The report suggests that a small-scale pilot project is feasible in the short-term, contingent on the commitment of key actors. Against this backdrop, the report suggests two steps for the development of community sponsorship in Sweden, which may be undertaken in parallel:

- Expansion of community engagement in the integration of resettled refugees to improve integration outcomes within Sweden's existing quota (without formal responsibilities or financial obligations) to further involve civil society actors in integration work;
- The piloting of a small-scale community sponsorship scheme involving one or two municipalities, either additional to the existing resettlement quota or within the quota with a view to additionality over time (additionality in principle).

The report proceeds in five sections. First, the report provides a state-of-the-art overview of the practice of community sponsorship internationally. Second, the potential benefits of community sponsorship are set out and critically analysed. Third, challenges and opportunities in the Swedish context are examined. Fourth, key design and operational elements are applied to the Swedish context, responding to identified challenges. Finally, the report concludes with main findings and suggests steps toward the development of a community sponsorship pilot.

2.

Introduction

Current global forced displacement remains at unprecedented levels. With opportunities for voluntary repatriation and local integration of refugees in the current global landscape increasingly limited, resettlement is becoming an even more important tool for protection and for finding solutions for some of the world's most vulnerable refugees. At the same time, plummeting resettlement numbers internationally have driven a search for innovative solutions for expanding protection to refugees. The spontaneous arrival of more than one million asylum seekers to Europe in 2015 saw a surge of volunteer-based civil society groups helping asylum seekers and refugees. Community sponsorship of refugees is emerging as part of the solution to the crisis of refugee protection, offering an innovative tool to improve integration and, ultimately, expand protection.

Sweden was among the main destination countries in the 2015 influx, with almost 163,000 asylum seekers arriving in that year alone.¹ Swedish civil society groups stepped in to support an overwhelmed state system, becoming key actors in both the reception of spontaneously arriving asylum seekers and the provision of initial integration assistance.² Civil society organisations thus played a crucial bridging role, complementing the state's role during the crisis.³

This report assesses the possibility of developing a community sponsorship programme in Sweden. Community sponsorship originated in Canada 40

years ago and has led to the resettlement of more than 327,000 refugees in that country. There is currently significant international interest in the development of new community sponsorship schemes. In recent years, community sponsorship programmes have been piloted or permanently established in countries including Argentina, Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom.

2.1 Defining community sponsorship

There is no settled definition of community sponsorship, but the essence of the concept is shared responsibility between civil society and the state for the integration of refugees.⁴ The term describes 'programmes where individuals or groups of individuals come together to provide financial, emotional and practical support toward reception and integration.'⁵ Community sponsorship involves the following elements:

- The planned arrival of refugees;
- A safe and legal pathway to protection, ideally in addition to resettlement;
- Shared responsibility for financial and social support between government, civil society and individuals for a defined period; and
- Government authorities retain ultimate responsibility for refugee integration.⁶

¹ European Migration Network, Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2016: Sweden (2017); Sayaka Osanami Törngren, Klara Öberg and Erica Righard, 'The role of civil society in the integration of newly arrived refugees in Sweden', *Newcomer Integration in Europe: Best Practices and Innovations Since 2015* (FEPS 2018) 13.

² *Ibid* 17; Michael Williams, 'Civil Society Organisations in large influx situations: the Swedish experience 2015-16'.

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes as a possible pathway to safe channels for admission to the EU, including resettlement' (2018) 37; European Resettlement Network, *Private Sponsorship Feasibility Study - Towards a Private Sponsorship Model in France* (2018) 6.

⁵ UNHCR, 'Complementary Pathways for Admission of Refugees to Third Countries: Key considerations' (April 2019) available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5cebf3fc4.html> accessed 9 October 2019 8.

⁶ European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship' 4; and Susan Fratzke, *Engaging communities in refugee protection*, (Migration Policy Institute 2017) 1.

Both the terms ‘community sponsorship’ and ‘private sponsorship’ are used to describe essentially similar programmes.⁷ The Canadian approach is often referred to as ‘private sponsorship’, while the term ‘community sponsorship’ is usually used in other countries. While these programmes have evolved at country level with different features, these terms do not reflect specific differences between the various models. For the purposes of this study, the term ‘community sponsorship’ is used to signal a focus on broader societal engagement (beyond the private sector or a focus on labour migration) and to prevent misconceptions of privatising otherwise public programmes.

Community sponsorship is related to, but distinct from, resettlement. Resettlement is one of the three internationally recognised durable solutions for meeting the plight of refugees, involving the transfer of a refugee from a host country to a resettlement country where they receive permanent protection.⁸ There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to community sponsorship. The challenge is fitting a model to the specific national context, drawing on lessons learned from other countries.

Setting aside the Canadian approach, most community sponsorship programmes have evolved relatively recently in response to the Syria situation, the New York Declaration and the Global Compact on Refugees. State practice is developing in two directions which UNHCR defines in the following ways:

1. Sponsorship as a tool for post arrival reception and integration support for UNHCR-referred resettled refugees who are matched to a community. A short-hand way of describing this model is ‘sponsored resettlement’.
2. Sponsorship as a pathway that allow communities to sponsor and support the entry and stay of nominated (‘named’) individuals, not referred

by UNHCR but selected by individuals or organisations. UNHCR considers this model of community sponsorship programme a complementary pathway.⁹

The model put forward in this report for development in Sweden is focused on the former concept of ‘sponsored resettlement’. The added value of community sponsorship to integration may be summarised as follows:

- A dedicated group of individuals supporting integration from the moment of arrival;
- Social capital that community actors bring that government authorities alone may not be able to provide, such as additional knowledge about housing, job opportunities and social connections;¹⁰
- Mobilizing additional resources by engaging citizens to undertake resettlement and integration in a more (cost) effective way; and
- Increased public support for refugees and improved social cohesion, through engaged and committed sponsors contributing to positive public discourse on refugees.¹¹

⁷ For example, the Global Compact on Refugees refers to ‘private or community sponsorship programmes’ (para 95).

⁸ UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook* (2011) 3.

⁹ OECD-UNHCR Study on third country solutions for refugees (2018); UNHCR, *The Three-Year (2019-2021) Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways* 7.

¹⁰ Social capital may be defined as ‘the material and non-tangible benefits of network connections... those social ties (connections, contacts), which are mobilisable in pursuing social advantage’. Brigitte Suter and Karin Magnusson, ‘Before and after: New perspectives on resettled refugees’ integration process’ in Brigitte Suter and Karin Magnusson (eds), *Resettled and Connected: Social Networks in the Integration Process of Resettled Refugees* (Malmö University 2015) 70.

¹¹ European Commission, ‘Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes’ 52.

2.2 Current momentum of community sponsorship

Since 2015, there has been significant interest in community sponsorship in Europe, with a number of pilot and permanent programmes implemented.¹² In 2016, the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) was created with a mandate to 'encourage and support the adoption and expansion of refugee sponsorship programs around the world.'¹³ In July 2018, immigration ministers from Argentina, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Spain issued a Joint Statement committing to piloting or implementing community sponsorship as a means to share responsibility for the global refugee crisis, improve integration outcomes and find innovative solutions to refugee protection.¹⁴

In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Compact on Refugees. One of the Compact's four objectives is expanded access to 'third country solutions' through resettlement and complementary pathways including community sponsorship.¹⁵ In June 2019, as envisaged in the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR released its Three-Year Strategy (2019-2021) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, which builds momentum for the development of complementary pathways globally, including community sponsorship schemes.

In December 2019, the first Global Refugee Forum, a high-level meeting of governments, international financial organizations, private sector, development actors, refugees, and civil society representatives secured more than 800 wide-ranging and substantial commitments of support for refugees and the communities they live in, in areas from employment, to places in schools for refugee children, resettlement, clean energy and infrastructure. Moreover, Belgium, Brazil, Malta and Portugal pledged to explore pilot community sponsorship models.¹⁶ Sweden is a robust supporter of the Global Compact on Refugees and has increased its resettlement quota from 3400 to 5000 since 2017.¹⁷ Sweden is also the co-chair of a new inter-state forum on resettlement, the Priority Situation Core Group, along with Ireland. However, there are currently no concrete proposals for the establishment of a community sponsorship scheme in Sweden and this is the first detailed study on the potential of such a model.¹⁸

Finally, there is currently interest and support at EU level for the development of new community sponsorship schemes, including a European Commission feasibility study¹⁹ and a current Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Action Grant for funding of projects fostering the integration of persons in need of protection through community sponsorship schemes.²⁰

¹² Peter Hueck, 'Community based sponsorship programmes in Europe: what next?' European Insights, August 2019 available at <https://bit.ly/2UQEKjt> accessed 1 October 2019; 'How effective are existing complementary pathways for meeting protection needs?' European Insights, August 2019 available at <https://bit.ly/3d7cb7F> accessed 1 October 2019.

¹³ See <http://refugeesponsorship.org>. The 2016 New York Declaration and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) also call for the expansion of resettlement and other alternative avenues to asylum for refugees.

¹⁴ Joint Statement – Ministers from Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Argentina, Spain and New Zealand underline their support for community-based refugee sponsorship, 16 July 2018, available at http://refugeesponsorship.org/_uploads/5b4ca01e5c883.pdf accessed 30 October 2019.

¹⁵ Global Compact on Refugees para 7. Complementary pathways identified in the Compact are family reunification pathways, private refugee sponsorship, humanitarian visas and labour and educational opportunities for refugees.

¹⁶ See <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/channel/pledges-contributions> accessed 8 April 2020.

¹⁷ Swedish Migration Agency, 'Sweden's Resettlement Program – 2018' available at <https://bit.ly/2N4wXdK> accessed 30 September 2019.

¹⁸ For a general discussion on using the Canadian sponsorship model as inspiration for Scandinavia, see Trygve Ugland, *Canada Can – Can we? Sponsoring Integration of Refugees the Canadian Way* (FORES 2018).

¹⁹ European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes'.

²⁰ AMIF Action Grant, 'Fostering the integration of persons in need of protection through private sponsorship schemes' available at <https://bit.ly/3ejURhr> (closes 30 January 2020) accessed 30 October 2019. See also SHARE, *Fostering Community Sponsorship across Europe* (2019).

3.

Community Sponsorship: International Practice

In recent years, community sponsorship models have been piloted and established in a number of states. The following provides an overview of current practice, with a focus on community sponsorship in Europe. This selected overview shows the range of objectives (family reunification, international protection, labour migration) and modalities across community sponsorship models.²¹

3.1 Community sponsorship in Europe

Within Europe, Germany's Federal Länder Sponsorship Scheme (FLSS), in place between 2013 and 2018, was a *family reunification* programme focused on Syrians that admitted 23,500 refugees. The scheme has been criticised for placing onerous requirements on sponsors, with sponsorship lasting up to five years,²² and restricting the rights of sponsored refugees.

Between 2015 and 2018, Portugal implemented a temporary community sponsorship scheme to assist in meeting its *relocation* targets.²³ More than 1500 people were admitted under the model, with sponsors taking on responsibilities for 18 months in relation to accommodation and other support services. Sponsors were community organisations matched with refugees by the state.²⁴ At the Global Refugee Forum, the Portuguese government pledged

to explore the establishment of a new pilot 'inspired by the Canadian experience and the movement of other countries that adopted it, namely in Europe'.²⁵

In 2016, the Humanitarian Corridors project began in Italy as a response to the tragic death toll in the central Mediterranean. Humanitarian Corridors involves the selection of individuals in countries of first asylum for entry into Italy, France (from 2016) and Belgium (from 2017). Beneficiaries are granted an entry visa, apply for asylum upon arrival and are provided reception and integration support by faith-based organisations, who bear all costs related to integration. Humanitarian Corridors is thus both a legal pathway to protection and a form of sponsorship to improve integration. Since its inception, Humanitarian Corridors has sponsored around 3000 people.²⁶

Also in 2016, the United Kingdom's Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) was launched as a strand of the country's resettlement quota. The Programme's initial focus was on *improving integration*, with refugees referred by UNHCR for resettlement. Sponsors must be registered charities and provide financial and social support for one year and housing for two years.²⁷ Initially, the CSS resettled refugees within the UK's quota, meaning the CSS lacked additionality, but the scheme will be additional from 2020. A recent evaluation found the

²¹ This section draws on an internal report produced by this author for Amnesty International Denmark in April 2019.

²² European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes' 130.

²³ The intra-EU relocation scheme in place between 2015 and 2017 transferred likely refugees from Greece and Italy to other member states. Around 34,323 people were successfully relocated under the scheme.

²⁴ European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes' 28.

²⁵ See <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/channel/pledges-contributions> accessed 8 April 2020.

²⁶ Michael Collyer, Maria Mancinelli and Fabio Petito, *Humanitarian corridors: safe and legal pathways to Europe* (University of Sussex Policy Briefing, 2017); UNHCR, 'Life-saving programme offers safe path to Italy for refugees', 18 September 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/2zG3bca> accessed 1 November 2019.

²⁷ *Ibid* 60.



scheme was functioning well, despite some initial challenges (see UK CSS profile, below).²⁸

In March 2019, Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) was launched. The scheme is focused on *providing international protection* and supports refugees identified by UNHCR for resettlement within the quota of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, but the government has committed to additionality in the medium to long-term. The CSI aims to resettle 50 refugees during the initial development phase. During this period, infrastructure will be developed to allow for the programme to be scaled up for the full implementation phase. Sponsors provide social and financial support (around 110,000 SEK per refugee) for 18 months and housing for two years.²⁹

In the first half of 2019, the Basque region piloted a small community sponsorship project within Spain's National Resettlement Program. The Basque

regional government bears all financial costs, with sponsor groups formed and supported by the Ellacuria Foundation and Caritas providing houses and operational support. The pilot has sponsored five Syrian families (29 people) referred for resettlement by UNHCR, with sponsor groups providing social support.³⁰ At the first Global Refugee Forum, Spain pledged to expand the programme to 500 sponsored refugees in the Basque region and other Autonomous Communities by 2022.³¹

Most recently, the German Neustart im Team (NesT) programme, launched in May 2019, is additional to the state's resettlement program and was designed jointly by UNHCR, civil society and the government to *improve integration and expand protection*. The pilot aims to sponsor 500 refugees. Sponsors are responsible for providing integration support for one year and housing for two years (see NesT profile, below).

PROFILE:

Germany's NesT model

In February 2018, the German interior ministry announced a community sponsorship programme to coincide with Germany's role as co-chair of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR). In order to develop a programme suitable for the German context, several NGOs and foundations were consulted throughout. In developing the model, the German interior ministry received further support from their UK counterparts, the Canadian government and the GRSI.

The NesT programme was launched in May 2019 with the first sponsored refugees arriving in October 2019. The model aims to build on lessons learned from the FLSS, which was focused on family reunification. The objectives of the NesT programme are to create better integration outcomes and expand protection through increased resettlement places. These objectives reflect a desire to provide protection to a more diverse group of refugees and to support refugees lacking existing connections in Germany.

The NesT programme is administered by the Ministry for Interior and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, with the latter responsible for selection. A civil society contact point (ZKS) was established through private funding, made up of staff from Caritas Germany, the German Red Cross and the Protestant Church.

The ZKS screens sponsor applications, provides basic training for prospective sponsors and supports sponsors in the first months of sponsorship. Moreover, the ZKS is a first port of call in the case of relationship breakdown between sponsors and refugees. In the case of relationship breakdown, ZKS attempts to match refugees with new sponsors.

Sponsored refugees are *additional* to Germany's resettlement and humanitarian admission quota, which is 9700 people in 2019. The NesT programme aims to sponsor 400 refugees annually but is currently in an open-ended pilot phase. Refugees are selected from UNHCR resettlement referrals and are granted refugee status before admission.

Sponsors (referred to as mentors) are groups of five or more individuals responsible for providing integration support for one year and covering accommodation costs for two years. This financial responsibility is tied to the social housing rate and paid into a secure account before the sponsorship period begins. Mentors can indicate their capacity to support an individual or family, but not select refugees based on other criteria. Currently, around 30 groups are applying or approved to act as mentors.

PROFILE:

The United Kingdom's CSS

In July 2016, the UK home minister announced an expansion of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) to 20,000 refugees and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) which aims to resettle 3000 vulnerable children by 2020. This expansion included the introduction of a community sponsorship initiative. The CSS was developed by the Home Office, in consultation with UNHCR and a range of civil society organisations.

In 2018, the Home Office and philanthropic bodies funded the creation of a civil society organisation, Reset Communities and Refugees (Reset), to support the CSS. Reset promotes the CSS, trains sponsors and acts as a conduit between sponsors and the Home Office.

The CSS was initially undertaken within the UK's resettlement target, however, in June 2019 the Home Office announced a new resettlement scheme with all refugees supported through community sponsorship to be additional to the government quota from 2020.

Refugees under the CSS are referred for resettlement via UNHCR and receive refugee status before arriving in the UK.

Sponsors are volunteers auspiced by registered charities in the UK and must raise £9000 (110,000 SEK), provide social support for one year and identify sustainable accommodation that refugees can rent for a period of two years. Sponsors must also gain the consent of the municipality of residence.

Approximately 400 refugees have arrived in the UK through the CSS and around 200 groups have sponsored refugees or are in the process of being approved as sponsors.

A recent evaluation of the CSS found the programme is functioning well, with sponsors and refugees benefitting from the scheme, noting frustrations among both sponsors and refugees in relation to challenges around gaining work in the first year of integration.



3.2 Community sponsorship outside Europe

Outside Europe, community sponsorship is best known through Canada's longstanding model. Originally conceived as a civil society-led response to the Indochinese refugee crisis in 1979, community sponsorship in Canada has since evolved into three distinct streams:

- Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) programme: whereby accredited sponsors finance the first year of integration of refugees. A significant proportion of refugees under the PSR are family members of sponsors.³² The programme allows sponsors to 'name' the persons they would like to sponsor, who thereafter must prove that they are entitled to receive refugee status in Canada. The PSR is additional to the state's resettlement quota.
- Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) programme: launched in 2013, the BVOR matches sponsors with refugees referred for resettlement by UNHCR. Sponsors and the state share the financial costs of integration for one year on a roughly 50-50 basis. The BVOR is part of the state's resettlement quota.³³
- Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) programme: rarely used, JAS involves resettlement with financial costs borne by the state. Sponsors support refugees that are categorized as being especially vulnerable with emotional and social support. The JAS is part of the state's resettlement quota.

Following a pilot in place since 2013, Australia's Community Support Programme was established in 2017. The Programme provides for 1000 sponsored refugees per year within Australia's resettlement quota. The scheme supports refugees who are 'job-ready' with 'functional English' and is more focused on *labour migration* than protection. The scheme is administered by 11 Approved Proposing

Organisations, who manage sponsoring groups and individuals. The cost of the Australian scheme is very high, with sponsors paying around \$AUD 55,000 (365,000 SEK) for one refugee to cover costs related to visas, administration and integration.³⁴

Established in 2014, Argentina's Syria Programme places individuals as sponsors of Syrian refugees coming to the country. Sponsors are responsible for the reception and integration of refugees for 12 months, or less if they can attain self-sufficiency before. Refugees are granted a renewable two-year humanitarian visa, and after spending three years in Argentina can access permanent residence. Since 2014, 412 Syrians have arrived in Argentina through this programme.

In 2018, New Zealand's Community Sponsorship of Refugees model was piloted with six families (23 people) sponsored, additional to New Zealand's annual resettlement quota of 1000 refugees. In 2019, the quota was increased to 1500 refugees. Currently, the New Zealand government is considering the establishment of a permanent community sponsorship scheme, over and above the state quota. Refugees are either nominated by a community organisation or referred by UNHCR, and all must be UNHCR-mandated refugees. To be eligible, refugees must meet English language requirements and are also required to have three years' work experience or a qualification that required two years of tertiary study. There is thus a certain level of selectivity inherent to the model. Sponsors are responsible for supporting the refugees in New Zealand for up to two years, including both financial and integration support.³⁵

In sum, there is an emerging base of international practice on community sponsorship of refugees, both in Europe and globally. Pilot or permanent schemes in Argentina, Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom provide important lessons learned for future work on community sponsorship in Sweden.

³² European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes' 37.

³³ Fratzke, *Engaging communities in refugee protection* 5; and Jennifer Hyndman, William Payne and Shauna Jimenez, 'Private refugee sponsorship in Canada' (2017) 54 *Forced Migration Review* 56, 56-59.

³⁴ Khanh Hoang, 'Human rights: Private sponsorship of refugees and humanitarian entrants: Risks and rewards for Australia' (2017) *LSJ: Law Society of NSW Journal* 74; Asher Lazarus Hirsch, Khanh Hoang and Anthea Vogl, 'Australia's Private Refugee Sponsorship Program: Creating Complementary Pathways Or Privatising Humanitarianism?' (2019) 35 *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 109, 116.

³⁵ New Zealand Government, *Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category Pilot Process evaluation* (May 2019) available at <https://bit.ly/3hyyJBO> accessed 9 October 2019.

4.

The Potential Benefits of Community Sponsorship

The following addresses four commonly cited benefits of community sponsorship, briefly exploring the evidence base for each.

4.1 Improved integration

Community sponsorship is assumed to provide better integration for refugees than traditional, government-run programmes. There is widespread agreement in the literature that community sponsorship models positively influence refugees' integration, although most of the analysis emerges from Canada.³⁶ Studies show that "sponsored" refugees are faster than quota refugees in respect of gaining employment and language acquisition.³⁷ Existing, scant findings from Europe suggest that sponsored refugees learn the local language faster than quota refugees, due to increased contact with the community.³⁸

In the Swedish context, research indicates that resettled refugees generally face greater integration challenges than refugees who seek asylum spontaneously or migrants who arrive through the family reunification pathway.³⁹ Research and interviews undertaken for this study suggest that spontaneous arrivals and family reunified

migrants possess a higher level of financial means and social capital than resettled refugees.⁴⁰ As a result, spontaneous arrivals have markedly better employment integration than resettled refugees in Sweden.⁴¹ However, research also suggests that resettled refugees 'catch up' after around 15 years in the country, with an employment rate of around 70 per cent.⁴²

In sum, there is some evidence that community sponsorship results in improved integration for refugees. Community sponsorship has the advantage of offering a dedicated group of sponsors rather than a single integration worker whose resources are likely to be stretched across many refugees. While this evidence base is far from definitive,⁴³ it suggests that sponsored refugees receive enhanced access to employment, language skills and social capital through immediate contact with a dedicated group of welcoming individuals.⁴⁴

³⁶ Giacomo Solano and Valentina Savazzi, *Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework for integration?* (RESOMA discussion brief 2019) 6. See for example, Kaida, Lisa, Feng Hou, and Max Stick. "The long-term economic integration of resettled refugees in Canada: a comparison of Privately Sponsored Refugees and Government-Assisted Refugees." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2019): 1-22.

³⁷ Solano and Savazzi, *Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework for integration?* 7; European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes' 37; Fratzke, *Engaging communities in refugee protection* 5.

³⁸ Solano and Savazzi, *Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework for integration?* 8

³⁹ Pieter Bevelander, 'Resettled Refugees in Sweden: a statistical overview' in Brigitte Suter and Karen Magnussen (eds), *Resettled and Connected? Social Networks in the Integration Process of Resettled Refugees* (Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare, Malmö University 2015).

⁴⁰ Pieter Bevelander, 'Integrating refugees into labor markets' (2016) IZA World of Labor 7.

⁴¹ Pieter Bevelander, 'The employment integration of resettled refugees, asylum claimants, and family reunion migrants in Sweden' (2011) 30 *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 22, 34.

⁴² *Ibid* 35.

⁴³ Solano and Savazzi, *Private Sponsorship Programmes and humanitarian visas: a viable policy framework for integration?* 8.

⁴⁴ SHARE, *Fostering Community Sponsorship across Europe* (2019) 35.



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4.2 Expanded protection

Ideally, community sponsorship is additional to the resettlement quota, thereby expanding protection through increased resettlement places and providing durable solutions to refugees where none would otherwise exist. Canada's PSR and BVOR streams resettle twice as many refugees as the government's standalone quota, while the NesT programme in Germany, the UK's CSS and Humanitarian Corridors are all additional to their respective governments' resettlement quota. Other models currently take place within state quotas, such as Ireland's and Spain's pilot in the Basque region. While these programmes are relatively new, and their numbers fairly small, they demonstrate that European community sponsorship models can expand protection.

4.3 Financial savings for the state

Community sponsorship generally involves groups of individuals assuming also financial responsibility for some aspects of refugees' integration, alongside practical assistance in settling into the new society. Importantly, no interviews conducted for this study ruled out the willingness of community groups and individuals making a financial contribution to the integration of sponsored refugees.

Such financial contributions offer *short-term* savings for the state that may be useful for advocating for the piloting of a community sponsorship programme. However, sponsors' financial obligations should not be unreasonable. In the Swedish context, it is clearly unreasonable for sponsors to take on the entire cost of integration, so financial responsibility must be shared between the state, municipality and sponsors. More realistically, sponsors would assume financial responsibility for particular elements of integration, such as housing (see section 5 below).



Of course, community sponsorship aims to produce better integration outcomes, thus saving the state money in the *longer term*. If it works well, community sponsorship can increase refugees' access to the labour market, thus avoiding social welfare dependency down the line. As discussed above, however, there is currently no definitive evidence confirming that sponsored refugees are less of a financial burden on the state in all cases.

4.4 Increased public support for refugees and improved social cohesion

Finally, community sponsorship can contribute to building welcoming societies by increasing public support for refugees. In addition, community sponsorship can strengthen social cohesion in communities integrating refugees.⁴⁵ Evidence of

these broader positive effects are most clear from the Canadian experience. A 2018 survey found that 62% of Canadians believed that the country should continue to accept the same number or more refugees as in 2015, following several years of heightened resettlement of Syrians. Since 2015, alone, more than two million Canadians have sponsored refugees and seven million people know someone who has sponsored.⁴⁶

In less-established models, clear evidence of increased public support and social cohesion is not yet available. However, a recent evaluation of the United Kingdom scheme reported a 'kin-like' relationship between sponsors and refugees, with positive effects rippling across local communities.⁴⁷ In New Zealand, more than 10,000 people petitioned in support of a permanent community sponsorship programme, following a small pilot that sponsored 23 refugees.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ For guidance on supporting social cohesion in the context of community sponsorship, see SHARE, *Fostering Community Sponsorship across Europe* (2019) 28-35.

⁴⁶ Bond and Kwadrans, 'Resettling Refugees through Community Sponsorship: A Revolutionary Operational Approach Built on Traditional Legal Infrastructure' 87.

⁴⁷ Phillimore and Reyes, 'Community Sponsorship in the UK: from application to integration' formative evaluation 24-25.

⁴⁸ Amnesty International New Zealand, *Community sponsorship of refugees: New Zealand's pilot programme and its potential* (2019).

5.

The Swedish Context: Challenges and Opportunities

Interviews with Swedish civil society and government actors revealed both challenges and opportunities in considering the potential of community sponsorship. The following provides an overview of these factors to inform future considerations on developing a model for community sponsorship programs in the Swedish context. Key challenges identified include state-centred conceptions of integration, the Swedish welfare system, principles of non-discrimination and the relationship between expanding legal pathways at the expense of the right to seek asylum. A number of key opportunities were also identified, notably the need for improved integration of resettled refugees, political interest in legal pathways, increased civil society role in refugee assistance (especially since 2015), and international momentum around community sponsorship, including at EU level.

5.1 Challenges

The belief that integration policy is the sole responsibility of the state

The primary identified challenge is the deeply-held expectation that integration is squarely the responsibility of government authorities. While there is to some extent civil society involvement in the reception and integration of refugees in Sweden, particularly since the 2015 influx, there remains a widespread belief among civil society actors that integration is a core governmental function. As a result, there are concerns about the potential responsibility shifting or even privatisation of integration if civil society steps into a role traditionally filled by the state.

The role of civil society in refugee assistance was, until 2015, generally limited to 'complementary' support services, such as sports clubs and cultural activities. In 2015, of course, civil society organisations played a vital role in bridging the gap in public services during the influx of asylum seekers. This acute role providing core reception and integration support may have opened up the possibility of greater, more systematic civil society involvement in integration, but there remains a lack of coordination and state funding and an expectation that responsibility for refugee integration lies with the state.

From the government side, there is clear interest in further involving civil society in refugee integration, with a number of government documents calling for a greater civil society role since 2010.⁴⁹ Reporting suggests that the events of 2015 created a positive shift in government perceptions of civil society, at both national and municipal level.⁵⁰ However, interviews showed some civil society actors remain reluctant to become central actors in refugee integration, viewing 2015 as an aberration rather than the new normal. A number of civil society organisations expressed a desire to play a complementary, but not fundamental role, in the integration of refugees. Other civil society actors expressed a willingness to 'step up', citing the long history of informal community involvement in integration in Sweden, the vital role of grassroots movements in 2015 and the untapped potential of Swedish individuals and communities to welcome and support newly arrived refugees.

In sum, deeply-held views of primary role of the state actors in integrating refugees is a challenge to any future community sponsorship model. At the same time, the often-informal involvement of community

⁴⁹ See Osanami Törngren, Öberg and Righard, 'The role of civil society in the integration of newly arrived refugees in Sweden' 15-22; Statens Offentliga Utredningar, *Att ta emot människor på flykt* (2017) 438.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor (MUCF), *Villkor för organisationer med social inriktning – civila samhällets villkor 2015 med fokus på flyktingmottagandet* (2015) 54.



actors in integration and the role of civil society in supporting new arrivals in 2015 may signal a shift away from the state-centred concept of integration in Sweden.

Principles of non-discrimination and the Swedish welfare system

The principle of non-discrimination and equal treatment is fundamental to Swedish society. In integration policymaking, there is a strong preference for general, rather than targeted, measures. The non-discrimination principle holds that refugees should be resettled on the basis of UNHCR's vulnerability criteria, rather than selective religious or other criteria. As a result, there is a marked scepticism of both 'naming' community sponsorship models (such as Canada's private refugee sponsorship) and humanitarian admission schemes coordinated solely by faith-based groups (such as Italy's Humanitarian Corridors model).

The Swedish welfare system is a potential challenge to the feasibility of community sponsorship. An identified concern with community sponsorship is that because of its emphasis on shared responsibility for integration between sponsors and authorities, such a model may leave refugees 'half-in, half-out' of Sweden's welfare system. There is a clear consensus that responsibility for basic welfare services should not rest on individuals as it would expose refugees to potential harm and would place an unreasonable burden on private persons.

Thus, any model that involves selective 'naming' or faith-based practices do not align with Swedish non-discrimination values. Further, sponsorship models that place complete – or even partial – responsibility for services on individuals to the exclusion of the state are unworkable in the Swedish context. However, a community sponsorship model that meets these challenges may be envisaged. For example, a 'sponsored resettlement' model that draws from the same UNHCR resettlement referrals as quota refugees and provides for full inclusion in the national welfare system (such as the UK CSS and German NesT models) may avoid the pitfalls identified.

Expanding resettlement at the expense of spontaneous asylum

The current restrictive political narrative on migration in Sweden is a further challenge. The potential for some political parties to justify restrictive practices through expanded resettlement is an area of concern. Resettlement and community sponsorship allow states to maintain a commitment to responsibility sharing that can be used strategically to balance their efforts to restrict access to asylum.⁵¹ A number of civil society interlocutors identified the potential for Swedish politicians to embrace community sponsorship as a means to 'offset' restrictions on the right to seek asylum, thus strengthening a range of migration controls while slightly increasing resettlement, via community sponsorship.

Civil society actors thus expressed strategic and timing concerns about this dynamic between resettlement and spontaneous asylum. There is a risk that support for community sponsorship may be seen to support a restrictive approach to seeking asylum in Sweden. A number of civil society actors identified the need to strike a balance between supporting legal pathways to protection, on the one hand, and advocating for the right to seek asylum, on the other.

The effects of 2015 and 'empathy fatigue'

The ongoing policy and demographic effects of the 2015 influx is a further challenge, though also presents opportunities (see 4.2 below). Government representatives pointed out that the establishment programme has just peaked in terms of numbers, with nine per cent of Swedish school students foreign-born, high unemployment levels among newly arrived refugees and high numbers of family reunification applications anticipated in the near future.

On the civil society side, some actors reported burnout among both professionals and volunteers working on refugee issues. While the 2015 crisis

mobilised both established and newly-formed civil society actors, it also placed significant pressure on organisations, creating 'empathy fatigue' among individuals.

Sweden's well-established integration system

A further challenge to the development of a community sponsorship scheme is the well-established and complex state integration system. A couple of contacts noted concerns around adding new actors to the establishment program, which already requires significant coordination between the Swedish Migration Agency, the Public Employment Service and municipalities. The introduction of a community sponsorship scheme would further devolve certain responsibilities to a civil society actor, thus creating further complexity, though this challenge was not considered insurmountable.

5.2 Opportunities

The need for improved integration outcomes

There is widespread agreement that integration could be improved in Sweden. Both literature and interviews identify a gap in specific support for quota refugees and the potential role of civil society in filling this gap. While the existing establishment program includes a civil orientation component, there is general agreement that this could be improved through links with the local community.

Community sponsorship thus presents opportunities to provide refugees with 'cultural guides', capable of assisting new arrivals in navigating the first steps of integration and increasing the social capital of refugees.⁵² Through bridging of social capital, sponsors' 'know-how' can assist refugees' integration with respect to housing, employment and links with the host community.⁵³ Besides the potential benefit to refugees, some interlocutors identified

⁵¹ Hashimoto offers four explanations for states' resettlement programs: egoistic self-interest; humanitarian altruism; reciprocity; and international reputation. Naoko Hashimoto, 'Refugee Resettlement as an Alternative to Asylum' (2018) 37 *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 162, 166.

⁵² Suter and Magnusson, 'Before and after: New perspectives on resettled refugees' integration process' 70.

⁵³ The EU Commission feasibility study found: 'Integration (e.g. language courses, support accessing social services, education and labour market) was identified as a type of support and sponsor's responsibilities that bring strong added value, in particular in terms of the

such community links as of mutual benefit as it can increase social cohesion and combat loneliness and isolation within Swedish society.

Civil society engagement in refugee assistance, particularly since 2015

The mobilisation of civil society in 2015 demonstrates the potential of communities and individuals in supporting persons seeking international protection, highlighting high levels of empathy for refugees shown by a significant group of people. For example, one study found that around 40 per cent of 942 surveyed volunteer organisations worked with asylum seekers and refugees in 2015.⁵⁴ Some interviewees suggested that the events of 2015 may have changed mindsets around the role of civil society in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, while others emphasised the significant untapped potential of church groups and elderly citizens in welcoming new arrivals.

Support and mobilisation around the cohort of approximately 36,000 (mostly former) unaccompanied minors is a prominent example of civil society engagement, with some elements of community sponsorship. Under the scheme Red Cross, Save the Children and the Church of Sweden are contracted by the state to find housing and social support to this group, including the hosting of unaccompanied minors in private homes in exchange for nominal financial support. Some contacts suggested that this experience with a specific cohort could provide lessons for a future community sponsorship model.

Community sponsorship can take place under existing legislation

Depending on the approach, a Swedish community sponsorship scheme can be implemented without changes to existing legislation. Under a 'sponsored resettlement' model, refugees may be admitted under Chapter 5(2) of the Aliens Act, which provides for the granting of a residence permit to a foreigner within the framework of resettlement. This possibility is a clear benefit, as legislative change would be extremely difficult at present.

Other models of community sponsorship may present greater legal challenges. For example, a humanitarian corridors approach that creates a new pathway for entry into Sweden may require a new immigration category based on amendments to the Aliens Act. Several interlocutors noted that the creation of new, additional avenues to Sweden was highly unlikely in the current political climate.

Municipality interest in refugee integration

A significant amount of responsibility for integration falls at the feet of municipalities. Under a mandatory distribution key, refugees are allocated to Sweden's 290 municipalities for the two-year establishment programme. Clearly, interest in receiving and integrating refugees varies between municipalities, but interviews suggest a number of municipalities, notably in Northern Sweden, are likely interested in admitting more refugees to prevent population loss and fill labour shortages. This possibility requires further exploration.

While some municipalities have demonstrated experience in successful integration of refugees, notably Åre municipality,⁵⁵ others lack experience in engaging civil society and volunteers. A number of community engagement activities – such as mentorships, language cafés and 'friend families' – could be systematised and developed across different municipalities.

quality of integration provided to sponsored beneficiaries.' European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes' 8.

⁵⁴ Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällsfrågor (MUCF), Flyktmootagande: Det civila samhällets roll och villkor (2016) 13.

⁵⁵ Åre municipality, Heartfelt Integration Work: Åre Municipality's successful integration work creates social/economic growth and diversity in sparsely populated areas (2017).

A commonly identified challenge for municipalities is the provision of housing. Community sponsorship presents an opportunity for cooperation between civil society and hosting municipalities in this area. There is thus potential in exploring how civil society actors could provide this particular element of integration support, drawing on existing practice internationally.

Community sponsorship can offer a legal pathway to protection

For both the state and civil society, community sponsorship holds promise as it offers a legal pathway to protection. From the state's perspective, the model is a planned, orderly and controlled approach to protection which may be of interest to politicians. Civil society actors, on the other hand, are generally supportive of the creation of legal pathways to protection but have not yet focused on community sponsorship in particular.

The current parliamentary inquiry into the future of Sweden's migration policy has a focus on legal pathways. A number of contacts stressed that the parliamentary inquiry presents more risks than opportunities, with the political climate firmly focused on restricting rather than expanding refugee protection.

The Global Compact on Refugees and Global Refugee Forum

One of the Global Compact on Refugees' four objectives is expanded access to third country solutions for refugees, through resettlement and complementary pathways to admission. The Compact specifically calls for the development and expansion of community sponsorship models as one of a suite of complementary pathways.⁵⁶ In line with the Compact, UNHCR's strategy on resettlement and complementary pathways envisages significant expansion of community sponsorship in the coming decade.⁵⁷

The first Global Refugee Forum, held in Geneva on 17 and 18 December 2019, aimed to deliver pledges and highlight good practice advancing the objectives of the Compact. With respect to good practice on solutions, the GRSI, the UK Community Sponsorship Programme, and Caritas Italy's humanitarian corridors programme are listed.⁵⁸ In the long-term, the Compact provides an important vehicle for the development of community sponsorship practices, while the inaugural Forum will likely highlight the development of community sponsorship in other jurisdictions.

Combating negative narratives about migration

A further opportunity identified for community sponsorship is the potential to counter negative narratives around migration and integration. At the personal level, some contacts identified the benefits of everyday Swedes coming into contact with refugees, while at the macro level the widespread adoption of community-based integration could have long-term positive effects on political views on migration.

Sweden's liberal labour migration system

Finally, a couple of contacts identified Sweden's liberal labour migration system as a potential opportunity for community sponsorship focused on labour opportunities. The Swedish labour market allows for a certain degree of employer freedom and may present opportunities for employers to act as sponsors in areas matched to labour shortages.⁵⁹ While a focus on labour migration may significantly shift the nature of community sponsorship away from international protection, there may nevertheless be lessons to be learned here.

Against the backdrop of these challenges and opportunities, the following section considers some of the key design elements of a potential future Swedish community sponsorship model.

⁵⁶ Global Compact on Refugees para 95.

⁵⁷ UNHCR, *The Three-Year (2019-2021) Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways* 11.

⁵⁸ See <https://www.unhcr.org/good-practices.html> accessed 7 October 2019.

⁵⁹ Talent Beyond Borders, for example, links skilled refugees with countries and companies that need their skills. See <https://talentbeyondboundaries.org/vision-impact.html> accessed 7 October 2019.

6.

Designing a Future Swedish Community Sponsorship Model

The present section provides some strategic considerations on the design and operational modalities of a possible future Swedish community sponsorship model. The model put forward here is that of ‘sponsored resettlement’, with the dual objectives of improving integration outcomes and expanding protection through additional resettlement places. Models involving the establishment of a new pathway to admission, the ‘naming’ of individual refugees by sponsors, significant legal changes or requiring sponsors to bear the full financial cost of integration are not considered here, in light of the challenges discussed above. The following sets out the legal factors, design elements and role of key actors for a ‘sponsored resettlement’ model.⁶⁰

6.1 Legal feasibility

A Swedish community sponsorship scheme can be implemented without changes to existing legislation. Under the ‘sponsored resettlement’ model, refugees may be admitted under Chapter 5(2) of the Aliens Act, which provides for the granting of a residence permit to a foreigner within the framework of resettlement.

This model would provide sponsored refugees with precisely the same set of rights and protections as resettled refugees, with the sharing of responsibility for integration between authorities and sponsors taking place within the current legal framework. As a result, the introduction of a community sponsorship model could take place at the policy level, through

the development of a strong policy framework and appropriate changes to the annual resettlement budget.

The adoption of community sponsorship models purely at the policy level is common internationally. In Germany (NesT), Ireland and the United Kingdom, refugees supported through community sponsorship are admitted under the same legal conditions as refugees resettled under the state’s resettlement quota. Canada is the only country to have introduced statutory provisions specifically authorising community sponsorship.⁶¹

6.2 Key elements of a ‘sponsored resettlement’ model

1. Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of community sponsorship should be refugees referred for resettlement by UNHCR and approved by the Swedish Migration Agency. In other words, refugees admitted to Sweden under any future community sponsorship scheme should come from the same resettlement pool as quota refugees.⁶² Such an approach upholds principles of non-discrimination and avoids the identified risks of selectivity in models based on ‘naming’, religion or factors other than need. This approach is in line with the UK’s Community Sponsorship Programme and Germany’s NesT model.

⁶⁰ For a detailed checklist on building a community sponsorship program, see <http://refugeesponsorship.org/guidebook?chapter=0&area=1> accessed 1 November 2019.

⁶¹ Thus, a recent article concluded: ‘community sponsorship programs do not require significant, dedicated legislative infrastructure.’ Jennifer Bond and Ania Kwadrans, ‘Resettling Refugees through Community Sponsorship: A Revolutionary Operational Approach Built on Traditional Legal Infrastructure’ (2019) 35 *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees* 86, 95.

⁶² In 2018, UNHCR identified 1.4 million refugees in need of resettlement, with just 55,600 refugees resettled by UNHCR. UNHCR, *Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2019* (2018).

2. Legal status of beneficiaries

Refugees admitted to Sweden under a community sponsorship programme should be entitled to the full set of rights afforded to quota refugees, that is permanent residence and the same rights and obligations as all other residents.⁶³ As noted above, it is proposed that sponsored refugees are covered by Chapter 5(2) of the Aliens Act, under the same conditions as resettled refugees. Affording sponsored refugees identical legal status as quota refugees upholds principles of equality between refugees and avoids the need for legislative change to the Aliens Act.

3. Additionality

A Swedish community sponsorship model should ideally – over time – be additional to the resettlement quota. However, convincing governments that community sponsorship is a beneficial and sustainable model may require a pilot programme within the existing quota.⁶⁴ Given Sweden's recent expansion of its resettlement program, a small-scale pilot within the annual quota could be considered to support the integration of resettled refugees. Such an approach could be termed 'qualitative additionality', with an aspiration of becoming additional over time and thus expanding access to protection through increased resettlement places.

If the pilot phase is successful and sustainable, the next step would be to increase the number of quota refugees coming to Sweden, with sponsored refugees additional to state resettlement. The United Kingdom's community scheme, for example, began as a pilot programme within the state's resettlement quota, but has recently been announced as entirely additional.⁶⁵ In Germany, the NesT programme allows for the admission of 500 refugees on top of the annual quota.

4. Sponsors

Sponsors should be Swedish citizens, permanent residents or secure residents (for example, a visa that allows for legal residence for at least two years). Sponsors must be organised in groups of five or more individuals and may be supported by an established church group, association, trade union, company or NGO. Sponsors must demonstrate their commitment to providing financial and practical integration support for the duration of the sponsorship period, through undergoing training and a formal agreement entered into with government authorities, in particular municipalities.

5. Sponsors' responsibilities

Community sponsorship is premised on shared responsibility between government authorities and sponsors. However, ultimate responsibility for sponsored refugees remains with the state. Thus, sponsors' responsibilities should extend to clearly identified elements of integration and include practical and to some extent complementary financial obligations. Sponsors should not be expected to take on responsibilities that are unduly onerous or place refugees at risk of abuse.

In case of relationship breakdown between sponsors and refugees, responsibility should revert to the state or municipality if alternative sponsors cannot be found. Under the 'sponsored resettlement' model, where there is a breakdown between sponsor and refugee, the refugee in effect returns to the normal resettlement programme, thus preserving their protection status. In the UK, for example, in the rare case of relationship breakdown, refugees are folded into the government resettlement programme whereby the municipality assumes sole responsibility for integration. In Germany, the ZKS attempts to find alternative sponsors (mentors) to assume responsibility.

In practice relationship breakdown is very rare. In the UK, interviews show just one case of relationship breakdown among the approximately 400 refugees

⁶³ See Swedish Migration Agency, 'Sweden's Resettlement Programme – 2018' (2018).

⁶⁴ Fratzke, *Engaging communities in refugee protection* 10.

⁶⁵ UK Home Office, 'New global resettlement scheme for the most vulnerable refugees announced', 17 June 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/3e5FxEM> accessed 30 October 2019; Hannah Feldtman, 'Resettlement Scheme Extended! Community Sponsorship to be Additional', Sponsor Refugees, 17 June 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/3d1EWTi> accessed 30 October 2019.



sponsored. In Canada, sponsorship breakdown has been estimated to occur in one out of 40 sponsor relationships.

Given housing is often a challenge for municipalities receiving resettled refugees, sponsors could assume responsibility for providing housing for the one year of the two-year establishment programme, in line with applicable housing regulations. Such support could either be in-kind (for example, hosting an individual refugee in a sponsor home) or financial (for example, covering the rent for a refugee family).

Sponsors could further take on responsibility for other social support, using existing community engagement programmes, with a focus on practical orientation, social activities and building up social capital. However, this social support should not replace the existing civic orientation programme offered by the Public Employment Service. As in other countries, this form of support should last for one year.

6. Policy framework

As noted above, community sponsorship can be piloted at policy rather than legislative level. What is required is thus a strong policy framework, based on the concept of shared responsibility between the state, municipalities and sponsors. Such a model can draw on the existing principles on integration as a shared responsibility between the various government bodies. A policy framework should cover the following key relationships:

- The relationship between the state, municipalities and sponsors
- The relationship between sponsors and refugees
- The relationship between the state and civil society organisations involved in training and support of sponsors

Clearly, good cooperation between the state, municipality and sponsors is essential for the effective development of a community sponsorship model.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ See, for example, Department of Justice and Equality, Community Sponsorship Ireland: Initial Policy Framework (2019).

Where national authorities do not assume coordination responsibility, trusted civil society organisations with expertise in supporting refugees and working with volunteers should be engaged by the state to act as a focal point for community sponsorship, working closely with both sponsors and government authorities (see 5.3 below).

7. Monitoring and evaluation

Finally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be built into any community sponsorship programme from its establishment. Monitoring is key to assessing the 'effectiveness and success of the scheme and to ensure a constructive and ongoing relationship between the sponsor and the beneficiary.'⁶⁷ Monitoring is particularly important with respect to the eligibility of sponsors, either by the state (as in the UK) or a trusted civil society actor (as in the German NesT model). Sponsored refugees, already vulnerable, may receive inadequate support from sponsors unable or ill-prepared to support them.⁶⁸

Evaluation is a further necessary element of a future Swedish community sponsorship model and has historically been a weakness in equivalent models internationally.⁶⁹ Systematic evaluations are present in more recent approaches, with government (New Zealand⁷⁰) or independent (United Kingdom⁷¹) evaluations undertaken soon after implementation.

6.3 The role of key actors

The implementation of the design elements outlined above relies on the involvement and cooperation of a number of key actors in the operation of a community sponsorship pilot.

Swedish Migration Agency, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Justice & Public Employment Service

While community sponsorship is a 'bottom-up' approach to refugee resettlement, state ministries play a key role in setting the framework and providing oversight. In most countries with community-based sponsorship-models, national authorities are responsible for establishing a policy framework (in cooperation with civil society actors); conducting security screenings and issuing visas to sponsored refugees; matching sponsors and refugees from UNHCR's resettlement referrals; and evaluating the scheme.

Municipalities

Municipalities are important actors in all phases of designing, implementing and supporting a community sponsorship model. In the Swedish context, the municipalities play a vital role as the primary government authority providing integration support to refugees. In developing a pilot, a small number of municipalities need to agree to host sponsored refugees and work with sponsors on implementation.

Civil society focal point

One or more trusted civil society organisations with expertise in supporting refugees and working with volunteers should be engaged by the state to act as a secretariat or focal point for community sponsorship, working closely with both sponsors and government authorities. Such a body may have responsibilities relating to promoting community sponsorship, training sponsors, screening sponsorship applications and supporting sponsored

⁶⁷ European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes' 9.

⁶⁸ Patti Tamara Lenard, 'Resettling refugees: is private sponsorship a just way forward?' (2016) 12 *Journal of Global Ethics* 300, 306.

⁶⁹ European Commission, 'Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes' 9.

⁷⁰ New Zealand Government, *Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category Pilot Process evaluation* (May 2019).

⁷¹ Jenny Phillimore and Marisol Reyes, 'Community Sponsorship in the UK: from application to integration' formative evaluation.



refugees. In the United Kingdom, Reset plays this role, while in Germany, the civil society contact point (ZKS) is an alliance of Caritas Germany, the German Red Cross and the Protestant Church. In Ireland, the newly constituted National Support Organisation will play a similar role.

Other civil society organisations

Beyond the important role of a civil society focal point, outlined above, civil society organisations play a key role in auspicing sponsors. Based on international experience, sponsors in the pilot phase are likely to be members or volunteers of a church group, association, trade union, company or NGO. Civil society organisations and other community groups can thus play a pivotal role in promoting and supporting a pilot scheme through their membership or volunteer networks.

Funding bodies

Funding for the infrastructure necessary to conduct a community sponsorship pilot may come from a range of sources, including private philanthropic funds, the Swedish Migration Agency or AMIF. In Germany, private foundations provided the initial funding for the establishment of the ZKS, while Reset in the United Kingdom is funded by contributions from the Home Office and philanthropic foundations.⁷²

⁷² UK Home Office, 'Home Office awards £1 million to help communities support refugees' 18 June 2018, available at <https://bit.ly/3uhrWq> accessed 31 October 2019.

7.

Recommendations: The Road Ahead

This report is a first step to inform discussion and development of a community sponsorship model in Sweden. There is potential for a Swedish community sponsorship model and some interest in the development of a pilot among certain civil society actors and municipalities. There are, moreover, a number of opportunities for community sponsorship in Sweden, including the need for improved integration among resettled refugees; momentum among grassroots civil society groups since the 2015 influx; the possibility of developing a community sponsorship scheme within the existing legal framework; and strong interest among some municipalities in improving integration outcomes.

There are also a number of challenges, such as the relatively under-developed role of civil society in integration; concerns that community sponsorship does not accord with Swedish values of non-discrimination and access to the welfare state; and the current political climate, including the risk that expanded resettlement will come at the expense of the right to seek asylum in Sweden. These challenges may hamper the development of a community sponsorship model in the short term. However, the 'sponsored resettlement' model put forward above seeks to address these challenges, outlining a model that is feasible under the current legal framework; upholds principles of non-discrimination through sponsorship of refugees under UNHCR's resettlement programme; provides sponsored refugees with the same rights and protections as other resettled refugees; and focuses on expanding protection through a commitment to additionality.

Finally, this report suggests two integrated steps toward the development of community sponsorship in Sweden. It is important to note that these steps are not exclusive and may be taken in parallel.

Community engagement: improved integration of refugees already resettled in Sweden

One need identified by this study is the improved integration of resettled refugees within Sweden's resettlement quota through increased community engagement. While a number of community engagement initiatives already exist, there is a lack of systematic community support available to quota refugees, who face extra challenges vis-à-vis employment and social capital. This measure is not focused on expanding protection through additional resettlement, but rather improving the quality of integration among resettled refugees within Sweden's quota, thereby building the infrastructure for a future, additional community sponsorship programme.

Of course, existing initiatives should inform future community engagement and community sponsorship models. The following programmes could be adapted, developed or expanded:

- Åre municipality's successful approach to refugee integration and retention, which uses a whole-of-society approach to support new arrivals, including volunteers from the local community.⁷³
- Existing IOP (ideburet offentligt partnerskap) agreements between municipalities and civil society actors. IOP agreements, coordinated by FORUM, may be a useful basis for developing cooperation on integration between municipalities and civil society actors.⁷⁴
- Community assistance for unaccompanied minors, in which civil society organisations are contracted by the Swedish Migration Agency to support unaccompanied minors is a clear example of community engagement. Civil society

⁷³ Åre municipality, Heartfelt Integration Work: Åre Municipality's successful integration work creates social/economic growth and diversity in sparsely populated areas (2017).

⁷⁴ See <https://www.socialforum.se/om-forum-2/ideburetoffentligt-partnerskap/> accessed 31 October 2019.



organisations identify and support individuals in hosting refugees, in exchange for modest financial remuneration.

- Existing ‘refugee guide’, ‘friend family’ and ‘language cafe’ programs in place in several municipalities and church groups.
- The persecuted artists program, which provides a two-year visa for artists facing persecution in their country of origin. Beneficiaries must be invited by a municipality, city, county council or regional authorities, who provide for the artist for two years.⁷⁵

Community sponsorship pilot: ‘sponsored resettlement’

Alongside the community engagement model above, this step envisages the development of a small-scale pilot programme in 1-2 municipalities with a small number of sponsors and refugees, drawing on the

design elements outlined in this report. This measure comprises the following elements:

- The creation of a community sponsorship working group to advocate for and inform the development of a community sponsorship model. This working group should ultimately include stakeholders from civil society, UNHCR, municipalities, the Swedish Migration Agency, Ministry of Justice, Public Employment Service and refugees.
- Pursuing funding and cooperation opportunities to fund a pilot scheme, for example via the current AMIF Action Grant,⁷⁶ the Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor (MUCF) grant program⁷⁷ or private foundations.
- Engagement with relevant transnational actors with expertise on community sponsorship, such as the GRSI and government and civil society actors from Canada, Ireland, Germany and the United Kingdom.

⁷⁵ Swedish Migration Agency, ‘Rättsligt ställningstagande angående uppehållstillstånd för fristadskonstnärer’ available at <https://bit.ly/3hBhm39> accessed 9 October 2019.

⁷⁶ European Commission, ‘Study on the feasibility and added value of sponsorship schemes’; AMIF Action Grant, ‘Fostering the integration of persons in need of protection through private sponsorship schemes’ available at <https://bit.ly/3ejURhr> accessed 30 October 2019.

⁷⁷ See <https://www.mucf.se/bidrag> accessed 31 October 2019.

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Interview list

- Alexandra Segenstedt, Red Cross Sweden, 23 September 2019
- Anna Karlgren, Church of Sweden, 23 September 2019
- Bernd Parusel, Swedish Migration Agency, 17 September 2019
- Cristina Manzanedo, Entreculturas, 9 September 2019
- Elena Knezevic, Caritas Germany, 17 September 2019
- Eva Jonsson, Sponsor Refugees Ambassador, United Kingdom, 9 September 2019
- Firas Wakkas, 1 October 2019
- George Joseph, Caritas Sweden, 13 September 2019
- Hevi Dawody Nylén, Stockholm University, 5 September 2019
- Ida Holmgren, Ministry of Employment, 13 September 2019
- Janice Bothello and Ania Kwadrans, Refugee Hub, 30 August 2019
- Karin Perols, Swedish Association of Local Governments & Regions, 26 Sep 2019
- Kerstin Lindblad, Ministry of Justice, 20 September 2019
- Madelaine Seidlitz, Amnesty International Sweden, 10 September 2019
- Marcus Engler, Migration Analysis, Germany, 26 August 2019
- Michael Williams, 10 September 2019
- Melanie Bavendamm, Ministry of the Interior, Germany, 6 September 2019
- Nicola Clase, Sweden's Ambassador at large for Migration, 12 September 2019
- Oskar Adenfeldt, FORES, 13 September 2019
- Rebecca Einhoff, UNHCR Germany, 23 September 2019
- Russel Rook, Good Faith Partnership United Kingdom, 1 October 2019
- Sofia Rasmussen, Save the Children, 23 September 2019
- Trygve Ugland, Bishop's University, 29 August 2019

