

FOUR POSSIBLE REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP PROJECTS:

1) Sponsor-referred Sponsorship Cases:

Our Diocese and Faith communities regularly receive requests from individuals to sponsor refugees overseas who are often relatives of Canadians or Permanent Residents. Offering such sponsorships is important not only because lives (of refugees) are saved but also because this provides emotional relief to individuals, families and communities inside Canada.

As per the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Diocese as Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) can formally partner with a Faith community or other group of people called “Cosponsor-Organization” and/or with individuals called “Cosponsor-Individual”. All parties engaged in a refugee sponsorship are jointly liable to provide the support needed by sponsored refugees to integrate the community.

Such refugee sponsorships are initiated in Canada because the Cosponsor –organization or Cosponsor-individual names the refugee(s) to be sponsored. The refugee(s) will go through a process that takes different processing times depending on their country of refuge. They are screened by Canadian immigration officers overseas. They have to be cleared on eligibility and admissibility grounds. Eligibility refers to the criteria of the universal refugee convention definition and admissibility refers to the security screening and medical exams.

Responsibility: *The SAH, the Faith community (Cosponsor-organization) and/or the Cosponsor-individual (relative in Canada) are communally responsible for providing financial and emotional assistance for one year from the date of arrival in Canada or until the sponsored refugee(s) become(s) self-supporting, whichever comes first.*

2) Joint Assistance Sponsorship Cases:

Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) refers to a joint undertaking by a sponsoring group (like your Faith community) and Immigration Canada to sponsor refugees who need to start a new life in Canada. Refugees profiled as JAS cases are persons guaranteed Government’s financial assistance for 24-36 months. Refugees eligible under this category are generally people who have special needs that will likely result in a longer or more difficult period of integration.

This category is quite different from the first because profiled refugee(s) under it have already been interviewed by Canadian authorities overseas and found eligible and admissible for resettlement in Canada. JAS cases are generally "travel ready" as they have passed medical, security and criminality screening. If you sponsor under this category, expect your sponsored refugee(s) to be on the way to Canada few months/weeks after you said “yes, you can come”. Your choice of a JAS case to sponsor might depend on the following: the number of parishioners who are willing to be committed to such a project, the particular endangered countries your group might be interested in, the family size that might be more reasonable for your group, etc...

Responsibility: *Joint Assistance Sponsorships are generally 24 months undertakings. The Faith community and /or Cosponsors are NOT responsible financially but would be responsible for assisting with INTEGRATION.*

3) Visa Office -Referred (VOR) Sponsorship

Visa Office -Referred (VOR) Sponsorship refers to a 12-month period undertaking for both financial and integration assistance. Refugees profiled under this category have been interviewed and are ready to travel to Canada once a sponsor is found as well. Refugees eligible under this category are generally people who have been found able to become self-supporting within 12 months.

Responsibility: *The Faith community and/ or Cosponsors are responsible for providing financial and integration assistance for one year from the date of arrival in Canada or until the sponsored refugee(s) become self-supporting, whichever comes first.*

4) Blended Visa Office-Referred Sponsorships (BVOR):

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program brings refugees with the greatest need to Canada. It is a “blended” program because it is a cost-sharing arrangement whereby Immigration Canada and private sponsors contribute financially to support the refugees. Private sponsors are also responsible for providing settlement support to the refugees for the whole length of sponsorship period (typically 12 months). Refugees resettled under the BVOR program receive income support from the Government of Canada through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for **6 months** after their arrival (during months 2-7).

Responsibility: *Private sponsors offer the other **6 months** of financial support (during month 1 and months 8-12) and cover the initial startup costs.*

Summary and Recommendation:

Needless to say, there are many refugees in various endangered countries that are in need of resettlement as a humanitarian solution of last resort.

Also, there are many Canadians and Permanent Residents whose relatives are stranded in different places at risk. Some of the relatives in Canada are able to meet their settlement needs, others have no relative in Canada or the relative(s) is (are) not able to take care of them. That is where Faith communities are mostly needed.

In our refugee ministry, we prioritize as much as possible according to the greatest need of protection. The refugee in greater danger/vulnerability comes first. This also gives us assurance that those we sponsor will meet Immigration Canada’s requirements.