



# WHEN CITIZENS HOST REFUGEES

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FROM THE SURVEY OF THE HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS  
PROJECT

## The first year of the project implementation: July 2017 - August 2018

The project Humanitarian Corridors aims to provide reception of particularly vulnerable persons among refugees temporarily hosted in Lebanon. These Welcomed persons are provided with humanitarian visa that allows them safe and legal access to France under the private sponsorship scheme (Welcomed persons are privately sponsored and supported by voluntary Host groups/individuals). This project is being implemented within the framework of the Agreement signed in March 2017 between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France and five faith-based organizations (namely: Community of Sant'Egidio, the Protestant Federation of France, the Federation of Protestant Mutual Aid, the Bishops' Conference of France and Secours Catholique - Caritas France). As a result, the first families were welcomed in France in July 2017 and by the end of September 2018, 160 Welcomed persons that is 38 families and 3 individuals arrived to France.

In order to better assess and evaluate the project and its impact on Welcomed persons and Host groups as well as to address the gaps and propose improvements, the project partners agreed to conduct a survey. This survey was shared with respondents at least 3 months after the arrival of the respective Welcomed person. The retention rate of the survey was relatively high and managed to reach respondents who were in a relevant position to answer the survey questions. Out of 25 addressed families and 3 individuals (105 persons in total), 21 questionnaires representing 79 Welcomed persons were answered. Out of 28 Host groups addressed, 27 baseline questionnaires were answered.

# KEY FINDINGS



## PROFILE OF WELCOMED PERSONS

**Majority of respondents and their families** (14 families) remained in protracted displacement situation outside their country for three years or more before arriving to France. Before applying for the participation in the project Humanitarian Corridors a half of all respondents (11 families) tried to reach secure place outside Lebanon through other channels mainly through safe migration programmes for refugees and people in need.



## PROFILE OF HOST GROUPS

**The majority of Welcoming** groups (16 groups) has more than 15 members from which 9 groups indicated that their group has more than 26 members. In addition, the majority of the Host groups (16 groups) indicated that their group was specifically and exclusively created for the Humanitarian Corridors project.



## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND ACCESS TO RIGHTS IN FRANCE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY HOST GROUPS

**In order to initiate administrative procedures in France**, most respondents and their families (15 respondents) succeeded to register their asylum application within 15 days upon arrival as specified in the Agreement. On the contrary and not in accordance with the Agreement, nearly a half of respondents and their families did not have an interview with the Office for the Protection of Refugees (OFPRA) during first three months upon the arrival to France. Welcomed persons receive support with settlement from Host groups. In particular, Host groups provide accommodation, material support, language training, socio-cultural activities, social support and assistance during the asylum claim and administrative procedures. At least 18 Host groups responded that they cooperate with civil society organizations and 13 Host groups indicated that they collaborate with social support structures dedicated to state-funded asylum-seekers.



## HOUSING

**Half of all respondents** (11 Welcomed families) expressed their satisfaction with the accommodation in France organized by Host groups. Some of the responding Welcomed families consider their current accommodation or the place of residence as too small while few respondents pointed out a lack of good connection with public transportation to schools and medical facilities. In terms of the type of accommodation arranged for Welcomed persons, 15 Host groups indicated that they found accommodation free of charge while 11 Host groups indicated that the Welcomed persons are hosted in rented housing



## EMPLOYMENT OF WELCOMED PERSONS

**The data from** the survey shows that none of the respondents or their family members were engaged in a remunerable activity. This is mainly due to work restriction for the asylum seekers, but also due to limited French language skills and limited availability of jobs in the area of residence. On the other hand, one half of respondents (10) indicated that they or their family members work as volunteers in charitable or sports associations.



## LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

**The average level of French language** of the majority of Welcomed persons upon arrival to France was basic or non-existing. By contrast, after few months of stay in France the French language skills of Welcomed persons and their families increased to basic or intermediate level. While 36 per cent of responding Welcomed persons indicated that their children in schooling age could not or had a limited access to education in Lebanon, the survey revealed that 67 per cent of the children in schooling age were enrolled in the French educational system immediately upon arrival and the remaining children within few months



## HEALTHCARE

**The majority of respondents and their families (13)** did not have an access to free healthcare in Lebanon, Iraq or Syria. In contrast, almost all respondents indicated that currently they have free access to healthcare for all family members. In addition 17 respondents and their family members already used the medical services in France.



## SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

**Friends and family can provide additional support** with settlement in France. The survey showed that only 5 respondents and their families live close to another family member and only one respondent with the family declared to live near to someone they knew from home. Only four respondents indicated that they presently live near to their country nationals they met in France and nearly a half of the respondents (10) indicated that they live near to friends they made once in France. When asked how the involvement of the Host group in the project changed their perception of persons with migration experience, 11 Host groups responded that the change was positive. In addition, 15 Host groups responded that the involvement of their group in the current project also changed positively the community perception of foreigners in general. Nearly all Host groups participating in the survey responded that they would encourage other Host groups to get involved in the project Humanitarian Corridors.

**““** *What are the positive aspects of the project: "...to bring together people from various political and religious backgrounds who work together for the common goal. This diversity is enriching and it does miracles. The regular events such as picnics for refugees/asylum seekers and neighbouring hosting groups are very rewarding”*

Host group from the Occitanie region

**To conclude with**, the survey results highlighted overall satisfaction and appreciation of the project by Welcomed persons and Host groups. In fact, both surveyed groups indicated satisfaction with guidance and tools provided by the project partners. The majority of respondents felt timely and well informed about their roles and responsibilities. Welcomed persons further noted that the most positive experience was a warm welcome at the airport and the extensive support provided by Host groups, while Host groups were motivated and inspired with the trust Welcomed persons have towards them as well as the patience Welcomed persons have with lengthy procedures and learning French language.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations provide a list of concrete measures aiming to improve the project design and fine-tune its implementation.

### PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION AND POST-ARRIVAL ASSISTANCE

Welcomed persons and Host groups would further welcome additional pre-departure information. The Welcomed persons, would value more detailed information on: labour market and education in France, information about housing, general information about French culture, information about the place of their residence, detailed description of administrative procedures in France and more information about the travel to France. The Host groups would appreciate more information about their role and responsibilities towards Welcomed persons.

**““** *Administrative procedures in France are lengthy; sometimes there is a lack of clarification. I think that others joining the project should be informed and advised to be more patient with administrative procedures and do not hesitate to ask questions and seek clarification.”*

Young Iraqi woman

### INCORPORATE IN THE PROJECT SPACE FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOG AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE

Given the differences in culture, language and faith, the intercultural encounters bringing together Welcomed person and Host groups as well as exchanges of experience should be considered by the project partners in the second year of the project»»

## HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS

### ENSURE ACCESS TO QUALIFIED SERVICES PROVIDED BY ADMINISTRATORS AND SOCIAL WORKERS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

» Although majority of Welcomed persons arriving to France through the project Humanitarian Corridors succeeded to access the entitlement for asylum seekers and follow up on their asylum claim, these administrative procedures represent a time consuming, complex and stressful task, especially for the Host groups. It is therefore necessary to ensure availability of dedicated services/social actors who could counsel and support the Welcomed persons and Host groups through procedures.

“ Administrative procedures are very time consuming. We would welcome an agreement between the French authorities and partners of the project Humanitarian Corridors that could guarantee assistance of a social worker during different administrative procedures from the moment Welcomed persons arrive to France. ”

Host group from the Bourgogne Franche Comté region

### RESPECT THE LENGTH OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE AS STATED IN THE AGREEMENT

Timely procedures are critical element in the Humanitarian Corridors project as any significant delay hinders Welcomed person access to entitlements, including housing, unemployment or family benefits (as guaranteed by the Republican Integration Contract). The duration of procedures as stated in the Agreement should be therefore respected to facilitate planning for the Host groups and project partners. In cases where the deadlines can not be respected, the State authorities should provide alternative solution and ensure commitment towards hosting the Welcomed persons.

### ENSURE ACCESS TO ADA ALLOWANCE FOR HOUSING

Host groups commit themselves in the project with large financial amounts in order to support Welcomed persons. In some cases the amount for first three months of hosting exceeds 3000 EUR. The recent decree decreasing the additional amount of ADA (Financial allowance for asylum seekers) for persons residing outside the state housing facility has a strong implication for the independence and autonomy of the Welcomed persons as well as for the Host groups. This decree restricts autonomy of these individuals

and impedes solidarity actions of civil society and it is therefore important to cancel this decree.

### ENSURE TIMELY ACCESS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND SPECIAL CARE SERVICES

Given the fact that majority of Welcomed persons under this project are persons with significant vulnerabilities, it is a priority to guarantee quick access to free psychosocial support. Moreover, in some cases, arriving persons have strong disabilities that require specific type of accommodation (for example persons in a wheelchair). For these particular cases, the State should guarantee a priority access to adapted public facilities while Host group can provide the socio-cultural and emotional support.

### IMPROVED ACCESS TO FRENCH COURSES, VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES, TRAINING AND JOB MARKET

Similar to situation of other asylum seekers, access to job market and French courses from the moment of the registration of asylum claim would foster integration of Welcomed persons. It is therefore recommended to guarantee for all asylum seekers access to job market and French courses from the moment of the asylum claim registration and not only once the protection is granted. All project partners fully support this recommendation.

### PROVIDE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT ON FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROCEDURE

Several Welcomed persons express deep worries about their closest relatives and family members who stayed behind in Syria, Lebanon or Iraq. It is of main importance both for the relatives still in conflict zones, as well as for the integration of Welcomed persons to facilitate family reunification by providing detailed information about the procedure, timeframe and assistance during the application procedure.

“ We are exhausted and suffer so much as we left our family (parents and my brother) behind in Lebanon. They should come to France, I hope you will be able to find a solution. I am sick and frequently hospitalized and the presence of my parents here in France would help me, my wife and our little daughter a lot. ”

Iraqi man



Fédération  
protestante  
de France



Fédération  
Entraide Protestante



SANT'EGIDIO



CONFÉRENCE  
des évêques  
de FRANCE



Caritas  
France  
Secours Catholique