



Restoring Dignity, Inspiring Change.

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Building the Future through Community Sponsorship of Refugees

– comparing experiences and learning from each other

A hybrid in-person (Vatican City/Rome) and virtual workshop

26-27 September 2022

Statement by Ms. Christine Nathan, President

International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)

Session on the role of international organizations and international NGOs (5 minutes for each speaker followed by brief discussion 16:10 – 16:45 on 27 September)

1. ICMC Europe established in 2012 the “Share Network”, regrouping a wide range of stakeholders, including regional and local authorities, refugee and migrant associations, NGOs and faith-based organizations, interested in welcoming refugees and migrants in Europe. Our work focuses on coordination, information sharing, promoting good practices, research, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building, and amplifying the voices of local actors and communities.
2. Within the Share Network and with the financial support from the European Union, ICMC initiated and coordinates the Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN), which brings together a consortium of actors running community sponsorship programmes in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the UK.
3. Among many other activities, the Share Network brings a comparative perspective in the seven above mentioned countries and documents common challenges and good practices which can make the various models more resilient over the long-term. A report, published in May 2022, compiled the first lessons learned across the seven countries through the monitoring and evaluation of community sponsorship programmes:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61701919c9cd9200cd8e6ccc/t/62b1e0862ba>

Below and briefly mentioned, the six most important lessons learned.

4. First, community sponsorship has a “transformative potential” for both refugees, who feel a sense of security and welcome, and the host community, which feels mobilized and more cohesive, and understand better the refugees’ struggle.
5. Secondly, one resounding finding highlighted throughout the evaluations has been that the design of programmes have not adequately taken into account the need for more explicit and transparent partnership agreements that clearly lay out roles, responsibilities and their duration, between the government, intermediary civil society organisations (NGOs and churches), volunteer sponsor groups and other actors. Very often, there is a blurring of roles between different actors, unclear responsibilities, and serious financial gaps.
6. Thirdly, the transition to autonomy for the refugee families is a real challenge. A one-to-two-year support - the standard one in community sponsorships - is far too short in light of strained labour markets, language barriers, etc. Securing and financing housing remains a challenge in all countries.
7. Fourthly, there should be better expectation management for both sponsors and refugees and indeed more information about the profiles of both the refugee and sponsoring families. A good practice is to offer the possibility of pre-departure videoconferences between refugees and sponsor groups.
8. Fifthly, it is essential to have both a civil society intermediary organization that acts as a clearing house between the refugees, the volunteer sponsors and the local, regional and national authorities; and an inter-cultural mediator that speaks both languages.
9. Sixthly and finally, it is important to build monitoring mechanisms into programmes. In programmes where it is done regularly, monitoring can be useful not only for the purposes of safeguarding and quality assurance but also to troubleshoot problems and respond to needs as they arise, adapting and making small changes as needed. It is also important to systematically involve refugees in evaluation and monitoring, building on what worked well and less well for them.