

GRSI Workshop: Monitoring and Evaluation in Community Sponsorship - June 24, 2020

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) convened a discussion on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within the context of community sponsorship programs (CSPs). Showcasing M&E practices from across the world, speakers were invited to share their respective projects and findings, as well as lead breakout room discussions on areas of inquiry best served by M&E.

The following are highlights and key outcomes of the session:

Community Sponsorship Program (CSP) Pilot Program - Wendy Searle, Government of New Zealand

The evaluation of the New Zealand pilot began 3-months after the arrival of the families and focused on process. It is important to note that the focus of the evaluation was to understand what could be learned and apply those lessons to future improvements of the CSP. The following are the objectives of the process evaluation:

Community Organization Refugee Sponsorship Category Pilot: Process Evaluation - found [here](#).

Kate Brown (Co-Director) & Carly Whyborn (Head of Operations), Reset UK

Recently, RESET has undertaken two key monitoring projects: the post-arrival visits focus on supporting sponsors to assess the progress of the family as they integrate - as well as how sponsors would assess their own support. These are 3-visits, staggered over 1 year (week 6, month 6 and month 10). The objective is to provide an opportunity for groups to reflect on the overall experience. These meetings also include the family that they support, but groups are met separately so members can speak openly about their experience. Information gathered in these meetings are shared with RESET, Home Office, sponsor groups and supported families.

On the other hand, the [data collection tool](#) was aimed at learning from the outcomes from sponsors and their involvement in the sponsorship program. The goal was to gauge the skills and knowledge sponsors have gained from CSP. For example, RESET is asking sponsors to rate on a scale from what they feel they have acquired (e.g. teamwork and leadership skills, knowledge of local resources - and personal gains such as pride and satisfaction etc.).

Brian Dyck, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)

Items that are easily measured are important to settlement and government partners, such as employment or language. However, the less tangible indicators (e.g. are you understanding issues? do you have friends?) are challenging to measure and equally important to the integration and settlement experience.

Building in M&E measures at the outset is important; and key questions to think about regarding evaluation include:

1. What are the program requirements?
 - This tool should be consistent for sponsors because, as program scales up, data will then be consistent for easy comparison.
2. Have you examined what your assumptions are?
 - Are we getting the right feedback? How are we going to test these assumptions?

3. Think about size of the program
 - This will be helpful when thinking about how to scale up M&E.

Rich Janzen, [Centre for Community Based Research \(CCBR\)](#)

CCBR undertakes and promotes research and evaluation that takes on a community-based approach. This incorporates the following 4 elements:

1. Community driven
2. Participatory
3. Action-oriented
4. Sharing and mobilizing

A community-based approach involves the consultation of cross-stakeholder steering committees that guide the project. Under this approach it is also important to be clear about the theory of change – what is the course of action and ensuring there is consensus on this approach. Community-based approach also supports creativity in how information is shared to facilitate and encourage the use of findings.

CCBR shared an example of a 3-yr project that built in M&E at the beginning, while utilizing a community-based approach. The project focused on language training at the workplace. The evaluation of the project incorporated all the key elements above and, notably:

1. Innovative information gathering with 6 different methods of answering main research question combining quantitative and qualitative questions. Information gathering also incorporated former refugee researchers, where they administered surveys to participants.
2. Creative ways of displaying and sharing findings charts, graphs, and short stories.
3. The steering committee, not the evaluators, were responsible for developing the recommendations to foster ownership since they will be implementing them.

Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe, Aliyyah Ahad

The latest report captures lessons learned from a pilot project, the workshop series for resettlement authorities as well as a set of interviews from resettlement and sponsorship actors.

Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement: A Monitoring and Evaluation Road Map can be found [here](#).

Breakout session: The Sponsor and Community Experience

This breakout session focused on the sponsor and community experience. The following are the 3 main points from the discussion:

1. Mindfulness of power imbalances: reflect on M&E project stakeholders and who is best positioned to ensure the project is producing valid results.
2. Incorporating M&E at the in early stages of program development – beneficial for all programs but newer programs have an advantage to do this with more ease.
3. Helpful communication – explore ways the value of community sponsorship can be showcased to the hosting community.

Breakout session: Policy Design

The second breakout session explored policy design effectiveness, sustainability, replicability; and implementation within the context of M&E. These are the key themes that emerged from the discussion:

1. The knowledge gap among policy designers on CSP and M&E must be addressed to ensure development.
2. Additional exploration to determine how design can facilitate sponsor inclusion and ownership of the CSP and how M&E can assess wider impacts of the program.
3. Is CSP increasing volunteerism and utilizing unused capacities, or is it 'taking away' volunteers from areas of need in communities? M&E can play a part in shedding more light in this area.
4. Redirecting programs to focus M&E on both policy aspects of CSP **and** community dynamics. CSPs must regain a balance to gain a full understanding of program impacts.

Breakout Session: The Refugee Experience

Here participants examined the refugee experience within the M&E context. The following are notable points:

1. Centering the refugee experience within M&E design is often challenged by the following:
 - a) Risks of tokenistic inputs
 - b) Barriers to surpassing messages of gratitude (perpetuated by perceptions of power imbalances)
 - c) Varied experiences – an accurate understanding of the refugee experience will require more refugee participants due to the degree of varied experiences.
2. Despite these challenges, suggested ways forward are:
 - a) Use of an independent evaluator - newcomers may feel more comfortable speaking with a neutral party.
 - b) Involvement of refugee researchers – this may help with building trustworthy communication channels.
 - c) Remembering the 'big picture' – mindfulness of the importance of understanding outcomes for the entire community.

OTHER RESOURCES:

Centre for Community Based Research - [Evaluating Refugee Programs](#)

[Caritas - Humanitarian Corridor Project Evaluation](#)

UNHCR, "Are refugees good for Canada?" [English/French](#)

University of Birmingham, [Institute for Research into Superdiversity Reports](#)