



## Workshop on Monitoring of Community Sponsorship

### REPORT

### SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN)



Diözesan-  
Caritasverband für das  
Erzbistum Köln e. V.



BERDINTASUN, JUSTIZIA  
ETA GIZARTE POLITIKETAKO SAILA  
DEPARTAMENTO DE IGUALDAD,  
JUSTICIA Y POLÍTICAS SOCIALES



This report was co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

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## **Introduction: Workshop on Monitoring of Community Sponsorship**

The SHARE Workshop on Monitoring of Community Sponsorship programmes took place on June 16, 2021, online via zoom. It provided a platform to present and discuss the lessons learned from EU countries' experiences with community-based sponsorship programmes and best practices in monitoring and evaluation. The workshop was organised in the context of the SHARE Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN), a programme co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) which supports pilot and ad-hoc sponsorship initiatives to develop into sustainable, community-driven programmes. Led by ICMC Europe, the SHARE QSN project gathers a consortium of actors in Belgium (Caritas Belgium), France, (Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FEP), Germany (Caritas Cologne), Ireland (IRC), Italy (Consortio Communitas), Spain (Basque Government), and the UK (Citizens UK) who are all experienced in refugee integration and are currently carrying out private sponsorship programmes in their national contexts.

Paralleling the multi-stakeholder nature of the SHARE QSN Project, the roundtable event was transnational and attended by over 90 participants from a consortium of actors including civil society, international organisations, national and regional governments, EU institutions, universities, research institutes, NGOs and other practitioners.

The monitoring workshop builds upon Caritas' experiences as a 'lead' sponsor organisation, supporting Community Sponsorship groups in Belgium and guiding them in their work, and also looked at practices developed in other European countries as well as Canada.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss different monitoring techniques and challenges, as well as showcase promising practices in this domain. The workshop was divided into two parts; during the first part, the concepts of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within community sponsorship were discussed with a focus on community-based approaches to monitoring. In the second part, different speakers presented the practices of monitoring and evaluation from Italy, France and Belgium. The first part was moderated by Anne Dussart from Caritas International and the second part by Daniele Albanese from Consortio Communitas/Caritas Italiana.

The workshop was opened with a presentation by ICMC Europe/SHARE network which provided an overview of the monitoring and evaluation findings in the different QSN partner countries. This was followed with a presentation by the Centre for Community Based Research in Canada on community-based research approaches, looking at community-based evaluation and how it has been adapted for refugee serving organisations. In the second part, three different practices on monitoring and



evaluation in three different countries were presented by various actors, including practitioners and academics, volunteers from a sponsor group and a sponsored refugee.

Caritas International, ICMC Europe and the SHARE Network team kindly thank all presenters and participants for contributing towards knowledge-sharing and the success of the workshop.

## **I- Setting the Scene: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of Community Sponsorship**

### ***Gabriela Agatiello, ICMC Europe: Introduction to the SHARE Network, the QSN Project, and Overview of M&E Findings in QSN partner Countries***

Established in 2012 and led by ICMC Europe, the SHARE Network provides a platform for mutual exchange and learning amongst local and regional actors working on or considering resettlement initiatives, and advocates for increased and better resettlement capacity and other complementary pathways in Europe.

The SHARE Quality Sponsorships Network (QSN) project is being implemented from January 2021 to June 2023 and is co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), while also receiving support from a private donor. The SHARE QSN seeks to support pilot and ad-hoc sponsorship initiatives to develop into sustainable, community-driven programmes. This SHARE QSN workshop marks the second transnational event of the QSN project, focusing on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of sponsorship programmes.

M&E is an essential element to achieve sustainable and high-quality programs that ensure durable solutions and improve refugee integration. In order to accomplish this, M&E needs to be built into the program design. A programme evaluation can often be used to apply for funding by demonstrating programme outcomes, lessons learned, and areas that need to be further addressed. Furthermore, M&E can be used to stir political commitment and public involvement in refugee sponsorship. Accountability of program design and implementation can also be ensured by conducting M&E, which is key, given the vast array of different actors involved in the programmes.

One of the common challenges highlighted during the workshop was the need for transparency and clear agreements regarding responsibilities and operational procedures between stakeholders. Other challenges mentioned were the need for improvement of coordination and communication with the local municipalities, improved training of volunteers (e.g. in intercultural skills) and specific attention paid to expectation management, preferably during the earliest stages of involvement.



Additionally, it was identified as important that safeguarding mechanisms are in place throughout programme implementation.

Three key strengths identified during the initial evaluations of the community sponsorship pilots were highlighted. Firstly, the possibility to re-join the government protection system was experienced by the beneficiaries as very empowering and ensured their access to safeguarding mechanisms. A second positive element identified is the establishment of Civil Society Contact Points and intermediate organisations as a platform for actor coordination. Finally, evaluations of longer-running programmes like in the UK point to the transformative potential of community sponsorship as it connects refugees to diverse networks and provides the opportunity for refugees to connect to their wider community, preventing isolation.

To learn more about the QSN Project and initial findings from the country evaluations please access the SHARE QSN presentation at the following link: [SHARE Network Presentation](#).

**Rich Janzen, Centre for Community Based Research, Canada: *A Community-based approach to Monitoring and Evaluation***

The Centre for Community-Based Research is a non-profit organisation that conducts research into more than 400 topics, including participatory evaluations, community

sponsorship and refugee integration. The Centre was established almost 40 years ago and is growing rapidly through partnerships with organisations and universities.

Community-based evaluation is not a method but an approach, guided by three key principles: stakeholder-driven, participatory and action-oriented. In other words: **An “approach that involves active participation of stakeholders, those whose lives are affected by the issue being studied, in all phases of research, for the purpose of producing useful results to make positive changes”.**

Three basic questions or hallmarks should guide the creation of meaningful evaluations (1) ‘Who drives the agenda? (2) Who has a stake in this issue? And finally, (3) ‘What actions will follow?’. A proactive approach to evaluation is needed for effective community-based evaluation practices and to produce meaningful insights. This goes beyond evaluating and includes using evaluation results to adapt or improve current and upcoming activities. A community-based approach can help establish a proactive and meaningful evaluation for all participants involved in the project. Another important question in this regard is: ‘Why do we conduct evaluations?’ Key motivations include learning and gaining insights into outcomes, capitalising on approaches and identifying challenges or best practices. Evaluations are an important instrument in knowledge mobilisation since produced knowledge is



shared and results are communicated with people who can act on those findings.

Each evaluation should be driven by a unique theory of change which involves identifying the outcomes the project aims to achieve. Establishing a theory of change is important for each different actor involved in the project and the subsequent evaluation. Sometimes the funding organisation's theory of change will dominate, although it may not match well with the sponsor groups'. However, the outcome pursued by all actors, including refugees themselves, should guide the theory of change. In other words, the Community Based Evaluation will not focus on the intervention itself of evaluating, but on how the evaluation is mirroring the change that actors involved wish to see.

To learn more about a community-based approach to M&E and the work of the Centre for Community Based Research see Rich Janzen's [presentation here](#).

## **II- Monitoring of community sponsorship programmes: practices from three countries**

**Veerle Steppe (integration trainer) & Bo Coenen, Integration Counsellor for community sponsorship programme of Caritas International: *Monitoring of community sponsorship in Belgium: practices from Caritas International.***

The Belgian Community Sponsorship project was established in 2020 in partnership with Fedasil, the Belgian government agency responsible for the reception of refugees. For Caritas, the purpose of M&E is to facilitate programme improvement and to assess the situation and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved, such as the Belgian government. Currently, monitoring is done by collecting feedback from the sponsor groups and the refugee families. The data is collected through three methods: a helpdesk during training; peer learning, and monitoring sessions with refugee families and the sponsor groups. The latter occurs at three key moments for refugees and sponsors: after 1 month, 3 months, and 12 months (or in accordance with complementary needs).

The monitoring sessions with the families and sponsor groups always consider recurrent elements of former monitoring sessions, training, and peer-learning sessions. Monitoring sessions also involve the active participation of intercultural mediators. They are former refugees who are trained employees of Caritas with the responsibility of building bridges between refugees, the sponsor group and Caritas coaches, based on their own expertise. They know the culture, the language and have been through immigration and adaptation processes themselves. Complementary to additional training, their experience helps sponsor groups to understand the different struggles the families may



experience while helping the refugee families understand life in Belgium and engage in a smoother integration process.

One of the significant challenges different stakeholders face is the difficulty in managing expectations of the families and sponsor groups. The sponsor groups are volunteers, which can have advantages as well as limits. Even when supported by an intercultural mediator, families are reluctant to share their real thoughts. They are very grateful for the chance for resettlement, and therefore do not want to offend the sponsor group by expressing concerns. It is also difficult to collect feedback from children and women as in most of the monitoring sessions the husband speaks on behalf of the family. Specific attention is therefore needed to address the views and needs of sometimes invisible family members more directly. This could entail adapted support for women and children in the family by the different actors providing support including the sponsor group, intermediate organisations and external partners, such as schools, language tutors and medical staff. This would allow women and children to play a more active role in the integration and evolution process of the family.

Training and monitoring practices are best organised on a needs-driven basis. Through experience in conducting sponsorship and evaluative practices, Caritas has found that flexibility within the programme opens

opportunities for wider participation while taking into account the needs of the group. Additionally, whenever possible, Caritas recommends working with intercultural mediators, not only for translation but also for practical advice and adapted recommendations for refugee beneficiaries. Furthermore, they can guide the sponsor group and other intermediaries in dialogue, avoiding miscommunications caused by cultural, practical, procedural, or linguistic misunderstandings.

For evaluations of the programme, training and monitoring practices can often result in additional, important guidelines on key topics, such as the need for adapted intercultural approaches and dialogue between intermediary organisations and sponsor groups. There must be a general transversal knowledge by all stakeholders in the programme of the rights of resettled refugees, and the programme in general, next to adapted support to access general, medical and social rights and consequent referrals. Refugee integration programmes must specifically work on informing and inspiring local communal administrations and local welfare services so that administrative issues may be resolved in a smooth, quick and cooperative manner. Such an approach could help ensure the avoidance of additional obstacles in the integration process. Special attention needs to be given to explaining administrative rights, ways of accessing them and obstacles to their accession, aiming at going



beyond an understanding of these issues by the newcomers to a (partly) autonomous management of these aspects.

Expectations must be managed from the very beginning of the sponsorship process: this includes clarifying the expectations for the integration of the family. When this is discussed and assessed at an early stage, then possible discrepancies in the expectations of sponsor group members can be addressed early on to avoid internal divisions and tensions within the group. Together through the broader framework and guidelines, this can be coached transversally through the helpdesk and during monitoring sessions, and also be addressed during the peer-to-peer sessions. It is highly recommended that during the peer-to-peer sessions in the early stages, expectations in terms of 'phasing out' are measured and discussed with all parties and, more particularly, that all members of the sponsor group are in agreement.

**Myriam Gabriël & Linda Van More,**  
**A sponsorship group from Beloeil, Hainaut**  
**Belgium: *Experience of a sponsor group***

The volunteer group started sponsoring a refugee family during the first pilot phase of the project and its members had important prior experience in working in the field of (transit) migration, involving local partners and administrations. During the workshop, the group emphasised their need for continued

support since the workload has been overwhelming, leading to a diminished participation of other group members. They lamented the lack of practical preparation prior to the arrival of the refugee family.

The Covid 19 pandemic has significantly impacted the integration process for the family, with major obstacles for local networking, learning the language, and difficulties in communicating with the community. However, despite the many challenges and obstacles, a sense of overall satisfaction in engaging with the sponsorship process and the will to accompany the family throughout and beyond the foreseen sponsorship period was strongly expressed by the group. The continuous support, monitoring and training offered by Caritas has been a key motivating factor.

To learn more about the monitoring and evaluation practices in Belgium you can access [Caritas' presentation here.](#)

**Ilaria Schnyder von Wartensee, Assistant**  
**Professor at the University of Notre Dame:**  
***Findings from a longitudinal study on the***  
***Humanitarian Corridors Programme in Italy***

Since its launch in 2015, the Italian humanitarian corridor programme has welcomed 2343 refugees to Italy. Caritas, a leading actor in the Italian Humanitarian Corridors Programme, has supported approximately 536 refugees from refugee camps in Ethiopia, Niger, and Turkey (as well as



urban refugees from Jordan), by hosting them in 55 dioceses across Italy.

The longitudinal research conducted by Ilaria and her team focused on the first cohort of refugees hosted by Caritas through the Humanitarian Corridors programme, who arrived from Ethiopia. The research is currently in the third stage of a 5 year-long study. Qualitative data was gathered through conducting 400 interviews with refugees, social workers, and volunteers across 45 Italian dioceses. Additionally, participant observation and field studies were conducted for a holistic understanding of the programme.

The obstacle of Covid-19 to data collection was overcome using the Human Lines website<sup>1</sup> which collects participants experiences, stories and data whilst serving as a platform for information to partners.

The research found that humanitarian corridors provided communities with an opportunity to be actively and positively engaged in the social issue of the refugee crisis. However, the emotional and financial burden for private sponsors, usually faith-based, was reported as often difficult by volunteer sponsors. Whilst increased information to volunteers and refugees prior to refugee arrival has improved expectations, more mental health support is needed for refugees, many of whom struggled

with isolation and trauma. Further counselling support for volunteers is also needed to equip them in aiding refugees. Furthermore, increased government support for civil society actors is crucial to ensure correct resource support and programme manageability.

A key evaluation finding was the sense of “rebirth” expressed by the majority of beneficiaries regarding their community placements, resulting from their security and deep gratitude. Furthermore, inter-faith pairings of refugees and communities have largely been positive as community’s prior negative perceptions of other cultures are reduced through refugee engagement. However, more intercultural training is needed to further improve social relationships between groups.

The research also highlighted several key challenges including the difficulty for refugees to confidently integrate within the 12-18 month placement period. This resulted in increased pressure on volunteers and communities who used their own financial and social capital to continue the support of refugees. This financial pressure was exacerbated by refugees reporting difficulties in gaining job opportunities due to discrimination and language barriers. Overall, the longitudinal study showed that only 6% of beneficiaries are fully autonomous and living in Italy after the programme completion. A further

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<sup>1</sup> See Human Lines Website:  
<https://humanlines.org/en/human-lines-1.html>





31% continue to be partially or completely supported by Caritas and 13% of participants were transferred to the Federal SPRAR system after the sponsorship ended. Under 50% of participants had either left the programme before the end of the sponsorship duration or moved to a new country. Although not all finalised their sponsorship period, the programme helped to build their confidence and language skills and enabled them to rebuild their lives. This also raises the question of how the success of programmes should be measured as beneficiaries of humanitarian corridors may not always stay in the arrival country.

To learn more about the research findings from the longitudinal study you can view Ilaria Schnyder von Wartensee's [presentation here](#).

**Guilhem Mante, Programme coordinator at the Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FEP) and Micheline Helaleh, sponsored refugee from Syria: *Monitoring of sponsorship groups by FEP coordinating committee in France***

The focus of the presentation was on the monitoring mechanisms used by FEP for the humanitarian corridors in France and the key lessons and insights learnt throughout the process.

In France, FEP works with a team based in Lebanon in charge of the identification and preparation of the beneficiaries. At national level, FEP works with a national platform, coordinating the overall structure of the

project. At regional level, a regional platform of professional social workers supports the citizen committees (sponsor groups) and the hosted persons (refugees).

Monitoring sessions are conducted to check key performance indicators such as access to housing, employment, social welfare and beneficiaries' level of knowledge of the French language. These indicators are further supplemented by personal characteristic indicators.

Using a combination of different monitoring and follow-up tools ensures that a quantitative and qualitative follow-up is facilitated. Quantitative data is monitored and collected through a simple excel monitoring tool. Indicators to be assessed on a regular basis are access to employment and housing. Other follow up mechanisms FEP organises are bilateral discussions at regional level between the regional platform, the social workers as well as both the hosted persons and the sponsor group committees. These regional gatherings gather the national platform, the regional platforms and all the sponsor groups and hosted persons in a given region. To support this, steering committees have been created between the regional platform and the national platform to allow for updating and sharing of progress, which had to be adapted due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Regional gatherings have been suspended for the time being, instead video conferences have been set up with all



citizen committees and the sponsor groups all around France. These online conferences occur on a regular basis; once every two months.

Apart from improving FEP's own practices, which is the first objective, data collected is used for advocacy discussions with public authorities and donors, as well as to ensure accountability of the programme. Moreover, it creates a safe place for a qualitative discussion. One of the challenges identified has been building a trustful relationship between all stakeholders as a key factor for success. Another challenge identified is deciding the right time and manner to cease monitoring activities, as community sponsorship in France allows a long term follow up of beneficiaries, beyond access to autonomous housing.

To learn more about the practices of FEP in France on monitoring & evaluation you can view Guilhem and Micheline's [presentation here](#).

### **III- Feedback and comments from workshop participants**

Building trust and engaging the whole family during the monitoring and evaluation process was one of the key points raised by participants. FEP tries to meet these challenges by working with intercultural mediators, through which a relationship of trust can be built. However, programmes need to stay attentive to how to deal with cultural differences and how to adjust monitoring processes to include all

stakeholders' views, with a special focus on women and children.

The need for resources to do proper monitoring in the different countries was also raised by participants. In the UK, even though many of the volunteers who are welcoming refugee families are qualified and have already worked for different charities, adapted training specifically for sponsorship is essential, with a focus on how to address the different types of needs, cultural situations and also in terms of expectations management. Many groups have valuable experiences, thus gathering good practices and organising exchanges between the different sponsor groups, in various countries would be a valuable activity. These exchanges should focus, not only on how to support the family, but also on ways to build and establish a strong volunteer group that works well together.

The question of having adequate resources and professional support for the volunteer groups was also raised by participants. In France and Italy, administrative issues regarding asylum procedures can be very complex, which is why having the support of a professional social worker is key. This allows sponsor groups to focus on more practical and cooperative tasks like helping them learn the language, adapt to their new country, and make connections with the community. This benefits all members of the group as they gain positive energy instead of losing energy on aspects they are not trained nor prepared for. Furthermore, willingness to



host another family may increase considerably if sponsors feel well supported.

### **Conclusion**

While community sponsorship can lead to enhanced community engagement and better integration prospects for refugees, it requires well organised programmes and a high level of individual and group commitment. Volunteer sponsor groups in different countries often struggle with similar challenges, including managing expectations of both the volunteers and the refugee families, administrative hurdles, language and intercultural challenges, and at times feeling overwhelmed by the work. The importance of providing clear information about the programme, roles and responsibilities and potential challenges has been highlighted as a good practice to better manage expectations from the beginning. Training for groups and ongoing support for both volunteers and refugee families from intermediary support organisations is also seen as a helpful practice by stakeholders involved.

Overall, the workshop underlined the importance of monitoring processes to identify challenges early on and be able to troubleshoot any problems that may arise. The presentations

from the different speakers also pointed to the value of M&E processes to improve programme effectiveness in the long-term, by highlighting common problem areas as well as best practices, which stakeholders can then use to enhance their programmes.

As part of its monitoring and evaluation work, the SHARE Network in the coming months will be working with external evaluators to assess how sponsorship programmes in Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Ireland concretely work on the ground with volunteers, local authorities, refugees, support organisations and the wider community. The overall goal of the research project is to identify challenges and outcomes in the different programmes with a view to providing information to help all stakeholders involved in their delivery to improve their programmes design and implementation and ultimately enhance refugee integration. For more information on SHARE QSN monitoring and evaluation activities you can visit the [QSN project page](#).