
**Advancing Private Refugee Sponsorship: Engaging and Resourcing MCC
Manitoba's Constituency**

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program allows Canadian citizens to respond to these global needs by supporting a refugee or refugee family for their first year in Canada. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program, through the Sponsorship Agreement MCC Canada holds with the Government of Canada, has been involved in refugee sponsorship since the 1970s. Through refugee sponsorship, MCC Manitoba facilitates the response of its constituency to refugee situations around the world which in 2014 put the total estimate of refugees around the world at 14.4 million (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 5; UNHCR, 2015, p. 9).

After a number of years where, due to a variety of factors including changing government policy and increased processing times, there have been challenges to the continued interest in refugee sponsorship, MCC Manitoba identified a need to revitalize the program in its constituency. This project seeks to address that need by providing important information about the motivations and experience of past participants in order to develop strategies for program promotion and support provided to Constituent Groups so that the program is able to expand its capacity (MCC Manitoba, 2014, pp. 1-2).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The project's literature review explored the existing body of knowledge on the private sponsorship of refugees in Canada. Specifically it looked at past evaluations of the program, the motivations of sponsors, and ongoing challenges impacting the sponsorship experience. There has been significant discussion and study on the impact of the resettlement effort that took place during the Indochinese refugee crisis with mixed conclusions about its success given the challenges identified with those sponsorships. Current debate has focused on the sponsor motivations, the involvement of the faith community in sponsorship and how to frame the refugee sponsorship as a partnership that avoids issues of dependency.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This project employed a qualitative approach to the collection and analysis of primary data and document analysis. It was designed as a needs assessment that incorporated the principles of grounded theory, allowing for emerging themes to be rooted in the perspectives of the interview participants (Creswell, 2003, p. 16). The identification of challenges experienced by Constituent Groups and the gaps in support provided by MCC Manitoba in the sponsorship process helped to identify the gap between what assets and resources groups currently have access to, and what they should have access to (Community Tool Box, 2014, para. 4).

The research was conducted through group interviews with Constituent Groups who had sponsored refugees from 2005 – 2015. The interviews were compared to the 2015 knowledge-sharing document distributed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which surveyed how Sponsorship Agreement Holders work with Constituent Groups and co-sponsors.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The interview findings showed that overall, interview participants found refugee sponsorship to be both challenging and enriching and their motivations varied by were broadly based on past experience, family history and feelings of compassion and empathy, all enhanced by media attention to particular crises. In general interviewees found the support of MCC Manitoba staff to be very helpful but also suggested places for improvement. The review of the country wide survey of Sponsorship Agreement Holders found that there is a wide range of approaches to supporting Constituent Groups but no best practices emerged from the findings.

The analysis of the interview findings took the interview findings, alongside the context provided by the literature review and the national survey conducted by the RTSP, and discussed their implications for current program activities. The themes that emerged suggest that motivations for participation are largely unchanged and should continue to inform program promotion and that Constituent Groups trust MCC Manitoba's experience, continue to be in need of ongoing settlement support and are open to learning and evaluation activities that might improve the sponsorship experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the analysis of the interview findings, recommendations were developed that address program promotion and recruitment, settlement support, network facilitation and learning and evaluation. Specific activities were identified to address the recommendations and were combined into a strategy map which expands on existing program activities to reach a collection of activities that will better contribute to identified program outcomes (Ambrose, K. n.d., p. 4)

From that strategy map, the following activities were identified as recommended priorities for implementation given existing program capacity.

Program Promotion and Constituent Group Recruitment

- Incorporate refugee and migration issues into communication and presentations on disaster response and other MCC Manitoba educational events in order to maintain awareness of refugee and migration issues.
- Connect with younger Constituent Group participants in order to include them in program promotion.

Settlement Support

- Initiate regular check-ins with sponsoring groups throughout the sponsorship period.

- Develop and provide resources to Constituent Groups to help them support refugees dealing with mental health and trauma.

Network Facilitation

- Development of a CG list-serve to facilitate information sharing amongst CGs including information about CGs looking for partnerships, co-sponsors looking for CGs and offers of housing and other settlement supports to CGs

Learning & Evaluation

- Provide an online mechanism for gathering feedback at the end of the sponsorship period.
- Use the settlement assessment survey previously developed to begin systematically tracking settlement outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This project has shown that refugee sponsorship through MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement program enjoys a committed base of support that desires to see the program grow in its reach and contribution to positive outcomes for resettled refugees. Focusing the role of MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement staff on the creation of an environment in which Constituent Groups feel supported, can provide support to each other and are themselves learning about what it means to be a supportive and welcoming community for refugees, will ensure that the program has Constituent Groups participating in the program for years to come.

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1.0 Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were an estimated 14.4 million refugees, or persons in refugee-like situations, worldwide in 2014. This estimate is the highest since 1995 and is considered to be a record 23% increase over the previous year (UNHCR, 2015, p. 9). While refugees come from many countries around the world, in 2014, half of the total number of refugees in the world came from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia (p. 13). Resettlement of refugees from a country of asylum to a third country is one of three durable solutions for refugees with the other two being voluntary repatriation and local integration. In 2014, 12,300 of the 105,200 refugees resettled globally were received by Canada (p. 22).

The Government of Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program allows Canadian citizens to respond to these global needs by supporting a refugee or refugee family for their first year in Canada. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada has been involved in refugee sponsorship since the 1970s and signed on as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) in 1979. The sponsorship of refugees is a primary focus of MCC Canada's Migration and Resettlement Program, and MCC Manitoba, through a Memorandum of Understanding with MCC Canada, facilitates the private sponsorship of refugees by its constituency (MCC Canada, 2010, p.5).

Continued interest in private refugee sponsorship by sponsoring groups across the country, including those MCC Manitoba works with, has been challenged in recent years by changes in government policy, increased processing times, reductions in the number of successful named cases, and shifts in the country of origin of refugee populations (Canadian Council for Refugees [CCR], 2014, p. 1; CCR, 2013, p. 5). The sustainability of the refugee sponsorship work by MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program, the client for this project, depends on having Constituent Groups ready to participate in refugee sponsorship. For this reason, the program is looking for ways to increase the capacity for refugee sponsorship in the organization's constituency.

1.2 PROJECT CLIENT AND PROBLEM DEFINITION

The client for this project is MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program, represented by Arisnel Mesidor, Migration and Resettlement Program Coordinator. Refugee sponsorship is a key emphasis for the program, and the coordinator works closely with each group that undertakes a sponsorship, under the Sponsorship Agreement that MCC Manitoba operates within. The Constituent Groups who undertake sponsorships are key to the sustainability of this part of the program. To date, there has been no assessment or formal evaluation that has looked specifically at the experience of those groups. In 2008, an evaluation was conducted to review the Migration and Resettlement Program implemented across the MCC offices in Canada that addressed the internal functioning of the program. One of the key questions that emerged from

that evaluation was what could be done by provincial program coordinators to increase sponsorship capacity in their area (Vanderlip, 2008, p. 37). This project will return to that question as it examines the characteristics and needs of those who have participated in the program in the past in order to recommend points of emphasis moving forward.

The Program's primary task is to facilitate refugee sponsorship through the PSR Program and its purpose statement states that "resettlement of refugees is a tool to provide solutions for a small number of people displaced by conflict" and furthermore, that "resettlement through the PSR Program engages our constituents directly with displaced people and gives them a deeper understanding of the roots of conflict". In 2014, the program developed a three-year plan that identified the revitalization of the program in Manitoba Mennonite churches as one of two anticipated outcomes. This project intends to contribute to that outcome, providing important information about existing participants that will inform ongoing engagement with the constituency and both old and new sponsoring groups (MCC Manitoba, 2014, pp. 1-2).

In addition, addressing this question at this time is opportune in that MCC Manitoba is currently dealing with a large increase in interest in the program due to media attention related to the Syrian refugee crisis. With both existing and new sponsorship groups coming on board, it would be prudent for staff to learn from past experiences in the hopes that the current level of interest can be developed into ongoing partnerships.

1.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary question this project seeks to answer is how can MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program maintain and expand its capacity by developing a sustainable core of Constituent Groups available for partnership in the PSR program. In support of the primary research question, a number of secondary questions and themes were explored with the purpose of providing MCC Manitoba with options to consider and ultimately, recommendations on how to increase the number of sponsorships and the quality of the sponsorship experience. These secondary questions are:

- What is the current state of the program?
- What is the desired future state or preferred outcomes?
- What gaps exist in the resources and services currently provided to constituent groups in the sponsorship process in order to learn from past experience and provide better support in the future?
- What are the factors that motivate constituent groups to participate in the sponsorship of refugees?
- What are the barriers to participation experienced by constituent groups?
- Are there alternative models of participation or partnership that would reduce barriers to participation in the program?

To provide answers to these questions, the motivations of constituent groups and their perspectives on sponsorship were sought out and analyzed. Additional research included an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing program and gathering feedback from stakeholders on opportunities for growth. Together with perspectives gathered from other Sponsorship Agreement Holders, the report provides recommendations with the intention of improving the program's sustainability into the future.

1.4 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided to clarify terms frequently used throughout the report and in some cases, to differentiate between the differences in the definitions used by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and MCC for particular terms.

Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) - are incorporated organizations that have signed a formal sponsorship agreement with IRCC. Most current SAHs are religious organizations, ethno cultural groups or humanitarian organizations. SAHs, which may be local, regional or national, assume overall responsibility for the management of sponsorships under their agreement. Organizations entering into a sponsorship agreement with IRCC generally submit several refugee sponsorships a year (IRCC, 2016, pp. 8-9).

Constituent Group

- As defined by IRCC, “a SAH can authorize Constituent Groups to sponsor under its agreement and provide support to the refugees. Each SAH sets its own criteria for recognizing Constituent Groups. Constituent Groups are based in the sponsored refugee's expected community of settlement and must have their sponsorship application and settlement plan approved by their SAH before the undertaking is submitted to the Centralized Processing Office in Winnipeg (IRCC, 2016, p. 8).
- Within MCC in Canada, constituency is defined as Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches and congregations in Canada. MCC's private sponsorship program has traditionally understood its constituency, as defined by MCC, to be the basis for its Sponsorship Agreement (SA), and has applied its own definition of constituency to its definition of what a constituent group is (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 54-55).

Co-Sponsor – any group that falls outside of the MCC definition of Constituent Groups, including non-Mennonite churches that have been extended sponsorship privileges under MCC Canada's Sponsorship Agreement (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 58).

Named Sponsorship

- Defined by IRCC as sponsor or SAH referred.
- Defined by MCC as only those cases proposed by churches, groups or individuals who have a connection to family or friends (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 48).

Un-named Sponsorship

- Defined by IRCC as referred by IRCC or the government.
- Defined by MCC as including those defined by IRCC as IRCC/government referred, as well as those that are referred through other MCC offices internationally, or those referred by organizations such as UNHCR, ICRC, and Amnesty. Essentially, any case referred and assessed internationally, where the application is currently located is considered by MCC to be un-named (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 48).

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The report that follows begins with a section on the background of the client, the PSR program, and the current policy environment within which MCC Manitoba's program operates. This is followed by a review of the literature related to private refugee sponsorship in Canada and related themes relevant to the research question, concluding with a conceptual framework that underlies the research. Chapter 4 outlines the project's methodology including the selection of participants, data collection methods and project limitations. The group interview findings are presented in Chapter 5 and a discussion of these findings in the context of the literature review takes place in Chapter 6. Following that discussion, Chapter 7 presents recommended strategies with a recommendation for prioritizing their implementation, and Chapter 8 brings the report to a conclusion.

2.0 Background

This section outlines relevant background information that provides the context for the rest of the report. It begins with a description of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, including the various ways in which private citizens sponsor refugees. This is followed by an overview of MCC's history of refugee sponsorship dating back to 1920. A brief review of the current refugee policy context in Canada notes recent changes and shifts in focus. The chapter concludes with a description of the current organizational context, including recent developments.

2.1 PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES PROGRAM

Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP) began in 1978 with the implementation of the *Immigration Act* of 1976, which established a mechanism whereby Canadians could participate in refugee resettlement through private sponsorship (Aura, 2014, History of PSR). The Government of Canada also provides direct support for refugee resettlement through the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) program (IRCC, 2015, p. 4). In 1979 and 1980, Canadians responded to the Indochinese crisis in South East Asia by sponsoring 35,000 Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians; a response that earned Canadians the Nansen Medal for service to refugees (CCR, 2014, p. 2). Since that time, other large resettlement efforts included 1,800 Afghans from 1994-1998 and in 1999, 7000 Kosovar refugees were airlifted from Macedonia (AURA, 2015, History of PSR). Today, approximately 5,000 privately sponsored refugees come to Canada each year (CCR, 2014, p. 2).

There are a number of ways in which sponsors can participate in the PSR program. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides approval for incorporated organizations, often religious organizations, cultural groups and humanitarian organizations to become SAHs. These organizations then assume responsibility for the sponsorships submitted under their agreement. Some SAHs carry out sponsorship directly but they can also authorize a Constituent Group to undertake a sponsorship under their agreement and provide the support to the refugees directly. Citizens can also form Groups of Five (G5) where five or more individuals can apply directly to IRCC to be approved for sponsorship, provided they can prove that they will be able to provide the support necessary for the year of sponsorship. The final type of group that can participate in refugee sponsorship are Community Sponsors. These are organizations who make a commitment to sponsor and must also be approved by IRCC. Finally, a SAH, Constituent Group or community sponsor has the option to create a formal partnership with an external group or individual who is called a co-sponsor and is often a family member of the sponsored refugee already living in Canada, to carry out the sponsorship together (IRCC, 2016, pp. 8 – 9). Regardless of the type of sponsorship group, private sponsors commit to supporting the refugee's first year in Canada, starting at the time of their arrival (p. 12).

Refugee cases are matched with sponsors in one of two ways. Either a sponsoring group can name a particular refugee or refugee family and submit an application on their behalf directly to

the CPO-W, or sponsoring groups are matched by staff at the Matching Centre at IRCC in Ottawa with cases already approved and selected by a Canadian visa office (IRCC, 2016, p. 14). Under the first method, so called “named” cases, sponsors must wait for their application to be processed and approved, a process that can take months to complete. However, cases that are visa office-referred (VOR) can arrive within one to four months (pp. 14-15). Additional sponsorships may occur under the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program where the Government of Canada matches cases referred by the UNHCR with a SAH or Constituent Group under the agreement of a SAH and provides six months of income support. Groups may also request a refugee case through the matching center under the Other Visa Office-Referred Program however in this case, no income support is provided (pp. 32-34). Another type of case, the Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) is available to SAHs and their Constituent Groups to provide resettlement opportunities to refugees with special needs and require more than the usual year of support. In this case, refugees are matched with private sponsors in addition to receiving government support for up to 24 and in some cases 36 months (p. 35). Finally, the Women at Risk (AWR) program assists women who, due to various circumstances, cannot be guaranteed safety in their committee, and the Urgent Projection Program (UPP) allow Canada to respond to urgent cases where refugees face threats to their life as determined by the UNHCR. This last category, UPP, is processed within 24 – 48 hours and usually refugees are on their way to Canada within five days (p. 37).

2.2 MCC HISTORY OF REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

MCC’s work with refugees goes back to the early days of the organization, founded in 1920, when it assisted Mennonite refugees escaping war, persecution and famine in Europe. In the 1970s, this work shifted to a focus on refugees from around the world (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 3). As the events of the Indochinese crisis unfolded, MCC began discussions with the Government of Canada about its new sponsorship program in November 1978, and in March 1979 signed a Sponsorship Master Agreement with Employment and Immigration Canada, now IRCC (Shalka, R. and Molloy, M., n.d., p. 6). The agreement allowed MCC, through its provincial offices, to work with constituent groups to facilitate the sponsorship of refugees from South East Asia. In 1979 and 1980 alone, 485 sponsoring groups would participate under MCC’s agreement to bring approximately 4,000 refugees to Canada (Kehler, 1980, pp. 8-9). In the initial years with the program, all cases were referred by IRCC to MCC as eligible for resettlement. After the first year, MCC workers in the camps in South East Asia noticed that many of the most desperate cases were being overlooked. A tension developed during the years that followed as MCC worked to prioritize the most vulnerable cases. At the same time, its Constituent Groups and the refugees that they had sponsored began pushing to have the cases of their family members still located in camps submitted for sponsorship. As a result, MCC developed a priority list to attempt to focus the program’s efforts. That list included un-named referrals from IRCC and cases identified by workers in the camps as long-stayers, large families, those with medical issues or disabilities, orphans and single parent families (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 44).

A program review was initiated in 2008 to assess the impact and effectiveness of the program from the perspective of stakeholders, the effectiveness of the program's current strategies for achieving outcomes, the impact of external trends and the program's fit within MCC's stated mission, vision and values (Vanderlip, 2008, p. 6). While the evaluation found that the program continued to fit within the core values of the organization, in meeting PSR Program objectives and maintaining the ability to complement MCC's work internationally and assist congregations in reuniting families, there have been significant implications for MCC staff (p. 7). The shift that began with the second wave of refugees from South East Asia was found to have continued, resulting in 93% of MCC's cases being named sponsorships.

While there are advantages in supporting named sponsorships, it requires a significant amount of time from staff to compile and submit applications, leaving little time to work at increasing capacity in the constituency for sponsorship. The final report's first recommendation was to understand the mix of sponsorships, which would drive a number of other decisions regarding the program. Secondary areas of importance included recommendations around policies and procedures, training, back up and technology and following that, the report provided recommendations regarding promotional materials, congregational support and newcomer evaluation. Following the receipt of the report, through follow-up discussions on the primary recommendation, it was decided that the ratio of sponsorships would be maintained at 60-40, unnamed to named cases (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 44).

2.3 CURRENT POLICY CONTEXT

Since 2011, a number of policy changes have been introduced and have had a direct impact on the PSR Program. In 2011, in order to assist in reducing a processing backlog, a cap was introduced on the number of applications that could be submitted by SAHs to the Nairobi mission. Those caps were extended in 2012 so that SAH faced a global cap on the number of applications that could be submitted along with specific caps for the Nairobi, Pretoria, Islamabad and Cairo missions. Other changes included the elimination of the source country category, which meant that sponsors were no longer able to sponsor anyone directly out of their country of origin, and there has been an increase in the identification of priority populations by the Minister. This identification was a potential foreshadowing of the exploration being done by IRCC to reorient the resettlement program towards a focus on a small number of refugee populations around the world. While the number of restrictions increased in 2011 and 2012, the government did announce in 2013 that it would create a new category of sponsorship that would see cases referred by Canadian visa offices with a cost sharing arrangement between the government and sponsors (CCR, 2013, p. 3).

2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

In 1920, Mennonite relief commissions in Canada and the U.S. came together to form MCC in response to the suffering of Mennonites in southern Russia (Mast, M., 2015, para. 5). Over the

years, MCC evolved from helping Mennonites to assisting others. An office was established in Kitchener, Ontario in 1943 and in 1963, MCC Canada was established. Since that time, the annual budget of MCC in Canada has grown from \$300,000 to approximately \$50 million (Terichow, G., 2013, para 10).

MCC's mission statement states, "MCC is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, sharing God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another and creation" (MCC, 2015, para. 1) In March 2014, the Boards of MCC Canada and MCC U.S. approved a five-year strategic plan, giving direction to the work of MCC for 2015 – 2020. The five strategic directions adopted by the boards are:

1. MCC prioritizes work with uprooted and other vulnerable people.
2. MCC's key emphases in building healthy, sustainable communities are: responding to disasters; ending hunger; providing clean water; offering quality education; and enabling sustainable livelihoods.
3. MCC is committed to preventing violence and promoting justice and peace.
4. MCC invests in young people to serve at home and around the world.
5. MCC, through mutually transformative relationships, nurtures and aligns the passions of the church, partners, and supporters (MCC Canada, 2015a, p. 1).

Under strategic direction #1, the MCCs in Canada committed themselves to a goal of resettling 150 refugees annually for the length of the plan (Peters-Pries, 2015, p. 3). To that end, a steering committee was established to coordinate a countrywide campaign to encourage the sponsorship of refugees by its constituency. The emphasis of communications for that campaign was to be the global refugee crisis as the world experiences the largest number of displaced people since World War II, using the Syrian crisis as an illustration. However, on September 3, 2015 Canadians were mobilized by a photo of a young child whose body had washed up on a Turkish beach after drowning during an attempt by his family to cross the sea to Greece. Since that time, MCC offices across the country have been overwhelmed by interest in its constituency and in the public at large to bring people to Canada via its PSR Program. Based on 2015 year-end reporting, provincial MCC offices had submitted applications to IRCC for more than 600 Syrian refugees. While the increased interest has been directly related to the Syrian crisis, the increase in media attention about the plight of refugees globally has also generated interest in refugee sponsorship in general, resulting in a numerous submissions by MCC to IRCC for refugees coming from places other than Syria (B. Dyck, personal communication, November 20, 2015). The total number of people for which applications had been submitted to IRCC as of December 10, 2015 was 1233 (C. Sawatsky Peters, personal communication, January 7, 2016).

3.0 Literature Review

This section of the report explores the existing body of knowledge on the private sponsorship of refugees in Canada. Specifically it looks at past evaluations of the program, the motivations of sponsors, and ongoing challenges impacting the sponsorship experience in order to provide a context within which MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement program operates. The review took place between August 15 and October 15, 2015. Key research terms were refugee resettlement, resettlement challenges, motivations, and faith. Research was conducted using the University of Victoria Library Summons, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, Springer Link, and York University Centre for Refugee Studies databases and supplemented by a review of the works cited lists of the literature discovered through the initial database searches. The review focused on literature related to the PSR program, which is unique to Canada as the only country where private citizens have the opportunity to sponsor refugees. Where literature related to the resettlement experience in other countries was found to be relevant it was also included.

Given the lack of study of the program in recent years, the review begins with an exploration of the literature examining the sponsorship experience during the Indochinese crisis of the late 1970s when the PSR program came into being. It then reviews the discussion in the literature on the motivations of private sponsors, including the impact of faith on sponsors and the refugees they sponsor, and the considerations that have been given to reframing the sponsorship process as a partnership. Finally, the findings of the review are used to inform a conceptual framework for the project.

3.1 PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP AND THE INDOCHINESE CRISIS

As the single largest influx of refugees in the era of private sponsorship, the resettlement of Indochinese has been heavily scrutinized. The research related to this movement of refugees to Canada highlight both challenges and benefits of private sponsorship.

At the outset, the proponents of private sponsorship and the creators of the program believed that private sponsorship would result in more successful outcomes related to the integration of refugees into Canadian society. Indra (1988) describes this ideal of personal support provided by compassionate Canadians but notes that while early studies found privately sponsored refugees to have an advantage over their Government Assisted counter-parts, later studies have not found this to be the case (p. 160). These disparate findings play out in the review of the literature that follows, describing both the benefits and drawbacks of the private sponsorship model.

In many cases, it was found that financial assistance was the greatest benefit of sponsorship (Indra, 1993, p. 235). A study by Woon (1987) of the sponsorship of Vietnamese in Victoria found that all privately sponsored households were self-supporting after the year of assistance (p. 141). The Refugee Resettlement Project reported on by Beiser (2010; 2009) also found that privately sponsored refugees were more likely to have found jobs than those who were government assisted (p. 42; p. 545). McLellan's findings in her study of Cambodian refugees in

Ontario provides further support to the argument that private sponsors were more successful helping refugees find employment and even intervened when there were issues between employer and employee (1995, p. 28). This is not surprising given the findings of Neuwirth and Clark (1981) who argue that the majority of sponsors adopted an instrumental approach to the sponsorship; encouraging refugees to become self-supporting as soon as possible (p. 136; Neuwirth, 1984, p. 122). Beiser (2009) notes that privately sponsored refugees were faster at picking up financial practices, which would have increased their likelihood of self-sufficiency (p. 565).

On the other hand, others found that the push to find employment delayed or prevented language acquisition and go as far to say that private sponsorship had little to no effect on employment patterns (Woon, 1987, p. 136; Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p. 136; Lanphier, 2003, p. 245, Johnson, 1987). Beiser (2003) goes even further in stating that neither type of resettlement, private sponsorship or government assisted, provided an advantage to integration. In fact, refugees were known to prefer government assistance to private sponsorship (p. 206; Woon, 1987, p. 145). This preference is related to a number of factors arising from the way in which sponsors tended to carry out their responsibilities. A number of studies found that the allowances provided by sponsors were not equal at the outset and some chose to adjust them when refugees found employment (Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p.135; Neuwirth, 1984, p. 122; Beiser, 2003, p. 207). Beiser (1999) explains that this caused tension between refugees, as they compared the monthly allowances they received with the amount provided to other refugees from other sponsors. On the other hand, government assisted refugees were all treated equally (pp. 121-122). Neuwirth (2005) recommended that guidelines outlining specific allowance amounts based on the size and age composition of a refugee family be made mandatory to alleviate this issue.

Sponsors were also found to have arranged for housing that refugees could no longer afford once the year of sponsorship had ended (Beiser, 2003, p. 207; Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p. 136). On this issue however, government assisted refugees did not necessarily fare better as they were spread across the country, often in small towns, and within the first year many chose to relocate (Beiser, 2010, p. 43). While their reason for re-location was not always due to the cost of housing, they ended up re-locating nonetheless. Denton (2003) reports that approximately one third of government assisted refugees leave within three years and in an Alberta study by Krahn, Derwing and Abu-Laban (2005), almost half left due to insufficient or inadequate employment opportunities in smaller cities Their choice to stay or to leave can also be attributed to the location of other family members or members from the same ethnic group (p. 268; p. 875).

3.2 THE IMPACT OF PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP

Despite the challenges described above, Beiser (2003) found that private sponsorship did provide an advantage in the ability of refugees to adapt to their new lives but what was not clear, was how that advantage came about (p. 213). McLellan (1995) found that sponsors helped to introduce Cambodian refugees in Ontario to Canadian culture, including them in social events

that included food, music and games (p. 28). This is an example of Neuwirth's finding (1984) that while sponsors more readily took up an instrumental role in the sponsorship, many worked to develop social bonds and spent time with the refugees they were sponsoring (p. 123). These relationships also provided a valuable network for refugees, connecting them with public services and familiarizing them with their new home (Lanphier, 2003, p. 246; Lamba and Krahn, 2003, p. 339). Lanphier (2003) notes that the cultural and emotional support provided by sponsors has the potential to influence change beyond the expected scope of adaptation (p. 244). This may contribute to the intergenerational tension described by Neuwirth and Clark (1981) between maintaining cultural identity and the pressure to assimilate (p. 138). Nonetheless, Lamba and Krahn's study (2003) of social networks of refugees in Canada found that a majority found their connections with sponsors worth retaining after the initial year of sponsorship (p. 348). Woon's three-year review of resettlement in Victoria found that sustained connection resulted in higher levels of integration and that relationships improved following the year of formal financial support by sponsors (p. 144).

3.3 CHALLENGES FOR SPONSORS

While many found the experience very rewarding, sponsorship was not without its challenges. This can be said both of the experience during the Indochinese crisis and sponsorships since that time. Much of the difficulty can be attributed to cultural differences and a lack of information about those differences as discussed above in regards to the difficulties experienced by refugees. Derwing and Mulder's 2003 study of the Kosovar sponsorship experience in Northern Alberta identified a number of challenges. In the case of the Kosovars, the government looked after the financial support but relied on private sponsors to provide the resettlement support. Sponsors found that refugees compared the support they received to the support received by other refugees and expected any issues to be resolved quickly, leaving sponsors with the feeling that refugees had unreasonable high expectations of them (p. 227). In addition to better information on the respective roles of all parties, other challenges identified in the study were cultural differences in the role of women and difficulty of finding employment for refugees coming with existing professional credentials and a lack of information (228-233). A lack of information about the job market was found to be an issue in other sponsorships, in particular for those coming from non-Western countries (Neuwirth, 1989, as cited in Lanphier, 2003, p. 248).

Another set of challenges relates to the interaction and experience with the bureaucratic processes of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The sponsorship process can be a lengthy one with processing times at times double that of non-PSR cases (Denton, 2003, p. 267; Lanphier, 2003, p. 241). The frustration with the length of the process is exacerbated by delays and higher rejection rates for named sponsorships (Derwing and Mulder, 2003, p. 233; Lanphier, 2003, p. 241). Whether or not cases take a long time to arrive in Canada, sponsorship is a large commitment of time and resources, from the initial expression of interest through to the end of the year of sponsorship (Lanphier, 2003, p. 243). Sponsors have also been frustrated by the lack of information received from IRCC in a number of areas. Derwing and Mulder (2003) identified

a lack of information about dates of arrival, medical needs, cultural information and guidance for those groups new to private sponsorship as complaints sponsors directed towards IRCC (p. 229-234). Denton (2003) also noted that the administrative requirements of the program are a burden for groups who are left to fill out complicated application forms (p. 267). While training has become an area of increased emphasis by IRCC, Treviranus and Casasola (2003) identified that there is no requirement that the individuals who participate in the PSR program become experts in resettlement (p. 198). Others have recommended having experienced groups provide information and share stories with new and inexperienced groups taking on sponsorships, and having settlement agencies on contract with the federal government to offer cultural awareness programming (Derwing and Mulder, 2003, pp. 234-235).

3.4 STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

It is clear from the literature that there are conflicting points of view regarding the past success of the private sponsorship model. Indra (1988) points to a number of key structural issues that impacted the effectiveness of the program, resulting in dependency and paternalism. First, was the lack of information and cross-cultural awareness on both sides of the relationship (p. 164). No information was provided to refugees prior to their arrival about the culture they were being settled into (175). This was supported by McLellan's finding in a study of the resettlement of Khmer people in Southern Ontario, that sponsors did not have prior knowledge of or receive information about the culture of those they were sponsoring (1995, p. 28). Even more significant was the way in which this lack of information extended to misunderstandings about the roles and responsibilities in the relationship between refugees and sponsors (Indra, D.M., 1988; Woon, Y.F., 1987; Indra, D.M., 1993; Beiser, M., 2009; Lanphier, M. 2003, p. 243). An evaluation by Woon (1987) of the adaptation of Vietnamese in Victoria found that the failure to explain the program to sponsored refugees caused some confusion, as there was no parallel concept in Vietnamese society to serve as a reference point for understanding the nature of the relationship (p. 133). Sponsorship would have been better understood had sponsorship been carried out by family members rather than strangers, because of cultural understandings about familial responsibilities (Beiser, 2010, p. 41). Indra (1993) argues that this lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities of both refugees and sponsors prevented a relationship of reciprocity that may have allowed for a level of equality between the parties (pp. 244-245). Instead, the relationship more often than not developed into one of dependency and paternalism (Indra, 1988, p. 162). This result is supported by Beiser's work in 2009, which highlights the power imbalance between the helper and the refugee being helped (p. 566). Neuwirth (1984) found private sponsorship to be a relationship of dependence. Her interviews with refugees 14 to 16 months after arrival indicated that they were well aware that without the assistance of sponsors they would still be languishing in a refugee camps and therefore did not feel free to ask for additional assistance when needed (p. 123). In general, sponsors held power over decisions that impact the refugees' ability to integrate into their new society. The role of the refugee is not defined beyond an expectation to work towards self-sufficiency within the year of sponsorship (p.123). However,

despite the dependence imbedded in the program, others like Neuwirth and Clark (1981) found that the majority of refugees were able to establish relationships with sponsors that were trusting enough to overcome these challenges (p.140).

3.4 CURRENT DEBATES AND DISCUSSION

Recent literature shows a shift away from the evaluation of the settlement outcomes of resettled refugees and towards discussions that focus on the characteristics of sponsoring groups, their motivations, and the problem of dependency that was identified in previous research.

3.4.1 MOTIVATIONS OF SPONSORS

There are a few key sources of motivation for those who make the decision to get involved in private sponsorship. For many, their initial interest is triggered by media attention to one crisis or another (Neuwirth, 1984, p. 120; Eby, Iverson, Smyers and Kekic, 2010, p. 594; Lanphier, 2003, p. 241). Derwing and Mulder (2003) found this to be the case during the sponsorship of Kosovars in the 1990s (p. 219). While some responded as a spontaneous act, for many, taking the step of following through with participating as a sponsor was tied to religious or humanitarian principles (Neuwirth, 1984, p. 120; Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p. 134). Since the inception of the PSR program, churches, individual Christians and Christian, faith-based organizations have been key players and have been the single largest source of sponsors (McKinlay, 2008, p. 1). Bramadat (2014, p. 923) and Pohl (2006, p. 83) both highlight the biblical imperative to welcome the stranger. Private sponsorship is also a tangible way for Christians to demonstrate their faith, fulfilling a desire to play an active role in helping others and to experience personal growth (McKinlay, 2008, p. 42; Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p. 134). Finally, for older generations who came to Canada as refugees themselves or had parents and siblings who did so, private sponsorship allows them to give back (Adelman, 1982 as cited in McKinlay, 2008, p. 43). While these motivations have held true for some time now, many have identified this as an area for future research. It is an area of concern for those looking at the sustainability on the program as attendance in churches that have been a major source of sponsors declines and ages (Denton, 2003, p. 259; Bramadat, 2014, p. 77; McKinlay, 2008, p. 44). Treviranus and Casasola also assert that a more in depth look could produce valuable information for future efforts (p. 199).

3.4.2 COMMUNITIES OF FAITH AND PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP

The involvement of the faith community in private sponsorship has garnered attention in the research in an attempt to understand the potential impacts of this reality on the resettlement experience and the results are mixed. The rules of the private sponsorship program include the instruction to groups not to proselytize and surveys have found that most sponsoring groups respect the religious backgrounds of those they sponsor (Bramadat, 2014, p. 920; McKinlay, 2008, p. 51). While there was some degree of conversion amongst particular groups during the Indochinese crisis, to attribute it to the faith of sponsors alone would be simplistic (McKinlay, 2008, p. 51). McKinlay's study of Hmong refugees found that conversion was an integration strategy that did not imply abandoning traditional values. There were however, some who may

have done so out of obligation and a lack of understanding of what was expected in response to assistance offered by sponsors. In general however, conflicts that did occur were largely cultural rather than religious. Other changes in both the approach to sponsorship and in Canadian society have also mitigated the pressures refugees may previously have felt to convert. It was also the case that sponsors encouraged refugees to make connections to their own community of faith and that for some refugees, faith held no significance at all (2008, pp. 54 – 71).

Other conclusions emerging from the study of the experience of the Indochinese, point to drawbacks of a predominantly Christian sponsoring community. McKinlay (2008) found that being resettled in small communities was more difficult for refugees who were not Christians because the normative Christian foundation of the community caused them to feel a higher degree of difference from the rest of the community. She argues that the feeling of being different would be mitigated in larger urban centers (p. 68). In situations where the religious background of refugees differed from their sponsors, Beiser (2010) also discovered negative implications. In his research on the mental health of refugees he found them to be at a higher risk of depression when this was the case (p. 41; Beiser, 1999). A third area of concern is the language used by faith groups to promote private sponsorship. McKinnon (2009) highlights the scrutiny that should be applied to the way sponsors and refugees are set up as the helper and the vulnerable respectively (p. 319-320). While scripture is used to motivate sponsors to participate, McKinnon argues that it emphasizes service but not the relationships and integration that the program is designed for (319).

3.4.3 DEPENDENCY VS. PARTNERSHIP

As the issue of dependency has emerged, many have identified the needs to exercise caution in the language used to characterize refugees so as not to negatively impact their ability to resettle successfully (Lamba and Krahn, 2003, p. 336). While Lamba and Krahn (2003) found that most refugees were able to maintain an active role in their resettlement, the issue of portraying refugees as vulnerable and needy continues to be discussed. They argue this is needed to address the structural barriers that have the potential to relegate refugees to a role as passive recipients of help (p. 356). McKinnon (2009) argues that this characterization ignores the reality that refugees bring their years of education and professional experience with them when they resettle (p. 322). Lanphier (2003) has also noted that refugees do not necessarily lose their entire social network when they relocate to a new country (p. 249). He goes on to advocate for a structuring of the relationship between sponsor and refugee as one of sharing and partnership (p. 255). This argument is in line with the definition developed by Church World Service which describes integration as “a long-term process, through which refugees and host communities communicate effectively, function together and enrich each other, expand employment options and create economic opportunities, and promote mutual respect and understanding among people of different cultures” (Dwyer, 2010 as cited in Eby, Iverson, Smyers and Kekic, 2010, pp. 597-598).

3.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the fact that very little research has been conducted on the private sponsorship program since the Indochinese crisis, there is much to be learned through future research. Without access to recent research, policy makers, staff at IRCC, private sponsors and sponsorship agreement holders are left with anecdotal evidence and arrival statistics to gauge interest and effectiveness of the program (Treviranus and Casasola, 2003, p. 199). Analyses of issues such as application trends, processing times, and refusal rates as compared to processing times and conditions overseas would provide the information needed to identify issues and training needs overseas (Treviranus and Casasola, 2003, p. 199; McKinlay, 2008, p. 10).

In order to improve the chances of successful resettlement, a number of areas of research should be considered. Beiser (2003) notes that understanding how the supports provided by private sponsors interact with other sources of support would have implications for future policy decision-making and implementation (p. 2014). A related area for future research is identified by Ives, Sinha, and Cnaan (2010) who suggest that an understanding of which supports are necessary for refugees across a range of challenges would allow settlement agencies and sponsors to prioritize their services (p. 86). A third area of research related to improving the settlement experience of refugees would be to contrast the urban and rural experiences of refugee sponsorship (McKinlay, 2008, p. 76)

3.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for the project focuses on the interaction between what sponsors bring to the resettlement experience and the role of MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program in helping sponsors navigate the resettlement process. Constituent Groups have significant influence over the sponsorship process and settlement outcomes. Staff work through these groups to serve the beneficiaries or participants that the sponsorship program exists for, refugees be resettled in Canada. The motivations, expectations, and intercultural competency of sponsors, along with their knowledge of refugee issues and situations of conflict and migration, impact the way an individual or group approaches the work of resettlement. Historically speaking, this includes the way in which constituent groups' are motivated by their Christian faith. That approach will have a significant impact on the extent to which refugees are able to become self-sufficient and integrate into life in Canada.

The characteristics of the particular refugee or family of refugees that is sponsored is a variable over which sponsors, and MCC Manitoba, have little control. They may have made some choices in the matching process but little will be known about what refugees have experienced, what family dynamics are already at play, or what trauma they bring with them. The interaction between the approach taken by sponsors and the experience, expectations and personalities of the refugees being resettled will determine the nature of the relationship between the two groups and create the environment within which settlement outcomes are possible. The resources and expertise that MCC Manitoba's program brings into this relationship of sponsorship will impact

the approach taken by sponsors and therefore the health of that relationship and the success of the sponsorship.

While Memorandums of Understanding and Settlement Plans are in place to provide the parameters of the relationship between MCC and the Constituent Groups, MCC does not have complete control over the activities of the group or the way in which they approach sponsorship. For this reason, the influence that Program staff has with Constituent Groups is very important. The concept of boundary partners within the program design, implementation and evaluation methodology of Outcome Mapping does well in describing this relationship. Boundary partners are those actors with which a program works to effect change; the ability of the program to contribute to change goes through them. Figure 1 depicts the way the program relates to the external environment through its boundary partners. According to Outcome Mapping, the Program works to facilitate that change by providing the resources and supports to these partners over the life of the project (Earl, Carden and Smutylo, 2001, p. 41). For this reason, it is important that MCC Manitoba understands the characteristics and experiences its Constituent Groups in order to identify the activities that will best support them in the resettlement process. This understanding is also key to recruiting Constituent Groups to participate in sponsorship as the outcome of a sponsorship experience has implications for a group's on going participation in the program. The relationship between the Migration and Resettlement Program, its boundary partners and program participants, in this case sponsored refugees, is demonstrated in Figure 2 which also includes other boundary partners with which the program interacts.

Figure 1. Boundary Partners

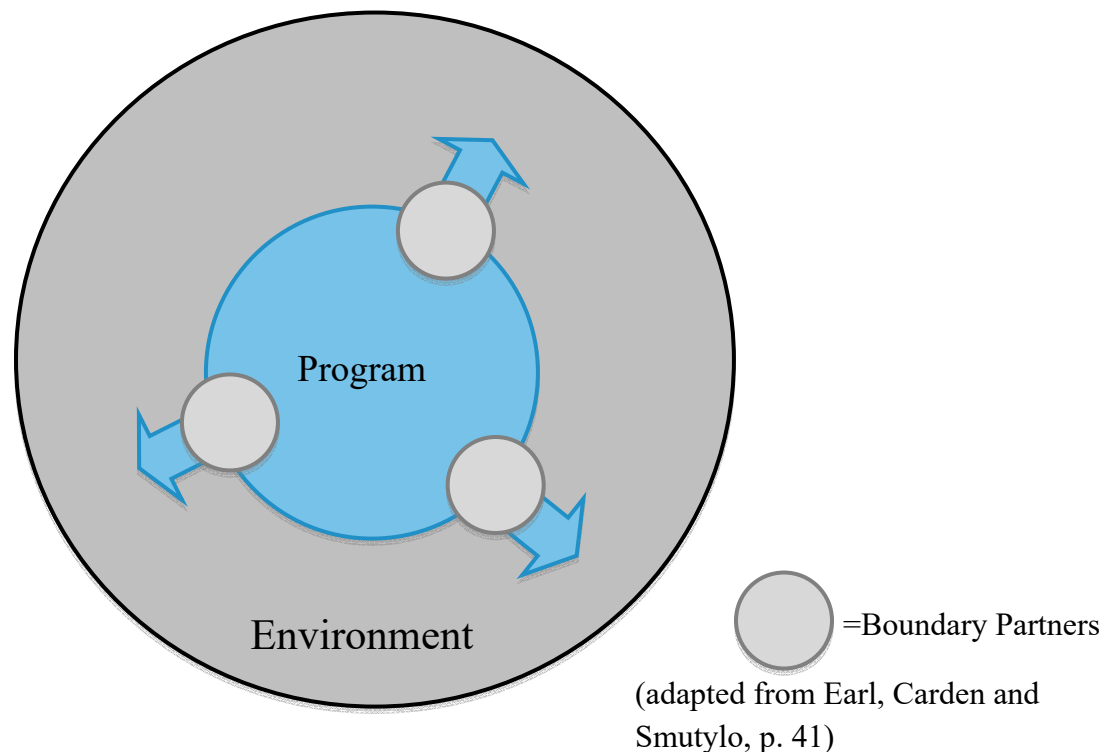
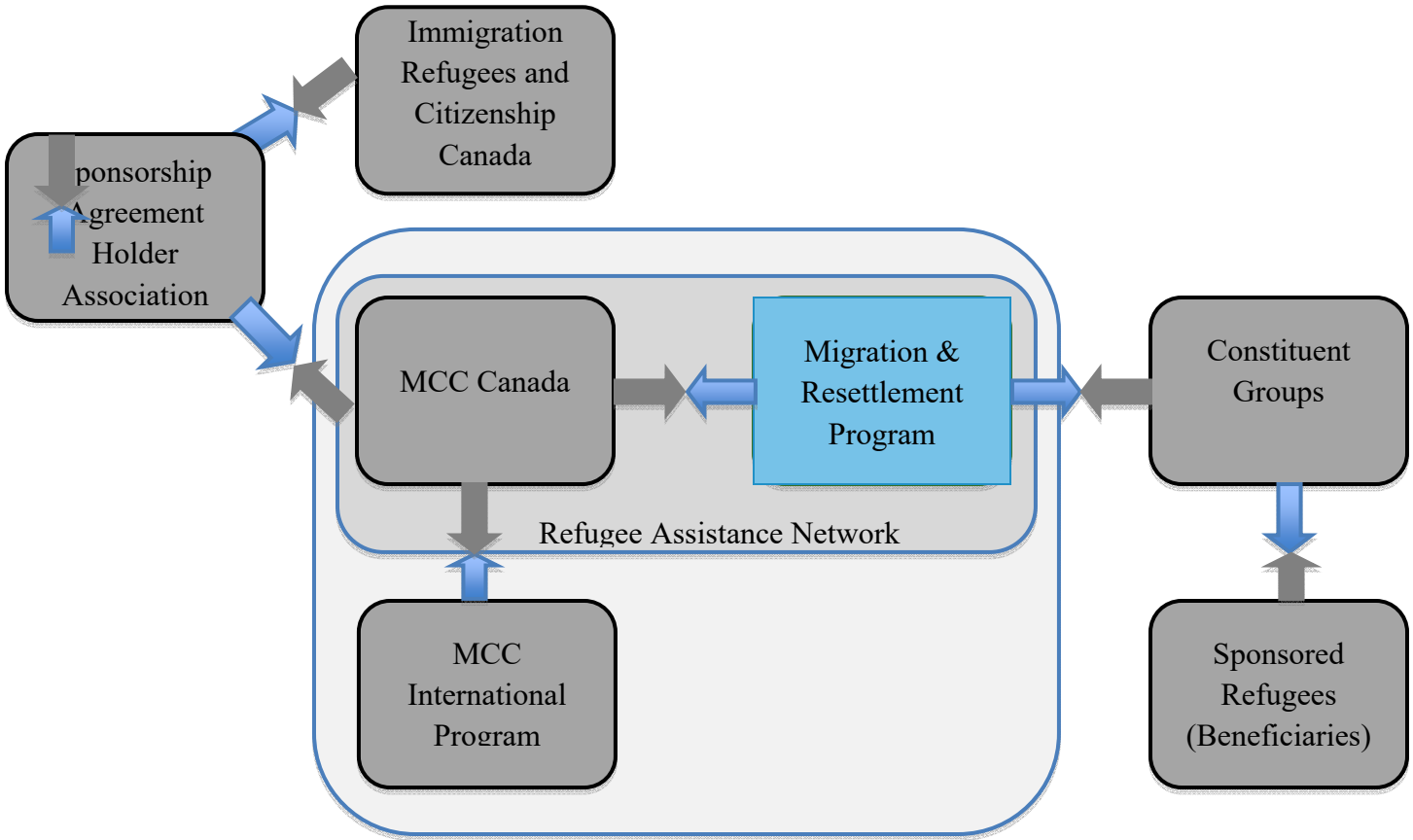


Figure 2. Migration and Resettlement Program Boundary Partners



4.0 Methodology and Methods

This project employs a qualitative approach to the collection and analysis of primary data and document analysis. It is designed as a needs assessment that incorporates the principles of grounded theory, allowing for emerging themes to be rooted in the perspectives of the interview participants (Creswell, 2003, p. 16). The methods include a literature review, interviews with 9 Constituent Groups, and a review of a study regarding how other Sponsorship Agreement Holders across Canada work with their Constituent Groups. The following section provides a detailed overview of the project methodology, research methods and limitations.

4.1 METHODOLOGY

This project is primarily designed as a needs assessment; identifying the challenges experienced by Constituent Groups in the sponsorship process and the gaps in the support provided by MCC Manitoba to Constituent Groups in their work to sponsor and resettle refugees. A needs assessment helps to identify the gap between what assets and resources a group currently has access to, and what they should have access to (Community Tool Box, 2014, para. 4).

The interview findings will be compared to the 2015 knowledge-sharing document distributed by IRCC, which surveyed how SAHs work with Constituent Groups and co-sponsors including the successes and challenges, they experience. The data collection and analysis will inform recommendations that outline activities and map strategies which will enable the program to enhance its contribution to program outcomes (Better Evaluation, n.d., para. 1; Earl, Camden and Smutylo, 2001, p. 61).

4.2 METHODS

4.2.1 DATA COLLECTION

The primary goal of the data collection was to collect feedback directly from the Constituent Groups who have been participating in refugee sponsorship through MCC Manitoba. Semi-structured group interviews were conducted with Constituent Groups with prior experience with refugee sponsorship to explore the research questions. Their unique experiences with refugee sponsorship provided information on their experience with how the program is currently being run and facilitated their feedback on potential improvements to the program.

Interview participants were chosen using purposive sampling in order to ensure that the feedback received was representative of the diversity of the Constituent Groups that MCC Manitoba has been working with. Interviews were conducted with those groups who had sponsored refugees in the last 10 years through MCC Manitoba. From the list of groups who fit that initial criteria, purposeful sampling was used in order to ensure that the data collected would be representative of the denominational affiliation, group structure, and include both urban and rural perspectives. An effort was also made to have groups whose last sponsorships spanned the ten year time period in question, 2005 – 2015. The interviews were approximately 90 minutes in length and

participants were sent the interview questions in advance of the interview (see Appendix 1). The client provided a list of groups who had undertaken a sponsorship in the years 2005 – 2015 to the researcher. The researcher selected groups from that list using the purposive sampling method described above, and a MCC Manitoba staff person with no connection to the organization's Migration and Resettlement Program then contacted each group's contact person by phone to request permission to pass their information along to the researcher. Where no response was received, follow-up was done by phone and email. If the contact person gave their permission to be contacted, the researcher then sent an invitation to participate by email, following up by phone where necessary.

From the 26 groups contacted, a total of 9 interviews were conducted with Constituent Groups who had sponsored refugees within the last 10 years. Of the 9 interviews, one third were conducted with groups based in towns in Southern Manitoba, with the remaining two thirds conducted with groups located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Six of the 9 Constituent Groups were congregations from MCC Manitoba's member denominations. The three remaining groups were a joint effort of two rural congregations, a formal partnership between three neighbourhood churches and one non-profit organization.

While the intention was for the interview sample to be representative of the past ten years, none of the groups who agreed to participate had their last sponsorship take place before 2010. Groups whose last sponsorship took place between 2005 and 2009 were either uninterested in participating or contact information was no longer up to date.

The interviews were semi-structured based on a list of initial questions, however space was given for discussion to address other relevant areas important to the participants' experience. The list of initial questions is included in Appendix A.

4.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis and the principles embedded in grounded theory so that the categories and themes that emerged were rooted in the perspectives of the interview participants (Creswell, 2003, p. 16). Interview data was coded and analyzed in order to discover the emerging themes. Those themes were then taken and compared against a 2015 survey of SAHs conducted by IRCC to explore how SAHs work with constituent groups, including the successes and challenges of working with those groups. This secondary level of analysis was conducted in order to determine whether the challenges experienced by Constituent Groups working with MCC Manitoba were unique or shared by other groups across the country.

4.3 DELIMITATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RISKS

This project is limited by its scope. In an effort to ensure that it remained manageable in size, it focuses on the effectiveness of the Migration and Resettlement Program from the perspective of Constituent Groups with previous experience with the program rather than the refugees who have been sponsored. In addition, groups who have sponsored refugees through other SAHs or

through other mechanisms available through IRCC were also left out of the research. However, the findings of the group interviews were reviewed against a 2015 knowledge-sharing document on the experience of SAHs working with Constituent Groups and Co-Sponsors. The research also does not include the perspectives of those who have never chosen to sponsor refugees through MCC Manitoba.

The project aim is to provide MCC Manitoba with feedback from Constituent Groups in order to strengthen the organization's work and relationships with those groups, and to develop strategies to increase the program's capacity. Therefore, the research did not question the existence or need for the program, only ways in which it could improve.

The level of media coverage of and public interest in the global refugee crisis, and the plight of Syrian refugees in particular, beginning in September 2015 had a significant impact on data collection for the project. Many groups declined due to time constraints because of the recent arrival of a refugee family or work in anticipation of an arrival. In total, 33 groups were contact about participating in the project, resulting in 9 interviews between October 19, 2015 and January 4, 2016. The original project proposal planned for a survey of other SAHs in order to provide context for the findings of the group interviews conducted for the project. That survey was distributed to members of The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association on November 17, 2015. There are currently 97 organizations registered as SAHs with IRCC, and the Association represents the majority of SAHs across Canada, reflecting the diversity of groups working with the PSR program (IRCC, 2015, Sponsorship Agreement Holders; The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holder Association, 2016, About, para. 5). At the end of December 2015, only one response had been received. This is attributed to the massive increase in workload for those coordinating the sponsorship of refugees by SAHs directly or through Constituent Groups and Community Sponsors. The number of Constituent Groups MCC Manitoba is currently working with has not been seen since the time of the Southeast Asian crisis, and most other SAHs would be experiencing the same influx of groups. As a result, the 2015 knowledge-sharing document produced by IRCC, is used in place of the survey to provide a comparison for the findings of the project. Finally, while the list of potential participant groups went back to 2005, those whose last sponsorship occurred more recently were more likely to agree to participate.

An additional limitation resulted from the failure to collect demographic information from interview participants. In general, interview participants were aged 50 years and older, and therefore were not representative of the general population. This is likely due to the fact that the majority of those who had participated in the program during the timeframe identified were of that age and therefore the sample was representative of past participants in refugee sponsorship. The result however, is that the research did not include an analysis of the motivations and experience of younger people who may currently be involved or might choose to be involved in the future.

There exists a possibility that the project may be impacted by the dual role of the researcher as both the interviewer and an employee of MCC Canada, a closely related organization whose head office is also located in Winnipeg. While the researcher is not employed by MCC Manitoba, in general, the MCC constituency does not make a distinction between the two. The client does not see this as a factor that will negatively affect the research as they feel that participants will be more willing to participate in the research if they feel that the main purpose is MCC seeking their feedback rather than an external project. For this reason, the client sees the researcher's employment connection as an asset. In addition, participants were informed of this dual role in the invitation to participate, the participant consent form, and at the start of each interview.

Finally, the Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Victoria, in its review of the project, concluded that the project activities posed minimal risk to participants.

5.0 Findings: Interviews with Constituent Groups

This section of the report will provide an overview of the key findings from the interviews with Constituent Groups

Interviewees had much to share about their experiences with sponsoring refugees including information about motivations for participation and in general, groups demonstrated a shared commitment to continued sponsorships despite the challenges. The interview findings are presented in the first three sections named below. A fourth and final section highlights relevant findings from a Refugee Sponsorship Training Program knowledge-sharing document on how SAHs work with Constituent Groups and co-sponsors, providing national context for the finding related to the Migration and Resettlement Program's support role.

1. Constituent Group Identity
2. Role of the Migration and Resettlement Program
3. Program Outcomes
4. National Context

5.1 IDENTITY: HISTORY, MOTIVATION, CHALLENGES

5.1.1 CONSTITUENT GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

All of the congregation based Constituent Group histories of refugee sponsorship began with the Indochinese 'boat people' crisis of the 70s and 80s. One of the remaining two groups includes members who participated in refugee sponsorship during the 'boat people' crisis with a different group. A few individuals from various groups recalled memories of their parents' participation in refugee sponsorship during that crisis; however, the non-profit group's history with sponsorship does not go back as far. Instead, they first came together as a response to the 2001 earthquake in El Salvador and helped with MCC's relief and housing reconstruction efforts. Later on, they decided to become involved in refugee sponsorship out of a desire to take on work in their own community, and the connection to MCC Manitoba was natural given their previous experience with the organization.

While the 'boat people' crisis created an awareness of refugee sponsorship in general, specific sponsorships were initiated by a variety of events and factors including media attention and community members or former refugees approaching the congregation with names of friends or family to sponsor. Many groups indicated that Program staff has also approached them from time to time about specific sponsorship needs.

The frequency with which each group takes on sponsorship cases varies. The group organized as a non-profit estimated that they had sponsored 25 families over the past 15 years. Another group was doing one sponsorship per year but in the last six years has only taken on three cases and cited a slow down in the process as the main reason for the drop in frequency. Others choose to consider sponsorships when they have raised enough money to undertake a new case, when they

are approached by MCC, or when former refugees approach them. Two of the groups, after successive difficult cases, have not taken a new case in a number of years, choosing instead to provide financial assistance to sponsorships taken on by other Constituent Groups.

While each Constituent Group has its own way of managing responsibilities, in general, a small committed group ends up carrying much of the workload. Some congregations have a standing committee that carries the refugee sponsorship agenda whereas others only form a committee when they take on a sponsorship case. For the constituent group that is a formal partnership as well as the non-profit, a permanent board or coordinating group is in place with defined roles such as Chair and Treasurer. For the congregations, the broader church community contributes to the financial support and collects gifts in kind for the set-up of the housing of the refugees. Other forms of partnership that have emerged in the course of Constituent Group activities over the years are:

- With churches or cultural associations to sponsor refugees whose country of origin is the same as that of the cultural association or church membership,
- Between rural and urban churches or Constituent Groups,
- With other Mennonite or other churches in the same neighbourhood, and
- With other churches within smaller rural communities.

5.1.2 MOTIVATIONS

Every group interviewed cited feelings of compassion, generosity and empathy as reasons for their participation in refugee sponsorship. One participant commented that to choose to participate in refugee sponsorship represents a “willingness to be human and share out of what you have” (Interviewee A, personal communication, November 13, 2015). Alleviating suffering and acting out of a humanitarian response were also mentioned as motivations for responding. In general, participants felt that it was a fulfilling experience in that they got more out of the experience than they gave.

In each interview, participants attributed their participation to an obligation and responsibility. One of the reasons given for this responsibility was the reality that they live in a privileged and comfortable society and have an obligation to give out of what they have. A few participants described feeling an obligation to respond once they were aware of a particular refugee situation or crisis. As one interviewee put it, “there are 60 million refugees and displaced people in the world today...we can’t just pretend that it isn’t happening” (Interviewee B, personal communication, November 15, 2015). Another source of responsibility described by all groups was the obligation placed upon them by the values of their faith. Interview participants quoted passages from the bible to love others as He loved us, to be their brother’s keeper and to look after the orphan and the widow. While faith was found to be an important motivator, groups do not use faith as criteria for selecting refugees to sponsor, noting that conversion “is not the reason why we bring people here” (Interviewee C, personal communication, November 3, 2015). Instead, conversations about faith “come as a result of relationship, when you become friends

and begin to know about their families, their faith and their culture (Interviewee D, personal communication, November 25, 2015).

Family history was a significant motivator for many participants. Most could point to parents or grandparents who came to Canada as refugees and a few individuals were refugees themselves. One participant said that the experience helped them to connect with their family history. Some concern was expressed for the fact that as this connection to family history becomes further removed, younger generations will not have the same motivation to become involved in refugee sponsorship.

Finally, not withstanding the other important motivators, media attention provides an important push that moves people to action. Most groups indicated that at least part of their motivation came from the awareness created by media attention to specific situations such as the Indochinese crisis and the admission of Bosnian Muslim refugees in 1992. Groups saw the media as the main driver behind the current interest in sponsoring Syrian refugees. One group commented that they hoped MCC Manitoba would be able to find a way to leverage what appears to be a historical moment in the country to further both its work with the constituency in sponsoring refugees and the opportunity presented to influence policy.

5.1.3 SPONSORSHIP CHALLENGES

Constituent Groups face challenges in the lead up to refugees' arrival, throughout the course of the year of sponsorship, and beyond that first year if their relationships with the refugees continue beyond the initial yearlong commitment.

All but one group indicated that the time commitment is a challenge. One group described it as long periods of waiting combined with intense periods of activity; particularly in the first few weeks as they assist with appointments and obtaining items such as health cards and social insurance numbers. Coordinating committees often have difficulty finding volunteers, particularly in smaller congregations where everyone is already involved with other programs. Even in cases where volunteers can choose their level of commitment, participants said that you could easily end up in over your head with phone calls at 2 o'clock in the morning and family crises. One participant noted that in an emergency situation they "don't have any professionals to ask how to handle a particular issue, we're just going in on a prayer" (Interviewee E, personal communication, November 25, 2015). The time commitment required was also noted as a barrier to participation for young people or those with young families. The one case where time was not mentioned as a challenge was one of the rural groups where most individuals on the groups' committee were retired or are farmers whose work is seasonal.

The finances required to take on sponsorship were included as a challenge for those groups based in small congregations. For groups with larger congregations or multiple congregations to draw on, raising funds is seen as the easy part. Those groups that struggle to raise funds either participate less frequently or have chosen to partner with other Constituent Groups.

When asked about the challenges faced in the settlement process groups highlighted finding housing, accessing employment opportunities, and the tension between taking time to learn English and finding a job as quickly as possible. However, all groups explained that learning the language was key to refugees' ability to integrate into society, including as a requirement for employment.

A number of groups felt ill equipped to help refugees process the traumatic experiences they might come with. Participants highlighted the difference between being physically safe and have mental and emotional safety. Language barriers and different cultural understandings of mental health make the issue of trauma difficult to address with refugees and counseling resources can be hard to access.

Sponsorship in rural areas presents some additional unique circumstances. Challenges relate to the lack of access to services found in larger centers and the lack of diversity in some communities. Each of the three rural groups found themselves driving into Winnipeg or larger towns for medical appointments, and language and education services, and while housing can be less expensive, there can be fewer rental properties available. One group found it difficult for families with older children who found no social network to connect with. In these smaller towns many refugees move on either mid-sponsorship or at the end of the year of sponsorship to Winnipeg or other major Canadian cities. However, some have chosen to stay or have indicated an interest in returning once they have completed their education.

A final challenge came from managing refugees' expectations of the sponsorship experience. Many of the groups interviewed indicated that refugees either lacked information about the program or had been misinformed about the types of support sponsors would provide. While MCC Manitoba provides recommendations related to the amount of financial support to provide, constituent groups make their own decisions about what to provide and how to manage that support. Some had strong opinions that the recommended level of support was insufficient, but as was expressed by one interviewee, "it isn't enough to live on but if they need to go on social assistant after [the sponsorship period] at least it won't be a shock" (Interviewee F, personal communication, November 3, 2015). In a few cases, groups found that the refugees compared the level of support they were receiving with other refugees and then became unhappy with the help they were receiving if it was less than that of others. A number of the groups who sponsored also found that in some cases refugees were unhappy with receiving used items.

5.2 THE ROLE OF MCC MANITOBA

Constituent Groups choose to work through MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program for many reasons. Many Constituent Groups benefit from the good reputation MCC Manitoba has in the community when they are recruit volunteers. One group said that it has allowed a diversity of churches in the community who would not normally work together on projects, to come together to share the work of sponsoring refugees because of the name

recognition of MCC in their community. Each of the groups interviewed indicated their appreciation for the experience of MCC in refugee sponsorship and the organization's longevity in the places refugees are coming from. Other characteristics used to describe the reasons why groups choose to work with the Program were professional, well organized and trustworthy. One constituent group described MCC as the primary agency that their church works with because "it is part of us and is our expression of how we want to help in the world" (Interviewee G, personal communication, December 13, 2015).

All of the groups interviewed commented on the importance of the Program staff's support in completing the paperwork required to undertake a sponsorship. Groups were also unanimous in their affirmation for the resourcing role staff plays in answering questions throughout the sponsorship and settlement process, particularly in situations of crisis and cultural misunderstanding. One group found the information session that was organized to educate them about the culture of the family they were sponsoring important to their preparations for the family's arrival. However, two of the groups located in rural areas commented that at times they felt that their distance from Winnipeg impacted the amount of support they received.

One area of support a few of the groups felt could be improved was in the follow-up done after refugees arrive. Most groups take it upon themselves to contact MCC Manitoba staff when issues arise. One group in particular felt that having staff check-in periodically, even when nothing is going wrong, would help them feel more connected and supported. There was also support for having some mechanism in place to evaluate the group's experience following the year of sponsorship. Two groups specifically advocated for follow-up with refugees after a few months or even one year to see how they resettlement is going. One of those groups indicated that this had happened with one of their recent sponsorships and felt that it was very helpful. It also provided the sponsors with questions to be thinking about from the start of the year of sponsorship.

According to the majority of the groups interviewed, MCC Manitoba plays an important role as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder. Many groups commented on the role the organization plays as their connection to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, voicing their appreciation for having someone available that understands the changing policies and procedures of that department. Constituent Groups also see MCC's SAH status as way to have their voices heard by the government when it comes to frustrations with the sponsorship program and advocacy related to refugee policy.

A number of groups commented on the need for Program staff to play a facilitation role in the constituency. Constituent groups felt that staff were well placed to facilitate partnerships between Constituent Groups and with others in the community. As a central point of contact for groups interested in refugee sponsorship, groups felt that staff could help match groups and individuals with the time to undertake sponsorships with those with the finances to fund the activities so that neither time nor finances would be a barrier to participation.

Constituent Groups would also like to see Program staff maintain and expand their presence in the constituency in two ways. First, interview participants felt that the Coordinator's time should be freed up from doing a lot of paperwork so that they could spend more time speaking with the constituency, including church conference pastors who hold a leadership role within their respective denominations. Two groups felt that existing sponsors or those with previous experience could also be called upon to speak to community groups about their experiences. Secondly, a number of groups felt a need for educational resources on dealing with trauma and integration issues with the refugees they have sponsored. One group suggested that educational workshops on topics of justice and peacebuilding in their communities would also be welcomed.

5.3 PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The themes related to the outcomes of the program are grouped into two sections. The first section describes outcomes related to changes in the attitudes and understanding of Constituent Group members. A second section covers sponsor understandings of the integration of refugees to their new society.

5.3.1 SPONSOR LEARNING OUTCOMES

Nearly all of the Constituent Groups interviewed discussed the need to make adjustments to the expectations they entered with. As one interview participant put it, "when you are dealing with humans you can't expect it to go perfectly" (Interviewee H, personal communication, October 22, 2015). Constituent Groups noted that every individual and ever family situation is different and their main task is to find those resources that will fit the needs of each situation. While some interview participants expressed the hope that long lasting relationships would form, they also acknowledged that that is not the overall goal and that the year of sponsorship may only be one step in the journey. Particularly in rural areas, Constituent Groups have come to accept that many refugees may choose to move to Winnipeg or other larger cities.

Many of the groups interviewed commented on the need for patience with the settlement process. One group was told that they should expect it to take five years for the family they were sponsoring to be integrated into society. At first they did not believe that it would take that amount of time but they now realize how long the process takes. At least half of the groups interviewed emphasized the need to be patient, listen and, as much as possible, allow those they have sponsored figure things out on their own. As one participant put it, "there is more than one right way to do things" (Interviewee C, personal communication, November 3, 2015).

Participants in each of the groups interviewed said that their perspective on the world has changed as a result of their experience with refugee sponsorship. A couple of participants felt that they already had a good grasp of what is going on in the world and that their experience has only confirmed what they already knew. In general however, the majority commented that the experience makes global situations feel more personal and motivates them to learn about the

places refugees they have sponsored come from, resulting in a broader understanding of conflict situations.

Many participants felt that changes in their understanding came out of building relationships with those they sponsor. One participant said that “the places in the news become real and full of people like us” (Interviewee I, personal communication, October 22, 2015). The idea of sponsorship being about relationship was important to a number of groups. Making personal connections was seen as an important part of helping refugees through inevitable periods of homesickness. Participants also said that the experience had helped them to be more empathetic and accepting of other cultures.

5.3.2 NEWCOMER INTEGRATION

When asked about what integration looks like for refugees, some responses were limited to more instrumental aspects of resettlement such as success in finding jobs, learning the language and owning a home. Of these responses, language was deemed to be extremely important for refugees to be able to expand their social network beyond those from their own culture. A number of groups commented that when refugees found employment with others from their own culture they were less likely to learn English.

On the other hand, existing social networks comprised of family members who resettled in previous years and friends from the same ethnic community, were found to ease the integration process. In particular, existing newcomers have been helpful in assisting refugees adjust to a new culture. Many groups found that refugees naturally sought out religious and cultural communities similar to what they would have had back home rather than or in addition to building relationships with the sponsoring community.

All of the Constituent Groups interviewed found that integration was easier for younger refugees and the second generation. They described the increased difficulty for those refugees who were born and lived in one country for decades to try and re-locate and rebuild their lives. In those cases, sponsors said that the first generation knows it will be difficult but are doing it for their children.

Overall, interview participants described integration as a process that includes the sponsoring community. One group noted that in regards to the community, acceptance and integration are two different things. They found that integration becomes easier as the community becomes more ethnically diverse and that as more sponsorship occurs, the community becomes more educated and welcoming. One of the groups interviewed was told, to their surprise, that it would take five years for the family they sponsored to be fully settled. They found it hard to believe but in the end found the five year prediction to be more realistic. In one rural community, the Constituent Group felt that while progress had been made, the community still had a long way to go in their understanding and attitudes towards newcomers. Although it is no longer unusual to see newcomers in the community, some aspects of life are still segregated such as the way

groups interact in the high school. On the other hand, at last summer's town fair, the girl named the fair's Princess came from a refugee family. The interview participant who described this example of acceptance said that while it may seem symbolic it should be seen as an indicator of changing attitudes.

5.4 NATIONAL CONTEXT

In March 2015, the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) produced a knowledge-sharing document on the experiences of SAHs working with Constituent Groups and co-sponsors. Interviews were conducted with 15 SAH representatives. A sixteenth interview was conducted with a representative of a Constituent Group. It should also be noted that MCC Canada's SAH representative participated in the study. Of the SAHs interviewed, 11 do not sponsor refugees without Constituent Groups (RSTP, 2015, pp. 4-6). The areas of the study relevant to this project's purposes are recruitment and, application processing, settlement support, and successes and challenges.

5.4.1 RECRUITMENT

The study found that some SAHs actively seek out Constituent Groups while others simply work with the churches in their area. Methods of promotion of refugee sponsorship included web, social media, church bulletins, and presentations to churches and new pastors. One SAH in British Columbia procured funding to develop a promotional film (RSTP, 2015, p. 7). Another SAH indicated that they are often contacted due to media coverage of their programming (p. 8). The types of groups SAHs will work with range from working only with their denomination's churches to any community, religious or other established organization (p. 9).

5.4.2 APPLICATION PROCESSING

All SAHs help with sponsors' applications to some extent. Some SAHs go so far as to include a cover letter with the application package to strengthen the submission. One SAH always includes a synopsis of the refugee's story, often providing additional country condition research (p. 12). Many SAHs are also involved in assisting with the completion of the refugees' application forms. Usually Constituent Groups or co-sponsors assist refugees to complete their forms and almost all SAHs review the application forms and submit them to the Centralized Processing Office in Winnipeg (p. 13).

5.4.3 SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

Most SAHs indicated that the responsibility for settlement support depends on the arrangements made between the SAH and Constituent Group or co-sponsor where applicable. In general, the majority of the support is provided by a Constituent Group or co-sponsor, with the SAH getting involved in various capacities in support of the Constituent Group or co-sponsor. These support activities include welcoming newcomers at the airport, providing advice, helping with forms and connecting newcomers with services and programs (p. 20). Most SAHs use Settlement Plans that outline who is responsible for different aspects of settlement support (p. 22).

Monitoring of settlement support is the responsibility of each SAH and is required by its Sponsorship Agreement. Those SAHs who work through Constituent Groups or co-sponsors monitor the settlement to varying degrees. Two SAHs require regular updates and one SAH sends out quarterly reports. Other SAHs do not have specific monitoring methods but help where needed. One SAH uses a survey after the year of sponsorship to gather feedback from Constituent Groups on how the sponsorship went and what improvements could be made in the future.

5.4.4 SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

The RSTP document concludes with a section on the successes and challenges of working with Constituent Groups and co-sponsors. Some SAH representatives find that they do not have enough Constituent Groups willing to take on a sponsorship. They find it very difficult to receive calls from refugees' relatives who are unable to find a Constituent Group to work with. Some faith-based SAHs have found that their Constituent Groups, usually churches, are facing a dwindling and ageing volunteer base (p. 25). Many SAH representatives find it difficult to keep up with their workload given their limited resources, especially those who are volunteers or only work part-time. One SAH noted that their Constituent Groups are at times unaware of their cultural biases and position of power. These groups may not consider that refugees are not comfortable enough to raise concerns (p. 25).

Despite the challenges, SAH representatives indicated that working with Constituent Groups and co-sponsors allows them to sponsor many more refugees that they would otherwise be able to accommodate (p. 25). They note that the involvement of Constituent Groups helps with civic engagement and find the groups to be passionate and inspiring. One SAH highlighted the opportunity the program presents for churches from different denominations to work together and the benefits that can result from connecting co-sponsors with Constituent Groups, expanding the world view of Constituent Groups and helping newcomers to expand their social network beyond their ethnic group (p. 26).

5.5 SUMMARY

The interview findings offer a window into the experiences of Constituent Groups engaged in refugee sponsorship through MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program. Overall, interview participants found the experience to be challenging and enriching, expanding their understanding of global issues through meaningful relationship with sponsored refugees. Their motivations for participation varied but were broadly based on past experience, family history and feelings of compassion and empathy, and enhanced by media attention to specific crises. All experienced challenges in the sponsorship processes, some of which were beyond their control. In general they found Program staff to be helpful in addressing those challenges but they also offered ways in which that support could be improved.

Information on the experience of SAHs across the country provided an overview of the ways in which other SAHs work with their Constituent Groups. It is clear from the result of they study, that there is a wide range in the level of capacity and activity amongst SAHs. There are no clear best practices that emerge from these findings but there may be specific activities that one could learn from.

The next section will discuss these findings in greater detail and outline key themes for consideration as the program looks to build the sustainability and capacity of the program.

6.0 Discussion and Analysis

MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program has identified understanding its relationship with its Constituent Groups as key to the capacity and sustainability of the program. The findings of this project provide important feedback about the current effectiveness of the program, the role of program staff and the organization, and how to focus promotion and recruitment efforts.

As demonstrated by the interview findings, the program has maintained a committed core of Constituent Groups with a long history of sponsorship, motivated by their faith, humanitarian principles and personal histories. The summary of interview responses provides a basis for assessing the interest level for the program in the constituency and emphasizes the importance, not only of the technical expertise of program staff, but also the value placed by participants on staff's facilitation and education role. This supports the notion that program activities do have an impact on program outcomes through their influence on Constituent Groups, the program's boundary partners.

This section takes the interview findings, alongside the context provided by the literature review and the national survey conducted by the RTSP, and discusses their implications for current program activities. The discussion of this analysis is presented in three main sections. The first section, sponsor identity, examines the motivations of sponsoring groups. A second section on program outcomes that looks at the ways in which the approach taken by sponsors impacts program outcomes and the integration of refugees. Finally, the third section reviews the ways in which program activities support Constituent Groups in their sponsorships and the program in general.

6.1 SPONSOR IDENTITY

An understanding of who makes up MCC Manitoba's Constituent Groups and why they are involved in sponsorship provides important feedback for ongoing promotion and recruitment for the refugee sponsorship program.

As compared to previous literature on the motivations of sponsoring groups, the motivations for participation described by the interview participants demonstrate that motivations have not changed significantly since the PSR Program's inception. For those interview participants who were directly involved in the Indochinese refugee crisis their motivations remain largely unchanged. With all but one of the Constituent Groups interviewed having connections to sponsorship during that crisis, the longstanding motivations of these groups are themes MCC Manitoba can continue to draw on in the promotion of the program.

Motivations due to Christian faith remain strong and were noted by most participants. Private sponsorship remains a tangible expression of faith in which individuals and church communities can participate. A number of the groups interviewed directly quoted the biblical passage from

Matthew 25:35, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me”.

The literature review identified that besides religious motivations, humanitarian principles were the other important motivators (Neuwirth, 1984, p. 120). The majority of interview participants noted that compassion, empathy, and sharing out of what they have are also part of their personal motivations. These motivations maybe particularly important for those participants with less history with the program, as they do not have the same historical motivations for participating in sponsorship. Older generations who may have come to Canada as refugees or who are only a generation or two removed from that experience are more likely motivated by historical experience. Combined with a declining and ageing volunteer base in churches, the inclusion of a younger demographic will need to draw on other motivations.

A final common thread in both the literature review and the interview findings is that media attention to particular refugee situation drives people both renews interest and motivates people to get involved that have never been involved before (Neuwirth, 1984, p. 120; Eby, Iverson, Smyers and Kekic, 2010, p. 594; Lanphier, 2003, p. 241). In the case of the Indochinese, Bosnian Muslims, and the current Syrian refugee crisis, interview participants named the media was named as a motivating factor. The recent media attention on Syrian refugees has resulted in a large number of new groups coming to MCC Manitoba interested in sponsoring refugees. Many of these fall outside of what MCC Manitoba would consider its usual constituency. While MCC Manitoba has not done much to reach out beyond what would be considered its Constituent Groups in the past, it would not be unusual in the SAH to do so (RSTP, 2015, p. 9).

6.2 PROGRAM OUTCOMES

6.2.1 APPROACH TO SPONSORSHIP

The relationship between Constituent Groups and the refugees they sponsor can significantly impact settlement outcomes as well as the desire for sponsors to become repeat participants in the program. The educational role of program staff is important as they help prepare Constituent Groups to welcome refugees into their communities.

General information provided in advance of and immediately following refugees’ arrival on how the PSR Program works lays an important foundation for the sponsor-refugee relationship. Many interview participants indicated that a lack of information or even misinformation created expectations that were unexpected by sponsors and were difficult for them to meet. After research into the early years of the PSR program found that refugees compared the level of support received from different Constituent Groups, it was suggested that organizations provide more guidance to sponsoring groups (Beiser, 1999, p. 123). Many SAHs now use a cost table developed by IRCC based on family size however some adjust the amounts based on actual living expenses in the region and others deduct in-kind donations from the calculations (RTSP, 2015, p. 17). Interview participants indicated that MCC Manitoba recommends allowance

amounts that follow the assistance that would be available from social assistance so that in the event that after the first year, social assistance is required, there is not a large drop off in household funds. Some sponsors felt that these amounts were too low for their families to live on but understood the need for the recommended limits.

It is also important for sponsors to understand their role in the refugee's settlement process. Some interview participants, especially those in rural locations, noted that it is important to understand that refugees may move on to larger cities after the year of sponsorship comes to an end. One group learned that while they may play a significant role in refugees' lives, they are only a part of the journey and therefore long-term relationships may not develop. Given that previous research found that one third to almost half of refugees re-locate within the first few years after arrival, groups should be prepared for this possibility (Denton, 2003, p. 268; Krahn, Derwing and Abu-Laban, 2005, p. 875).

According to interview participants, misunderstandings due to cultural differences were found to be more common than those due to religious differences. This is a departure from the findings of Beiser's research on the mental health of sponsorships during the Indochinese crisis where refugees were at higher risk of depression when their faith differed from that of their sponsors. Religious differences were also found to be problematic in smaller, often rural communities who were predominantly Christian, which made differences more pronounced (McKinlay, 2008, p. 68). A reduction in challenges due to religious differences may be a result of increased diversity in Canadian society as well as a change in the way sponsorship is approached. Those interview participants who indicated that they do have conversations about their faith with the refugees they sponsor said that it comes up at the initiative of the refugees themselves and as a natural extension of being in authentic relationship.

The way in which sponsors approach the settlement process is important for achieving good long-term settlement outcomes. Many sponsors invest a lot of energy in the instrumental aspects of settlement including housing, employment and language acquisition. Addressing these components of settlement are necessary for meeting basic needs however the creators of the PSR Program envisioned that the personal support would result in better outcomes as compared to Government Assisted Refugees (Indra, 1988, p. 160). The literature does indicate that in the past, many sponsors not only addressed basic needs but also worked to develop meaningful relationships with the refugees they had sponsored. For many of the interview participants, building relationships is the most transformative part of the sponsorship process. Participants said that these relationships changed their understanding of conflict, of the countries the refugees came from and caused them to become more empathetic and understanding of other cultures. A SAH participant in the RSTP study emphasized that the PSR program creates this opportunity for Constituent Groups as well as helps co-sponsoring newcomers to expand their social network.

The importance of relationship to the sponsorship process is best understood with in a conceptualization of sponsorship as a partnership between sponsors and refugees (Lanphier,

2003, p. 255). One of the most significant concerns that emerged from the research into the Indochinese crisis and is a subject of ongoing debate is the danger of the characterization of refugees as vulnerable and needy with sponsors as the helpers and refugees as those needing help (Neuwirth, 1984, p. 123; Beiser, 2009, p. 566). What is required is to move beyond a definition of the role of refugees that is confined to a responsibility to work towards self-sufficiency, to one that recognizes the skills, social network and life experience that refugees bring with them when they resettle (Neuwirth, 1984, p. 123; Lanphier, 2003, p. 255, McKinnon, 2009, p. 322). A number of interview participants highlighted their efforts to include refugees in decision-making throughout the sponsorship process. Some did acknowledge that it is important to be aware of how easy it could be to try and provide advice rather than be patient and let refugees figure things out on their own. This is an area for ongoing education for Constituent Groups who may be unaware of their biases and position of power, especially when refugees may not feel comfortable raising concerns (RSTP, 2015, p. 26).

6.2.2 INTEGRATION

The integration of refugees into Canadian society is a process that involves both the refugee and the sponsoring community. Interview participants from one Constituent Group highlighted that for the sponsoring community, acceptance is different than integration. Ideas about what integration means may be connected to the way sponsors approach the sponsorship process and is therefore an area where program staff play an educational role. For some interview participants, integration is defined by accomplishments such as gaining employment, learning English and owning a home. This may be indicative an instrumental approach to sponsorship whereas those interview participants who saw sponsorship as being primarily about relationship tended to define integration as a long-term process that included social and cultural aspects of a refugees' life. Sustained relationships have shown to improve integration levels over the long term and have proven to be of value to the majority of refugees (Woon, 1987, p. 144; Lamba and Krahn, 2003, p. 348).

Despite the benefits of long-term relationships, it is clear that existing newcomers from similar cultural and religious backgrounds also add value to the resettlement process. Many Constituent Groups found that in some cases refugees sought to make connections with similar religious and ethnic communities rather than with their sponsors. Interview participants also reported that existing newcomers have been helpful in assisting refugees to adjust to their new culture. This range of approaches by refugees in creating social connections may be an indicator of the intergenerational tension that can occur as refugees seek to maintain their cultural identity while at the same time face pressures to assimilate (Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p.138). This tension can be exacerbated by the reality that integration is more difficult for first generation refugees than it is for younger generations according to interview participants.

6.3 PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Migration and Resettlement Program staff continue to provide invaluable support to Constituent Groups engaging in refugee sponsorship. Many existing activities should continue, while at the same time other types of support may be required to meet the changing needs of these groups.

6.3.1 TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND SUPPORT

The two most universally appreciated supports provided by Migration and Resettlement Program staff are assistance with paperwork and advice throughout the settlement process. This is consistent with the support provided by other SAHs, most of whom assist sponsors with paperwork and review forms before submitting them for processing (RSTP, 2015, p. 12-13). All of the groups interviewed raise the issue of complicated paperwork as a task that MCC assisted them with. It is only one of many frustrations with the bureaucracy of IRCC along with long processing times and information gaps throughout the processes (Denton, 2003, p. 267; Derwing and Mulder, 2003, pp. 229-234). The role of MCC Manitoba as the SAH provides both a connection to IRCC that allows Constituent Groups to participate in the problem and a buffer to deal with and interpret the changing policies and procedures of the program.

Advice throughout the settlement process once refugees have arrived is a second support that is highly valued by Constituent groups. Again, MCC Manitoba's program is not unique in this case as other SAHs take on an advice giving role as well as welcoming newcomers at the airport and connecting newcomers with services and programs (RSTP, 2015, p. 20). MCC Migration and Resettlement Program staff provide advice in regards to financial support, family conflict and navigating cultural differences. Usually this support is provided when called upon. Some interview participants indicated that periodic phone calls initiated by staff to check in would be appreciated. The trust Constituent Groups have in the advice staff provides may help to avoid some of the pitfalls of decisions made by groups in the past that created challenges for the refugees they sponsored such as arranging housing in neighbourhoods that become unaffordable without sponsorship support (Beiser, 2003, p. 207). Many of these issues can be addressed in the creation and review of a group's Settlement Plan. Something most SAHs use to outline sponsorship responsibilities (RSTP, 2015, p. 22). Many of the challenges that Constituent Groups faced in the past and continue to face are simply part of the sponsorship experience including finding housing and volunteers along with the time commitment required. They also must help refugees in their search for employment and the tension that can exist between taking time to learn English and the pressure to find employment (Neuwirth and Clark, 1981, p. 37; Woon, 1987, pp. 136-137). While MCC staff cannot remove those challenges, they can provide advice on how to navigate these issues based on past experience.

Resources that assist sponsors to help refugees manage their mental health and deal with the trauma they have experienced is an area that requires more attention according to a few of the groups interviewed. One interview participant said that they "feel ill equipped to help refugees deal with the trauma that they have experienced" (Interviewee J, personal communication,

October 25, 2015). They worried in particular about the Syrian families they were anticipating receiving in the coming months. Interview participants recognized the difficulty of finding counseling services in a refugee's first language and acknowledged that in some cultures, seeking out the help of a third party may not be an accepted way of dealing with mental health related issues. This challenge in particular was a key reason for two of the Constituent Groups interviewed to delay taking on a subsequent sponsorship.

6.3.2 MONITORING & EVALUATION

The Sponsorship Agreement held by MCC Canada requires that settlement support be monitored by the SAH. The policy and procedures manual used by each provincial MCC office, including MCC Manitoba provides the following guideline for evaluation and monitoring:

- Initial orientation meeting of the Coordinator, the sponsor, and the sponsored family to explain the sponsorship program, roles and responsibilities, budget and financial commitments and any concerns the newcomer or sponsoring group has.
- Monthly face-to-face meetings for the first six months with the sponsor group contact to review progress and answer questions. Meetings every three months following the first six months.
- Written reports throughout the year including two progress reports and a final evaluation that includes the sponsors and newcomers.
- A visit with the newcomer family during the first period of sponsorship to review issues and concerns (MCC Canada, 2010, p. 88).

Other SAHs monitor sponsorships to different degrees from having no specific methods in place to requiring quarterly reports. Given the lack of recent research into the effectiveness of the program, monitoring efforts by SAHs are the only evidence policy makers and IRCC staff have to work with when identifying and proposing changes to the program (Treviranus and Casasola, 2003, p. 199). Consistent monitoring and evaluation processes on the part of Migration and Resettlement Program staff would allow MCC Manitoba to maintain current records on its program's effectiveness and gather feedback from Constituent Groups.

Constituent Groups are also interested in consistent follow-up on sponsorship activity. One group noted that with a recent sponsorship, a Migration and Resettlement staff person came to have a follow-up meeting with the family they had sponsored and had a comprehensive list of questions developed to assess the families' experience. An interview participant from that group indicated that it would have been helpful to have that list in advance, even from the outset, so that they had an idea of what kinds of questions to consider throughout the settlement process. They indicated that although they had done a number of sponsorships over the years, this was the first time a meeting of this nature had taken place and recommended that it become a regular practice. Having groups learn from their own experiences of sponsorship would be particularly valuable to those groups who intend to continue taking on sponsorships, providing them an opportunity to reflect on their approach and its impact on the refugees they sponsor.

6.3.3 FACILITATION AND CONNECTIONS

MCC Manitoba was seen by interview participants to occupy a unique place within the constituency. As the central point of contact through which Constituent Groups are able to engage in refugee sponsorship, a number of groups interviewed thought that Migration and Resettlement staff would have a good understanding of who is involved, where the needs are, and what partnerships might be possible. Many of the groups interviewed name either finances or the time commitment as key factors in deciding whether or not to take on a sponsorship. With Migration and Resettlement staff knowing which Constituent Groups are able to provide one type of support or another, interview participants thought staff would be able to put the right people in contact with one another to facilitate sponsorships. This would be helpful for smaller congregations who are interested but lack the ability to provide all aspects of the sponsorship support, with time commitment and finances named as key obstacles. Some of these connections are already taking place. Three of the groups interviewed have reached out to other churches in their community, or to an urban church when their rural churches were lacking capacity. One the interview participants from one rural Constituent Group indicated that for their next sponsorship they were looking to make it a community initiative to pull in more members of the community. The organic connections and initiatives might be multiplied with even a limited amount of formal coordination. According to one participant in the RSTP study, a positive outcome of refugee sponsorship has been that it brings churches from different denominations together, an outcome that should be encouraged (2015, p. 26).

Interview participants also felt that a facilitation role could be played to enable the sharing of experiences between Constituent Groups for a variety of purposes. One rural Constituent Group commented on feeling very isolated due to their distance from Winnipeg. Making connections with other groups might help them to feel connected to in a larger vision and effort in a way that provides moral support. Another Constituent Group suggested that having experienced groups share with new or less experienced groups would be helpful for promoting the program. They felt that having others hear firsthand experiences might motivate others to participate and would have the added benefit of freeing up Migration and Resettlement staff to not be required to be at every refugee sponsorship event or meeting. Sharing experiences may also improve settlement outcomes. Derwing and Mulder's review of the sponsorship of Kosovars in Northern Alberta found that it would have been helpful for inexperienced groups to hear from those who had previously participated in refugee sponsorship in order to provide concrete examples for how to go about planning for the refugees' arrival and for navigating their settlement process (2002, p. 234).

6.4 SUMMARY

When analyzed together, the findings of the group interviews, the study of other SAHs and the contextual information provided by the literature review, present refugee sponsorship as a complex and transformative endeavor. Several themes emerged from this analysis. First, faith, historical connections and compassion for those in need remain ongoing motivations for

participation in refugee sponsorship and media attention presents an important opportunity for expanding support for the program. Second, the changes in sponsors' understandings of integration, changes in their perception of the world, and their desire for additional follow-up and evaluation demonstrate a desire to make the best contribution possible to successful settlement outcomes. Third, the approach taken by Constituent Groups to the task of resettlement has an impact on settlement outcomes. Fourth, Constituent Groups trust MCC's experience with refugee sponsorship and value the support received from staff throughout the settlement process. Finally, Constituent Groups see opportunities in making connections with other Constituent Groups and individuals in the constituency and feel that the program could play an important role in facilitating those connections.

The implications of these findings will inform the development of recommended strategies for the program to consider in future years. The next section will present a set of strategies that address the organization's desire to build program capacity and ensure sustainability.

7.0 Recommendations

In 2014, MCC Manitoba identified the need to revitalize its refugee sponsorship program and named it, along with improving the settlement of refugees, as a program outcome in its project planning framework for 2014 - 2017. Interest in the organization's constituency had waned to a small collection of committed Constituent Groups and there was no sign that the situation would change without a proactive effort to promote the program. The events of September 3, 2015, when the world's attention was captured by the photo of the lifeless body of a Syrian refugee child, on a Turkish beach, dramatically shifted societal awareness of and interest in refugee sponsorship. Since September 2015, the Migration and Resettlement Program has had no shortage of interest in sponsorship and has been facilitating sponsorship in numbers not seen since the Indochinese refugee crisis. While program growth is no longer top of mind, staff knows that as media attention shifts to other crises, current levels of interest will also recede. For this reason, this evaluation of the motivations and past experience of Constituent Groups who have sponsored refugees between 2005 and 2015 is important for improving the sponsorship experience for new and existing Constituent Groups and should inform ongoing promotion of the program as staff look for ways to maintain interest and awareness of migration and resettlement issues including refugee sponsorship.

The themes that emerged from the discussion of project findings demonstrate openness on the part of constituent groups to ongoing learning in order to provide the best support possible to the refugees they sponsor. The high level of trust that Constituent Groups have in MCC Manitoba's history and expertise in refugee sponsorship and issues of conflict and migration in general means that program staff are well positioned to influence their sponsorship efforts.

Based on the project's conceptual framework, which sees working with Constituent Groups as a primary avenue for influencing the sponsorship and resettlement process, the following recommendations outline strategies for directing and influencing the work of Constituent Groups in order to contribute to the stated program outcomes. Recommendations are also provided in the area of program promotion and Constituent Group recruitment, in order to ensure that the program continues to have Constituent Groups to work with. Finally, recommendations for building and strengthening monitoring and evaluation will help to inform improvements and changes to program activities and provide information about program effectiveness. These recommendations are derived from the analysis of interview findings, a review of other SAH activities and informed by the context provided by the literature review.

7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM PROMOTION AND CONSTITUENT GROUP RECRUITMENT

Recommendation #1.1: The Program should leverage current events in ongoing communication and promotion activities. History has proven that media attention is important for building societal awareness of refugee issues. For Migration and Resettlement Program this is an

opportunity to educate its constituency and the wider community about refugee issues and present a case for refugee sponsorship as a way to participate in a practical way in durable solutions for refugees.

Recommendation #1.2: The Program should be proactive in its efforts to promote the program as part of ongoing constituency engagement efforts. The project found that there is a core of committed Constituent Groups that participate on a continuing basis. It is also the case that the volunteer base for these groups is ageing and new, younger volunteers will need to be encouraged to participate. In order to recruit new groups as well as have renew the volunteer base of existing groups, the program will need to do more than simply respond to inquiries. It should also support existing groups in their efforts to bring on new volunteers. These efforts should make use of the following strategies:

- Include previously sponsored newcomers in speaking engagements to provide first hand accounts of their experiences as refugees and with the sponsorship program.
- Recruit experienced sponsors to share their experiences of sponsorship with new Constituent Groups exploring participation in the program.
- Tailor speaking engagement topics to draw on relevant motivations for participating in refugee sponsorship such as faith, family history of sponsorship, family ties to the experience of being refugees.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING WITH CONSTITUENT GROUPS

7.2.1. SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

Recommendation #2.1: Continue to provide direct supports to Constituent Groups through out the sponsorship and resettlement process, particularly the completion of paperwork for both sponsors and refugees. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) provides a variety of forms to be completed by sponsors and refugees in the applying to be sponsored. These forms are complex and are subject to changes and updates at any time. Assistance in completing these forms continues to be a highly valued service by sponsoring groups. Sponsoring groups also expressed a desire for staff to continue to provide advice throughout the settlement process and to advocate as needed on refugee policy being implemented by IRCC.

Recommendation #2.2: The Program should initiate regular check-ins with sponsoring groups throughout the sponsorship period. Currently, advice is provided as needed when Constituent Groups experience complications and crises during the sponsorship. Rather than respond reactively, a regular pattern of check-ins should be established. This would be especially helpful for new sponsors who are doing everything for the first time. For all Constituent Groups it would help to maintain open communication channels throughout the groups' sponsorship.

Recommendation #2.3: The Program should provide resources to Constituent Groups to help them support refugees dealing with mental health and trauma. Many refugees have experienced

trauma and struggle with their mental health after arrival as a result of that trauma or due to the stress of resettling in a new country. Some Constituent Groups have had difficult sponsorship experiences due to the mental health struggles of the refugees they have sponsored, or as they anticipate a new wave of refugees coming from places like Syria, feel that it will be an ongoing and increasing area of need. Program staff would not necessarily need to create these resources but should seek out existing resources and where appropriate, tailor them to the needs of Constituent Groups.

7.2.2 NETWORK FACILITATION

Recommendation #2.4: The Program should develop a Constituent Group Network to facilitate knowledge sharing amongst Constituent Groups. The network would serve two main purposes:

- a) Whether groups are new or experienced, a network would provide a forum for ongoing knowledge sharing around the tasks of sponsorship and would create a supportive community environment where individual Constituent Groups feel part of a larger whole. Groups who have a long history of sponsorship have much to offer in the way of advice about how to do sponsorship and how to avoid some of the more common difficulties groups experience. New groups would benefit from hearing firsthand about the process as they navigate it for the first time. This would be particularly helpful for those groups that are more isolated in rural areas.
- b) The network would provide a way to facilitate information sharing between groups that would help to match individuals or groups with resources with Constituent Groups in need of resources or Constituent Groups with each other. This would be helpful in instances where there are Constituent Groups who are able to provide some but not all of the resources required for sponsorship. There are also situations where individuals call program staff with offers to provide in-kind donations or ways to fill housing needs that need to be matched with Constituent Groups with those particular gaps in resources. While many of these connections are already being made on an ad hoc basis, a network list-serve or community webpage would help to facilitate connections more efficiently and effectively.

7.3 LEARNING AND EVALUATION

Recommendation #3.1: The Program should provide a mechanism for gathering feedback at the end of the sponsorship period. Gathering feedback from Constituent Groups following the period of sponsorship would provide staff information that would allow for reflection on the effectiveness of program activities and implementation of changes where needed.

Recommendation #3.2: The Program should establish regular reporting and evaluation tools for monitoring sponsorships. The Sponsorship Agreement requires that SAHs monitor the sponsorships undertaken under their agreement. Sharing reporting and evaluation tools with sponsors in advance would provide them with an understanding of how the Program will monitor

the outcomes of the sponsorship beyond accounting for housing, employment and language acquisition. This would allow sponsors to learn about the effectiveness of their own planning and program staff to learn about the effectiveness of the program.

Recommendation #3.3: The Program should include discussions with Constituent Groups in the process of creating their Settlement Plans on desired settlement outcomes look like. The way in which Constituent Groups approach the sponsorship process has a significant impact on the success of the resettlement. Communicating how the Program thinks about integration and approach to sponsorship would help contribute to the opportunity for improved program outcomes.

7.4 STRATEGY MAP FOR WORKING WITH CONSTITUENT GROUPS

The specific activities implied by the recommendations are combined below into a strategy map. The activities are grouped based on whether they are targeted directly at Constituent Groups or the environment in which Constituent Groups operate. In both cases, they are further divided into three categories: causal, persuasive, and supportive. Causal activities are those that are the responsibility of and controlled by the program where as persuasive and supportive activities are ways in which the program works to influence Constituent Groups (Earl, Carden and Smutylo, 2001, p. 62).

The map helps to expand on activities in the existing Project Framework in order to propose a set of activities that will contribute to program outcomes (Ambrose, K., n.d., p. 4). The strategies described below are in addition to tasks required by the Sponsorship Agreement between MCC Canada and IRCC. Activities in italics are those activities included in the current project planning framework.

Table 1. Strategy Map

Recommendations	Strategy Target	Strategy Type		
		Causal	Persuasive	Supportive
PROGRAM PROMOTION AND CONSTITUENT GROUP RECRUITMENT	Potential Constituent Groups (CGs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Training/consultation for CGs and interested potential sponsors in spring 2014 and following years as needed.</i> - <i>Cultivate new relationships with groups and businesses starting in 2014</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with Conference Pastors to build support for ongoing Constituent Group participation. - Tailor the content of presentation materials to the motivations of particular audiences such as family history and faith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify existing sponsors, especially young people, willing to speak to others about their experience
	Potential Constituent Group Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Contact churches, put announcements in bulletins on an ongoing basis.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond to media requests and produce website and social media content - Leverage media coverage of refugee crises when they occur. - Incorporate refugee and migration issues into communication and presentations on disaster response and other MCC Manitoba educational events in order to maintain awareness. 	
SETTLEMENT	Constituent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit sponsorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Develop a systematic</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assistance with:

SUPPORT	Groups	<p>applications to IRCC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide check lists for settlement activities 	<p><i>training tool for sponsors and a regular schedule for training in winter 2015.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold trainings and distribute resources related to dealing with trauma and mental illness. - Develop resources and training on integration and community building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Settlement Plans o Sponsor Paperwork o Refugee Paperwork o Settlement advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be proactive about contacting CGs by phone or email to check in on how the sponsorship is progressing. - <i>Identify tools for troubleshooting settlement difficulties.</i>
	Constituent Group Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy advocacy through the Sponsorship Agreement Holder Council and relationships with government officials and civil servants 		
NETWORK FACILITATION	Constituent Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a CG list-serve to facilitate information sharing amongst CGs including information about CGs looking for partnerships, co-sponsors looking for CGs and offers of housing and other settlement supports to CGs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify experienced and other existing sponsors willing to speak to others about refugee sponsorship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold information sessions where experienced sponsors and formerly sponsored refugees share their experiences.

	Constituent Group Environment			- Development of a Constituent Group Network
LEARNING AND EVALUATION	Constituent Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Require reports on CG activity at 3, 6, and 12 month intervals. - Create an online tool for sponsors to complete at the end of the year of sponsorship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage in discussions about what successful settlement outcomes look like and how refugees can be involved in goal setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information on evaluation tools to be used with refugees at regular intervals so that sponsors understand how the program evaluates resettlement outcomes. The stated plan for evaluating settlement outcomes is: <i>Ongoing survey of newcomers on an ongoing basis at 3, 6, 11 and 18 months, and possibly beyond if time allows.</i>
	Constituent Group Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Follow up with refugees who have settled in that last few years in summer of 2014. If resources allow, this follow up will continue in order to measure effectiveness of the program.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document both stories of success and challenging situations for other to learn from. 	

7.5 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The implementation of any number of the recommendations and related strategies is not without its challenges. Existing staff capacity provides a constraint on the pace and order of implementation. While many of the recommended strategies are possible at little financial cost, they would all require some degree of staff time which, at different times and under current conditions, are already stretched thin. At the same time, as an organization that values learning and evaluation as a way to demonstrate program effectiveness and impact and ensure the program's sustainability, a minimum level of monitoring and evaluation is required. It will be important to design tools that allow the implementation of these strategies in a way that is efficient and saves time in the long term where that is possible.

The realities of working with a wide variety of Constituent Groups with varying degrees of experience and differences in approach to sponsorship also presents a challenge. While groups might welcome opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences, the desire to further engage in learning and evaluation opportunities may not be shared. The Memorandum of Understanding that outlines the roles and responsibilities of MCC Manitoba and the CG only requires reporting at one, six and twelve months as well as the ability to meet with the resettled refugee (MCC Canada, 2015, p. 4). Groups are not obligated to take part in learning opportunities beyond those requirements. This may apply particularly to groups for whom refugee sponsorship is a one time commitment.

Refugee sponsorship in Canada is a collaborative effort that involves many different actors. Until now, connections and partnerships amongst different Constituent and community groups have emerged organically. While it has been recommended that program staff look at ways to facilitate those connections in a more formal way, it should be careful to do so in such a way that leverages rather than constrains the natural emergence of those connections.

Finally, where recommended strategies for program promotion and Constituent Group recruitment implicate other departments in the organization, conversation will be required if there is to be a shift in the way the program is included in communications materials. Those departments will have their own existing priorities and it may take time for any agreed upon adjustments in approach to occur.

7.6 PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations and resulting strategy map present multiple opportunities to maintain and expand program capacity. Given the existing human and financial resources available to the program, the following list of strategies form a recommended list of priorities for implementation:

Program Promotion and Constituent Group Recruitment

- Incorporate refugee and migration issues into communication and presentations on disaster response and other MCC Manitoba educational events in order to maintain awareness of refugee and migration issues.
- Connect with younger Constituent Group participants in order to include them in program promotion.

Settlement Support

- Initiate regular check-ins with sponsoring groups throughout the sponsorship period.
- Develop and provide resources to Constituent Groups to help them support refugees dealing with mental health and trauma.

Network Facilitation

- Development of a CG list-serve or other online platform to facilitate information sharing amongst CGs including information about CGs looking for partnerships, co-sponsors looking for CGs and offers of housing and other settlement supports to CGs

Learning & Evaluation

- Provide an online mechanism for gathering feedback at the end of the sponsorship period.
- Use the settlement assessment survey previously developed to begin systematically tracking settlement outcomes.

In the medium and longer term, program staff should review and evaluate the possibility of building the remaining recommended strategies into program plans. In many cases these recommendations build on the first phase of priority recommendations and further strengthen learning and evaluation as a part of Constituent Groups' learning process as well as the assessing the effectiveness and improving support for Constituent Groups in the future.

8.0 Conclusion

For MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program, refugee sponsorship has long been a way to provide its constituency with an avenue for providing resettlement opportunities for refugees from around the world. In 2014, the Program identified a need to revitalize its relationship with its constituent churches in order to increase the number of refugees being assisted by the Program; numbers which had been dropping in recent years. This project was initiated in order to provide staff with information about the Constituent Groups that have recently participated in the program, which would allow them to better understand why groups chose to participate and what their experience has been working with the program. Finding new ways to promote the program, recruit new Constituent Groups, and provide effective support to Constituent Groups is essential to the sustainability of the Program and its ability to increase capacity for sponsorship.

Since the project began, the Program's working environment shifted considerably with the newly acquired awareness on the part of Canadians of the Syrian refugee crisis. Program activity including inquiries from numerous churches and groups who have never before participated in refugee sponsorship has increased dramatically since September 2015. While in the immediate future recruitment is of little concern, the project was able to provide important information to staff as in their support of Constituents participating in this recent wave of sponsorship activity.

The literature review provided a helpful review of the sponsorship experience in the 70s and 80s during the Indochinese crisis and the challenges and successes of that time in the history of the PSR program. It also examined current debates around the impact of Christian faith and the complex nature of the inherent power imbalance in the relationship between sponsors and refugees.

The project's research findings were analyzed alongside the context of the literature review and the findings of the RSTP survey of other SAHs and a number of themes emerged around the issues of recruitment and promotion of the program, program outcomes and settlement support. In the area of program promotion the recommendations address the need to leverage current events and take a proactive approach to raising awareness of refugee issues and encouraging refugee sponsorship in the constituency. When working with constituent groups once they have decided to participate in the program, the recommendations encourage the continuation of settlement support activities related to completion of paperwork, provision of advice on addressing settlement issues throughout the sponsorship on a more proactive basis, and the creation of a Constituent Group Network in order to facilitate connections and support amongst Constituent Groups. Finally, the recommendations address Constituent Groups' desire for increased follow-up and evaluation including discussion of intended outcomes, follow-up with refugees and an end of sponsorship evaluation survey for Constituent Groups.

Areas for future research can also be identified from the findings of the project and would help to address some of the project's limitations. First, the project did not engage in any way with the refugees sponsored through MCC Manitoba over the same period of time as was examined in the research. Conducting a separate evaluation that brings in the voices of refugees themselves would be an important contribution to the literature and for MCC Manitoba to consider in its program planning. A second area for future study would be to address the need to have younger generations participate in refugee sponsorship. Gathering specific information and feedback on the motivations young people have for participating and the barriers to participation they face would help MCC Manitoba to shape program promotion in a way that engages a younger demographic of people. Finally, in their leadership of Constituent Groups through the process of sponsorship and resettlement, staff may find it helpful to use complexity theory as tool to analyze their project environment. Complex systems function in non-linear ways where change in one part of the system can have unintended and unpredictable impacts in other parts of the system (Morgan, 2005, p. 9). Onyx and Leonard (2011) identify several leadership characteristics that have proven successful in complex community development environments that could be taken into consideration (pp. 503-505).

This project has shown that the Program has enjoyed a committed base of support for refugee sponsorship that desires to see the program grow in its reach and contribution to positive outcomes for resettled refugees. Sponsorship is an undertaking that presents many unavoidable challenges due to the nature and complexity of assisting refugees to resettle in a foreign country and yet, Constituent Groups who have and continue to participate in the program find that the reward far outweighs those challenges. Given this reality, focusing the role of MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement staff on the creation of an environment in which Constituent Groups feel supported and empowered, can provide encouragement to one another, and are themselves learning about what it means to be a supportive and welcoming community for refugees, will ensure that the program has Constituent Groups participating in the program for years to come.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background Information

1. How did you hear about the opportunity to sponsor refugees? Why did you choose to sponsor refugees through MCC Manitoba?
2. When was the last time your constituent group participated in Private Sponsorship of Refugees through MCC Manitoba?
 - a. How many family members did your group sponsor? What was their country of origin?
 - b. Is this sponsorship the only one you have done?
3. Why did you choose to get involved in refugee sponsorship? What do you attribute those motivations to?

Current State of the Program

4. What are the strengths of MCC Manitoba's refugee sponsorship program as you have experience them?
5. What are the weaknesses of MCC Manitoba's refugee sponsorship program?
6. Would you say that the family or person you sponsored has integrated well into the community? How would you define integration?
7. Do members of your group have discussions about faith and religion with the resettled refugees? Who initiates those discussions?
8. What challenges were you faced with in the sponsorship process?
9. What resources were provided by MCC Manitoba staff to assist you in the sponsorship process?
10. What are the barriers to participating in refugee sponsorship?

Needs Assessment

11. How could MCC Manitoba work to reduce the barriers to participation in refugee sponsorship?
12. What needs experienced by constituent groups in the sponsorship process are not currently being met by MCC Manitoba?
13. Are the additional resources and support required already available in the community? If not, how could MCC Manitoba best provide these resources?

Future State of the Program

14. What would it look like if the program were to operate at its full potential?
15. How has your understanding of refugee issues changed? Has your understanding of the country of origin for the family or person you sponsored changed?



Advancing Private Refugee Sponsorship: Engaging and Resourcing MCC Manitoba's Constituency

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Advancing Private Refugee Sponsorship: Engaging and Resourcing MCC Manitoba's Constituency that is being conducted by Stephanie Dyck.

Stephanie Dyck is a graduate student in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at sdyc@uvic.ca or by phone at 204-797-6015. Additionally, she works as Executive Assistant at Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Community Development. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kimberly Speers. You may contact my supervisor at kspeers@uvic.ca or at 250-721-8057

This study is also being conducted for a client, Arisnel Mesidor, Migration and Resettlement Program Coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research this project is to examine how MCC Manitoba's Migration and Resettlement Program might be able to maintain and expand its capacity by developing a sustainable supply of constituent groups available for partnership in the PSR program. In consultation with the client, the researcher will assess the perspectives of constituent groups who have participated in the program in the last ten years in order to recommend strategies for increasing future capacity. The needs assessment will identify the current state and the desired future state and the project will then address how the gap between the current and future state can be narrowed or eliminated. A number of sub-questions or themes will be explored with the purpose of providing MCC Manitoba with recommendations for how to best position the program for success into the future with goal of increasing the number of sponsorships and the quality of the sponsorship experience.

Importance of this Research

This research is important because continued interest in private refugee sponsorship by congregations and constituent groups has been challenged in recent years by changes in government policy, increased processing times, reductions in the number of successful named cases, and shifts in the country of origin of refugee populations (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2014, p. 1; Canadian Council for Refugees, 2013, p. 5). The sustainability of the PSR program, through MCC Manitoba depends, on the continued interest

of constituent groups. In addition, addressing this question at this time is timely in that the organization is getting ready to launch an initiative for resettling refugees from the Middle that will require that the program maintain and expand its current capacity.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been a member of a constituent group who has participated in private refugee sponsorship through MCC Manitoba in the last 10 years. Your involvement has provided you with valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the sponsorship process.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two hour in-person group discussion, together with other members of your constituent group. The discussion would include a needs assessment using open-ended questions that would be sent to you in advance. The group discussion would take place at a time and location of your choosing.

Following the group discussion, I will ask if one person from the group would be willing to participate in a follow-up exercise. If you agree, once the data analysis has been completed, I will compile the emerging themes and send them to you for review and comment.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you. This inconvenience would include the time required to participate in the group discussion as well as the correspondence required by phone or email in advance of the group discussion. If you choose to participate in the follow-up exercise, the additional time required to review and comment on the emerging feedback may also be an inconvenience to you.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include improvements to the program based on the findings of the research and possible improvements in the resettlement outcomes of refugees sponsored through the program. The findings of the project will also benefit the PSR programs of other organizations who may be able to apply the findings to their own work.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study the data linked to group data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity I will take the necessary steps to protect your anonymity in that your name and contact information will not be used in the final report.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected though there are some limits to my ability to provide complete confidentiality. Data collected as part of the research will be stored confidentially and only the final report will be distributed to my client and supervisor. There are however limits to confidentiality due to the nature of group interviews. Should you choose to remain anonymous, I will remove all identifying information from your contribution.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with other staff at MCC Manitoba who relate to the Migration and Resettlement Program, the Program’s advisory committee, and Migration and Resettlement Program staff working in other MCC offices across Canada. The themes that emerge from the group interview data will be shared with those interviewees who agree to participate in the follow-up exercise.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of following the project’s defense date. Only the final report will be available for distribution to MCC Manitoba and other staff with work related to the Migration and Resettlement Program. Paper copies of the data and draft copies of the final report will be confidentially destroyed by a professional document shredding company. Electronic data will be deleted from all computers and USB drives.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include me, the researcher, as well as my supervisor, Kimberly Speers, whose contact information is listed at the top of this form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca)

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.