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# **UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF RESETTLEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP**

Learning from refugee men

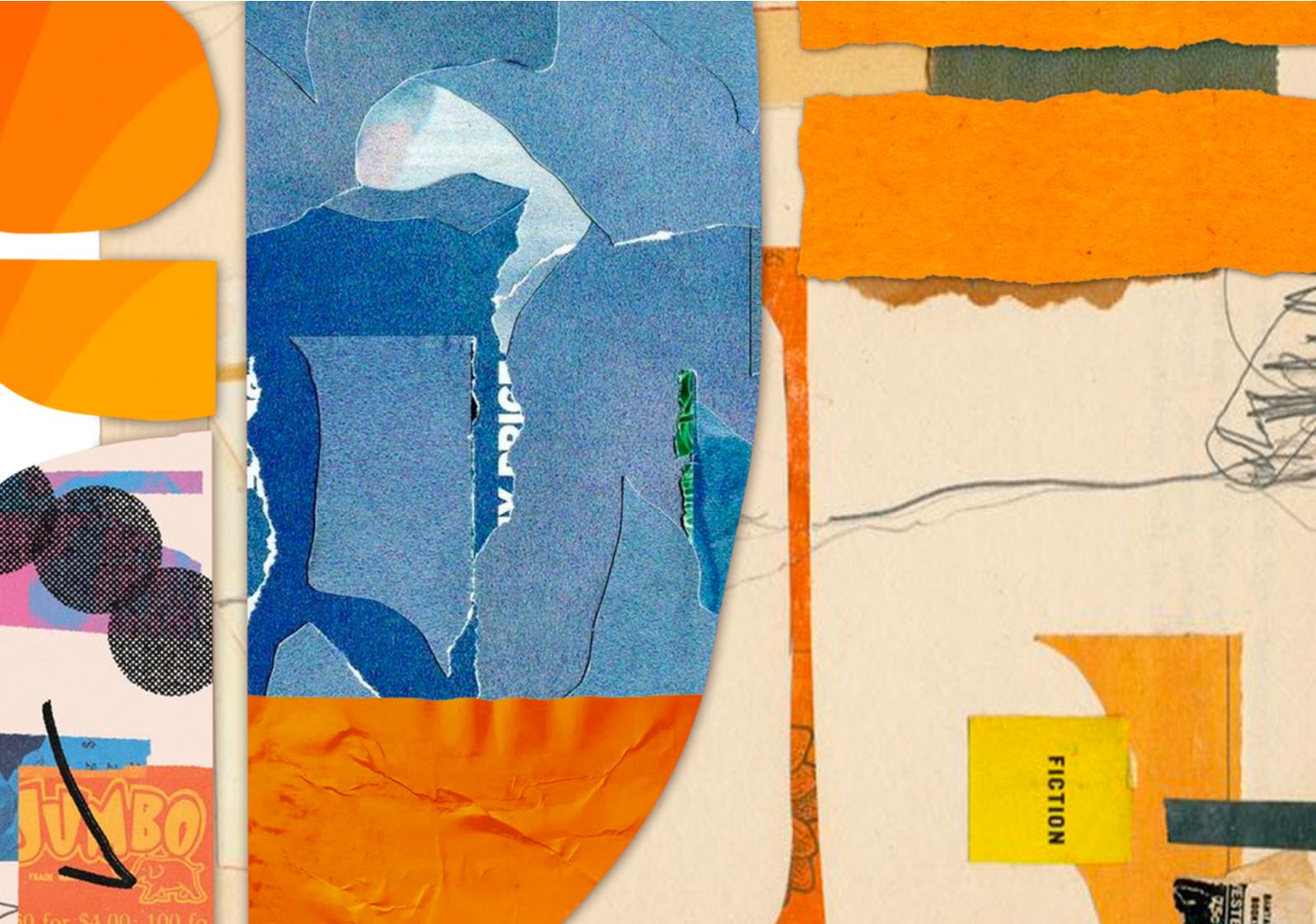
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# INTRODUCTION

To enhance our understanding of the experiences of those being resettled through Community Sponsorship, in January we facilitated a workshop with welcomed refugee men who had arrived in the UK through this scheme.

The purpose of the focus group was to learn from the men about the misconceptions surrounding resettlement to the UK. The aim was to utilise the learning from the focus group to guide and enhance Reset's work on training, advice, and support to Community Sponsorship groups. This included the adaptation and development of resources and training.





## Method

A focus group was conducted with six Experts by Experience: men who had arrived in the UK through Community Sponsorship with their families in the past two years. The approach adopted was collaborative and trauma informed, ensuring that facilitators were mindful of the potential for participants to be triggered and equipped to provide support and service sign-posting as needed.

The research was conducted remotely with the focus group taking place online via Zoom. Utilising a collaborative approach helped to ensure that participants' voices were heard. The focus group lead facilitator had lived experience of resettlement and this helped to create a sense of ease within the group, with the facilitator able to relate to much of the discussion which encouraged open participation. Furthermore, the participants worked collectively to agree on some rules for working together, prior to commencing the focus group.

# Men's Experiences

Overall, the participants shared a feeling of joy arriving in the UK, but also anxiety as they did not know what their lives were going to be like in this new country. They talked of the challenge resettled family's face in not knowing how they will adapt to the new society once they are actually here.

The participants had been made aware of what life in the UK was like before they departed their host country, as they had attended some training about UK life and connected with other people who had already been resettled. They spoke positively about the UK, and their pre-arrival training had helped to ensure they were not too surprised. One participant said that he feels he is living in paradise now that he is in the UK.

Another participant explained that they and their family fled from the war and killing in Syria to Lebanon. In Lebanon they were shocked as they had to endure a miserable life, lived in poverty, there was an absence of the most basic human rights, and they were not respected in Lebanon. When they came to the UK, they were very happy.



"I am living in paradise now that I am in the UK."



The participants shared that they felt comfortable in the UK and that they are treated with respect and love. None felt disappointment about their new lives here. They highlighted their appreciation for the continuous support and care they receive from their Community Sponsorship groups that have welcomed them and local charities.

Social life in the UK was characterized as positive; the participants talked about how kind and helpful their neighbours were when they arrived and how supportive their Community Sponsorship groups are.

Collectively they agreed that the main challenge was learning English and that such limited language skills was the main obstacle to their integration into society.

Many of the participants had not received much education so they found that returning to education was quite challenging. They agreed that it takes a long time to learn the language and that English is a difficult language to learn.



The opinions of the participants were unified about the health care in the UK. One participant said that he had to wait six hours in the emergency department to be seen. Some of the men added that in their home country, the health care process of attending hospital and obtaining medications was much quicker.

On the other hand, they all expressed satisfaction and joy with the educational services in the UK. A few participants expressed their concerns around some elements of the school curriculum that were being taught to their children, and which they felt did not align with their religious beliefs; particularly the teaching of sexuality and gender within the schools.

Regarding employment, the majority of the men have not yet obtained work. One of the men highlighted that the main obstacle was not having strong enough language skills to be able to communicate with others; this being essential for integration into the field of employment.



There was some frustration and fear around housing and rental prices. One participant expressed his frustration of being unable to find alternative accommodation with affordable rent and another stated that it was unsettling only having a temporary contract. The main concern was high rental prices and having a low income.

One participant described his concerns as a father needing to support his family, but having a disability which requires long term support and which currently prevents him from seeking employment. He is anxious to find affordable housing and support his family.

Some of the men would like to be able to stay in their homes for a longer period and others said that they would like to be able to access financial loans due to the high cost of living, particularly the cost of some foods, to help them and their families get by until they can start work.

The men all stated that they would like greater access to halal food shops. Some said that there are not any mosques in the area and so they have to travel far if they want to pray, which they are not used to. One family has to travel more than one hour to get to the closest mosque.



# What we Learnt

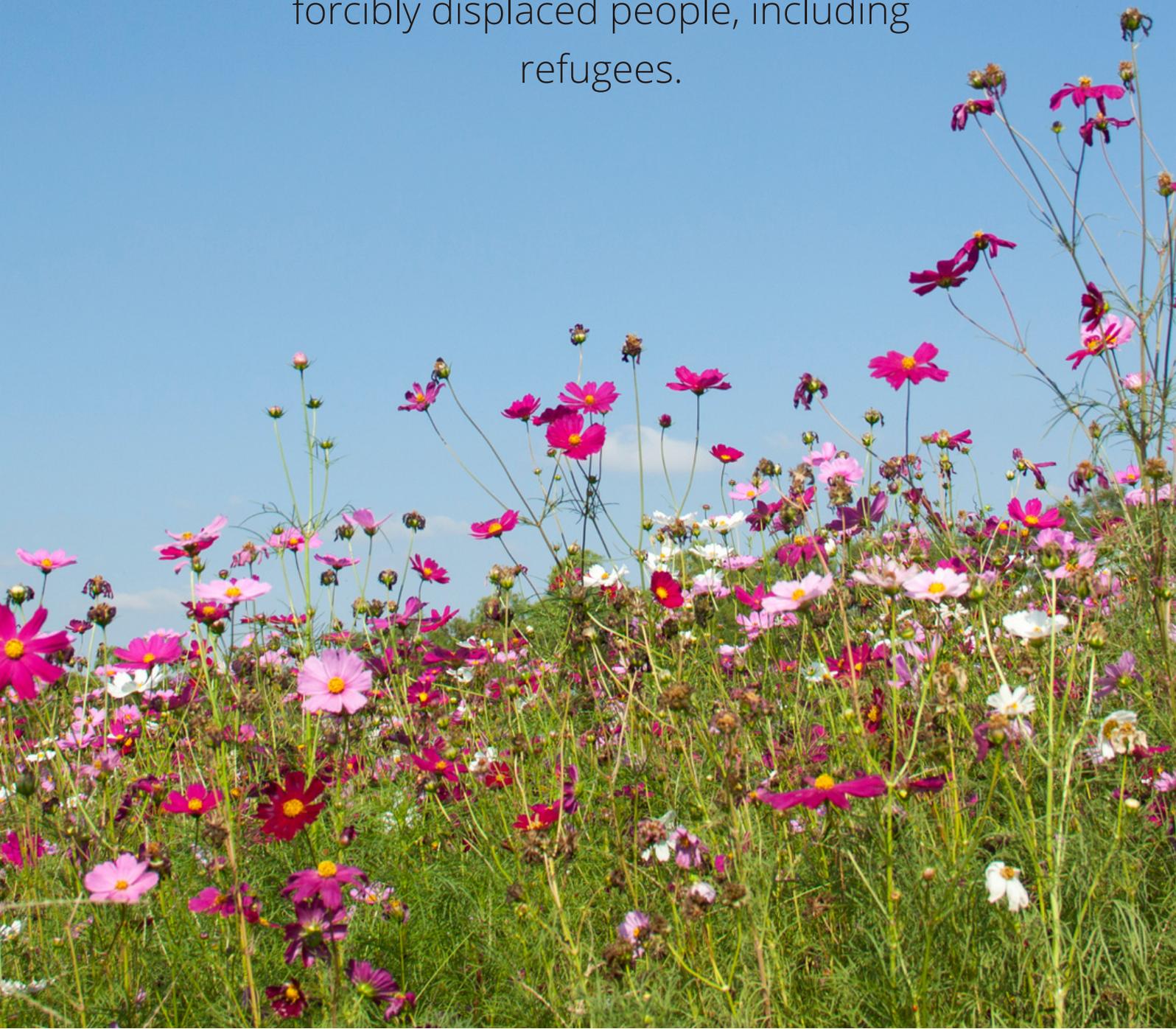
The focus group provided valuable insights into the expectations and realities of resettlement to the UK through Community Sponsorship. The participants shared their experiences of struggling with language barriers, obtaining work, and concerns related to affordable housing. They also spoke of the kindness and support they have received from their Community Sponsorship groups, local charities and their neighbours, highlighting the strength of Community Sponsorship.

Prominent themes that came up for the participants were anxiety about not knowing what life would really be like living in the UK, despite some prior knowledge of the country, and the challenge of learning English and worries about future housing possibilities. This emphasises the importance of Community Sponsorship groups understanding the emotional journey of resettlement and being equipped to support these common concerns. Integration takes time and will be a unique journey for everyone. Expectation management is a key part of Community Sponsorship and plays a significant component in Reset's training and support.

We understand that these findings are limited given the number of participants and sole gender of participants. However, the findings provide a basis for understanding some of the expectations and realities of resettling to the UK through Community Sponsorship. Further focus groups would add valuable knowledge to deepen this understanding.



We would like to say thank you to Wissam Asad for leading the men's focus group. Wissam arrived in the UK in 2022 through the Neighbours for Newcomers initiative, a community-led welcome of skilled forcibly displaced people, including refugees.





And remember that

# we are here to support you

If you want to talk to our team, learn more about Community Sponsorship, or have some questions then our door is always open for you.

You can also go onto our website to find out more information on Community Sponsorship in the UK.



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