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Literature Review on Best Practices in Government-Funded Services Supporting the Resettlement and Integration of Government-Assisted Refugees

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Abstract

This literature review of government-funded refugee services identifies the issues related to refugee resettlement programs; settlement location; housing; mental health services and employment services in different Canadian provinces and cities. It then summarizes the best practices related to refugees' integration in Canada or in other refugee resettlement countries. Wherever possible, the report mentions relevant policy recommendations addressed to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in the different journal articles, papers or reports.

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Executive Summary

Under the Resettlement Program, Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) are referred to Canada for resettlement overseas by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or another referral organization, and arrive in Canada as permanent residents. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides them with a variety of services to support their settlement and integration into Canadian society.

In the case of government-assisted refugees resettling in Canada outside of Quebec, resettlement supports and services are provided by the Government of Canada through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), IRCC funds 32 RAP SPOs to deliver RAP services in 34 communities across Canada outside of Quebec.

All resettled refugees, including GARs are also eligible to receive all Settlement Program services that are available to all newcomers to Canada. These include language training, needs and assets assessments and referrals (NAARS), information and orientation to various aspects of life in Canada, and employment services. The goal of the settlement program is to encourage newcomers to be fully engaged in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of Canada.

Under the auspices of the Government-Assisted Refugee Resettlement Assistance Program Working Group (GAR-RAP WG), the Settlement and Integration Policy (SIP) branch at IRCC is undertaking a review of services and how they are delivered to GARs during their first year in Canada. The Review will be considered alongside a departmental evaluation and will result in recommendations for program and policy improvement. A synthesis of recent literature, the subject of this report, is one activity under the Review.

The objective of this report is to provide IRCC officials with a better understanding of what the recent literature says about best and promising practices in government-funded services designed to support resettled refugees to live independently in their resettlement country. The report synthesizes the literature identified through the "knowledge scans" provided by IRCC and identifies key themes, insights and trends found in the literature. It should, however, be noted that this report does not take into account any efforts that may already be underway by IRCC to address some of the issues identified.

The report consists of five main sections corresponding to the topics in the literature scan, namely refugee resettlement programs, settlement location, housing,

mental health services, and employment services. Within each section. key issues are identified to frame the literature review.

In order to give the context for refugee (re) settlement in Canada, this document includes a background appendix providing a portrait on refugees in Canada.

A key finding of the literature review is that a number of the issues are cross-cutting and occur in more than one subject area. This suggests that these issues are of particular importance. These cross-cutting issues are highlighted below:

- the need for better information sharing between all actors and organizations involved in the settlement process both within organizations and across organizations domestically and internationally;

- the inadequacy of income support for GARs, with the impact more acute in housing but also relevant in other areas such as transportation;

- the importance of pre-departure orientation services for refugees with information on housing and other areas;

- the challenges of settlement for GARS in small cities where social isolation is linked to lack of co-ethnic communities can impede integration;

- The importance of effective case management systems to support the need of refugees to access and navigate existing services in all areas including housing, health and income assistance;

- the key role played by translation services for GARS in the early settlement period to adapt to a new setting; and

- the effectiveness of mixing work and language training so GARs can develop language skills and vocabulary relevant to their job.

Literature Review on Best Practices in Government-Funded Services Supporting the Resettlement and Integration of Government-Assisted Refugees[1]

I. Introduction

Background[2]

Under the Resettlement Program, Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) are referred to Canada for resettlement overseas by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or another referral organization, and arrive in Canada as permanent residents. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides them with a variety of services to support their settlement and integration into Canadian society.

GARs are typically provided with one time start-up costs, monthly income support for up to 12 months, and services to support their initial resettlement through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). RAP services include reception at the airport, RAP needs assessment and referrals to Settlement and broader-based community services, immediate orientation (including financial), provision of temporary accommodation and help finding permanent housing, and links to essential federal and provincial programs.

In the case of government-assisted refugees resettling in Canada outside of Quebec, resettlement supports and services are provided by the Government of Canada through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), IRCC funds 32 RAP SPOs to deliver RAP services in 34 communities across Canada outside of Quebec.

All resettled refugees, including GARs are also eligible to receive Settlement Program services that are available to all newcomers to Canada. These include language training, needs and assets assessments and referrals (NAARS), information and orientation to various aspects of life in Canada, and employment services.[3] The goal of the settlement program is to encourage newcomers to be fully engaged in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of Canada.

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[1] This report was written by Ghada Abid under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Sharpe. We would like to thank Elizabeth Orton and Bonita Varga for valuable input in the preparation of this report.

[2] This section draws on the statement of work of the project.

[3] Resettled refugees also receive coverage under the Interim Federal Health Program for certain pre-departure medical services and for in-Canada basic services (e.g. hospital and physician care) until such time as provincial/territorial health insurance takes effect, as well as supplemental services (e.g. urgent dental care, vision care, counselling) and prescription drug coverage as long as the beneficiary receives income support from the Resettlement Assistance Program (or its equivalent in Quebec) or is no longer under private sponsorship. Finally, the Immigration Loans Program (ILP) provides GARs and other eligible immigrants, with access to funding that would otherwise not be available to them. Loans are used to cover a number of expenses, including travel to Canada

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Objective and scope

The objective of this report is to provide IRCC officials with a better understanding of what the recent literature says about best and promising practices in government-funded services designed to support resettled refugees to live independently in their resettlement country. The report synthesizes the literature identified through the "knowledge scans" provided by IRCC and identifies key themes, insights and trends found in the literature.

The report consists of five main sections corresponding to the topics in the literature scan, namely refugee resettlement programs, settlement location, housing, mental health services, and employment services.[4]

Four IRCC documents provided useful background for this report: "Refugee Resettlement Program Performance Information Profile (IRCC, 2017a), "Settlement Program Performance Information Profile" (IRCC, 2017b), "Synthesis Report: Key Information Interviews" (IRCC, 2020a), and the Powerpoint presentation "Review of Services and Service Delivery for Government-Assisted Refugees" (Foran, 2020). The information in these documents, particularly the third and fourth, is largely consistent with the findings of this literature review. But a comparison of these findings with those of this literature review is beyond the terms of reference of the project.

In order to better understand the context for refugee (re) settlement in Canada, the Centre for the Study of Living Standards prepared a background appendix on refugees in Canada. The document discusses the definition of refugees, provides data on trends in refugees, broken down by the different types of refugees and country of origin. and examines the characteristics of refuges, particularly GARs and briefly discusses refugee settlement programs. This document is included as a stand-alone appendix to this report.[5]

II. Refugee Resettlement Programs

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provided the Centre for the Study of Living Standards with 75 journal articles, papers or reports from different sources related to

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and other costs associated with resettlement, specifically to defray the cost of transportation to Canada (transportation loan) and/or to assist with establishment in Canada (assistance loan).

[4] A sixth topic or section in the knowledge scan was financial support. The studies in this section were found not relevant so the report includes no section on this. But the issue of financial support for refugees is very relevant and covered under other sections.

[5] The background appendix for this literature review can be found at http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2020-09-appendix.pdf.

refugee resettlement programs. Most of the publications were based on research outside of Canada. After closely examining the reports and the studies, we were able to identify five issues: the insufficient duration of RAP monthly support; the lack of information sharing; the deficiency in the management and coordination of volunteers; the need to improve pre-arrival orientation; and the importance of effective case management.

1. The insufficient duration and amount of RAP monthly support

The RAP monthly support GARs receive during their first year in Canada is believed to be inadequate with regard to its amount and its duration. Unlike PSRs, GARs are chosen based on their vulnerability instead of their professional or linguistic skills (Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017). To better reflect GARs' needs, as documented in several studies, IRCC might want to consider making two simultaneous changes: adjusting the amount and extending the duration of the monthly income support.

GARs in Lethbridge stated that the amount they received was inadequate as it "barely covers their rent, insurance, bus passes, phone, and so forth" (Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017:23). The inadequacy of the RAP monthly allowance will be further discussed in the housing section. According to an IRCC (2016c) evaluation of the Syrian refugee initiative, GARs' income support period needs to be extended beyond 12 months. GARs interviewed all agreed that the receipt of income support for only 12 months was not enough for them to fully establish themselves. They stated the need to overcome their language barriers and tackle their medical issues before they access the labour market. GARs in Lethbridge conveyed their concerns about the duration of the RAP income support fearing they "would not be able to learn English and thus would not be able to work full time to provide for their families"(Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017:22).

Support for the case for an extension of income support for GARS is provided by the experience of Syrian refugees to Canada, Syria represents of course the top country of origin for GARs in Canada since 2015. The Syrian Outcomes Report by IRCC (2019:8) reports that only 43 per cent of adult Syrians found employment after 2 to 3 years in Canada. This was lower than PSRs (60 per cent) and BVORs (55 per cent). GARs thus take longer to obtain employment compared to refugees in other sponsorship streams. In order to give them more time to increase their employability, GARs may need extended financial support beyond the one-year period.

2. The lack of information sharing

Improving information sharing within and between organizations involved in refugees' resettlement both nationally and internationally was recognized as a problem in IRCC's evaluation (2016a). Information gaps can hinder IRCC staff, partners and stakeholders in their

preparation for the arrival of refugees. Therefore, they need to be provided with accurate and complete refugee information to ensure GARs' needs are effectively met. Examples of information to be shared include refugees' countries of origin and date and time of arrival in Canada. According to IRCC (2016c:33), refugees' "full socio-demographic and contact information needs to be accurately captured for populations that arrive in Canada to allow for effective ongoing monitoring and results reporting". To better support refugees' arrival and welcoming, Quebec's Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion suggests the systematization of rapid transmission of information related to refugees in conjunction with federal authorities. Doing so would allow the actors involved in refugees' (re)settlement to channel resources and guarantee a better reception for refugees (Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion, 2017). In other words, information sharing in Canada represents an area for improvement (Cronkrite et al., 2016).

Information sharing should not be limited to the period preceding refugees' arrivals. It should also be reinforced after refugees safely make it to Canada. If IRCC is not provided with accurate information related to refugees' (re)settlement challenges in a timely manner, this can negatively impact the process of decision making. According to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2017), the lack of information sharing concerning language training wait-lists in Canadian provinces and cities prevented IRCC from properly addressing this issue. IRCC "could not closely monitor where demand exceeded supply, and it was less able to make timely decisions on where to spend money most effectively".

In 2010, the Government of Canada along with the Province of Ontario funded a system that displays real-time information related to language classes' provision to clients. Thereby, IRCC, the provincial government and SPOs were able to see how many seats were available and which SPOs had waitlists. When Canada started welcoming resettled Syrian refugees in 2015, IRCC used that system to allocate funds across Ontario. As pointed out by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2017), that system only covered Ontario and was not implemented in other provinces. Consequently, the federal government did not know how many refugees were waiting to access language services nor did it have access to information related to waiting periods in these provinces. Later on, IRCC started collecting waitlists information directly from SPOs. It also made some changes to its Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) system. As pointed out by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (2017), the data shown were unreliable. Therefore, it was not possible to decide whether "the extra resources spent to expand language training services were used efficiently and gave Syrian refugees quick access to language training". This is an example of where better information sharing is needed.

The issue of information sharing is relevant in many areas. In the housing section, we will highlight how the lack of information on the number of family members can negatively impact GARs' housing experience in Canada.

In the European Union, there is a myriad of good practices when it comes to improving information sharing related to refugees either between Member States or on the national level. For example, the SHARE Network was created in 2012 to connect different Member States' local authorities as an attempt to foster peer learning about refugees' resettlement. In Sweden, a project called Strengthening the Reception of Resettled Refugees was set up to improve communication between national and local actors involved in refugees' resettlement. By providing accurate information on refugees' arrival dates, this programme "contributed to clarifying roles and responsibilities and fostered improved planning of resettlement procedures" (Stürner, 2019:10). Finland opts for an inclusive decision-making process. In fact, the Finnish Immigration Office officials and Finnish integration experts from different municipalities jointly conduct resettlement interviews. This approach enables better information sharing and therefore facilitates decision-making related to refugees' needs and challenges.

On the international level, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommends the implementation of information sharing mechanisms between resettlement countries for refugees. Such mechanisms will allow them to share their best practices when it comes to resettling refugees. Canada, as a resettlement destination for refugees, may want to consider "tak[ing] this international dimension into account in national contingency planning and emergency response plans" (OECD, 2019:92). One such practice of international information sharing is the Five Country Conference, or FCC, which is a forum of information sharing and cooperation that facilitates biometric data on refugees between the immigration agencies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. The purposes of this information sharing are "to assist in the effective administration and enforcement of the Participants' citizenship and immigration laws; to facilitate the secure flow of people to Canada or the United States through co-operative border management among the Participants, [and]; to promote international justice and security by fostering respect for human rights and by denying access to the United States and Canada to persons who are criminals or security risks" (IRCC, 2003).

3. The deficiency in the management and coordination of volunteers

Integration is viewed as a two-way process between refugees and Canadian citizens (Parliament of Canada – House of Commons Canada, 2019). Therefore, community engagement becomes an essential element to ensure refugees' successful integration in their new country of residence. For this reason, the Government of Canada encouraged all Canadians to become involved and play an active role in refugees' (re)settlement by volunteering (Kenny & Mamuji, 2019). Indeed, both RAP SPOs and Settlement SPOs stated that volunteers were extremely

beneficial. However, if there are no formal community engagement programs, volunteer coordination may become a challenge.

Kenny and Mamuji (2019:24) criticized the decreased funding for community engagement programs. They mentioned that back in 1990, the Government of Canada implemented the Host Program "designed to assist in resettlement and the development of social networks by having volunteers familiar with Canadian ways help newcomers learn about available services and how to use them, practice English and French, get contacts in their field of work and participate in the community". But in 2008, IRCC amalgamated the Host Program and other settlement programs into one program. The authors point out that this action reflects IRCC's continuing efforts in reducing the costs of refugees' (re)settlement in Canada. However, this modernization through amalgamation resulted in the absence of consistent volunteer programs for RAP and Settlement SPOs on the national level. Consequently, this organizational disconnect prevented volunteers from adequately supporting GARs (Kenny & Mamuji, 2019). In fact, not all of them were aware of the scope of services made available to GARs. Some of them do not even know all the community partners (IRCC, 2016c).

For this reason, IRCC is advised to implement formal mechanisms that manage volunteers involved with refugees (IRCC, 2016c).

4. The need to improve pre-arrival orientation

Pre-arrival settlement services delivered to refugees before coming to Canada are as important as post-arrival services. In fact, pre-arrival orientation sessions play an important role in the managing of refugees' expectations. Therefore, this step should not be neglected or dismissed as it provides refugees with basic information on their new country of residence. According to Stürner (2019:10), the importance of pre-arrival orientation sessions' provision lies in their role of "support[ing] refugees in taking proactive decisions and preparing for their future integration". However, IRCC's Syrian Outcomes Report (2019) mentioned that the first Syrian refugee cohort in Canada did not benefit from settlement services prior to their arrival to Canada which may have made their integration process difficult compared to other refugee groups. For this reason, Jenkins (2019:14) deems it "important to reinstate pre-arrival orientation" for refugees.

Refugees resettled in an EU Member State usually have to participate in pre-arrival orientation sessions lasting between two hours and one week. Stürner (2019:10) explains that these sessions need to be as transparent as possible and tailored to bridging refugees' information gaps on their new host country. In the Netherlands, former refugees offer their compatriots cultural orientations through Skype calls to better prepare them for their arrival. In Sweden,

municipal authorities are part of the pre-arrival cultural orientation sessions to ensure "pre-departure cultural orientation [are] tailored to the receiving locality as much as possible".

While it is common to have pre-departure orientation sessions for refugees, organizing orientation sessions for the host community prior to refugees' arrival is less common. One example of the delivery of such sessions is found in Norway where the government provides municipalities involved in refugee resettlement with information on refugees' cultural profiles through the Norwegian Cultural Orientation Programme (NORCO). The Norwegian government also holds seminars on refugees' countries of origin (Stürner, 2019). Canada could follow the Norwegian participatory strategy as a way of ensuring that its provinces and communities are prepared to welcome refugees and ready to support their integration process.

5. The importance of effective case management

The success of GARS resettlement is linked to an effective system of case management by the agencies providing services to refugees. Shaw and Poulin (2015) have identified a number of traits of effective case management, highlighted below.

- A fixed limit on the duration of case management for a refugee may be optimal. It has been found in the United States that six months of case management services were insufficient for most refugees to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge base to successfully transition to life.

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- Regular home visits (weekly through month 1, monthly through month 6, and quarterly through month 24), linguistically appropriate services, and weekly individual and group supervision were found to be key components of an effective case management program.

- A 30 families caseload limit for managers makes for more effective case management.

- It is important to encourage self-sufficiency and positive adjustment by engaging in dialogue with newcomers regarding how they are doing and how they can become more independent. In this regard, the needs of individuals differ and a flexible extended case management system is desirable.

III. Settlement Location

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provided the Centre for the Study of Living Standards with 18 journal articles, papers or reports from different sources related to refugees' settlement location. The research was mainly conducted outside of Canada. After closely examining the total number of studies, we were able to identify three issues that arise when refugees are assigned to reside in small Canadian cities: the limited resources in small communities; the lack of co-ethnic communities in small cities, and policies to encourage refugee settlement in smaller centres.

As part of its "regionalization" policy, the federal government assigns GARs to smaller and medium-sized cities mainly because many of these cities face a declining population and also to take the pressure off of Canada's gateway cities such as Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver that are experiencing a noticeable growth in their populations (Jenkins, 2019:4). Since refugees' initial settlement destination is chosen by the Government of Canada, that they do not have any agency in the decision-making process may not be the best from the point of view of their integration into Canadian society. One indicator of a poor initial settlement location is the propensity of undertaking a second migration to a different city. We are especially interested in refugees' secondary migration from a small to a big city since "the size of an initial destination city matters when accounting for variations in immigrant retention rates by admission category" (Kaida et al., 2020:15). According to a study by Statistics Canada, GARs are more likely than PSRs and economic migrants to leave their initial city of settlement during their first 10 years in Canada. In addition, GARs' likelihood of undertaking a secondary migration increases when the size of their initial city of settlement decreases. In this section, we look at factors which may contribute to GARs' secondary migration when initially settled in small Canadian communities. Addressing these factors may lead to a lower propensity for GARS to undertake secondary migration within Canada.

1. The limited resources in small communities:

If refugees were free to choose where to initially settle upon their arrival, they would probably "never set foot in small cities where they have no economic or social connections" (Kaida et al., 2020). The difficulty small communities have in retaining refugees may be explained by their limited resources.

According to Cronkrite et al. (2016), the ability to meet the needs of refugees differ depending on their settlement location. For example, refugees in small communities may experience additional challenges compared to refugees that are settled in urban centres that tend to have more resources available. When it comes to mental health services provision, rural Manitoba communities still have a "limited experience with war-trauma [and] the refugee

experience" (Cronkrite et al., 2016:1). For housing, smaller communities offer refugees an advantage as the options tend to match refugee families' sizes in an affordable way (Rose, 2019). But as we will explain in the housing section, this may not represent a strong enough reason for refugees to remain in these communities. Interpretation services are also not accessible to refugees as translators are often hard to find in small communities (Haugen, 2019:58). The paucity of translation services, as we note in the fourth section of our literature review, may impact refugees' mental health and their settlement experience in general (Cronkrite et al., 2016).

In Australia, refugees' initial destination is chosen by the Australian government according to a number of factors that include "any existing links the refugees might have to family or friends, the location of others from the same background and the availability of support services" (Piper, 2017:16).[6] Piper (2017) explored possible ways to attract refugees to Australian regional centres. According to the author, a number of strategies are needed to ensure a sustainable settlement. First, he mentions the importance of thinking about regional communities' capacities of supporting refugee families to make sure there are enough resources. Resources required by regional communities for successful regional settlement are health care, education and training, settlement support and lifestyle resources. Health care resources consist of having major hospitals in proximity, local medical professionals with experience in aiding refugees, the ability to use interpreters in health practice, nearby trauma outreach centres and general practitioners who have space to treat the refugees. Education and training resources would include ESL classes, support in schools for young individuals, education providers familiar with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and training institutions with a variety of vocational courses. Settlement support resources comprise having service providers with experience in working with refugees as well as having an understanding of refugee needs, regular contact between government and non-government providers and the ability to user interpreters. Lifestyle resources include places of worship, venues for communal and cultural activities, availability of culturally significant foods (e.g. halal), library resources in refugees' native languages, locally available and inclusive recreation and sports clubs and public transport that is available on weekends and in evenings.Second, finding synergies or matches between refugees' skills and the regional area labour shortages should not be neglected. Third, he states that ensuring support from refugee community leaders is essential given the important role they play in convincing refugees of relocating to regional centres.

2. The lack of co-ethnic communities in small cities

The presence of co-ethnic communities is an important element that refugees consider when deciding whether they will stay in their initial city of settlement or not. For example,

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[6] The Australian context is different from the Canadian one because refugees are initially placed in capital cities. Both Canadian and Australian governments are exploring ways of retaining refugees in rural areas.

many SPOs assume that Syrian refugees prefer to live where they are more likely to find Arabic-speaking individuals and access ethnic services (Haugen, 2019). This is more likely found in larger cities since they "offer a wider range of services and co-ethnic communities" compared to smaller ones (Jenkins, 2019:20).

The lack of co-ethnic communities in small cities usually means that refugees may need to drive to the closest urban centre to obtain ethnic foods. In one community, local volunteers decided to step in to help Syrian refugees by: driving them to the closest major city so they can attend cultural events or access the mosque: connecting them to other Syrian or Arab refugees in neighbouring rural communities: ordering specific foods at local groceries; and finding interpreters using their personal networks (Haugen, 2019).

Because of the lack of co-ethnic communities in rural areas, Canadians living there "may not have had a lot of experience with other ethnicities or religions" (Haugen, 2019:57). Consequently, refugees tend to assume that they would face intolerance and would not be considered part of the new community. This fear of rejection can explain why refugees decide to move from smaller cities to larger ones. Because big cities are often home to different cultural and ethnic groups, refugees think they would be easily accepted and that the likelihood of being subject to negative comments would decrease.

In Australia, Piper (2017) states that if regional areas do not have communities that share refugees' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the Australian government might want to assign three to five families to reside in those areas as a start. By doing so, refugee families will not feel isolated and will still be able to speak their language of origin and celebrate cultural and religious events.

3. Policies to encourage refugee settlement in smaller centres

Despite the limited resources and lack of co-ethnic communities in smaller centre, it is desirable that refugees settle throughout the country, not just in the large cities. Jenkins (2019) has identified several best practices that may contribute to this objective.

Rather than sending refugees to these smaller cities from the outset, a voluntary incentive approach might be more constructive. Provincial governments, in concert with interested municipalities, could offer tax breaks and cash incentives to refugees and other immigrants who were willing to locate in smaller centres.

Jenkins focuses on the key role that municipalities can play in making their community attractive to refugees. For example, municipalities can coordinate offers of volunteer assistance,

and establish and fund permanent procedures and protocols for this, in consultation with settlement sector organizations and existing volunteer networks.

Municipal governments in smaller centres can attempt to create a reputation or brand as welcoming communities for refugees by supporting the development of effective multi-sector newcomer support networks. These networks can play a key role in facilitating refugee integration.

IV. Housing

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provided the Centre for the Study of Living Standards with 18 journal articles, papers or reports from different sources related to Government-Assisted Refugees' (GARs) housing issues. They were evenly divided between research conducted in Canada and research on the international level. After closely examining them, we were able to identify six issues: the inadequacy of the shelter portion of the monthly income support GARs receive with the housing rents; the mismatch between the sizes of available housing for refugees and the actual size of refugee families; the lack of information sharing between the federal government and RAP-SPOs related to GARs' housing needs; the lack of refugees' familiarization with the Canadian housing market; the paucity of translation services when delivering housing services to GARs; and the suitability of the geographic location of housing within a community for GARs and how it affects their access to services.

1. The inadequacy of the shelter portion of the monthly income support GARs receive to cover housing rents

As part of the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), GARs receive a monthly income support (based on provincial social assistance rates) intended to help them cover the expenses of housing and other basic needs for up to one year or until they become self-sufficient, whichever comes first (IRCC, 2016). The monthly income support that GARs receive is often not sufficient to cover their housing costs which often exceeds 30 percent of their available income. Affordable housing for refugees is defined as housing that costs less than 30 percent of before-tax household income, according to the housing standards set by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (Brown & Armenakyan, 2020). For this reason, most of the studies on housing in the knowledge scan provided by IRCC call for more affordable housing for GARs. The importance of housing affordability is highlighted by Coley et al. (2019) who found that having access to adequate housing is positively correlated with well-being.

When it comes to housing affordability, Rose and Charette (2017) identified the incompatibility between the allowance GARs receive for housing and the actual housing rents. They compared RAP allowances and Canada Child Benefit (CCB) rates with CMHC's Rental

Market Survey data for average rents in the lowest quartile of the housing market that is the most basic housing units that are found in cheaper neighbourhoods. The authors found that refugee families would be spending more than 30 per cent of their income on rent alone. The amount a couple with two children receives for housing through the RAP allowance in Ontario is $795 but the rent for a 3-bedroom apartment (if the two children were of different sexes and age ranges) in Toronto is $1,300. In this case, even with their Child Benefit, the family would spend 49 per cent of their modest income on rent. Consequently, GARs often resort to using their CCB or other forms of income to cover their other basic needs[7].

The situation is worse for small families, families with no children or single people. Refugees with no children are not eligible for CCB (Canada Revenue Agency, n.d.) and only rely on the income provided by RAP. For example, a basic studio apartment in Calgary would use up to 83 per cent of the RAP income of a single person (Rose & Charette, 2017:18). The fact that GARs need to repay their transportation loans to the Government of Canada worsens their financial situation and makes their housing budget even tighter. For this reason, Rose and Charette (2017) recommend that IRCC revisit the income support given to GARs in a way that better reflects the provincial and local housing markets' prices and reduces if not eliminates the existing gaps between housing needs and the monthly income support for housing.

2. The mismatch between the sizes of available housing for refugees and the actual size of refugee families

Another particularly poignant issue identified by Rose and Charette (2017:17) was the dearth of housing units that correspond to the needs of large and multi-generational refugee families. For large refugee families, "finding suitable housing units while respecting occupancy codes" becomes quite a challenge. The average size of Syrian families is well above that of Canadian families. For example, between November 2015 and July 2016, the government-assisted Syrian refugee families with 5 and 7 members accounted for almost 50 per cent of Syrian families resettled to Canada (Open Government, 2016.-c). By comparison, households with five or more persons make up approximately 8.4% of all Canadian households (Statistics Canada, 2017). This means that the RAP Service Provider Organization (SPO) would often have to convince landlords to adjust their housing arrangements. For example, they were able to persuade landlords to make changes to connect two apartments in Halifax and merge some side-by-side duplexes in Windsor. According to Silvius et al. (2019) and Rose and Charette (2017), a greater number of affordable larger units for large refugee families is needed because size requirements and affordability constraints limit the range of options RAP-SPOs currently offer to

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[7] RAP Income Support rates for housing are aligned with provincial social assistance rates. In 2017, IRCC introduced a national RAP housing supplement for clients who require financial assistance with their rental and utility costs over and above the applicable RAP rate. The RAP housing supplement serves as a substitute for the more comprehensive rental supplement and subsidized housing programs offered by provincial and municipal social assistance programs. However, the housing supplement amount is not typically enough to raise household income to a level such that housing costs do not exceed 30 of their income.

GARs. Addressing the federal and provincial housing policy decision makers and stakeholders, Rose and Charette (2017:31) call for a diversification of available housing options to meet refugees' housing needs.

3. The lack of information sharing between the federal government and RAP-SPOs related to GARs' housing needs

The lack of information transmission between the federal government and RAP-SPOs in relation to GARs' housing needs was recognized as an issue in Rose and Charette (2017). In the case of Syrian refugees, the lack of information concerning refugees' profiles increased the settlement challenges (Rose, 2019:23). Being aware of the family structure and composition of refugees and their health conditions is crucial to ensuring the success of housing strategies for GARs. This can involve other community partners, not just the RAP SPOs. For example, a number of cities, municipalities and non-profit organizations wanted to take part in Syrian refugee resettlement efforts. They set up online housing portals to assist refugees with their housing search. Many of the housing offers on these platforms were inconsistent with refugees' housing needs because the "general public had limited information about refugee profiles and needs" (Rose, 2019:18). Rose (2019) calls for improving the information transmission between overseas processing offices, the Operations Branch of IRCC in Ottawa and RAP providers in different cities as this would facilitate advance planning for housing. Refugees can then be more effectively matched to suitable housing. Rose (2019) also believes that this would reduce the refugees' stay in temporary housing or hotels. Therefore, IRCC officials are advised to provide accurate advance notification of the profile of GARs where it would ideally specify their family sizes and their estimated arrival dates.

4. The lack of refugees' familiarization with the Canadian housing market

Services offered to GARs by settlement agencies include a variety of workshops and courses. However, these workshops tend to provide little information on housing, resulting in refugees lacking familiarization with the Canadian housing market (Brown and Armenakyan, 2020). Each country has its own housing culture and laws so it goes without saying that refugees coming to Canada cannot be fully aware of all these differences. Rose (2019:23) stresses the importance of providing refugees with clear and accurate basic information about the resettlement country's housing system as this would help them develop "realistic expectations about their future housing (that it will be basic) and aspirations (that is normal and very possible to move to better housing later on in the settlement process)". A RAP SPO interviewee in Rose and Charette (2017:16) suggested that a number of Syrian refugees have difficulties accepting their initial housing option as they were not aware that, unlike in Syria, it is completely normal in Canada to upgrade to a better dwelling once their financial situation improves.

Municipalities, local immigration partnerships and other newcomer support networks are encouraged to establish permanent local housing tables and task forces involving the "full range of local housing providers, including private developers and landlords as well as the public and non-profit sectors" to ensure their active participation in securing suitable and affordable housing for GARs (Rose & Charette,2017:.29). Doing so would provide a space to discuss predictable and unpredictable needs related to housing that can arise with refugees' arrivals to Canada.

More effective information sessions by RAP providers that pinpoint both tenants and landlords' rights and responsibilities in the Canadian housing market are needed for GARs. To do this, housing policy staff are advised to make better use of multimedia resources provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)'s Newcomer Housing Information team (Rose & Charette, 2017). These resources are available in eight languages (including English and French). Expanding settlement workshops beyond language classes to cover additional topics that directly target housing-related issues in a Canadian context can be beneficial for refugees (Brown & Armenakyan, 2020).

Informing newcomers of discriminatory behaviour they may face during their housing search or housing-related scams they may fall for will definitely help avoid deception. Ideally, information and orientation sessions provided to refugees prior to their arrival to Canada, during their first weeks of resettlement and also in the following months to ensure a successful settlement process need to have a strong housing component (Rose & Charette, 2017). .

5. The paucity of translation services when delivering housing services to GARs

The lack of translation services can make communication between landlords and refugee tenants difficult. English or French is generally not one of refugees' spoken languages. In fact, almost 80 per cent of GARs resettled in Canada between January 2015 and May 2020 speak neither English nor French (Open Government, 2016.-a). For this reason, Silvius et al. (2019) deem it important to address the shortage of translation services. They explain that by doing so, refugee tenants' access to social housing would be facilitated. Refugee tenants who do not speak English or French (depending if the province is francophone or anglophone) are unable to fill out the required housing-related documents alone or fully comprehend the information given to them during housing-related workshops. Refugees mainly depend on service providers to translate documents or make calls for them but this takes up an important amount of service providers' time.

Language barriers prevent refugees from directly communicating with housing providers. In some cases, when refugees do not understand the content of a phone call/text, a letter or an email, it can result in missed opportunities or even losing their social housing tenancy (Silvius et

al., 2019). A recommendation to IRCC would then be to increase the collaboration with "provinces, territories, municipalities and other stakeholders to better coordinate the availability of interpretation so that newcomers have meaningful access to provincially and municipally delivered social services" (Parliament of Canada – House of Commons Canada, 2019). The shortage of translation services applies beyond housing as we will discuss it in future sections.

6. The suitability of the geographic location of housing within a community and how it affects GARs' access to services

Rose (2019) addressed the issue of the existing mismatch within a community between refugees' housing and the location of services designed to support GARs' resettlement and settlement. RAP housing-search workers that help GARs find their future home must satisfy two criteria at the same time: housing affordability and housing suitability. According to Rose (2019:15), a house is suitable if it is accessible to settlement services, health care and everyday services by public transportation.

Small cities and towns in Canada often have an adequate supply of affordable housing options that match refugee families' sizes (Rose, 2019). But public transportation is usually very limited (Rose, 2016) so the transportation barriers to accessing services need to be addressed. Whenever public transportation is not available, GARs' access to resources and services can be seriously hindered since GARs generally cannot afford to own a car. According to Cronkrite et al. (2016), the absence of public transportation in rural communities in Canada results in refugees' dependence on volunteers for their transportation. If the family size is large, then a single refugee family might need the help of multiple volunteers to drive them or even rent a bus for them (Haugen, 2019). For this reason, Texeira and Drolet (2016) recommend reducing the transportation barriers by expanding bus routes and making bus services more frequent in the case of car-oriented cities. It may be unrealistic to do just for refugees.

Wilkinson and Garcea (2017:21) adopted another approach. They advise policy makers in Canada to provide settlement agencies with funding to help refugees cover their transportation costs particularly in rural areas. By doing so, they believe it would improve the effectiveness of settlement services delivered to GARs. Rose (2016) suggests shifting the attention to other programs that can be easier to implement such as "ride-sharing, taxi-buses, non-profit self-service bicycle and car rentals, and coaching for driver education especially for women". For example, newcomers in Winnipeg are able to receive assistance to obtain\ their driver's licence through a program offered by Manitoba Public Insurance (Cronkrite et al.,2016).

V. Mental Health Services

For this section of the literature review, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provided the Centre for the Study of Living Standards with 39 journal articles, papers or reports from different sources related to mental health services for refugees. Out of the total number of studies provided, 70 per cent were conducted in countries other than Canada such as the United States, Australia, and Denmark. After closely examining them, we were able to identify five issues: the prevalence of stigma surrounding the use of mental health services among the refugee population and their lack of knowledge about mental health; the lack of medical staff knowledge about refugees' cultural profiles; dealing with PTSD and trauma in the refugee community; the limited use of internet when providing mental health services; and the insufficient use of multidisciplinary and holistic approaches to mental health services for refugees.

1. The prevalence of stigma surrounding the use of mental health services among the refugee population and their lack of knowledge about mental health

According to Agic et al. (2016), successful interventions for delivering mental health services to refugees are the ones that are linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive. In other words, successful interventions understand and overcome refugees' cultural barriers in the delivery of mental health services. Cultural barriers are linked, among other things, to refugees' omnipresent stigma surrounding mental illness that consequently prevents them from seeking mental health assistance and their belief in traditional alternative practices (Thomson et al., 2015:1897).

A report by British Columbia's Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction (2018:7) stated that the terms or language used during consultations with refugees is very important when addressing stigma. For example, the use of the words "anxiety", "depression" or any other term related to mental health during the diagnosis or during the mental health promotion makes it difficult for refugees to acknowledge they may suffer from it as they believe these are Western diseases. Being diagnosed with a mental health illness can also mean being labeled "crazy" (Kaplan et al., 2016) and can eventually lead to the loss of social status, social exclusion, and discrimination (Salami et al., 2019). A refugee family will not simply accept that their child has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Instead, they prefer to think that their child is active and that nothing is wrong with him or her (British Columbia, 2018). Another example of the stigma related to mental health disorders among refugees would be believing their problems are a consequence of their sins or bad karma rather than admitting they might have a mental health condition (Kaplan et al., 2016).

Some refugees also fear for their legal status in Canada if they were to access mental health services. They believe that if they admit they are mentally-ill, there is a chance they would lose custody of their children or risk being deported to their country of origin (Salami et al., 2019). Whenever refugees access mental health services, they are asked to provide their permanent residence (PR) number. That leads some to think that the government has access to their medical file and that their mental health condition is a barrier to becoming Canadian citizens in the future (British Columbia, 2018:9).

Due to their aversion to Western treatment approaches and their fear of stigma, refugees usually resort to alternative therapies and stress management techniques. They believe that "being strong" or "staying busy" can help them overcome depression. The most common treatment models are prayer, music and family support. Refugees believe in the curative power of cultural prescriptions which may explain their reluctance to use mental health services (Thomson et al., 2015).

In order to offer mental health services that are adapted for specific refugee groups, the presence of a cultural broker becomes a necessity. As discussed in Brar-Josan and Yohani (2019:513), a cultural broker is "an individual who takes on the role of bridging individuals or groups of differing cultures for the purpose of improving communication and reducing conflict". Examples of cultural brokers that assist mental health practitioners include, but are not limited to, paraprofessionals, settlement workers and bi-cultural members (Brar-Josan & Yohani, 2019:513).

Cultural brokers help overcome cultural barriers to accessing mental health services by "facilitating cultural integration and sense of belonging, bridging to settlement services, supportive counselling, facilitating referrals to mental health practitioners, educating about mental health, providing contextual information and cultural interpretation" (Brar-Josan & Yohani, 2019:512). For Bhayana and Bhayana (2018), the presence of a cultural broker when delivering mental health services can ensure that the communication between the mental health professional and refugee patients is valid.

Thomson et al. (2015) recommend that media campaigns related to mental health promotion use imagery and messages that are designed in a culturally-sensitive manner when targeting specific refugee groups. Since Salami et al. (2019) advocate for the use of a prevention approach rather than a crisis management one when it comes to refugees' mental health, these media campaigns will essentially "clarify the role of mental health services to those unfamiliar with such services" (Thomson et al., 2015:1900). Examples of messages that target refugees' poor self-recognition of mental health disorders are "if you're feeling sadness or crying frequently call this" (Forrest-Bank et al., 2019:680).

2. The lack of medical staff knowledge about refugees' cultural profiles

Almost all refugees that resettle in Canada come from non-western countries and cultures. The lack of medical staff's knowledge about refugees' backgrounds can represent additional barriers to the provision of mental health services as this can impact "effective diagnosis and treatment, due to different culturally based perceptions of the nature of the mental health problems and different expectations about the role of health services in responding to them" (Kaplan et al., 2016:1161). Thomson et al. (2015) affirm the need for linguistically and culturally sensitive service that includes an awareness of how culture impacts health and treatment.

To improve mental health practitioners' cultural awareness and sensitivity, Thomson et al. (2015:1899) suggest "strengthen[ing] the cultural diversity component of the medical training programs and sensitivity of health care providers" to refugees' specific mental health needs. If general practitioners or mental health professionals' awareness of refugees' cultural backgrounds increases, it will be easier for them to detect and manage unusual representations of mental disorders. The World Health Organization (WHO) also recommends ensuring that the mental health workforce understands refugees' different family and social structures (WHO, 2018).

Hebebrand et al. (2016:5) recommend that general practitioners and mental health professionals consult refugee-specific websites such as the Cultural Orientation Resource Center to gain better understanding of the refugee patients they serve. Through a compilation of refugees' culture profiles, this website "provide[s] a basic introduction to the social structure, language, geography, and history of various cultural groups".

Another best practice is the use of cultural brokers as a means of addressing the lack of medical staff knowledge (Brar-Josan and Yohani, 2019). These brokers facilitate cultural understanding to help mental health practitioners overcome cross-cultural differences that account for some of the barriers in providing services to refugee and immigrant populations.

Cultural brokers can play three roles to facilitate refugee youth's access to formal psychological support:

- Facilitating referrals: (1) identifying mental health issues, (2) consultation with youth and family, (3) determining which professional to refer to, and (4) introducing youth to the professional;

- Educating: brokers can help refugee youth and their parents learn about the benefits of seeking mental health services. They can explain the process in a manner that the family could understand and relate to; and

- Providing contextual information: brokers can obtain pertinent background information relating to clients and transferring that information to the mental health practitioners.

3. Dealing with PTSD and trauma in the refugee community

As noted by Agic et al. (2016), the incidence of refugees coming to Canada with PTSD is increasing. PTSD and trauma, along with depression and anxiety are the main mental health issues facing refugees.

For an effective planning of refugee youth mental health services, Hebebrand et al. (2016:2) highlight the importance of understanding refugees' flight experiences, not just the trauma they have gone through in their countries of origin. The authors assert that the "flight in itself can be traumatic or compound trauma via, for instance, separation experiences, sexual abuse, and trafficking including forced labor and sexual exploitation".

According to Forrest-Bank et al. (2019), Sijbrandij et al. (2017) and Agic et al. (2016), the mental health practices with the most promising outcomes when dealing with traumatized refugees and refugees with PTSD were the NET (Narrative Exposure Therapy) and CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy).

NET allows refugee patients to "develop a chronological narrative of their life story with a focus on the traumatic experiences in order to transform fragmented reports of the traumatic experiences into a coherent narrative" (WHO, 2018:21). During this intervention, the therapist usually resorts to the "employment of empathic understanding, active listening, congruence and unconditional positive regard" (Mitschke et al., 2017:3).

Using behavioural and cognitive techniques (e.g. exercises to reduce avoidance and hyperarousal), CBT "aims to reduce distress related to traumatic memories and their impact on the current life of the patient" (WHO, 2018:21).

Mind Spring (MS) is a community group intervention and promising practice that has been developed in Denmark to address PTSD and trauma in refugees (Husby et al., 2020). MS functions as an early group intervention for newly arrived refugees. The purpose of MS is to give the participants new knowledge and awareness about their own psychosocial reactions to war, flight, and exile-life as well as the importance of social networks. Groups are undertaken in the native language of the participants and led by an MS trainer with a refugee background in collaboration with a co-trainer (usually a social worker) from the municipality where the group is held. The co-trainer is assisted by an interpreter during the sessions. The MS intervention is organized into groups for parents, youth and children. Each group includes 8–10 participants

attending nine sessions of 2 hr each. The sessions cover psychoeducation and psychosocial themes such as identity, culture, stress, trauma, and parenting. The acceptability and outcome of MS have not yet been systematically investigated.

4. Limited online delivery of mental health services to refugees

As already noted, there are many barriers to the delivery of services to refugees including mental health services. These barriers include language and transportation. For example, "not being fluent in English and/or French can pose challenges to gaining access to mental health services" (Thomson et al., 2015:1898). Most of the studies in the knowledge scan confirm that language barriers between health care providers and refugees led to the underuse of mental health services. Another barrier that can explain refugees' reluctance to using mental health services is transportation. Kaplan et al. (2016) suggest that arranging refugees' transport and sending them reminders of their mental health appointments can be used to encourage them to go see a mental health professional.

An innovative solution to all these barriers would be to rely on online mental health services. E-mental health is defined as "the use of the internet and other electronic communication technologies to deliver mental health information and care" (Mental Health Commission of Canada [MHCC], 2018:3). Techniques used to deliver e-mental health interventions include, but are not limited to, instant messaging and video-based counselling services (also referred to as telehealth or telepsychiatry), online support groups, mobile phone applications, online assessment or diagnostic tools, blogs and podcasts and therapeutic gaming programs. To support refugees' use of e-mental health services, the Mental Health Commission of Canada prepared an implementation toolkit intended for community health workers, counsellors/psychotherapists, psychologists (including general, clinical, health, counselling), mental health nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, peer support workers and other allied health workers (MHCC, 2018). The type of technologies that would be used for refugees' mental health services include artificial intelligence that can overcome language barriers by offering translation services.[8]

The World Health Organization states that "computer technologies and tele-psychiatry can be explored as an alternative to face-to-face interpretation and may become more important over time, given their potential for cost reduction and easy access" given that interpreters, cultural mediators and the mental health workforce are well-equipped and well-trained to use them (WHO, 2018:23). According to Sijbrandij et al. (2017), e-mental health interventions can potentially reduce refugees' fear of stigmatization with no transportation costs. The authors mentioned that additional advantages of the online delivery of mental health services are "the

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[8] Artificial intelligence is defined as "computer systems that apply algorithms and machine learning techniques [to] perform tasks that normally require human intelligence" (MHCC, 2018:11).

relative brevity of e-mental health interventions and the possibility to automatize parts of the treatment" (Sijbrandij et al., 2017:5).

An example of transcultural tele-psychiatry is the Little Prince Psychiatric Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark which matches refugees to culturally competent mental health professionals. Refugees said that they preferred these online consultations compared to the interpreter-assisted ones because tele-psychiatry reduces their concerns when it comes to information confidentiality (WHO, 2018). Salami et al. (2019) draw attention to the close knit nature of refugees' communities. For this reason, using cultural brokers or translators from the same ethnic group is not the best option in the delivery of mental health services.

5. The insufficient use of multidisciplinary and holistic approaches to mental health services

A multidisciplinary approach in mental health services is one that seeks to expand the scope of actors involved in delivering mental health services to refugees to include interpreters, social workers, and community members alongside general practitioners and mental health professionals (Kostiuk, 2019). As stated in Agic et al. (2016:10), "what is needed is the political and institutional strategy for developing a system that will link and support clinicians, nurses, and social workers who offer treatment, as well as the settlement workers and communities who will provide the social support and sense of belonging to incoming refugees".

Multidisciplinary approaches may be particularly relevant in dealing with PTSD and trauma in the refugee community. These approaches can be evidence-based and can draw upon the best practices from different disciplines to tailor the most effective mental health interventions based on the needs of the refugee.

VI. Employment Services

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provided 27 journal articles, papers or reports related to employment services for refugees. Among the studies, 12 were conducted in Canada. After closely examining them, we were able to identify six issues: the referral process of SPOs that encourages GARs to finish their language training before accessing employment services; the focus on language acquisition through formal language classes rather than combining it with employment-related services; the lack of foreign credentials recognition; GARs' low social capital; RAP income support's high claw back rate; and discrimination against GARs in the labour market.

1. The referral process of SPOs that encourages GARs to finish their language training before accessing employment services

In theory, GARs can be simultaneously referred to language training and employment-related services by SPOs. However, in practice, SPOs usually encourage them to focus on their language learning while they are receiving RAP income support (IRCC, 2016a). The logic behind this is the fact that acquisition of one of Canada's official languages facilitates refugees' entry into the labour market and longer-term integration into Canadian society. For this reason, GARs tend to enroll in language classes within their first year in Canada before accessing employment-related services and starting the job hunt (Neufeld, 2018). On the other hand, PSRs who also need language training are usually encouraged to enter the labour market soon after arriving in Canada. Neufeld (2018:17) ties this different approach to private sponsors' "understanding of the connection between employment, settlement, and language acquisition".

Due to this approach, GARs report that they are not connected to employment-related services nor are they matched to employment opportunities until later in their integration process (IRCC, 2016c). While GARs fundamentally know that non-existent or poor language skills impede their ability to find a job (Neufeld, 2018), almost 85 per cent of them stated that language classes actually prevented them from looking for a job (Public Policy Forum, 2020). This challenge may be magnified by the inaccessibility of language classes due to various reasons. In that case, GARs find themselves unproductively unoccupied as neither language classes nor employment services are available to them. In addition to that, acquiring job-related vocabulary is not guaranteed through the language classes given to GARs.

As part of the evaluation of the settlement program, IRCC (2016b) found that employment-related services had a greater impact on the use and the improvement of GARs' language skills than formal language classes.[9] The evaluation also mentions that combining language training and employment-related services had even greater positive outcomes on GARs than language training alone. Programs that offer language in a work environment are believed to have "better outcomes than general language courses in terms of participation and labor market integration trajectories" (Vincenza Desiderio, 2016:26). Cronkrite et al. (2016:3) agree that making language skills' acquisition a prerequisite to securing employment is not the only option. The authors mention that it is possible for "workplace language learning and language supports [to] [occur] at the worksite, using the worksite to promote active learning".

An occupation-specific vocabulary is crucial when looking for a job in a particular field. To ensure refugees gain this vocabulary during language classes, Rietig (2016) recommends tailoring a part of language classes to a specific jargon. An example of this approach is the Integration through Education and Work project by the Bavarian Labour Ministry in Germany. It provides a space for asylum-seekers that already have university degrees or technical education

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[9] Employment-related services are part of the Settlement Program and include work placements; networking; employment-specific language training; mentoring; employment counselling; and resume matching (IRCC, 2017).

certificates "to attend language courses linked to practical experience and focus on specialized vocabulary" (Rietig, 2016:15). Ghadi et al. (2019) extol language classes that are embedded in the workplace thus providing refugees with the necessary occupational-specific language skills. Vincenza Desiderio (2016) cites the Swedish experience as an example for vocation-specific language classes. Through the Swedish for Professionals program, refugees have access to language classes tailored to specific professions ranging from highly-skilled occupations (economists, teachers and engineers) to skilled trades.

A recommendation made to the Government of Canada is to "support the development of collaborative options in which GARs can access programs to simultaneously improve their language skills while acquiring Canadian work experience and earning wages" (Public Policy Forum, 2020:17). The Public Policy Forum offers multiple suggestions on how the government can support this type of approach. First, it could collaborate with The Future Skills Centre to implement programs that combine language learning and employment tailored to refugees' needs. Second, the federal government could consider granting a tax credit similar to the Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit to the employers who offer GARs a flexible work schedule that makes it possible for them to work and attend language classes at the same time. This will ease GARs' dual burden of developing language skills and becoming economically independent. Third, the Government of Canada could expand the Federal Internship for Newcomers Program. Currently, the program requires a post-secondary degree (some administrative positions can be an exception) and is just open to refugees living in the following areas and their surroundings (up to 100 kilometers): Ottawa/Gatineau, Fredericton, Halifax, St. John's, Toronto and Victoria (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Through the expanded version of the program, GARs, regardless of their province or city of residence, would be able to apply for entry-level positions that do not require a post-secondary education.

2. The lack of foreign credentials recognition

As shown in the Appendix to this report, a much smaller proportion of GARs have post-secondary qualifications in comparison to other refugees (PSRs and BVORs) and economic immigrants. Nonetheless, the problem of GARs' foreign credentials recognition still needs to be addressed. As previously noted in the housing section, most refugees resettled in Canada come from non-Western countries. Therefore, the education they have received may be perceived as not necessarily matching Western standards. Therefore, it risks not being formally recognized in the Canadian context. Even though Canada has made important investments in foreign credentials recognition through for example the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, more work needs to be done to make the process more accessible and affordable to refugees (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017).

As noted in Neufeld (2018), refugees have the lowest levels of foreign credentials recognition among all Canadian immigrants. A report by Statistics Canada sheds the light on the existing disparities between refugees' levels of credentials and work experience recognition compared to those of other immigrant groups in Canada. In fact, after four years, "only 11% of refugees receive credential recognition and 14% receive work experience recognition, compared to 38% and 51% for skilled workers, and 19% and 31% for family class migrants" (Neufeld, 2018:18). This low recognition rate of refugees' foreign credentials and work experience may be related to two factors. First, it may just reflect the much lower proportion of refugees that have credentials and work experience compared to other immigrants. Second, it may arise from the lack of knowledge of the foreign credential and experience recognition process on the part of refugees.

To address this problem, Neupane (2012) states that the three levels of the Canadian government, services providers and employers need to come together to deal with foreign credentials recognition for GARs. In other words, the credential equivalency process requires collaboration between all parties that are involved in refugees' employment. Wilkinson and Garcea (2017) recommend the creation of a database that allows refugees to register their degrees, certificates and/or diplomas. Ideally, it would be accessible to settlement agencies and employers to check refugee applicants' educational records. Enhancing employers' awareness about refugees' experiences and skills gained overseas should accompany the foreign credential recognition process (Correa-Velez et al., 2015). Employers will recognize that refugees' previous work experience and education credentials obtained in their countries of origin can be as valuable as their Canadian counterparts.

Neupane (2012) also draws attention to the high cost of assessment fees associated with foreign credentials recognition. Rietig (2016:20) affirms that "cost may be a barrier for low-income applicants who do not depend on government transfers". Wilkinson and Garcea (2017) reported that would-be refugee nurses found the credentials recognition process long and expensive which can cause frustration. For this reason, Neupane (2012) encourages the elimination of assessment fees wherever it is possible to do so.

Hooper et al. (2017:10) provided examples of how cities can work hand in hand with local educational institutions or employer associations to assess refugees' qualifications. In Finland, a collaboration between the city of Helsinki, Helsinki Metropolia University and Luona Oy (which is the organization responsible for Finland's reception centres) led to the implementation of a programme that "recognises the credentials of asylum seekers and immigrants in the field of technology, engineering and business". To evaluate their skills, this programme relies on case studies from the Helsinki Metropolia University's courses and carries out tests in Arabic, English and Finnish.

In Germany, undocumented refugees or refugees who do not have written proof of their educational level can still be certified as fully qualified in certain professions. Thanks to the German Federal Institute for Vocational and Professional Education (BIBB) partnership with six chambers of trade, industry and skilled crafts, refugees can be subjected to an innovative qualification analysis. Refugees will be granted the opportunity to showcase their skills to a panel composed of experts from the chambers. Those experts will "evaluate the refugees' skills (through interviews, work samples, or presentations) and decide whether to issue them an equivalency certificate" (Hooper et al., 2017:10). If refugees receive the certificate, that means their skills are "comparable to those expected from a member of the [corresponding] chamber" (Rietig, 2016:19). In Germany, this process is only valid for non-regulated professions. For refugees given a partial credentials' recognition, the Integration through Qualification (IQ) Network directs them towards adequate bridge courses and intensive programs to fill their skills and experiences' gaps (Rietig, 2016).

In Sweden, fast-track programs were designed for refugees to help them overcome their knowledge gaps. Foreign-trained chefs, health-care professionals (nurses, pharmacists, dentists, doctors, etc) and teachers were eligible to receive tailored bridging training (Vincenza Desiderio, 2016).

3. GARs' low level of social capital

Having a high level of social capital, defined as well-developed personal and professional networks, is considered a driver of employment opportunities (Neufeld, 2018). According to the Public Policy Forum (2020:18), "85 percent of jobs are filled through social networking" in North America, that is to say, employers tend to hire people they have already shared a conversation with or who were introduced to them through mutual connections. Unlike Privately-Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) and Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) refugees, GARs have lower levels of social capital (Neufeld, 2018) and they even "may not know a single person upon arrival" (Public Policy Forum, 2020:18). Some Syrian GARs in Lethbridge stated that even after a number of years of residency, they still have limited connections with the local community (Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017). GARs' lack of social networks in Canada may prevent them from accessing jobs that are not advertised online.

For this reason, the Government of Canada is advised to prioritize building and enhancing GARs' social capital as part of its settlement strategy (Public Policy Forum, 2020). The emphasis needs to be put on developing bridging social capital, as opposed to bonding social capital[10] Drolet and Moorthi (2018) argued that bridging social capital, that is connections and

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[10] Social bridging happens when refugees make connections with individuals that are from different ethnicities and cultures whereas social bonding is when refugees that share the country of origin, the language and the religion stick together (Public Policy Forum, 2020).

networks between refugees and others outside the refugee community, is a key factor for refugees' successful integration. Senthanar et al. (2020) call for more specialized employment-related services for GARs in lieu of the homogenized ones currently offered to refugees and immigrants alike. The authors state that the services available do not take into account GARs' lack of social ties. Therefore, they might be inadequate and not respond to GARs' employment needs. The Public Policy Forum (2020) suggests strengthening partnerships between SPOs and local volunteer communities to provide initial social connections for GARs. The authors of the report exhort the federal government to further support local and national organizations that help refugees make meaningful connections in Canadian society. For instance, Tides Canada, through its initiative Together Project, helps connect refugees and Canadians "to build social support systems that result in stronger, more integrated communities" (Public Policy Forum, 2020:20).

4. RAP income support's high claw back rate

Under the RAP, GARs can "earn up to 50% of their total monthly RAP income support payment before any deduction is made to the monthly income support entitlement" (IRCC, n.d.). Once their earnings exceed 50 per cent of the monthly RAP allowance, "all RAP funds over that threshold are reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis for each dollar earned over the incentive allowance amount" (IRCC, n.d.). In other words, as soon as GARs go beyond the set threshold, their additional earnings will be clawed back by 100 per cent. Exceptions can be made for childcare or education expenses. This high claw back rate represents a disincentive to find employment (Neufel, 2018). Employed GARs that still receive RAP income support find themselves discouraged from seeking and accepting job positions that are better paid or require more working hours. Some GARs believe their best option is to reduce their working hours (Public Policy Forum, 2020) or volunteer to gain some Canadian experience (Agrawal and Zeitouny, 2017).

The Public Policy Forum (2020) report deems it important to reexamine the 100 per cent claw-back rate for GARs' additional income above the 50 per cent of their RAP monthly income support. They suggest a reduction from a 100 per cent claw-back rate to a 50 per cent one when surpassing the 50 per cent threshold. If GARs' additional income equals the total RAP income, that is 100 per cent, or goes beyond it, then the claw back rate can reach 75 per cent.

5. Discrimination against GARs in the labour market

Barriers to GARs' employment that were previously listed can be amplified by discrimination they may face in the labour market because of their ethnicity, race, religion, gender, disability and/or mental illness. By exploring the relationship between demographic factors and refugees' employment status, Khawaja et al. (2018) found that the more refugees are

"visibly" different than locals, the more difficult for them to be employed. Anti-refugee sentiment is noticeably increasing worldwide and Canada is no exception.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018), 64 per cent of resettled refugees in Canada in 2017 were from the Middle East. Since the majority of refugees from that region are Muslims, Islamophobia may be a key form of discrimination. In fact, a 2018 survey found that slightly more than 80 per cent of Canadian citizens believe Islamophobia exists in Canada. In addition to that, hate crimes against Muslims witnessed a 253 per cent increase between 2014 and 2017 (Public Policy Forum, 2020). Nationals from Somalia and Eritrea, that is the third and fourth most common countries of origin for GARs resettled in Canada (Open Government, -c), may face anti-black racism during job interviews or at their workplace. This also applies to any black refugee in Canada. Black women are less likely to be employed compared to white women even when they are more educated and better qualified (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate). According to the report by the Public Policy Forum (2020:12), "employers discriminate against equivalently educated and experienced job applicants who have names that sound African, Asian or Muslim". Additionally, Wilkinson and Garcea (2017) highlight that employers tend to favour Canadian education or work experience over non-Canadian credentials.

To enhance GARs' employability, the Government of Canada must effectively address the issues of Islamophobia and anti-black racism. It needs to implement a national anti-discrimination strategy in the workplace. The Public Policy Forum's (2020:28) argues that "anti-Islamophobia and anti-black racism policy needs to be a key component of Canada's 2019–2022 Anti-Racism Strategy to combat racism [and] discrimination". The anti-racism strategy needs to build upon existing initiatives and events in Canada such as "World Refugee Day, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia, Islamic History Month, and Black History Month" (Public Policy Forum, 2020:28). Government of Canada's funding for settlement agencies' programs for workplace sponsorship should require an anti-racism component and an unconscious bias training to raise awareness aiming at improving GARs' social and economic integration.

Cronkrite et al. (2016:3) pointed out the need of an educational campaign to debunk the belief that refugees represent a financial burden for the Canadian government. The authors state this can be achieved by "countering messages shared through international media which can affect the mindset of Canadians". They also called upon the actors involved in refugees' (re)settlement to make Canadians understand that "refugees, in the long term, are low cost and in fact a negative cost: refugees will pay more in taxes than they take out of services and will help to build our economy".

A report by the OECD (2019:92) advocates for the strengthening of economic acceptance towards refugees. To do so, equal working conditions between national and refugee populations need to be guaranteed by promoting fair recruitment practices that would protect refugees from

discrimination and exploitation. Refugees may not be well-informed about their rights as employees. Therefore, local authorities in collaboration with settlement agencies and employers' associations are encouraged to "use websites, social media and other means of communication to inform refugees and other vulnerable migrants about opportunities, rights and obligations related to social and labour".

VII. Conclusion

This report has surveyed a vast literature related to best and promising practices in government-funded services supporting the resettlement and integration of government-assisted refugees based on a knowledge scan provided by IRCC. The scan divided the literature into five main areas, namely refugee resettlement programs, settlement location, housing, mental health services, and employment services. The report has followed this structure in its synthesis of the literature. The report identified key themes, insights, and trends under the general heading of issues. A total of 24 specific issues have been identified in the five areas.

A key finding is that a number of the issues are cross-cutting and occur in more than one subject area. These cross-cutting issues consequently are of high priority and merit attention. Examples of cross-cutting issues are highlighted below:

- the need for better information sharing between all actors and organizations involved in the settlement process both within organizations and across organizations domestically and internationally;

- the inadequacy of income support for GARs, with the impact more acute in housing but also relevant in other areas such as transportation;

- the importance of pre-departure orientation services for refugees with information on housing and other areas;

- the challenges of settlement for GARS in small cities where social isolation linked to lack of co-ethnic communities can impede integration;

- The importance of effective case management systems to support the need of refugees to access and navigate existing services in all areas including housing, health and income assistance;

- the key role played by translation services for GARS in the early settlement period to adapt to a new setting; and

- the effectiveness of mixing work and language training so GARS can develop language skills and vocabulary relevant to their job.

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