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# **Civil society contributions to the integration of refugees in Norway: A case study of the Norwegian Red Cross Refugee Guide Program in Bærum Municipality**

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# Declaration

I, Amna Ali declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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Amna Ali

June 30th, 2020 Ås, Norway

# Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative case study that investigate the contribution of the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) to integration of refugees. The thesis taking the NRC's Refugee Guide Programme in Bærum municipality as a case study.

The main themes of the thesis are the contribution of Norwegian Red Cross to integration of refugees in Bærum municipality, the role of the Refugee Guide Programme to integration of refugees in Bærum and the sustainability of the Refugee Guide Programme in Bærum.

Through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations with the key stakeholders involved in the Refugee Guide Programme. The thesis found that NRC's Refugee Guide Programme is able to contribute for the integration of refugees in Bærum municipality. The findings show that both refugee and guide informants have been affected by their participation in Refugee Guide Programme. The findings show that there were many pragmatic effects experienced, primarily by the refugee informants. These pragmatic effects included aspects such as practicing the Norwegian language, building a social network, finding work, and being active within the local community. Additionally, some refugee informants adopted or accepted new patterns, attitudes, or behaviours. However, there are many weakness and strengths that influences the sustainability of Refugee Guide Program and its impact on integration of refugees in Bærum municipality.

# Table of contents

<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	1
Research objectives and questions .....	2
Background .....	3
<b>2 Conceptual and theoretical framework</b> .....	15
Definitions .....	5
Norwegian integration policy .....	7
NGOs in integration of refugees .....	8
Norwegian Red Cross integration efforts .....	9
Norwegian Red Cross's refugee guide programme .....	13
Refugee Guide Programme in Bærum municipality.....	15
<b>3 Methodology</b> .....	28
Qualitative methods .....	16
Study area and period .....	17
Study participants .....	18
Sampling approach .....	19
Fieldwork preparation and contacting the informants.....	20
Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and Observation .....	24
Document Analysis.....	24
Writing and analysis of data.....	25
Ethical Considerations.....	25
Challenges.....	27
Limitations of the study.....	28

<b>4 Findings</b> .....	42
<b>Interviews</b> .....	38
Integration challenges .....	30
Integration polices.....	31
The role of NRC to integration.....	31
RGP objectives and activities .....	33
The impact of RGP .....	34
Challenges and weakness .....	35
Strengths .....	36
Follow-up and evaluation .....	37
Sustainability .....	38
<b>Focus group discussion</b> .....	39
<b>Observation</b> .....	42
<b>Analysis and discussion</b> .....	54
The role of NRC in integration in the Bærum municipality .....	45
The contribution of the Refugee Guide Programme (RGP) to integration in the Bærum municipality .....	48
The sustainability and prospects of RGP in the Bærum municipality .....	54
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	56
<b>References</b> .....	59
<b>Appendix</b> .....	60

## **Abbreviations**

NRC	Norwegian Red Cross
Bærum RC	Bærum Red Cross
RGP	Refugee Guide Program
UDI	The Directorate of Immigration
IMDi	The Directorate of Integration and Diversity
NMJPS	From Reception Centre to the Labour Market-an Effective Integration Policy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
NPOs	Non-Profit Organizations
NAV	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
IOM	International Organization for Migration





# 1 Introduction

There are numerous reasons why people choose to migrate to another country, including family unification, love, work, and war. The most common reason to move to Norway is work, but the number of asylum seekers has been on the rise, especially from countries such as Eritrea, Somalia, and Syria, where many need protection and therefore seek status as refugees (Statistics Norway, 2016). Integration of refugees in the Norwegian society is an important goal for society and for the refugees in terms of the economic and cultural benefits of individuals and the security and stability of the country. Integration is a long process and may be quite challenging, as it requires a significant effort and commitment from both the host country and the refugees (IMDi, 2008).

In this research project I will study the civil society contribution to the integration of refugees in Norway by making a case study of the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) Refugee Guide Programme (RGP), which is the primary refugee integration programme of the NRC in the Bærum municipality.

To conduct this research, a case study will be used to obtain the best possible picture of the Refugee Guide Programme in the Bærum municipality. Specific research questions will be answered and analyzed through a qualitative study based on interviews, focus group discussion, observation, and interactions with actors as individuals and in groups.

I have chosen this topic because it is important to document and understand the impact of programmes for integration. Integration requires the efforts of both the refugees and Norwegian society; the Refugee Guide Programme brings the two parties together to achieve this in a unique and practical way. The problem statement of the research is therefore: How does the Refugee Guide Programme (RGP) of the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) contribute to the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality and thereby contribute to achieving the organizational objectives of the Norwegian Red Cross in the field of migration and refugee support?

## **Research objectives and questions**

The research addresses the following objectives and research questions:

### **Objective 1: To contribute to the understanding of how civil society organizations contribute to the integration of refugees in Norway.**

- What are the major challenges of integration faced by refugees coming to Norway?
- What are the main policies of the government?
- What is the role of civil society organizations within this policy, and who are the main actors and what are their major programmes?

### **Objective 2: To document and understand the role and contribution of the Refugee Guide Programme of the Norwegian Red Cross to the integration of refugees.**

- How does the NRC participate in the integration of refugees nationally and in the study area?
- What are the main objective, activities, and impact of the Refugee Guide Programme on integration of refugees in the study area?
- How does the Refugee Guide Programme contribute to achieving the organizational objectives of the Norwegian Red Cross in the field of migration and refugee support?

### **Objective 3: To assess the sustainability and future prospects of the Refugee Guide Programme.**

- What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Refugee Guide Programme?
- Does the Programme appear sustainable (resources, feasibility, political support)?
- What alternatives exist today or could be developed?

## **Background**

Immigration to Norway is a long-standing historical practice that has received much public and political attention in recent years. According to Statistics Norway's Information Centre (2017), a total of 238,281 persons with a refugee background were living in Norway in May 2020. This corresponds to 30.1 percent of immigrants in Norway and 4.4 percent of the total population. Somalians still form the largest group with a population of 27,600, followed by Iraqis (20,800), and Syrians (19,900). Eritreans form the fourth largest group with 14,100 persons.

The arrival of people who are seeking protection and security into Europe was at a high level in 2015 and 2016 because of a large number of refugees fleeing the war in Syria, in addition to a significant number of immigrants from Africa, who may have been escaping social, political or economic adversity or persecution and were therefore seeking a better life in Europe. A small percentage of immigrants to Europe have made their way to Norway (UDI, 2017).

To make the integration of refugees into Norwegian society as smooth and effective as possible requires us to have a broad understanding of how the integration process works and to what extent the integration policies and programmes are successful, because the immigrants to Norway, including refugees, are still struggling to live their lives normally and find it extremely challenging to be a part of society, as confirmed by the rate of unemployment among immigrants (IMDi, 2008).

Furthermore, there continues to be debate about what is meant by successful and effective integration policy and programmes, how these can be defined and measured, and what should be the roles and responsibilities of governmental and non-governmental bodies, in addition to those of the refugees themselves, in the processes of successful integration (IMDi, 2008).

## 2 Conceptual and theoretical framework

### Definitions:

The conceptual framework is necessary to establish a common understanding of the perspectives and definitions used in the research. In addition, defining and operationalizing the research concepts will provide some of the criteria applied to measure the empirical data (Adcock & Collier, 2001, Berg & Lune, 2012: 39). Hence, some of these definitions will be used to analyse the data.

I identified central concepts in the research to be ‘migrant’, ‘asylum seeker’, ‘refugee’, ‘person with refugee background’, and ‘integration’.

I consulted the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) as the main references for my research concepts, because they are among the primary governmental and non-governmental agencies working in this field in Norway.

The International Organization for Migration IOM (2011) defines **migrant** as a ‘person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is’.

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI), defines **asylum seekers** as follows: ‘A person is called an asylum seeker if he or she has applied for protection (asylum) in Norway and the application has not yet been finally decided’.

According to UDI, an individual is only an asylum seeker from the time he or she reported to the police in Norway and applied for asylum until UDI has made the final decision regarding his or her application. After the final decision to their applications, they are no longer called asylum seekers: if they received a positive answer, they are granted a residence permit as a refugee or on humanitarian grounds. If their application was rejected by UDI, they must leave Norway.

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI), defines **refugee** as ‘a person who meets the requirements for being granted protection (asylum) in Norway’.

**Person with refugee background** ‘refers to persons resident in Norway who have come to Norway as refugee’ (Strøm,2018).

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity IMDi (IMDi, 2008, p. 9) states that ‘**Integration** is a two-way process that involves immigrants being included in society, participating in the labor market, and having equal opportunities. This requires immigrants to learn the language, become qualified for work and respect Norwegian laws and regulations. It also requires the general population to adapt to the new multicultural environment at work and in the community’.

## **Theoretical framework**

The objective of the theoretical framework is to provide an overview of the theoretical framework that is used in this thesis to analyse the data, and thus provide a theoretical overview of the Norwegian Red Cross and its contribution to integration, mainly through the Refugee Guide Programme, as it is understood in this study.

The overview is based on the state’s integration policy and the efforts of non-governmental organizations toward integration of refugees by focusing on the Norwegian Red Cross and then the Refugee Guide Programme. Appropriate key findings of this review are considered here.

## **Norwegian Integration Policy:**

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is the governmental body responsible for migration and immigration, including the processing of asylum applications as well as the running of reception centres for asylum seekers. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) acts as a competence centre and a driving force for integration and diversity.

To achieve the government’s policy of integration and diversity, IMDi collaborates with municipalities, government agencies, immigrants groups, civil society organisations, and the private sector (IMDi, 2016). According to IMDi (2012), the role and responsibility of IMDi occur after UDI’s work is completed.

IMDi is responsible for the person who has been granted residence permits in Norway by UDI. The primary responsibility of IMDi includes many tasks, which are: (1) the resettlement of the refugees in the municipalities; (2) running the introduction programme which aims to provide classes in Norwegian and social studies; (3) functioning as a competence centre; (4) efforts aimed at diversity and dialogue, in addition to efforts toward equality concerning public services. Moreover, IMDi has also different administrative tasks like administrating financial grants, such as grants to municipalities and to voluntary organisations working to promote diversity and integration, research and development, documentation, and information and guidance through web portals, publications, networks, etc. (IMDi, 2016).

The Norwegian integration policies toward integration usually focus on the employment aspect as one of the most influential aspects of integration. In May 2016, the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security launched an integration policy called the white paper. This policy began based on the migration situation in Europe and Norway (NMJPS, 2016).

According to this policy (NMJPS, 2016), the entrance of migrants with a refugee background into the labour market or educational programmes were the main issues. The primary motivation behind this focus is the reliance of migrants with a refugee background on the cash benefits of the Norwegian welfare system. The Norwegian welfare model is dependent on high participation in the workforce, which is not the case when it comes to the refugees' reality, because the cash benefits require no commitment to work. This can mean participation in the labour market is scarcely profitable. In addition, benefits such cash-for-care for the migrants and refugees who have no connection to the labour market can weaken the motivation to participate in the labour market.

Until now, the low rate of employment and the skills gap among the migrants, especially migrants with a refugee background, have remained the primary challenges regarding integration. These have spurred the launch of Norway's new integration policy. 'Integration through knowledge' is the government's integration strategy for 2019–2022, published by the Ministry of Education and Research (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018).

According to Kunnskapsdepartementet (2018), Integration through knowledge was confirmed in October 2018 as one of the government projects to implement an integration boost from 2019 until 2022. The most crucial goal of the integration strategy is that more immigrants participate in working and social life. The new integration policy claims immigrants who are living and stay in Norway must contribute and be a part of small and large communities in Norwegian society.

The strategy emphasises that the most critical significant challenge in the integration field is the low employment rate among migrants, especially refugees and women. Since the refugees are lacking the efficiency and skill required by working life in Norway, refugees enjoy less employment and less job security. The main feature of the integration through knowledge strategy is the strong commitment to education, qualification, and competence. Those main features can help immigrants gain the knowledge and skills that they need so that they can come into the work market, argues the new strategy. The strategy also includes intensifying efforts against exclusion to ensure greater participation in society (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018).

According to Kunnskapsdepartementet (2018), the main goal of the 'Integration through knowledge' strategy is a higher level of participation in work and social life. The integration strategy has four focus areas: 1) education and qualification; 2) work; 3) everyday integration; 4) the right to live a free life.

### **NGOs in integration of refugees:**

Integration requires the efforts of the authorities and refugees, where the authorities provide good opportunities, and the refugees must do their own work, specifically learning the language and developing skills and gaining experience to find work. All this requires the efforts of many public service actors as well. According to IMDi (2008), integration demands the efforts of the state, society, and refugees.

According to the UDI (2004), the issue of integration requires extraordinary amounts of policy coordination across the entire public sector. Perhaps more importantly, it also requires



extraordinary levels of coordination between governmental and non-governmental bodies (community institutions and civil society).

Government agencies are certainly not the only bodies in the field of migration and integration. It is important to work with the market and civil society as important forces in driving the dynamics of migration and integration. These two forces give migration policies a combination of support (UDI, 2004).

In the literature, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (COSs), non-profit organisations (NPOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and formal and informal associations are examples of relevant contributors in the field of international politics. In addition to the public and private sectors, these kinds of organisations are considered as a third sector, which plays a critical role worldwide through its work and services (Kallman, M., Clark, T., Wu, C., & Lin, J., 2016).

According to Bygnes (2017), Norway enjoys a particularly well-organised volunteer life, because this is one of the pillars of Norwegian social democracy. In Norway, the voluntary effort benefits individuals, or groups at the level of Norwegian society. Volunteer measures were taken during the Norwegian refugee crisis of 2015, which was sponsored by both national and international organisations.

## **Norwegian Red Cross integration efforts**

As part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC), the Norwegian Red Cross was founded in 1865 and works to implement its mission to ‘reveal, prevent and alleviate human suffering and distress’ (NRC, 2009, p. 1).

The Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) aims with its programmes and activities to offer relevant services through 400 local branches in 19 districts throughout Norway by depending on the local knowledge and resources of the volunteers who are working in their own communities as well as working internationally with other national societies (NRC, 2009).

NRC has a unique role as a humanitarian actor in the field of migration and integration in Norway and worldwide. Based on the NRC mandate, assisting migrants and refugees all over the world is part of the NRC programmes and activities. NRC works to ensure that migrants and refugees have access to fundamental rights such as health care and contribute to the inclusion and recognition of refugees' own resources and abilities (NRC, 2019).

The NRC has argued that Norwegian authorities alone cannot give refugees and immigrants a good start to life in Norway. According to NRC (2015), the organisation has made a tremendous effort in the integration of refugees. NRC has a partnership agreement with IMDi and addresses integration challenges through the following specific aspects: 1) many migrants feel lonely and isolated; 2) language barriers; 3) after completing the introduction program, many struggle to find employment; 4) unemployment rates among immigrants are three times higher than for native Norwegians; 5) integration is a two-way process and cannot be the sole responsibility of the state.

Today, NRC offers several different activities upon reception, such as Norwegian training groups, tour groups, children's activities, and conversation groups. Even after settlement, NRC has several other activities for refugees who are residents, such as a refugee guide, Norwegian training, and social meeting places. Through these activities in the local community, the refugees learn Norwegian and gain relevant expertise and a larger network. NRC experiences that refugees' sense of belonging to Norway is created through positive relations with 'ordinary people' in the local communities (NRC, 2009).

### **Norwegian Red Cross's Refugee Guide Programme:**

According to NRC (2015), the **Refugee Guide Programme** (RGP) is 'a "buddy system", in which a volunteer and a newly settled refugee are brought together for a 9-month (guiding period)'. In Norway, the RPG originated in Bærum. When the Bærum municipality presented an action plan for the integration of refugees in 1997, the Bærum NRC emphasised three things: Norwegian education, qualification, and networking. RGP as a project inspired by a model first

developed in Stockholm, where the Red Cross had been collaborating with the Stockholm municipality since 1984 on an introduction programme for newly arrived refugees.<sup>1</sup>

Today RGP is run by NRC as one of the care's department activities and is offered to all refugees who settle in one of many municipalities around Norway. RGP is found in 77 municipalities in Norway; there are over 1,300 refugee guides across Norway; and over 1,400 refugees participate in the programme. The programme is run in collaboration with the municipalities, and in most places the municipalities are involved in financing the programme, which is the case of Bærum RGP. Moreover, NRC Refugee Guide also collaborates with volunteer centres and other organisations in their work.<sup>1</sup>

NRC district offices are the ones who organise RGP, like the Akershus district in the case of Bærum RGP. In addition to Bærum, NRC Akershus today runs refugee guide programmes in Eidsvoll and Hurdal, Fet, Ullernsaker, Rælingen, Asker, Nannestad and Gjerdrum, Nesodden, Skedsmo, Ski and Sørum, Ås and Vestby, Nittedal, and Oppegård.<sup>1</sup>

At the district office of Akershus Red Cross, there is an employee adviser who works with refugee guide multicultural activities. In the case of branches like Red Cross Bærum, the branch has an employee coordinator working in close coordination and collaboration with the willing host group (Recourse Group).<sup>1</sup>

The framework of Refugee Guide Programme:

According to NRC (2016, p. 15), 'The refugee guide programme provides refugees with a unique opportunity to establish a network in their local community, learn about Norwegian culture, and practise the language'. The framework for the refugee guide is to reinforce an equal relationship between refugee and guide. It is envisaged that both will be active and that both parties will have a mutual benefit from the programme. However, an important framework condition for the refugee guide is that NRC should cooperate closely with the municipalities.

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished material from the Red Cross the Refugee Guide Participant Booklet

Before becoming a guide, a person needs to go through 12 hours of training, of which the standard Red Cross Volunteer training is part. One course is focused more specifically on the role of the refugee guide. Both the guide and the refugee who are participating in RGP have a duty of confidentiality. This is not a legal duty of confidentiality, but a moral promise not to pass on the personal information they learn while participating in the project. The guide and refugee will do activities together that promote the security and independence of the refugee.<sup>1</sup>

The objectives of Refugee Guide Programme (RGP):

The objectives of the Refugee Guide Programme according to the refugee guide booklet are: Train oral language skills within the personal and public domain. Through dialogue between the guide and the refugee, the refugee can find new words and expressions to express knowledge and experiences from the home country and use them. Moreover, Communication is an important prerequisite for building a network and being a safe and independent participant in the local community.<sup>i</sup>

Gain experience on how to build social networks in Norway, where the refugee participant can create an acquaintance for his/her own network. In addition to gaining knowledge of the local community, he/she will become settled in through the better understanding of Norwegian culture, formal and informal codes, and rules for socialising. Moreover, participate in activities that promote security and self-reliance and empowerment

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished material from the Red Cross the Refugee Guide Participant Booklet

By spending time together, refugees and guides can gain a greater mutual understanding of culture. This can in the long term develop a greater knowledge of understanding about cultural differences and similarities. Through his/her knowledge of the local environment, school, and work, the guide can teach refugees a great deal about school, education, and parenting in Norway. However, refugees have already received information in these areas from others, such as the refugee office or the reception centre. Through dialogue with their guides, the refugees can have the opportunity to offer their own experiences in these areas and hear ordinary Norwegians' experiences. <sup>13</sup>

But again, building networks takes time. We cannot expect refugees to have a large network in nine months or a year, argue NRC. In nine months or a year, refugees may have more acquaintances to greet when shopping in the convenience store, may be getting to know someone they have met in the local community, and may be acquiring so-called network-building expertise.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished material from the Red Cross the Refugee Guide Participant Booklet

Follow-up and guidance:

For RGP, the main people in this programme are the refugee and the guide. Therefore, many events and activities are carried out to follow up this relation between the refugee and his/her guide. NRC expects the guide to participate and be in touch through events and the activities that they offer. These event and activities are the follow-up café, contact by email (after 7 months), and disconnection café after 9-12 months. Moreover, the guide can contact the contact person if he/she needs follow-up during the link period. The main purpose of these follow-up events and activities is to take up the challenge, discuss current issues, and share tips on activities.

According to what I have mentioned above, all the follow-up efforts carried out by NRC target the guides more than the refugees.<sup>15</sup>

### **Refugee Guide Programme in the Bærum municipality:**

Bærum RC is one of the local branches in Akershus county, established in 1909 as Norway's 18th Red Cross branch. Bærum RC has approximately 2,600 members; 270 are active volunteers. The Bærum RC house is located in the centre of Sandvika, where Bærum RC administers running different activities driven by Bærum RC and in collaboration with others, such as the refugee office of the Bærum municipality in the case of the Refugee Guide Programme. Bærum RC offers different activities, including social inclusion, children and youth, and the search and rescue corps (Bærum RC, 2020).

Within the care unit, Bærum RC offers the Refugee Guide Programme and several activities to promote social contact and work for integration, which in the end influence social inclusion. The majority of the care unit's engagement consists of the following activities: visitor services, childcare, homework help, Women's Day, witness support, refugee guides including family connection, Norwegian training, Girls' Night, Youth Evening, Norwegian education for women, multicultural activities, and café opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

Organisation of the project/activity:

RGP is run as a collaboration between the refugee office in the municipality of Bærum, the hired coordinator of the Bærum NRC, and the voluntary resource group of RGP.<sup>2</sup>

The refugee office is responsible for settling refugees in the municipality of Bærum, as well as coordinating efforts for adult refugees in the introduction programme (Bærum Kommune, 2020).

When it comes to RGP, the refugee office in the Bærum municipality maps the need for a guide with the participants in the introduction programme and sends an application for a guide to the Red Cross.<sup>2</sup>

Bærum RC has an employee coordinator with the main responsibility for the operation of the Refugee Guide Programme in the municipality, in close coordination with the refugee office and the resource group. The coordinator is responsible for contact with the refugee office, welcomes new volunteers and participants, calls for interviews, connects, ensures that the formal requirements for training, duty of confidentiality, and the police certificate are complied with, as well as seeking grants, recruiting, and marketing the activity. The resource group consists of volunteers who are or have been a refugee guide; they arrange follow-up meetings, guide meetings, and meeting places for the refugee–guide couplings, and follow up the couplings via telephone and e-mail.<sup>2</sup>

Couplings and volunteers of RGP:

There were 34 couplings in 2013, 45 couplings in 2014, 82 couplings in 2015, 124 couplings in 2016, and 74 couplings in 2017. The participation by gender in these couplings were 38% women and 62% men. The ages of participants were 11% between 41–50 years old, 37% between 37–40 years old, and 52% between 18–30 years old.<sup>2</sup>

The volunteers were between 18 and 70 years old, but the age distribution shows that most of volunteers were at or above 50 years old. There were 32% of volunteers aged 51–60 years old, 21% of volunteers aged 61–70 years old, 20% of volunteers aged 18–30 years old, 15% aged 70 years and up, 6% aged 31–40 years old, and 6% of volunteers aged 41–50 years old.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the country background of the refugee participants, the figures showed that 47% were from Eritrea, 25% from Syria, 11% from Somalia, 6% from Ethiopia, 3% from Iran, 3% from Iraq, 3% from Sudan and 2%.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Unpublished materials from the Bærum RC annual report of Bærum RGP .

The Bærum RC is working to facilitate joint activities for those connected with the refugee guide and the family connection. Several guides provide feedback on the need for joint activities and suggestions on what a guide can do with the refugee in the period during which they are connected.<sup>2</sup>

Through external agreements, Bærum RC offer free tickets to Stabek's home games at Nadderud, the Technical Museum in Oslo, the Munch Museum, and 20 other galleries and museums in Oslo. The activity group organises monthly tours and activities with everything from ski lessons, curling, canoeing, farm visits for families, Christmas cake baking, and international food parties.<sup>2<sup>6</sup></sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Unpublished materials from the Bærum RC annual report of Bærum RGP.



## **3 Methodology**

In this chapter, I will explain the choice of qualitative methodology, including triangulation. Moreover, the chapter will cover the process of data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and the challenges faced during the study.

### **Qualitative Method**

The main goal of this research is to understand whether and how the Refugee Guide Programme (RGP) contributes to the integration of refugees. The research examines opinions and perceptions of different stakeholders involved in RGP in the Bærum municipality. Additionally, the research considers some points regarding RGP in Ås and Vestby, since this was the initial area proposed for the research before choosing the case of RGP in the Bærum municipality.

The study uses a qualitative research methodology. I adopted a case study for this research because of the possibility it gives to explain social phenomena. According to Yin, ‘the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena’ (2009, p. 4). In this research, I examine whether and how the Refugee Guide Programme (RGP) contributes to the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality. By employing a case study of RGP in the Bærum municipality, I gained the possibility to examine this phenomenon pointedly by concentrating my efforts on one case. According to Jacobsen (2015), a case study allows a researcher to go deeper into a situation, organisation, or something that is clearly delimited in time and space, providing insight into the place or event.

The study uses a qualitative research methodology for the case study, including triangulation, which ‘entails using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). The main methods of data collection are qualitative interviews and focus group discussions supported by observations and secondary data analysis.

### **Study area and period**

The thesis is based on a case study of NRC’s Refugee Guide Programme in the Bærum municipality. My first plan was to study RGP of the NRC in the Ås and Vestby municipalities, but this turned out not to be functional at the time of study. Refugee participants and volunteers

to be engaged as guides were not available; neither were there any formal links maintained between the NRC branch and former participants and volunteers. I therefore chose the Bærum municipality as the study area for this research.

The Bærum municipality has a Norwegian majority population of around 127,867, including migrants and Norwegians of non-Norwegian descent (SPSS, 2019). Figures obtained from Statistics Norway show the number of people living in the municipality who have either migrated themselves or are offspring of parents with backgrounds from other countries. According to these figures, people from Poland constitute 4,148 inhabitants; Sweden, 1,696; the Philippines, 1,117; Pakistan, 978; Iraq, 850; Somalia, 842; Germany, 722; Eritrea, 619; Lithuania, 596; and Vietnam, 360 (SPSS, 2019).

As a rule, the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality is guided through the municipality's refugee office (*flyktningkontor*), which is in charge of refugees' settlement and the administration of the introductory programme in the municipality (Bærum Kommune, 2019). In 2019, the Bærum municipality received an award from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) for its substantive role and distinguished work in settling and integrating refugees. The prize was won in a competition with six other municipalities: Asker, Bodø, Lørenskog, Stange, Steinkjer, and Tromsø (IMDi, 2019). The Bærum municipality has initiated innovative forms of cooperation aimed towards the integration of refugees involving cooperation between volunteers, the business community, the municipality, and NAV (Finans Norge, 2019). However, this study will only focus on the contribution of NRC in Bærum, mainly the Refugee Guide Programme (RGP).

The study was carried out from August 2018 to May 2020. This was interrupted by a four-month sick leave from August to December 2019. The literature review and conceptual framework were completed during the fall of 2018. Preparation and implementation of the fieldwork (data collection) took place from January to May 2019. The period from January to June 2020 was allocated for data analysis and writing.

## **Study participants**

The study population comprised all refugees in the study area including male/female adults (18 years old and above), who were or are still part of the immigration and integration programmes

fostered by NRC, including the RGP; guides within the Bærum municipality; volunteers and staff of NRC and in the Immigration and Integration Department at national, district, Bærum Branch; and, finally, the refugee office of the Bærum municipality. Excluded from the study were refugees who participated/were participating in the RGP and who were not living in the Bærum municipality, Norwegian Red Cross's Immigration and Integration departments not at national, district and Bærum branch, and, finally, the staff at the refugee office who were not working for the Bærum municipality.

The research aimed at engaging the following numbers of participants during the data collection process: Six (6) *refugees* in the study area, who were or are part of the immigration and integration programmes and activities fostered by NRC in the Bærum municipality. Six (6) NRC *volunteers* representing guides for RGP in the Bærum municipality. Nine (9) *other staff and volunteers* from other stakeholders, such as the resource group for RGP in the Bærum municipality, NRC staff at national, district and Bærum levels, in addition to staff at the refugee office in the Bærum municipality, because they represent the governmental side.

## **Sampling Approach**

Sampling was conducted from the three categories of the study population defined above. These categories of participants were selected as informants because they had different roles and responsibilities within the Refugee Guide Programme (Bryman, 2012). Informants to this research have been selected by using purposive sampling as they represent different categories. Admittedly, they come from different backgrounds and gender and age groups and have represented different qualifications, occupations, positions, and experiences. Diversity among informants decreased for such reasons. For instance, the staff and volunteers of the NRC's Immigration and Integration Department were selected. They provided information about volunteers and refugees who were or are engaged in the RGP in the study area. Refugees and guides who were or are part of the RGP were also selected, to have balanced opinions and experiences. The goal of purposive sampling was 'to sample cases or participants strategically so that those sampled were relevant to the research questions posed' (Bryman, 2012, p. 418).

I relied on a list of contacts acquired from NRC's Immigration and Integration Department and the refugee office at the Bærum municipality. However, most of the refugee participants that I

contacted using this list did apologize. Consequently, snowball sampling was also used. Snowball sampling means that selected participants lead to or propose other participants who have experience relevant to the research (Bryman, 2012). This method was also used because it was relevant in terms of reaching the refugees who were or are part of RGP. I started the snowball sampling by contacting and interviewing a friend from the Bærum municipality who had been previously engaged in RGP. This friend linked me to a group of refugees with relevance to the research topic. Thanks to this friend, I managed to connect with three other refugee participants in RGP between 2016 and 2018. Two were males from the Sudan and Ethiopia and one, a woman from the Philippines. The Sudanese also connected me with a female refugee from the same country who was still participating in the RGP. Also, thanks to the social network connections, I was able to interview three of the four refugee participants in this study. Furthermore, it gave me opportunity to reach out to the refugees who were participating in RGP to incorporate their experiences and input in the research.

### **Fieldwork preparation and contacting the informants**

Completing an internship in the fall of 2018 at the Ås and Vestby branch of NRC allowed me to engage with the Immigration/Integration Department. By the end of the internship, I had identified the list of contact persons who were working for or in relation to RGP at the district level (Akershus district).

Several coordination meetings were held with the Senior Adviser for Visitor Service and RGP in the Akershus district, Migration, the Integration Coordinator in the Bærum municipality, RGP's resource group in the Bærum municipality, and the refugee office in the Bærum municipality. Through these formal discussions and meetings, I collected information and internal documents and prepared for the next stage of data collection.

To reach the refugee guides and refugees in the Bærum municipality and involve them in data collection activities, a significant role was played by the Migration and Integration Coordinator, the refugee guides' resource group, and the refugee office in order to establish links with target guides and refugees. These entities emailed the targeted persons, informing them about the study and the data collection events. I had written a letter of intent, to present myself and explain the study with more focus on the intended data collection activities. The information letter was

written in both English and Arabic and was attached to the emails sent to refugee guides and refugees by the Migration and Integration Coordinator and the refugee office. Following that, interested refugee guides made more clarifications to targeted refugee participants to ensure that they had received and understood the information sent via email.

Only four guides were interested in being part of the activities related to data collection, sending their confirmations via emails. No responses were received from refugees who were part of RGP. Fortunately, I received confirmation from one refugee by phone after he had obtained more clarifications from his guide about the research. The remainder of the refugees who participated in the data collection activities were engaged through snowball sampling, mainly through the social network.

I coordinated for the data collection events directly with the refugees, refugee guides, staff and volunteers of Norwegian Red Cross, and the refugee office in the Bærum municipality by sending emails, phone calls, and SMS. All data collection events were carried out in the Bærum Red Cross's house and the refugee office's venue. The Bærum Red Cross house is considered a place of convenience for all the informants, as they were already familiar with it. It is in downtown Bærum and close to all means of transportation. Three of the intended interviewees (two refugees and one guide) were unable to attend the interviews physically. One of them was abroad, and the other refugee and the guide had time difficulties. This was solved by having phone and online interviews. However, several refugee participants, mainly women, declined participation, citing time constraints.

## **Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and Observation**

According to Bryman (2012, p. 469) ‘the term qualitative interview is often used to capture the different types of interviews that used in qualitative research’. Therefore, the in-depth interview and focus group discussions were the main techniques of data collection, in addition to observation. I designed an interview guide based on the research questions, for which I formulated clear and open questions with the possibility of asking additional questions if necessary. I normally adjusted the interview guide to the different groups interviewed. I collected data from March 2019 until May 2019 by conducting 16 in-depth interviews, one focus group discussion, and observations.

I was not able to conduct all the planned interviews, focus group discussions, and observations during the fieldwork. Refugees interviewed were based on the number who were willing to be interviewed, whether in individual or group interviews. However, I was able to gather an appropriate amount of data for the research, in addition to the qualitative texts and documents. During the fieldwork, I held four out of six interviews with the refugees, four out of six interviews with the guides, as well as one out of three focus group discussions with guides only. Moreover, I observed one interaction between a guide and her refugee participant. In addition, I observed some of the Immigration and Integration Department’s activities at the NRC house in the Bærum municipality. These activities were mainly ‘Women’s Day’, which takes place regularly at the Bærum Red Cross house, mainly targeting refugee women. Beside Women’s Day, I observed a function called ‘Youth Evening’.

Interviews with refugees focused on their perceptions and experiences concerning integration into the Norwegian society and local community after participation in NRC's integration programmes, RGP in particular. Additionally, I asked the NRC refugee guides, volunteers, staff, and the refugee office in the Bærum municipality about their experiences and efforts in contributing to refugee integration through RGP.

<b>Categories of informants</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>
Refugee informants	4 interviews
Guide informants	4 interviews
NRC staff and volunteers	5 interviews

Refugee office	2 interviews
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**Table shows the number of interviews conducted within the study categories.**

The first group included the refugee informants; I interviewed four refugees: three men and one woman. Two men from the Sudan had been previously engaged with the refugee guide. The third man is from Syria and the woman is also from the Sudan. An Ethiopian woman declined at the last minute although she had received through her guide adequate explanations about the research, notwithstanding my provision of an Ethiopian translator who explained to her the reason and nature of the interview. She declined due to her work, school, and child-related commitments. Another six refugees contacted through the refugee office in the Bærum municipality and the social network, mainly women, declined, citing the same reasons I have mentioned above. Out of these six refugees were three women from the Philippines, Iraqi Kurdistan, Syrian Kurdistan and three men, two from Syria and one from Ethiopia. The men declined without mentioning any circumstances.

The second group consisted of the refugee guide informants. I interviewed four refugee guides, three men and one woman. All men were part of RPG for more than three years. However, one of the three men was a member of the resource group and a guide at the same time. The woman joined the programme as a guide in the fall of 2018. The third group consisted of NRC's staff and volunteers working for RGP. I interviewed two members of resource groups. I also interviewed three Red Cross staff at working at the national and district levels and in Bærum. The fourth group included government representatives in the Bærum municipality; two interviews were held in the Bærum refugee office with women representing the refugee office.

Most of the interviews took place for between 30 minutes and one hour. All informants expressed satisfaction regarding the interview questions, reiterating that it was extremely interesting, and that the questions were of utmost significance. As mentioned above, most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in the Bærum Red Cross house and the refugee office's venue in the Bærum municipality. The English language was the language of instruction used with the informants of the refugee guides, volunteers at NRC, staff, and the informants at the refugee office, while the Arabic language was used with all refugee informants. All interviewed refugee informants spoke neither English nor Norwegian. Therefore, all the interviews with the

refugee's informants were conducted in Arabic in a way that enabled them to express their views in the right way. Fortunately, I speak Arabic as a mother tongue along with English.

In addition to that, three focus group discussions were planned throughout the research. The first was with refugees only, the second with refugee guides, and the third with the refugees and refugee guides together. Lack of willingness to participate and the time factor were the main obstacles preventing the completion of the focus group discussions. However, one focus group discussion with the guides was held and was attended by four informants. Three were guides, two men and one woman, in addition to a member from the resource group in Bærum. The member of the resource group was a former refugee guide. Therefore, he was able to share his experience both as a previous guide and as a leader of the resource group.

Focus group discussions held in the Bærum Red Cross house lasted for 76 minutes. The interview guide was designed for the focus group discussion to profoundly address certain themes and topics. I facilitated the session by guiding, keeping time, and making sure that all members were effectively participating and that all topics were discussed.

Moreover, many observations were carried out in this study. Bryman (2012) states that, to gain access to and an understanding of group members, the researcher must spend a considerable amount of time with that group, listen to what people say and watch what they do, take field notes, and return home to record the findings. Observations helped to understand the dynamics between them and complement the observations from interviews and focus group discussions.

I conducted, during the fieldwork, several observations for different activities of the Immigration and Integration Department in the Bærum municipality. I observed activities including women-refugee day, refugee Youth Evening, and the Norwegian language training. However, the main observation that I monitored as part of this study targeted observation of the interaction between a refugee guide and her participant during a meeting held at the Red Cross house in Bærum. I observed the interactions of the refugee guide when she met with her refugee participant in the Bærum Red Cross house to help her with homework. I spent an hour watching and listening to what they were doing and what they said. Based on that, I took notes.

I was willing to do many different observations for couplings in RGP, mainly observing the interactions between guides and their refugee-participants. However, factors like informants'



inability and/or unwillingness to be observed were among the challenges hindering my plans to carry out several observations. The reasons behind these challenges were related to time and coordination. Coordination with refugees turned out to be quite difficult.

## **Document analysis**

In this research, I used both primary and secondary data, including text documents such as policy documents, and field notes, as they provided information for the study. To understand the concept of integration and its policy, I mainly used documents of governmental bodies like the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), and the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, in addition to Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and some books. However, internal documents and reports of the department of NRC, including RGP, were used to gain good background on the Refugee Guide Programme, its origins, objectives, and methods, mainly in the Bærum municipality.

I used two documents related to integration issues and the Refugee Guide Programme. These documents were an internal document offered to me by Bærum RGP. The first document is the Refugee Guide Participant Booklet and the second one is annual report of Bærum RGP. The first document helped me to find out the historical background of RGP in Norway and Bærum in particular. Moreover, it helped to find out the objectives of RGP and it works at national, district and branch levels. While the second document helped me to obtain specific information and data about the Bærum's RGP. The data showed the couplings connected since 2013 until 2017.

All these documents helped me build a better understanding and design appropriate interview questions. Moreover, it helped me in the analysis, interpretation, and clarification of many points.

## **Writing and analysis of data**

I started the writing process while I was executing the fieldwork and data collection. I wrote notes from all the fieldwork that I conducted and spent quite a while considering the data. Therefore, the writing and analysis process started early and developed until approximately when

I finished the data collection. I transcribed all the interviews manually, which helped me to be familiar with the data I collected. Then, I organised the data according to the topics of the interviews. Thus, I organised and then compared the gathered data and coded them by labelling each part. Additionally, I removed some of the titles and focused on the title's topics that would assist vetting and finding answers to questions raised by the research. According to Bryman (2012, p. 580): 'it must be relevant to the investigation's research questions or research focus'. After that, I categorised the coding into several themes.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Permission from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data was obtained before starting the fieldwork. I have also submitted a confirmation letter signed by my supervisors to NRC in the Bærum municipality. Moreover, I wrote an informed consent form, explaining to all the informants prior to each of the individual/group interviews. The main objectives of the informed consent were to maintain the confidentiality, privacy, and integrity of both the data and the participants. Furthermore, I deleted all recorded interviews following finishing transcription. The transcripts were coded, meaning that interviewees could not be identified.

## **Challenges**

### **Coordination and planning of interviews**

The main and most important actor for my fieldwork was the Norwegian Red Cross. As a leading actor for the Refugee Guide Programme, NRC has access to all stakeholders involved in this programme. Actors were mainly refugee participants, guides, resource groups, and the refugee office at the municipality. Coordination of the fieldwork was not an easy job and was even challenging in terms of time lasted, although I used all possible ways to establish contacts with the Norwegian Red Cross. I communicated by email and phone as well as through the site visit. However, when I managed to engage with the right actors within the Norwegian Red Cross, other coordination challenges with other actors were looming. Coordination challenges with the refugees were difficult to solve for many reasons, which will be presented in this chapter. Therefore, I managed to include only a few refugees as participants in this research.

## **The Situation of Refugees**

The participation of refugees in this research was very limited due to work and family circumstances. Most of the contacts were acquired through the refugee office, the Norwegian Red Cross, and other social networks engaging refugees with the introductory programme in Bærum. Save for the weekends, the introductory programme starts daily in the early morning and ends at 3:00 p.m. Most of the refugees are by then busy working, especially women, who are expected to take care of households and the children. Most of the refugee women I contacted through the refugee office in the Bærum municipality declined participation due to, as they claimed, being short of time. All these women stated an unwillingness to share views and experiences regarding the Refugee Guide Programme. To avoid feelings of insecurity or other related inconveniences concerning participation in this research, I sufficiently explained to the selected refugees the objectives of the research, pinpointing other factors such as privacy and confidentiality. Moreover, I assured them of the possibility of providing an interpreter so that they could express their views in their mother tongue. All these guarantees, however, did not change anything for most of them, especially among the women.

I relate the refugees' feelings of insecurity regarding their participation in the research to the reasons mentioned above. These could as well be attributed to their experiences, cultural and academic backgrounds, and the hardships they had suffered prior to their repatriation. Most refugees come from countries lacking freedom of expression and basic rights. All refugees I interviewed stated that they had never participated in academic research before. Nevertheless, one participant said he was able to express his views frankly for the sheer reason that I was addressing him in Arabic and because I was, like himself, a refugee, which gave him a sense of security and belonging. He explained the reason why he felt safe, saying that I could understand his viewpoints because I have a refugee background, have similar experiences, and could speak to him in his mother tongue.

As a student with a refugee background, I was not surprised by the points that were mentioned and that I experienced from the refugee participants' side. I come from a similar environment, where engaging vulnerable groups like the refugees in research projects requires much motivation, effort, and time. Therefore, I found it very reasonable to receive many rejections from the refugee participants.

### **Language:**

Language was a major challenge, especially regarding the interviews with refugee participants. Admittedly, not all the refugees were reached through NRC, the refugee office, or through English- or Norwegian-speaking social networks. An English-speaking Filipina declined to participate in the interview. An Ethiopian woman was not able to do the interview in English or in Norwegian. I provided an Ethiopian translator for her; however, she, too, declined. The remainder of the participants preferred to do the interviews in Arabic, and this prompted me to use my mother tongue, which is Arabic, so that they could participate. Fortunately, this enabled them to better express their views. This, however, required a double effort to be exerted on my part, doing the interviews with the refugee participants in Arabic and then writing transcripts in English. Yet, at the same time, this was an excellent way to build up trust with targeted refugees, allowing them to express both their views and experiences while I acquired adequate data.

### **Limitations of the study**

When it comes to interviewing or observing in Qualitative research, Yin (Yin,2011) mentions that if implements only interviews or observation and the major concerns is to figure out how the participants react in a specific event, then the data will be limited to the participants' perceptions and behaviours. My interviews seek to explore how the Red Cross through the Refugee Guide Programme has attempted to influence the integration of refugees in Bærum municipality. Hence, my data collection may be limited to the participants of RGPs behaviours and perceptions.

To reduce the possible limitations on this research, I interviewed different actors participated/participating in the RGP such as guides, refugees, NRC staff and volunteers and refugee office's staff. It was possible to conduct interviews with more actors participated/participating in the RGP. Still, because of the time and limitations of my resources, I decided to interview only the actor's participants that I managed.

Moreover, the case study has an explicit limitation when it comes to generalization. According to Jacobsen (2015) it is not easy to generalize from one case. Therefore, this research cannot be generalizing from the case study of Bærum municipality, but only builds assumptions. To be able to generalize findings from a case, data from other contexts is needed (Jacobsen,2015). Thus, for

this research, it can be argued that the case of the Bærum's RGP for integration cannot be generalized at the district or national level. However, similar studies must be conducted in other cases, or the findings made in a claim must be tested in a broader context.

## 4 Findings

This chapter aims to present the findings of the data collection process. I will present these findings through three main sections: interview findings, focus group discussion findings, and observation and documentation findings. Each section has its own subsections.

### Interviews

The findings of this section reflect inputs from the refugee informants, guide informants, NRC informants (staff and volunteer), and refugee office informants. The inputs of the informants will cover the contribution of NRC to integration of refugees in Bærum, the contribution of RGP to integration in Bærum, and the sustainability and prospects of RGP in the Bærum municipality.

### **The contribution of the Norwegian Red Cross to the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality**

In this part, I will be looking at the major challenges of integration faced by refugees, the integration policies of the government in the Bærum municipality, and the role of NRC in the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality. This is important as it explains why and how the Red Cross participates.

### Integration challenges

The refugee informants mentioned many integration challenges, such as learning the Norwegian language and finding work. However, they said the most difficult challenge is to having contact with Norwegian people. A, a 35 year-old man, said, ‘I have been living here for seven years, and I have been working for more than four years, but despite this there are a lot of simple things that I cannot understand, because I find it very difficult to interact or communicate with Norwegian people’. The guides mentioned different challenges regarding integration. A 73-year-old woman said, ‘Integration should include us much more because it is not only the question of language, it is really a question of culture and the values we have’. Jo is a 61-year-old man and had been a refugee guide for three years; he said, ‘It is difficult to understand our culture, our way of thinking, you know’.

The staff and volunteers of NRC and the staff of the refugee office in Bærum agreed that the integration challenges are a big topic, regarding which it is not easy to give a simple answer. Nak, a woman working for NRC, said, 'People from the host community are not welcoming the refugees in same way, that we also have to work and think how the Red Cross comes in, work against islamophobia and help people to get a chance to meet those might not don't think well or good of'. K, a woman working for NRC, said, 'We meet refugees that they told us that they never talk to Norwegians in the region other than teachers they meet in school'. While An1, a women working for the refugee office, said, 'Because of the cultural and social differences the refugees are facing many challenges when they apply for a house and work because they are not born in Norway, they have different names and different colours or whatever'. N, a woman working for NRC, said, 'I observed that refugees who are educated or have a good education background learned the language faster than those who are not educated'.

### **State's integration polices**

when it comes to the integration policy of the government in Bærum municipality. The main findings in this part primarily reflect the views of the refugee office's informants in the Bærum municipality because it responsible for leading efforts addressing the integration issue at the municipality level. However, other views from other informants will be included.

An1 said, 'By the end of the introductory programme, refugees must come to work or to the education'. She added, 'We will be measured for how many people got work or education every year'. An1 said, 'Of course we have a lot of cooperation with NAV, because refugees took money when they were into the introductory programme, which is not always enough money, and we also cooperate together to find work for refugees and courses that can lead them to work'. C, a women working for the refugee office, said, 'In the first two years the refugees deal with the refugee office and then NAV department, they go directly to NAV after that. While the role of the Adult Education Centre for Norwegian Courses is to learn the refugees the Norwegian language and social studies, moreover they also provide language practice opportunities, and provide advice to refugees and help them to apply for further education'.

The state's integration policy was also mentioned by other informants, mainly the NRC informants as well as the refugee and guide informants. Nak said, 'The government policy

focuses more on the demands that the refugees must do like their responsibilities. NRC is more focussed on the inclusion, what the community has to do as well. It's a two-way responsibility'. She added, 'Nak said, "I think the government wants IMDi to be more like depend on the organisations for good integration"', while N said, 'As NRC, we are covering the cap of refugee offices in the municipalities by these kind of activities'.

While one of the refugee informants, A, said, 'The state's integration policy terrorises the community dealing with foreigners and refugees sometimes by addressing issues such as Islamophobia and the unemployment too much unlike reality'. The guide A said, 'The integration policies do not include us as Norwegian people'.

### **The role of NRC to integration**

When it comes to the role of NRC in integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality, Nak said, 'I think the government wants IMDi to be more like depend on the voluntary organizations for good integration. But our communication back has been that we do the voluntary work, but IMDi can't not tell us that this is what we need to do, because we do not do the state and the government's job'. Nak said, 'When they make the state budget and the government policies for the integration of refugees, we always write letters and give them our views and our policies on what they are doing and suggestions to make them there. We should see the needs and then we can react, and of course also write chronic in the newspaper'. She added, 'We make awareness videos and I think one of our good credibility is the stories that we can provide from the field on integration. So, it can show a larger Norwegian population that these people are like us'. At the branch level, K said, 'NRC's immigration and integration department provides several activities including RGP. These activities bring the refugees and Norwegians together and target youth, women, men, and children', while N noted, 'We are covering the gap of refugee's offices in the municipalities by these kind of activities'.



## **The role of the Refugee Guide Programme in the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality**

Here, I will explore the role of RGP in the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality by addressing the informant's inputs on two main issues. These issues are the objectives and activities that contribute to integration carried out by RGP in the Bærum municipality, in addition to the impact of RGP on the integration of refugees in Bærum. These issues are significant because they show the role of RGP in the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality.

### **RGP objectives and activities**

The guide informants confirmed their understanding of RGP's objectives. Jo said, 'I knew the RGP through some friends, who have been participating', while An said, 'I read about the RGP on the internet, because I know NRC does a lot of good things'. G, a retired man, said, 'Red Cross markets themselves, they have pamphlets and so on'. J said, 'My understanding about RGP's goal is to enhance the integration in the society and make it go faster more rapidly'.

The refugee informants were not sure about their understanding of RGP objectives. J, a 27-year-old man, said, 'I had very a few backgrounds about RGP and its objectives while I was participating in it'. Na, a 35 year-old woman, said, 'All I understand is that I have the opportunity to practice the language with a Norwegian', while A said, 'I didn't have a clear understanding of the RGP's objectives, so I was a little worried at the beginning because I didn't know what activities we could do together'.

The guide and her/his refugee participant were/are implementing different activities toward the RGP's objectives. G said, 'I introduced the refugee participants to places here, for example, I invited one of them to one of the very famous ski jumps not to practicing skiing but just to see it because everyone in Oslo or Norway knows about this ski jump'. An offered, 'We sit in the library and she wants help with her homework and then of course we can speak Norwegian all the time'. Jo said, 'Sometimes we look at TV or discuss things about Norwegian language and codes'. Na, a 35 year-old woman, said, 'My guide is helping me to go through my homework, moreover she visited me and I visited her'. A said, 'We used to meet weekly, my guide helped in learning the language and getting to know the community and Norwegian culture. We did a

variety of activities such as go for a walk, to a café or cinema, and exchanging home visits'. Most RGP participants seemed satisfied. Jo said, 'It's mostly interesting'. But M, a 42 year-old man, said, 'We had no activities other than home visits. We went for a walk one time'. 'The guide was the one who visited me the whole time', explained M. M added that he had the intention to visit his guide, but his guide was not interested. He continued, 'The guide's visits were long. On one of his visits, the guide stayed with us at home for more than three hours. He was not talking much, but he was asking a lot'.

Regarding the activities' coordination, the couples coordinated for these activities via calls and SMS. G said, 'Either we talk about it while we meet, or we text each other'.

### **The impact of RGP**

When it comes to the effects and the impact of RGP on integration of the refugees in the Bærum municipality, the refugee informants mentioned several different effects resulting from their participation in RGP. Na said, 'My self-confidence and ability to understand and speak Norwegian improved', while Y said, 'I practiced the value of punctuality'. A noted, 'I really enjoyed my time in the company of the guide, and I am grateful for that, especially in times of winter'. Y said again, 'Now, I have people that I know in the city. I got to know the guide's family as well. Often, we exchange greetings or talk for a while when they come across groceries, for example. This makes me feel secure'. A said, 'Through the interaction with the guide, I accumulated knowledge about sexual identities, so I was able to adopt an open attitude towards homosexuality. Through my discussion with him I sensed that he believed that refugees would not accept homosexuality. But he understood from our experience that not all refugees are'. In contrast to what was presented based on the inputs of the refugee informants, in this aspect, the contribution of M were very negative. He said, 'I have gained unwanted benefits from my participation in this programme'. He added, 'The guide surprised me with information about me related to the introduction programme'.

As for the guides, they mentioned the same effects that the refugees mentioned. Jo said, 'We used the city or the woods for walking'. Most of them mentioned that the issue of getting to know the other and the exchange of knowledge and culture is one of the effects of the programme on them as participants. Jo said, 'I learned a lot about the difficulties of being a

refugee and I am reaching my life by learning a lot about culture differences’, while An said, ‘It’s much easier for you and me to understand things if we are in the middle of what happens instead of just knowing it intellectually’. An also noted, ‘I need to use myself and my time’, and G said, ‘It’s a pleasure for me to contribute on that’.

Other informants representing mainly the staff of NRC and the refugee office considered other effects beside those involving language. Nak said, ‘It’s not just about the language, it’s about the social inclusion also, the RGP prevents the social exclusion and loneliness’, while C said, ‘The refugees meet with Norwegians through RGP’, and An1 said, ‘RGP is a good chance for the newly arrived refugees to meet with Norwegians’. Nevertheless, determining the effect of RGP on integration was difficult for the study informants. Nak said, ‘We do not know the picture or the views of refugees themselves, most of the results stay locally’. An1 noted, ‘It is strange that we do not ask these questions to people who are done the RGP’. She added, ‘We are counting how many people connected but not the effect’.

## **The sustainability and prospects of RGP in the Bærum municipality**

To look at the sustainability and prospects of RGP, I have addressed issues like challenges and weaknesses, strengths, follow-up and evaluation, sustainability, and then alternatives that exist or could be developed for RGP in the Bærum municipality. I looked at these issues by focussing on many different important points, like resources, feasibility, and political support.

### **Challenges and weaknesses**

The guide and refugee informants reflected on many challenges. G, a guide, said, ‘It’s quite difficult to communicate with the refugee participant if he/she does not master a certain level of Norwegian language’. Another guide disagreed; she said, ‘If I use word that she doesn’t understand, then she has translation on her phone’. Na is a refugee participant; she said, ‘At first, the language was a challenge, because I was speaking very weak Norwegian’, while Jo said, ‘Finding time was and remains a challenge. I have a lot of duties to do, but I also want to participate’. Referring to time as a challenge, G said, ‘I had three participants during three years,

the first one had many things to do and he was busy to get a job, the other one was waiting for his family to come and he was busy with them when they came'. He added, 'During the winter and when it's dark, the participant's day became very short' as assigned for the climate condition. Refugee participant A said, 'I was completely lazy to communicate with the guide during the dark cold winter period, although the guide was committed'.

Moreover, J said, 'I had a feeling of fear and hesitation because I am new to society and my Norwegian language is weak, but I also had the desire to practice the language and get to know Norwegian society through the guide'. On the same point, G1, who is a former guide, said, 'I think what is actually more challenging than the language is the personality, because if he/she is a very shy person then it's quite hard to be guide for hours every weekend'. An1, working for the refugee office, said, 'At the beginning of their participation in RGP, the refugees are a little bit shy'. Some of the refugee informants did not know how to use the guide. A said, 'It is very important for the refugees to know the programme, its nature, and its objectives in a detailed and motivating way before starting the programme, because the refugees have many apprehensions, and a lot of things are vague, because they are in a new society and do not know anything'. Lack of follow-up was also mentioned. M said, 'There was a misunderstanding between me and the guide, I did nothing but stop my participation in the programme'. He said, 'Because of my negative experience with the Refugee Guide Programme, I have no desire to participate in any activities that take place at Bærum NRC'. While G1, one of the NRC volunteers, said, 'Many couples stopped meeting each other without letting NRC to know it, and when we find out sometimes it's difficult to get one track again'. In the case of M, taking a contact with NRC was a challenge. M said, 'One challenge was, how do I stop my participation in the programme in a polite way?'.

An1 said, 'Getting a guide can be a challenge, because there are some refugees who applied for it and have been waiting for too long'. One of the guides said, 'Most of the people on the list for this assignment are elderly people over 50 years and the refugee participants are young, around over or under 30 years, so it's difficult to get a good match. It's not impossible but it's difficult'.

Applying for funding was a challenge facing RGP, especially at the national level. Nak said, 'We can apply for funding, but it is much less, and we do not have a system for following that up good enough for today'.

## **Strengths**

The study's informants mentioned different points as strength. One of the refugee informants, A, said, 'RGP has more space to coordinate, depending on the circumstance of the guide and refugee. They can together coordinate the time, place, and activities'. An, a refugee guide, commented on the same point and said, 'It is an open relationship where both can suggest'. Other refugee informants mentioned the same point as well. Along the same lines, C, from the refugee office, said, 'Because so many refugees here they are lacking practicing Norwegian, they go to school from 8–2:30, then they do not easily come in contact with Norwegian people. So RGP is very important, and also when they get a network they can learn more about the Norwegian society'.

Another point has been mentioned by GI; he said, 'I think maybe the most important reason for the success is that NRC has a dedicated coordinator for RGP'. An1 added, 'Having a person who does the administrative work is a strength, because the volunteers want to do work with people, they do not like to do administrative work'.

NRC staff and volunteers elaborated more and mentioned the capacity of NRC. An said, 'I think NRC has network of theatres, concerts, and exhibitions that is interesting for us. Moreover, NRC provides a useful and important course for us as guides'. G said, 'NRC markets themselves, they have pamphlets and so on'. He added, 'The people of this community engaged in involving these foreigners in our society have very few things to do actually', while Nak said, 'NRC has good volunteers who have been doing this for some years and know how to run it'.

## **Follow-up and evaluation of RGP**

The resource group of Bærum's RGP elaborated on many points related to the follow-up and evaluation of RGP. In said, 'As a resource group member, I am working closely with the programme coordinator, calling, or sending emails very week'. Recently, the RGP resource group has increased its efforts to follow-up on the couplings. In said, 'Right now, I have a group

of guides and refugee participants that I follow up with'. She added, 'I think, for a volunteer activity, I would say the follow-up efforts that we do as a resource group are good enough'.

When it comes to the national level, Nak said, 'Nationally, NRC doesn't have a system to follow up the refugees, but we have one for the guides'. She added, 'The branches and districts, they report back like half year and the end of the year, but we don't have the picture or the views of the refugees themselves, so that what we lack'. She clarified, 'But we are working on a project to better our national evaluation'.

On the other hand, most of the guide informants were satisfied with the follow-up efforts that NRC does with them. Jo said, 'I am satisfied with the way NRC follows-up with me. They send emails to check regularly and of course I can make contact if I need to and I get an answer'. An said, 'It's very much up to us, how we respond, I don't feel that I need any more follow-up than I get really'. However, G said, 'NRC did not follow up with me before, but they started'. They indicated the absence of the evaluation aspect. Jo said, 'Evaluation will be interesting because I can learn more from the feedback'. He added, 'We need to receive feedback to learn from our experiences', while G said, 'We have no kind of evaluation'.

The refugee informants indicated that they had not experienced any kind of follow-up by the Red Cross. M said, 'Any programme that has been developed must be followed up, but I do not have information if the refugee guide programme at that time was followed up with the refugees participating in the programme'. A said, 'I stopped participating in the programme before completing five months. But I was surprised that I was not questioned about the reason, neither by the NRC or the refugee office'.

Lastly, when it comes to follow up at the level of joint work between NRC and Bærum's refugee office, G1 said, 'The programme coordinator is the one who has the daily contact or the normal contacts with refugee office in the Bærum municipality'. An1 said, 'We have regular meetings at least twice a year where we go through every refugee in the programme to see if they have got a guide'. An1 added, 'It's strange that we don't ask any evaluation questions to refugees who are done with RGP, but we should to think about doing that soon', continuing, 'We only count how many people connected but not the effect'.

## **Sustainability**

I will be looking for the sustainability of RGP, considering both threats and opportunities. Many threats and opportunities have been mentioned already as challenges, weaknesses, or strengths by the refugee informants, guide informants, NRC informants, and refugee office informants.

## **Focus group discussion**

The focus group discussion was a good opportunity for the guides to open a dialogue, reflect, and share experiences and points of view regarding issues based on the study questions. The main issues discussed were the RGP objectives, activities, effects, challenge/weakness, follow-up, evaluation, strengths, and alternatives that exist to further develop RGP.

### **RGP objectives, activities, and effects**

All the guides were aware of the NRC programmes and activities, but they decided to choose RGP. G said, 'I wanted to contribute to make a difference and for me the Red Cross was the way'. An commented, 'I wanted to help people coming to Norway and try to integrate them with my knowledge'. When it comes to the effects of RGP, G1 said, 'I am keeping contact with my previous refugee participant'. G said, 'I helped my refugee's participants in writing letters, CVs, and applications'. G1 explained his interaction with the refugee participant by saying, 'I was doing a lot of just driving with him because he was practicing for a driver's licence'.

### **Follow-up and evaluation**

Regarding the NRC follow-up on the interaction between the guides and the refugee participants, all the guides were satisfied. Jo said, 'I think the follow-up has been quite good; if I had questions, I got answers; if I sent emails, I got answers. They send emails to see how it's going, I think it's more than sufficient for me'. They were satisfied with the format of the Red Cross following up with them, through the programme coordinator and the discussion group.

### **Challenges and weakness**

Many challenges were mentioned by the guides based on their experiences. Most of them mentioned challenges such as time and language level. G said, 'Sometime it's not only refugees

who have time problems'. GI said, 'I think what is more challenging than the language is the personality of the refugee participant. Because if he or she is a very shy person its quite hard to be a guide for hours every weekend, when it's so...you have to run the conversation all the time to be receiving a sentence, we only get only yes or no'. Moreover, winter is a challenge for the refugees. G said, 'Because of the darkness my refugee participants' days became short'.

Another weakness is some refugee participants stopping their participation in RGP. GI said, 'Some stop meeting without telling NRC, and when NRC finds out sometimes then it's difficult to get it on track again'.

### **Strengths and alternatives that exist to further develop RGP**

An said, 'There are so many activities toward integration of refugees in Bærum. Moreover, we can take our refugee participants to movies, sports, the theatre, on tours, and so many things offered by NRC'. GI said, 'We have full time administrative support here, many other NRC brunches do not have this. They have only volunteers'. G said, 'As a guide, I can always call her and if the coordinator is not here, she calls me back and she is good at listening, resolving'. GI added, 'The fixability of RGP is one of strengths, in most of the cases the guide and his/her refugee participant can coordinate and adjust the interactions based on their circumstances'. Jo said, 'There is a possibility for follow-up programmes, smaller groups can be an alternatives'. GI said, 'For the refugees, there is no programme they can go to when they finish with RGP; we have capacity for that'. He added, 'A meeting place for formal refugees and guides'.

### **Observation**

This section presents the findings of observations that I gained during fieldwork. The findings from the observations covered the following: observation of the activities of the integration department for NRC in Bærum, the fieldwork, and then observing one coupling, mainly the interaction between the guide and the refugee participant.

I observed the integration department activities to have an idea about how these activities, including RGP, happen, and which kind of interactions exist and who participates. As I previously indicated, I was able to observe almost all the main activities of the NRC integration



department in Bærum. I observed the Norwegian language training activity, Women's Day, and Youth Evening.

The Norwegian language training was held in the evening. The number of participants was large, more than 20 participants. The majority were refugees, who clearly represented different nationalities. The number of men and women were nearly equal. The Norwegian volunteers were women and men, mostly retired people as well as a young lady. Because there were fewer Norwegian volunteers than refugees, some refugees worked in groups with one or two volunteers, while some volunteers worked with one or two refugees. The Norwegian volunteers were helping the refugees do their homework and training them to pronounce the Norwegian words correctly. I saw most of them use the exercise notebook for one of the Norwegian learning books (*På vei*). I spent about 15 minutes observing this activity and then I left for an interview.

Women's Day: Women's Day was in the afternoon, in the first floor's hall. There were more than 13 women of different ages and nationalities. Some women took their children with them. They spoke different languages, such as Somali, Eritrean, as well as other languages in addition to Norwegian. I was unable to observe the activity from its beginning, but I saw that some of them were busy with their children, while others were doing handicrafts with Norwegian women, and others were talking to each other. It seems like it is mainly a place for the women to meet each other and exchange their experiences.

Youth Evening: The youth attending this activity represented different nationalities, including the Norwegians; most of whom were not Norwegian. There was nothing specific for most of the youth. On the first floor, young people were playing soccer games, while there was a group of girls listening to music and dancing in one of the rooms on the top floor, in addition to groups here and there talking to each other. Despite the noise, they apparently found a place to have fun.

The second observation's findings covered in depth the interaction between the guide and his or her participant in order to look at what that guide and the refugee participant used or did to achieve the impact of this relation. A one-hour observation was completed, during which I observed the meeting of one guide with her participant.

In the middle of a May day, I met the guide (An) and her refugee participant at the Red Cross house in Bærum to observe the interactions between them. We sat in one of the rooms booked by

the guide (An). We sat around an eight-seats table; the guide and her participant sat next to each other, while I sat four seats away from them. The guide clarified that this meeting came at the request of her participant, to help her explain the homework of her daughter.

Through this meeting, the guide was able to assist her participant by explaining the nature of the homework and how to help her daughter to do it, as she clarified and explained the meanings of a number of new Norwegian words to her participant. At times, when the guide was unable to explain some of the words, the participant made use of a Google translator. At other times, the guide would write or draw a small drawing to explain the meaning for her. They also use body language many times, especially the participant. She used facial expressions many times; one of these expressions was that she drew a sure smile when the guide asked her if she understood the homework well.

The place was quiet, and the guide was motivating her participant when she read the homework by using words like ‘excellent’, ‘nice’, or a comment about how her pronunciation of Norwegian words is improving in an excellent way. The communication between them was automatic, even when they were exchanging jokes during the explanation of the homework (they laughed at one of the questions).

I observed that the guide had good abilities in dealing with her participant, and that the participant was responding automatically and interactively despite the presence of the language barrier between them, due to her speaking and initial understanding of the Norwegian language.

At the end of their meeting, the guide explained to her participant that she had a lot to do in May, but they agreed on new dates. I observed that they could arrange and meet according to their circumstances.

I observed that sometimes the participant’s interactions with her guide were slow to the point of not feeling like interacting, mainly because of the language barrier, as I observed. However, the patience of her guide succeeded to get her interaction back. The guide did not take the lack of her participant’s response negatively, as she was offering further explanation to reduce the distance between them.

I also observed some distress and embarrassment on the part of the participant, because she was unable to express herself at times.

Later the guide told me that the interaction of her participation this time was less than usual, and we credited it to the stress from my presence, which I also noticed. But I and the guide noticed that her stress decreased after some time.

## 5 Analysis and discussion

### The role of NRC in integration in the Bærum municipality

Identifying the integration challenges according to the study informants who represent different categories was a way in to know the contribution of NRC to the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality. The findings show that all the study's informants, including refugees, referred to challenges such as learning the Norwegian language (especially for the uneducated refugees), finding work or education, and cultural difference. Moreover, NRC and refugee office informants confirmed that cultural difference affected the refugees negatively. According to the experiences of the refugee office in Bærum municipality, it is difficult for a refugee to find housing to rent because he/she has a different name or different colour. Nevertheless, the refugee informants confirmed that communicating with the Norwegian people was the biggest and most difficult challenge for them. More than one refugee informant mentioned that communicating with the Norwegian people still presents a challenge to them despite learning a good amount of the language and finding a job.

Linking the state's integration policies to the challenges mentioned above, it becomes clear that governmental policies for integration in the Bærum municipality aim to help the refugees have job or education after they have finalised the introductory programme. However, other goals are included, like provide housing facilitation, health care support, and other technical supports. To achieve the mentioned goals, the refugee office in the Bærum municipality works closely with Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) and the Adult Education Centre for Norwegian Courses.

Referring to IMDi (2008, p. 9). '**Integration** is a two-way process that involves immigrants being included in society, participating in the labor market, and having equal opportunities. This requires immigrants to learn the language, become qualified for work and respect Norwegian laws and regulations. It also requires the general population to adapt to the new multicultural environment at work and in the community'. However, the governmental integration policies in the Bærum municipality focus on refugees only, and do not include Norwegian people.

NRC informants argue that the government's integration policy demands a lot from refugees and lacks an emphasis on inclusion. Some of the refugees elaborated on the government's integration policy. They indicated that not all the state's integration policy supports the integration of refugees into Norwegian society. Some of the guide informants stressed the necessity of including Norwegians more in the integration efforts, especially in the government efforts, since its only focus is on refugees. Moreover, NRC argued that the state's integration policy lacks many important issues regarding integration, such as networks, cultural difference, etc.

In the theoretical and conceptual framework, reference was made to government policies for integration, in addition to the Red Cross's participation in the integration. NRC works to ensure that migrants and refugees have access to fundamental rights and contribute to the inclusion and recognition of refugees' own resources and abilities (NRC, 2019).

Regarding the role of NRC in the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality, the informants reflected upon many points. According to the inputs of the NRC informants, NRC is focusses more on inclusion and what the community has to do as well; it should be two-way responsibility, as they explained in describing their contribution toward the integration of refugees. As a contribution toward the integration of refugees, NRC tried to participate and play a part in designing the state's integration policy. Moreover, NRC works to create awareness of the integration field by addressing its challenges, what is necessary for integration and what does not work, based on their experiences.

However, NRC also interacts with the governmental bodies working in this field, mainly IMDi, applying for funding at the national level. Moreover, NRC district offices and branches interact with the municipalities. Through these interactions and not, there are many different programmes and activities offered by NRC for the integration of refugees, such as integration activities at the reception centers, Norwegian language training, the Refugee Guide Programme, and other interesting and good integration local activities like women groups, cooking groups, men groups, football, hiking, etc. None of these activities are supervised by the national office.

At the level of the NRC branch in Bærum, NRC arranges many different integration activities, such as RGP, Norwegian language teaching/training, Women's Day, and Youth Evening, as main activities.<sup>2</sup>

The findings show that the activities mentioned above bring the refugees and Norwegian people together, which is a sign confirming the inclusion aspect of NRC's integration efforts.

According to IMDi (2012), efforts aimed at diversity and dialogue, alongside efforts toward equality concerning public services, are part of IMDi's primary responsibility. Since IMDi collaborates with municipalities, such efforts are supposed to be appear within the refugee office's integration efforts in the Bærum municipality. But the research findings did not identify any type of efforts in this regard in the municipality. N is one of the NRC informants; she said, 'We are covering the gap of refugee offices in the municipalities by these kinds of activities'.

At the level of the NRC branch in Bærum, NRC arranges many different integration activities such as the RGP, Norwegian language teaching /training, women day, and Youth Evening as main activities.<sup>27</sup>

## **The contribution of the Refugee Guide Programme (RGP) to integration in the Bærum municipality**

To deeply understand the contribution of RGP to integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality, this section will use the Refugee Guide Participants Booklet<sup>1</sup> to analysis the contribution of RGP to integration. Mainly, I will be looking at the RGP objectives, activities, impact, and its contribution to achieve the organizational objectives of NRC in the field of migration and refugee support, according to the informants' experiences.

According to the Refugee Guide Participant Booklet, RGP has many different objectives, as mentioned in the theoretical framework<sup>1</sup>. According to the findings of this study in this regard, All the study informants had a general idea about the RGP's objectives, especially the refugee informants. The findings show that the guide informants were quite aware about the objectives of RGP, unlike the refugee informants. They built this understanding through the information provided to them by the NRC staff, volunteers, compulsory courses, voluntary courses, and NRC

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<sup>2</sup> Unpublished materials from the Bærum RC annual report of Bærum RGP .

publications in the media. Hence, the guides addressed their understanding of RGP objectives by mentioning aspects such as learning and practicing the Norwegian language and enhancing the integration of the refugees in Norwegian society.

The refugee informants confirmed that they had general background knowledge rather than a concrete understanding of the RGP objectives and activities. From the findings, I realised that refugee informants received very general information by the refugee office and NRC when they joined RGP. However, they had become more aware about RGP objectives after or through their participation in it. Therefore, NRC's Refugee Guide Programme needs to develop a way in collaboration with the refugee office to ensure that the refugee participants will be sufficiently aware of RGP objectives and activities. A pamphlet in different languages may be very helpful. Such pamphlet is supposed to be available on NRC websites, in the NRC office and refugee office, and at the adult education center (*voksenopplæring*).

When it comes to the activities that the guide and his/her refugee participant were doing or had done, the findings show that the guides and refugee participants were doing or had done very different and interesting activities. These activities targeted issues like practicing the Norwegian language, getting to know each other, cultural differences, building networks, and understanding the Norwegian culture and its codes. Despite the differences and diversity of activities from one coupling to another, most of the participants seemed satisfied by their activities and the way they<sup>8</sup> were organized. However, one of the refugee informants was not satisfied, and he stopped participating in RGP.

To ensure that both the guide and his/her refugee participant can effectively identify activities that match RGP objectives, I suggest that NRC invite new couples for a joint meeting, where NRC can help both the guide and the refugee design and determine an activity plan for at least three months. The activity plan can be very flexible and updated at any time when both the refugee and guide agree. Moreover, close follow-up for both the guide and his/her refugee participant is important and highly recommended.

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished material from the Red Cross the Refugee Guide Participant Booklet

When it comes to the relation and interactions between the guide and his/her refugee participant, The Refugee Guide Participant Booklet stated that both the guide and the refugee who are participating in RGP have a duty of confidentiality. This is not a legal duty of confidentiality, but a moral promise not to pass on the information they learn while they are participating in the project<sup>1</sup>. According to the findings, the guides and refugee informants experienced the relations between them as a secure relation. This was obvious when they talked about the activities they did together and the way they coordinated these activities. However, this is was not the case for M. He believed that his guide has not complied with the duty of confidentiality.

### **The impact of RGP to integration of refugees in Bærum**

The Refugee Guide Participant Booklet states that both parties will gain mutual benefit from the Programme<sup>1</sup>. The findings show that both refugee and guide informants have been affected by their participation in RGP. The findings show that there were many pragmatic effects experienced, primarily by the refugee informants. These pragmatic effects included aspects such as practicing the Norwegian language, building a social network, finding work, and being active within the local community. Additionally, some refugee informants adopted or accepted new patterns, attitudes, or behaviours. This was done by accumulating knowledge and opening entry points that enabled them to become acquainted with the Norwegian community in Bærum, its customs, way of life, and codes. In this regard, reference was made to issues such as accepting and respecting the other, accepting difference and living with it, respecting time, and female empowerment. Despite that, one of the refugee informants experienced a negative effect from his participation in RGP. According to this refugee participant, his participation for several months in this programme left a negative effect on him toward RGP itself, and towards his belief in integration as a refugee in Norway. From this experience, it can be seen that there are participants who do not stick to the RGP restrictions.

As for the guides, they mentioned the same effects that the refugees mentioned. They emphasised the improvement of the participants in the language and the creation of a link with the local community as an approach to building networks and understanding Norwegian culture and codes. Moreover, most of them mentioned the issue of getting to know the other and the exchange of knowledge and culture as one of the effects of the programme on them as guides.



The programme enhanced the feeling of satisfaction for the guides due to their participation in something that supports the integration process in the local community. Most of the guide informants represent Bærum's retired population. They sound aware about the value of the voluntary work, and they have time and resources.

From what was mentioned above, I cannot limit the effect of RGP to practicing and developing the language only, or that RGP affects only the refugee informants when we talk about the integration process. However, accurately determining the effect of RGP on integration in Bærum was a difficult issue for all informants, as they confirmed that all they mentioned was the result of their observations and experiences. This is due to the lack of any kind of evaluation of the relationship between the refugee and the guide in the Bærum municipality.

RGP covers many different aspects that contribute to integration. RGP contributes to integration on the basis that integration is 'a two-way process that involves immigrants being included in society, participating in the labor market, and having equal opportunities. This requires immigrants to learn the language, become qualified for work and respect Norwegian laws and regulations. It also requires the general population to adapt to the new multicultural environment at work and in the community' (IMDi , 2008, p. 9). To a general extent, RGP covered the gap that the Bærum refugee office does not covered regarding the integration of refugees. The reason behind this was the ability of RGP to include both refugees and Norwegian people, and this is what Bærum's refugee office misses in their integration efforts. RGP covers other important aspects of integration that were not covered by the efforts of Bærum's refugee office, despite its importance. Aspects such as social networks, interacting with Norwegian people, cultural differences, etc. have only been covered by the RGPs integration efforts and not by Bærum's refugee office.

## **The sustainability and prospects of RGP in the Bærum municipality**

### **Challenges and weakness**

The guide informants mentioned almost the same challenges as the refugee informants. Challenges such as language, time constraints, and climate conditions were mentioned by both. Some guides considered weak Norwegian language skills as a challenge and others did not.

However, the refugee informants confirmed that communicating with the guide using weak Norwegian language skills was a challenge. Most of them also indicated that finding the time to meet the guide was a challenge because of their educational, work, or family conditions, especially during the winter. A said, 'I was completely lazy to communicate with the guide during the dark cold winter period, although the guide was committed'. In addition to these challenges, all the refugee informants mentioned fears of dealing with a Norwegian person, especially in the beginning of the coupling. Some informants emphasised that their insecurity in dealing with the guide in the beginning had something to do with the reality they came from. This is because their security concern is high due to the experiences they have gone through, in addition to other issues, such as cultural differences. A said, 'It is very important for the refugees to know the programme, its nature, and its objectives in a detailed and motivating way before starting the programme, because the refugees have many apprehensions, and a lot of things are vague, because they are in a new society and do not know anything'.

Moreover, all the refugee informants confirmed that they had no idea about how they could use the guide. Some of them mentioned the matter of refugee's expectations based on his/her participation in the programme as one of the weaknesses that caused either misunderstanding, frustration, or lack of motivation for the refugee to continue participating in this programme. According to the informants, these expectations come because their background on the nature of activities and the objectives of the programme is very weak, especially in the early stages of their participation in the programme. Besides that, the absence of NRC follow-up for refugees participating in the RGP has been mentioned by some of refugee informants as a weakness. M said, 'There was a misunderstanding between me and the guide, I did nothing but stop my participation in the programme'. He said, 'Because of my negative experience with the Refugee Guide Programme, I have no desire to participate in any activities that take place at Bærum NRC'. They stressed the necessity of the follow-up issue because of its motivational effects for their continued participation in the programme until the end. It also enhances the issue of unconcern and removes the issue of misunderstanding, if any existed. One of the refugee informants indicated the necessity of checking the capabilities and readiness of the guide for this task. Because of such challenges and weakness, two informants ended their participation in the programme. Communication with the Red Cross was a challenge for them.

Recruiting more volunteers or guides for RGP was also mentioned as a challenge, mainly by NRC and refugee office staff. Lastly, applying and receiving funds for the integration programmes and activities were mentioned by most of the NRC staff.

### **Strengths**

The refugee informants mentioned the flexibility of the Refugee Guide Programme in many respects. The flexibility of the programme distinguishes it positively from the rest of NRC's integration activities, according to refugee informants.

In addition, the refugee informants pointed out the positive impact of RGP on several aspects, such as language and close recognition of Norwegian society. As a refugee office, they consider RGP to be a very good way for the refugee participants to learn and practice the Norwegian language. Na said, 'My self-confidence and ability to understand and speak Norwegian improved'. Moreover, refugee participants can build networks through their participation in RGP, which will allow them to learn about Norwegian society and culture. Y said, 'I practiced the value of punctuality'. The refugee participants considered the process of matching the guide and the refugee participant based on a convergence of interests, academic or professional background, or even quality largely as a strength.

Moreover, the joint work between the Immigration and Integration Department of the Bærum NRC and the refugee office was considered a strength. This joint work, according to the NRC and the refugee office, strengthens RGP since RGP is run as a collaboration with the refugee office in the municipality of Bærum. The refugee office pays for a hired coordinator for Bærum NRC and maps the need for a guide with the participants in the introduction programme, then sends an application for a guide to the Red Cross.

Guides and NRC staff and volunteer informants mentioned the value of volunteer work, the seniority of RGP in the Bærum municipality, and its ability to provide various resources, such as courses for volunteers and the various activities and offers that RGP provides for the guide and participant. They considered all this a source of strength for the programme. The fact is, NRC is offering many activities toward integration in Bærum. Beside what is mentioned above, the informants believed that RGP in Bærum has a quite feasibility and resource. Therefore, there is a possibility that RGP appears sustainable and could even be promoted.

## **Follow-up and evaluation of RGP**

The programme coordinator and the RGP resource group are responsible for the follow-up and evaluation in the RGP. The resource group uses mainly the follow-up café, where they invite all the guides in Bærum to share their experiences and ask questions. Beside this, they send emails to guides to check how things are going.

The resource group's informants confirmed that they started last autumn, 2018, following the RGP along a different and new way which is more effective than before. They assigned every member of the resource group several couplings with whom to follow up. For the evaluation, they recently started letting the refugee participants fill out a form at the beginning and end of the coupling period. This was in addition to the annual reports which reflect mainly how many refugees and guides have been connected throughout the year.

As a resource group for RGP, they confirmed that they did not get any kind of support from the NRC district or national office for the follow-up and the evaluation.

The input from refugee informants in this regard did not indicate any follow-up efforts for their interactions with the guide by the Red Cross Refugee Guide Programme, even in the case of informants who participated in the programme without finishing: one of them ceased to participate due to laziness and frustration, while the second stopped due to a misunderstanding between him and his guide. These two participants did not officially end their participation or complete the necessary paperwork with NRC. One of them was surprised that NRC did not recognise or follow-up on such events.

On the other hand, most of the guide informants were satisfied with the follow-up efforts by NRC. Regarding evaluation, all the guide informants stressed the importance of evaluation and their strong desire to know the impact of what they are doing. They indicated a lack in this area.

NRC and the refugee office coordinated their joint work through email communications, and they met at least twice a year. But they did not do a direct follow-up with the refugees participating in RGP. Moreover, this joint work did not cover any evaluation efforts for RGP.

## **Sustainability**

One of the threats mentioned by refugee informants to the sustainability of the refugee's full participation in RGP was insufficient knowledge about the objectives and understanding of the programme. Dealing with this threat in a positive way can transform it into an opportunity for sustainable and effective interactions between the refugee participant and the guide. They stressed the need for more effort by NRC in familiarising the refugees with the programme and its objectives and encouraging them to join it.

The absence of follow-up by NRC with the refugees participating in RGP causes the programme lose the opportunity to learn and benefit from lessons, misunderstandings, and weaknesses, as stated by some of the refugee informants. They also noted the waiting period until obtaining a guide. They stated that the waiting period negatively affected their motivation to participate.

The refugee informants who were currently participating in RGP stressed that the factor of finding time to communicate with the guide as a threat to their sustainable participation. They attributed this to their many obligations regarding issues, such as the introduction programme, language internship, work training, and work in addition to family responsibilities, especially for women. They indicated the difficulty of developing time management skills.

As for opportunities, most refugee informants have confirmed that RGP is a good opportunity for refugees to get to know the Norwegian society and integrate into it.

The guide informants did not mention many issues regarding the sustainability of RGP. However, the evaluation aspect has been mentioned as an opportunity that can enhance the sustainability of RGP if it done for each coupling.

One of the reasons why RGP is more sustainable is that Bærum RGP has a hired coordinator paid for by the refugee office of the Bærum municipality. But again, this fact can be taken as a threat, because there are no guarantees that the refugee office will continue paying. Nak said, 'Making RGP work on a 100% voluntary basis is like a key for its sustainability', while An1 said, 'The municipality has to cut money because we get less and less money now'. However, Bærum RGP has lasted for 20 years and still going strong; that is the reason, Nak said, 'We can work more on it to make it more sustainable without so much funding'.

Furthermore, the staff and volunteers of Bærum NRC mentioned the resources of Bærum NRC. G1 said, 'Bærum NRC has a central big office where everyone can use it'. A said, 'Bærum NRC provides a reachable course for us as volunteers', while G said, 'Bærum NRC markets themselves really well to get more volunteers'. He added, 'They have their website, they are available on social media, and they have pamphlets everywhere'.

### **Alternatives to developing RGP**

The refugee informants did not offer any alternatives in this regard, rather than offering recommendations or improvements. They recommended opening the opportunity to participate in RGP to all refugees in need of this programme and not restricting enrolment to the refugees participating in the introduction programme or the refugees who are newly settled in the Bærum municipality. A said, 'If I had the opportunity to participate in RGP again, that would be great. Previously, I was afraid of many things. But now, my fears are less, and I am ready to accept any efforts that could support my integration in Norwegian society more than before'. Many of the refugee informants agreed that there is a perception among refugees that the opportunity to register and participate in this programme is restricted to new refugees in Bærum. Adding that this perception excludes a number of refugees who are speaking and working but do not have a good understanding of Norwegian society or feel lonely, N said, 'I think that RGP, with its objectives, is suitable for every refugee in Bærum. The programme can help refugees when they are newly settled in Bærum and participating in the introduction programme to learn the language, and it also helps refugees who settled for a period in Bærum to create a network to get to know the local community closely, which helps in the integration issue. What I want to say here: The programme is suitable for all refugees, regardless of the number of their years in Bærum or in Norway, but it is important that the guide change and not be fixed'.

Y suggested including non-Norwegian volunteers to support the programme in term of following up with the refugee participants. He said the refugees will be able to communicate back with NRC when necessary if it is possible for them to use their mother tongue. He justified that by saying many refugees are not able to express their point of view in Norwegian when they are still learning the language.

M believes that the Norwegians themselves need to participate in RGP, and not only to assist refugees. He said, 'I think that the Norwegians need to participate in the Refugee Guide Programme more than the refugees themselves. Even all the NRC programmes and the activities should target Norwegians as well. Because they need to get to know refugees and thus they can learn how to deal with them'.

## 6 Conclusion

This research project aimed to understand the contribution of the NRC Refugee Guide Programme to the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality. However, to conduct this research, a case study used to obtain the best possible picture of the Refugee Guide Programme in the Bærum municipality.

The contribution of the Refugee Guide Programme (RGP) of the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) aims to the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality. This was studied through a document content analysis and through interviews, observations and one focus group discussion with study participants who were the guides, refugees, NRC's staff /volunteers, and refugee office staff.

The results of the contribution of the Norwegian Red Cross to the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality analysis show that NRC's contribution to the integration of refugees is more effective than the state's integration, which represents the refugee office in this case. One of the reasons is the governmental integration policies in the Bærum municipality focus on refugees only, and do not include Norwegian people as the study's participants confirmed. Moreover, NRC argued that the state's integration policy lacks many vital issues regarding integration, such as networks, cultural differences, etc. NRC is focused more on inclusion and what the community has to do as well; it should be two-way responsibility, as they explained in describing their contribution toward the integration of refugees.

Thus, the impact of the Refugee Guide Programme in the integration of refugees in the Bærum municipality affected both the refugees and their guides. There are many pragmatic effects experienced, primarily by the refugee informants. These pragmatic effects included aspects such as practicing the Norwegian language, building a social network, finding work, and being active within the local community. Additionally, some refugees and guide informants adopted or accepted new patterns, attitudes, or behaviors. Despite that, one of the refugee informants experienced a negative effect on his participation in RGP.

However, there are many weaknesses and strengths that influence the sustainability of the Refugee Guide Program and its impact on the integration of refugees in Bærum municipality,



mentioned by the study participants. Suggestions were made by study participants indicating improvements in the Refugee Guide Program to ensure its sustainability and development.

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## 8 Appendix

**Table (1): In-depth interviews with Norwegian Red Cross staff and volunteers**

No	The name of the informant	Gender	Status of the informant	Venue	The date of interview	Audio Length
1	Information session with D.	F	Staff	Røde Kors Lillestrøm	14.Jan.2019	30:00 minutes
2	N.	F	Staff	Røde Kors Lillestrøm	12. March.2019	60:12 minutes
3	K.	F	Staff	Røde Kors Oslo	25. March.2019	40:00 minutes
4	Nak	F	Staff	Røde Kors Oslo.	27. March.2019	60:05 minutes
6	In	F	Volunteer	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	1st.April.2019	32:16 minutes
7	Gl.	M	Volunteer	Bærum Røde Kors Huset.	1st.April.2019	37:32 minutes
8	Jo	M	Refugee guide.	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	1 <sup>st</sup> .April.2019	17:56 minutes
9	G.	M	Refugee guide	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	2ed.April.2019	59:35 minutes
10	An	F	Refugee guide	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	2ed.April.2019	50:53 minutes
11	JE	M	Refugee guide / Member of the Resources Group for Bærum refugee guide	Online	25th May 2019	58:00 minutes

**Table (2): In-depth interviews with refugee office's staff in Bærum municipality**

No	The name of the informant	Gender	Venue	The date of interview	Audio Length
1	C.	F	Refugee Office in Bærum Municipality.	2ed.May.2019	60:19 minutes
2	An1.	F	Refugee Office in Bærum Municipality	2ed.May.2019	60:02 minutes

**Table (3): In-depth interviews with refugee's participants in refugee guide program Bærum municipality**

No	The name of the informant	Gender	Nationality	Status of the informant	Venue	The date of interview	Audio Length
1	A.	M	Sudanese	Participated in refugee guide program	Online	26.March.2019	40:00minutes
2	M.	M	Sudanese	Participated in refugee guide program	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	28.March.2019	47:31minutes
3	Na	F	Sudanese	Participant in refugee guide program	Cafe in Bærum	18.May.2019	35:00 minutes
4	J	M	Syria	Participant in refugee guide program	Online	25.May.2019	48:30 minutes

**Table (4): Informants who apologized for participating in the In-interviews later within the fieldwork period**

No	The name of the informant	Gender	Nationality	Status of the informant
1	MI	F	Eritrea	Participant in refugee guide program

2	AB	M	Eritrea	Participant in refugee guide program
3	LI	F	Norwegian	refugee guide
4	AI		Syria	Participant in refugee guide program
5	NA	F	Kurdistan/Syria	Participant in refugee guide program
6	RO	F	Philippines	Participated in refugee guide program

**Table (5): Focus Group Discussions with guides' participants**

No	The name of the informant	Gender	Nationality	Status of the informant	Venue	The date of interview	Audio Length
1	AM.	M	Norwegian	Guide	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	7.May.2019	76:00minutes
2	J.	F	Norwegian	Guide	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	7.May.2019	76:00minutes
3	GR.	F	Norwegian	Guide	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	7.May.2019	76:00minutes
4	G.	F	Norwegian	Former guide and member of the resource group.	Bærum Røde Kors Huset	7.May.2019	76:00minutes

## **Informed consent statement**

My name is Amna Ali, and I am a master's student pursuing development studies at the Norwegian University of life sciences (NMBU). My master thesis research study will be about the contribution of Røde Kors on the integration of refugees by focusing on the refugee guide program. The primary and only purpose of this study is for academic purposes. According to that, many interviews and focus groups discussion will be done to collect the required information.

I would like to clarify that the informants who are going to be part of the data collection activities will be informed about many issues such as:

- Assurance of confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability, for example, by indicating that the informants will not be required to give their name if they want, the data will be aggregated, and individuals will not be identified using categories or details of their location, etc.
- All the interviews and focus group discussions will be recorded with the permission of the informants. All the records will be deleted after the transcribing process is over.
- These clarifications will be included in the interview guides as well to be cleared at the beginning of each interview as a firm promise.
- The informant will receive information about her/his participation in the research study, and the information will be given in a form that can be understood by the informant.
- The informants have the right to withdraw from participation at any time, without this entailing any negative consequences for them.



## Letter

My name is Amna Ali, a student doing a master's in international development studies at the Norwegian of Life Sciences University (NMBU). I have started working on my master thesis, which has the title of:

### **Civil society contributions to the integration of refugees in Norway: A case study of the Norwegian Red Cross Refugee Guide Program in Bærum municipality.**

The integration requires the efforts of both the refugees and Norwegian society: the Refugee Guide Program brings the two parties together to achieve this uniquely and practically. According to that, my research study aiming to document and understand the impact of programs and activities for integration running by the Røde Kors in Bærum with more focus on the refugee guide program.

To conduct this research, specific research questions will be answered and analyzed through a qualitative study based on observation, focus group discussion, interviews, and interactions with actors as individuals and in groups.

Therefore I am asking you kindly to participate in fieldwork activities that I am planning to do it within the period of (last week of March to last week of April). The main fieldwork activities are:

- 1- **in-depth interviews** with **refugees who are or were part of the refugee guide program, refugee guides**, and people representing the other stakeholders such as **Røde Kors staff or volunteers** working in refugees and migration field, representatives of the **municipality. refugees' office**
- 2- **Focus group discussion:** Three focus group discussions to be held with **only refugees, only guides**, and with **both refugees and guides**.
- 3- **Observation.**

Your participation is highly appreciated, therefore contact me through my email address or call, send me SMS.

Email address: [amna.ali@nmbu.no](mailto:amna.ali@nmbu.no)

Phone nr: 96663269

تحية طيبة

أنا اسمي أمنة علي , طالبة ماجستير تخصص دراسات التنمية الدولية بالجامعة النرويجية للعلوم الحياتية بمدينة اوس. لقد بدأت العمل في أطروحة الماجستير التي تتناول دور منظمات المجتمع المدني وبالتحديد دور الصليب الاحمر في دمج اللاجئين في المجتمع النرويجي.

أطروحتي للماجستير تتناول هذا الموضوع وبالتحديد برنامج دليل اللاجئين التابع للمنظمة الصليب الاحمر في منطقة باروم , الجدير بالذكر ان بداية برنامج دليل الاجني كانت في منطقة باروم.

بناء علي ماذكر اعلاه , يجب علي اجراء عدد من المقابلات المعمقة , مجموعات النقاش مع عدد من الجهات الفاعله والمشاركة في هذا البرنامج , تتمثل هذه الجهات في :

\_ اللاجئين المشتركين او اللذين شاركوا في برنامج دليل اللاجئين في منطقة باروم .

\_ المتطوعين كدليل للاجئين في منطقة باروم.

\_ العاملين والمتطوعين في هذا البرنامج لدي منظمة الصليب الاحمر في منطقة باروم.

\_ العاملين في مكتب اللاجئين (الناف) لدي بلدية باروم .

\_ العاملين لدي منظمة الصليب الاحمر في قسم اللاجئين والمهاجرين علي مستوي النرويج.

اتقدم شاكرة بدعوتك /ي للمشاركة في احدي هذه المقابلات او مجموعات النقاش التي ساقوم باجرائها في الفتره المقبلة ( منذ الاسبوع الاخير من شهر مارس وحتى الاسبوع الاخير من شهر ابريل ).

أرجو منك/ي شاكرة التواصل معي من خلال البريد الالكتروني الموضوع ادناه او من خلال ارسال رساله نصية او الاتصال بالرقم أدناه لتحديد الزمن والمكان المناسب معاك /ي .

رقم الموبايل : 96663268

الايمل :

[amna.ali@nmbu.no](mailto:amna.ali@nmbu.no)

انا اقدر الجهد والزمن الذي ستبذله /ستبذليته من اجل المشاركة في هذه الدراسه التي من شأنها ان تقيم مجهودات منظمة الصليب الاحمر في مجال البرامج والانشطه التي تنفذها في مجال ادماج اللاجئين في منطقة باروم وبالتحديد برنامج دليل اللاجئين.

خالص الشكر والتقدير

امنه علي

## **Interview guide for the refugees:**

### **Personal questions:**

- 1- What is your name?
- 2- Gender:
- 3- How old are you?
- 4- Where you live?
- 5- Where are you from?
- 6- What is your educational background?
- 7- Marital status?
- 8- Do you have kids? If yes, how many kids do you have?
- 9- What is your mother tongue?
- 10- How many languages do you speak?
- 11- What is your occupation?
- 12- How long have you been in Norway?

### **Main Questions**

- 1- How did you know about the refugee guide program?
- 2- How have you been engaged in this program?
- 3- How long have you been engaged within the refugee guide program?
- 4- What are your understanding of the refugee guide program and its goal?
- 5- Which kind of activities are you doing with your guide?
- 6- Do you like all the activities that you were doing with your guide? If so, why?
- 7- How you and your guide coordinating for these activities?
- 8- Would you please describe your benefits from the activities that you do with your guide?

- 9- What are the main challenges that you are facing with your guide and with this program?
- 10- According to the NCR, the duration of this partnership between the refugee and the guide is one year; do you think it's enough time? And why?
- 11- According to your experiences in this program, do you think the refugee guide program has helped you to achieve any progress regarding the language, work, network, or any other issues?
- 12- According to your experiences with the refugee guide program, what are the weakness and the strengthening of this program?
- 13- Based on your life experiences in Norway, what are the main challenges that are facing you as a refugee living in Norway?
- 14- How can you resolve these challenges?
- 15- Do you think that your participation in the refugee guide program can help you face these challenges that you have mentioned above? If so, how?
- 16- Do you think that this program can be promoted or developed to something else, or it is matching with the reality and needs of the refugees? If so, how?
- 17- What are the facilities and supports that offered to you by the NAV refugee office or Red Cross to be satiable in this program?
- 18- As a refugee, are you participating in any other integration activities running by Red Cross? If so, like what?
- 19- Which one of the Red Cross integration activities do you like at most? And why?
- 20- Which one of these activities or programs don't you like?
- 21- What do you think about the NRC integration programs or activities?
- 22- What is your opinion about the NAV refugee office and Red Cross efforts regarding the integration of the refugees into the Norwegian society?
- 23- Is there anything you would like to add?

## **Interview Guide for the Red Cross Guides**

### **Personal questions**

- 1- What is your name?
- 2- Gender:
- 3- How old are you?
- 4- Where you live?
- 5- Marital status?
- 6- What is your educational background?
- 7- How many languages do you speak?
- 8- What is your occupation?

### **The main Questions**

- 1- How did you know about the refugee guide program?
- 2- How have you been engaged in this program?
- 3- How long have you been engaged within the refugee guide program?
- 4- What are your understanding of the refugee guide program and its goal?
- 5- Which kind of activities are you doing with the refugee?
- 6- Do you like all the activities that you are doing with your refugee? And why?
- 7- How you and the refugee coordinating for these activities?
- 8- Would you please describe your benefits from the activities that you do with the refugee?
- 9- What are the main challenges that you are facing with the refugee and with this program as general?

- 10- According to the NCR, the duration of this partnership between the refugee and the guide is one year; do you think it's enough time? And why?
- 11- According to your experiences in this program, do you think the refugee guide program has helped the refugee to achieve any progress regarding the language, work, network, or any other issues?
- 12- According to your experiences with the refugee guide program, what are the weakness and the strengthening of this program?
- 13- Based on your experiences within this program, what are the significant challenges of integration faced by refugees coming to Norway?
- 14- How did you act as a community member in participating in resolving these challenges?
- 15- Do you think that your participation in the refugee guide program can support the integration of refugees in Norway?
- 16- Do you think that this program can be promoted or developed to something else, or it is matching with the reality and needs of the refugees? If so, how?
- 17- Are you participating in any other integration activities running by Red Cross? If so, like what?
- 18- Which one of the Red Cross integration activities do you like best? And why?
- 19- Which one of these activities or programs don't you like?
- 20- What do you think about the NRC integration programs or activities?
- 21- What is your opinion about the NAV refugee office and Red Cross efforts regarding the integration of the refugees into the Norwegian society?
- 22- Is there anything you would like to add?

## **Interview guide for the Norwegian Red Cross volunteer and staff**

### **Personal questions**

- 1- What is your name?
- 2- Gender:
- 3- What is your educational background?
- 4- How many languages do you speak?
- 5- What is your position?

### **General Questions:**

- 1- Based on your work experiences, do you think that the refugees have a good background and understanding of the integration concept? If so, how do they understand the concept?
- 2- Based on your work experiences, what are the major challenges of integration faced by refugees coming to Norway?
- 3- What are the main policies of the government that the Norwegian Red Cross works within in the integration of the refugee's field?
- 4- What is the role of the Norwegian Red Cross within this policy?
- 5- What is the main program and activities running by NRC targeting the integration of refugees?
- 6- What are the main difficulties and challenges facing these programs and activities?
- 7- How does the NRC participate in the integration of refugees in the study area?
- 8- How was the refugee guide program born?
- 9- What are the main goals of the refugee guide program?
- 10- What are the measures?

- 11- What are the activities of the Refugee Guide Program on the integration of refugees in the study area?
- 12- What are the impacts of the refugee guide program on the integration of refugees in the study area?
- 13- How does the Refugee Guide Program contribute to achieving the organizational objectives of the Norwegian Red Cross in the field of migration and refugee support?
- 14- What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Refugee Guide Program?
- 15- Does the program appear sustainable (regarding resources, feasibility, and political support)?
- 16- What alternatives exist today or could be developed?
- 17- Is there anything you would like to add?



## **Interview guide for NAV refugee office staff**

### **Personal questions**

- 1- What is your name?
- 2- Gender:
- 3- What is your educational background?
- 4- How many languages do you speak?
- 5- What is your position?

### **General Questions:**

- 1- Based on your work experiences, do you think that the refugees have a good background and understanding of the integration concept? If so, how do they understand the concept?
- 2- Based on your work experiences, what are the major challenges of integration faced by refugees coming to Norway?
- 3- What are the main integration policies of the government?
- 4- What is the role of civil society organizations within this policy; who are the main actors, and what are their major programs?
- 5- How does the NRC participate in the integration of refugees nationally and the study area?
- 6- Who are the other NGOs working on the integration of refugees in the study area?
- 7- How does the Refugee Guide Program contribute to achieving the integration of refugees' objectives in the field of migration and refugee support, generally and within the study area?
- 8- What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Refugee Guide Program?

- 9- Does the program appear sustainable (with regard to resources, feasibility, and political support)?
- 10- What alternatives exist today or could be developed?
- 11- Which kind of support are you providing to this effort?
- 12- Is there anything you want to add?

### **Focus group discussion interview's guide for guides**

- 1- What is your background about NRC integration programs or activities (Norsk trening , damesdag,) and why have you chosen the refugee to guide program in particular?
- 2- What are your understanding of the refugee guide program and its goal?
- 3- Based on your experiences in this program as a refugee guide, do you think the refugee guide program has helped your participant to achieve any progress regarding the language, work, network, social life, or any other issues?
- 4- According to the NRC, the duration of this partnership between the refugee and the guide is one year; do you think it's enough time? And why?
- 5- Does the participant's level of (Norwegian) language challenge the communication between you two or can lead to misunderstanding?
- 6- What are the weakness and strengthening of this program?
- 7- Would you please describe your benefits from the activities that you do with your participant (refugee)?
- 8- Do you think the way NRC in Bærum does to follow up and evaluate the partnership between you and the participant (refugee) is sufficient? Why?
- 9- Do you think that this program can be promoted or developed to something else or its matching with the reality and needs of the refugees? If so, how?
- 10- Is there anything you would like to add?



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