



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

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# Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category Pilot

Process evaluation

May 2019

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WELCOME



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
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# Glossary

<b>Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS) Category</b>	Was an alternative form of admission to New Zealand for up to 25 refugees in 2017/18.
<b>Complementary pathways</b>	Are safe and regulated avenues by which refugees may live in a country and have their international protection needs met and are alternatives to the Refugee Quota Programme.
<b>International Organization for Migration</b>	Is an intergovernmental organisation that works in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. Is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all, and provides services and advice to governments and migrants. (Source: <a href="https://www.iom.int/about-iom">https://www.iom.int/about-iom</a> )
<b>Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC)</b>	Is a centre that Immigration New Zealand manages and that works in partnership with other government agencies and non-governmental organisations to run the refugee reception programme. The reception programme prepares refugees for their new lives New Zealand.
<b>Nominated refugees</b>	Were nominated by sponsoring community organisations for inclusion in the CORS Pilot.
<b>Persons in need of protection</b>	Are people who need international protection when they are outside their own country and unable to return home because they would be at risk at home and their country is unable or unwilling to protect them.
<b>Refugee Quota Programme</b>	New Zealand resettles 1000 refugees per year (increasing to 1500 from July 2020). Under the quota, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees refers 'mandated' refugees to New Zealand to consider for resettlement. The quota includes women at risk, medical/disabled cases, and emergency protection cases.
<b>Refugee Status Determination (RSD)</b>	Is the legal or administrative process by which governments or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional or national law. Is a vital part of being recognised as a refugee. (Source: <a href="https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-status-determination.html">https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-status-determination.html</a> )
<b>Request for Application (RFA)</b>	Is completed by community organisations applying to become approved sponsors under the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category.
<b>Selection mission</b>	Is official offshore travel by immigration officials (refugee quota and settlement officers) to interview Quota Refugees submitted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees under the Refugee Quota Programme.

<b>Third-country solutions</b>	Are settlement options in countries other than the one the refugee has fled from or is currently living in.
<b>UNHCR-referred refugees</b>	Are refugee candidates referred to Immigration New Zealand by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees when a sponsoring community organisation does not wish to nominate refugee candidates.
<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</b>	Is the global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. (Source: <a href="https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/about-us.html">https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/about-us.html</a> )

# Executive Summary

## Context – Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category Pilot

In June 2016, Cabinet approved the piloting of the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category (CORS) Category as an alternative form of admission for up to 25 refugees in 2017/18.<sup>1</sup>

The aims of the CORS Pilot were to:

- provide an opportunity for community organisations to more actively engage in supporting successful refugee settlement
- enable sponsored refugees, with the support of community organisations, to quickly become independent and self-sufficient
- provide an alternative form of admission for refugees to complement New Zealand's Refugee Quota Programme.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) undertook a process evaluation of the Pilot, based on interviews and administrative data, to inform decisions on any future intakes under the CORS Category. Forty-six people were interviewed for the evaluation: sponsored refugees (11), sponsors (16 across the four approved community organisations), other community organisations that had shown interest but either did not apply or were not selected (4), MBIE (12) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff (3). Interviews were undertaken when sponsored refugees had been in New Zealand for about three months.

The evaluation was undertaken about three months after the sponsored refugees arrived in New Zealand and assesses how well the Pilot has been implemented, what early outputs have been achieved and what improvements could be made if it were rolled out further.

The evaluation does not make any conclusions about the success of the Pilot in terms of the outcomes sought around settlement and labour market integration.

The Pilot was implemented within a relatively short timeframe. A Cabinet decision was made on the design of the Pilot in August 2017, sponsors were selected in November–December 2017 and sponsored refugees arrived in New Zealand in May and July 2018<sup>2</sup>.

## Four community organisations were approved as sponsors and six refugee families were selected to be sponsored through the CORS Pilot

Community organisations were invited to apply, using the Request for Application (RFA) form, to sponsor refugees under the CORS Pilot. Four community organisations, Gleniti Baptist Church (Timaru), South West Baptist Church (Christchurch), Society of St Vincent de Paul (Nelson area) and Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand (Wellington), were selected as approved community organisations to sponsor refugees. They were required to enter into a Deed of Agreement with MBIE.

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1 Twenty-four refugees were admitted under the CORS Pilot.

2 One family arrived a few weeks early due to their circumstances.

To be eligible to be approved for residence under the CORS Category, principal and secondary applicants were required to be mandated as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the status of refugees and to meet security, health and immigration assessments. Principal applicants were also required to demonstrate basic English language ability, meet minimum requirements around work experience or qualifications and be aged 18 to 45.

Community organisations could nominate refugees they wished to sponsor or sponsor UNHCR referred refugees from Jordan and Lebanon. In the case of UNHCR-referred refugees, UNHCR identified refugees according to Immigration New Zealand's (INZ) CORS Category criteria and then contacted refugees to tell them about the CORS Category. An interview was held with UNHCR and information was forwarded to INZ along with the Resettlement Registration form. Refugees were required to complete an Expression of Interest form before being invited to apply for the CORS Category. Refugees were then interviewed by INZ staff as part of an existing Refugee Quota selection mission.

### **The CORS Pilot successfully brought communities together to support refugees**

The evaluation shows that the CORS Pilot has achieved its objective of providing an opportunity for community organisations to more actively engage in supporting refugee settlement and to build communities that welcome refugees.

The evaluation clearly shows that the community organisations invested significant human resources and finance in supporting the settlement of sponsored refugees. Most of the work was undertaken by volunteers, but three community organisations also had paid staff involved in some activities.

Each sponsored refugee family was supported by six or more volunteers.<sup>3</sup> These volunteers had prepared for the family's arrival by establishing contact with them before their arrival and sourcing housing and household goods. On the family's arrival, the volunteers helped to set up bank accounts, apply for income support and enrol children in schools. Volunteers also spent considerable time showing the sponsored refugees around their community. After these initial orientation tasks had been accomplished, sponsors linked CORS refugees to English training opportunities and encouraged them to start thinking about further training or employment.

All sponsored refugees were very positive about their relationship with their sponsors. They credited the practical and emotional support they had received from their sponsors, as what helped them most in these first few months of settlement. Sponsors also spoke about the positive impact that sponsoring had for them as a community. It brought people together with different skills, and the teams that formed around the families worked well. Sponsors also spoke about the interest and support they received from their larger communities. One of the successes of the Pilot is that it has extended the breadth of those involved in settling refugees.

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3 Former refugees who were sponsored through the CORS Pilot are referred to throughout the report as 'CORS refugees' or 'sponsored refugees'.

## **Sponsored refugees are doing well but it is early days; employment will be a challenge**

Most of the CORS refugees were doing well three months on. They were making progress learning English and had learnt how to navigate their community. However, they all faced significant challenges, the most immediate being the need to improve their English language ability. Many spoke about their frustration at not being able to communicate in English or the slow progress they were making learning English. Despite being required to have a basic level of English all principal applicants still needed to improve their English to some extent before they could undertake employment or further study.

One of the significant challenges for the sponsored refugees and their sponsors is employment. At the time of the interviews, one sponsored refugee was in part-time work in their area of expertise, but a few sponsors raised concerns that the sponsored refugees were unlikely to have their qualifications recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) or get work in their area of expertise without further training.<sup>4</sup> Refugees knew that they would have to upskill and retrain when coming to New Zealand, but a few did not realise how difficult this process would be.

CORS principal applicants were required to have a minimum of three years' work experience (in the same occupation or within the same related sector) or a qualification requiring a minimum of two years' tertiary study. This was to assist them to enter the labour market relatively quickly. However, one concern raised by sponsors was that, while one of the selection criteria for refugees was having qualifications, this did not necessarily guarantee that they would be able to work in New Zealand using those qualifications.

It is recommended that an outcome evaluation of the Pilot be undertaken at around 18 to 24 months to determine how well the Pilot has enabled sponsored refugees to enter the labour market, navigate their communities and access mainstream support.

## **Different models evolved to support sponsored refugees, and potential exists for community organisations to partner with others**

Community organisations had to demonstrate that they met certain criteria,<sup>5</sup> including being a legal entity, but they could organise themselves in whatever way worked best for them and their community. The CORS Pilot saw two broad models evolve to support sponsored refugees: a sole provider model and a partnership model.

The sole provider model was utilised by two approved community organisations in the South Island. One organisation is a church with a mid-sized congregation who sponsored one refugee family. The other is a large church with significant community involvement and a history of social service provision. This church sponsored three refugee families, each embedded within

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4 NZQA is the government agency responsible for New Zealand qualifications and for assessing qualifications gained overseas to determine the equivalent level in New Zealand terms.

5 To be eligible to participate in the CORS Pilot, a community organisation had to be a legal entity, have experience working successfully with former refugees or other vulnerable people, have financial capability to meet its responsibilities, have the capability and capacity to deliver settlement services for sponsored former refugees, and enter into an outcomes agreement with INZ for the provision of identified settlement services to agreed standards.

one of the neighbourhood communities. Each refugee family sponsored by these approved community organisations was supported by around 10 to 15 people.

The partnership model saw organisations with existing structures and resources partner with individuals or groups who did not meet the criteria for approved sponsors by themselves or did not have the capability or capacity to sponsor refugees on their own. In one case, this was an ethnic community in New Zealand who wanted to sponsor refugees from their ethnic background. In another case, it was individuals who had 'a heart' for refugee sponsorship but needed an organisation to partner with.

If the CORS Category is rolled out, opportunity exists to consider how partnership models could be fostered to allow individuals and groups who do not have resources or capability on their own to become involved in sponsoring.

The strength of both models was a team approach with a diversity of skills. Also highlighted was the importance for one or two people who had the vision for sponsorship and the ability to provide a coordination or facilitation role. The strength of the sponsoring community organisation in terms of capability and capacity to provide support for volunteers and sponsored refugees was also crucial.

### **Pilot worked well, but communication and the selection process could be improved**

The purpose of a pilot is to learn how to operationalise a policy, how to overcome implementation barriers and how to improve processes. The implementation of the CORS Pilot generally went well, but as with any pilot, improvements can be made.

### **Positive relationship between Immigration New Zealand and sponsors is a strength, but communication could be improved**

Sponsors were overwhelmingly positive about their relationship with INZ, which was a strength of the CORS Pilot. However, communication could be improved in a number of areas:

- better communication at the outset about what the CORS Category is, what it is intended to achieve and how to apply to become a sponsor
- greater clarity on what services and funding CORS refugees would be eligible for
- greater clarity on what information and services refugees received at their two-week programme at the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC)
- better communication about CORS from INZ to other agencies, particularly the Work and Income branch of the Ministry of Social Development.

### **Perspectives mixed about the refugee selection criteria and selection process needs to be better operationalised**

Principal applicants were required to demonstrate English language ability, meet minimum work experience or qualifications, and be aged 18 to 45. These requirements were proposed under the expectation that they would increase the likelihood of the former refugees achieving successful outcomes, particularly in regards to securing sustainable employment and becoming self-sufficient.

While some participants were supportive of the eligibility criteria, others were concerned that the criteria excluded those most in need of protection. Some sponsors said that the English language criteria meant that the first few months of settlement had been easier to manage. The CORS Category is complementary to the Refugee Quota Programme, and several INZ staff

said that it provides an opportunity for refugees who might not be resettled under the Refugee Quota Programme because they were not those most in need of protection.

The eligibility criteria added complexity to the selection process, both in terms of UNHCR's role and INZ's immigration officers' role, particularly given the relatively short timeframe for implementing the Pilot. Both INZ and UNHCR said it took time for the two organisations to develop a clear understanding of how the criteria for the selection of refugees would be operationalised. Assessing English language ability of the refugees was a challenge for INZ staff, and the expectation was that interviews would be conducted in English (as part of the English test); interpreters were present to assist with technical or professional terminology.

The use of selection criteria in addition to resettlement criteria resulted in longer timeframes for UNHCR to find suitable cases and to assess whether nominated refugees met the criteria.

INZ staff feel they need to be better supported to enable extended interviews given the English language assessment. Other areas where improvements could be made to the selection process include:

- having printed information about the CORS Category in the refugees' languages to give to refugees on the day INZ interviews them
- explore the possibility of INZ staff completing the Residence Application form with refugees.

Although principal applicants are required to have a basic level of English language skills, this information would clearly spell out what they are and are not entitled to, so they would know what they would be asked to do and what would be involved.

### **Sponsors indicated that there is wider interest within communities to expand the CORS but support will be needed to become approved sponsors**

CORS sponsors expressed the view that there is interest within their community organisations and other organisations in their wider communities to sponsor refugees in the future. They also indicated that there is capacity and capability to sponsor a greater number of refugees. However, the Government would need to consider the capacity of the wider community volunteer sector to sponsor more refugees and the sustainability of this.

Although the current sponsors were all faith-based sponsors, they felt opportunities existed for others to get involved in sponsoring refugees, including former refugee communities. However, community organisations needed support at various stages of the sponsorship journey.

Sponsors commented that they would have benefitted from a workshop explaining what sponsorship involves, the application process, and the level of commitment and work involved. This information would have given them greater confidence and clarity when applying to become approved sponsors. In the future, such a workshop would enable organisations to decide if they had the capability and capacity to become approved sponsors and make it more likely that those community organisations that went through the RFA process were those suitable to become approved sponsors.

Once organisations are approved to sponsor refugees, sponsors suggested INZ could provide further localised training or workshops along the lines of the workshop given in Christchurch in the Pilot. Sponsors spoke highly of this workshop and the information they received. The workshop covered a wide range of topics, including how to manage expectations and provide support for volunteers. It is important that the costs of travel for sponsors are taken into consideration when deciding where to hold workshops.

Sponsors appreciated the opportunity to meet and learn from each other. Providing forums for sponsors to meet and for community organisations that are experienced sponsors to mentor those who are new in the process will be important in the future. One sponsor suggested that an entity could be established to work with government and oversee the CORS Category. The entity could provide information and training and connect community organisations that are considering sponsoring refugees under the CORS Category to help smooth the way for them.

The RFA form was adapted from forms used by MBIE for its tender process involving commercial arrangements, and a Deed of Agreement was entered into by approved sponsors. Some sponsors felt the RFA and other documentation could be simplified. In addition, it was suggested that INZ provide community organisations with a flowchart of the application approval and selection process.

### **Aspects of the CORS Pilot need to be reviewed if the number of sponsored refugees is to increase**

The CORS Pilot was small – six families, comprising 24 sponsored refugees. If the intake under the CORS Category is to increase, then consideration needs to be given to resourcing, the nomination and selection process, and the reception programme.

### **INZ staff questioned whether the model in the pilot could be applied with a larger number of refugees**

INZ staff indicated that extra resourcing would be needed if the Pilot was expanded. It was suggested that the model would need to be reviewed and potentially revised, and an expanded CORS Category would need dedicated resources (for example, to oversee INZ staff, decision making, liaising with potential sponsors and selecting refugees). UNHCR staff reported they would support an expanded programme. However, further discussions between INZ and UNHCR would be needed to explore enhancements to processes to support the implementation of an expanded CORS Category.

### **UNHCR and INZ staff questioned the scalability of the process for nomination of refugees**

The CORS Pilot allowed sponsors to nominate refugees. If they did not wish to nominate refugee candidates, candidates were referred to INZ by the UNHCR. Sponsors and other community organisations were very keen on retaining the option to nominate refugees. However, nomination added a level of complexity to the selection process and would be even more difficult if numbers of CORS refugees were to be increased. There were questions in particular about how the nomination process would work with the model of connecting the selection of refugees to existing selection missions, if that model was to be continued beyond the Pilot.

### **Ways to deliver a reception programme need to be further explored**

Sponsored refugees found the content of the two-week programme at MRRC useful and valued the opportunity to meet others in similar circumstances to themselves. It also provided an opportunity for INZ staff to provide initial settlement information.

Consideration will need to be given as to whether the benefits of a specific reception programme and the ability of MRRC to accommodate a greater number of refugees outweigh the cost and issues of providing this for refugees who enter New Zealand through sponsorship. There may be opportunities to explore providing a localised reception programme for sponsored refugees, particularly if numbers were to be increased.

## **Conclusion**

The CORS Pilot has seen the successful selection of four community organisation sponsors and six refugee families comprising 24 people. Sponsoring community organisations came together effectively to support refugees and, three months on, were meeting their obligations around settlement. Sponsored refugees were generally doing well but improving English and finding employment will be the significant challenges in the following months.

Consideration needs to be given to improving communication between INZ and sponsors and improving the refugee selection process. While there is considered to be interest in the community, alongside the support that government provides, for greater numbers of CORS refugees, consideration needs to be given to the scalability of the selection process and the role of MRRC.

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# 1 Introduction to the evaluation

In June 2016, Cabinet approved the piloting by Immigration New Zealand (INZ) of the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS) Category as an alternative form of admission for up to 25 refugees in 2017/18 to complement the Refugee Quota Programme.<sup>6</sup>

A process evaluation of the CORS Pilot has been undertaken to inform decisions on any future intakes under the CORS Category. The evaluation assesses how well the Pilot has been implemented, what early outputs have been achieved and what improvements could be made if it were rolled out further.

## 1.1 Context

The new CORS Category is part of New Zealand's broader refugee and humanitarian programme, which provides 1000 places annually under the Refugee Quota Programme<sup>7</sup> and 300 places each year for family reunification through the Refugee Family Support Category. In addition, approximately 150 to 200 successful claims for refugee or protected person status are made each year, which are decided on a case-by-case basis.

Refugee sponsorship programmes have been implemented by some of New Zealand's international counterparts. Canada introduced its Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in 1979, through which 288,000 refugees have been resettled.<sup>8</sup> Australia and the United Kingdom have developed refugee sponsorship initiatives more recently.

Church groups in New Zealand were behind the initial impetus for the CORS Category during the period of the Syrian crisis. They approached the Minister of Immigration and offered to run a pilot based on the Canadian model. Discussions were held early on with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) about what a sponsorship category might look like, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) undertook a process of consultation with a wide range of organisations in the development of the CORS Pilot.

The Pilot was implemented within a relatively short timeframe (as outlined in Table 1.1).

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6 Twenty-four refugees were admitted under the CORS Pilot.

7 The refugee quota will increase to 1500 from July 2020: J Adern and I Lees-Galloway. (2018). Refugee quota increases to 1500 in 2020. Release 19 September.  
<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/refugee-quota-increases-1500-2020>

8 Government of Canada. (2014). *Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program*.  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/guide-private-sponsorship-refugees-program.html>

Table 1.1: Pilot implementation timeframe

Timeframe	Activity
August 2017	Cabinet decision on the design of the CORS Pilot
October 2017	Request for Application released to community organisations
November–December 2017	Approved sponsors selected and informed
February–March 2018	Selection mission to Jordan and Lebanon
May and July 2018	Sponsored refugees arrive in New Zealand
July 2018	Sponsored refugees settled in communities with approved sponsors

Six sponsored families, comprising 24 people (12 adults and 12 children), arrived in New Zealand in May and July 2018<sup>9</sup>. All but one family had children. Around two-thirds of the sponsored refugees were from Syria and a third from Iraq. The children ranged in age from new born to 14.

## 1.2 CORS Category aimed to give community organisations opportunities to support refugee resettlement

The development of an alternative pathway for refugee admission that complements traditional refugee resettlement is intended to provide durable protection solutions for refugees and build community engagement and support for refugee resettlement. It also demonstrates New Zealand's commitment to international responsibility sharing.

The objectives of the CORS Category are to:

- provide an opportunity for community organisations to more actively engage in supporting successful sponsored refugee<sup>10</sup> settlement and to build communities that welcome former refugees
- enable sponsored refugees, with the support of community organisations, to quickly become independent and self-sufficient, so they can enter the labour market, navigate their communities and access mainstream support services without requiring additional support
- provide an alternative form of admission for refugees to complement New Zealand's Refugee Quota Programme and, in doing so, demonstrate New Zealand's response to the scale of refugee movement and commitment to international responsibility sharing.

<sup>9</sup> One family arrived a few weeks early due to their circumstances.

<sup>10</sup> Former refugees who are sponsored through the CORS Pilot are referred to throughout the report as 'CORS refugees' or 'sponsored refugees'.

### **1.3 Sponsored refugees had to meet health, age, education and work experience criteria**

To be eligible to be approved for residence under the CORS Category, principal and secondary applicants were required to be mandated as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the status of refugees and meet security, health and immigration requirements.

Principal applicants were also required to demonstrate English language ability, meet minimum requirements around work experience or qualifications, and be aged 18 to 45.<sup>11</sup> These requirements were proposed in expectation that they would increase the likelihood of the former refugees who met them achieving successful outcomes, particularly in regards to securing sustainable employment and becoming self-sufficient.

### **1.4 Four community organisations were selected as approved sponsors**

The Request for Application (RFA) to become an approved sponsors was issued by MBIE in October 2017. To sponsor refugees under the new criteria, community organisations were required to demonstrate that they (see Appendix 1):

- were a legal entity
- had experience working successfully with refugees or other vulnerable people
- had the capability and capacity to deliver the settlement services for sponsored refugees, particularly in regards to the capacity of the organisation to arrange suitable accommodation and support sponsored refugees to enter the labour market and secure meaningful and sustainable employment
- had the ability to enter into an outcomes agreement with INZ for the provision of identified settlement services to agreed standards.

Six community organisations applied to become approved sponsors and four were selected: Gleniti Baptist Church (Timaru), South West Baptist Church (Christchurch), Society of St Vincent de Paul (Nelson area) and Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand (Wellington).

### **1.5 Community organisations could nominate refugees or sponsor UNHCR-referred refugees**

Community organisations were able to nominate refugees for inclusion in the CORS Pilot intake. If a sponsoring community organisation did not wish to nominate refugee candidates, candidates were referred to INZ by the UNHCR.

To ensure the identification and selection of refugees was logistically feasible, cost-effective and enacted in a timely manner for the Pilot, sponsored refugees had to be located in Jordan or Lebanon. These regions were chosen to align with planned INZ selection missions.

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11 See Appendix 1 for further information on selection criteria for former refugees to be approved for residence under the new category and for community organisations.

## **1.6 Support for sponsored refugees was shared between government and the sponsoring organisation**

The responsibility for resettlement and supporting successful settlement outcomes under the CORS Pilot was shared between government and sponsoring community organisations. Appendix 2 outlines the respective roles and responsibilities of government and sponsoring community organisations.

The New Zealand Government funded the onshore and offshore eligibility assessment and health screening and travel to New Zealand for selected former refugees. The government also funded a two-week reception programme at the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC) that was tailored to support sponsored former refugees to work and live in New Zealand communities.<sup>12</sup>

The tailored reception programme also functioned as a handover period between INZ and the sponsoring community organisation to support the development of the settlement relationship between the community organisation and sponsored refugee.

Sponsored former refugees were required to settle outside Auckland due to pressures on accommodation and infrastructure in Auckland. Sponsoring community organisations were required to provide settlement services and support to sponsored former refugees for up to two years, including practical assistance for establishment on arrival and in daily living, with a strong focus on connecting to the labour market and encouraging independence.

Sponsored former refugees were eligible to access the same government-funded welfare and housing support, education and health services as other New Zealand residents and citizens, as well as the re-establishment grants that are available to Quota Refugees. However, sponsoring community organisations were responsible for sourcing and providing appropriate and adequate privately funded housing.

## **1.7 Report is based on interviews and administrative data**

The evaluation gathered information through administrative data and in-depth interviews with stakeholders with different perspectives.

Forty-six people were interviewed including sponsored refugees (11), sponsors (16 people across the four approved community organisations), other interested community organisations (4), MBIE staff (12) and UNHCR staff (3). Sponsors were asked to keep records of the number of volunteer and staff hours spent on various tasks, budget and milestones met. Appendix 3 provides further details on the evaluation methodology.

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12 Refugees who come to New Zealand through the Refugee Quota Programme spend their first six weeks at the MRRC. The MRRC is managed by INZ, which works in partnership with other government agencies and non-governmental organisations to run the six-week reception programme.

## **1.8 There are limitations to what questions the evaluation can answer**

This process evaluation was undertaken about three months after the sponsored refugees arrived in New Zealand and focuses on implementation and early outputs, for example whether sponsors had met their early settlement responsibilities. It does not make any conclusions on the success of the CORS Pilot in terms of the outcomes sought around settlement and labour market integration.

The intake of sponsored refugees for the Pilot is small – only 12 adults and 12 children (across six families) – and only four community organisations were approved as sponsors. The small number of former refugees and community organisations involved in the Pilot means particular care has been taken around the reporting of information. There may only be one principal applicant sponsored by a community organisation in a particular settlement location. The reporting approach ensures the confidentiality of former refugees' identity is protected and this has affected what, and at what level, information can be reported.

## **1.9 Structure of the report**

The report is structured around the three main objectives of the evaluation.

- Chapter 2 examines the implementation of the various stages of the CORS Pilot from the perspective of the different 'players', including what went well and what were some of the challenges.
- Chapter 3 examines the early outputs of the Pilot, including early settlement outcomes and the ways in which community organisations came together to settle sponsored refugees.
- Chapter 4 presents participants' perspectives on the Pilot, how it could be improved and lessons for the future.

## **2 Implementation of the CORS Pilot generally went well; the main challenge was lack of clarity of the process**

The CORS Pilot involved multiple processes and stages, from community organisations applying to become sponsors through to selection of refugees and their arrival in New Zealand. This chapter addresses the implementation of these processes and the challenges that were faced at each stage.

### **2.1 Community organisations had to go through an application process to become approved sponsors**

#### **Request for Application form was adapted from those MBIE uses for its tender process involving commercial services**

Community organisations were invited to apply to sponsor former refugees under the CORS Category. The RFA was simplified to make the language less commercial and easier to understand. Approved CORS sponsors were required to enter into a Deed of Agreement with MBIE rather than a contract, because money was not being paid for services. However, a formal agreement was necessary in order to hold CORS sponsors accountable for providing services and meeting standards.

The RFA asked sponsors to address three areas.

- Financial viability – the financial resources available to their community and how these resources were sufficient to meet the sponsorship responsibilities for the sponsored refugees for up to two years. Sponsors were also asked to provide evidence of funds and assets as well as a proposed indicative budget.
- Capability to deliver settlement services to sponsored refugees – experience working with refugees and or vulnerable people and their relationships with third parties and links to the community that would support settlement. Sponsors were asked to provide details of how they would support refugees in the area of employment and to indicate what they would cover in a settlement plan.
- Capacity to deliver settlement services to sponsored refugees – organisation size, structure and key relationships. Sponsors were asked to outline their non-financial resources that would support the refugees, linkages to other organisations and their roles in settlement services, and their systems to manage the delivery of settlement services.

A couple of sponsors indicated that some of the questions in the RFA seemed to be asking the same thing in a slightly different way – this was mentioned particularly in relation to questions asking about capability and capacity. Sponsors found themselves cutting and pasting the same answer into different sections.

#### **Request for Application process was time-consuming, and organisations with people experienced in funding applications were at an advantage**

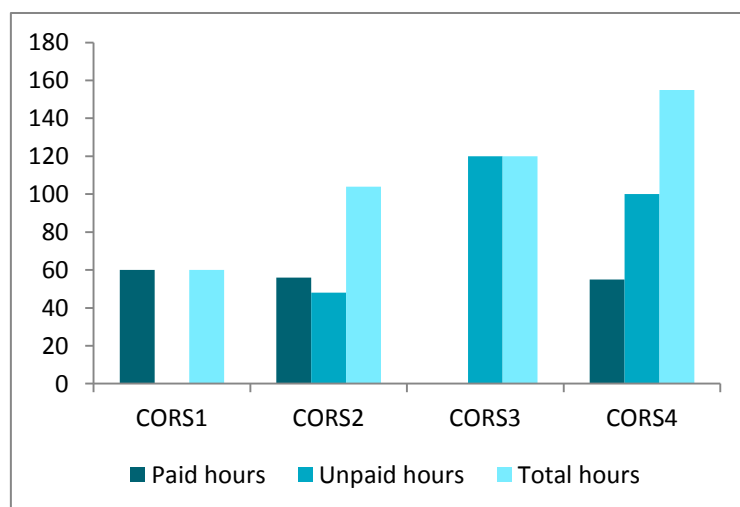
The RFA was released on 13 October 2017 and applications were due on 10 November 2017. CORS sponsors indicated that the timeframe for applications was very tight, particularly given how much ground work had to be done.

Sponsoring community organisations were asked in the evaluation reporting template to indicate how many volunteers and staff had been involved in the application process and how many hours were spent by each group. Numbers of staff and volunteers and hours spent varied significantly and were a reflection of the size and structure of the organisation. The number of people involved in the application varied from one person doing it all to eight people (four paid staff and four volunteers) completing the application. Three out of the four sponsoring community organisations had at least one paid staff member working on the application. Large organisations with significant structures had more paid staff working on the application than smaller organisations that were more reliant on volunteers.

I did not have a problem actually with the application. It was big but I thought they were pertinent questions. From memory I did not think it was too hard to understand what was being asked of us. It was just a big piece of work. It was a lot of work. (Sponsor)

Figure 1 shows the total hours that were spent on the application to become approved sponsors, as well as the hours spent by paid staff and volunteers. Total hours invested in the application ranged from 60 to 155. The number of hours invested in the application was a reflection of the number of people involved in the application. The sponsoring community organisation that had only one paid staff member involved in the application spent 60 hours. In comparison, the sponsoring community organisation that spent 155 hours on the application was also the organisation with the most people (both paid and unpaid) involved in the application (eight people).

Figure 2.1: Hours spent on application to become sponsoring community organisation



Note: CORS1 to CORS4 represent the four sponsoring community organisations.

CORS sponsors indicated in the interviews that they found the RFA onerous and time-consuming to complete. However, some sponsors indicated that the level of information required in the RFA seemed appropriate for the level of commitment required from community organisations:

While it was a lengthy application ... I think in a way it was probably what needed to happen at the start. (Sponsor)

One sponsor also said that developing a settlement plan as part of the RFA process was helpful for them to start thinking through how they might prepare for the refugees' arrival.

Community organisations that had people who had worked for government or who were experienced in funding applications said they were at an advantage for completing the application:

I do a lot of applications for my work ... I probably had a better understanding of how to word things, how to put these in the application ... If you did not have a background in that kind of stuff it would have been more difficult I think. (Sponsor)

### **Sponsors understood their responsibilities but lacked clarity about support available for sponsored refugees and the selection criteria**

Most sponsors said that they understood the responsibilities that sponsorship entailed, saying that INZ had explained it well and it was clearly set out in the Deed of Agreement. However, a couple of sponsors indicated that they were unclear throughout the application process about what services and funding CORS refugees would be eligible for. For example, these sponsors thought they were expected to cover all accommodation costs for up to two years. If this information had been more clearly set out, it may have made the RFA process a bit easier in terms of setting budgets. Sponsors' lack of understanding with respect to provision of accommodation was also raised by INZ.

One sponsor said they had lacked clarity on what the process of selection of the sponsors would involve, such as whether it would be a face-to-face or phone interview and that the process seemed to be evolving as they went.

Some sponsors also felt that there was lack of clarity in the RFA process around criteria for selection of refugees. A couple of sponsors were unclear that refugees could be selected from only Lebanon or Jordan. While the criteria for selecting the refugees were outlined in supporting documentation, they had missed them. One sponsor realised this once they had completed their application, but still went ahead with nominating those refugees in the hope INZ might relax the criteria requirements. They subsequently agreed to sponsor UNHCR-referred refugees. Another was unclear that extended family could not be included in the application. One sponsor admitted that this information may have been in the detail of the RFA but they missed it.

### **Process for selecting approved sponsors went smoothly**

A panel of four MBIE staff was set up to assess the RFA responses with the support of MBIE Procurement. Panel members had a range of operational and policy expertise in the area of refugee resettlement. Guidelines were developed for scoring the responses. These were provided to the panel to ensure consistency.

Of the six community organisations that submitted an RFA response for the CORS Pilot, four met the initial assessment criteria in the RFA and two were declined because they did not meet the criteria. INZ staff involved in the assessment process indicated that it went smoothly, MBIE procurement provided a good framework for the process, and roles and responsibilities were clear. The assessment process was followed up with a phone call with each of the four successful providers to discuss questions and information gaps that were raised by the assessment panel. All four were then approved as sponsors for the Pilot.

## **Sponsors were motivated by the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives and having the resources to do so**

Sponsors' motivations to get involved in the CORS Pilot were wide ranging, but ultimately it was about making a difference for people who are among some of the most vulnerable in the world.

For some, it was a personal connection with a refugee family or situation. For others, it was recognition that they had resources and skills they could share, including a community of people they could call on:

We saw sponsorship as a way we could help – make a contribution if you like, using our existing resources. (Sponsor)

## **2.2 Six families were selected to be sponsored**

### **Five sponsored families were UNHCR referred and one family was nominated**

The CORS Pilot provided sponsoring community organisations with the option of nominating refugees or sponsoring UNHCR-referred refugees. Community organisations were informed in the RFA process that the refugees needed to be based in Jordan or Lebanon. This was to coincide with planned INZ refugee selection missions in these countries to be cost-effective.

Three of the sponsoring community organisations indicated their desire to nominate refugees who they knew through personal connections. However, in two of these cases, the refugees were not located in Jordan or Lebanon. These community organisations were informed that sponsored refugees under the Pilot needed to be based in Jordan or Lebanon. They were provided information about the CORS Category and the option to sponsor UNHCR-referred refugees. Both organisations agreed, and only one sponsor proceeded with the nomination process.

UNHCR identified and contacted people who were deemed to fit the policy and criteria or confirmed that nominated refugees were registered and mandated. INZ has advised that the process for selecting CORS refugees was as follows.

- UNHCR interviewed families and generated the Resettlement Registration Form, which was submitted to INZ.
- INZ assessed the Resettlement Registration Form against CORS criteria and conducted a risk assessment.
- Refugees who met requirements completed an Expression of Interest form, which UNHCR returned to INZ.
- INZ accepted the Expression of Interest form and sent the Residence Application Form to UNHCR to complete with refugees.
- Refugees were interviewed by INZ staff as part of an existing quota selection mission to Jordan and Lebanon. The offshore INZ interview also gathered biometric information and undertook a settlement interview. The refugee underwent health screening during the selection mission, which was arranged by the International Organization for Migration.
- All the information obtained (including the risk assessment, security checks and medical information) was used to support INZ decision making. INZ staff said most cases were straightforward from a risk assessment perspective.
- Health assessments were undertaken by the INZ health assessment team.

Appendix 4 outlines the selection process from nomination or UNHCR referral through to approval of refugees.

### **Significant time went into developing the selection process and associated documentation for the CORS Pilot**

INZ technical advisers and operational policy staff were involved in developing the documentation associated with the CORS refugee selection process. This included new Expression of Interest, Residence Application, and Decision Summary forms as well as template letters and instructions. The timeframes were tight, and the work had to be delivered along with existing work. However, INZ hired an additional quota immigration officer for six months to free up experienced immigration officers to work on the CORS Pilot.

### **A strong relationship existed between INZ and UNHCR, but challenges around communication were identified**

All refugees had to be formally recognised as refugees and submitted by UNHCR. There was a strongly collegial relationship between UNHCR and INZ, which was considered by both parties to be instrumental for the CORS Pilot to succeed:

UNHCR response was fantastic; we had a good relationship with UNHCR both in Jordan and Lebanon where these groups were identified. (INZ staff member)

However, UNHCR's role in the identification of refugees was not without challenges. Both INZ and UNHCR indicated that there was disconnect at the outset between what the two organisations understood about how the criteria for selection of refugees was to be operationalised. While UNHCR was provided with the criteria, there was a lot to unpack about what they meant in practice.

### **Nomination added complexity to the selection process**

Two parallel refugee selection processes (sponsors could nominate refugees or take UNHCR-referred refugees) and the constraints around the timeframe for the CORS Pilot and refugee selection missions added complexity to the Pilot. One community organisation progressed down the refugee nomination process, and this process was more involved than where the refugees were referred by UNHCR. The first family the sponsor nominated declined the option to come to New Zealand. The second nominated family was received on the last day of the INZ selection mission to Jordan and Lebanon. As a result, the formal interview was undertaken on behalf of INZ by the International Organization for Migration, and this family was accepted to come to New Zealand through the CORS Pilot.

### **Three UNHCR-referred cases did not proceed after the Expression of Interest process, which put pressure on UNHCR to identify additional cases**

Three families who submitted an Expression of Interest and were referred to INZ for consideration did not proceed to the application stage. One refugee withdrew after their case was submitted to INZ. Two other cases were not considered by INZ after the Expression of Interest was submitted by the UNHCR. In the first case, this was due to a low level of English ability and in the second because the applicant insisted on including extended family.

INZ staff mentioned that this put pressure on UNHCR to identify other families within the selection mission timeframe.

## **Assessing English language ability of refugees was challenging**

The assessment of English language was based on the assessment for the INZ Samoan Quota and Pacific Access Category. The interviewing immigration officers were required to determine whether principal applicants met the minimum English language requirement by assessing whether they were able to understand and respond to basic questions in English at the interview and to read and understand basic English.

INZ staff mentioned difficulties with assessing sponsored refugees' English language ability and deciding on what the benchmark should be, as this was a new process for them. One staff member mentioned they did not feel confident doing the English language assessment, and another said that it was a subjective decision. There were a couple of situations where discussions were held with INZ managers to decide whether the English language ability of the refugees was meeting the CORS policy intent.

To meet the English language criteria, the adult partner with the strongest English language ability was advised to apply as the principal applicant. In three cases this was the husband, and in three cases the wife.

## **Matching of sponsors and refugees happened before the INZ interview**

Three INZ managers matched refugees who were UNHCR referred to sponsors. This matching process occurred before the selection mission and INZ interview. Matching was based on information provided in UNHCR's Resettlement Registration Form and the sponsor's RFA documents. While sponsors were informed that the final decision was yet to be made, matching happened at this stage to give sponsors information in advance about the general composition of families (for example, size of family and occupation). They were not provided with specific details, as refugees had yet to be approved.

## **Refugees found waiting to hear the outcome of their application stressful**

Once INZ had decided on the CORS refugee's case, UNHCR was informed of the outcome. UNHCR then informed the applicant of the outcome.

Sponsored refugees commented that waiting to hear the outcome of the process was difficult for them. Some felt well informed through the selection process and about the process and timeframes, others less so. One CORS refugee had heard that they had been accepted for the CORS Pilot through their sponsor rather than through the UNHCR. Most refugees understood that the CORS Category was new and that it differed from the Refugee Quota Programme.

However, a couple of refugees also acknowledged that the process for the Pilot was relatively short compared with other refugee programmes they knew of.

## **Sponsored refugees were provided with information before coming to New Zealand but circumstances made it difficult for them to understand what some of it meant**

Before their arrival, sponsored refugees received a lot of information about living and working in New Zealand, including a booklet and CD provided by INZ during a settlement interview. The interview was also an opportunity for refugees to ask questions or raise concerns and for expectations to be managed.

While refugees were provided with information from INZ and their sponsors before arriving in New Zealand, there were concerns from sponsors and refugees that some refugees were unclear about what to expect in New Zealand.

A few sponsored refugees said that they had all the information they needed, but others said they would have liked more information about study and work in New Zealand as well as the challenges they might face.

### **Contact between sponsors and refugees before arrival and while at the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre is vital**

Once refugee families had been approved under the CORS Category and matched with a sponsor, the next step for INZ was to put sponsoring community organisations and sponsored refugees in touch with each other. They were provided with each other's names and contact details by INZ. In most cases, sponsors made the first contact, but, in a couple of cases, sponsored refugees made the first contact. Contact between sponsors and sponsored refugees was via email, instant messenger, WhatsApp, Skype and, sometimes, by phone. Some sponsors sent photos of the house that sponsored refugees would be living in and the schools that their children would be attending. Sponsored refugees were told that their sponsor would be their main contact, and they were to ask them any questions they might have.

Contact before travelling to New Zealand was an opportunity for sponsored refugees to ask questions about the region they were being settled in, the cost of living and food in New Zealand and so forth. Sponsors said that this initial contact was vital to help establish the relationship before the refugees arrived in New Zealand:

It was more of a welcome that we were looking forward to seeing you so that he knew who we were, that there were real people out there to support them when they came (Sponsor)

Sponsors were also a point of contact for some of the logistical questions of sponsored refugees. In one case, a sponsor provided information about when the sponsored refugee was travelling. Sponsors were also able to reassure sponsored refugees around fears and concerns they had.

In some cases, sponsors also sent information about themselves and their families, including photos. They felt that introducing themselves was a way to start developing a mutual relationship. Sponsored refugees indicated that this early information about New Zealand, the region they were being settled in and their sponsors was vital:

Yes of course it was just very useful. The way he welcomed us and even though by email, it gave us good ground to be optimistic. (Sponsored refugee)

Sponsored refugees were proactive in seeking out information about New Zealand and the regions they were being settled in through the internet.

Sponsors also had contact with the families while they were at MRRC. This continued on from the relationship they had developed before arriving in New Zealand. Sponsors passed on details of the house they had rented for the family and when the sponsors would be travelling to Auckland to meet them.

## 2.3 CORS refugees spent two weeks at Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre

A two-week programme was developed specifically for CORS refugees, with a strong emphasis on employment and working in New Zealand for principal applicants.<sup>13</sup> The group of CORS refugees was small, so they had the opportunity to indicate the areas they would like to concentrate on. One of these was to develop a CV to take with them to their region of settlement. Sponsored refugees also discussed what was required to get their qualifications recognised by the NZQA<sup>14</sup> and had some of their documents translated to begin this process.

Other components of the tailored programme covered the New Zealand Police and New Zealand law, Taha Māori, moving into the community and cross-cultural issues. All sponsored refugees had their English level assessed, and there was an emphasis on English language for partners of principal applicants whose English was often at a lower level. Children participated in the standard school programme provided to Refugee Quota children attending MRRC.

### **Value of the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre lies in the information provided and the opportunity for CORS refugees to meet others in the same circumstances**

Five of the six families attended the two-week programme at MRRC. One family did not have the opportunity to attend.

While the two-week programme at MRRC was considered valuable by sponsors and sponsored refugees, a couple of INZ staff queried the value of running the programme at MRRC with one suggesting it should be run in the community. However, several of the sponsors and a few refugees indicated that in addition to the value of the information provided, an important value of the two-week programme at MRRC was the opportunity for sponsored refugees to meet each other:

[The] group formed a bond with each other, so regardless of what information they picked up about New Zealand they sort of had a bond with people they knew and were not alone here ... (Sponsor)

These relationships among the sponsored refugees were maintained after they settled in their respective communities, and there was talk about visiting each other in the holidays.

The two weeks at MRRC also provided INZ staff with the opportunity to monitor the sponsored refugees' health and family circumstances and provide social work and health services, if required, before the refugees moved into the community. However, this was not found to be necessary with this group of CORS refugees.

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13 The two-week reception programme was developed specifically for CORS refugees to provide them information about living and working in New Zealand (the focus for the principal applicant was on working and for the secondary applicant was on living in New Zealand) without being overly long from the time they arrived to the time the sponsors were to provide settlement support.

14 NZQA is the government agency responsible for New Zealand qualifications, and for assessing qualifications gained overseas to determine the equivalent level in New Zealand terms.

Most sponsored refugees spoke positively about their time at MRRC, although they would not have wanted to spend any longer than two weeks there. The CORS refugees found the information and experience the programme offered useful:

In all it was a very good experience. We have been briefed with many useful information including among other things the laws and regulations that are applicable in this country. (Sponsored refugee)

Sponsors of the family who had not attended the MRRC programme felt that the family had missed out. They felt it had meant some additional work for them as sponsors around providing information and managing expectations. These sponsors also felt they had missed out by not being able to connect with other sponsored refugees and sponsors who attended the farewell ceremony:

I think it would have been better if they had gone to Māngere, I think just that introduction to New Zealand ... and it would have been lovely for us to have been able to go to Māngere and to connect with all the others.  
(Sponsor)

### **Sponsored refugees experienced some confusion at the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre**

Sponsored refugees were at MRRC at the same time as a regular cohort of Quota Refugees, who attend for six weeks. A significant issue raised by sponsored refugees, sponsors and INZ staff was the confusion this created around differences in eligibility between the two groups and why the programmes were different. More specifically, there were concerns among some CORS refugees that they would not be eligible for income support<sup>15</sup> or that they were missing out on vital information due to the shortened course.

A few of the sponsored refugees said that INZ staff did not seem to be able to answer some of their questions around why and how they were different from the Quota Refugees. A couple of INZ staff also indicated that they felt confused about what was being delivered and what CORS refugees were eligible for. The CORS refugees asked to meet with senior INZ management to discuss their questions around eligibility and differences between the CORS Category and the Refugee Quota Programme. This request was met and the meeting was well received by the CORS refugees and reassured them:

I think it was the best induction session we had because ... we were in the dark until this meeting with ... INZ (Sponsored refugee)

## **2.4 Handover from Immigration New Zealand to sponsors went well, but sponsors wanted more clarity about what was covered at the Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre**

Sponsoring community organisations were provided with basic information about the refugees they were sponsoring, including their age, children, education and work history, and health. The aim of this information was not only to provide sponsors with a broad picture of who they

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15 Sponsored refugees were eligible for income support and an accommodation supplement.

were sponsoring, but also to highlight any issues that might surface during settlement. Sponsors indicated that this information, alongside the contact they had with the refugees, was useful to help them prepare for the refugees' arrival.

All sponsoring organisations, with the exception of the sponsor whose family had not attended the MRRC programme, flew to Auckland to meet the refugees and take them to their settlement region. A farewell was held for the CORS refugees and their sponsors at the MRRC, which was viewed positively. The farewell is where their permanent residence letter was handed over in a ceremony.

However, several sponsors also mentioned some communication challenges around logistical issues of the handover process; for example, who was responsible to CORS transport to the airport. A few sponsors also said that they lacked clarity about what was being covered in the two-week programme at MRRC and what information refugees had been provided:

From my perspective it was like they didn't know what they were going to do and what gaps we were going to have to fill when they arrived  
(Sponsor)

For the family who did not attend MRRC, the handover process happened at the airport where around 30 people turned up to welcome them. INZ staff who welcomed them, handed them their permanent residence letters and introduced them to their sponsors in a formal handover to the sponsors. This process was considered by INZ and the sponsor to have gone well even though it was rushed due to the circumstances of the family.

## **2.5 Different community-based models evolved to support refugees**

One of the objectives of the CORS Category was to provide an opportunity for community organisations to more actively engage in supporting successful refugee settlement and to build local communities that welcome refugees. Community organisations had to demonstrate that they met certain criteria, including being a legal entity, but they could organise themselves in a way that worked best for them and their community. The CORS Pilot saw different models and partnerships to sponsor refugees evolve. Sponsors appreciated the opportunity to bring their own perspectives and innovation to the Pilot:

INZ came across as providing an explanation but at the same time giving us a platform to innovate on the basis that they didn't necessarily know how it was going to be done. So they were very open and saying "Okay. Tell us how we could do it?" which was great for us. (Sponsor)

### **Sole provider models**

Two of the four sponsors are Baptist churches. Gleniti Baptist Church in Timaru has a mid-sized congregation and sponsored one family. Timaru is a small city in the South Island that has not been a traditional location for refugee settlement, but will resettle a small number of refugees per year as part of the Refugee Quota Programme from 2020. The Pastor of Gleniti Baptist took on a coordination role and was the point of contact for MBIE. A support team for the family was established, comprising about 15 members each with a specific role and area of responsibility. They drew in support from other churches and the wider community. They believed that their strength lay in being a small centre with a 'community mentality'. People were so keen to help out in some way. Settling sponsored refugees in a small non-traditional settlement centre also brought challenges, primarily the lack of people from the sponsored refugees' background and religion for them to connect with. However, sponsors indicated that

they had worked hard to mitigate these challenges, and while there were few people from the refugee family's background in their community, they had connected the refugee family to other Muslim families living in the centre. The sponsor had also helped facilitate a visit from another refugee family from the same background in another centre.

South West Baptist Church in Christchurch is a large church with significant community involvement and a history of social service provision. The church is based around communities of people who live in the same neighbourhood and relate to each other (neighbourhood communities).

South West Baptist Church sponsored three families, each embedded within one of their neighbourhood communities. Each neighbourhood community had one or two people who took on a leadership and coordination role. In addition, the church established a Settlement Advisory Team that was made up of a variety of people across the church, including those with experience working with refugees. This team met with the neighbourhood leads on a regular basis.

South West Baptist Church described its model as a 'cradle model' where the family are supported by their neighbourhood community who in turn is supported by the Settlement Advisory Team, who in turn is supported by the church as a whole. Neighbourhood support teams ranged from around 10 to 15 people. This model ensured support at all levels and flows of information. South West Baptist church also had a full-time volunteer who coordinated the 'cradle model' and was a point of contact with MBIE. This person also took on a coordination and support role across all of the South Island-based sponsoring community organisations.

Sponsoring three families was considered a strong point of this model as it allowed economies of scale and a broader group of people to bounce ideas off. Embedding refugees in an established community was another strength of this model; the sponsored refugees were in a community with easy access to schools and other services and their sponsors lived close by.

## **Partnership models**

The other two community organisations were based on partnership models and each sponsored one family. In the case of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (Nelson area), three people not associated with a particular community organisation had the vision for sponsorship, but needed a community organisation to partner with and that could provide financial support. St Vincent de Paul had already been talking at a regional conference about what it as an organisation could do to support refugees, so when approached by these three people it readily agreed to be the umbrella organisation. A group of six people, including three St Vincent de Paul members, formed the core support group, with one person taking a facilitation role. These six people had extensive community networks and were able to draw on a variety of support services.

Caritas Aotearoa NZ is the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' agency for justice, peace and development. The refugee family based in Hamilton was supported by a partnership of four organisations with Caritas as the umbrella organisation. The other three organisations were the Catholic Dioceses of Hamilton, the Equestrian order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and an ethnic community where the sponsored refugee family would be embedded. A memorandum of understanding was developed between all organisations. There was daily communication between all parties for several weeks after the sponsored refugees arrived to provide updates on progress. While Caritas was not a delivery body within New Zealand, it was asked by the Catholic Bishops to coordinate with the other communities. Caritas has contracts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to undertake aid and development overseas, so was seen to have the capacity and capability to put in an application and be the point of contact with MBIE.

This was the most complex of the models developed with four distinct organisations based in Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington. While the combination of different groups with different skills resulted in a strong model, communication and coordination among the groups was a challenge.

### **Strength of all models was a team approach with diversity of skills**

Common themes among the four community sponsors were the importance of a team approach and developing a support group with a wide variety of skills. Assigning people to distinct roles was also considered important:

Probably the biggest theme of what we've done is that it's been very much a team approach. (Sponsor)

We set up a support team and then each member had a portfolio. (Sponsor)

Also highlighted was the need for one or two people who had the vision for sponsorship and the ability to provide a coordination or facilitation role. The role of this person was to provide structure, keep people on track, be the contact with MBIE and be the conduit for information. INZ mentioned that it was helpful to have a single point of contact for each community organisation. Groups had different ways of ensuring things were done and different structures for accountability.

### **Pros and cons to settling sponsored refugees in 'like communities'**

One family was settled in a community of the same ethnic, language and religious background. Sponsors involved in supporting this family said that this had helped smooth the process in the initial few months of settlement.

However, sponsors involved in supporting sponsored refugees who were not of the same background as the sponsored refugees said that they felt that this provided refugees with opportunities to meet a greater diversity of people. This view was supported by one sponsored refugee who suggested that settling refugees in communities who are not of the same background as them can aid integration:

I think bringing all these [ethnic background] refugees from Jordan or Lebanon or wherever they come from and dumping them all in one place, so I think you haven't made any change for them. All you have done is you have just moved them from one territory to another and now you are keeping them in one place together. It will be harder and longer for them to integrate with society. (Sponsored refugee)

## **2.6 Strength of the pilot was the positive relationship between Immigration New Zealand and sponsors**

Sponsors spoke very positively about the support they received from INZ and the relationship that was developed. INZ was accessible and approachable, and the relationship was a partnership involving open dialogue. One sponsor said that it and INZ had been finding their way together. Comments from sponsors included:

Our relationship with INZ, I would like to say it would be 10 plus. (Sponsors)

These people are great people. They are doing what you expect from the Immigration Service. (Sponsors)

Sponsors appreciated the opportunity to meet with INZ staff early on and to have people within INZ they could contact to ask questions, though one sponsor said it wasn't always clear who in INZ they should talk to about the different aspects. Sponsors said they often took the initiative in contacting INZ with questions or providing updates on the progress of refugees.

INZ staff also spoke positively about the relationship with sponsors. They were eager to learn from INZ's experience working with refugees and were very professional in their interactions with INZ.

### **Sponsors appreciated the workshop Immigration New Zealand ran in Christchurch**

Before the arrival of the sponsored refugees, INZ held a workshop in Christchurch for the staff and volunteers from the South Island sponsoring organisations. Originally, INZ had intended to hold it in Auckland as they thought this could double with the sponsors meeting the families at MRRC. However, sponsors raised concerns about the cost for several people to travel to Auckland. Following discussions with community organisations and INZ the workshop was moved to Christchurch as this was more cost-effective for community organisations.

Sponsors spoke highly of the workshop and really appreciated the information they received from INZ. The workshop covered a large range of topics, including education and employment, Work and Income benefits, health and wellbeing, housing, language resources, policies and processes around child protection, and family violence. In addition there was a discussion around working with volunteers and how to manage expectations and set boundaries and provide support for volunteers. Also covered were MBIE's reporting requirements around the CORS Pilot and programme content at MRRC.

The workshop was also an opportunity for the sponsors to meet each other and ask questions. One sponsor did not participate in the training due to difficulties around timing. Their family arrived early and did not participate in MRRC and they had to hit the ground running. Although INZ sent them a lot of information and had several phone calls with them, these sponsors mentioned that it would have been useful to have had some training.

Sponsors were also provided with a resource pack. This contained information on Citizens Advice Bureau contacts, Work and Income key contacts, Ministry of Education refugee education coordinators, and NZQA key contacts. Fact sheets on Syria and Iraq were also included.

INZ said that the support needed by sponsors once the sponsored refugees arrived has been minimal and has been primarily around how to deal with bureaucracy.

## **2.7 Communication was a challenge in some areas**

### **There were mixed perspectives about how well information about the Pilot and its policy was communicated to interested organisations**

INZ provided information about the CORS Pilot through a range of channels. The INZ website contained information about the Pilot, including the RFA documents. Organisations consulted for the development of the Pilot received an email with a link to the website with information about the Pilot and community organisation and refugee eligibility criteria. There were also press releases about the Pilot.

Sponsors and other community organisations were mixed in their views on the adequacy of INZ's communication about the Pilot. A couple of participants felt that the Pilot was not communicated well and that unless an organisation had been looking for information they would not have known about it. When asked how they had heard about the Pilot, they mentioned a variety of sources. Some had heard about it because they were part of the group who had put an appeal in to government to allow community organisations to sponsor refugees. Others had heard about it through individuals who were interested in sponsoring refugees, and in one case a sponsor had heard about it directly from a refugee who had read about it on the INZ website.

However, one sponsor said that there was plenty of information once they knew about the Pilot.

One INZ staff member said the fact four community organisations had been chosen to be sponsors for the Pilot is evidence of success given the timeframe and the small scale of the Pilot. While they would have preferred to attract a more diverse group of organisations they considered this to be acceptable for the Pilot. This perspective was also raised by other participants in the evaluation.

### **There were some communication challenges around the process**

A few INZ staff interviewed said that they had a lot of questions from sponsors throughout the application process. Half were around process issues, forms and criteria and half were around what the government would provide in terms of support and funding. These questions did not necessarily relate to sponsors not understanding what was in the RFA but rather them trying to see where the boundaries were and if there was flexibility.

Sponsors generally felt kept informed by INZ through the refugee selection process though a few indicated there were some challenges. These challenges included:

- a lack of clear timelines about when things would happen – sponsors found out things as they happened
- it was unclear who the main contact in INZ was
- two sponsors heard directly from the family they were sponsoring rather than INZ that they had been accepted under the CORS Pilot, which led to confusion for both sponsors and sponsored refugees.

## **2.8 Managing expectations is crucial**

### **Some sponsored refugees came with unrealistic expectations**

A few sponsors from different community organisations expressed concern that some sponsored refugees had come to New Zealand with unrealistic expectations about life in New Zealand. A few sponsored refugees had been surprised by the cost of living in New Zealand, the time it would take to achieve things (for example, improving English language and obtaining employment) and expressed frustrations around communication:

The below expectation is the timeframe. When I come here I think I will study hard for six months and I will finish English course ... But she told me you will need 1 ½ or 3 years ... This is very bad. (Sponsored refugee)

Issues around unrealistic expectations were particularly a concern for two families who had expected life and employment in New Zealand to be much easier than they were finding it.

However, several sponsored refugees had come with realistic expectations of life in New Zealand or felt that it had been easier than they expected:

They have come with the attitude they will have to work really hard for a couple of years. He has come prepared to do that. (Sponsor)

Sponsored refugees said that they had found New Zealand to be a safe place and that the warm welcome and support they had received from their sponsor had made life easier for some than they had expected. One sponsored refugee said that their sponsor had prepared them well to expect things to take time. A couple of sponsored refugees were concerned about how they would be treated because they were Muslims but they had found themselves to be very accepted:

We were told that Kiwis or New Zealanders don't like ... Muslims.  
However, when we came here it proved to be wrong and an illusion.  
(Sponsored refugee)

Sponsors and INZ staff mentioned how important it is to manage expectations before sponsored refugees come to New Zealand.

### **Concern that the selection process raised expectations that could not be realised**

Both UNHCR and INZ raised concerns that approaching refugees about a possibility of resettlement can set expectations that may not be realised for various reasons, for example refugees not meeting health requirements.

A few sponsors raised concerns that one of the criteria for the selection of refugees for the CORS Pilot was their qualifications, but this did not necessarily guarantee that they would be able to work in New Zealand using those qualifications. In some cases, it was simply a matter of getting their qualifications recognised by NZQA, but for some further study and training would be required if they wanted to work in their area of expertise.

Sponsored refugees were informed that the CORS Category was a settlement offer and not a job offer and there would be no guarantees that they could work in the area they were trained for despite being selected for their skills. Sponsored refugees knew that they would have to upskill and retrain when coming to New Zealand, but a few did not realise how difficult this process would be. INZ and sponsors said that this needs to be well communicated to sponsored refugees before their acceptance for settlement under the CORS Category:

I guess the weird thing about this policy from my side is there is no  
obligational guarantee that the person's going to end up working in that  
field of work anyway ... managing their expectations on when they would  
ever be able to get back into that career is hugely important. (INZ staff  
member)

### **Sponsoring was more time-consuming than expected for some, but also easier for some**

Several sponsors mentioned sponsoring had been harder and more time-consuming than they expected. One sponsor said that the first few weeks were especially difficult, particularly learning how to deal with systems and processes. One sponsor said that they did not envisage that sponsoring would take over their lives, and an INZ staff member said that some sponsors had not realised how many hours were involved in settling a family.

However, several sponsors also said that sponsoring had been easier than they had expected, despite the time commitment. One sponsor said that they had been expecting something

major to go wrong and were pleasantly surprised that had not happened. Those who said it was easier than expected credited this to the large network of volunteers they had supporting them and the personalities of the refugees they were sponsoring.

## 3 Communities worked well together to welcome refugees

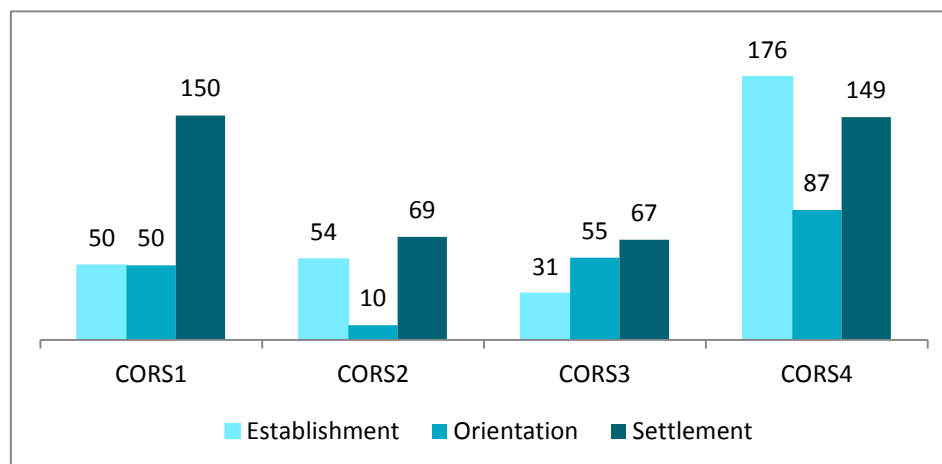
### 3.1 Sponsoring community organisations have invested significant resources to support CORS refugees

Sponsoring community organisations were asked to keep records of the number of staff and volunteers involved in various aspects of sponsoring as well as an estimate of how many hours they had spent. In addition, they provided details of their costs to date.

#### Most settlement tasks were undertaken by volunteers and hours spent were considerable

Figure 3.1 shows the number of hours that community organisations spent on establishment, orientation and settlement activities. Establishment included sourcing housing and setting it up, banking and other activities before or at arrival; orientation involved showing sponsored refugees around their new location; and settlement support included linking sponsored refugees to employment opportunities, training and education, and other services in their community. Establishment and orientation were one-off tasks completed at the time of the evaluation interviews whereas settlement support was ongoing.

Figure 3.1: Hours sponsors spent on establishment, orientation and settlement activities



Note: CORS1 to CORS4 represent the sponsoring organisations. One community organisation was sponsoring three families. In this case the average number of hours per family has been used.

As can be seen from Figure 3.1, sponsors varied in the number of hours put into various activities. Caution needs to be applied when considering this information and it needs to be considered as indicative only. Capturing the number of hours spent was extremely difficult for sponsors. In addition, some sponsors may have captured activities under settlement that others captured under orientation. Nevertheless this information is useful as an indication of the investment that sponsors made in supporting sponsored refugees.

The number of hours spent on establishment activities ranged from 50 to 176. The family sponsored by the community organisation that spent 176 hours on establishment activities did not attend the two-week course at MRRC. The large number of hours may be a reflection of some of the extra tasks sponsors were required to undertake that had been covered at MRRC for other sponsored refugees.

Two out of the four sponsors had one paid staff member involved in supporting the CORS refugees but most of the hours invested were by volunteers. The number of people involved in the various activities ranged from 3 to 16 (see Appendix 5). Hours invested were highest for organisations that had a large number of people involved in the activities. For example, the organisations CORS1 and CORS4 had 11 and 10 people, respectively, involved in settlement activities, and they had invested around 150 hours.

### **All sponsors were within their budgets, but housing costs were a challenge**

As part of the RFA sponsors were required to submit their budget for the settlement of refugees.<sup>16</sup> Budgets varied considerably from around \$15,000 to \$44,000. At three months, spending was well within each organisation's budget, varying from \$5,000 to \$18,000. Two community organisations were subsidising the family they were sponsoring, paying for ongoing internet, transport and other costs. Two organisations were not subsidising the families they were sponsoring but were prepared to step in if they needed financial support until they got employment.

Sponsoring community organisations received significant donations both in terms of cash and household goods. It was estimated that in a few cases up to \$15,000 to \$20,000 was donated in household goods.

High housing costs were a challenge for sponsored refugees and sponsors. In a couple of cases, houses had been obtained at lower than market rents because they were owned by people within the larger community connected to the sponsors. A few sponsors talked about the challenge of finding housing within their neighbourhood that could be met within the sponsored refugee family's budget. A few sponsored refugees spoke about the high cost of housing and transport and the difficulty of staying within budget. In one case, the sponsor reassured the sponsored refugee that they would not "let him fail" and would support them where necessary.

A few sponsors provided the families with money in the bank to start with, which could act as a buffer if they were struggling on their budget.

One sponsor was very concerned to ensure that the families they were sponsoring were able to maintain themselves within their budget:

We thought about giving them slightly cheaper rent but thought actually that's not doing them any favours because once our support officially finishes or if they want to move somewhere else they need to be aware of how much it costs. (Sponsor)

INZ raised concerns early on with sponsors that they were setting up the sponsored refugees with budgets where their income did not meet their outgoings and emphasised the importance of sponsored refugees maintaining lifestyles within their budgets.

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16 Community organisations were asked to provide information on the financial resources available to them and to explain how these resources were sufficient to meet the sponsorship responsibilities following sponsored refugees' arrival in New Zealand for a minimum of two years. In addition, they were required to provide an indicative budget that captured their settlement services responsibilities.

### **3.2 Sponsors prepared for the arrival of CORS refugees in a variety of ways**

INZ staff felt that sponsors had prepared well. They had gathered and coordinated volunteers, connected to the wider community and been making links to work opportunities.

#### **Most significant preparation was gathering information about what it meant to sponsor refugees through training and other ways**

One community organisation organised a workshop for volunteers where a Syrian couple shared their experiences of living in New Zealand and a volunteer who had previously been involved in helping refugees settle talked about their experience. Other community sponsors were invited to this session and some were able to attend. The Syrian couple provided information about cultural and religious expectations and areas where miscommunication might arise. This was considered crucial given that Christians were sponsoring Muslims and the sponsor said they wanted to make sure their beliefs did not get in the way of sponsoring. Other issues discussed were gender roles, types of food and what Syrian people would look for in a home.

Several sponsors mentioned how helpful this session had been and one said this about the workshop:

there were lots of things, especially cultural things that we were not aware of ... so that was really useful and helped give us a bit of confidence in what we were doing. (Sponsor)

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative was also in contact with sponsors, offering them support, templates and mentoring.<sup>17</sup> A couple of sponsors mentioned that this support had been really useful and helped them get under way with preparation for their family's arrival. Sponsors were also invited by Amnesty International to a meeting in Wellington when the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative was visiting New Zealand, and some took the opportunity to attend. One sponsor said that the meeting was an "awakening" for them, in particular seeing how the community sponsorship was working in Canada.

One sponsor had undertaken Red Cross training in advance of sponsoring the family and training by Refugees as Survivors on how to deal with trauma. They had found this training helpful and had adapted some of Red Cross plans and framework for their purposes. However, subsequently, some sponsors were also informed by MBIE that they wanted community organisations to develop their own models for how to go about supporting refugee settlement in their community.

#### **Sponsors set up structures and made links into their communities**

All sponsoring community organisations set up structures in advance for how they would go about meeting their sponsorship obligations. Most assigned volunteers to specific roles and set

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17 The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative works to assist and inspire countries around the world to open new pathways for refugee protection. They do this by sharing Canada's history, experience and leadership in private sponsorship and by supporting the creation of new programmes that countries design to meet their unique needs.

up systems to keep in regular touch and keep track of progress. Sponsors said that a lot of time and energy was put into preparation in the months leading up to the sponsored refugees' arrival:

So we took all the information, summarised it, put the key points in ... the first two weeks, the first 6 months and so we had dates, people's names beside each thing. (Sponsor)

Sponsors did a lot of work up front to find out what services and supports were available in their wider communities for the families they were sponsoring. Some contacted Muslim and refugee communities to alert them that the families were arriving and some contacted potential employers.

Word was put out to their wider communities, on social network sites and so forth, and goods were collected. The organisation taking three families started filling containers with goods.

### **Finding housing was a challenge, with one family still in temporary accommodation**

Finding housing was a challenge in some cases and one family was still living in temporary accommodation about three months after arrival.

Community organisations sourced houses through their own networks and by contacting rental agencies. In one case, the house was owned by someone in the community, and, in another case, a sponsor decided to buy a house so they could rent it to the sponsored refugee family. Four of the six families moved straight into the home that had been prepared for them. One of the challenges for these sponsors was the need to source the rental property in advance, and in some cases having to pay rent for several weeks before the family arrived. One sponsor had to sign the lease on behalf of the family they were sponsoring before knowing whether the family had been accepted by INZ.

A couple of families were housed initially in temporary accommodation; one was living with a family and the other was living in accommodation attached to a family home. These sponsors said that they had wanted to provide the sponsored refugee families with extra support in the first few weeks. However, an added benefit was having the sponsored refugees' input into the search for the rental property, in particular around the type of home they would like to live in.

### **One family arrived early and this put pressure on the sponsors**

One family arrived about six weeks early due to their circumstances. Preparing for their early arrival put a lot of pressure on the sponsor especially as they did not know until two days before the family were due to travel to New Zealand. This situation was aided by the fact this family was embedded in a community with the same cultural background and language. However, the sponsor was not able to get a rental property in time, and the family lived with another family within the community for a few weeks before moving into their own home.

### **Sponsors' greatest difficulties were dealing with 'red tape' and agencies' lack of knowledge of the CORS Pilot**

Several sponsors spoke about difficulties dealing with some government agencies, particularly Work and Income, and agencies' lack of awareness about the CORS Pilot:

One thing that community organisations flagged ... is that they felt other Government agencies didn't know enough about CORS. So maybe at a strategic level they know the CORS programme is going on but how do we get that message to frontline staff. (INZ staff member)

A few sponsors mentioned that knowing how to prepare was difficult because there was no process or template to follow. Particular difficulty was mentioned around the process of applying for benefits and setting up Inland Revenue numbers and bank accounts. A couple of sponsors said that it would have helped them to know in advance that an Inland Revenue number and a bank account number are needed to apply for a benefit:

We had to do a bit of digging around in finding that stuff out. That was the bit that was probably harder than it needed to be. I would like to think that now in the future there is a clear process, a template setting up bank accounts, [Inland Revenue] numbers, this is how you do it. (Sponsor)

One sponsor said it would have been helpful to have received the National Health Index number in advance.

### **3.3 Sponsoring community organisations were meeting their obligations as set out in the Deed of Agreement**

#### **Sponsors were meeting the initial orientation milestones**

Interviews were undertaken with CORS refugees and their sponsors about three months after they arrived in their region of settlement. All sponsored refugees had been enrolled with a health service or doctor, bank accounts had been set up, Inland Revenue numbers obtained, principal applicants were receiving income support, and children were enrolled in school. Sponsors said they did not feel there were any services that they had needed to connect the sponsored refugees to that were not available in their community.

Sponsors had spent time showing the sponsored refugees their local community, such as where to shop and buy Halal meat and Middle Eastern food. Sponsors took the families by foot or bus to show them around their community and how they could access various services. One sponsor talked about the importance of connecting sponsored refugees to an internet provider as soon as possible so they could communicate with their families in other countries.

All sponsors had held welcoming events around shared meals, and there were many opportunities for formal and informal get-togethers. One community organisation recorded that it had spent 250 hours organising and attending community events, receptions, gatherings and visits with up to 25 people involved in these. Sponsors spoke about how meaningful and fun these gatherings had been. Some sponsors had taken the sponsored refugees for trips further afield.

Sponsored refugees had been connected to the services and the wider community, including mosques and other former refugees or migrants. Several sponsors said that the families were now forming their own friendships and contacts. A couple of sponsors said that this was really important, particularly as the sponsors were all older people and the sponsored refugee families needed people their own age and stage to relate to.

Sponsored refugees were overwhelmingly positive about how their sponsors had helped them get to know their new community. They appreciated all the effort sponsors had gone to on their behalf in preparing their homes, setting up bank accounts, showing them around their community and connecting them to other people:

All the credit goes to our sponsor. They were a great help. (Sponsored refugee)

The sponsor was a great help in guiding us to the places of shopping and supermarkets and all other places we might just need to go to. They introduced us to some other members of the community. I think they did a great job. (Sponsored refugee)

Three community organisations provided the sponsored refugees with an introduction manual that included, for example:

- a house manual with a list of contact people and emergency services
- a book of local services and maps
- an introduction pack for newcomers prepared by the local council.

### **All sponsoring community organisations had developed settlement plans, but discussions about these with refugees varied**

As part of the Deed of Agreement, sponsoring community organisations were required to develop individual settlement plans for sponsored refugees before their arrival in New Zealand. The settlement plans were required to take into account the sponsored refugee's specific settlement needs and goals for transition to independence into the community.

INZ provided a settlement plan template. This outlined sponsoring organisations' and INZ's responsibilities for various activities and the tasks to be undertaken in the first week that sponsored refugees arrived in the settlement location. It also covered the tasks that needed to be completed by six weeks and three months in the community.

Sponsors appreciated having a template, but one sponsor indicated that it should have been made available to community organisations earlier. This sponsor said that they had already developed a plan based on the Canadian model and had to start again using the INZ template.

All sponsoring community organisations had developed settlement plans for the families they were sponsoring, and most refugees recalled having some level of conversation with their sponsors around how they might reach their goals. In some cases, these conversations were informal as sponsors were wary of information overload in the first few months. A couple of sponsors felt that discussion around the long-term goals had dropped off in the midst of dealing with the day-to-day issues but that perhaps the time had come for those conversations. In other cases sponsors, were having regular discussions with the sponsored refugees around the settlement plan and their goals.

Sponsored refugees' goals centred on improving their English and taking steps towards employment. Sponsored refugees had a strong desire to be employed.

## **3.4 Relationships are central to the Pilot's success**

### **Sponsored refugees were making progress towards settlement and relationships with their sponsors were key**

All sponsored refugees spoke very positively about their relationship with their sponsor. They credited the practical and emotional support that they had received from their sponsors as what had most helped them in the first few months in New Zealand. Sponsors had helped them with practical day-to-day things but had also spent time talking through their concerns and listening to their stories. Even sponsored refugees who were struggling spoke positively about the relationship with, and support from, their sponsor. Several said that their sponsor had become friends or even like extended family:

You feel they are family with you. People are feeling with you. (Sponsored refugee)

A couple of sponsored refugees had been concerned that they would be treated differently because they were Muslim, and their sponsors were not, but were pleasantly surprised that that had not happened:

They don't look at us like we are Muslim or we are any religion.  
(Sponsored refugee)

### **Sponsors spoke positively about their relationship with sponsored refugees and the impact of sponsoring on their community**

Sponsors spoke warmly about their relationship with the sponsored refugees. Several sponsors mentioned that the family they were sponsoring were lovely people and easy to relate to. They were open to new things and not afraid to ask questions. A couple of sponsors mentioned the fact that one partner was able to speak a level of English made communication and developing relationships much easier. All sponsors appeared to genuinely care for the families they were sponsoring and wanted the best for them:

It's not a job to us because we care about them. (Sponsor)

A couple of sponsors mentioned that there had been miscommunications from time to time but both they and the sponsored refugees were committed to working through these:

There's probably been unintentional cultural breaches but I think they understand that people's hearts are in the right place and that people haven't meant to offend them. (Sponsor)

Sponsors also spoke about the positive impact that sponsoring had had for them as a community. It brought people together who have different skills and the teams that were formed around the families worked well:

There are key roles necessary to connect the family with welfare, health, schooling which have taken considerable time, however the friendship activity that makes the real difference in making a family feel welcome comes about through small actions shared among many and repeated often. (Sponsor)

INZ said that one of the positives of the CORS Pilot had been the involvement of people who would not normally be involved with refugees. Extending the breadth of those involved with settling refugees was one way for communities to become more welcoming.

A couple of community organisations mentioned that they had hosted gatherings for the wider Muslim community as part of welcoming their families and this had been a really positive experience. A couple of sponsors also said that sponsoring had helped raised their understanding of different cultural and religious groups.

### **3.5 Sponsored refugees faced many challenges, with English fluency and employment the most significant**

#### **Sponsored refugees were making progress with learning English but this continues to be a significant challenge**

A few sponsors and sponsored refugees said that one of the positive things in their settlement was the progress being made in learning English. However, many sponsored refugees also spoke about their frustration at not being able to communicate in English or the slow progress they were making learning English. Some mentioned that this was the biggest challenge for them since coming to New Zealand.

Principal applicants were required to have a certain level of English to be accepted for the CORS Category. A couple of principal applicants spoke about the burden they were carrying being the interpreter for the family:

Actually it was harder because I am the only one who can speak English.  
My son can speak too but I have the whole responsibility here for my family. (Sponsored refugee)

However, several said that they used Google translate if they came across problems. Most had not needed to use interpreters, though one sponsor said that they had used interpreters in formal meetings to give the partner with better English a break from having to translate. In one case, an older child was acting as an interpreter.

Both sponsors and sponsored refugees said that improving English was the first priority, and most refugees were studying English through polytechnics, schools and English Language Partners.<sup>18</sup> Despite having a certain level of English, all principal applicants still needed to improve their English before they could undertake employment or further study.

I didn't think they'd be able to do the jobs that they are qualified for yet.  
Because there's quite a huge difference between conversational English and academic English. (INZ staff member)

#### **Learning to drive, having qualifications recognised and gaining employment were the next challenges for refugees**

A couple of sponsored refugees already had their learners or restricted driver licence and others were working towards it. Driving was seen to be very important for a few of the refugees who had to travel for work or study.

At the time of the interviews only one sponsored refugee was in part-time work, and this was in their area of expertise. In addition, a couple of sponsored refugees had been offered work experience. Work and offers of work experience had been obtained through sponsors' networks.

Most sponsors had assisted sponsored refugees to make an application for NZQA overseas qualification recognition or were in the process of doing so. While one sponsored refugee had had their qualification recognised by NZQA, a few sponsors raised concerns that the sponsored

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18 See English Language Partners website, <https://www.englishlanguage.org.nz/>

refugees were unlikely to have their qualifications recognised by NZQA or get work in their area of expertise without further training. Issues around expectation management were raised earlier, but one sponsor said:

What's the point of having a tertiary qualification if you can't use it here.  
(Sponsor)

Several sponsors and CORS refugees acknowledged that re-training or further study may be necessary before sponsored refugees would be ready and able to work.

### **Other challenges included stress and feelings of isolation**

A few sponsors said that the sponsored refugee families had been struggling with a lot of stress and anxiety in the first few months. In some cases, this was improving, but in a few cases sponsored refugees were still struggling. A couple of sponsors mentioned that the sponsored refugees were feeling sad as the result of the loss of their families and homes.

A few sponsored refugees also spoke about feeling stressed and anxious as they faced so many challenges ahead of them. They were worried about finding employment, not being able to work in their area of expertise, the cost of living, communication difficulties and the unfamiliarity of everything. A few sponsored refugees also spoke about the challenge of being in a centre with no mosque or with few people from their ethnic background.

However, a couple of sponsored refugees felt that the challenges were minor and that the help of their sponsor was making the difference.

### **Challenge to empower sponsored refugees**

One community organisation spoke extensively about empowering the sponsored refugees to become independent as soon as possible. This had been part of their training for their volunteers:

The Canadians advised that it is really easy to create dependency so we have been really conscious of that. (Sponsor)

There were a variety of ways they were doing this, including setting them up with realistic budgets, which they were not subsidising, giving the sponsored refugees choices of which bank, internet company or doctor to go with, and showing them how to do things rather than doing them for them.

For us the challenge is to help them long term get to independence. It's easy to pick them up and take them places, trying to work with them and teach them the process is the challenge. (Sponsor)

A few sponsored refugees spoke about how important it was for them to be independent and provide for themselves:

From my point of view there are things I need to do, even if the sponsor is available. (Sponsored refugee)

However, as mentioned in earlier, other sponsors were subsidising CORS refugees in various ways.

### **A few sponsors and CORS refugees asked whether they were required to stay in the centre they were settled in**

A couple of sponsored refugees raised issues about the centre they were located in. These were based around the desire to move to a larger location and a place where there were universities to pursue further study or jobs in their field of expertise. Questions were raised as to what the possibilities were for them to move within the two-year period. One INZ staff member said that it had become clear at MRRC that a couple of sponsored refugee families did not want to go to the centre where their sponsor was located.

### **Sponsored refugees' hopes for the future centred on employment and their children**

Sponsored refugees first hope was to improve their English, and some were open to retraining if they could not use their qualifications in New Zealand. All sponsored refugees, including women taking responsibility for childcare, indicated that they hoped to be employed at some time in the future, even if this was part time. A couple of sponsored refugees mentioned they would like to open their own restaurant or business. Other occupations they aspired to included hairdresser, electrician, teacher, tailor and dental technician. Some hoped to get their qualifications recognised by NZQA and to work in their fields of expertise, but most accepted that this might be a long process, requiring further education.

Other common hopes included getting a driver licence, getting a New Zealand passport and becoming independent. One sponsored refugee said that they wanted 'a normal life' for their future, and another said that they wanted to do something with their life.

Hopes for their children were for them to succeed at school, learn English and make friends. Ultimately, they all wanted a better future for their children.

## **3.6 Sponsoring community organisations were overwhelmed by the contact from outside parties**

All sponsoring community organisations commented on the amount of interest they had received once they had been accepted as CORS sponsors and their names had been published. One sponsoring community organisation said they had been contacted by up to 100 individuals or organisations and another had had 50 emails from refugees around the world asking to be sponsored. Another one said they had spent 67 hours responding to contacts from outside parties seeking to find out about the CORS Pilot or refugees asking to be sponsored. Contacts were via Facebook, email, phone or a direct approach to the organisation.

In response to contact from refugees, sponsoring community organisations developed a standard response that this is a pilot and they could not take on any more refugees. One sponsor said they directed refugees to the INZ website, and another had suggested that INZ state on its website that no more refugees were currently being accepted through the CORS Category.

Contact also came from non-governmental organisations, including Amnesty International that was undertaking a shadow report on the CORS Pilot.<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International interviewed

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19 Shadow reports (often called 'alternative reports') are submitted as an alternative to a government's official report regarding a particular topic.

several staff and volunteers from the sponsoring organisations as well as sponsored refugees as part of its report. A couple of sponsors raised issues around the privacy for the refugees participating in this report and chose not to participate:

Even within church I've been quite protective of what information goes out ... Nobody needs to know they went to the Doctor. But versus publicising it and getting people involved and enthused in supporting it; it's that trade off. (Sponsor)

Other contact came from media wanting to write articles on the CORS Pilot, and sponsored refugees and sponsors had also been contacted by a student wanting to interview sponsors and refugees as part of their PhD.

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## **4 CORS Category adds value to New Zealand's refugee programme but scope for improvement exists**

### **4.1 Participants' perspectives on the CORS Pilot were generally positive**

In general, participants' perspectives on the CORS Pilot were positive. Sponsored refugees' comments about the programme included that it is a great programme because it provides refugees with a way out of their situation and because there was only a short time to wait between being advised of the programme and their eligibility to apply and arriving in New Zealand compared with other refugee resettlement programmes that, reportedly, can take years to resettle the refugees.

When INZ staff and sponsors were asked what they saw as the greatest success of the Pilot they gave a variety of responses including:

- just having the Pilot is a success
- providing another pathway for people who want refuge
- tapping into areas of the community not traditionally involved in refugee resettlement
- expanding the knowledge of the communities about refugees and resettlement
- accessing the networks of sponsors
- the refugees were able to come here quite quickly, compared with coming through other categories.

#### **Participants had mixed perspectives on the criteria for selection of CORS refugees**

As mentioned in section 1, CORS refugees were selected based on specific criteria. Several sponsors said that the criteria, in particular the requirement for the principal applicant to demonstrate they can read, understand and respond to basic questions in English, had helped with the initial few months of settlement. The fact refugees were relatively well educated and young also helped the settlement process. One sponsor said that the refugees were selected well on their ability to integrate.

I think in terms of refugees ... having some English already, ... he does have some work experience which is cool and that will pay off eventually, but that English is key, I think. (Sponsor)

A couple of INZ staff noted that the CORS refugees had a higher level of independence and confidence than is generally the case with Quota Refugees.

The CORS Category is complementary to the Refugee Quota Programme, and several INZ staff said that it provides an opportunity for refugees who may not have otherwise been resettled because they are not those most in need of protection. One INZ staff member said that some refugees with qualifications find it hard to migrate through skilled migration programmes because they lack documentation to verify their skills. At the same time, they are not the most vulnerable, so are overlooked and have few options:

This is a group that would not otherwise be settled. But that does offer the opportunity for people that might not ever get in under the Quota

and gives them a future and ability to get on with their lives. (INZ staff member)

I think as part of the whole concept behind this particular way this was drafted, was to enable a different group of individuals to have access to protection as well as the people who are the most vulnerable. (INZ staff member)

However, some sponsors and other community organisations spoke out strongly against what they called ‘cherry picking’ of refugees. This was a reason why one community organisation had chosen not to participate in the Pilot:

Our problem is that it ceased to be a humanitarian category. It became about capability rather than vulnerability. (Other community organisation)

A couple of sponsors said that while it would be more difficult to sponsor those most in need, some community organisations had the capacity to do this. They suggested that sponsorship by community organisations with a significant level of capability to provide support and care for very vulnerable people was still a good model for settlement.

A couple of participants called for other criteria to be reviewed as well, particularly the requirement for refugees to be settled outside Auckland due to pressures on accommodation and infrastructure, given that many refugee communities that might be interested in sponsoring are based in Auckland, as well as there being more opportunities for employment and study.<sup>20</sup> Also of concern for a couple of participants was the requirement for CORS refugees to be mandated as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention in the context of who they could nominate for sponsorship. Not all people in refugee-like situations are mandated as refugees. An INZ staff indicated that UNHCR’s approach now was to do a Refugee Status Determination only at the stage when refugees were identified as priority for resettlement.

### **UNHCR supports the CORS Category operating complementary to the Refugee Quota Programme**

UNHCR advocates for an expansion of third-country solutions for refugees,<sup>21</sup> particularly given the significant global resettlement needs, and indicated that the CORS Category is a positive step if it is used as a tool to help underpin support for expansion of resettlement programmes. It also emphasised the importance of keeping a protection focus to community sponsorship programmes, preferably without criteria for selection in addition to the established resettlement criteria based on protection needs that are used for the Refugee Quota Programme.

However, UNHCR staff raised the possibility of developing a model that would fit under the complementary pathways stream outside the quota resettlement track and with a focus on labour or education. They noted that the CORS Category had evolved from discussions

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20 See Appendix 1 for further information on selection criteria for former refugees to be approved for residence under the CORS Category.

21 The expression ‘third-country solutions’ means settlement options in countries other than the one the refugee fled from or is currently living in.

between INZ and UNHCR a long time ago around a labour mobility scheme for skilled refugees and highlighted that such pathways can also complement resettlement by increasing opportunities for protection and solutions for refugees:

Any complementary package of protection where we can help more people is a good thing (INZ staff member)

The sponsored refugees also stressed that being able to feel safe in New Zealand was a major factor for them in coming here. They hoped that the CORS Category would continue to help other refugees in the future:

I think this category will pave the road for many people who are caught in the cross-fire of turmoil in civil war. It could be a way out for them (Sponsored refugee)

## **4.2 Participants strongly support continuing the CORS Category**

Sponsoring organisations, INZ and UNHCR staff, as well as some of the sponsored refugees indicated that they supported the CORS Category being continued in some form as long as it complements the government's resettlement programme:

I think it should definitely continue, the CORS Category, I think it's something different from both Quota and family reunification and there's a huge appetite for it from communities. (Sponsor)

### **Participants had many ideas for improving the CORS Category, including better communication and a greater lead-in time**

A few INZ staff and sponsors suggested that communication of the responsibilities of government and the sponsoring organisations could be made clearer to potential sponsors.

According to INZ staff, INZ would need to be more proactive in providing CORS information to potential sponsors using various mediums to enable a more diverse and broader range of community organisations to consider engaging in such a programme.

CORS sponsors are already getting those stories out and promoting the CORS Category through their networks. There has been significant coverage of the arrival of the sponsored former refugees in their communities portrayed in the New Zealand media. These media reports have presented the resettlement of these refugees and the CORS Category in general in a positive light and are an example of ways to increase awareness of the CORS Category.

The amount of lead-in time in the CORS Pilot was insufficient for some community organisations to complete the application process. They needed more time to gather information and understand what was required.

INZ staff also would have preferred a longer lead-in time to prepare. However, they acknowledged they would not be starting from scratch if another intake of sponsored refugees were to take place, as much of the documentation needed has already been prepared for the Pilot and could be reused with some amendments.

It felt like there was a massive rush to get things organised before we left ... the interviews, processing, them coming. (INZ staff member)

## **Simplification of the application form would make it easier for potential sponsors to apply**

Some organisations felt that the RFA form and other documentation they were required to complete could be simplified to make it easier for them to understand what is being asked for. Some community organisations that were unfamiliar with the language of contracting found the application process daunting. INZ had adapted the forms from those used in other procurement situations and acknowledged that some community organisations might find it difficult to understand the requirements:

Some people may really approach a document quite well and go fantastic, MBIE has outlined what they're looking for. Others especially in the social services space may be more open to a face-to-face sort of thing, like meeting with officials and going through what the project is. (INZ staff member)

Although community organisations understood the need for the formal Deed of Agreement, less formal information provided alongside the Deed to explain it would be helpful.

## **Potential sponsors could be better supported when deciding whether to apply, and to prepare to meet their responsibilities**

Some sponsoring community organisations commented that a workshop explaining what sponsorship involves, the application process, and the level of commitment and work involved would enable organisations to decide if they have the capability and capacity to become sponsors. As another sponsor suggested, there could be a series of flowcharts to help navigate the processes from applying to sponsoring to selecting refugees.

I think clarity on the selection route and the criteria, it's almost like a diagram that could be drawn ... probably quite a few flowcharts, there's one if you are selecting and one if you're not. (Sponsor)

Community organisations would also like to see templates of the RFA and the settlement plan earlier in the process with more explanations of what the process entails.

One community organisation commented that having more information on how to identify mandated refugees would be useful. They suggested that not knowing how to get this information may have put some groups off nominating refugees.

Once organisations are approved to sponsor refugees, some indicated they would like INZ to provide further localised training or workshops along the lines of that given in Christchurch in the CORS Pilot:

INZ did training in Christchurch, meaning several volunteers were able to attend. Had it been held in Māngere as first envisaged, it would have been cost-prohibitive for most of us. (Sponsor)

A further suggestion was that the training could be continuous with workshops every six months or yearly to enable community organisations to learn from each other. It would also enable INZ to maintain a relationship with them.

One sponsor suggested being able to access and utilise other non-governmental organisations' training for volunteers would be useful.

If the CORS Category is rolled out or extended, opportunity exists to consider how partnership models could be fostered to allow individuals and groups that do not have resources or capability on their own to become involved in sponsoring. Partnerships could bring together

the strengths of well-established community organisations with the commitment and skills of individuals and groups to deliver on-the-ground support.

### **Participants suggested enhancements to the CORS Pilot refugee selection process**

UNHCR requires sufficient timeframes to identify suitable caseloads to support New Zealand to consider a sufficient number of cases to meet the available places.

UNHCR did the preliminary interview and completed the resettlement application forms with the refugees. INZ could further explore options to enhance the process to enable INZ to undertake completion of the Residence Application. Some INZ staff suggested that decisions on where to place people (for example, families from a large city placed into a small town) might have been done differently if more information had been available. Though there was no evidence that there were any issues with the matching of families to sponsors, having this information would help INZ staff to have a better understanding of the family so they could better match families to sponsors, particularly if the matching process happened following the interview. In addition, consideration could be given to utilising available technologies to support the selection process and form completion such as Skype.

The selection process was confusing for some of the sponsored refugees, and some INZ staff felt that the refugees did not have a clear understanding of what the CORS Category was and what to expect when they came to New Zealand. One INZ staff member suggested using printed information in the refugee's language as a way to provide clearer information for the refugees. Although the principal applicants are required to have a basic level of English skills, this information would clearly spell out what they are and are not entitled to, so they know what they are being asked to do and what is involved. It would help if they were provided with an INZ contact in case they have questions.

### **Several sponsors indicated a preference for nominating refugees if the CORS Category continued**

As noted by many participants, community organisations were very keen on retaining the option to nominate refugees for sponsorship:

these guys have all come from zones from Afghanistan, Iran and Ethiopia, so that's my one real hope is that they continue to allow sponsors to actually nominate refugees. I'm a bit concerned they might drop that out, which might or not have impact whether we continue with the programme. (Sponsor)

However, nominating refugees as opposed to sponsoring UNHCR-referred refugees added a level of complexity to the refugee selection process for INZ, UNHCR and for the one sponsoring community organisation that did go through the nomination process.

Three of the four approved sponsors had intended to nominate refugees, but this did not eventuate due to the location of the nominated refugees not being Lebanon or Jordan. These organisations hope that in future they will be able to bring particular refugees to New Zealand. Some felt quite strongly about this.

### **Sponsoring community organisations identified information they wanted to receive before handover of the sponsored refugees to help them be more prepared**

To be more prepared, sponsoring community organisations identified information they would like to receive before the sponsored refugees were handed over, including:

- more clarity around arrival dates for the sponsored refugees

- an indication of their level of English language skills
- knowing what training and information sponsored refugees had received in the programme at MRRC
- templates for setting up bank accounts and Inland Revenue numbers or being provided with Inland Revenue and National Health Index numbers
- knowing who to contact at INZ about particular aspects of the process.

Other suggestions for improving the availability of information and support around the application process for future intakes included:

- mentoring by groups that have already been through the process
- providing more information on the website in less formal, more user-friendly language.

Sponsors mentioned that it would have been useful for other agencies, such as Work and Income, to be advised of the CORS Pilot by INZ before sponsors approached them.

## 4.3 Wider interest exists within communities to expand CORS Pilot

### Sponsors reported a high level of interest in the wider community

CORS sponsors indicated there is interest within their community organisations and other organisations in their wider communities to sponsor refugees in the future and that there is the capacity and capability for organisations to do so:

People in the community want to do something, not just give money and the community settling the refugees in gives that sense of belonging. Bringing them in and “knowing who they are can be really enriching”.  
(Sponsor)

I think there is a lot of interest in the community and it’s a cool way that people can actually engage and activate themselves to get involved or something, which is cool (Sponsor)

Although the current CORS sponsors are all faith-based groups, they indicated other groups that might want to take part forward could include Rotary, iwi, unions, LGBTI or Rainbow communities, the Rural Women’s Network, and other faith-based organisations around New Zealand:

It could even be things like Rotary groups, if there were people who were really committed to it, it doesn’t have to be churches, there’s other organisations that would probably have the skills to do it, if they have the passion to. (Sponsor)

They pointed out that within the faith-based groups, some church congregations or parishes would be in a better position to sponsor than others, because some are wealthier than others.

Both the community organisations that became sponsors and those that were interested in sponsoring, suggested there is potential for more existing former refugee communities with the capability and capacity to get involved.

Sponsors indicated that, aside from the core group of around five volunteers coordinating the resettlement of refugees, they needed quite a large number of more casual volunteers. Some questioned whether that level of support could be sustained over time if more refugees were

sponsored. Some INZ staff also questioned the sustainability of the CORS Category for existing CORS sponsors to cope with increased numbers of refugees.

The availability of suitable housing for sponsored refugees was raised as a significant issue for an expanded CORS Category. In some areas, there are rental housing shortages that may impact on the ability of community sponsors to house an increased number of refugees. The availability of housing and other support services would need to be taken into account when deciding where to settle increased numbers of sponsored refugees.

### **Various groups suggested what an expansion of the CORS Category should look like**

The impact of expanding the CORS Category on sponsors, communities, INZ and UNHCR would depend on how many more sponsored refugees were to come in under the category and the approach used.

Examples of a scaled up CORS Category included another pilot, increasing the intake numbers perhaps to 50 people, or gradually scaling up over time using a staged approach to give organisations time to build their capacity and capability.

Several challenges were identified by sponsors, INZ and UNHCR staff that would need to be considered if the decision were made to expand the CORS Category.

### **Sponsor selection would need to be considered if refugee numbers were increased**

INZ staff questioned whether the framework used in the CORS Pilot for selection of sponsors could be applied for increased numbers. One suggestion was having a dedicated manager to oversee INZ staff, make decisions and liaise with potential sponsors. INZ staff also commented that there would need to be sufficient resources to cover the back-end work of reviewing and scoring the documents if the same approach were taken again.

### **UNHCR and INZ staff questioned the scalability of the nomination and selection process**

INZ staff noted that to expand the CORS Category they would need more processes and frameworks in place, including resources and training for staff. This would also include further development of the interface between UNHCR and INZ processes.

For the CORS Pilot, the selection of refugees was aligned with existing INZ selection missions. INZ staff suggested that it would be possible to tie in the selection of CORS refugees with existing selection missions for greater numbers, if required. They would just have a proportional number of INZ staff assigned to interview CORS refugees. They see the refugee interviews as important, so if refugees selected for sponsorship were scattered all over the world it would pose more of a challenge than having them in one place. There is a tension around allowing refugees to be nominated from various parts of the world versus tying in with existing INZ selection missions in one or two regions.

UNHCR also commented that a nomination process can present challenges in managing expectations of refugees and sponsors alike. They explained that the management of refugee expectations is an ongoing challenge in resettlement processing.

UNHCR indicated that if a nomination process were considered as part of a future sponsorship programme, structures and capacities for processing would need to be carefully considered, and it was noted that the Canadian model for private sponsorship entails significant capacity.

## **Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre would need greater resourcing and a longer lead-in time to accommodate CORS refugees if its two-week programme continues**

Most sponsored refugees spoke positively about the time they spent at MRRC. They commented that the duration of two weeks was sufficient and that they had found the programme content useful. The sponsor of the family that did not attend MRRC felt that more work was required on the sponsor's part to provide their family with the information they had missed out on.

The capacity of MRRC to accommodate more refugees outside the Refugee Quota Programme was questioned by some INZ staff, particularly with the quota increase taking place in July 2020 (from 1000 to 1500). A bigger number would require more accommodation at MRRC or somewhere similar, if it was decided to continue the two-week programme. There may be opportunities to explore other options such as localised programmes for sponsored refugees.

Other INZ staff indicated that with sufficient lead-in time MRRC would have the capacity to plan for handling larger numbers of sponsored refugees and that the existing knowledge and experience of INZ staff at MRRC could be built on to increase capacity. One INZ staff member suggested that the refugees would benefit from longer than two weeks at MRRC.

## **CORS sponsors, Immigration New Zealand staff and UNHCR staff shared further ideas for expanding the CORS Category**

For the CORS Category to expand successfully, a need was identified for good practical models to follow and training for potential sponsors to assist and encourage them to become sponsors. Suggestions included:

- setting up an entity to work with government and oversee the CORS Category that could provide information and training and connect community organisations considering sponsoring refugees under the CORS Category to help smooth the way for them
- using leverage through economies of scale for things such as deals from an airline for flying the sponsored refugees to their settlement areas
- some faith-based groups engaging in resettlement by providing specific support to other organisations that sponsor refugees.

One CORS sponsor noted that they may sponsor again in the future. However, the best use of their resources could be working with government to set up whatever entity is needed to do community refugee sponsorship, bringing the strengths of the community, the organisations and the government to the table:

It's just that government has strengths and community has strengths and together we can do something better than if we tried to go our own way.  
(Sponsor)

## **4.4 “Just do it” – sponsors’ advice for potential sponsors**

Participants from across all the sponsoring community organisations reported being involved in the CORS refugee resettlement process had been worthwhile and they would encourage other people to get involved.

Just enjoy it. It's quite easy to get caught up stressing about how to do things culturally, appropriately ... but I think just enjoying the friendship and the journey is an important part of it. (Sponsor)

Do it. It will change your life. You'll get more out of it than you put in.  
(Sponsor)

Advice included housing the sponsored refugees within their community and having a team of people with different skills so the work doesn't fall on just a few people:

the wider the group, the wider the skill base, the better off you are.  
(Sponsor)

Sponsoring organisations mentioned that it was important for any future sponsoring organisations to do their 'homework'. This could involve talking to groups with experience in working with refugees, or having them as part of the team, finding out what it means to be a community sponsor, talking to other people and trying to understand as much as you can about the refugee families and their culture.

You can't do it all on your own you need to be able to link to others ...  
having a strong core, passionate people on the ground and good linkages  
would be my advice to them and making sure that those all work  
together. That's what would ensure success I think. (INZ staff member)

As previously discussed, managing the expectations of refugees is important. One suggestion made by a sponsor was for members of sponsoring organisations to try to meet the refugee families before they come to New Zealand, for example, go to Lebanon or at least have somebody who meets them there and sets the expectations. However, they felt that would be too much of a financial stretch for many community organisations. Even if sponsors cannot afford to visit the refugees offshore, they can still tell the refugees about themselves and their organisation, and make sure they know what they're going to be provided with once they get here.

One sponsor's advice to any future sponsors was not to make assumptions, indicating they had preconceived ideas about refugees that did not hold up once they had met them, for example that refugees would be grateful to be resettled here.

Don't make assumptions about what people want, about how people feel. I think out in New Zealand there are all kinds of misconceptions like refugees are poor ... What they're doing is grieving because they can't go home ... but they can't because there's a big fat war going on. So rather than struggling where they are, this is the second option. (INZ staff member)

Enthusiasm, being open minded, having a willingness to get into the detail and plan, and having a high level of commitment to the refugees and to working together, and putting in many hours initially were other themes that came through strongly from sponsors when asked what advice they would give to other organisations thinking of sponsoring refugees.

But it gets easier as you go. We have done the hard work now. It is getting easier. But certainly to go for it. We have all got nothing but pleasure out of it. (Sponsor)

## Appendix 1: Criteria for CORS refugees and sponsoring community organisations

	Criteria for selection
<b>Principal and secondary refugees</b>	<p>Be mandated as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention</p> <p>Pass the same security, risk and settlement assessments required of refugees selected for the Refugee Quota Programme</p> <p>Have the same standard of health that is required of residence class visa applicants</p> <p>Not be eligible to be sponsored for residence under any Family Category, including the Refugee Family Support Category</p>
<b>Principal refugees</b>	<p>Demonstrate English language ability that is sufficient that the candidates can read, understand and respond to basic questions in English</p> <p>Have a minimum of three years' work experience (in the same occupation or within the same related sector) or a qualification requiring a minimum of two years' tertiary study</p> <p>Be aged between 18 and 45 years</p>
<b>Community organisation</b>	<p>Is a legal entity</p> <p>Has experience working successfully with former refugees or other vulnerable people</p> <p>Has financial capability to meet its responsibilities</p> <p>Has the capability and capacity to deliver settlement services for sponsored former refugees</p> <p>Enters into an outcomes agreement with Immigration New Zealand for the provision of identified settlement services to agreed standards</p>

## Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Immigration New Zealand	Community organisation	Other government agencies
<b>Identification &amp; selection of former refugees</b>	Refer refugees to Immigration New Zealand (if community organisation chooses not to nominate former refugees)	Specify numbers of former refugees  Assess refugees according to criteria	Nominate refugees	
<b>Pre-arrival</b>		Undertake onshore and offshore security and risk assessments  Undertake offshore health screening for refugee candidates  Pay international travel costs to New Zealand  Approve or decline residence application	Establish contact with selected sponsored refugees  Provide information to sponsored refugees  Develop individual settlement plans for sponsored refugees before their arrival in New Zealand	
<b>Initial support on arrival in New Zealand</b>		Run two-week reception programme at Māngere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC)	Visit sponsored refugees at MRRC  Pay domestic travel for sponsored refugees from MRRC to settlement location	Run reception programme at MRRC
<b>Accommodation in settlement location</b>			Provide privately-funded accommodation, core furniture and other household goods	

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>	<b>Immigration New Zealand</b>	<b>Community organisation</b>	<b>Other government agencies</b>
<b>Settlement services in settlement location</b>			Ensure there are adequate staff to provide a variety of case-related settlement services and support to sponsored refugees for up to two years	Provide local services such as English language classes, schools, a primary health organisation and other settlement agencies
<b>Employment-focused settlement services in the settlement location</b>			Connect sponsored refugees to the labour market by placing working-age sponsored refugees into meaningful and sustainable employment or in employment-focused training	

## Appendix 3: Method

### Evaluation objectives

The purpose of the evaluation was to inform decisions on future intakes under the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS) Category. The evaluation considered the processes, capacity and capability of community organisations to take on responsibility for settlement services and initial reflections on the CORS Category from sponsoring community organisations and sponsored refugees. More specifically, there were three key evaluation questions.

- How well is the Pilot being implemented?
- What early outputs have been achieved by the Pilot and have there been any unintended consequences?
- How can the Pilot be improved and are there any lessons for the future?

### Methods

The evaluation gathered information through in-depth interviews with a wide range of perspectives and administrative data. Sponsored refugees were provided with the option of having an interpreter at the interview and most chose this option. In all but one case, the interpretation was by phone.

#### Interviews

Forty-six people were interviewed for the evaluation using a semi-structured interview guide. Table A3.1 shows the breakdown of the various groups of people. Each community organisation was asked to nominate up to four people involved in sponsorship.

**Table A3.1: Participants involved in interviews**

Participant group	Number
Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship sponsored refugees	11
Approved sponsors	16
Immigration New Zealand staff	12*
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	3
Other community organisations	4**
Total	46

\* Two staff in this group were from the wider Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and one was from Auckland University of Technology. They have not been separated out for confidentiality reasons.

\*\* These community organisations were selected from those that had made submissions on the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Pilot.

Two researchers undertook the interviews, with one taking extensive notes during the interview. Audio-recordings were transcribed by an external agency. A software package for the analysis of qualitative data (NVIVO) was used to analyse interview data.

## **Administrative data**

Sponsors were asked to keep a variety of administrative data, including the personnel involved and hours spent on various tasks involved in settlement, their budget and their timeline for meeting accountabilities according to the Deed of Agreement.

## **Ethics**

The evaluation involves contact with highly vulnerable participants (former refugees) and access to confidential and sensitive information. The evaluation was designed, conducted and reported in a manner that respects the rights, privacy and dignity of those affected by and contributing to the evaluation. The evaluation adhered to the standards set out in the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Human Research and Evaluation Ethics Guidelines and was guided by recognised Code of Ethics (Australasian Evaluation Society's (AES) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of Evaluations). The evaluation was reviewed by the MBIE's Research and Evaluation Ethics Panel.

## **Informed consent**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were made aware of what information would be sought and the purpose of the evaluation. It was made clear that all participation was voluntary and that participants had the right to withdraw their involvement at any time. The informed consent process was conducted in an appropriate style and language.

## **Confidentiality**

The physical data for this evaluation is in a secure (locked) cabinet and electronic data is in restricted folders in the electronic document and records management system of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. All data is accessible only by the immediate project team and will be destroyed after five years. When sending information, care was taken to ensure that data was sent securely and encryption was used.

Participants were informed that all contact details and personal information gathered for the evaluation would be confidential to the project team. No names of individuals or organisations would be included in the report. However, due to the small number of community organisations involved in the CORS Pilot, it was not possible to guarantee confidentiality particularly where roles were so singular as to make such anonymity impossible. In these cases, community organisations were advised that they could be identified and given the opportunity to review their contributions before inclusion in any report. In the case of sponsored refugees, all effort has been made to ensure they are not identified in the report.

## **Interacting with vulnerable groups**

There is the potential for sponsored refugees to feel under pressure to participate in an interview because they are grateful to New Zealand for providing an opportunity for them to be resettled. To mitigate this, the informed consent process reinforced that participation was voluntary and that their residence status would not be affected by their choice to participate or not. In addition, the information sheet providing background information about the evaluation was translated into Arabic.

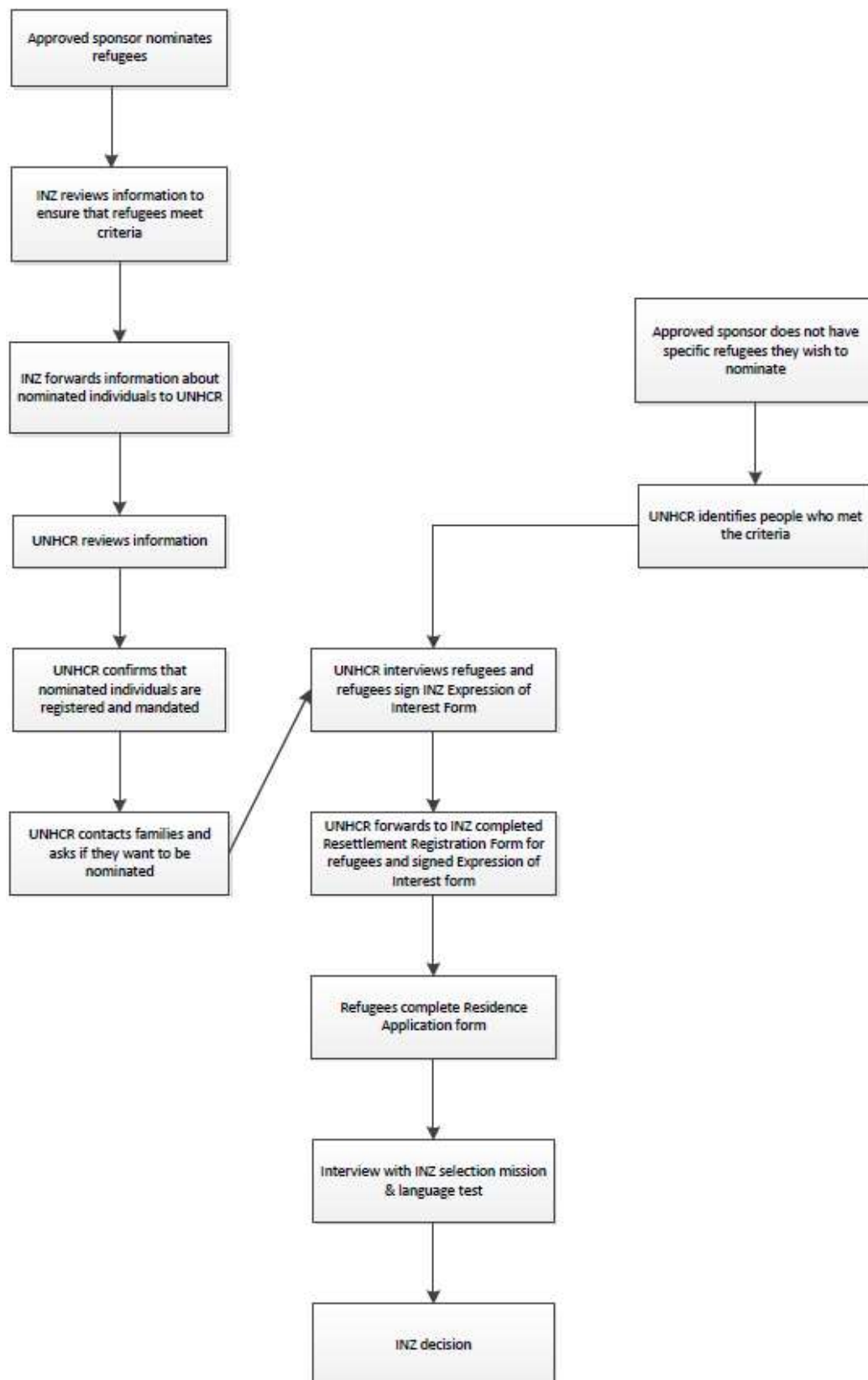
Safety protocols were put in place to ensure the safety of participants (in particular, sponsored refugees) and interviewers. The safety protocols focused on ensuring the safety of the people being interviewed, other members of the public and members of the research team. The

protocols described the procedures interviewers should follow if it becomes clear during an interview that someone's safety is seriously at risk.

The interview process could raise issues for participants, which they might want to discuss further or which might be distressing for some participants and interviewers. A list of appropriate community and support organisations was developed and left with participants in case they needed to revisit issues or seek support. Sponsored refugees were invited to bring a support person to the interview if they wanted to.

Refugees were provided with the option of having an interpreter at the interview.

## Appendix 4: Selection process for CORS refugees (flowchart)



Note: INZ = Immigration New Zealand; UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

## Appendix 5: Hours spent on various activities

Community organisation	Establishment		Orientation		Settlement		Total
	People	Hours	People	Hours	People	Hours	Hours
CORS1	4	50	3	50	11	150	250
CORS2	8	54	8	10	7	69	133
CORS3	4	31	5	55	3	67	153
CORS4	16	176	7	87	10	149	412

Note: One community organisation was sponsoring three families. In this case, the average number of hours per family has been used.

