

# BUILDING EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR REFUGEES

*MAPPING A CANADIAN  
PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT MODEL*

## About this guide

This manual was prepared by WUSC in partnership with UNHCR.

## Acknowledgments

This manual was written by Michelle Manks and Lisa Weighton. It was designed by Anish Parmar.

## About WUSC

WUSC (World University Service of Canada) is a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to improving education, employment, and empowerment opportunities for youth around the world.

[wusc.ca](http://wusc.ca)

## About UNHCR

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

[unhcr.org](http://unhcr.org)

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# ACRONYMS

**CEGEP** – Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (General and Vocational College)

**IELTS** – International English Language Testing System

**IOM** – International Organization for Migration

**IRCC** – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

**NGO** – Non-governmental organization

**PSR** – Private Sponsorship of Refugees

**SDGs** – Sustainable Development Goals

**SRP** – Student Refugee Program

**TOEFL** – Test of English as a Foreign Language

**UNHCR** – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**WUSC** – World University Service of Canada

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

World University Service of Canada has been mobilizing the Canadian post-secondary community to offer educational pathways for refugees for several decades through the Student Refugee Program (SRP).

The SRP provides a one-of-a-kind partnership opportunity for universities, colleges, and CEGEPs to directly respond to the increasing need for durable solutions and higher education opportunities for refugees. Post-secondary institutions are uniquely placed to build upon their expertise of working with international students to meet the needs of refugee youth, and enhance their employment outcomes after graduation.

The following guide presents WUSC's unique framework for the resettlement, education, and integration of refugee youth through Canada's post-secondary network. It offers examples of practical considerations that have been informed by over 40 years of experience offering resettlement and post-secondary education opportunities to refugee youth.

This guide is not intended to be a comprehensive tool. Instead, it provides an overview of the key elements relevant in establishing such a program, including the funding of scholarships; the identification of potential students; the coordination of applications and admissions; the coordination of their pre-arrival preparation and resettlement; and the mobilization of students to provide peer-to-peer integration support.

This guide also outlines partnership suggestions at the campus, national, and international levels that are useful in implementing such an initiative. These partnerships ensure adequate post-arrival support to refugee students admitted through the program.

WUSC receives hundreds of applications from refugee youth annually but can only accept a small fraction of these qualified, bright young students. Our hope is for this guide to inspire governments, organizations, and post-secondary communities to learn more and join Canadian institutions in offering new educational pathways in their own countries for refugees.

# INTRODUCTION

## Global Displacement

As of 2016, there were 22.5 million refugees globally. It is reported that refugees spend an average of 17 years of their lives in exile<sup>1</sup>. These record-high numbers of displaced people, and the increasingly protracted nature of refugee contexts, mean that the temporary mechanisms that have been put in place in the past to address the needs of displaced populations are no longer relevant or commensurate with the scale of the crisis. As voluntary return to their country of origin is not an option for many refugees, more opportunities for local integration in countries of asylum and resettlement to third countries must be explored. With developing nations hosting 84 per cent of the world's refugees, it is clear that more can and must be done by developed nations to share the responsibility currently being borne by some of the world's least developed countries<sup>2</sup>.

As part of its mandate to protect refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) identifies the most vulnerable for resettlement, which is the organized transfer of refugees from the countries where they sought refuge to another (third) country that has agreed to admit them.

While resettlement is a well-established mechanism to provide protection and a durable solution for refugees, it is far from keeping pace with identified needs. Less than one per cent of the world's refugees are resettled each year<sup>3</sup>. Additional complementary pathways, such as community sponsorships, and education and employment pathways are needed to respond to these growing protection needs.

As humanitarian actors work to find solutions to this unprecedented crisis, there is renewed emphasis on comprehensive action and a whole-of-society approach to responding to the needs of refugees worldwide.

The 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants lays out a vision for shared responsibility, known as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, or CRRF. It calls on UNHCR to work with a wide range of partners to provide greater support to refugees and the countries that host them. Involving not only governments, but also the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society, including post-secondary communities, faith leaders, and international financial institutions, can significantly amplify the collective response.

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- 1 United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.) Migration, refugees and displacement [web page]. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/development-planning-and-inclusive-sustainable-growth/migration-refugees-and-displacement.html>
  - 2 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2017) Global trends: Forced displacement in 2016. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34.pdf>
  - 3 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (n.d.) Resettlement [web page]. <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html>

## Access to Education for Refugees

The rate at which refugee children and adolescents have access to education is likewise not meeting the immense need. Only half of all refugee children attend primary school compared with the global average of 91 per cent<sup>4</sup>. Only 22 per cent of refugee children attend secondary school compared to 84 per cent of non-refugee children, and only one per cent ever reach university compared to 36 per cent globally<sup>5</sup>.

Not only is education a basic human right, enshrined in both the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, but it is also recognized as a key development objective in the international community's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>6</sup>. During times of displacement, education plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, in addressing psychosocial needs, and in providing a safe and stable environment for those who need it most. Education provides refugee youth with tools for self-reliance and prepares them to access dignified livelihood opportunities, including when they are resettled or return home.



*"I think such an opportunity to make it beyond high school and right into a Canadian university or college motivated so many students to work even harder through primary and secondary schools. For a fact, I know it did motivate me."*

John Kon, 2011 SRP Student, McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario), originally from South Sudan

4 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2017) Left behind: Refugee education in crisis. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/59b696f44.pdf>

5 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2016) Missing out: Refugee education in crisis. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/57d9d01d0>

6 United Nations. (n.d.) Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform [website]. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

# BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS THROUGH EDUCATION

Educational pathways provide an innovative approach to address both the immense need for durable solutions for refugees and their need for tertiary education. Further, educational pathways enable the inclusion of non-traditional partners (i.e. post-secondary institutions) in a comprehensive response to the refugee crisis.

Since 2016, commitments and efforts to expand educational opportunities for refugees have been increasing, but the potential to engage post-secondary communities worldwide remains immense.

WUSC's SRP has been at the forefront of mobilizing Canadian universities, colleges, and CEGEPs to develop educational pathways for refugee youth for many decades.

As governments, NGOs, and post-secondary communities seek to develop new community-based sponsorship models and improve access to education for refugees, Canada's SRP, created and implemented by WUSC, offers a successful model for other countries to emulate.

## What is WUSC?

Incorporated in 1957, WUSC is a Canadian-based NGO that works in the field of global development in more than 25 countries around the world. The organization has three key pillars of intervention in the creation of a better world for youth: education, employment, and empowerment.

In the Canadian context, WUSC engages a diverse network of students, post-secondary institutions, skilled volunteers, development agents, governments, and businesses as collaborators in its programming. The organization is active on more than 80 university, college, and CEGEP campuses across Canada through student-led WUSC Local Committees. These groups of students, administrative staff, and faculty members help raise awareness among their peers and in their communities about pressing global issues, particularly forced migration. They also play a pivotal role in supporting one of the organization's flagship programs: the SRP.

## What is the SRP?

WUSC's SRP is the only program of its kind to combine opportunities for higher education with resettlement for young refugees, while engaging post-secondary institutions and their students in refugee protection. This initiative is built upon a unique youth-to-youth support model, where campus-based student volunteer groups (WUSC Local Committees) provide critical academic and social support to refugee students. These committees are responsible for helping the newly arrived students navigate the Canadian post-secondary system and integrate into their new life in Canada.

Additionally, WUSC engages nearly one million Canadian youth each year to fund the program in a sponsorship model that relies significantly upon the financial contributions from both students (often through a tuition levy) and their campus administrations. By engaging with the program, hundreds of thousands of Canadian students further enhance their awareness and understanding of pressing global issues, while working together to build more welcoming communities for all newcomers to Canada.

Since the program began operating in its current format under Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program, the SRP has enabled more than 1,700 refugee youth to continue their post-secondary education in a safe and secure environment. Former refugee students, in turn, become ambassadors for the refugee response on their campus and beyond, as they provide insight to fellow Canadians into the challenges facing those forcibly displaced globally.



© WUSC Local Committee - University of Victoria



© WUSC Local Committee  
University of Toronto Scarborough



© WUSC Local Committee - McGill University

# CREATING EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR REFUGEE STUDENTS

## How Does the SRP Work?

The SRP operates under Canada's PSR Program, which enables WUSC to select refugee students, recognized by UNHCR, in their country of asylum and match them with sponsoring WUSC Local Committees at post-secondary institutions in Canada. The WUSC Local Committees at universities, colleges, and CEGEPs across Canada then sponsor under WUSC's agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the sponsors. These Local Committees and their post-secondary institutions take on the costs of education and settlement of sponsored refugee students for their first year in Canada, and provide essential integration support.

## Partnerships

While the SRP is managed centrally from WUSC's headquarters in Ottawa, Canada, its implementation requires the collaboration of many partners at the international, national, and campus levels. The following sections outline the roles and responsibilities of key partners who are involved in the recruitment, preparation, and matching of refugee students, and the program's delivery in Canada.

### International Partnerships

To facilitate the selection, preparation, and immigration of students, WUSC relies on the cooperation of many international partners, including IRCC, the UNHCR, a variety of government ministries in the refugees' host country, local NGOs, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In most cases, WUSC also works in collaboration with its own overseas offices, which provide local oversight to the SRP program in addition to carrying out other development programs. These partnerships are instrumental to the success of the program, particularly for the effective coordination of students' preparation for university, college, or CEGEP admission, and their arrivals in Canada on time for September classes. Table 1 provides an overview of key international partners and their roles as they relate to the program's delivery.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNER	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Canadian Embassy/IRCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview candidates to determine eligibility for resettlement/immigration</li> <li>• Coordinate medical and security clearances of students</li> <li>• Issue travel visas to Canada</li> <li>• Liaise with the IOM to secure students' travel arrangements to Canada in time to begin their studies</li> </ul>
UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify refugee status and registration of applicants in the country of asylum</li> <li>• Identify priority populations for resettlement</li> <li>• Provide guidance to WUSC and information on local context for refugees and that of students' country of origin</li> </ul>
Host Country Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant exit permits</li> <li>• Conduct security clearance at reduced cost</li> <li>• Verify academic documentation of students who graduated from their school system</li> </ul>
Local NGOs and/or WUSC Country Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the SRP in the refugee camps and amongst urban refugee populations in their countries of asylum</li> <li>• Shortlist candidates based on pre-determined criteria that are informed by immigration regulations and academic requirements of sponsoring institutions</li> <li>• Coordinate language proficiency tests</li> <li>• Coordinate and participate in interviews</li> <li>• Deliver advanced language classes and coordinate English or French proficiency exams</li> <li>• Coordinate Canadian culture orientations and academic preparations</li> <li>• Liaise between WUSC headquarters in Canada, SRP candidates, the IOM, and overseas visa offices</li> </ul>
IOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate the travel arrangements of successful refugee students</li> <li>• Provide Canadian Orientation Abroad prior to students' departure</li> </ul>

Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities of International Partners

## National Partnerships

National partnerships with post-secondary education associations and networks, student associations, and the federal government are critical to the program. These actors are best positioned to bring together stakeholders at various levels of universities, colleges, and CEGEPs across the country, advocate for greater support from the federal government, and facilitate the immigration of refugee students. Each of these actors plays a critical role in making the program possible. Equivalent bodies or similar actors can be found in other countries to create supportive, enabling environments for educational pathway initiatives. Table 2 provides an overview of key national partners and their roles as they relate to the program's delivery.

ORGANIZATION OR BODY	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Associations of Post-secondary Education Networks, Canadian Ministries of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the SRP and calls to action amongst their membership</li> <li>Connect WUSC to post-secondary institutions who are not yet involved in the program</li> <li>Advocate on behalf of the post-secondary community to the government</li> <li>Advocate for alternative credential assessments for refugees who have lost documentation</li> </ul>
Associations of Student Unions/Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilize campuses and student unions to support the SRP</li> </ul>
Federal Government/IRCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the policy foundation for resettlement and a mechanism through which the private sponsorship of refugee students can be facilitated</li> <li>Evaluate applications by sponsoring groups</li> <li>Grant and administer students' travel loans<sup>7</sup></li> <li>Fund integration services for immigrants and refugees in Canada</li> </ul>

Table 2: Roles and Responsibilities of National Partners

### WHAT IS THE PSR PROGRAM?

Unique to Canada, the PSR is a partnership between the Government of Canada or the Government of Quebec and organizations across the country such as WUSC, faith-based groups, community associations, humanitarian organizations, unions, and groups of five or more individuals. Under the PSR, these organizations and groups identify candidates for resettlement to Canada while IRCC assesses their eligibility requirements for resettlement<sup>8</sup>. Under the PSR, IRCC facilitates the refugee's arrival in Canada and private sponsors provide the individual with housing, financial support, and settlement assistance for the first year of her/his residence in Canada. After this time, the individual is expected to become independent.

### BENEFITS OF THE PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP MODEL FOR THE SRP

- Permanent residency allows WUSC to sponsor students for one year only. After 12 months, students are eligible for the same financial support available to other Canadian students.
- As Permanent Residents, students pay domestic tuition fees rather than costly international student tuition fees.
- This model makes the program less expensive to operate per student than supporting international students, and thus enables WUSC to sponsor more students each year.
- Stress is alleviated when students do not have to worry about maintaining their Canadian residency status or about being forced to return to their country of origin, which may still be conflict-affected, after the completion of studies.
- Permanent residency allows students to access employment opportunities as well as apply for loans, scholarships, and bursaries.
- Permanent residency increases integration and connections to the community, as students see their host community as their new home.
- Permanent residency provides the potential opportunity for students to sponsor their family members in the future.
- Permanent residents are eligible to apply for citizenship after three years.

<sup>7</sup> Refugees resettling in Canada are responsible for covering the cost of their travel to Canada. Since most refugees cannot pay for these costs upfront, the Government of Canada issues refugees a loan, which they are responsible for repaying soon after their arrival in Canada. This is called their "transportation loan" or "travel loan."

<sup>8</sup> Given the academic component of the SRP, civil society organizations' ability to pre-screen and identify candidates is key to this particular type of sponsorship program.

## Campus-Based Partnerships

The SRP provides a one-of-a-kind partnership opportunity for universities, colleges, and CEGEPs to directly respond to the increasing need for durable solutions and higher education opportunities for refugees. Post-secondary institutions are uniquely placed to build upon their expertise of working with international students to meet the needs of refugee youth, and enhance their employment outcomes after graduation. The SRP requires collaboration with campus administration, student associations, and student volunteers.

## Campus Administration

Campus administrators play two key roles in supporting SRP students. First, they provide financial support through tuition, residence, and/or meal plan waivers. They may also be able to provide bursaries or scholarships, which they dedicate to refugee students.

Second, most campuses support the program by providing flexibility with regards to admissions criteria for refugee students and deadlines for submitting official applications. Due to the contexts in which they have pursued their studies and/or urgency with which they have fled their country of origin, many refugee youth have incomplete academic and identification documentation, or may not have grades that reflect their learning abilities. As part of their commitments, sponsoring campuses designate an admissions officer who is familiar with the challenges refugees face to review the documents of SRP students each year, and take into consideration their unique barriers when evaluating their application. Table 3 provides more examples of partners affiliated with campus administration, and their roles and responsibilities.



*“I was very inspired by the direct, positive impact I could have in refugee students’ lives by being an active member of our WUSC Local Committee. I realized I could be a friend, a welcoming peer, and a mentor all in one to help make the students’ experiences in Canada the best they can be.”*

Cyrus Silverstrider, WUSC Local Committee Member, University of Toronto St. George Campus (Toronto, Ontario)

CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION PARTNER	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Admissions and Registrar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide WUSC with the academic requirements necessary for admission at their institution, and identify areas of flexibility for refugees</li> <li>Assess student profiles and documentation and confirm suitability at the institution and within their desired program of study</li> <li>Confirm and process SRP students' applications for admission</li> <li>Provide students with access to academic counselling services</li> </ul>
International Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist WUSC Local Committees to plan welcome orientations and deepen cross-cultural competencies</li> <li>Provide academic advising</li> <li>Offer guidance and support to SRP students</li> </ul>
Residence/Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide students with an accommodations fee waiver, in some cases</li> <li>Provide additional social and psycho-social support through Residence Advisors/Dons</li> </ul>
Awards and Financial Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide students with access to financial counselling services</li> <li>In some cases, provide cash and/or in-kind donations to help finance sponsorship (e.g. waived tuition, residence, books, and/or meal plan fees)</li> </ul>
Alumni Affairs and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some cases, allocate funds collected from alumni to support the SRP</li> </ul>
Institutional Services <sup>9</sup>	<p><b>Health and Wellness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide medical and mental health services through campus clinics</li> <li>Provide medical plan/insurance</li> <li>Provide counselling services</li> <li>Provide access to on-campus food banks</li> <li>Coordinate services and accommodations for students with special needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Employment and Career Centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide career counselling</li> <li>Provide job search, CV writing, and interview tutorials</li> <li>Provide access to employment databases and information on employment opportunities for students</li> <li>Coordinate internship and co-op programs</li> <li>In some cases, provide pre-established employment opportunities for incoming students</li> </ul> <p><b>International Offices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce student to Canadian laws and culture</li> <li>Coordinate city tours and facilitate familiarization with services</li> <li>Coordinate English or French as a second language services</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide access to recreation facilities</li> <li>Provide multi-faith spaces</li> <li>Coordinate peer mentorship programs</li> <li>Coordinate campus events calendar</li> <li>Provide access to clubs and student interest activities</li> </ul>

Table 3: Roles and Responsibilities of Campus Administration

## **WUSC Local Committees and Student Associations**

Crucial to the SRP's success is its unique youth-to-youth sponsorship model, which empowers young Canadian students to play an active role in the sponsorship of refugees. Local Committees raise funds and awareness for the program on their campus and in their community. The Local Committee often operates as a student club under the Student Union, which, in some cases, manages the funds that are raised to support the SRP students. WUSC Local Committee members also play a critical role in offering day-to-day social and academic support for SRP students. Table 4 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the student groups on campus.

STUDENT GROUP	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
WUSC Local Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secure the support of the university, college, or CEGEP in advance of sponsorship, and liaise with administrative partners to establish relationships and commitments to provide the services listed above upon student's arrival</li><li>• Educate key parties within the institution about the SRP and obtain their support (e.g. administration, admissions, students' union)</li><li>• Develop and implement a fundraising strategy by securing such forms of support as student levies; tuition, residence, and/or meal waivers; and/or donations</li><li>• Establish a budget and secure the funds needed to support the student for the duration of the sponsorship (in Canada, this is for 12 months) - see Appendix 1 for a sample budget</li><li>• Submit budget to WUSC and IRCC for approval, and adhere to it for the duration of the sponsorship, notifying both parties of any changes made to the budget during the sponsorship</li><li>• Provide an orientation to the campus and broader community and support the student to register for and access services such as health care</li><li>• Act as an ongoing social support network for the newly arrived student</li><li>• Facilitate integration of student into Canadian life, norms, and social activities</li><li>• Raise awareness on campus and in their communities about the refugee crisis and sponsorship in order to foster greater understanding, increase support for the SRP, and create more welcoming communities</li></ul>
Student Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize the WUSC Local Committee as an official club on campus<sup>10</sup></li><li>• Support Local Committee efforts to pass a referendum in favour of collecting a tuition levy (after program launch)</li><li>• Collect levies</li><li>• In some cases, manage collected funds and disseminate to SRP student monthly</li></ul>

Table 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Student Groups

<sup>9</sup> Many of the support services listed here (among others) are available for all students on campuses across the country. While not dedicated specifically for refugee students, these pre-existing services are integral to their integration on campus and the community as well as to their academic success.

<sup>10</sup> Becoming a club recognized by the university, college, or CEGEP enables access to services and resources provided to all clubs.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of WUSC Head Office**

WUSC coordinates the in-Canada components and the overseas processes of the SRP. In countries of asylum, WUSC coordinates the recruitment and preparation of students with relevant partners. As the holder of the sponsorship agreement with IRCC, WUSC also facilitates the overall immigration processes for refugee students, and with WUSC Local Committees.

In Canada, WUSC continuously works to increase the number of placements provided by institutions and the number of participating schools. Throughout the year, the organization provides training and support to sponsoring groups (Local Committees) in advance of the SRP students' arrival and for the duration of the sponsorship. WUSC also maintains regular contact with the SRP students and coordinates the monitoring and evaluation of students and the program. Table 5 provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of WUSC.

AREA OF SUPPORT	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Recruitment, Selection, Preparation, and Immigration of Refugees Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coordinate with partners in country of asylum to promote the SRP and shortlist candidates</li><li>Interview candidates and finalize the selection</li><li>Work with UNHCR, IOM, and the Canadian visa office to coordinate the immigration of students to Canada as Permanent Residents</li></ul>
National, Regional and Local Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provide two three-day annual trainings to Local Committees on supporting refugee students, fundraising, communicating with campus administration, public engagement, and cross-cultural competencies (trainings often coincide with other national conferences and are funded in part by WUSC, in part by student groups, and in part by the government)</li></ul>
Ongoing Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Follow up with students once in Canada, acting as a resource for refugee students</li><li>Development and distribution of campaign tools to support the introduction of the program at new campuses or increases in financial support to sponsor more students</li></ul>
Monthly Reminders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prompt student groups to complete tasks related to the current student they are sponsoring and relevant to the preparations required for the next student</li><li>Prompt refugee students to organize important activities such as obtaining Permanent Residency card and registering for classes in January</li></ul>
Annual Program Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complete semi-annual check-ins with refugee students and semi-annual evaluations of the sponsorship. Staff follow up on anything that may be flagged through these mechanisms. End-of-sponsorship evaluations are also conducted annually with sponsoring groups.</li></ul>

Table 5: Roles and Responsibilities of WUSC

# SPONSORSHIP BUDGETS AND FUNDRAISING

## Cost of Sponsorship

Financially supporting the student is an integral part of Canada's PSR program. The WUSC Local Committee is responsible for providing at least 12 months of financial support for the refugee student they are sponsoring. While each institution's budget and funding mechanisms are managed locally and differ from campus to campus to reflect the varying costs of living from community to community, each sponsorship budget is guided by IRCC and WUSC's minimum requirements that must be met in order to be approved<sup>11</sup>. On average, the cost per student is between CDN \$20,000 and \$30,000, which includes accommodations, tuition, other academic expenses, and basic living expenses for 12 months.

## Beyond the First 12 Months

The goal of the sponsorship is to equip students to be independent by the end of the 12-month period, so that they are on the road to autonomy in Canada while also continuing their studies. As Permanent Residents of Canada, students are able to apply for bursaries, student loans, and scholarships after their first year, similar to any other Canadian post-secondary student. As part of the integration process, WUSC Local Committees are responsible for connecting SRP students to employment opportunities on campus or within the community.



**60% of SRP students** earn scholarships and/or bursaries following their first year of study



**2 out of 3 SRP students** secure employment during their first year of study

## Funding Sources

Funding the SRP at the campus level requires a collaborative effort between the administration of the participating institution and the thousands of enrolled students who attend it. Donations in kind, such as waiving tuition and/or residence costs, along with student levies provide the funds for most of the refugee student sponsorships. This unique funding model enables a whole-of-campus approach to supporting refugee students financially, academically, and socially. It also ensures renewed funding each year and the long-term sustainability of the program once established on campus.

<sup>11</sup> According to Canadian legislation, the minimum amount accepted by IRCC for a one-year private sponsorship of an individual refugee is \$13,500. This amount can be calculated from both cash and in-kind donations. The amount for a WUSC sponsorship is higher than this because WUSC sponsorships also include tuition and other school-related expenses.

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“We want to let undergraduates know that they made this possible. By agreeing to pay just a little more, they’ve changed the lives of other students.”

David Mendez, WUSC Local Committee  
Co-President, University of Ottawa  
(Ottawa, Ontario)

The most effective SRP fundraising strategies are a combination of the following:

## Student and Faculty Levies

Student levies are an excellent way to secure stable, predictable, and lasting funds for the SRP. Such levies operate like a student tax for campus-based initiatives such as the SRP. To establish a student levy for the SRP, a Local Committee will usually run a referendum campaign, asking the student body to vote on having a compulsory fee for the SRP added to their annual student fees. In Canada, student levies in support of the SRP range from CDN \$0.50 to \$20.

The benefits of a student levy are significant. A levy demonstrates the students’ commitment to the SRP, and guarantees sustainable resources for sponsorship annually. Once in place, it is added to future students’ fees indefinitely. With this commitment, the broader student population feels greater ownership of the program and greater connectedness to the students who benefit from it. Additionally, the university, college, or CEGEP administration is more likely to match funding generated by student levies as they represent campus-wide commitment to the SRP.

Once the levy is in place, a Local Committee can worry less about fundraising and instead focus on other aspects of the sponsorship, such as providing academic and social support to the SRP student and raising awareness on campus about the refugee crisis in order to create more welcoming communities.

Those Local Committees that have strong support from faculty members on campus have been successful in also establishing a faculty levy for the SRP. This option is most effective when committees work closely with a faculty advisor who is a strong program supporter.

## Waivers

Waivers are an integral component of the SRP and one of the most effective ways to reduce costs. A campus could confidently support a sponsorship entirely through a student levy and waivers. The most common waivers are tuition, accommodation, and meal-plan waivers. The following on-campus groups can approve and/or facilitate these waivers:

- **University, college, & CEGEP administration:** bursaries, tuition waivers, etc.
- **Housing services:** residence waiver
- **Food service provider:** full or partial meal-plan waivers

# Fundraising

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## Public Donations

While donations support the program to a far lesser extent, securing donations from members of the broader community are a great way to engage various on- and off-campus groups in the SRP. Individuals and groups may be rallied to support sponsorships on campus through cash donations. Others may offer in-kind donations. For example, instead of fundraising \$300 for a bicycle for transportation, some campus groups have sought a donated one. Local Committees seek donations from the following on-campus groups:

- **Student union:** cash donations; help with campaigning for a student levy
- **Bookstore:** donations of books and/or school supplies
- **Faculty/staff associations:** cash donations, payroll deductions
- **Information services:** used computers

Off-campus groups such as the following have also supported the SRP through donations:

- **Businesses:** financial donations; in-kind donations (e.g. bicycle, computer)
- **Individuals:** financial donations
- **Local organizations (i.e. Rotary/Lions Club):** financial donations; support for event coordination

When providing financial donations, businesses and individuals may be eligible for charitable tax receipts, when their donation is in accordance with Canadian legislation on charitable giving.

## Fundraising Events

Whether by selling products and/or services or by organizing events, fundraising activities can both secure financial contributions and raise awareness about the SRP. Fundraising events can range from high profile galas to Feast or Famine dinners, and from charity garage sales to benefit concerts. While events may not provide a renewable source of funding, they do play an integral role in both raising funds and the profile of the SRP, which can be instrumental to sustained support for the program or proposing a new SRP student levy or an increase to an existing levy.

“We sponsored students just want to thank the whole university community. We don’t take it for granted. Students here are helping others in regions where their only hope is education.”

Daniel Makuach Akot, SRP Student  
studying Bio-pharmaceutical Science,  
University of Ottawa (Ottawa, Ontario)

# Funding the Operational Costs of the Program

## Operational Costs

The operational costs of the SRP make up a fraction of the program's total budget (13 per cent). However, securing operational funds can be challenging, as donors, governments, and foundations prefer to support students directly. In order to ensure a strong, sustainable program, WUSC builds operational costs into the budget of each sponsorship, otherwise known as the "contribution fund." The amounts in Table 6 provide a breakdown of approximate annual operational costs associated with supporting 80 campuses and sponsoring 150 students.

OPERATIONAL COST	APPROXIMATE AMOUNT PER YEAR (CAD)
Program promotion and new campus outreach	\$100,000
Sponsoring group training and ongoing support	\$305,000
Coordination of program overseas, including student recruitment, selection, and pre-departure preparations	\$440,000
Program management and administration	\$135,000

Table 6: Approximate Operational Costs for the SRP

## Operational Funding Sources

The long-term success of the program depends on a sustainable and renewable funding model. Currently, about 70 per cent of the one-million-dollar operating budget comes from contribution funds from institutions, which are submitted to WUSC annually for each student they wish to sponsor. WUSC also relies on contributions from governments, foundations, and individual donors to a far lesser extent than traditional development programs, therefore increasing the sustainability of the program. Contributions from each funder are outlined briefly in Table 7, below.

<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL OPERATIONAL BUDGET</b>
Contribution funds from institutions	Mandatory contribution per student sponsored, based on size of student population. Ranges from CAD \$3000 - \$5000 per sponsored student. Contribution funds finance overseas recruitment, selection, language classes, and the immigration process. They also support training and ongoing guidance provided to sponsoring campuses by WUSC head office.	68.5%
Foundations and individual donors	Unpredictable source of external funding. Supports various operational costs of the program.	5%
Provincial government	Because many of WUSC's post-secondary partners are based in Ontario, the province's Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development contributes funds to support the introduction of the program at new campuses and to provide ongoing support to those who already sponsor.	19.5%
Federal government	Funds contribute to awareness raising activities about newcomer integration, the refugee crisis, and other global issues.	7%

Table 7: Funder Contributions to the Operational Costs of the SRP

# IDENTIFYING STUDENT CANDIDATES

## Recruitment

Each year, WUSC works with UNHCR's implementing partners in education, local NGOs, and others working with refugee youth to issue calls for applications in the countries of asylum in which the organization operates the SRP. As of 2017, WUSC accepts applications from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Jordan, and Lebanon, but has sponsored students from 37 countries of asylum since the program's inception.

The selection of countries in which the program operates is dependent upon the unique country contexts, the size of program, and the presence of local partners and other WUSC programming.

## Application Requirements

WUSC accepts applications from students who are currently residing in a country in which the SRP operates. In order to qualify for the program, applicants must:

- Demonstrate that they meet the 1951 Convention definition of a refugee;
- Present a need for resettlement<sup>12</sup>;

- Have completed secondary school and have access to school-leaving certificates;
- Be proficient in one of Canada's official languages (English or French);
- Be single, without dependents<sup>13</sup>;
- Be between the ages of 17 to 25 (important for the peer-to-peer model); and
- Be self-reliant and mature<sup>14</sup>.

## Application Process

Applications are processed through partner organizations in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Lebanon, and Jordan. Applicants must write a cover letter that describes herself or himself, and they must indicate how they meet the basic criteria of the SRP. Their application should also include up-to-date contact information, a photocopy of all important academic records including previous TOEFL or IELTS score results, if applicable.

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<sup>12</sup> Resettlement is typically reserved for refugees who do not have any other durable solutions, for example through voluntary repatriation to their country of origin, or ability to integrate in their country of asylum.

<sup>13</sup> On occasion, WUSC will consider candidates who are single mothers, and may partner with another sponsorship agreement holder who can provide the additional support as needed.

<sup>14</sup> Students with special needs are encouraged and supported to apply, and successful candidates are matched with one of the many institutions in Canada who have special infrastructure to support their needs.

## Student Selection

Upon reception of the applications, candidates who meet the program's prerequisites are invited to take a pre-interview language assessment, which is either delivered by the British Council, or a WUSC implementing partner in the country of asylum. Applicants who meet a minimum level of language

proficiency to conduct an interview in one of Canada's languages of post-secondary instruction are then invited to attend an in-person interview with a selection committee. Selection panels are composed of a WUSC staff person from Canada, and a combination of UNHCR staff, Canadian visa office staff, and/or staff of a local implementing partner or NGO working in the area of education for refugees.

### **AIMING FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN RECRUITMENT**

Young women, and in particular young refugee women, face many barriers to accessing higher education in developing countries. In order to give women opportunities to apply and participate in the SRP in these contexts, WUSC makes special considerations in the application process for young women to account for the additional barriers they face. These considerations include lower academic and language application criteria for female applicants than for their male peers. WUSC also works with university, college, and CEGEP admissions offices to understand the contexts that are specific to women in the students' countries of origin and asylum. Still, in 2017, women accounted for only 33% of the SRP cohort. WUSC continues to explore strategies for increasing the number of young women sponsored through the program, including working with community leaders in refugee camps and contexts to raise awareness about the importance of educating girls and delivering in-camp education programs for girls and young women at the upper primary and secondary school levels.

# POST-SELECTION

## Pre-Departure Preparations in the Host Country

Once candidates have been accepted into the program, they begin pre-departure preparations that will begin to equip them with the information and skills required to be successful in Canada. While simultaneously completing the immigration process, implementing partners in the country of asylum provide successful candidates with pre-departure preparation and training including:

- Language courses and official language testing (IELTS/TOEFL)
- Computer proficiency courses (when needed)
- Cultural and academic orientations (either via distance or in-person by volunteers)

## Compilation of Students' Documents

Once refugees have been selected, WUSC collects information regarding their desired program of study, family ties in Canada, and language test scores. Students are then matched to participating post-secondary institutions based on their suitability and admission criteria.

## Student Matching

Each year, WUSC issues a call to institutions within Canada's post-secondary network to determine how many students each campus is able to support for the following school year. Through this process, WUSC confirms admissions criteria and each institution's

flexibility with regards to minimum requirements, as well as the budget in place for each sponsorship.

Once the students' portfolios have been compiled, WUSC sends each sponsoring campus the profiles of a few students who meet the admissions criteria of their institution for their review. Local Committee members engage with staff in the university, college, or CEGEP's admissions office to ensure that the office understands how the SRP operates. Before reviewing and ranking SRP candidates' dossiers<sup>15</sup>, Local Committees must consult their admissions offices to confirm whether the SRP students are indeed admissible to their desired program at the institution. In certain cases, WUSC may request that a Local Committee negotiate flexibility with respect to the admissions requirements of the proposed SRP student. Original transcripts and language testing scores are copied and sent to admissions offices. Originals are verified by WUSC and, on occasion, confirmed with Ministries of Education in the country of asylum. Finally, admission fees are waived.

## Immigration Process

As the SRP is part of a resettlement program, students must pass an interview with a Canadian visa officer and undergo medical and security screenings before their immigration application is approved by IRCC. Because they are granted Permanent Resident status upon arrival, they do not require student visas. Once the Canadian visa office issues the travel visa, it is the IOM who is mandated by IRCC to arrange their travel so that they can arrive in time to begin their classes in September.

<sup>15</sup> WUSC asks each successful candidate to prepare a dossier for Local Committees to review. Each dossier contains the candidate's post-secondary transcripts, English or French language test scores (e.g. TOEFL), biographical information, and a note about what they are looking for in a post-secondary degree (e.g. what program they would like to pursue).

# SOCIAL AND INTEGRATION SUPPORT UPON ARRIVAL

WUSC requires that candidates be between 17 and 25 years of age when applying for the SRP because the program is rooted in the idea of “youth sponsoring youth”. The vast majority of Local Committee members are undergraduate students under the age of 25. Since sponsorship involves committing to providing academic and social support, it is important that the SRP student and Local Committee member are able to relate to and learn from each other. Ideally, with “youth sponsoring youth,” SRP students are more likely to develop friendships and connect to social networks in their first year. The relationship that exists between the SRP student and the group of people who sponsor can be very rewarding when both sides have mutual understanding and respect.

Beyond the WUSC Local Committee, there are many pre-existing opportunities at colleges, CEGEPs, and universities that can support the social integration of new SRP students. Through activities such as first-year

orientation and events organized by the International Students Office, SRP students can immediately get involved in campus life and meet other first-year students. Clubs, sports teams, and religious groups on campus or in the community also provide students with opportunities to meet many people from Canada and abroad, and enable the student to explore various aspects of Canadian life.

While offering emotional support and providing the SRP student with opportunities to make new friends can ease challenges to adjusting to life in Canada, it is possible for the needs of refugee students to surpass the experience and abilities of the volunteer support group. In these cases, WUSC may solicit the support of trusted SRP alumni, or faculty and staff advisors at the student’s campus to provide guidance. In some cases, it is necessary to refer the student to services on campus, such as counselling, or to other services that are available in the community.



# CONCLUSION

UNHCR reports that while many conflicts around the world continue for decades, much of the funding for refugee education comes from emergency funds that do not account for long-term educational needs.

WUSC's SRP has developed a sustainable funding model that responds to the higher education needs of refugee youth while also providing them with hope for a better future through a durable solution in Canada.

Not only do graduates of the program go on to make important contributions to their communities - both in Canada and overseas - but the program also continues to provide a sense of hope for youth and their families still living in refugee contexts. Although small in size, it is a program with a large, sustainable impact that extends well beyond the individual. Volunteers involved in the SRP often remain committed to supporting refugees and refugee causes beyond graduation, whether in their workplace or community, or on national and international levels.

A 2007 study found that 97 per cent of sponsored students had completed or were in the process of completing their post-secondary program with many intending to further their education. The vast majority – 85 per cent – report having found work in their chosen fields after graduation. Many SRP students have not only graduated and found employment, but have also begun their own projects to support other refugees who remain in exile.

The success of these students is also a reminder of the potential that refugees have if given the opportunity to access higher education. Many of the program's alumni are dynamic members of their communities and volunteer their time to help others in their country of origin, country of asylum, or in their community in Canada. The Canadian experience shows that universities, colleges, and CEGEPs can make a profound difference in the lives of refugees, and we hope that the lessons learned through the SRP can help many other countries to expand durable solutions and educational opportunities for refugee youth around the world.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Is your organization, institution, or group interested in learning more? Reach out and talk to us! WUSC has decades of experience which we would be happy to share. Each country's rules and requirements vary. WUSC would be pleased to help provide guidance in designing a similar program within your unique context. Contact us to schedule a meeting or a conversation where you can ask about lessons learned on recruitment, selection, preparation of students, and leveraging international partnerships to support new educational initiatives. We look forward to hearing from you!

# APPENDIX 1

## Sample Budget for a 12-Month Sponsorship

### Mandatory Support

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
SRP Contribution Fund	\$200-\$5000
Initial settling in	\$50-\$300
Food	\$2000-\$4000
Rent and utilities	\$4000-\$8000
Personal expenses	\$1200-\$2400
Clothing	\$500-\$800
Emergency funds	\$1000
Tuition	\$3000-\$7000
Books and school supplies	\$750-\$1200

### Recommended Support

(Not mandatory but items WUSC strongly encourages Local Committees to provide for their students)

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Travel loan repayment	\$2500-\$3500
Computer	\$500-\$1000
AGA – SRP National training – Post-Arrival Session for newly arrived SRP students	\$200-\$1500
Long distance phone cards	\$100-\$200

### Optional Support

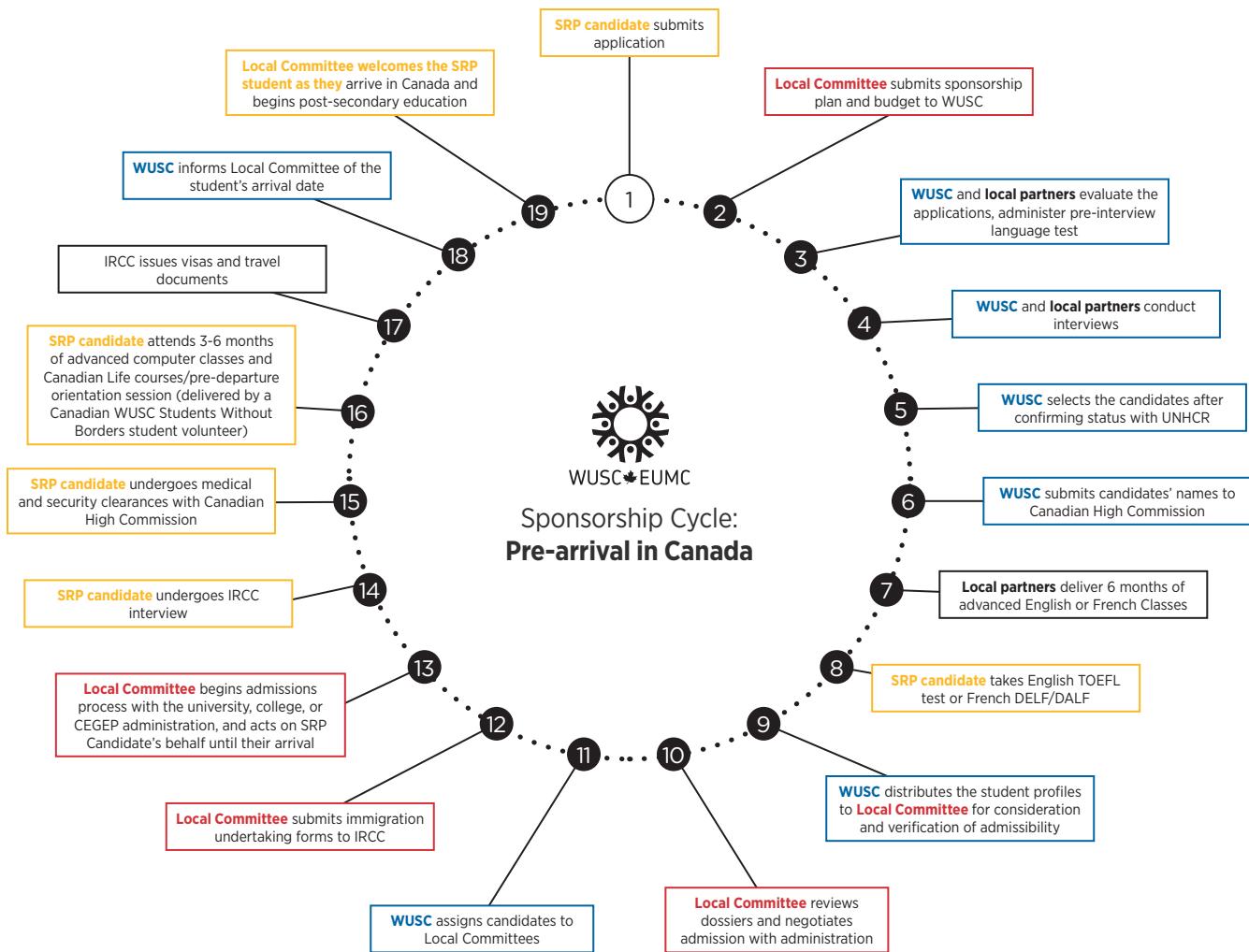
(Not mandatory but is included by some committees as part of their sponsorship)

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Orientation in Canada	\$100-\$250

# APPENDIX 2

## Sponsorship Cycle

The following diagram illustrates the sponsorship cycle, both overseas and in-Canada, before the arrival of the SRP student in Canada:







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