

THE IMPACT OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE INFLUX ON LOCAL SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT DISRUPTION LEADING TO INNOVATION



A community-based research project in Waterloo Region

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Funded by



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

RESEARCH PURPOSE

- Using Waterloo as a case study, the purpose of this nine-month project was to collaboratively explore the disruptive impact of the recent Syrian refugee influx on the way local communities support newcomers.
- This was done in order to:
 - determine how local communities can innovate to better support refugee newcomers
 - determine how public policy can reinforce these innovations

RESEARCH METHODS

**Document
review**

**Key informant
interviews**
(6 interviews
with 11
individuals)

**Community
survey**
(38 responses: 10
individuals + 28
groups)

**Organizational
focus groups**
(3 focus groups +
2 interviews, 14
individuals total)



SYSTEMS CHANGE REQUIREMENTS

VISION

- motivations + values guiding refugee support

STRUCTURE

- players + programs + partnerships + finances in supporting refugee newcomers

PROCESS

- practices to lead, plan, equip + evaluate refugee support

CUMMULATIVE IMPACT



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VISION

Drawing on values that have historically defined the region

- History of supporting refugee newcomers
- Community-building spirit (“barn-raising”)

Yet motivated in reaction to a current global refugee crisis

Leading to an enlarged vision for local refugee support

- Not business as usual - A “yes we can” attitude

“It’s part of our definition of our community... I don’t think I’ve ever given up the notion that we are a community of doers and responders.. it’s like barn-raising, if somebody needs something, we help them.” (Focus group participant)



STRUCTURE

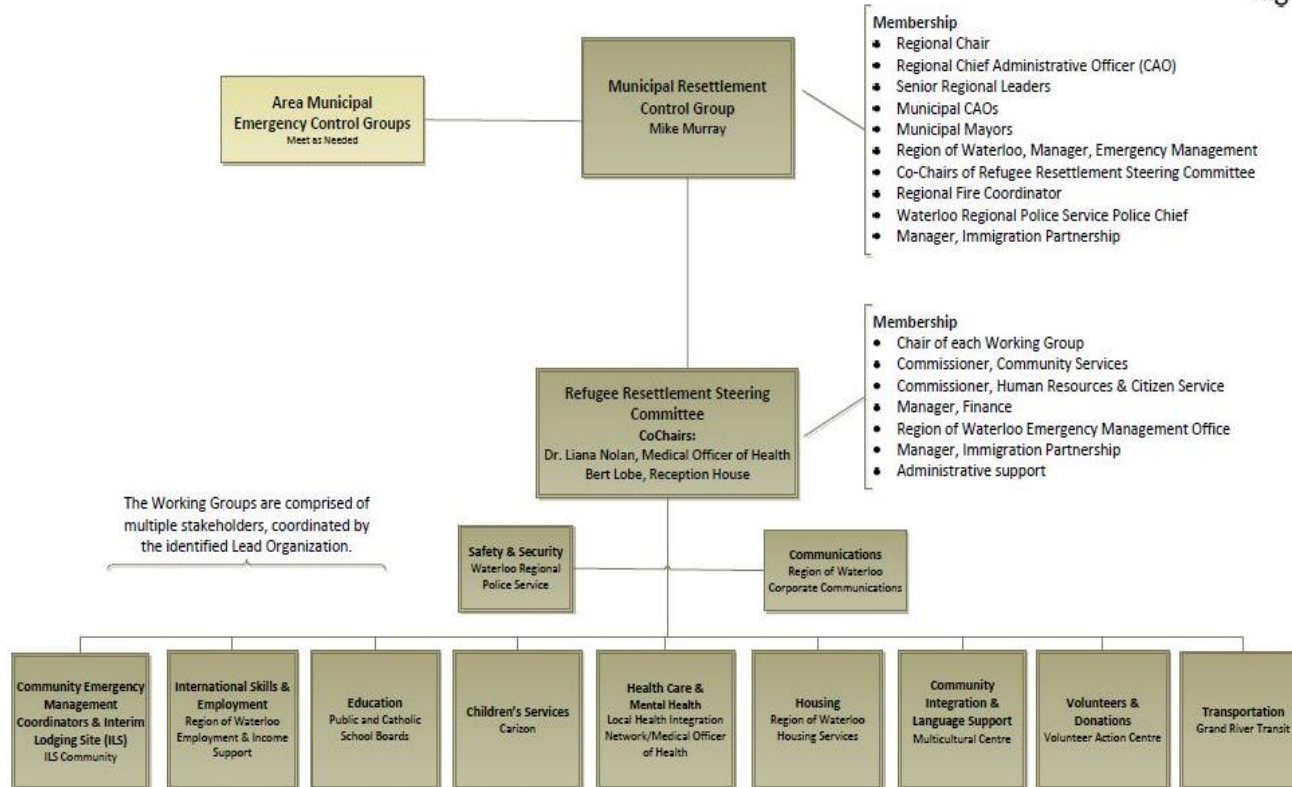
Waterloo Region

Syrian Refugee Resettlement Preparedness Plan

12/7/2015



Region of Waterloo



CENTRE FOR
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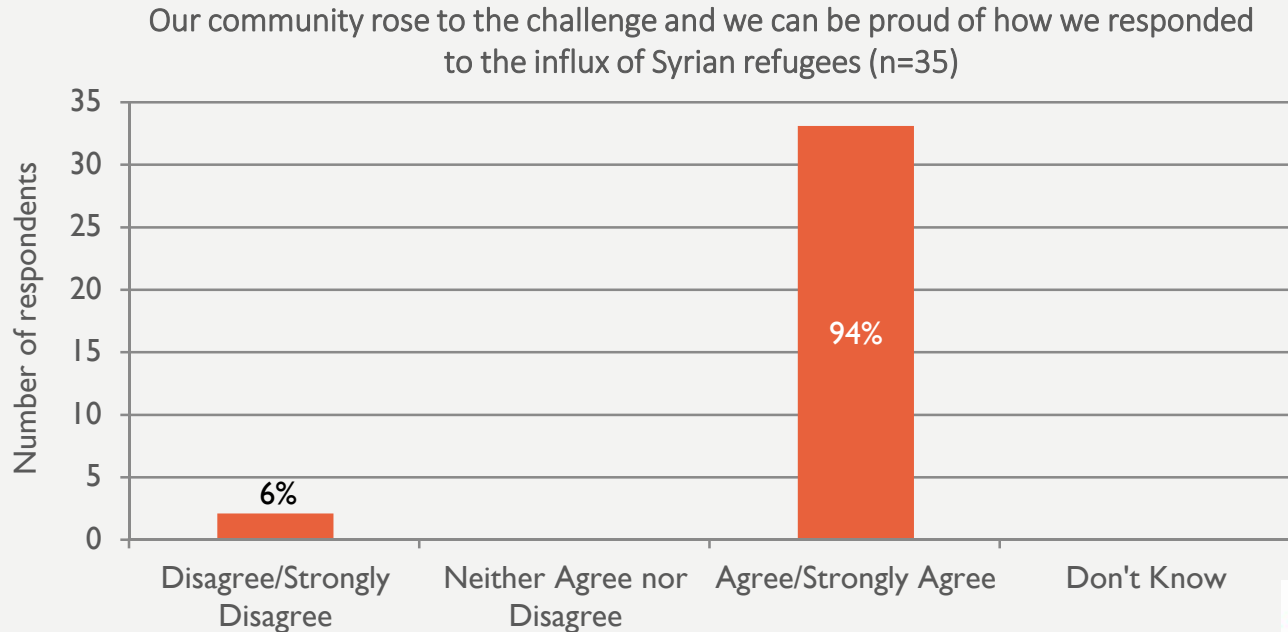
PROCESS

- **Designating leadership:** Gaining agreement on who is leading what early on
- **Coordinating communications:** Multi-strategy flow of information to decrease confusion and duplication
- **Leveraging local resources:** Integrating and coordinating donations of time, money and materials
- **Stripping of bureaucracy:** Working toward a common goal even if it meant doing things outside of normal procedures
- **Engaging new players:** Trying to connect people and groups into the system of support



IMPACT

Disruptive yes, but not overwhelming. Generally positive reviews.





IMPACT

Describe the community's attitude toward the Syrian refugee influx



IMPACT

Despite challenges, new opportunities led to significant and unanticipated benefits

- Unleashing of previously untapped resources
- Stronger leadership for supporting refugee newcomers
- Increased community and organizational awareness and involvement

Shift from a resettlement organization(s) to a resettlement community



RESEARCH APPROACH

Hallmarks of community-based research, striving to be...

- **Community-driven** – the research is practically relevant to those most affected by the issue under study and leads to their self-determination.
- **Participatory** - community members and researchers equitably share control of the research agenda through active and reciprocal involvement in the research design, implementation and dissemination.
- **Action-oriented** - the process and results are useful to community members in making positive social change and to promote social equity.

Israel et al 1998; Ochocka & Janzen 2014

RESEARCH APPROACH

Functions of community-based research, conducted in order to ...

- **Produce Knowledge** – gaining new insights through systematic and rigorous research.
- **Mobilize Knowledge** – sharing and communicating what has been learned in ways that enable people to use the research results.
- **Mobilize Communities** – building stronger relationships among people so that they are better equipped to use research learnings and together address pressing societal issues.

FOUR PHASES

Relational:

- Negotiating mobilization of knowledge and people

Technical:

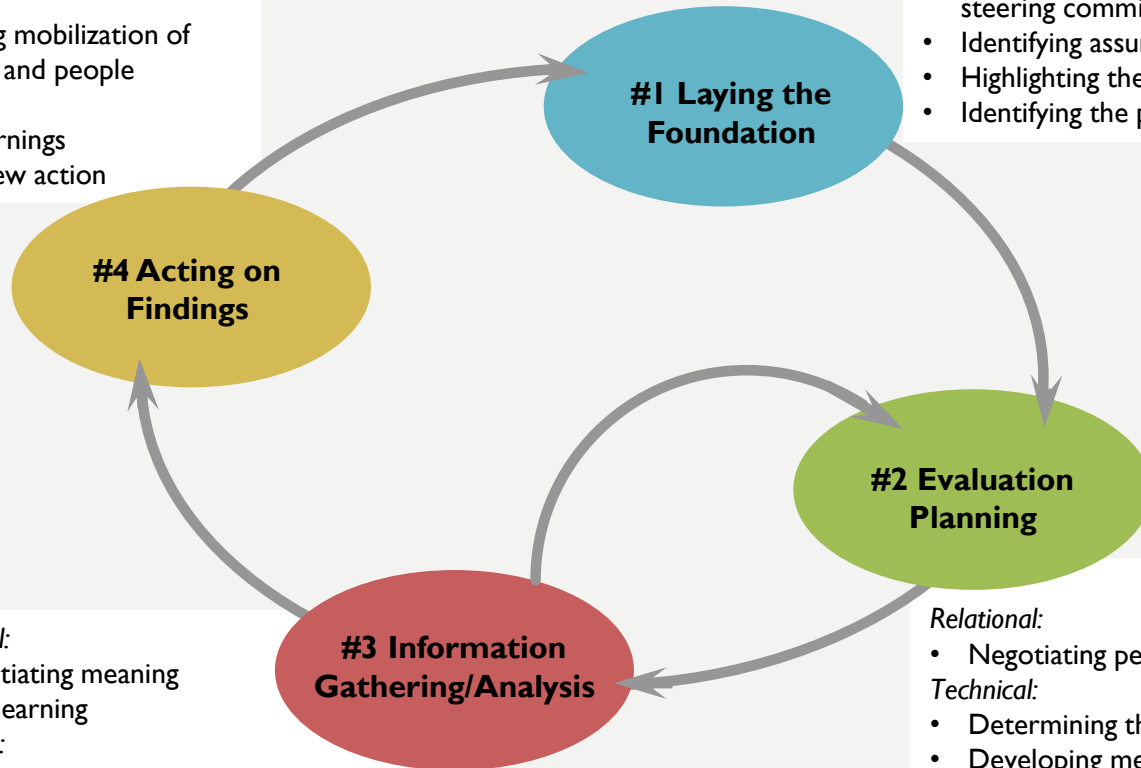
- Sharing learnings
- Initiating new action

Relational:

- Negotiating goals and roles

Technical:

- Identifying stakeholders and organizing steering committee
- Identifying assumptions about research
- Highlighting the context
- Identifying the purpose of the research



Relational:

- Negotiating meaning and learning

Technical:

- Gathering information ethically
- Analyzing and summarizing

Relational:

- Negotiating perspectives to include

Technical:

- Determining the research questions
- Developing methods for collecting information
- Developing an analysis plan



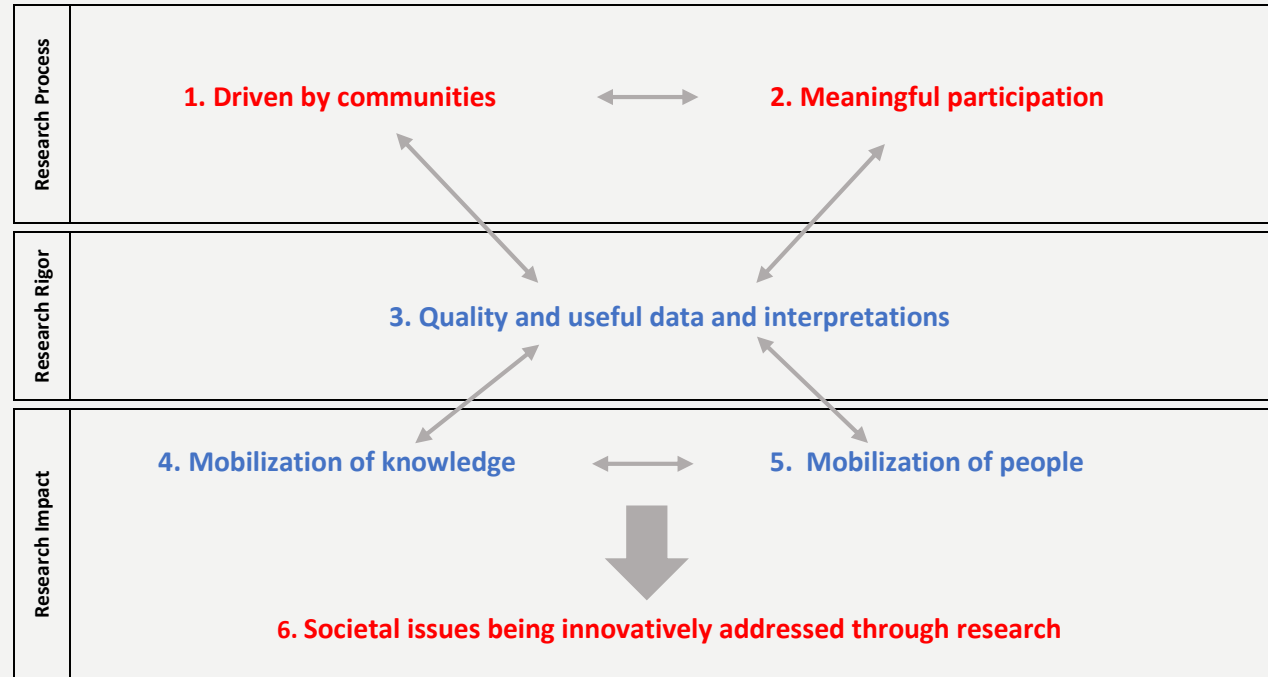
COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

CBR Hallmarks

- Community-driven
- Participatory
- Action-oriented

CBR Functions

- Knowledge production
- Knowledge mobilization
- Community mobilization

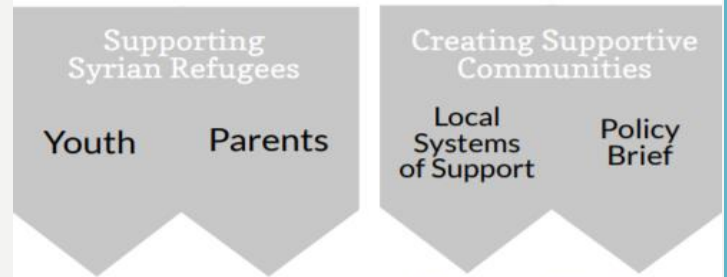


Janzen, R., Ochocka, J., & Stobbe, A. (2016). Towards a theory of change for community-based research projects. *The Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning*. 2(2), 44-64.

THANKS FOR LISTENING!

To learn more visit the project website
www.communitybasedresearch.ca.

Or contact Rich Janzen at
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Exploring the Syrian Refugee Experience in Waterloo Region
[\(link\)](#)

The impact of the Syrian refugee influx on local systems of support: disruption leading to innovation
[\(link\)](#)

Questions / Comments

Any questions/comments regarding these Syrian Refugee Resources and the related projects can be directed to CCBR at general@communitybasedresearch.ca