

Evaluation of pre-departure orientation training for Sweden-bound quota refugees

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intergovernmental organisation International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides services and advice to governments and migrants, including internally displaced persons, refugees, and migrant workers, concerning migration.

IOM Finland received funding from the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) for the project Pre-Departure Orientation for Sweden-bound Quota Refugees Pilot 2020-2021. Under this project, quota refugees bound for Sweden received a pre-departure orientation (PDO) about topics related to the resettlement process and key aspects of life in Sweden. The PDO-pilot was focused on training provided in Uganda in December 2020 and in Niger in April-May 2021.

As the pilot project was coming to a close, IOM sought to draw lessons from the project to inform a future project phase. For this reason, WSP Sweden was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the PDO-trainings. The evaluation was carried out remotely between August and November 2021 and was to determine whether refugees participating in the PDO demonstrate a positive attitude and realistic expectations towards their resettlement in Sweden.

The evaluation has collected data from interviews with over a hundred quota refugees that participated in the training, as well as from a control group of 15 refugees who did not receive the training. In addition, a survey and interviews with municipality representatives have formed part of the total data assessed.

A key finding from the evaluation is that the PDO-training participants from Uganda and Niger feel positive and have realistic expectations on life in Sweden. They by and large appear to be familiar with most if not all key topics and aspects covered by the PDO. This is not the case with the control group, a finding that strengthens the relevance and utility of the PDO-training.

At the same time, another key finding is that far from all municipalities consider the refugees to have realistic expectations or that they possess key information about Sweden and life here. The municipalities sought strengthening of several topics and messages, for improved resettlement and faster integration.

The main conclusion from the evaluation is, therefore, that on the one hand the PDO-training needs to be continued and provided to all Sweden-bound quota refugees, and that it needs to be strengthened in a few areas and topics (such as family reunification, the Swedish bureaucracy, the individualistic society). On the other hand, SMA needs to work much closer with the municipalities to ensure that they are aware of the training content and who has participated, and more broadly to ensure a continuum of information provided in the field with that provided once the refugees have resettled in Sweden. This will ensure that the overall pilot project can achieve its purpose to contribute to early integration and successful resettlement of quota refugees in Sweden.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There are an estimated 272 million international migrants around the world, representing approximately 3.5 percent of the world's population. Uprooting and being forced to migrate from a country of origin is an inherently stressful and dramatic process, during which loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems, adjustment to a new culture and changes in identity and concept of self are likely to occur. Moreover, migrants sometimes have unrealistic and inaccurate expectations of life in their new country. Unrealistic expectations may cause additional stress to migrants upon their arrival. Unrealistic expectations can also cause pressure on the social service providers of the receiving community who work to help migrants adjust.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), being part of the United Nations system, supports migrants across the world, developing effective responses to the shifting dynamics of migration and, as such, is a key source of advice on migration policy and practice. The organisation works in emergency situations, developing the resilience of all people on the move, and particularly those in situations of vulnerability, as well as building capacity within governments to manage all forms and impacts of mobility.

IOM's pre-departure orientation programmes aim to minimise the stresses experienced by the migrants and maximise the skills and strengths of migrants in order to facilitate integration. This by providing practical information on country of destination, assisting migrants in setting realistic goals, and developing the skills and attitudes needed to succeed in their new environment. At any given time, IOM implements over 30 different migrant training and pre-departure programmes worldwide.

The Swedish Resettlement Programme, in turn, intends to help resolve protracted refugee situations that are, or are at risk of becoming, permanent. The programme also offers timely protection for people in vulnerable situations. Refugees who are selected for resettlement may be in refugee camps, as well as in cities or rural areas. As part of the resettlement programme, Sweden has received 5,000 quota refugees per year since 2018. The Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) works together with the UN system, as well as Swedish embassies and Sweden's municipalities who receive quota refugees.

Within the context of the Swedish Resettlement Programme, IOM with funding from the SMA implemented a pilot project that started in September 2020 and ended in November 2021. The intention of the project was to lay the foundations for a comprehensive Swedish Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) programme that would target the 5,000 Sweden-bound quota refugees annually. The expected outcomes of this pilot project were:

- 1) To strengthen Sweden's capacity to provide PDO for quota refugees.
- 2) Refugees participating in PDO demonstrate a positive attitude and realistic expectations towards their settlement in Sweden.
- 3) Continuum is established between PDO and post-arrival services.

For the pilot project's second outcome, *Refugees participating in PDO demonstrate a positive attitude and realistic expectations toward their settlement in Sweden*, IOM organised two PDO trainings, for some 320 refugees of South Sudanese, Somalian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Congolese and Burundian origin. The first training was held in Uganda in December 2020 and the second training was held in Niger in April-May 2021.

1.2 The assignment

IOM commissioned an evaluation of the PDO pilot trainings held in Uganda and Niger, to learn about and improve the quality of future PDO trainings for quota refugees in the context of the Swedish Resettlement Programme. WSP Sweden was contracted to carry out the evaluation.

The evaluation had a formative purpose, to be used by IOM and SMA for adjustments and improvements of the curriculum, methodology and implementation of future PDOs.

The objective of the evaluation was to assess whether the second outcome of the overall pilot project had been attained, in other words:

Refugees participating in PDO demonstrate a positive attitude and realistic expectations towards their settlement in Sweden.

To determine whether this outcome have been achieved, the evaluation was to give answer to the following questions:

1. Have the project outputs led to the expected outcome?
2. What is the quality of the PDO trainings in terms of the expected outcome?
3. Are the resettled refugees and receiving municipalities satisfied with the PDO trainings?
4. What are the major factors influencing the achievement of the expected outcome?
5. To what extent has the project adapted to changing conditions in order to ensure the project outcome?

The evaluation was carried out remotely, between August and November 2021.

1.3 Scope, method and data limitations

The scope of the evaluation was the two trainings held in in Uganda and Niger. The target group for the evaluation was a sample of initially 110 of the total 217¹ 16 year and above refugees that participated in the trainings in the two countries, as well as a sample of 10 municipalities that have received and hosted quota refugees from the two countries in 2020/2021.

The data sample and collection methods consisted of the following:

- 108 interviews conducted with quota refugees from camps in Uganda and Niger (20 of which done by IOM)
- 10 interviews with representatives from host municipalities
- Results from IOM administered survey to the 64 host municipalities, with a total of 76 individual responses
- Interviews with a control group of 15 quota refugees
- Document review

There were some limitations to the quality of the data. Firstly, a relatively long time had lapsed since the first group from Uganda had their in-field training. This is likely to have impacted on the views that these refugees put forward in the interviews. The views may not be as precise and detailed as they would have been had the evaluation taken place closer in time to the training.

¹ The total number was 320 out of whom 217 were 16 years old or above.

Secondly, the interview guide used was long and had an academic language, making it at times difficult for the refugees and the interpreters to understand. This may have caused interview fatigue, leading to less precise and accurate answers.

Finally, the refugees appeared unfamiliar with assessing answers according to a range, such as the scale 1-5 or “agree to a large extent” to “not at all”. The interpreter had to spend time explaining the scale of the answers to the refugees. Moreover, the scale was not consistent throughout the interview guide; sometimes it included 1-5 alternatives and sometimes 1-6 alternatives. These aspects combined made it at times difficult for the interviewer and interpreter to understand exactly where on the scale the participants answers were. To conclude, it may have led to inconsistencies in the value prescribed from one interview to another, depending on which evaluator conducted the interview.

2 EVALUATION FINDINGS

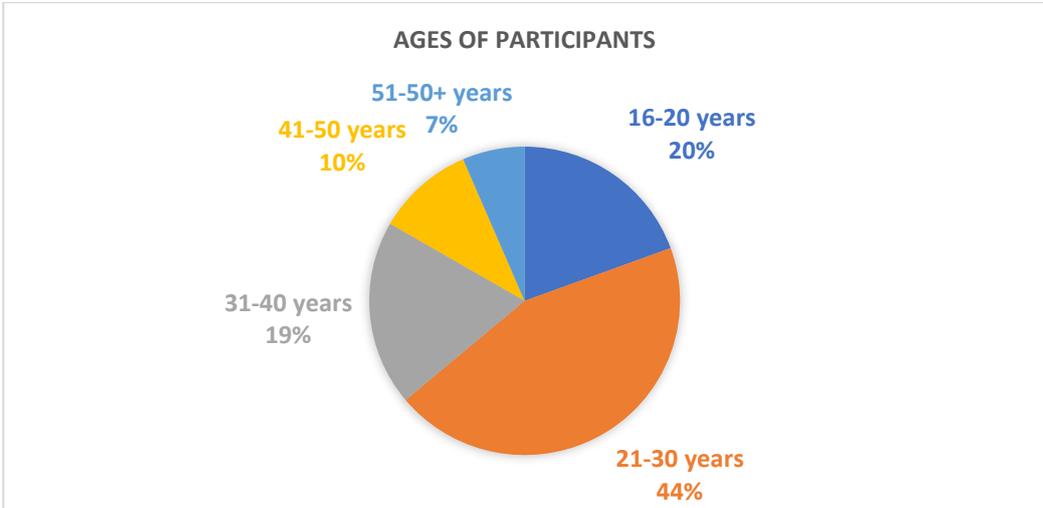
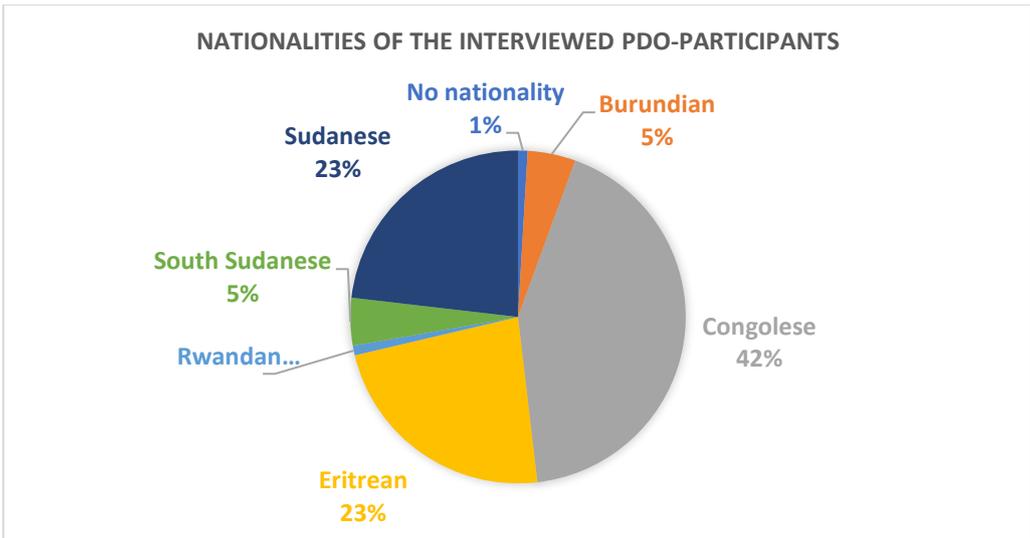
This section presents findings from the data collection. It is structured according to the target groups of the evaluation, with section 2.1 presenting the key results from the data collection of the quota refugees, PDO-training participants as well as the control group. Section 2.2 presents data collected from the municipalities, from a survey as well as from in-depth interviews with a smaller group of municipalities.

2.1 Interviews with quota refugees

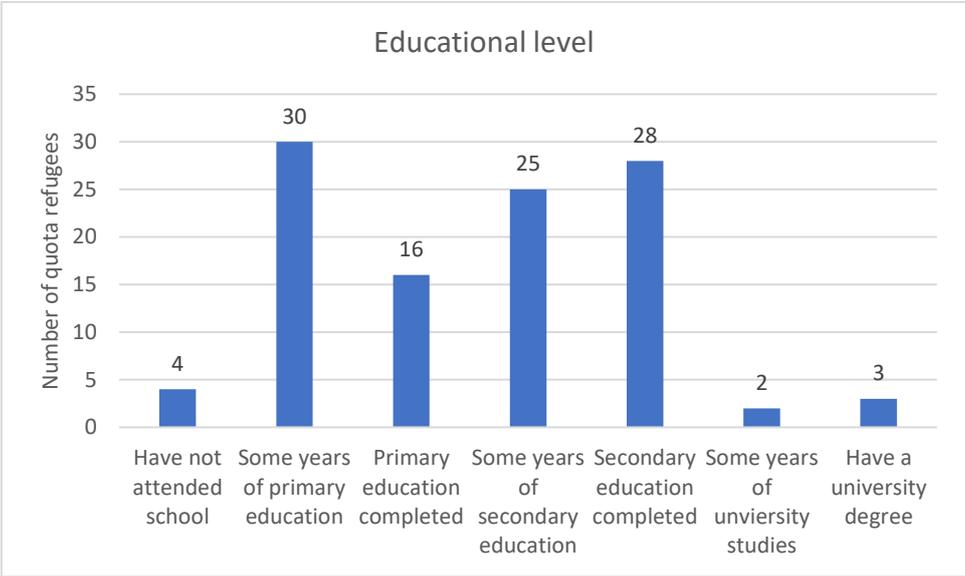
2.1.1 Refugees participated in PDO-pilot

Profile of participants

Out of 108 interviewed quota refugees in the sample group, 48 identified as women (44,5 percent) and 59 identified as men (54,5 percent). One person identified as “other”. Almost 43 percent were Congolese, 23 percent of Eritrean and Sudanese origin respectively. The largest cohort was in the 21-30-year-old interval, 44 percent. Same age group size in the 16-20-year-olds and the 31-40-year-olds, 21 percent.



In terms of education levels, almost half of the participants (49 percent) in the sample group had some years of secondary education or had completed secondary education. However, a relatively large proportion of the participants, 43 percent, only had some years of primary or completed primary education.² A further break down of education levels is presented in the diagram below.



Satisfaction with current situation in Sweden

72 percent of the refugees interviewed were either very satisfied or satisfied with their accommodation in Sweden. 17 percent responded that they are dissatisfied, with the main reasons being the following:

- Surprise that the apartment was unfurnished.
- That the rent does not correspond with what they had been told; they had understood from the PDO training that the rent would be free or much cheaper at the PDO.
- Families share one room/live in a very small apartment with no privacy.
- That the accommodation is isolated and/or in a place where only immigrants live. This makes integration into the Swedish society more difficult.
- They live alone and feel lonely.
- A sense of stress knowing that they need to find a new apartment by themselves after two years.

84 percent are very satisfied or satisfied with the initial support provided by the municipality in Sweden. Of the few participants (8 participants) that were dissatisfied one reason given was that they needed help with practical aspects in the home, such as how to use the oven and other home appliances, or not having received help with family reunification from the municipality.

One interview question related to how satisfied the individual was with his/her daily activities, such as school, the establishment programme, language classes etc. This and other questions related to satisfaction with current situation in Sweden question were not always easy for the participants to

² All the interviews conducted with the quota refugees that attended the PDO-training used the interview guide that was developed by IOM. The interview guide had pre-defined answers such as “some years of primary school” and “primary school completed” to the question “How many years of education have you attended?”. It has therefore not been possible to further break down the level of education within the different categories.

understand – they were formulated in a complicated way using an academic language. Moreover, the repetitiveness of some of the questions in combination with its detailed-oriented approach and specific pre-defined answers confused both the participants and the interpreters.

In total, 68 percent responded in the end that they were very satisfied or satisfied. Some themes amongst those that answered “ok” or who were dissatisfied were:

- Concerns with only having online classes – the refugees did not have a laptop at home, felt lonely, isolated, and thought it was more difficult to learn from home.
- They would like to work alongside learning Swedish – it would be easier to learn the language and to integrate if combining work with studies.
- Unhappy with having to wait for months before starting school.
- Long commuting to daily activities affects how participants feel about their daily activities – the long commute makes them tired and to feel isolated.

The PDO training

Largely all participants in the sample group noted that they had felt respected by the trainers during the training. Many had difficulties giving specific examples of why they felt respected but said it was the overall experience. The PDO training appears to have generally been a very positive experience for the refugees. The following statistics underscore this:

- About 90 percent said that they were able to share their thoughts and ask questions during the training to a large extent or to some extent.
- 85 percent noted that the training had provided them with realistic expectations about the initial steps of their life in Sweden.
- 83 percent responded that the training prepared them for real life situations that they might face in Sweden as a newly arrived person.
- 89 percent answered that the training had provided them with skills and attitude that better prepared them for resettlement.

Almost everyone (103 of 108 interview participants) concurred that, overall, the training provided them with useful information about life in Sweden. The following topics were considered especially useful:

- Climate and geography in Sweden
- Health care and education in Sweden
- Laws and human rights, e.g. LGBTQI+ rights, women’s right, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, parents are not allowed to hit their children
- To call the police if something happens instead of getting involved oneself
- Swedish culture and society, e.g. the importance of being on time, queuing, Swedish people are in general more introvert and quiet
- Practical aspects about life in Sweden – how to use public transport, co-live with neighbours, how to use common spaces such as laundry room – the importance of keeping them clean, hygiene, how to recycle, how to shop food and clothes, traffic rules
- The importance of learning Swedish
- Accommodation in Sweden

As has already been mentioned, the way some questions were phrased made them challenging for the refugees to grasp. This means that for questions such as how well the training prepared them for the introduction into Swedish society (such as going to the Swedish Tax Agency, getting a bank

account, enrolling in school) appeared to overlap with a question regarding how well the training prepared them for interacting with the public sector (state agencies and service providers), and how well the training prepared them for the system of education, work and retirement. The answer to these somewhat overlapping questions fall in the range of 67-75 percent of participants considering that the training had prepared them well. However, in reality it is not fully clear if the distinction between these questions was understood, or if the similar responses to different questions reflects an interview and question fatigue.

The questions relating to rights and responsibilities were easy to understand for some, while more challenging for others. 80 percent answered that the training had very well or well informed them about their individual rights and the support they are entitled to. 66 percent responded that the training had very well or well informed them about their responsibilities as residents in Sweden.

Considering the positive outcome of the training on most aspects and topics, it is noteworthy that the question on family reunification had slightly fewer positive responses. 7 percent (8/108) responded that the training had either poorly informed them, 5.5 percent (6/108) responded not at all informed them and 14 percent (15/108) of the respondents did not wish to answer on how well the training informed them about family reunification and return to country of origin.

62 percent of the participants had only received information about Sweden from the PDO. 13 percent had made their own research, and 14 percent had received information from other people, family and friends. Several refugees commented that they wished that the training lasted for more than three days, as most information is entirely new to them and they may struggle to find the equivalent information themselves, outside of the training.

Post-settlement

Just over half of the participants (55 percent) noted that they did not encounter situations or aspects of Swedish life that they did not feel properly prepared for when they came to Sweden. Of the relatively large group that did note that they encountered unexpected situations, two themes stand out: the weather and climate (that it is cold and very dark/ light) and the accommodation –(such as not having a furnished apartment and having to pay rent).

Other themes that the refugees felt less prepared for include:

- Lack of knowledge of region/ municipality for resettlement* Not knowing which municipality a refugee is bound for.
- Sense of isolation* Being alone at home or living far away from the city centre/other people
- Nature of Swedes* Swedish people were considered more introverted and quieter and not spontaneous. Swedes often don't practice a religion.
- The society* That Sweden is an organised, safe and peaceful country; How health care and education system works; That it is a highly digitalised society; equality between women and men.
- Rights* LGBTQI+ rights; legal age at 18, which can affect family separation as well as reunification.

Almost all (104 of 108) responded that they thought that their resettlement to Sweden would have been more challenging if they had not participated in the training. Some of numerous positive quotes include:

"This orientation helped us because we had some picture of Sweden in our heads after the orientation. It helped so much, so much."

"Everything is very different from African culture. Without the orientation it would have been hard. It helped me learn many things about Sweden."

"Without the training I would have felt scared, whereas now I didn't."

"Resettlement would have been very challenging without the information session."

"I wouldn't have respected the queue system if I hadn't received the information prior to coming. We don't have it in Sudan. I would have had problem in the stores and the supermarket. But I learnt to respect my place in the queue. Transportation as well, that you need to leave your card and buy a ticket, I learnt that too. Also, that you shouldn't disturb others on the bus."

"I have met some here in Sweden who did not participate in any orientation training. For them it has been very difficult."

Comments and feedback from the quota refugees for IOM and SMA to consider for improvements include:

"In addition to the sessions in the camps, give information to the refugees once in Sweden."

"Ask the municipalities to show all practical matters once in Sweden. Several have not used dishwashing machines and other appliances previously and need help with this."

"The municipality should give more consideration to that they come from another culture with other values."

"How are we supposed to adopt to Sweden if we are only put with other immigrants? Sweden needs to solve its housing problem. Why do they welcome refugees if they don't have enough houses?"

"Need more information about children's rights in Sweden, since it differs significantly from Uganda/Kongo."

"More information regarding family reunification, it is a long and difficult process."

"It is not good to have to wait so long for SFI."

"Be more clear to explain about the cold weather, that people are reserved and that there are very few community places where people gather. People mainly stay at home."

2.1.2 Control group

A control group was selected and interviewed, to compare the perspectives and experiences of the quota refugees that had received the training with those of similar characteristics and backgrounds, but who had not received the training. For this purpose, a total of 15 refugees were interviewed - 7 women, 7 men and 1 identified as "other". The selection of the control group attempted to mirror the PDO-training participants' group with the criteria available, including the refugee's arrival date. The information available of each person, both in the PDO-training participants' group and the control group, before conducting the interview was each person's age, sex, origin and the language(s) they spoke.

Information prior to re-settlement

11 out of the 15 control group respondents answered that they had limited or no information about Sweden and life in Sweden prior to departure. Aspects that they claim to not have known about include respect between people, non-discrimination, liberty, importance of education, the importance of learning the language, and most of all – that it is cold. Among those who were informed to some extent, the information had been received from friends or acquaintances who had visited or lived in Sweden. 2 individuals had googled information independently.

Regarding specific information related to the Covid-19 pandemic or family reunification, some had got information from friends or from UNHCR.

Initial period in Sweden

Overall, the participants in the control group appear to not have been well-prepared and had limited pre-existing knowledge about Sweden. Close to no one claims to have had knowledge of rights and responsibilities as a newly arrived migrant or resident in Sweden. The preparedness about the Swedish society, interacting with service providers, and the housing alternatives provided by the municipalities were very low.

Living in Sweden

Approximately half of the respondents had decent knowledge of the Swedish geography and the climate. Just under half had awareness about the importance of learning Swedish. And by and large, the control group was unprepared for the extensive digitalization of the Swedish society.

Aspects related to values, cultural differences and family relations are considered by the evaluators to have been poorly understood by the control group, based on the answers given to questions on these topics.

Regarding specific aspects that surprised the participants in the group upon arrival in Sweden, the following themes stand out:

- Safety and security
- The respect between people
- The Swedes and the different more reserved and individualistic culture
- The organisation of the public sector
- Infrastructure and organisation of public transport
- Minimal cash transactions
- The climate and the cold weather

Indicative quotes from the group:

"I think it is important that IOM quota refugees that are bound for Sweden must get complete information before arrival. Not like it has been for me, I was supposed to be placed in Stockholm, but at the airport I received conflicting information. There was a lot of discussion back and forth there. It was very hard."

"I just want to tell people who help others to coming here – it was wrong of them to not give information about Sweden. We knew nothing about Sweden. They need to give information to people who come here."

"It would have been good [with information prior to departure]. Now we came as goats, without knowing anything. It is important to give information to those in the refugee camps."

2.2 Host municipalities

The municipalities that have received and hosted quota refugees were surveyed to understand to what extent they thought the refugees had realistic expectations and information. In addition, 10 interviews with municipal representatives were conducted to discuss some questions more in-depth.

2.2.1 Survey

IOM administered a survey to 64 municipalities with a total of 76 municipal representatives responding, which meant that some municipalities had several representatives responding to the survey. The key results from this survey are presented in this section.

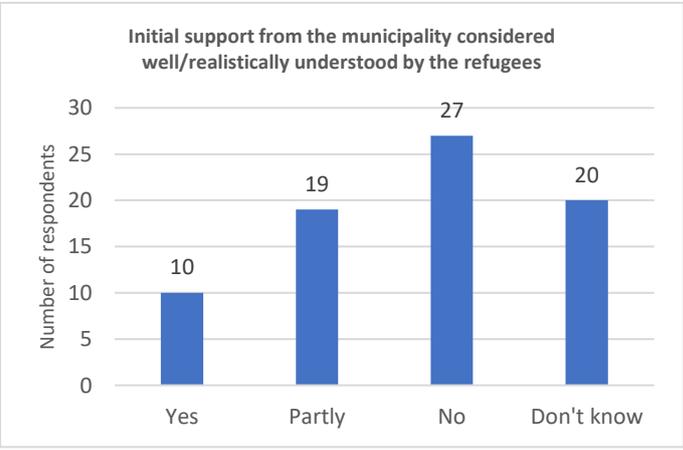
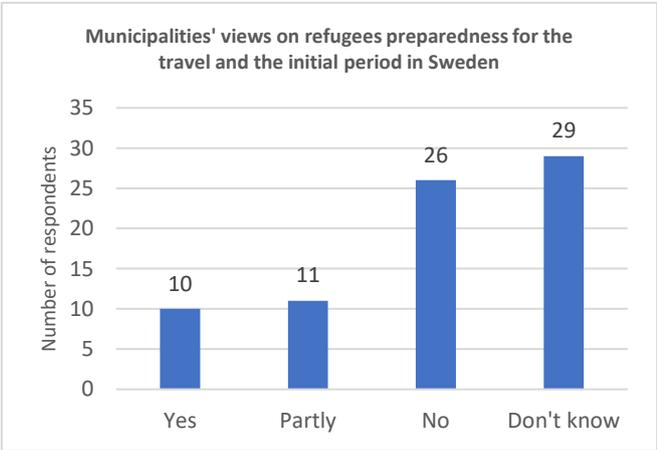
Just over half of the respondents (40 out of 76) considered that the quota refugees that received the PDO training were better prepared, compared to those that had not had the training.

Those who responded that the PDO-participants were better prepared considered that the participating quota refugees had better information about Sweden and a better understanding of the system, that they had more knowledge generally, felt safer and more confident. Since the information was considered by this group of municipal representatives to have made the refugees more prepared, the representatives considered that integration was (and is) facilitated. However, the respondents also noted that there is a challenge to know whether the difference is due to the individual or the PDO training. The extent of the information a person has absorbed was considered highly individual.

Of those that thought that there was no difference in preparedness between quota refugees who had received the PDO-training and those that had not, the main comments were:

- The municipalities do not know which refugees have received the training.
- It is unclear if information and knowledge that the refugee has is due to the PDO or other sources.
- Some municipalities consider that the refugees have unrealistic expectations that are impossible to satisfy.
- They consider that few refugees have participated in the PDO.

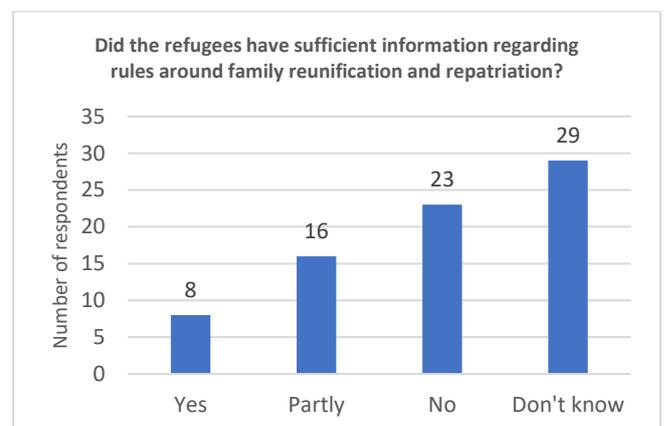
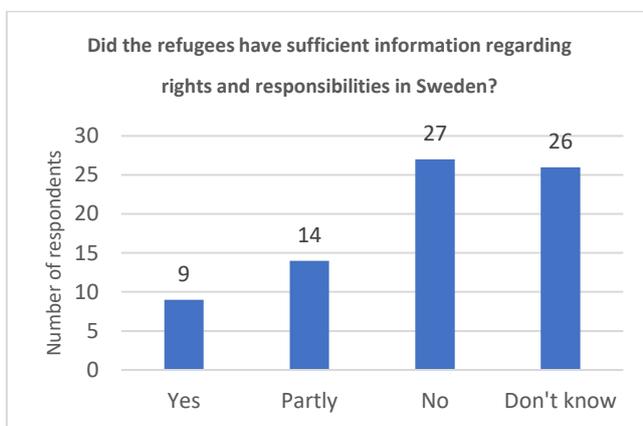
Once question explored whether municipality representatives considered that the refugees were well informed about and prepared for travel and initial settlement in Sweden. The responses did not provide strong evidence that such was the case, instead pointing at a lack of transparency and awareness of the training.



In particular, the municipalities considered that the quota refugees did not have important information regarding:

- The time required to get started with school, SFI and subsidies
- Information about the housing and residency situation and different opportunities therein
- Economy and subsidies, what the money should cover
- Family relations
- Public authorities, bureaucracy with long wait
- Family reunification
- Health care and social security
- Initiatives and interventions by the municipality

Another survey question related to the level of information the refugees were thought to have regarding rights and responsibilities. Here again, there is not clear evidence that the refugees were considered well informed and prepared.



The municipalities emphasised that they need to get information about which quota refugees have participated in the PDO and what the PDO covers. This in order to ensure a continuum and to resume the chain of information given to the refugees that starts in the field and should be followed up on once they have resettled to municipalities in Sweden. The information and messages that were given during the training in the field need to be repeated, in a similar fashion, by the municipalities.

The most frequent comments regarding pre-departure activities and information that needs to be strengthened include:

- The housing situation, the workings of the public authorities and the bureaucracy.
- A short presentation about the hosting municipality ought to be included in the PDO
- Information about financial aid
- The Swedish economy, price levels, in order for the refugees to be prepared that Sweden is an expensive society
- The process at the municipality upon arrival (and the difference between municipalities)
- More information about own responsibility
- Registering at the population registry and receiving a “personnummer” takes a while, during that time it is not possible to register for any activity

2.2.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a sample of 10 representatives from 10 different municipalities. The main findings from these interviews are presented in this section.

One of the main findings from the interviews was that the municipal representatives were rarely aware of who had participated in the pre-departure activities and who had not. They representatives interviewed claimed to not see any difference between refugees regarding for example realistic expectations relating to settling and integrating into the Swedish society. Only two representatives noted that they saw a difference in attitude and knowledge. Some considered the difference being due to own experience, situation, prerequisites and background and not due to the PDO.

The challenge in knowing who has participated in the PDO is prescribed to a lack of awareness of any available system that provide information on quota refugees background training, such as the PDO. Only 2 of 10 respondents claim to be able to find information about the training.

Overall, and similarly to the responses in the survey to the municipalities (section 2.2.1), the content of the PDO was not known to the interviewed municipality representatives. Lack of information about the training content meant lack of information about the quota refugees' knowledge about Sweden upon arrival.

Municipal representatives considered that the quota refugees' prerequisites were not dependent on having participated in the PDO, but rather due to other intersectional factors, such as level of education, knowledge of English language, level of literacy /illiteracy, age (initial settlement generally easier for younger persons), digital literacy, and whether an individual comes from an urban area thereby considered to have an advantage.

Going forward, it was considered necessary that the quota refugees gain more knowledge of the following themes and topics:

The system and the bureaucracy

- Understanding of Swedish bureaucracy – the administrative process pertaining to key aspects of getting established in Sweden takes time. The refugees are for example unlikely to be able to initiate studies before receiving a “personnummer”.
- The role of social services and government agencies generally – that a central role of the social services is the protection of individual rights, including the right of the child. Some refugees are afraid that the social services will take their children. The interviewed municipality representatives suggested that this can be improved by improving the information provided to refugees regarding the role of the convention of the child in Sweden.

Culture and norms

- A democratic society and the responsibility placed on the citizens (vs authoritarian regime)
- Sweden as a highly individualistic society

The individual level and everyday situations

- Housing and ability to develop a meaningful everyday situation (work/studies). The respondents noted that the refugees' expectations were sometimes unrealistic in terms of comfort and housing facilities compared to what the municipalities can offer

- Cost of living in Sweden
- Family reunification
- Psycho-social and mental well-being
- Importance of learning Swedish language

Some representatives noted that quota refugees that have pre-existing knowledge about the municipality he or she is bound for have been able to prepare and visualise their new home better and this has facilitated these individuals' settlement. They therefore thought it would be relevant and important to provide information at the training about the specific municipalities the refugees are going to be resettled to. One interviewed municipality representative noted:

"It would have been useful if the municipalities had been asked to collaborate to develop a presentation [for the PDO-training] that is relevant to the situation and conditions in specific municipalities"...

...and that:

"It is important to prepare the refugees for the specific situation in a particular municipality...This would contribute to more realistic expectations. As it is now all municipalities are treated as if they are the same, while in reality they are very different and offer very different services and opportunities. This causes frustration among the refugees. Some quota refugees even refuse to sign housing contract as they find their accommodation too small."

A few conditions were considered necessary by the interviewed municipality representatives for successful hosting and integration. Host municipalities need information about the type of information quota refugees have received prior to departure, so that this information can be followed-up on by the municipalities. The information needs to be given and repeated on several occasions.

To facilitate for the municipalities to host quota refugees effectively, it was considered that very good coordination between authorities is required, and that contact between the refugees and the host municipality prior to departure would facilitate early settlement. Furthermore, the system for 'personnummer' was considered in urgent need of efficiency improvements for a faster integration. There is otherwise a risk that the refugees lose hope and motivation due to a very extended settling process, during which it is not possible to register for key activities such as SFI /language training.

3 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In section 3.1 an analysis of the findings is provided by assessing the results according to the five key questions that the evaluation was set to answer. Based on that analysis, lessons learnt are drawn in section 3.2.

3.1 Analysis per key evaluation question

Have the project outputs led to the expected outcome?

The IOM project had three outcomes, of which this evaluation was to focus specifically on the following:

Refugees participating in PDO demonstrate a positive attitude and realistic expectations towards their settlement in Sweden

The data collected by the evaluation in order to determine whether the PDO-training had led to this outcome has focused on the one hand on the view and experience of quota refugees, and on the other on the view of the host municipalities.

The quota refugees who participated in the PDO training considered the training to have been very helpful in preparing them for resettlement. Almost all interviewed refugees concur that without the training the change and the move to Sweden would have been more challenging.

The perceived preparedness and level of knowledge on the part of the PDO-participating quota refugees are evident when comparing this group to the control group. Overall, the participants in the control group appear to the evaluators as significantly less well prepared and had limited pre-existing knowledge about Sweden. The individuals in the control group were clear that it is very important that all quota refugees receive a level of information about their new country in order to know what to expect. The areas where key information and preparedness gaps are most noticeable correspond with the areas and the topics that group who participated in the PDO-training though had been well covered in the training and that the PDO-training participants therefore felt well prepared for. This strengthens the relevance of the training and suggest that it has been effective, in the light of the lack of preparedness of the control group who had not had the topics explained to them through any information session or training.

This positive outcome of the PDO-training is not conclusively shared by the hosting municipalities. Just over half of the respondents to the municipality survey thought they could discern a difference in preparedness and expectations between those who had participated in the training and those that had not. The municipalities list a number of areas and topics regarding which the refugees have had unrealistic expectations. As established by IOM, unrealistic expectations are considered unhelpful for faster and effective settlement and integration.

What is the quality of the PDO trainings in terms of the expected outcome?

According to the Terms of Reference, the evaluation was to follow-up on three specific elements of the training. These were:

- Did the training provide the refugees with a sufficient understanding of their new home country?
- Did the training provide the refugees with relevant skills required for their first few months in Sweden?

- Do the refugees consider they were better prepared for their new country, compared to if they had not attended the training?

These questions overlap with the evaluation question discussed above (*Have the project outputs led to the expected outcome?*). The interviews conducted with the 108 quota refugees, as well as with the 15 refugees from the control group, went into granular detail about what had been learnt, information received and retained, expectations, and level of preparedness. By and large, it is clear that the PDO-training was very helpful in all these respects. This is also validated by the fact that the individuals in the control group had a poor understanding and presented a lower level of preparedness regarding the very same aspects that the PDO-participants noted they felt well prepared for. A few topics are considered by several refugees to need strengthening, or a continued process of information (beyond what is given in the field). These topics include:

- Family reunification
- The housing situation and the importance of clear communication regarding what to expect
- The role of social security and the rights of the child (in order to pre-empt worry by the refugees about the safety and care of their dependents).

The refugees participating in the pilot training considered that the length of the training – 3 days – was a good amount, if not a little short considering the limited opportunities they may have to find information about their new home outside of the training.

As per the previous evaluation question, the municipalities in turn are divided as to whether PDO-training had provided the refugees with sufficient understanding of Sweden, as well as provided them with essential skills. A large proportion of municipal representatives claim to not notice any difference between the refugees that had attended and those that had not in terms of attitude, level of expectations and level of knowledge. Areas that were considered to need improved information to the refugees were the governance system and the bureaucracy, culture and norms, and topics related to practical everyday situations and daily life in Sweden at a personal level.

Are the resettled refugees and receiving municipalities satisfied with the PDO trainings?

The refugees considered that the following aspects and topics of the training were particularly helpful in preparing the refugees for their new country:

- Individual rights
- Values of the Swedish society
- Practical aspects, such as recycling, common spaces in the housing complex, traffic and transportation rules.

The municipalities, many of which could not discern a difference between those that had received the training and not, did consider that the refugees had relatively good understanding of the school system, work and education, weather and climate, and individual rights. Overall, however, it is not possible to conclude that the municipalities were satisfied with the training.

In this respect, it is important to view and link the specific outcome relating to the quality of the PDO-training to the other two outcomes of the overall pilot project. In addition to the refugees having more realistic expectations, the pilot project is also expected to:

- Strengthen Sweden's capacity to provide PDO for quota refugees, and
- Establish a continuum between PDO and post-arrival services.

As the data collection from the municipalities have demonstrated, there appears to be gaps in the continuum between PDO and post-arrival services. Municipality representatives interviewed generally did not know where to find information about whether a refugee had participated in a PDO-training, if at all they were aware of this training having taken place. While this in and of itself is not strange as the municipalities receive many refugees and it is difficult for them to know and keep track of who has participated in a training and what that training might have covered, it still means that the municipalities have little ability to ensure a continuum of the information given in the field and build on that once the refugees have arrived in Sweden. This also means that while the participating refugees may consider that they have realistic expectations, without knowing what information has been given to them, the municipalities in turn may consider the refugees to have unrealistic expectations. And this may be based on assumptions and expectations held by the municipalities about the refugees that in themselves are unrealistic. This is likely to cause frustrations for both municipalities and refugees.

IOM Migrant Training Programming fact sheet notes that

*IOM encourages bridging programmes and information-sharing among all stakeholders involved in the integration process, so as to ensure that all actors understand both training content and methodology and are aware of the potential challenges identified during pre-departure that may need additional attention and follow-up post-arrival.*³

For an overall better outcome, therefore, it is imperative that SMA and IOM work together to bridge the different outcomes of the overall pilot project.

What are the major factors influencing the achievement of the expected outcome?

The intended outcome of the PDO-training pilot is that the refugees participating in PDO demonstrate a positive attitude and realistic expectations towards their settlement in Sweden.

What determines whether the participants have developed realistic expectations or not can partly be understood by applying an intersectionality perspective.

The data collected indicates that younger individuals are better prepared and adapt more easily to their new situation. There is also a rural-urban divide, whereby refugees who have previous experience of living in urban centres appear to adapt better to life in Sweden and being more accustomed to modern technology and services. They are more likely to have been exposed to English, something that appears to have made a difference in terms of faster integration, according to some municipality representatives. Finally, education level appears to matter in how fast and effectively a person adjusts to the new situation and settles in the his or her new country and municipality.

³ Fact sheet, IOM Migrant Training Programming

For achievement of the overall pilot project outcome, as is noted above, it is essential to establish a better continuum between the training and the post-arrival context. SMA notes that the success of the programme hinges on whether it serves to create a stronger continuum between the information and support resettled refugees receive before and after coming to Sweden.⁴

To what extent has the project adapted to changing conditions in order to ensure the project outcome?

The main changing circumstance during the project period was, naturally, the Covid-19 pandemic. The evaluation shows that the PDO-training and the way the training was delivered adapted very well to this challenging circumstance. The presence and facilitation by local IOM staff made a significant difference to the experience of the refugees.

3.2 LESSONS LEARNT

The quota **refugees** that participated in the PDO-training are very appreciative, they appear to feel much more prepared and have realistic expectations on their new country. Those who did not get any training ask for information, and this evaluation shows that they consider themselves to not be well prepared.

There is a need to ensure that information regarding sensitive points and aspects that are likely to cause frustration is repeated at several points along the resettlement continuum. Themes that need repeating include the housing situation and the not always ideal accommodation provided; 'personnummer' and waiting time; individualistic society; high price levels, and; family reunification.

Also, when possible, it is advisable to try and provide information at the training about the specific municipalities the refugees are going to be resettled to. Interviewed municipality representatives noted that quota refugees that have pre-existing knowledge about the municipality he or she is bound for have been able to prepare and to visualise their new home better and this has facilitated these individuals' settlement.

For effectiveness across the full re-settlement continuum, the **municipalities** need to have better oversight over who has participated in a PDO-training and what this training covers. It should be noted that this evaluation covers the pilot project during which the PDO-model and training materials were to be developed and tested. It was therefore not a focus of SMA to provide detailed information on the PDO as they are expected to do once the pilot has been completed, with the model and the materials ready for launch.

Going forward, it is important that the municipalities' awareness of the PDO-training is raised. This in order to contribute to the continuum mentioned, and to be able repeat information given in the field. While there are of course challenges in ensuring that municipalities receive information about and monitor who of the refugees they receive have received training and on what topics, for the PDO to play an effective role for resettlement and integration, the evaluation has pointed to the need for better liaison and coordination with municipalities. For SMA (and IOM Finland), this means ensuring a continuum between the PDO training and the activities by host municipalities, to ensure a good start for the refugees. More information to municipalities on the background and information held

⁴ Migration Policy Institute, *Recommendations for Sweden's future predeparture orientation programme for resettling refugees*, March 2020

by each refugee is necessary. The municipalities need to be much more involved, starting at the training situation in the field, when possible.

There are also lessons to be drawn regarding the **monitoring and evaluation** of the project. These lessons relate to evaluation approach, method and tools, as well as to the evaluation process.

As an approach, developmental or follow-on evaluation is a good practice in context when it is important to be able to adjust the project approach and content while the project still unfolds. A formative approach allows for course corrections and can help ensure optimal outcome for the target groups involved during the project and help adjust outputs along the way, by introducing an element of continuous learning through periodical shorter evaluations. The periodical evaluations, or intermittent reviews, would collect sufficient data for a final evaluation to be made more efficient and less costly.

In terms of monitoring data gathered, this should ideally be further disaggregated along years of education, gender and age. For this to be feasible, it is important that the number of data points and questions asked are fewer and well considered, otherwise the number of variables to manage will be difficult to process and make sense of into something meaningful. Aspects to follow-up on and monitor is how the refugees rated the training and at subsequent points, after 2-3 months of arriving in Sweden, how they consider this training to have served them.

For the method, it is important that IOM spends more time upfront to quality assure the interview guide. The current guide is considered long, it has difficult language and repetitive questions. The questions were sometimes difficult for the refugees to understand. The way the multiple-choice answers are combined with open-ended questions is also not ideal for ensuring accuracy and consistency in responses. Furthermore, the evaluation team experienced challenges with the IT-tool Kobo at times.

In terms of the evaluation process, a lesson from this evaluation is that IOM needs to ensure that the municipalities explain the random selection of interviewees and that the interview will not affect the participants in any way. This was communicated to the municipalities by the evaluators, however, the process is likely to improve if SMA and/or IOM communicate this message as well. Finally, it is important that IOM and/or SMA ensure access to municipal contacts ahead of evaluation in order to save time and resources.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation has explored whether the refugees that participated in the PDO-training demonstrated a positive attitude and realistic expectations towards their settlement in Sweden.

The evaluation has found strong evidence that the PDO-training participants from the two groups from Uganda and Niger feel prepared in many different respects for life in their new country. With some exceptions, they appear to be fully aware of Swedish characteristics, such as Sweden being a very organized country, that it is cold, that women and men have equal value and that it is important to learn the Swedish language. This is not the case with the control group, a finding that strengthens the relevance and utility of the PDO-training.

However, it is also clear that the sense of being well-prepared and possessing realistic expectations is not shared by a satisfactory number of municipalities. Many municipalities consider the refugees to have unrealistic expectations and sought strengthening of several topics and messages, for improved resettlement and faster integration.

Therefore, a key conclusion is that on the one hand the PDO-training needs to be strengthened regarding a few critical topic areas, on the other hand SMA needs to work much closer with the municipalities to ensure oversight and transparency over the content of the training and who has participated, and more broadly to ensure a continuum of information provided in camp with that provided once the refugees have resettled in Sweden.

Recommendations

The PDO

1. Continue with the PDO. Ensure that all Swedish bound quota refugees participate in the training. The training is recommended to last for at least three days, as per IOM recommendations, to cover all relevant topics properly considering the limited opportunity for the refugees to find relevant information themselves outside of the training.
2. Ensure that municipalities are either present or provide remote information to the refugees about the municipalities that they are likely to be resettled to.
3. Strengthen how the topics related to housing, family reunification, climate and weather, life in Sweden (and the reserved nature of Swedes and the individualistic society) are delivered.

Continuum of information and support pre and post resettlement

4. Explore with the municipalities what realistic expectations on the recently arrived quota refugees look like in terms of the refugees' level of preparedness and understanding of the Swedish society. It is important to avoid a mismatch of expectations between the municipalities and the quota refugees regarding pre-existing knowledge and information.
5. Ensure that the municipalities are aware of the contents of the PDO and who has participated. This would allow for more realistic expectation on the refugees, and for a better understanding of background knowledge to build on once the refugees are in Sweden.
6. Work with municipalities to ensure the continuum of information, bridging the information given in field with information given by the municipalities in Sweden. Ensure that sensitive and critical topics are repeated once the refugees are resettled.

Evaluation methods and process

7. Consider the option of developmental evaluation for a future project. This will enable adjustment to the approach and activities while the project is being implemented.
8. Improve some evaluation methods and tools, in particular the interview guide. This can be done by simplifying the language and reducing the number of questions, as well as testing the guide before launching it.
9. For a more efficient evaluation process, ensure access to municipal contacts ahead of evaluation, to save time and resources.