

## DISCUSSION PAPER

# Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program

## Employment and Immigration Canada

*[Editorial note: The text in boldface are extracts from "Report: Private Sponsorship Consultation," written in May 1991 by Howard Adelman. Editorial comments are in italics.]*

### Purpose

This document examines the issues raised through the review of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program and provides recommendations designed to improve the operational practices of this program and to address the concerns expressed by program partners.

### Program Background

Provisions for the Private Sponsorship Program were introduced as part of the Immigration Act of 1976. It was recognized at that time that in addition to a planned government effort to help refugees, Canada would benefit from a mechanism that would allow private citizens and corporations to become involved in refugee resettlement.

**[What was originally viewed as a very incidental part of the system of refugee intake, if it were ever to be utilized, quickly became the most imaginative innovation in refugee resettlement with the massive intake of Indochinese refugees beginning in 1979 and 1980 in which, during an 18-month period, 32,000 refugees were sponsored by the private sector.]**

The private sponsorship system enables corporations and groups of individuals to assist refugees and members of designated classes to rebuild their lives in Canada. The aim of sponsorship is to let interested groups express their concern for refugees in concrete ways. The sponsors take the responsibility for the persons they sponsor. A guiding principle behind the program is the belief that refugees are

assisted in their adaptation to Canadian culture through close association with established residents of Canada.

Voluntarism is a cornerstone of the Private Sponsorship Program, which operates as a joint venture between the government and the voluntary sector. Much of Canada's population is composed of former refugees or their descendants, and many national organizations in this country have a history of dedication to the resettlement and integration of refugees. Such organizations, primarily major national churches and large, well-known, ethnic organizations, were the first to become involved in private sponsorship. In 1979-80, the program was successful in responding to the need to resettle Indochinese refugees. Participation in the program then declined until the mid-1980s when it increased again in popularity. Today, in a climate of economic restraint, the number of applications for private sponsorship are fewer than in the late 1980s; however, this program continues to be instrumental in assisting numerous refugees to become resettled in Canada.

When the private sponsorship of refugees was established, Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) identified, in general terms, the obligations of sponsors. Precise, detailed guidance was, however, never provided. Over the years, as participation in the Private Sponsorship Program expanded and evolved, a wide variety of practices developed across the country. Difficulties developed in the operation of the program because of the absence of clear directions. **[The surge in private sponsorship in one group based on new practices without a precedent, may have been the critical factor which shifted the program so dramatically that strains in other areas, which had developed in the interval, now came to the fore.]**

Some sponsoring groups overestimated the number of refugees they could sponsor and support. With the downturn in the economy these groups found themselves unable to cope with the financial responsibilities of the sponsorships they had submitted. Sponsorship applications had to be cancelled. This resulted in extreme disappointment for refugees as well as generating substantial additional workloads for CICs and visa offices. [Editorial note: *The Discussion Paper stressed financial overextension on the part of the sponsoring groups. The original Report saw the problem as two-sided, with mutual mistrust on both sides.*] [Instead of a program characterized by an almost loving trust between the government and the private sector, it became a program, as the research report prepared by the Strategic Planning and Research Branch of Immigration Policy stated (p. 5), characterized by "a lot of mistrust."]

While the program remains viable and well-respected, program partners voiced several concerns which need to be addressed. In an effort to deal with these concerns to improve the sponsorship system, a comprehensive review of the program was undertaken. The review was deliberately designed to further improve communications among all program partners — including private sponsors — involved in refugee resettlement.

## Review Process

The review of the Private Sponsorship Program began with a research project designed to examine the operational practices and to evaluate the performance of the program. A Steering Committee on Private Sponsorship, comprised of representatives from the academic community, private sponsorship groups, NGOs, and the federal government, was established to oversee all stages of this project.

The research was carried out through extensive consultations and in a spirit of partnership. Input was solicited from the three major participants in the program: private sponsors, the

government, and refugees themselves. Information was gathered by means of questionnaires and in-person interviews, and the data collected was compiled into a final report of findings.

This report was discussed at a national consultation which brought together sponsoring groups, NGOs, the academic community, and the federal government. The national consultation process provided a forum for additional recommendations to be presented and allowed private sponsors an opportunity to express their views concerning future aims and objectives for the private sponsorship program.

A comprehensive report focusing on the major issues raised through the study process and the national consultation was compiled and made available, for review and comment, to the members of the Steering Committee. The report was then finalized and forwarded to the Minister and to other interested parties.

This paper builds on the material collected through the review of the sponsorship program. It takes into account the comments and recommendations made by all the program partners and will form the basis for new program guidelines.

The observations and concerns that surfaced through the research project are presented herein, and proposals are offered aimed at improving the sponsorship system.

## Summary

Throughout the process of assessing the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, it was evident that the majority of respondents involved in the review were overwhelmingly in favour of retaining the program. It is considered a successful Canadian innovation. Thousands of refugees were provided with an opportunity to resettle in Canada through an able support system. Access to established residents in this country helped introduce these newcomers to the norms and values of Canadian culture, ensuring their understanding of the new environment in which they lived.

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees is delivered through a unique

partnership comprised of government and nongovernment personnel. Organizations which have a tradition of dedication to the resettlement and integration of refugees, actively participate in this program and, through their involvement, foster and support a number of other immigration programs and initiatives. The willingness of so many Canadians to give so generously of their time to assist refugees is a visible demonstration of their commitment to continuing Canada's humanitarian tradition. The recommendations contained in this paper will serve to reinforce and augment the operation of this well-respected program — a program accepted and promoted by many in keeping with the heritage of this country.

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## RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS

### PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES PROGRAM

#### Processing of Sponsored Applications

##### Issue:

Long processing times were identified as a major concern for sponsoring groups. There was overwhelming support among program partners to address this matter. In many cases, processing of sponsored applications takes from 18 months to two years.

The lengthy processing times are problematic in that sponsoring groups, intent on assisting refugees, become frustrated; support systems tend to diminish as a result of unreasonable waiting periods.

##### Background:

The time it takes to process sponsored applications is recognized as a significant problem by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) and the Department of External Affairs (EA). The crux of the problem is the number of visa officers available to respond efficiently to the overall volume of work that must be completed.

Immigration officers in Canada are responsible for distributing and receiving sponsorship applications. Forwarding these forms to visa offices is automatic and is usually carried out within 5 to 10 days after receipt of the sponsorships. Visa officers are responsible for assessing applications and making decisions pertaining to the eligibility and admissibility of each person sponsored.

Processing of refugee applications, while done on a priority basis, still comprises only a small fraction of the total immigration workload abroad. Visa officers are tasked with a variety of immigration activities; processing of applications for permanent residence from all categories of immigrants, issuance of employment and student authorizations, and issuance of visitor visas, to name a few.

Present operational practices within EIC and EA allow for unlimited numbers of immigration applications to be submitted for processing at a time when there is significant interest in immigrating to Canada.

Backlogs have therefore developed not only in the area of private sponsorship applications; processing of all immigration applications is affected. In order to reduce the processing times for refugee applications, it is necessary to examine the overall immigration application processing system. Better planning for anticipated workloads is mandatory.

#### **Conclusion:**

It is recommended that:

- EIC and EA improve the management of the immigration processing system to respond appropriately to the anticipated workload;

**[Visa officers were viewed as having an extremely heavy workload and a number of suggestions, not mutually exclusive, were made to allow visa officers to keep on top of their responsibilities:**

**a) Visa officer(s) in each refugee-producing area should be asked to specialize in processing refugee sponsorships;**

**b) more visa officers should be assigned to handle the workload;**

**c) there should be a transfer of more resources to visa processing.]**

- EIC and EA strive to reduce processing times to an average of six to nine months, and that mechanisms already in place be reviewed to allow for the immediate processing of applications from persons in imminent danger.

- Master Agreement holders (MAHs) and other sponsoring groups be asked to forecast the number of refugees they intend to sponsor, by world area, over the calendar year;

- The number of sponsorships submitted by groups be determined by their ability to support, both morally and financially, the integration and resettlement of those sponsored.

*[Editorial note: The Discussion Paper stressed planning and limits. The original Report stressed an open-ended approach with review provisions for rejected applications.]*

**[1. The number of private sponsorships should remain open-ended, should continue to be part of the overall intake over and above the government intake and should not be restricted by the use of rationing of entry visas.**

**2. The turnaround time for sponsorships should be 6-8 months.**

**3. The government should introduce a review process for rejected applications.]**

#### **Selection: Identification of Refugees**

##### **Issue:**

Prospective refugees come to the attention of MAHs and sponsoring groups through a number of means. Refugees are identified by: their relatives in Canada, international organizations, overseas partners, government personnel, and direct requests from the refugees themselves.

More and more refugees are being identified or "named" through family members and other relatives in Canada. There is a need to determine if this practice of selection is acceptable or if a more broadly-based method of selection is desirable.

#### **Background:**

The object of selection is to identify refugees who are in need of protection and are admissible and to match them with sponsors. When the Private Sponsorship Program first began a "matching centre" was established to link needy refugees to sponsoring groups. Today, many of these "former refugees" are actively canvassing sponsoring groups to request assistance for friends and relatives they consider also to be refugees.

Generally, sponsoring groups are involved in refugee sponsorship out of compassion. Consequently, more emphasis is placed on "selecting" those in need regardless of the country of origin or the methods used to identify these individuals. However, there are some understandable reasons for sponsors to concentrate their efforts on relatives of persons who are already in Canada. First, sponsors are in closer contact with "former" refugees and are under pressure to sponsor their families or others from their country. Second, sponsoring groups find it easier to sponsor people from the same cultural group because they are able to transfer the experience and knowledge that they acquire from one sponsorship to another.

Experience indicates that "naming" refugees from within Canada is a legitimate and worthwhile means of accessing persons who are in need of protection. This method of "selecting" refugees, when used in conjunction with other various sources, provides a comprehensive and varied approach to identifying vulnerable individuals throughout the world.

#### **Conclusion:**

It is recommended that:

- MAHs and sponsoring groups be allowed to continue to have access to a variety of sources to identify/"name" refugees;

**[MAHs retain the right to name refugees in sponsorships. Further, this proviso was important in allowing the private sector to have an input into the selection process based on the**

information they received directly from refugee-producing areas.]

- EIC fully explain the eligibility and admissibility criteria for the selection of refugees to sponsoring groups;

[Editorial note: *The Discussion Paper assumes setting eligibility and admissibility criteria to be the sole prerogative of EIC with no input from sponsors; sponsors are assumed to merely implement EIC criteria and plans.*] [It was suggested that visa officers in a refugee-producing area be asked to draw up a set of criteria that they would expect a sponsored refugee to meet if that individual were to be assessed to be eligible for sponsorship under the program; these criteria would be put forth as *recommendations* to an annual consultation on sponsorship where the visa officers would be present to interact with MAHs and Private Sponsors. Hopefully, the criteria and standards for selection, though determined in the end by the government, would be a product of closer interaction and consultation between the government and the private sector.... Visa officers should not view selection as their exclusive responsibility, even if it was their ultimate responsibility.]

- MAHs make every effort to ensure that persons sponsored are eligible to be selected as refugees; [Visa officers should welcome any information provided by MAHs that would help to ascertain that the sponsored individual(s) is (are) refugees, but should not use any such information provided as a basis for a negative determination.... MAHs should assume a responsibility for vetting the refugees sponsored to ascertain that they are bona fide refugees under the criteria of the program, but should not feel an obligation to pass the information it receives on to visa officers for their consideration, though it may do so if the information provided is based on first-hand sources and is of good quality.]

- MAHs and sponsoring groups remain open to receiving names of refugees from a variety of sources including government, UNHCR, and other NGOs and agencies; and

[MAHs should remain open to receiving names from the Government, UNHCR, Amnesty International, International NGOs and other international agencies, etc., and passing them back to private sponsorship groups for sponsorship.]

- EIC should encourage identifying refugee cases that require sponsorship through liaison with international organizations and other appropriate means.

### **Financial Resources: MAHs and Sponsoring Groups**

#### *Issue:*

Some MAHs and sponsoring groups have in the past requested fees, deposits, pledges or administrative costs from refugees, their families or friends. Groups charging money do so for a variety of reasons, the primary purpose being to financially assist refugees by means other than from the resources of their own organizations. In this way, organizations have the capacity to sponsor more refugees than their financial assets would normally permit.

#### *Background:*

When the Private Sponsorship Program was established, it was understood that organizations participating in this initiative would be guided by philanthropic principles.

Indeed, among the first organizations to become involved in the program were some of the major national churches and large, well-known, ethnic associations. Given this context, the solicitation of funds from refugees, their families or friends, was never contemplated.

The issue of requesting funds, deposits, pledges, administrative costs — or anything similar — for sponsorships must be examined in view of the founding principles of this program. The Private Sponsorship Program was designed to be voluntary in nature and humanitarian in intent. Given the roots of this program, charging for sponsorships does not “fit in.”

The practice of charging fees began as a means of allowing organizations to finance the sponsorship of more refugees than their resources would permit. The current economic climate has made it difficult for some organizations to provide the intended support to all of those sponsored. Increasing costs associated with resettlement (accommodation, food, clothing and incidentals) confront sponsors on a daily basis. The reality of mounting costs, coupled with the desire to assist the plight of refugees, has encouraged some organizations to try and supplement the funds available to them to carry out their mandate. Most organizations, however, have undertaken to establish more realistic planning with respect to the numbers of refugees they can support rather than request funds from refugees or their acquaintances.

The Immigration Regulations governing the Private Sponsorship Program are clear: corporations or sponsoring groups wishing to facilitate the admission or arrival in Canada of a Convention refugee seeking resettlement must *have* the resources to provide for lodging, care, maintenance, and resettlement assistance for the refugee and his accompanying dependants for a period of one year. The policy of EIC with regard to the financial obligations of sponsoring groups flows from the Regulations. It has always been understood that the costs of the refugees' resettlement would be financed by MAHs or the sponsoring groups. It was never intended that this condition of sponsorship be interpreted to mean that refugees, either through their family members or other associates, “top up” the revenues of organizations to ensure the availability of financial backing for resettlement purposes.

#### *Conclusion:*

It is recommended that:

- A process of planning be adopted by MAHs and sponsoring groups, in conjunction with the Refugee Affairs Branch, to ensure that a planned approach is taken in determining the number of refugees to be sponsored;

• MAHs and sponsoring groups be asked to assure that funds are available within the resources of their organization to cover the costs of all sponsorships submitted; [MAHs should develop a set of guidelines, with consideration given to possible accreditation, for MAHs, such guidelines to be enforced by a self-policing system or the government in order to spot a "renegade" group.]

• In keeping with the original intent of private sponsorship the policy of EIC against charging fees be clearly and categorically enunciated to dispel any misunderstanding; and [Though most MAHs do not charge administrative fees and many if not most expressed a preference that administrative fees *not* be charged, they also agreed that the charging of administrative fees should not be prohibited, but specific guidelines should be established and made part of the Agreement specifying maximum administrative fees chargeable, the sources eligible to pay such fees and the uses to which such fees could be put. The above should not be construed to prevent a MAH from receiving donations, but guidelines should set out that donations should be not be used as a devious method of extracting fees from refugees or their relatives as a *requirement* of the group agreeing to provide a sponsorship. No provision should be made for refugees to pay to enable themselves to be sponsored.]

• The charging of fees be grounds for the cancellation of sponsorship privileges.

### **Pre-Arrival Orientation**

#### *Issue:*

Pre-arrival orientation provided to refugees was considered, in general, to be inadequate. It was felt that refugees should receive instruction in one of the official languages and advanced counselling on Canadian culture, employment opportunities, and basic facts about day-to-day life. More importantly, refugees should be supplied with some information concerning their rights as residents of Canada. MAHs and sponsoring groups

indicated that there was not enough information available to newcomers and that this was an area that required further attention.

#### *Background:*

Many MAHs and sponsoring groups felt that the process of orientation to Canada should begin prior to arrival in Canada and should continue after arrival. This implies that refugees should be supplied in advance, with basic information on what to expect upon arriving in Canada. It was felt that generally pre-arrival information is delivered inconsistently with many visa officers lacking the informational tools to educate newcomers.

Over the past two years, a number of initiatives were undertaken to respond to this situation. Language training and orientation classes are delivered to refugees overseas in Italy, Athens, Geneva, Hong Kong, and Bangkok, with additional sites being contemplated depending on world conditions.

A variety of orientation material, such as *Canada: A Source Book, Working with Newcomers, Getting Started in Canada, and A Newcomer's Guide to Canada*, was published and forwarded to immigrant-serving agencies, CICs, and visa offices. In addition, EIC funded the publication of cultural profiles on Iran, Somalia, El Salvador, and Guatemala. These cultural profiles were designed primarily for volunteers working in organized Host Programs. While many of the recent publications of pre-arrival information have been positively received, it is recognized that additional measures must be undertaken.

#### *Conclusion:*

It is recommended that:

• The Refugee Affairs Branch determine to what extent program partners, including MAHs, sponsoring groups, visa offices, and CICs are aware of the availability of recently produced orientation material. [Editorial note: *The Discussion Paper places primary responsibility for orientation on EIC. The original Report placed it on the MAHs.*]

[MAHs should be responsible for the training and orientation of private sponsorship groups, but if the Host Program enters this area, the Host Program should not engage in any "turf wars" with MAHs, though MAHs are free to invite the Host Program to assume responsibility for orienting their private sponsors. MAHs, collectively, should consider assuming the responsibility for developing an improved guide for private sponsors.]

• Where it is found that MAHs and other program partners have not received copies of the resettlement orientation publications that this material be provided; and

• Ongoing communication be maintained with visa offices, CICs, MAHs, and sponsoring groups to identify supplementary requirements in the field of informational tools needed to meet the operational requirements of the Private Sponsorship Program. [Editorial note: *The Discussion Paper focuses on pre-arrival orientation of sponsors. The Report focused on pre-arrival orientation for refugees.*]

[The government should provide enhanced language training and orientation to refugees prior to their departure for Canada.]

### **Co-Sponsorship**

#### *Issue:*

Some MAHs and sponsoring groups are utilizing informal co-sponsorship arrangements to bring refugees to Canada. There is no provision for the practice of co-sponsorship in immigration legislation.

#### *Background:*

Co-sponsorship occurs when an individual or group works jointly but informally with the sponsoring group to sponsor refugees. The implicit understanding in the arrangement is that the needs of the refugee (accommodation, food, clothing, moral support, etc.) will be looked after by others; the sponsoring group considers itself to be freed from any financial or moral

responsibilities. Often, sponsoring groups ask that waivers be signed absolving them from resettlement responsibilities, including financial obligations.

The practice of co-sponsorship, as it currently operates, is contrary to the original intent of private sponsorship. It contravenes the provisions that apply to sponsoring groups as defined in the Immigration Regulations.

It is understood that families may contribute to the resettlement of other refugee family members; however, these contributions must not replace the condition that sponsoring groups are ultimately responsible for providing material assistance, general orientation, and moral support to refugees.

Under the current practice, some refugees have been left unattended since there is no way of enforcing this arrangement.

The practice of co-sponsorship is a recent development in the sponsorship program and the majority of sponsoring groups do not involve themselves in co-sponsorship arrangements.

#### **Conclusion:**

It is recommended that:

- Co-sponsorship arrangements as described be discontinued as they have no legal basis; and
- Clear guidelines be provided clarifying the responsibilities inherent in sponsorship applications.

**[If a PS is working in cooperation with relatives of the refugee, the PS should consider making the relatives part of the sponsorship group, and/or signing a co-sponsorship agreement with the relatives to clarify the division of responsibilities.]**

#### **Communication**

##### **Issue:**

Program partners were in general agreement that there was a need to improve the quantity and quality of communication between the government and the sponsoring community.

#### **Background:**

It is recognized that the communication links between government and the sponsoring groups concerning the Private Sponsorship Program have been inadequate. Since the beginning of the program, very little has been provided to participants in the way of guidelines or directives defining appropriate channels of communication. This has fostered the development of informal communication networks which do not necessarily achieve the desired results. To improve the overall operation of the program and to dispel some misunderstanding, clearer instructions concerning information sharing must be produced.

The primary point of contact for MAHs and sponsors is the CIC. In most smaller offices, the relationship with the sponsoring community is quite good and communication remains open and friendly. However, problems have been encountered with many of the larger CICs where it is often difficult to obtain accurate program information and to develop good working relationships due to frequent staff rotation. Also, there was universal agreement among sponsoring groups that too often there was insufficient notification of the arrival date of refugees. Appropriate preparations were unable to be carried out by sponsoring groups as a result of "last minute" requests to meet refugees at the airport.

MAHs and sponsoring groups have very little contact or communication with visa offices. This contributed to a general misunderstanding of one another's role. Slow processing times and insufficient information concerning cases that were refused resulted in sponsors experiencing frustration with the overseas processing system.

In addition, sponsors felt that their efforts to communicate relevant background information concerning refugees were not given due consideration during the processing of an application. This resulted in a general feeling of discontent with the "arbitrary" attitude and decision-making of visa officers.

Similarly, visa officers registered dissatisfaction with the sponsoring community, which they felt had little appreciation of the constraints under which they worked and did not know what was involved in making a selection decision. It was felt that more care should be taken by sponsoring groups when pre-screening requests for sponsorship to ensure appropriateness of a referral prior to forwarding these requests overseas. Visa officers indicated they would welcome feedback from sponsoring groups concerning the resettlement and integration of refugees selected through the Private Sponsorship Program.

Despite the calls for improvement in the area of communication, several organizations had developed good, informal contacts with government partners and vice versa. However, there was a strong acceptance on the part of all program partners that improved mechanisms of communication were necessary and would benefit the overall operation of the program.

#### **Conclusion:**

*[Editorial note: The Discussion Paper adopts a public relations rather than a partnership model for communicating. The original Report was problem-oriented and stressed the need for refugees and sponsors to communicate.]*

It is recommended that:

- The Refugee Affairs Branch design procedures to improve communication among visa offices, CICs, and sponsoring groups, particularly throughout the processing of sponsored applications;
- Visa officers immediately inform CICs in all instances where an application for sponsorship has been refused, indicating the reason for refusal (i.e., admissibility or eligibility) and that CICs give priority to advising sponsoring groups;
- The process for notifying sponsoring groups of the arrival of a refugee be reviewed to identify and resolve shortcomings;
- CICs ensure staff involved in the delivery of the Private Sponsorship Program are adequately trained to perform this role; and

• Additional ongoing communication channels be developed and maintained between government and sponsoring groups (e.g., newsletter, meetings/conferences).

[Consideration should be given to providing MAHs with special RED ALERT sponsorship forms, perhaps in some ratio based on the number of cases processed by the MAHs and the degree that a MAH is involved with serious protection cases. These Red Alerts would be fast-tracked through the system, and, without removing the ultimate responsibility that the visa officers have for determining whether the individuals sponsored are refugees, would allow the visa officer to give a benefit of doubt to the sponsored refugee.... Visa officers should request refugees to sign a waiver (whether it should be absolute or a limited waiver was not discussed) on releasing information to the sponsors in order to facilitate better communication with the sponsors.]

### **Length of Sponsorship**

#### *Issue:*

[Editorial note: Nothing in original Report.]

Sponsoring groups offer financial, emotional, psychological, and social help to refugees for a period of one year. The emphasis on selecting those refugees in need of immediate protection could result in these newcomers requiring more time to adjust to a new and stable environment. There is a need to examine the present duration of sponsorship to ensure it is adequate for the resettlement and integration of all refugees admitted to Canada through this program.

#### *Background:*

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program was designed to complement the government-assisted program. The type of support to be offered to refugees admitted to Canada through these programs is generally uniform; the same selection criteria are employed by visa officers when determining eligibility;

and the length of support is normally for one year.

With respect to the period of assistance provided to refugees, there was a general consensus among program partners that, as with the government-assisted program, one year was usually sufficient. Experience had shown that the majority of refugees sponsored through these two programs were capable of fending for themselves after a year.

Sponsoring groups agreed, however, that there were instances when refugees would have benefited from extended financial and oral support. Understandably, refugees escaping from turbulent and war-torn situations suffered from the trauma of their experiences. Their readjustment to Canada's environment, though peaceful, was more difficult. To be able to respond to the greater needs of some refugees, consideration should be given to extending the period of support for longer than one year.

#### *Conclusion:*

It is recommended that:

- Provisions be made in the Immigration Regulations governing private sponsorship to allow for an extension of a sponsorship beyond one year;
- A recommendation to lengthen a sponsorship be taken only after a number of influencing factors have been considered, including the refugee's background and his/her capacity to cope with change and adjustment to an alien environment; and
- The decision to extend a sponsorship beyond the one-year time frame only be taken with the concurrence of the sponsoring group.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### *Issue:*

In some instances, program partners indicated that their roles and responsibilities, vis-à-vis the Private Sponsorship Program, were unclear. Much of this uncertainty can be attributed to a lack of precise guidelines defining the responsibilities of the four

main program partners involved in the delivery of the program.

#### *Background:*

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program operates as a collaborative partnership between the government and the private sector. It is a complex process in that it requires a number of players to work cooperatively and harmoniously with one another. While general guidelines outlining the responsibilities of program partners were issued at the outset of the program, communication mechanisms necessary to ensure ongoing clarity were not maintained. Understandably, over several years of operation, responsibilities became blurred, often resulting in misgivings as certain expectations were not met.

Specific operational procedures, forwarded to all CICs and visa offices on implementation of this program, are now dated. As a consequence, staff delivering the program in government offices have developed informal procedures to meet their needs. To standardize the operation of this program, national guidelines must be updated and redistributed.

MAHs are provided with information concerning their obligations, and those of the groups operating under their umbrella agreement, primarily through the contractual agreement signed with the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

However, this document, while a useful tool, contains only basic information. Supplementary details are necessary to strengthen and clarify several important aspects of the program.

#### *Conclusion:*

It is recommended that:

- Operational procedures required to ensure the effective and smooth functioning of this program be updated and distributed to CICs, visa offices, and the sponsoring community;
- A new contractual (master) agreement clearly identifying program respon-



sibilities and obligations of both government and nongovernmental organizations be produced;

- All corporations meeting the criteria of the program, who would like to participate in the private sponsorship of refugees, undertake to sign the revised contractual agreement; and

- Ongoing communication mechanisms be employed to enhance and reinforce a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of program partners.

*[Editorial note: The emphasis in the Discussion Paper is on control and management on the part of government, fiscal responsibility of the private sector, and the contract between the parties, with stress placed on the MAHs. The original Report continued to place primary emphasis on the initiative and responsibility of the private sponsors.]*

**1. The Private Sponsorship group has the primary responsibility for naming the refugee(s) they wish to sponsor, the numbers they wish to sponsor, the area of the world from which they wish to sponsor refugees, whether they wish to sponsor within a special program (e.g., women at risk), to determine what support is available for refugees in their area, but private sponsors should operate within guidelines established by their MAH or the government.**

**2. The PS should utilize a MAH, if available, for communicating with the government, not counting the local CIC office.**

**3. Nothing said herein should be construed or interpreted to mean that private sponsors be required to sponsor through the auspices of a Master Agreement Holder.**

**4. The PS has primary responsibility for meeting the refugees, arranging temporary accommodation, providing initial orientation to government services (including registration for SIN and Health Insurance cards) and community services (shopping, health care, transportation, etc.), registering the refugees in language courses and making an assessment whether the refugees should be enrolled in a skills upgrading program.]**

## **Operational Systems**

### *Issue:*

The current systems in place to support and monitor the daily operations of this program were found to be inadequate. Present operational policies and procedures require clarification and updating in order to respond to the needs of program partners. Efforts must be made to guarantee that information necessary to ensure the efficient and effective operation of this program is made available to assist program partners.

### *Background:*

The initial operational mechanisms established for the Private Sponsorship Program were designed to accommodate the early needs of this unique and focused undertaking. The systems, while minimal, were sound and functioned well for the limited number of national churches and ethnic organizations committed to the success of this operation.

As the number of program partners grew and diversified, the operational systems supporting this program became insufficient and obsolete. Sponsoring groups and government personnel indicated there was a need to address several current operational concerns: better planning strategies were required to sustain the daily operations of this program; improved data collecting and monitoring were essential to ensure continued effectiveness; and ongoing evaluating mechanisms were needed to protect and safeguard the integrity of the private sponsorship system. Program partners were universal in their agreement that policies and operational guidelines for private sponsorship be revised to reflect the current demands of this program.

### *Conclusion:*

It is recommended that:

- Operational procedures designed to provide guidance and directions to program participants be drafted and disseminated as required;

- Monitoring strategies and appropriate data gathering be developed to support the operation of this program;

- Modifications to fundamental policy issues be clearly articulated and forwarded to government and nongovernmental personnel involved in the administration of this program; and

- Ongoing consultations be initiated with program partners to ensure operational systems remain effective and respond to the program requirements.

## **Transportation Loan Program**

### *Issue:*

Information provided by MAHs suggested a lack of understanding of the operational aspects of the Transportation Loan Program. Past practices, for the most part, supported transportation loan approval for all persons under private sponsorship, regardless of the person's need for a loan or the ability of the person to repay the loan.

### *Background:*

The Transportation Loan Program operates on the basis of a revolving fund; that is, all repayments on established loan accounts are returned to the transportation loan fund to finance new loans.

In April 1990, the program's loan reserve was dangerously close to depletion because of the increased refugee admissions between 1986 and 1989. During this period, the number of refugees admitted under the government's annual refugee plan increased from 11,930 to 13,800; however, the number of privately-sponsored Convention refugees and designated class members rose dramatically from 5,086 landings in 1986 to 21,017 landings in 1989.

The increase in the number of government-assisted refugees was a managed increase. The increase in the number of privately-sponsored refugees was dramatic and unplanned. In 1989 alone, transportation loan approvals for persons under private sponsorship totalled \$8 million over and above the



expected loan approval level. The rate of loan repayment could no longer keep pace with the rate at which dollars were being loaned. In April 1990, temporary measures were introduced to limit loan approval to government-assisted refugees and those persons who were in life-threatening situations. The special measures remained in effect until October 1990, when a \$10 million increase to the program "ceiling" and the implementation of sound program management principles enabled the program to return to normal operations.

#### *Conclusion:*

It is recommended that:

- Sponsors indicate whether the person under sponsorship, and/or the sponsor is able and/or willing to cover the transportation and related costs;

[Travel loans should be equally available to private and government-sponsored refugees, and the ability or inability to pay for travel should not be a consideration in accepting or rejecting an application.]

- Sponsors counsel refugees under their sponsorship on the responsibility to repay their loans;

[Though a PS should encourage refugees to pay their transportation loans, they should not be asked to nor agree to encourage relatives and refugees to *prepay* such loans.]

- The responsibilities of sponsoring groups vis-à-vis the Transportation Loan Program be clearly defined;

- EIC develop multilingual program information brochures for use by sponsoring groups and persons seeking resettlement in Canada explaining the responsibilities inherent in the Transportation Loan Program.

[Editorial note: Aims and objectives were omitted.]

[The following was considered as an appropriate statement of the goals of the program. The program is intended:

### **A. A Form of Advocacy**

1. To provide an opportunity for individuals and groups in the private sector to involve themselves in direct action to influence refugee policy.
2. To allow Canadians and landed immigrants, through the initiative of the private sector, to be responsive to a refugee crisis.
3. To allow the private sector to bring in refugees over and above the government sponsorship target figure.
4. To foster better understanding and improvement between the government and private sectors.
5. To allow the private sector to develop different priorities in refugee sponsorship than the government sector.

### **B. Refugees and Refugee Communities**

6. To help refugees most in need, with a special reference to those who need protection.
7. To enable a community to help its members, with MAHs assuming a special responsibility for refugees who have no or very few members of their community in Canada.
8. To allow and facilitate the entry of refugees into Canada who have a Canadian connection.
9. To improve the adaptation process.
10. To ensure equal treatment for both government and privately-sponsored refugees through government services, such as transportation loans, language training, etc.

### **C. Canadians**

11. To allow Canadians to have a first-hand experience and learn how to deal with a pluralistic Canada that is now integral to the Canadian social fabric.
12. To allow Canadians to understand and live responsibly in a global system.]

## **Conference/Call for Papers**