

Refugee Resettlement in Seattle: Building Partnerships between Community-Based
Organizations and Resettlement Agencies for Better Refugee Integration

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BCRC: Bhutanese Community Resource Center

CBO: Community Based Organizations

CRB: Coalition for Refugees from Burma

CRSR: Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

CWS: Church World Service

DHS: Department of Health Services

DHHS: Department of Health and Human Services

ECBO: Ethnic Community-Based Organization

ECDC: Ethiopian Community Development Center

ECMA: Ethiopian Community Mutual Association

ESL: English as a Second Language

ICMC: International Catholic Migration Commission

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

IRSA: Immigrant and Refugee Services of America

IRC: International Rescue Committee

HIAS: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

LIRS: Lutheran Immigrant Aid Society

LPR: Legal Permanent Resident

MAA: Mutual Assistance Association

SIV: Special Immigrant Visa

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

R&P: Reception and Placement

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USCCB: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

US: United States of America

Volags: Voluntary Resettlement Agencies

WR: World Relief Corporation

Abstract

While refugee resettlement has been primarily the responsibility of voluntary agencies, it cannot be completed, understood, and effective without community-based organizations (CBOs). This research focused on how CBOs can collaborate or partner with voluntary resettlement agencies (Volags) in King County, WA. The central argument in this thesis is that building and fostering partnerships between these two types of actors will improve refugee resettlement outcomes.

Using data gathered from grey literature review, in-depth interviews, and informal discussions with people working in refugee reception, placement, and post resettlement, the author argues that the level of collaboration/partnership between the aforementioned institutions is low and needs to be improved. After presenting some examples of partnerships from across the country, the author details the expectations and concerns that community organizations have toward resettlement agencies. The author also makes recommendations that, if implemented, can improve the level of collaboration between voluntary resettlement agencies and community organizations.

Keywords: refugee resettlement, Volags, community based-organizations, partnerships

Chapter 1: Problem Formulation

1.1. Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently some 43.7 million uprooted victims of conflict and persecution worldwide (2011). Current UN reports show that the number of displaced people has hit a 15-year high (Euronews, 2013). More than 15 million of these displaced people are refugees. Among those refugees, more than 10 million have been living in exile for five years or longer (UNHCR, 2008). Recent figures suggested that Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Burma, Columbia, DR Congo, and Sudan are countries with the most refugees in the world. According to the same source (UNCHR, 2008), the Middle East and Asia are the major refugee generating regions in the world. Considering the current conflicts in Syria, Burma, and East and Central Africa, I can predict a surge in the number of refugees that would need to be resettled in more stable countries. As more conflicts arise and current conflicts expand worldwide, refugee resettlement is bound to be a major global issue in the coming years.

The UNHCR 2009 Global Trend (2011) revealed that countries such as Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Germany, and Jordan hosted almost 47 percent of the population deemed refugees between 2005 and 2009. According to the same organization, only 0.5 percent of refugees worldwide have had the chance to be resettled in developed countries. With a total of 371,100 people admitted as refugees in the country since 2007, the US is one of the countries that resettled the highest number of refugees per year in the world (Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2013). Burma, Bhutan, and Iraq were the leading countries of nationality for refugees in 2011, according to the same source.

Once refugees are approved for resettlement in the US, they are sent to the local affiliate of the various Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (Volags). These organizations try to address the

spiritual and material needs of the newly arrived refugees. In the US, the Seattle Metro Area ranks 5th in terms of the numbers of refugees (48,573) resettled from 1983 to 2004 (ORR, 2004). According to the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), among the 56,419 people that were granted refugee status during the 2011 fiscal year, 2,135 were resettled in Washington State. This figure makes this state the ninth (after Texas, California, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, and Arizona) in terms of refugee intake during the same year. The vast majority of these refugees came from Burma, Bhutan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and the former USSR. The majority of refugees resettled in the greater Seattle area reside in South King County as Figure 1 below highlights. With the exception of 2008, more than 62% of the total number of refugees admitted in Washington State was resettled in King County. Another analysis of the data shows that South King County (including Kent, Renton, Seatac, Tacoma and Tukwila) has been receiving an increasing number of refugees since 2008.

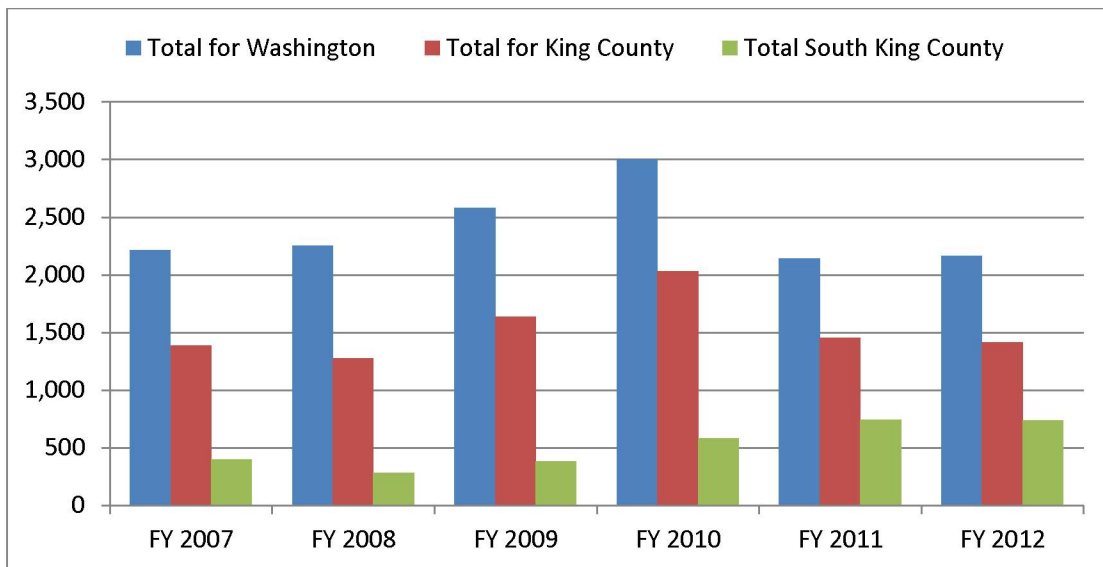


Figure 1: Refugee Arrival in Washington and King County from 2007 to 2012

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS), Refugee Processing Center (RPC), 2013

When the refugees get into the state, they are exposed to a completely different environment, making them more vulnerable. Research undertaken over the years has proven that some refugees experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), discrimination, rejection, and difficulties in building community (Sonn, Bishop, & Drew, 1999; Pipher, 2002; Hyman, Guruge, & Mason, 2008). They find themselves in an environment where they have to adjust to the culture, learn a completely different language regardless of their age, learn desirable skills, and face an array of health challenges. In this new context, the immigration policy, the urban setting, the community-awareness level, and other pre-existing conditions are important factors that can affect their successful resettlement. Unfortunately, refugees do not always have the resources or ability to access all the services that they could use to achieve a true self-sufficiency.

1.2. Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

My main research question is designed to describe and analyze how voluntary resettlement agencies (Volags) could partner with community based organizations (CBOs) so that together they can provide better assistance to refugees. To answer this question, I have explored the following sub-questions:

- What types of partnerships exist between CBOs and resettlement agencies?
- What are the key challenges all parties face when implementing or sustaining a partnership?
- What are both parties' expectations and concerns in terms of partnership implementation?

The goal of this thesis is to identify and describe examples of partnerships across the country that could also be implemented in King County. I am operating under the assumption that CBOs play a key role in improving the long-term integration of refugees. I believe that faith-based organizations (FBOs), such as World Relief, have a wide support and donor network that they can use to impact the various refugees CBOs. In order to make the issues discussed in this research clear, I have defined the terms and concepts used in the lines below.

1.3. Definitions of Terms and Concepts

1.3.1 Refugee

The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR) known as “The Refugee Convention” is the key legal document in defining a refugee. It defines a refugee as a person who:

“[owing] to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or return there because there is a fear of persecution...” (UNHCR, 2012).

This definition does not include people who are fleeing economic hardship or people who are victims of earthquakes, famines, floods, and other kinds of natural disasters. These people may be deserving of humanitarian assistance, or they may be admitted to the US as immigrants, but they are not refugees (UNHCR, 2012). One year after being admitted to the US, refugees are required by law to apply for legal permanent resident (LPR) status. Refugees granted LPR status may apply for citizenship five years after their refugee admission date. A refugee is different from an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) who is a person who has been forced to flee his or her home for the same reason as a refugee, but remains in his or her own country and has not crossed an

international border (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2006). According to the same source (2006), IDPs are often referred to as refugees although they do not fall within the current legal definition of a refugee.

1.3.2. Asylum-seeker

An asylum-seeker is someone who fled his/her own country and seeks sanctuary in another country (UNHCR, 2011). The individual applies for asylum-which is the right to be recognized as a refugee. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded. They can initially enter the country as tourists or international students. Once they enter the country, they can apply to Department of Homeland and Security (DHS) for asylum. If the asylum status is granted, the asylee becomes eligible to receive service and benefits from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) or other federal funds.

1.3.3 Special Immigrants Visa (SIV)

SIV cases refer to people arriving from Iraq and Afghanistan who have received Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) status. They have a similar experience and eligibility criteria as refugees, but they have not fled their country of origin. They are generally individuals who have received threats of violence due to their work and collaboration with the US military or contractors. SIV cases receive a green card immediately upon arrival. They are eligible for the same benefits and resettlement programs as refugees.

1.3.4 Self-Sufficiency

According to the ORR (2004), economic self-sufficiency is the earning of a total family income at a level that enables a family unit to support itself without receipt of a cash assistance grant. However, the definition of self-sufficiency should go beyond its economic meaning. It should be defined from a more holistic perspective to take into account the refugee's spiritual, mental, and sense of community needs.

1.3.5 Community Based-Organizations and Mutual Assistance Associations

Mutual assistance associations (MAAs) are secular ethnic organizations serving a particular immigrant group. Most of the time they are established by former refugees or immigrants, and their main objective is to assist other incoming refugees or existing group members. They serve the cultural, psychological, and socio-economic needs of refugees and immigrants. Moreover, they help bridge the gap between the host community (society) and the refugee families through the provision of English as Second Language (ESL) classes, afterschool programs, tutoring, conflict resolution, citizenship preparation, and household livelihood strategy planning referrals. They tend to provide a wide range of services, and in some cases they attend to multiple ethnic groups. They differ from CBOs in the sense that a majority of their Board members are refugees or former refugees showing much more involvement of the refugees themselves. Both MAAs and CBOs can play a very important role in the long term resettlement and integration of the refugees. I will use the term CBO to talk about any community organizations and mutual assistance associations that can participate in the refugee resettlement and integration process.

1.3.6. Partnerships

The working definition of partnership in this thesis is Butler's (2005) definition: "looking at the whole challenge; identifying all the needed resources; then engaging those varied elements in a single lasting collaboration; realizing a challenging goal that may be simple to state but too complex to achieve" (p. 6). At the greatest level of engagement, CBOs enter into a partnership to jointly explore a problem that is of interest to both entities. Then, the partnership works cooperatively to develop the specific research question, methods, and a plan for decision-making, as well as the equitable sharing of resources and findings.

1.3.7. Integration

By integration, I subscribe to the definition given by the Institute of Social and Economic Development (ISED). They define integration as “a dynamic, multidirectional process in which newcomers and the receiving communities intentionally work together, based on a shared commitment to tolerance and justice, to create a secure, welcoming, vibrant, and cohesive society” (ISED, 2007, p.11). The Work Group (2010) found that eight areas were common to various lists of indicators of integration, and three of these areas are critical to economic self-sufficiency: economic opportunity, language, and education. The other five areas are health and well-being, civic values/participation/engagement, housing, social connections, and belonging or safety (Dwyer, 2010, p. 13). The Figure 2 below summarizes the refugee integration continuum.



Figure 2: Integration continuum, Source: Dyer-Ives Foundation, 2003

The integration process could be analyzed according to the different spheres of the society (Figure 3). The Canadian Council for Refugees identified examples of indicators that might be used to evaluate newcomers’ and society’s level of integration.

SPHERE	SHORT-TERM (SETTLEMENT)	LONGER-TERM (INTEGRATION)
Economic	Entering job market Financial independence	Career advancement Income parity Entry into field of prior employment
Social	Established social network Diversity within social network	Accessing institutions Engaging in efforts to change institutions
Cultural	Adaptation of various aspects of lifestyle (e.g., diet, family relationships)	Engaging in efforts to redefine cultural identity Adapting or reassessing values
Political	Citizenship Voting	Participation in political parties Participation in socio-political movements

Figure 3: Layers of integration, Source: Canadian Council for Refugees (as cited in Dyer-Ives Foundation, 2003

1.4. Summary of the Refugee Resettlement

In order to understand the context and the interaction between the resettlement agencies and CBOs, it is beneficial to present a brief summary of the refugee resettlement structure in the US. Refugee admission occurs entirely at the federal government level, while resettlement is a local process (Nawyn, 2005). The refugee resettlement program in the US involves several institutions, one being the ORR. The ORR manages resettlement in partnership with non-profit organizations. The federal government, through the ORR, provides the funding necessary for the services available to refugees during their first four months in the U.S. These initial services are referred to as Reception and Placement (R&P). R&P give the refugees opportunities for grants, case management programs and contracts, funding for social services, small business start-up loans, employment assistance, job training programs, and ESL programs. Prior to the refugees' arrival, the Department of State, who manages the R&P program, notifies the private non-profit organizations, Volags, so that they can make the necessary arrangements. These arrangements consist of meeting the clients at the airport, renting and furnishing apartments, food provision, and making necessary appointments for medical examination, which are done during the refugee's first 30 days in the US. The resettlement agencies also link refugees to longer-term resettlement and integration programs funded by the ORR and the DHHS after this initial period.

Currently, most of the refugees are enrolled in the Match Grant program at their arrival. The Match Grant program is partially funded by the ORR and matches funds produced within the state. Currently, the Match Grant program is one of the main sources of funding for refugee employment services. The goal of the program is to help refugees secure a job as soon as possible within the first four months of arrival, instead of relying on public assistance programs. The

matching program also provides financial assistance for four months' rent, \$200 per month in cash assistance, English language training, childcare, and transportation subsidies. The program requires that its participants (refugees, asylees, SIVs) are of working age (18 to 65 years old), are employable, and accept any job offer during the first months.

As previously mentioned, resettlement services in the US are primarily delivered by a network of Volags. Volags are mostly religious organizations or CBOs that see the care of resettling refugees as part of their core mandate (Migration Policy Institute, 2013). The most active Volags include the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Lutheran Immigrant Aid Society (LIRS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), World Relief Corporation, Immigrant and Refugee Services of America (IRSA), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Church World Service (CWS), Domestic and Foreign Missionary Service of the Episcopal Church of the USA, Ethiopian Community Development Center (ECDC), and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

Volags provide direct services to the newly arrived refugees and help them integrate into the culture. During the refugee's first week, agency staff, volunteers, and interns help familiarize the refugee families to the American culture and environment. Unfortunately, the dominant trend in resettlement assistance since 1986 is an ongoing reduction in federal funding, which affects both refugees and their receiving communities (Holman, 1996, as cited in Brandt, 2010). In 1980 refugees received 36 months of cash and medical assistance, but that amount decreased to only eight months in 1991 (US CRS, 2006, as cited in Brandt, 2010) and is currently down to just four months. In the current context of budget cuts and increasing cost of living in urban areas, these decreases make resettlement more difficult for both resettlement agencies and CBOs, which greatly affects adaptation for refugee families.

1.5. Impetus for the research

Three main factors led me to choose refugee resettlement for my thesis. I will develop each of the factors in the lines below.

1.5.1. Internship at World Relief Seattle

In May 2013, I was accepted as a refugee resettlement intern at World Relief Seattle. During my internship, I had the opportunity to meet and interview dozen of refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Bhutan, Nepal, Burma, Somalia, and others. I was able to build good relationships with some of them by helping them to become familiar with the American culture. I had the privilege to listen to their stories, challenges, and hopes for the future. These relationships sparked my desire to study issues that affect their resettlement in the US. After witnessing the difficulties that the refugees were experiencing in accessing the resources available to them, as well as the resources that they lack, I decided to make an inventory study on the resources available to refugees in the Seattle area. This also led me to identify the type of resources and services that needed to be provided, the perception that the refugees have about their needs, and the resources available to them. After discussing with the Interim Director at World Relief Seattle, I changed my area of interest, and I decided that my research should look into the possibility of bringing all CBOs to work together, while at the same time partnering with resettlement agencies, and World Relief Seattle in particular.

1.5.2. Summer ethnographic study

During a Research Methods class in the summer of 2012 at Northwest University, I was required to conduct an ethnographic study with a group of my classmates. Our group decided to analyze how the Ethiopian community in the Seattle area found and built a sense of community. The assignment led us to study the Ethiopian Community Mutual Association (ECMA) in Seattle. I was able to better understand the contribution that the CBOs could make in the long-term integration of the refugees after witnessing how the community members get together to support

those in need. It is from that moment that the idea to bring CBOs and resettlement agencies together in partnership began to win my heart.

1.5.3. A Master's degree program grounded in social justice

The third influence that led me to this journey resides in the nature of the International Care and Community Development (ICCD) program at Northwest University. The two years spent in the program immersed me in the concepts of social and environmental justice, preferential care for the poor, holistic development, and migration theology, which all fundamentally pertain to refugee resettlement. These concepts shaped my worldview and my sociopolitical understanding of refugee resettlement, the role of the church, and our role as members of the Christian church.

Migration theology seeks to be a mobilizing force within the church, a force that equips Christians to respond to the issues of migration and the call of God (Groody, 2009). It asserts a moral response to the issue of migration affirming the humanity of the oppressed, advocating for justice, providing affirming symbols of connectedness with the biblical narrative, equipping migrants through religious practice, community life, and moral stability, and helping bridge the many divides experienced in the migration process (Larking, 2012). More importantly, this theology explores how God is understood or perceived by people in the resettlement context (What is God's role in the refugee's life? What is God calling us to do when we see a refugee or an immigrant? What is our role in this world?).

I argue that from the theology of migration perspective, it is a biblical responsibility for every one of us to provide immigrants and the most vulnerable of our society with the best care they need. It is an obligation, and thus has nothing to do with compassion or charity per se. It is what God expects from us, and failing to do so may render most of our otherworldly endeavors worthless before God. Specific Biblical scriptures can be cited to make this Godly injunction

more understandable. In Exodus 22:21-23, it is mentioned, “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt....” God loves refugees (Proverbs 31:8-9 and Deuteronomy 10:16-19); God will bless those that help refugees (Hebrews 6:10, Proverbs 28:27, and Deuteronomy 24:19-21); and He refuses to answer the prayers of people who turn their backs on refugees (Proverbs 21:13). These verses are important in the sense that one must first acknowledge that we are all foreigners or sojourners with obligations and this earth does not belong to anyone but God. It makes all of us aliens regardless of where we live. It is only by reminding ourselves about who we truly are in this world that we can give immigrants, especially refugees, the consideration and respect they deserve.

Information Technology and Communication (ICT) has made it possible for everyone to put their faith into practice by acknowledging and responding to the plight of refugees and the poor and the oppressed from anywhere they might be. Migration theology is an invitation to all of us, to let ourselves be touched and concerned by the plight of these people on the move and the special care they deserve as they try to rebuild their lives in new societies. Such concern is deeply rooted in the Scriptural basis for the Church’s imperative to reach out to the stranger, the sojourner, or the alien in our midst (Woodward, 2009). This theology underscores my conviction that it is an imperative for faith-based resettlement organizations to reach out to communities (especially refugee and immigrant communities) regardless of their beliefs and background, so that together they can work on the same power level to see how they can help the people resettled here live with dignity.

1.6. CBOs: Dominant Paradigm and Empirical Studies

The role of CBOs in integrating refugees into the host society is a dominant feature in refugee literature (Griffiths, Sigona, & Zetter, 2005, p.12). According to Marx (1990, as cited in Griffiths, et al., 2005, p.15), CBOs act to integrate refugees into their new social settings while

allowing for the retention of cultural identities. CBOs could have an important role to play in integrating individuals both within the migrant community and also within the wider social setting (Rex, 1987, as cited in Griffiths et al. 2005, p.17). CBOs help newly arrived refugees build and/or connect to the social capital established by former refugees or second generations of migrants/refugees. As Kenny (2011) wrote, official non-governmental agencies (NGOs) contracted by the state were conspicuously absent in the post-resettlement phase, with a number of unofficial NGOs filling the void. After the four months of direct resettlement with the resettling organizations, the refugees are basically left to fend for themselves, and most experience difficulties in accessing the mainstream public assistance system. This happens in a context where “public service providers are often unprepared to deal with people from different backgrounds” (BRYCS, 2003; Earner, 2002; Uehling, 1996 as cited in Morland et al. 2005). Furthermore, as the same sources mentioned, there are factors that compound barriers to mainstream social services, including limited English proficiency among new comers, service providers’ lack of understanding of refugees’ cultures, and new-comer refugee families’ overall lack of familiarity with US health, mental health, legal, and education systems (BRYCS, 2003; DSHS, 2001 as cited in Morland et al., 2005).

The need to provide culturally relevant and holistic approaches within refugee health care settings has been substantiated by research from clinicians, sociologists, and anthropologists (Bodeker et al. 2005; as cited in Singer & Adams, 2011). A formal collaboration or partnership can help the various organizations better allocate resources for refugees or improve the way they handle specific cases. It can help unleash new talent and new resources or get new institutions involved in facilitating resettlement. Refugees are eligible for employment and social services for five years. However, typical services delivered by World Relief are targeted to new arrivals during their first three to eight months in the U.S., and contacts with refugees fall off after this

period. This confirms the need to involve CBOs in the service delivery chain. Linking them formally to these institutions is particularly important for their long term integration process.

It is the responsibility of FBOs, such as World Relief, to provide an example by bringing institutions from different belief systems—both public and private organizations—together, so that supporting organizations can improve communication and sharing of information and resources. The partnership that World Relief, as a Church empowered organization, should lead can also take a form of interaction across sectors or institutions that might not be directly involved in the resettlement process. In South King County for instance, there are multiple organizations that work with women who are victims of domestic violence, youth-at-risk, housing opportunities for homeless single mothers, and cultural companionships through Christian schools that the refugees may have never heard of after their initial resettlement. Partnership with these other social service providers could lead to the development of original ideas into feasible proposals. Added partnership will enhance communication and increase awareness to help link the available resources at a local and global level.

Having a partnership oriented mindset could help reshape the way the most vulnerable people, including refugees, are resettled in cities. CBOs and FBOs can play a significant role in the integration and development of refugees. They help build community, facilitate the integration of refugees, and provide services that resettling agencies may not be able to provide due to the numbers of refugees they receive every year and their lack of financial resources. CBOs improve the information flow within the community, increase civic participation, and give a sense of belonging and a certain identity to the refugees. Research has shown the importance of community among the refugee population. Refugees often have many psychological disorders upon resettling in the US. Ingleby (2005) found that it is reasonable to assume that the outcome in terms of settlement for refugees would be improved if they are supported by settled

communities from their own or similar backgrounds. By living in and staying connected with their communities, this tool may be a preventative effort that could influence the population's psychological and emotional needs. After their resettlement, many refugees remain unemployed or without job security and they may feel isolated and socially excluded. Working closely with CBOs is a must for Volags if they want to greatly improve the resettlement outcome.

Chapter 2: Research Methods

2.1. Research Design and Data Collection

My research design incorporated four data collection methods. The first method consisted of semi-structured administered questionnaires delivered via email. The second method involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted at the particular community organization's office and by phone call. The third data collection method consisted of informal conversations with CBOs and resettlement agencies' personnel, as well as direct observation. The fourth method consisted of an extensive academic and grey literature review. My objective in analyzing the web documents was to identify the activities of the aforementioned organizations. My research looked to see if these CBOs had any experience in cooperation, collaboration, and partnership with other organizations. Advantages and shortcomings of these methods are detailed at the end of this chapter.

The selection of the CBOs that I have interviewed consisted of two phases. I first randomly preselected a set of 40 CBOs among the 211 listed in the database for refugee-led ethnic CBOs in the US available on the Project Soar Webpage. The project SOAR is an initiative of the International Rescue Committee, in partnership with the Nationalities Service Center, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), to provide ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) and other refugee-serving agencies with technical assistance to develop and deliver quality services and improve sustainability. It also included support to strengthen organizational management in areas such as fundraising and governance; improve services, in areas such as project design and case management; and build networks with peer and mainstream agencies (IRC, 2013). Secondly, I visited the websites of the preselected organizations to see how active they were. I found out that some of them had not updated their websites in a year. I therefore decided to retain 15 organizations I considered active based on the updates posted on the website.

Among the 15 I reached out to, eight responded to my questions. Thirdly, I reached out to eight CBOs in the Seattle area, and six responded to my questions. I randomly selected Volags across the country from a Volag database available at the refugees work website. The Lutheran Community Service Northwest (LCSNW), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and World Relief are the two Volags that I have interviewed in the Seattle area. The full list of the organizations I have interviewed is provided in table 1 below

Name	Location
Ethiopian Community Mutual Association	Seattle
Somali Community Services Coalition	Seattle
Northwest Somali Community Center (NWSCC)	Seattle
Horn of Africa Services	
Southwest Youth and Family Services	
Ethiopian Community Mutual Association	Seattle
HIAS Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania
Idaho Office for Refugees	Idaho
Lutheran Community Services Northwest	Seattle
International Rescue Committee	Seattle
World Relief	Seattle
Karen Organization of Minnesota	Minnesota
West Michigan Refugee Education & Cultural Center	Michigan
Ethiopian Community Development Council	Washington DC
Karen Organization of San Diego	California
Colorado African Organization	Colorado
Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago	Chicago

Table 1: List of the organizations interviewed

My interviews with CBOs covered the services they provide, the nature of their relationships with resettlement agencies their challenges, their expectations, and their experience

in partnerships and collaborations. My interviews with Volags personnel revolved around their perception of CBOs, the nature of their relationships, their expectations, and the conditions that need to be met before a potential partnership.

2.2. Difficulties and Limits

Even though my data collection method seemed convenient for both the researcher and the interviewees, I encountered some difficulties. The main challenge that I encountered during the data collection process was the difficulty of getting in touch with organizational personnel. Not all of them were willing to answer my questions. Some took more than two weeks to get back to me. Others never responded, regardless of my follow up calls and emails.

At the local level, I experienced some difficulties in getting CBO directors or personnel to be fully open to me about the difficulties and challenges in their relationships with resettlement agencies. CBOs were very suspicious about delivering the information that I needed. I have learned that unless one builds relationships with people at the community level or is introduced to them by a trusted gatekeeper, access to the information needed is limited. As Jupp & Sage Publications, Inc. (2006) mentioned, unless permission has been granted by a gatekeeper from within the community or organization in which the researcher plans to undertake his research, it is unlikely that access will be allowed in practice. If I had spent more time building relationships with CBO leaders, I would have gotten better information and also had more people to interview. I did not have the required connections to get all the critical information that I needed. Also, mentioning that I was an intern at World Relief (which I expected would help me get more information) led some interviewees to be reticent in their responses.

It has been acknowledged that this study has some limitations even though I strove to answer my research question with details. I believe that I could have had more comprehensive information if I had interviewed the refugees themselves. This is important because they know

how both the CBOs and resettlement agencies can provide them with the help they need. They are in a better position to know the gap that exists between the resettlement agencies and CBOs.

Chapter 3: Results and Discussions

3.1. The CBOs in the Seattle Area

As previously mentioned, CBOs exist in both a multi and mono ethnic configuration. Some serve one specific community while others provide services to refugees and immigrants regardless of their origin. In the Seattle area, there are around 18 CBOs serving refugees and immigrants (Table 2).

	Community Organization
1	Bhutanese Community Resource Center
2	Coalition for Refugees from Burma
3	East African Community Services
4	Ethiopian Community Mutual Association (ECMA)
5	Horn of Arica Services
6	Indochinese Cultural Service Center
7	Iraqi Community Center of Seattle
8	Khmer Community of Seattle
9	Korean Women's Association
10	Northwest Somali Community Center (NWSCC)
11	Somali Bantu Association
12	Somali Bantu Community Service
13	Somali Community Services Coalition
14	Somali Community Services of Seattle
15	Southern Sudanese Community of WA
16	Southwest Youth and Family Services

17	The Somali Refugee Community in Seattle
18	Ukrainian Community Center of Washington

Table 2: Community Based Organizations and Mutual Assistance Associations in the Seattle

Source: ORR, FFY 2009 State of Washington ORR Funded Programs

According to the 2009 Refugee Resettlement in Washington Site-Visit Report (2009), Seattle has a large variety of CBOs at different stages of development. Some are large, well-established agencies with a broad funding base and diverse services. Some are new organizations struggling to establish themselves by developing sound administrative structures, adequate and sustainable budgets, and quality services. Some agencies are stable, enduring agencies, while others suffer from factionalism, or currently serve too few refugees to be viable service providers.

The Ethiopian Community Mutual Association (ECMA) is one of the most vibrant CBOs in Seattle. Established 30 years ago, it is one of the oldest CBOs helping immigrants in the Seattle area. Founded by a group of immigrants who volunteered their time and energy, the organization is now registered as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in Washington State. Their mission is to assist Ethiopians and Ethiopian-Americans to preserve and share their ancient and rich cultural heritage and to facilitate a seamless integration of all persons of Ethiopian origin with mainstream United States lifestyle (ECMA, 2012). ECMA has partnered with local churches, businesses, and educational institutions to assist immigrants from East Africa to get into public housing and shelters. The association also provides employment services, translation of important documents, interpreting services for those with limited English, and counseling help with health, legal, and immigration issues. The organization helps to organize and promote social and cultural awareness by hosting health fairs, sport clubs, and community celebrations that bring together Ethiopians living in Seattle and its vicinity.

3.2.VOLAGs in Seattle

There are currently five voluntary agencies providing resettlement services in the Seattle area: Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Jewish Family Service, International Rescue Committee (IRC), and World Relief. Catholic Community Services (CCS) has withdrawn from resettlement in Seattle but still provides some assistance to immigrants and refugees. CCS is one the organization that CBOs turn to for housing assistance. CBOs and Volags are located in the suburban areas where housing tend to be at a much lower price. The Volags have bilingual staff, but due to the multiplicity of the languages spoken by the refugees, their personnel do not always speak all the languages. As a result, they use paid interpreters or non-paid former refugees and bilingual volunteers/interns. Contrary to the 2009 Refugee Resettlement in Washington Site-Visit Report, my research did not reveal any instance where Volags have shared bilingual staff capacity on a formal or informal basis.

3.3.Case study: Sampling of Partnerships and Community Initiatives

The data gathered during interviews with CBOs and Volags across the country have shown that some of these organizations were able to undertake a form of collaboration or partnership. I will highlight examples of partnership and collaboration I think could be implemented here in Seattle.

3.3.1. New Arrival Notification System

In San Diego, resettlement agencies have implemented a new arrival system whereby they inform various community or ethnic CBOs about new-comers. This system helps CBOs be better prepared to support the families or individual from their cultural perspective. They help them be quickly and better plugged into the community. This is particularly important in case the arriving refugees are classified as free-case. A refugee is designated as a free-case when there is no relative in the United States to aid in their resettlement (Refugee Solidarity Network, 2013). A

free-case is different from an “anchor-case” which means that the arriving refugee has family in the U.S. and came via an Affidavit of Relationship (AOR). An AOR is an affidavit filed at a local resettlement office to establish a connection between a refugee or asylee relative in the U.S. and a relative abroad (Refugee Solidarity Network, 2013). Given the fact that caseworkers are sometimes overloaded by many cases, it is important to get the new refugees to develop new support systems as soon as they arrive. This notification can also get the CBOs involved in the short and long term resettlement of the refugees.

3.3.2. The San Diego Refugee Forum

The San Diego Refugee Forum is a great example of partnership between the various resettlement agencies and community organizations in San Diego. It provides organizations and individuals in San Diego with the opportunities and tools needed to advocate for, educate, and empower persons fleeing from war and persecution. It is a platform where all organizations can collaboratively work to facilitate networking among organizations providing services to refugees, immigrants, SIVs, and asylees. The San Diego Refugee Forum meets the third Tuesday of each month, hosts guest speakers, and facilitates discussions on topics of interest. The Forum also provides government agencies with an opportunity to gather information and input on policy issues concerning the refugee community. Forum membership includes Volags, CBOs, Employment Services, Government Agencies, refugees, advocates, and supporting individuals. By organizing cross-over meetings between the Volags and CBOs, it is possible to make sure that they all understand the needs of the communities and can be responsive to issues as they come up. Seattle has a refugee forum; however, none of the organizations and people I interviewed mentioned the forum during our conversations.

3.3.3. The CARES Network

The CARES Network is a network of organizations either directly or indirectly connected to refugee resettlement in Colorado. It involves resettlement agencies, health care providers, employment services, mental health care institutions, educational institutions, counseling services, a disability work group, and a forced marriage work group. The heads of these organizations get together once per month to discuss issues pertaining to immigrants and refugees. They have an electronic mailing lists system where all members can share information on employment, trainings, opportunities and other issues that might come up. It would be helpful to have similar networks implemented here in Seattle.

3.3.4. Grant Writing

Grant writing is the most implemented type of collaboration between resettlement agencies and community organizations. Almost half of the CBOs that I interviewed mentioned that they have partnered at some point with a resettlement agency to apply for a grant. All of the CBOs in the Seattle area that I interviewed expressed their desire to implement a collaborative grant writing system with resettlement agencies. The challenges involved in potential collaborative grant writing will be discussed in the next section.

3.4.5. SEARAC's Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA)

The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) is a national organization that advances the interests of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans by empowering communities through advocacy, leadership development, and capacity building to create a socially just and equitable society. They collaborate with FBOs such as Buddhist temples, Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, and Moslem mosques, while also partnering with CBOs. In 2010, SEARAC secured two different funds from the ORR to work in collaboration with other organizations to implement an asset-building project for Burmese and Bhutanese refugee

communities so that they can better organize and address the resettlement and long term integration needs of their community members. As mentioned on their website, SEARAC's technical support includes helping organizations to define and develop organizational leadership ethos, establishing processes to promote and build leadership skills of all members in the organization, creating plans for leadership succession, and putting in place leadership transition strategies and policies (SEARAC, 2013). The project includes three components: building community relationships and gaining greater understanding of community needs, building capacity of community organizations to organize and help refugees toward self-sufficiency, and increasing local service and resource collaborations amongst social service providers, resettlement agencies, ethnic CBOs, and refugee leaders from Bhutan and Burma. The technical support includes helping selected groups and organizations to define and refine their organizational mission and objectives, establish leadership and operational infrastructure, develop meaningful and accountable service program designs, and build strategic community partnerships and networks for sustainability and growth. Resettlement agencies in the Seattle area can work with similar organizations or consultation groups to make similar capacity building opportunities available to local CBOs and the refugees they serve.

3.4. CBOs: Partnership Expectations and Constraints

As aforementioned, CBOs have expressed their willingness to partner with resettlement agencies to apply for grants. Unfortunately, there are challenges to this type of partnership. One resettlement personnel summarized one of the challenges in these terms: "often grants require a meticulous level of reporting and tracking and some CBOs lack the training or staff for this (Jeff, personal communication, March 17, 2013). The second challenge pertains to the nature of the relationship that CBOs working with refugees from the same country or the same region of origin has with one another. It can also be difficult to ascertain whom the organization really represents

(Mariam, personal communication, February 22, 2013). In some cases, CBOs tend to divide along political or tribal lines. These divisions make it difficult for any potential support organization to successfully help the community members.

Time is another challenge, because most resettlement organization personnel are already overloaded with case management and administrative work. Grants are competitive and require a significant investment up front with a relatively low chance of anything coming to fruition (Mark, personal communication, March 21, 2013). Resettlement agencies need to have extra time or extra staff to collaborate with CBOs to write grants. On the same topic, the competitive atmosphere of grants makes it difficult for organizations to share or disclose information with one another. It leads CBOs to be competitors instead of partners (Jasmine, personal communication, March 15th, 2013). The great desire they manifested right now for more involvement and partnership comes at a time when both public and private funding for refugee resettlement or immigrant support efforts are either greatly diminishing or highly competitive and coveted.

The lack of communication is another issue. Some of the interviewees' reported miscommunication between resettlement agencies, community organizations, and refugee clients. As one CBO executive director mentioned, "Communication is always a challenge particularly when the client says one thing and the resettlement agencies are saying another. Misinterpretation, lack of trust can arise as a result of that" (Chong, personal communication, February 26, 2013). The time spent with CBO personnel revealed the lack of communication between them and resettlement agencies. This leads to frustration and lack of knowledge about the guidelines under which both organizations work. One CBO personnel expressed his frustrations and incomprehension this way:

The problem is maybe they do not want to collaborate with us, or maybe they do not want that much. They bring people to the country and help them for three to four months and

after that the clients are coming to us and they do not want to collaborate with us.

Meanwhile, we are the one who really have a challenge. I think if they collaborate with us and share their resources, we can help more people, but they are putting the fact that they are big organizations and we are small organizations and they do not really care that much to collaborate with us. We are the ones who have to look for jobs for them, housing etc.

They do not want to share their resources. If we come together, we can really find out how to work together and see what could be done. If we collaborate, we can get bigger grants because right now the refugees are suffering. I think if we can sit down around the table and everybody talks openly, we can have a solution but the way it is done, it is not good.

(Desalegn, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

The reactions that I had from some of the CBO personnel prove that they do not always know what is done within the resettlement agencies when new refugees arrive. As one CBO staff mentioned:

The resettlement agencies bring our people here and they put them in very expensive apartment and also sign a one year lease while knowing that they these people will not get a job in a short period of time. They put our people in the apartment and do not even attend to their needs for five days. This is not normal. We are the one doing the work with almost no funding; we build our social capital to take care of our people while they take the money. They bring them and leave us with all the work. (Mekonen, personal communication, March 7, 2013)

If there were better communication systems between all resettlement agencies and CBOs, those comments would not have been made. All CBOs' personnel would know that resettlement agencies, and World Relief Seattle in particular, have always pursued the most affordable, safe, and sanitary housing they could find. They would know that refugees often have very limited

housing options when they first come here and that they are not eligible to rent at the majority of apartments because of strict income requirements (commonly three times the rent, while the assistance usually gives them 1.5 or two times the rent at best) (Mark, personal communication, March 21, 2013).

In terms of expectations, most community organizations have expressed the need for assistance with contract and grant writing, management, and capacity and leadership building. All the CBOs that I interviewed mentioned that they wish they could somehow take advantage of the job placement network or contacts that resettlement agencies have.

Interviews revealed that CBOs in the Seattle area do not always work together, and moreover, they seemingly distrust one another's intentions and/or ability to resettle refugees adequately. This situation was also witnessed by Karin Leah Brandt in her Master's Thesis titled, "Making Immigrant Integration Work: A Case Study of Refugee Resettlement in Philadelphia" (2010). At one interview, a CBO staff told me that the other organization does not provide any services at all, meanwhile they did. This distrust in one another can greatly hinder networking and collaboration among the various CBOs and Volags.

In addition to these specific needs, interviews, observations, and document analysis uncovered several other needs. CBOs need more capacity building and they need to have a better infrastructure. For example, the Somali Community Coalition Service uses a small and inadequately furnished room as office. How can they provide quality of services if the office is not equipped and if the staff do not work in a welcoming environment?

3.5. Resettlement Agencies: Partnership Expectations and Constraints

The Volags that I have interviewed have all acknowledged the benefits of partnering with CBOs. They have particularly highlighted the fact that such partnerships can equip them to provide better social services to the refugees from the various community groups. As Steve, a

Volag resettlement coordinator stated, Volags can learn a lot from the CBOs about the culture and the people to help them develop a program that can serve the population in a positive way (personal communication, March 19, 2013). This impression is also shared by Mark, a Volag case manager who noted that through partnerships with CBOs, Volags can increase their language ability; get a greater understanding of cultural issues; get a greater understanding of the barriers facing people down the road after the initial period, and get greater knowledge of resources that people can access in the initial period that would help later (personal communication, March 21, 2013).

One of the main constraints in partnership building is that most Volags operate with limited resources and time. In some cases they are inadequately staffed to help CBOs in capacity building. Program managers and coordinators tend to be overloaded with work to a point where they cannot devote enough time to help CBOs. Collaboration and capacity building can better happen when both institutions have a substantial amount of money and time.

The Volags wish that the several small community organizations that represent the refugees and immigrants could be united based on their country of origin. The Somali and Ethiopian community is represented by several organizations. This dispersal and division poses many challenges when Volags want to reach out to those communities. This division makes it also difficult for potential funders or to help the entire community. As one Volag resettlement coordinator mentioned:

[one] ethnic group has several organizations and they do not always agree with each other and do not support each other. Volags do not want to get in the middle of a situation like that where we may have to take sides and favor one over the other. They just need to get together and figure out how to support each other. Funders like coalitions (Steve, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

The Coalition of Refugees from Burma (CRB) and the Bhutanese Community Resource Center (BCRC) are great examples of unity within the communities from the same country.

3.6. Partnership: The Case of the Lutheran Community Service Northwest and World Relief

The interviews have revealed that both World Relief and the Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) share the similar core idea of partnerships. They both see partnerships as way to sincerely work together to increase their human and financial resources so that they can provide better services to the refugees. It is a way to save critical resources and reduce duplication of services among service providers. World Relief Seattle and the LCSNW have both highlighted the good relationship that they have with CBOs such as CRB and BCRC. The LCSNW started their partnership with the CRB and BCRC in September, 2011 through personal relationships between staff of both agencies. LCSNW started by conducting workshops for the refugees in their communities around life skills that help them to navigate the American system better. The LCSNW wants to continue improving this relationship and offer their expertise as fiscal agents and other consultation services.

World Relief, through its former director, (late Cal Uomoto) has helped the CRB get started in 2009. World Relief is currently partnering with the CRB on a grant to work with refugees in the Kent School District. World Relief Seattle is committed to helping the CRB and the BCRC once the latter is granted 501(c)3 status. World Relief is currently working on partnering with the City of Kent to initiate a Refugee Employment Summit and we have invited planning to invite other Volags and CBOs to be involved. In the meantime, the organization is co-sponsoring a weekly Job Club that is open to anyone in the community from a refugee

background and also recently started a Googlegroup for local refugee job developers so that they can share information with one another.

3.7.Key Component for a Successful Partnership between Volags and CBOs

There are a couple of fundamental conditions that need to be met before CBOs and Volags can successfully partner. Data gathered through interviews, observations, and document screening show that there are significant challenges involved in CBOs and Volags' partnerships. The challenges revolve around lack of resources and lack of trust between the various agencies. Data pointed to several areas where a prerequisite of conditions needed to be met before these organizations could effectively and successfully work together. Many of the CBOs that I interviewed felt marginalized by resettlement agencies. Therefore, one of the most pressing needs is to create an environment where all CBOs can express themselves and feel valued. This marginalization could be addressed to some extent by an effective communication system at all level before and during the partnership. In any partnership initiative, funds should be fairly distributed so that any party does not feel deceived. A fair distribution also implies that funding should be allocated or divided among parties according to their capacity to manage a specific amount and also their capacity to serve the refugees. The figure 5 summarizes key elements for a successful partnership between CBOs and Volags. I am convinced that any partnership endeavor should be based on sound scriptural and operational principles. God is the only builder of everything and this truth should be embraced by all agencies. It is by relying on His words that all parties can have a clear vision and sound decisions. As Phil Butler (2005) emphasized, effective partnerships require substantial, ongoing prayer. As highlighted in Figure 4, acknowledging that Volags and CBOs may have different backgrounds (cultural, beliefs) is a key to success. For an effective and lasting partnership, Volags should be flexible toward CBOs since some of the CBOs tend to have less qualified staffed. Ownership and power balance are vital in partnerships.

All agencies involved in partnerships should recognize that the success of their initiative relies on their shoulders and every organization should be step up to the plate and achieve the task assigned to them. It is also important that Volags recognize that they can benefit from the joint effort and that CBOs are not the sole beneficiary when they come to work together.

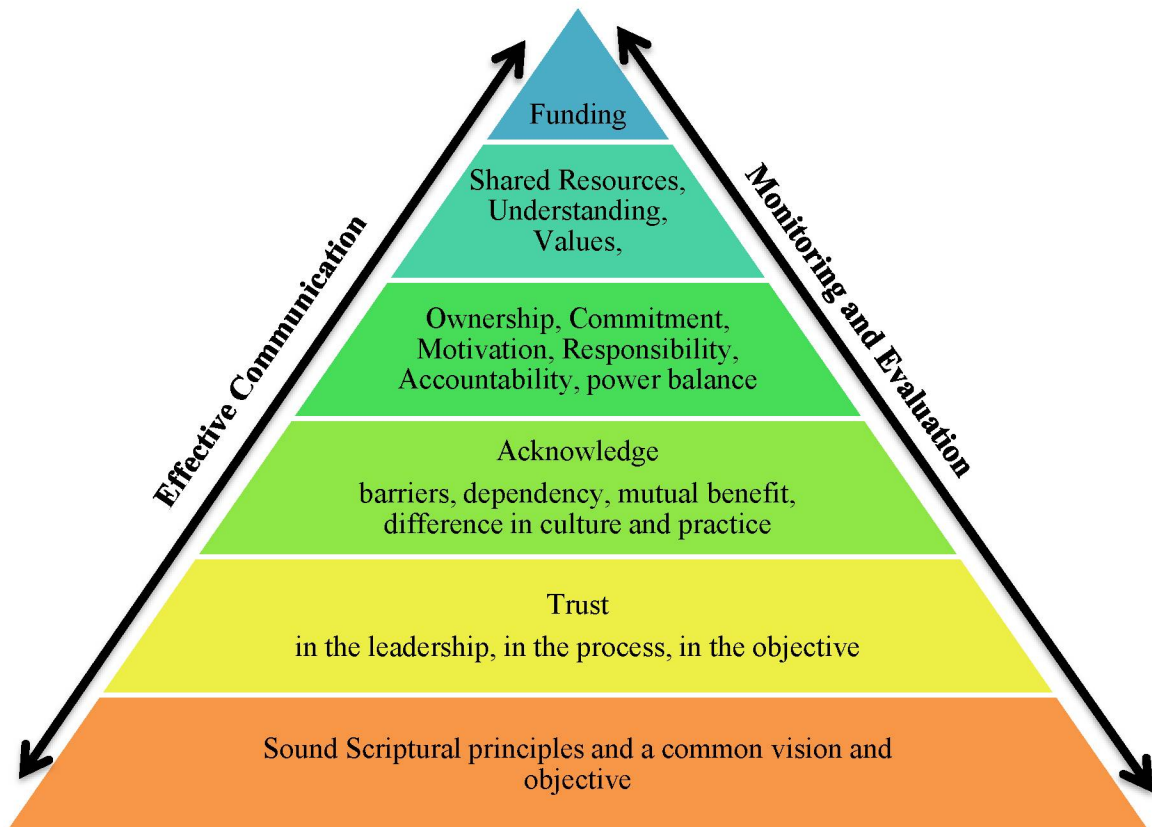


Figure 4: Key principles for a successful partnership between CBOs and Volags

It is worth mentioning that the partnership framework provided above works or should be embraced by Volags and CBOs seeking to build a partnership and those already in a partnership process. Partnership is not an event but a process that could be implemented in four stages as presented in Figure 5.

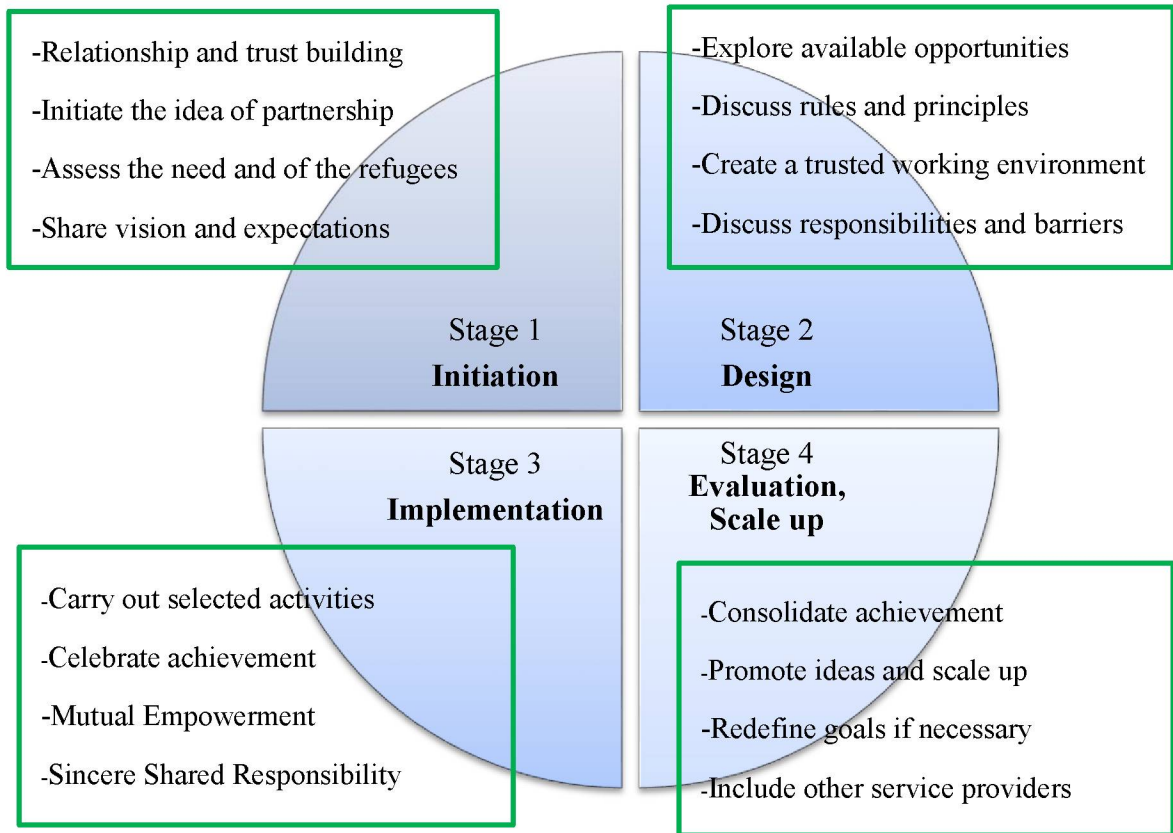


Figure 6: The four stages of partnerships between CBOs and Volags

Adapted from “Civil society partnerships” by UNICEF, 2012.

The four stages of the partnership process should be characterized by an effective communication between the Volags and the CBOs. A successful partnership should be promoted and scaled up. In a refugee resettlement context, a successful partnership between CBOs and Volags should be consolidated and room should be made for other services providers and institutions (city council, health care providers etc.) to participate.

Conclusion

Data gathered through observation, informal discussion, interviews, and grey literature review showed that the level of partnership between resettlement agencies and CBOs in the Seattle area is low. The data revealed that there are significant challenges involved in bringing CBOs (especially those from the same region) to unite and work together while partnering with

one another. I initially anticipated that lack of communication and trust between some community organizations would be an important issue, and my research found some information that supports my hypothesis. Not all CBOs know how resettlement agencies run their programs and how they do whatever they can to provide the refugee with the best resettlement conditions possible. Data pointed to several areas where a partnership between these institutions could benefit the provision of services to refugees, SIVs, asylees, and immigrants in general. The most pressing needs that CBOs expressed were funding, capacity building, and consultation. In addition to these very specific needs, the interviews uncovered that most resettlement agencies are not adequately staffed to provide the best support to CBOs.

Despite these lists of needs and constraints, interviews revealed that there were many initiatives developed by some resettlement agencies and CBOs either through grants from the ORR or informally. Even though the level of partnership is low, all these organizations are willing to work together. They need a strong and efficient platform where they can come together and openly talk about the challenges every organization is facing, the resources and information they have at their disposal, and how they can work together. Analysis of various partnerships from other states showed that the aforementioned challenges could be addressed if all stakeholders agree to communicate. Learning, borrowing, or adapting the initiatives presented in section 3.2 could be a starting point for organizations to work together for the benefit of the people they intend to serve.

Recommendations

Based on the information collected, the following recommendations could strengthen existing collaboration and partnerships while at the same time creating new ones.

1. One of the prevalent issues revealed was effective communication and trust. As organizations with more resources, influence, and networks, Volags should take the first step and reach out to CBOs and create a collaborative environment where, regardless of the size of the organization, all organizations are valued and respected. They should foster a trusting and productive collaborative environment whereby the perspectives and expertise of CBOs' leaders and members are fully taken into account.
2. Partnerships will have a greater impact when both parties develop and improve their capacity to educate the general public on refugee resettlement issues (through awareness raising campaigns in schools, churches, private companies, city councils, etc.). Resettlement takes place in an urban context, where success will not be achieved if the community is not first aware of the challenges facing the refugees and the role that could eventually play. There is a need to get the city and other non-immigrant communities connected to the resettlement process.
3. CBOs should improve their ability to mobilize resources from a broad range of donor audiences instead of relying on grants. They should implement social entrepreneurship projects so that they can have a sustainable inflow of funds to run their social service program.
4. From my experience and the data gathered, I recommend that Volags and resettlement related service providers reach out to CBOs to see how they could participate in the resettlement process as partners or as sub-contractors.
5. Since most of the CBOs have expressed their interest in apply for grants with World Relief, and since the staffs tend to be busy with case management issues, I suggest that World Relief implement a six-month community coordinator and grant writing internship program in addition to the traditional refugee resettlement internship program. The

community coordinator and grant writing interns will navigate between the various CBOs to ensure that they are aware of what is being done at the resettlement agencies. They will also work closely with CBOs to identify funding opportunities and to write and apply for grants.

6. I strongly recommend that the Ethiopian, the Somali and the Eritrean community expand to form a unique regional coalition that would be able to defend and advocate for all the community members. I am convinced that such coalition would be fully supported by all the Volags and services providers in the Seattle area.

While this research answered the question of how to get CBOs and resettlement agencies to work together, it has nonetheless raised further questions. This research should be expanded to encompass all service providers (health care providers, school districts, churches, mosques, private institutions, etc.).

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