The promise of community sponsorship: Lessons, limits, and questions from the Canadian PSR program

MICHAELA HYNIE
“Every country’s circumstances are different but we believe this is a good model which is exportable to other countries”
---John McCallum, 2016
(with Filippo Grandi and George Soros at the UN, Sept 2016)
CANADIAN REFUGEE ADMISSIONS AND SUPPORT

Resettlement

In-land claims (refugee claimants)

Resettled refugees are entitled to a minimum of one year financial and settlement support

- For some vulnerable people, can get 18 months or 2 years

Programs differ on who provides the support:

- Government Assisted Refugees (GARs)
- Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs)
- Blended Visa Office Referred (BVORs)
PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP IN CANADA

Sponsors

• Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) (66%)
  • Incorporated organization
  • Constituent groups (CGs) authorized to sponsor on their behalf
• Community Sponsors (3%)
  • Any organization in the community where the person will settle
• Groups of Five (G5)* (31%)
  • Five or more private citizens over the age of 18

Historically, faith-based organizations saw resettlement as a way to meet humanitarian goals, including family reunification

Historically, the government saw resettlement as a way of filling gaps in the workforce

Private sponsorship is in addition to those the government commits to resettling

CIC, 2007; IRCC, 2017; Labman, 2016
WHO IS YOUR SPONSOR?

Private sponsors can name who they want to settle

- Prior to Operation Syria, it is estimated that 90% to 95% of private sponsorships were family reunifications.
- In our sample of 2000 Syrian refugees, over 80% of privately sponsored had family in Canada.
- Out of approximately 40,000 Syrian arrivals in Operation Syria, fewer than 10% were Blended Visa Office Referred (BVORs).

Most of what we know about private sponsorship is based on people sponsored by family or to join family.
OTHER DIFFERENCES

PSRs are:

• More highly educated
  • Especially in the Syrian cohort
• More likely to speak English
  • Especially in the Syrian cohort

GARs are:

• Displaced for a longer period of time
  • in our Syrian sample
• Selected for vulnerability
  • Disability, chronic disease, large families, single parent families
# Sponsorship by Government versus Family or Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gov’t (n=860)</th>
<th>Family (n=767)</th>
<th>Comm (n=269)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age (in Year 1)</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have 4 or more children (%)</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (up to 6 years)</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (7 to 12 years)</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized (trade/college)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (university)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always need interpreter Year 2</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of displacement (months)</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim religion (%)</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>53.5</td>
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</table>
WHAT ARE THE (POTENTIAL) ADVANTAGES OF PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP?

For resettlement:

- Increases numbers who can be resettled
- Can be responsive to under-recognized groups and individuals
- Distributes newcomers across Canada

Kumin, 2015
INCREASED NUMBERS AND RESPONSIVENESS
RESETTLED REFUGEE ADMISSIONS SINCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP (ACTUAL AND TARGETED NUMBERS)

IRCC, 2017a; 2017b
DISTRIBUTE REFUGEES WIDELY?
SPONSORING COMMUNITIES FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

- Community sponsors
- Government sponsors

IRCC, 2019
WHAT ARE THE (POTENTIAL) ADVANTAGES OF PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP?

For integration:

• Engages civic society so
  • More positive intergroup relationships
  • More positive attitudes through increased feelings of control
  • Better integration outcomes by increasing newcomers’ social capital

Kumin, 2015
INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL?
NUMBER OF NEW FRIENDS

More new other friends if: younger, in Canada longer, don’t need interpreter, Community rather than Government sponsored, if male and if Muslim
HOW MUCH DO REFUGEES RELY ON THEIR SPONSORS?

HOW MUCH DID YOU RELY ON ____?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Ethnic Orgs</th>
<th>Other Friends</th>
<th>Ethnic Friends</th>
<th>Faith Orgs</th>
<th>Settlement Counselor</th>
<th>Sponsors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Very much</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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FASTIER INTEGRATION?
CURRENTLY WORKING (FROM SYRIA.LTH) (IN CANADA BETWEEN 1 AND 3 YEARS)

More likely to be employed if: Fewer children under 18, In Canada longer, Younger, Better physical health Year 1, Male, Comm rather than Govt, Moderate rather than high education, In VN or OK

- Government
- Family
- Community
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL: WHO HELPED YOU FIND A JOB (YEAR2)?

- Self
- Employment agency
- Settlement agency
- Other friend
- Coethnic friend
- Family
- Sponsor org
- Sponsor

[Bar chart showing the percentage of help from different sources, with Coethnic friend being the most significant source.]
INTEGRATION: LANGUAGE AND INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS: WHY ARE YOU NOT WORKING?

Carter, 2009; Dean & Wilson, 2009; Guo, 2009; The Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, 2017; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017
INTEGRATION: IS IT A GOOD JOB?

IS HOURLY WAGE ABOVE MINIMUM?

Higher if in Canada longer. Comm marginally higher than Family; men higher than women; OK and VN highest.
INTEGRATION: IS IT A GOOD JOB?  
IS WORK COMMENSURATE WITH QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE?

Related field if low or specialized education (trade/college)  
Appropriate if in Canada longer, displacement longer, low education, Comm  
More satisfied If better mental health Year 1; Govt less satisfied than Comm
INTEGRATION: WHAT ABOUT LONG TERM OUTCOMES?

EMPLOYMENT SINCE LANDING BY MIGRATION STATUS

PSRs have higher employment rates, advantage greater at lower levels of education.

Very little effect of initial language knowledge.

Kaida, Hou & Stick, 2019
INTEGRATION: WHAT ABOUT LONG TERM OUTCOMES?

EMPLOYMENT INCOME SINCE LANDING BY MIGRATION STATUS

PSRs have higher salaries, advantage greater with less education

Very little effect of initial language knowledge

Kaida, et al., 2019
INTEGRATION: WHAT ABOUT LONG-TERM OUTCOMES?

UNIVERSITY COMPLETION RATES IN CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admission Class of Parents</th>
<th>University Completion Rate</th>
<th>Mean Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skilled-worker class</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>46,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business class</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>46,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family class</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>39,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Assisted Refugees</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>41,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately Sponsored Refugees</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>43,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees Landed in Canada</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>35,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Generation+</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>46,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hou & Bonikowska, 2016
HOW WAS THE SPONSORSHIP PERCEIVED?
DID YOUR SPONSOR/GOVERNMENT DO WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO DO IN YEAR 1?

Excluding “not sure”
DID THEY HAVE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEIR OBLIGATIONS WERE?

Excluding “not sure”
WHAT ELSE DO WE KNOW ABOUT SPONSORSHIP RELATIONSHIPS?

Sponsorship breakdown

• About 25% of sponsoring organizations noted at least one
• Conflicts over agency, gratitude, and unequal relationships

Pressure to find employment quickly

• PSRs seemed to be taking jobs quickly but then leaving those jobs

People often joined sponsorship groups because someone asked them to

• We seem to be building civic engagement through sponsorship

IRCC 2017; Kaida et al., 2019; Kyriakides et al., 2018; Macklin et al., 2018; Nadler et al., 2010
OVERALL PERCEPTION OF RESETTLEMENT: WAS COMING TO CANADA THE RIGHT DECISION?
**SUMMARY**

**... AND SOME QUESTIONS**

Community sponsorship has been successful in Canada

- May be even more helpful for people with lower levels of education
- May be more helpful when sponsored by strangers than family

How do we develop clear guidelines about expectations but maintain the “human” nature of the relationship?

What is the right level of analysis and what time frame?

- Integration is a long and slow process: how much should we expect and how quickly?
- Integration is perhaps best considered at the level of families rather than individuals
Ahmed Hussen MP is Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for the Government of Canada. He is also a lawyer. He was National President of the Canadian Somali Congress.