



MIDTERM REVIEW
PILOT SAMEN HIER
DECEMBER 2020

**SAMEN
HIER[®]**

December 2020

Content: Dr. Craig Damian Smith, Amaya Verschuur, Maaïke Graaff,
Liselot van Zantvoort, Tariq Alhasan
Final editing: Anne van Eindhoven, Marjolijn Lampe
Design: Maranke de Krieger

To guarantee the anonymity of the participants of Samen Hier, only pseudonyms have been used in this report.

The Samen Hier pilot was realized with the support and cooperation of:

Adessium Foundation
Dioraphte
Oranjefonds
Municipality of Almere
Municipality of Den Haag
Municipality of Haarlem
Municipality of Rotterdam
Stem in de Stad Haarlem
Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam

Follow us

on Facebook,
Instagram and
LinkedIn.

@samenhier
#samenhier

Address

Samen Hier
Riviermark 4
2513 AM
The Hague

Contact

info@samenhier.nl
www.samenhier.nl
070 763 14 99



Table of Content

Summary	3
Introduction	5
About this report	7
Chapter 1 The Samen Hier model	10
1.1 Pairity matching method	10
1.2 Recruitment	11
1.3 Intake and matching	11
1.4 Match randomization	11
1.5 Matching procedure	12
1.6 Training, guidance and community building	13
Chapter 2 Theoretical framework	15
2.1 Social networks and integration	15
2.2 Social cohesion	16
Chapter 3 Samen Hier participants	16
3.1 Welcome Groups	17
3.2 Participating statusholders	18
Chapter 4 Ervaringen en impact	21
4.1 Language skills	21
4.2 Work	22
4.3 Trust and Equality	25
4.4 Intercultural communication and the role of cultural ambassadors	27
4.5 Social capital and network building	30
Chapter 5 Matching & Guidance	35
5.1 Matching	35
5.2 Training, guidance and community building	36
5.3 COVID-19	38
Chapter 6 Impact, improvements and perspective	40
Annex 1: Composition of Welcome Groups by City	45
Endnotes and sources	52

Summary

This report presents the mid-term evaluation of the **Samen Hier** pilot program. Samen Hier was launched in 2018 by Justice and Peace with the aim of creating a community-based intervention in the Netherlands for the reception and welcome of refugees. The pilot program was developed in close collaboration with Dr. Craig Damian Smith and his research team at the University of Toronto, Columbia University, University of Mannheim and Ryerson University. The model called for groups of five people or more from established communities to form a Welcome Group (Welkom Groep), who use their network, knowledge, and time for a year to support a matched refugee newcomer or family (known in the Dutch context as “status holders” – i.e. asylum seekers who have received a positive decision and residence permit). The pilot took place in four municipalities: Almere, The Hague, Haarlem and Rotterdam, and includes a total of 42 Welcome Groups. The pilot will be completed in the Spring of 2021 and evaluated in its entirety.

The mid-term review focuses on the experience, impact and developments of Welcome Groups and status holders in the areas of **employment participation, language skills, relationship building, intercultural communication, and social capital**. It also looked at the effectiveness and possible improvements to the matching methodology and guidance provided by Justice and Peace.

Major impact on integration frameworks and social connectedness

This study shows that the pilot has had a measurable impact on both status holders and Welcome Groups. For example, the vast majority of status holders indicate that the Welcome Groups have made a significant contribution to improved language skills and have helped to find jobs, internships, or other training. These outcomes will be further investigated in the final evaluation, when the results will be compared with a control group of newcomers who were not matched in the pilot.

The relationships that resulted from the matching not only affected traditional integration outcomes, but also contributed to the social connection that status holders feel with their community. Many Welcome Groups indicated they gained a better understanding of the lives of refugee newcomers and the challenges associated with settlement. Almost all matches reported their relationships were characterized by friendship and trust, and that they felt comfortable to share their feelings. These are important steps towards Justice and Peace’s goal of building equal and lasting relationships between refugee newcomers and receiving communities.

Matching

The mid-term review also provides insight into the experience with the matching methodology and guidance from Samen Hier staff. The Welcome Groups and newcomers were matched based on preference-ranking surveys and a matching algorithm developed by the Pairity research team (www.Pairity.ca). Although the majority of respondents indicated they were satisfied with this methodology, there is room for improvement by reducing the time between intake and the first meetings, and simplifying intake surveys.

Guidance and community building

Throughout the entire process from recruitment, to matching, to day-to-day relationships, Justice and Peace provides support to Welcome Groups and newcomers through training, the provision of “cultural ambassadors” for questions about language or intercultural communication, monthly check-in calls, and informal community-building activities. All were very positively experienced by participants. Cultural ambassadors proved to be important in the pilot and are most effective when both participants and cultural ambassadors are well aware of the role of cultural ambassadors. In the coming period, Justice and Peace will explore whether cultural ambassadors can receive more support and take a more active role within Samen Hier programming.

Opportunities

Many Welcome Groups indicated they prefer to work on practical tasks and concrete objectives towards their matches' integration. In practice, it appears they often have creative solutions and can open up their networks in a way that is usually not possible for professional service providers (nor for volunteers working in social counselling). Justice and Peace sees space to further develop Samen Hier as a model of community sponsorship in the Netherlands.

The pilot provides a solid basis to continue Samen Hier. A large majority of participants indicated that Samen Hier has had a lasting impact on their lives and would recommend participation to others. The personal relationship and the trust engendered by the programming play an important role in these positive experiences



Introduction

In 2018, Justice and Peace started the pilot **Samen Hier** as the first Dutch application of a community-based intervention for the reception and welcome of refugees. The pilot program was developed in collaboration with Dr. Craig Damian Smith and his research team through the Pairity matching platform. With Samen Hier, Justice and Peace took the first steps towards a Dutch variant of community sponsorship.

Building on Past Experiences

Samen Hier expanded on previous Justice and Peace initiatives, including Welcome Here and the Hague Living Room.¹ In these projects, Justice and Peace built capacity for civic initiatives and local solidarity between receiving communities and refugee newcomers. There appeared to be a great willingness from residents in the Netherlands to take in refugees and help them feel at home. Nevertheless, interviews with Dutch participants and refugee newcomers illustrated that one-off events and short-term initiatives did not always facilitate lasting, equal contacts.

Friendly and Equal Relationships

Refugee newcomers would like to have more everyday connections with Dutch people over and above transaction encounters in stores, at integration classes, or with social workers, but as community members with whom they can build friendly relationships and social networks. Newcomers mainly have contacts with other newcomers from their own communities. Contacts with Dutch people are often framed as a certain functional role, such as language buddies or social counselors. This is not only a missed opportunity for newcomer integration, but for society as a whole.

With the Samen Hier pilot, Justice and Peace and the Pairity research team sought to investigate whether and how underutilized support and capacity of Dutch citizens can be mobilized to receive refugees in local communities, open established social networks, accelerate the process of integration, and strengthen social cohesion.

Group of five model

Inspired by examples of international community sponsorship models, Samen Hier chose to recruit groups of five to form Welcome Groups. Welcome Groups use their network, knowledge, and time over the period of a year to support newcomers to participate effectively and immediately in Dutch society. The group of five model is based in part on the long-established Private Refugee Sponsorship example from the Canadian context, though with people who are already residing in the Netherlands, and without the requirements for financial and housing support. The purpose of partnering between a research project and established NGO was to build a base of evidence for future policymaking.

The pilot started in Almere, The Hague, Haarlem, and Rotterdam, where a total of 42 Welcome Groups were formed. The program received national attention as an innovative example of evidence-based programming.ⁱⁱ The pilot will be completed and evaluated in Spring 2021.

What is community sponsorship?

The European Resettlement Network defines community sponsorship as: “a public-private partnership between governments who facilitate legal admission for refugees and private/community actors who provide financial, social and/or emotional support to receive and settle refugees into the community.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Justice and Peace places the emphasis on active citizenship: citizens take responsibility for enabling the reception and integration of refugee newcomers. The Samen Hier model moves beyond financial responsibility toward in-kind investment, particularly time, knowledge, and access to social networks. The major difference from more traditional forms of volunteering is that within community sponsorship participants take on responsibilities with the support of an organisation (in this case Justice and Peace), rather than working to support an organisation’s programming. Community sponsorship programmes contribute to integration, social cohesion, and support for refugee reception.

Novel programmes have been established to test different variants of community sponsorship in several European countries. Justice and Peace aims to implement a Dutch model of community sponsorship, in which the involvement, commitment, and responsibility of local communities will ultimately contribute to the development of policies for increased resettlement via safe and legal pathways.

About this report

In this mid-term review, we look at the experiences and results of Samen Hier from the Autumn of 2018 to June 2020. The goal is to understand how participation is experienced by newcomers and Welcome Groups to date, and identify areas for improvement.

To answer this question, we use:

- Interviews and surveys conducted at the beginning of the programme by all participants:
 - A digital intake survey completed jointly by all members of the Welcome Group; and
 - In-person intake surveys and semi-structured interviews with all newcomer participants or members of households.
- Evaluation interviews conducted in a selection of participants in the summer of 2020:
 - A digital individual survey completed by 51 members of Welcome Groups; and
 - 23 semi-structured interviews with individual newcomers or members of a household.
- Monthly interviews held in the context of staff support.
- Internal reporting

This report is divided into six chapters. A description of the Samen Hier design and approach in the first chapter is followed by the theoretical framework in chapter two. The last three chapters explain the results: the demographics of the participants, their experiences with Samen Hier to date, and a preview with recommendations on the potential of the Samen Hier approach for the reception of refugees in the Netherlands.



"I have built a very beautiful relationship with Eva and her husband. It's become spontaneous and fun. I don't feel like a refugee with them. She does it from her heart and out of interest. I feel very similar to her and I feel like we can be friends. We learn from each other and I feel comfortable. I feel Dutch with them."

Abdullah (36 years)

1. The Samen Hier model

In Samen Hier, Welcome Groups of five Dutch people are matched to a refugee or refugee newcomer family for a twelve-month period. They spend a year together and at the beginning of the year determine together what they will do in that year. Samen Hier is inspired by international examples of community sponsorship, modified for a Dutch context. Welcome Group members can be seen as a sponsorship group, in the sense that they use their time, expertise, and network to welcome refugees into the local community.

Active citizen networks

Samen Hier distinguishes itself from volunteering by allowing active citizenship of the Welcome Group: the members of Welcome Groups support matched newcomers not as volunteers for Samen Hier, but as members of a local community. Justice and Peace supports and facilitates the Welcome Groups, rather than the other way around. The commitment of the Welcome Group is also different than in typical “buddy” projects, which are widespread around Europe, and usually exclusively focus on either language and employment. The Welcome Group focuses on a range of integration activities. This means that the Welcome Group and newcomer can decide together to work on language skills and employment participation, while at the same time undertaking social activities or accessing settlement services. An entire network is ready to welcome and guide matched newcomers.

Samen Hier focuses on promoting **equal relationships**. Discussions with newcomers have shown time and again that it is difficult for them to build lasting, equal contacts with their Dutch community-members.^{iv} Newcomers express a desire to have more contacts with Dutch people in an everyday way – not the Dutch who encounter them at counters, at integration schools or as volunteers of foundations, but city-dwellers with whom they can build friendly relationships and a social network. Samen Hier aims to facilitate these kinds of relationships by allowing Welcome Groups and newcomers to identify their priorities and how they want to organize the year. Unlike many international examples of community sponsorship, Welcome Groups are not asked for a financial contribution. The goal here is to avoid financial dependence and recognize the social welfare support of the Dutch state. Awareness about power relations is also a recurring topic in the training sessions. Each group is linked to a cultural ambassador who knows both languages and cultures and can help bridge cultural differences.

1.1 Pairity matching method

Samen Hier matches Welcome Groups and Status holders or Status holder households using the Pairity matching and evaluation system (www.Pairity.ca). Pairity was designed by an interdisciplinary team of academics and refugee settlement practitioners. It uses demographic and preference-ranking surveys and a preference-matching algorithm to make matches and monitor their progress. It is backed by a university research project to monitor the relationships between access to social networks and outcomes around social cohesion and refugee newcomer integration. The goal of the academically rigorous methodology is to make the best possible matches across the whole of the populations, meet the high-bar for evidence-based programming, and offer built-in monitoring and evaluation. The pilot phase offered a chance to test the matching system and evaluation systems, and offered important insights into how to streamline and improve both the matching criteria and evaluation procedures.

1.2 Recruitment

The recruitment of newcomers focused on status holders who received positive asylum decisions and were housed between 2017 and 2018 in one of the four pilot municipalities: Almere, The Hague, Haarlem, and Rotterdam. The purpose of the one-year limit was to ensure that newcomers were past the very first stages of their settlement, but that we could also ensure that the intervention would make a meaningful and measurable impact on integration. All newcomers who met these two requirements, regardless of their personal characteristics such as country of origin, gender, or family composition received an invitation from the municipality, the Dutch Council for Refugees, and/or Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam (external partner organizations).

Welcome Groups were recruited through word-of-mouth, events, door-to-door flyering, the use of ambassadors, social media posts, press releases, and radio interviews. Welcome Groups consist of five members (friends, colleagues, family or neighbours). The group size is based on Canadian experiences: a group of five unlocks a large social network, and is small enough to build close relationships

1.3 Intakes Surveys and Matching

After recruitment, all participants completed an intake survey (a semi-structured interview with status holders at their home, or an online survey for Welcome Groups), which collected extensive demographic data and participants' preferences. This questionnaire is based on existing research on integration and social relations, including the OECD's "Settling In" Integration Framework, World Values Survey, and the European Values Survey.^v The surveys asked about the goals and motivation to participate in Samen Hier, displacement history, language skills, education level, work experience, other skills, family composition, hobbies and interests, social contacts, well-being, and the nature of existing social networks.

Survey data was then coded using statistical software in order to facilitate matching using a preference-matching algorithm. Surveys established baseline data for measuring outcomes, helped Samen Hier staff understand the needs and desires of all participants, and generated data for the matching algorithm. The algorithm was designed to generate the best possible matches within the group of potential participants. Because the recruitment of Welcome Groups took longer than originally planned, the algorithm was not applied to a single pool of participants during the pilot. Instead, the matching took place in seven rounds, with each round containing at least five Welcome Groups and larger group of status holders.

1.4 Match randomization

Whereas all Welcome Groups were matched, we recruited a larger number of refugee newcomer households in order to create treatment and control groups. Once the algorithm identified at least two possible matches per Welcome Group, newcomers were randomly assigned to either treatment or control, where "treatment" was considered matching to a Welcome Group. The purpose of randomization is to allow for some degree of causal inference despite the relatively small size of the population.

There are 42 status holder households matched, and 29 in the control group. This report is based on surveys taken with the matched status holders. The final evaluation will include both the matched status holders and the control group.

1.5 Matching procedure

The use of a preference-matching algorithm for matching Welcome Groups and Status holders was intended to counter possible bias and give all status holders an equal chance to be matched. The algorithm ensured a match along three criteria: geographical distance, volunteer capacity and willingness to be matched with self-identified vulnerable newcomers, and preferences for household and Welcome Group composition.

Matching Criteria	Explanation
Geographical distance	The matching algorithm ensured that matches only occurred within a 5km distance. The purpose was to ensure that matches lived close enough together so that transit would not be a barrier to spending time.
Vulnerability	<p>In order to ensure neither group felt overwhelmed or under-supported, the surveys asked Welcome Groups if they had significant experience working with vulnerable social groups or individuals. For example, people with disabilities, homeless populations, people with histories of trauma, or people with addiction issues. Importantly, it also asked if Welcome Groups felt willing and capable of being matched with vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Newcomer surveys included questions about disabilities and trauma, whether they required specific types of support, and the nature of the household. These allowed us to establish a vulnerability score for each household. The vulnerability score was based partly on self-sufficiency matrices used by municipal and federal governments in OECD countries.</p>
Household Composition	<p>The final variable in the matching criteria was each group's preferences for household composition. Groups on both side of the match were asked to rank-order their preferences for household composition, including a family (or families) with children, couples without children, single parents, single males, single females, etc. We made clear that rank-ordering did not guarantee a match on the first-ranked choice.</p> <p>Once the inclusion and exclusion criteria for both distance and vulnerability were met, the algorithm matched volunteers and newcomers with their top household composition choices. If the top choice could not be met, it then descended down the rank-ordered preferences until it landed on a match.</p>

The algorithm excluded matches where, for instance, a newcomer household had a high vulnerability score and a Welcome Group had a low capacity or willingness to support vulnerable groups. The purpose was not to limit the number of potential matches per newcomer household, but to prevent volunteer burnout and meet both parties' expectations about their experiences with Samen Hier. In three cases, another match for these participants proved possible, based on the willingness and experience of the Welcome Group.

In addition to the three criteria mentioned above, professional backgrounds, language and culture and hobbies and interests were included in the surveys but not used for matching. These data points are used for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

1.6 Training, guidance and community building

Participants received various forms of guidance throughout the pilot. All Welcome Groups were trained at the outset to prepare them for the match. Each group is also linked to a contact person to monitor developments within the group, provide guidance where necessary, and conduct monthly telephone contact with both the Welcome Group and Status holder participants. In addition, groups were linked to a "cultural ambassador" who has a bi-cultural background, speaks both Dutch and the language of the newcomer, and performs a bridge function to facilitate equal contact. Eighteen cultural ambassadors are active in Samen Hier. Their guidance includes explaining cultural habits, translating messages, and helping to make appointments for in-person contact. They are also physically present (taking into account the measures around COVID-19) at meetings to interpret or explain certain cultural differences. A number of groups are not associated with a cultural ambassador because the status holder's language skills were very good and/or the status holder indicated they did not want to involve a cultural ambassador given perceived trust issues within their community.

Welcome Groups also follow (online) training courses on the social map in their city, which explains different municipal authorities and available services. In Haarlem, for example, a meeting was organised on Eritrean culture for all participants with an Eritrean newcomer in their group, cultural ambassadors, and Eritrean newcomers themselves. Some in-person community events and trainings could not be organised due to national measures due to COVID-19. These were replaced by four online community building events in which participants organised a Syrian cooking workshop, a virtual tour of Rotterdam, an Eritrean cooking workshop, and a themed evening about fasting. In all these meetings, Samen Hier participants were involved in the organization. In the summer, small-scale meet-ups were also held in the four cities, where participants met remotely to eat and exchange experiences.

Mutual interest

When Raheem (36) and Ali (35), an Iraqi couple, joined Samen Hier Haarlem, they knew what they were looking for “Samen Hier was a chance for us to meet real Dutch people and make friends.” They were both nervous for the first meeting, but soon discovered that the Welcome Group with whom they had been matched was incredibly interested in them and their background. The group, consisting of six women and three men, who know each other from work, agree with this feeling and say that they “find it very nice and special how open and involved Raheem and Ali are”. Both the couple and the group also emphasize how much they have learned a lot from each other. According to Jaap: “I have a better understanding now of other countries, and realize that not everything we see in the media about other countries is true. There’s a lot more behind it and Samen Hier’s a really nice way to find out.” The mutual interest and motivation to get to know each other has brought a strong bond based on equality and openness. As Sofie explains: “In the things that we find important and beautiful we are very similar and we get along really well. It doesn’t matter where you come from.” For Raheem, the impact of Samen Hier is clear: “If it wasn’t for Samen Hier, we wouldn’t have been able to make friends.”

An example for the group

Florentine started a Welcome Group in Rotterdam with five friends. The group was matched with the family of Abdul, Rahaf, and their six children, originally from Syria. What started as participation in a project quickly grew into a close bond with the whole family. The family’s goal was to have more contact with Dutch people. During the past months they not only got to know the group members well, but also their partners. The group undertook many social activities together. Their interactions are informal and friendly, and the family knows how to find the group for all kinds of questions. Conversely, the group has learned a lot from the family, especially about the education of children. A group member gave the following example to explain this, “When you see how polite and caring the children are for each other and how committed they are to each other, you definitely want to see how the mother achieves that with the upbringing.” According to Florentine: “For the two women in our group, who are expecting children, Rahaf is really a role model.”

2. Theoretical framework

The Samen Hier pilot and Pairity matching method are motivated by three hypotheses. The central and motivating hypothesis is that access to social networks early in the settlement process will result in more rapid and better integration for refugee newcomers. Second, we believe that fostering personal connections between receiving populations and newcomers will lead to better social cohesion. Third, we believe in empowering everyday people to make a meaningful contribution to both integration and social cohesion by offering day-to-day support as people get settled, which can eventually lead to meaningful relationships that go beyond volunteer support. Indeed, local initiatives for supporting newcomers, particularly in Europe, are often more immediately relevant for integration than national or regional policies.^{vi} Looking forward, we believe that the personal experiences from Samen Hier can offer evidence for broader use of community support and sponsorship models in The Netherlands and throughout Europe.^{vii}

Broad effect

Evidence for the impacts of social networks on integration is often anecdotal or based on post-hoc analysis and has not been tested through real-world interventions with robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. We also recognize that refugee newcomers are a group of people who are uniquely vulnerable to marginalization and discrimination. And while refugee newcomers often display an outsized amount of resilience in comparison to those in a receiving community, the immediate post-settlement phase is often the period where psychological trauma manifests.^{viii} As such, the Samen Hier intervention sees the role of social capital not strictly as a means to achieving typical success in areas like **employment** or **language acquisition**, but also look at the effects on **well-being, satisfaction and trust**.

2.1 Social networking and integration

Samen Hier understands integration as a two-way process, in which both receiving societies and the newcomers learn from each other and adapt. The goal of Samen Hier is to promote faster integration in all its versatility by giving access to social networks.

Increase opportunities through social networks

Recent social science research provides strong evidence that social networks, and the social capital they generate, create new opportunities and social mobility. These opportunities include access to specific jobs, or other interpersonal opportunities, such as building trusts and reciprocity.^{ix} Most people know from their own lives how important networks are: the people we know often turn out to be the primary and most important sources for new opportunities or to overcome difficult personal circumstances.

People who have to flee their homes as a result of war or persecution often lose the intergenerational social networks they were part of. Although close-knit social networks within newcomer communities are often the norm and are important for individual psychosocial well-being, newcomers can still become isolated by the lack of “bridging capital” with the wider receiving society.^x Lack of access to more established social networks can also lead to reduced integration, including lower wages, less meaningful employment, lower levels of education, and unequal health outcomes compared to the receiving society

2.2 Social cohesion

Samen Hier understands social cohesion as the whole of positive and meaningful relations between different social groups. In the Dutch and broader European context, however, terms such as 'integration' and 'social cohesion' are often seen as synonymous with a project of cultural assimilation, with the responsibility for adaptation borne entirely by newcomers.^{xi} Decades of shortcomings in integration policy have led to strong differences between the environment and life experiences of receiving and newcomer populations.^{xii}

In the worst case, the lack of integration can lead to intergenerational “parallel societies”, where newcomers and established communities have no meaningful interactions. This marginalisation can lead to mistrust and negative public opinion towards foreigners or minority communities. Conversely, personal contacts between established groups and newcomers can lead to more positive attitudes, reduce harmful stereotypes, and foster genuine inclusion.^{xiii}

Interesting Canadian examples

The Canadian context, from which many other “community sponsorship” initiatives draw lessons, provides an interesting example of integration and social cohesion. More than half of the Canadian population has either had a direct role in sponsoring a refugee or knows someone who has done so.^{xiv} Public opinion is overwhelmingly positive about immigration, including the resettlement of refugees and ensuring a fair asylum system. This widespread acceptance of refugees and positive attitudes towards newcomers has increased over time.^{xv} From a policy perspective, new immigrants in Canada often exceed the native-born population in terms of entrepreneurship and social mobility.^{xvi} Better integration outcomes have been linked to lower social welfare expenditures around the world.^{xvii}

3. The Participants of Samen Hier

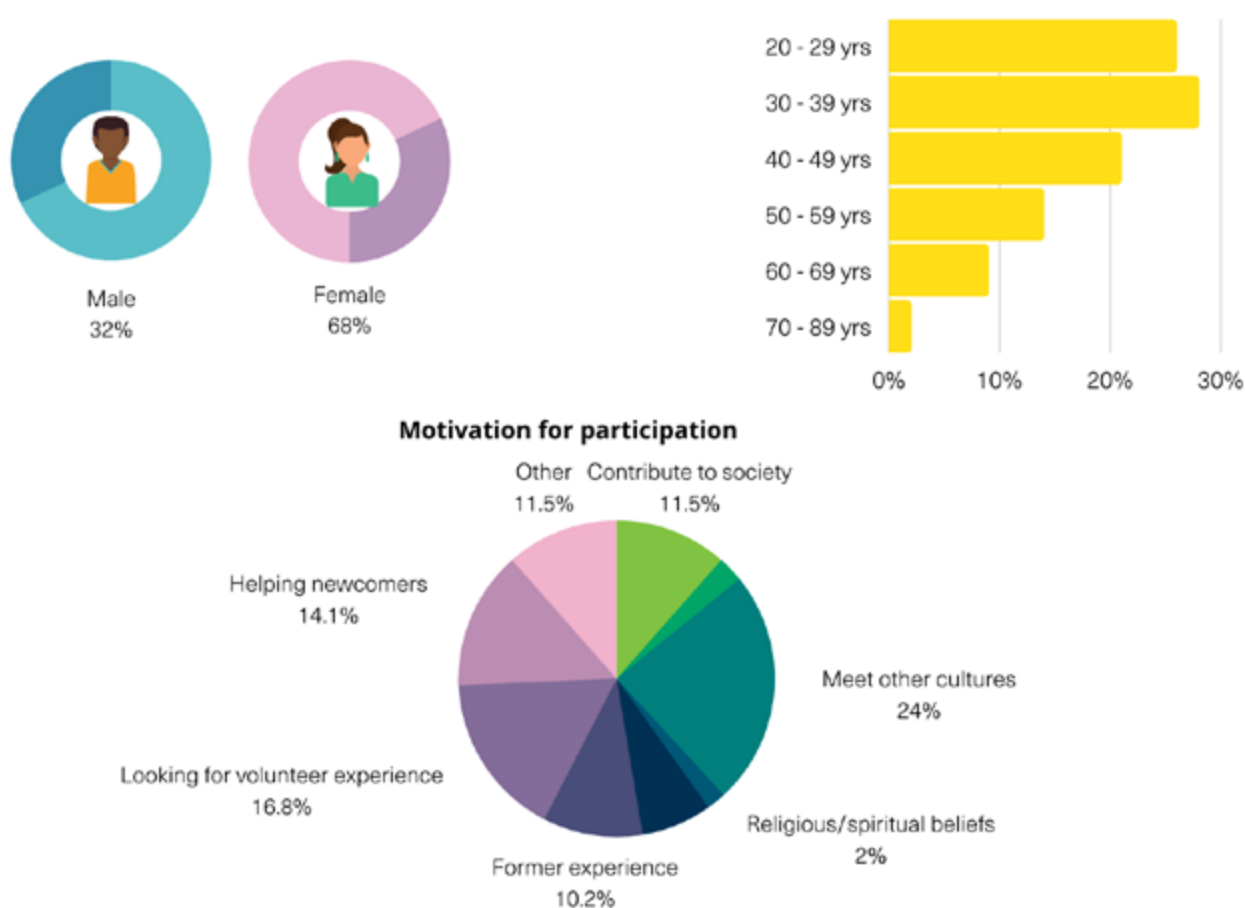
3.1 Welcome Groups

A total of 44 complete Welcome Groups signed up to participate in Samen Hier, two of which dropped out prior to the match. The others were matched with a status holder or status holder family. Welcome Groups consist of roughly two thirds women (68%) and a third men (32%), and the vast majority of group members are highly educated, as seen in Figure 1. 11 Welcome Groups had members with children, the average age of which was nine years old; in total, there were 63 children from members of Welcome Groups.

Diverse population of participants

The pilot targeted working people between the ages of 30 and 50, with strong social and professional networks. As was the aim, about half of the group members fall within the 30 – 50 age group, the rest are largely in the 20 – 30 age group (see Figure 1). The intake surveys also show that the Welcome Group members have diverse professional backgrounds, ranging from physiotherapist to photographer, teacher to business consultant. Social work and services (52%) and Health Care (50%) were most often mentioned as a field. Other members worked in the public sector, industry and the financial sector, in IT and the cultural sector (see Annex 1 for a full overview of the individual professions per Welcome Group). Only 7% were students and 4% retired.

Figure 1. Welcome Groups Demographics



Samen Hier aimed to recruit people who had not previously committed themselves to working with refugee newcomers, in order to involve new members of society in reception and integration. Half of the Welcome Groups indicated during the intake that some group members had no previous experience as volunteers for migrants or refugees. The interim surveys confirm this picture:

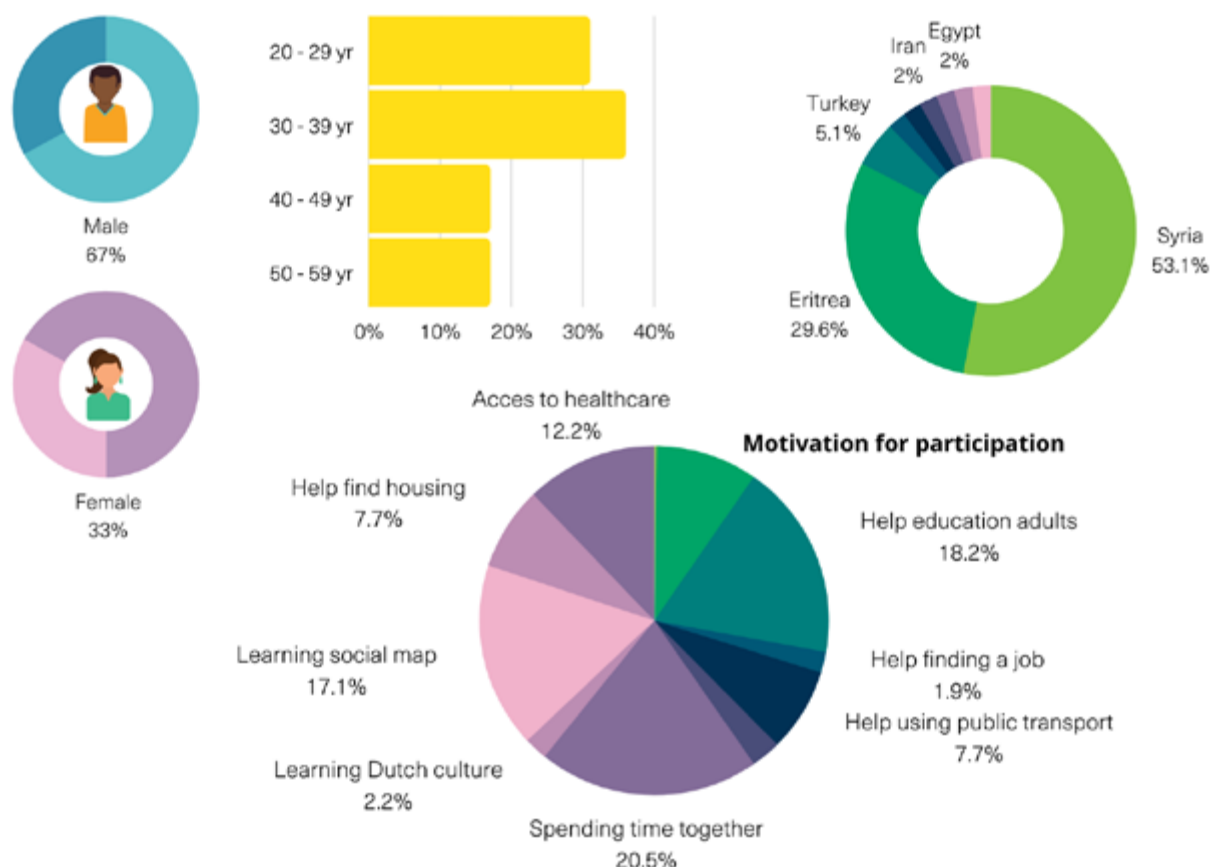
- **60% of Welcome Group respondents had not previously worked for refugees/ newcomers.**

Reasons for joining a Welcome Group vary. As seen in Figure 1, wanting to meet people from different cultures was by far most cited as a reason for participation, followed by looking for a meaningful (volunteer) experience. In the intake surveys, nearly 40% of participants indicated Welcome Group members were friends and nearly 30% indicated that they were neighbors or colleagues.

3.2 Participating status holders

A total of 42 status holder households were matched. The vast majority of status holders were from Syria (52%) or Eritrea (29%). Most were between 20 and 40 years old, with an average age of 36. Just over half of status holders (52%) resided in the Netherlands with their families. A total of 73 adults and 64 children were involved. The average number of children per family was three.

Figure 2. Status holders Demographics



As seen in Figure 2, status holders have different levels of education. There was significant diversity in terms of professional occupation:

- 19% of status holders indicated during the intake interview that they had the most experience in the field of 'Installation, maintenance and repair';
- 12% in the field of 'Education, training and library work';
- 12% in the field of 'Hospitality'; and
- The remainder indicated experience in healthcare, management, administration, business and sales, ICT, art and media, and agriculture.

When asked if they were working in the field of choice at the time of the intake interview, more than 90% replied that they were not. 61% were actively looking for work.

As seen in Figure 2, all status holders reported that learning and practicing the Dutch language was a priority and reason to participate in Samen Hier. Furthermore, many status holders indicated that they needed guidance in seeking employment, wanted to spend free time together, and wanted to learn about Dutch culture.



"You enter a new world, even though I'm as Dutch as can be. What does The Dutch Refugee Council do, what do caseworkers do at the municipality? We didn't know that very well at first. But now I also know what the community centres in my city do and I have searched for youth centers and activities for women of Yanet's [the matched Satus Holder] age. Not elderly, but not a young person either. You learn to look at your city differently."

Annemiek (26 years)

4. Experiences and impact

Samen Hier uses a broad approach to measure integration and social cohesion (as also described in Chapter 2). The measured values therefore include data on work, training, and language skills, as well as less tangible data on well-being, trust, and the feeling of belonging in a community.

This chapter provides some findings from the mid-term evaluations of 24 of matched groups; the other groups were already at the 12-month endpoint at the time of writing and will be the subject of the final report. These interim surveys were conducted with Welcome Groups and status holders during the Summer of 2020. These groups had been together for five to eight months since the match. The surveys include questions about volunteering, work, language skills, training, social networks, well-being, experiences with their match and satisfaction with the guidance and organization of Samen Hier. Where no objective scale was possible (e.g. language level), the survey used a Likert scale (i.e. 'totally agree', 'somewhat agree', 'disagree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'somewhat disagree' or 'disagree at all').

4.1 Language skills

Both in the intake and mid-term surveys, Status holders were asked about their language skills in Dutch and English. The surveys used the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR) for languages, and a scale of self-reported language skills.^{xviii}

At the beginning of Samen Hier, 34% of Status holders indicated that they could not speak, write, or read Dutch, but by the time of the mid-term evaluation only 4.3% indicated that they belonged in this category. The average CEFR level increased from A2 to B1 during this time, which means that Status holders had a functional use of Dutch at the time of the interim surveys. Most participants are known to participate in integration programmes and language lessons, and while these changes cannot be causally linked to Samen Hier:

- **Respectively, 52% and 30% of status holders said they “totally agreed” and “somewhat agreed” with the statement that the Welcome Groups had contributed significantly to their improved Dutch language skills; and**
- **Respectively, 4% and 35% of Welcome Group members said they “totally agreed” and “somewhat agreed” with the statement that they had seen a significant improvement in the status holder’s spoken and written Dutch.**

The divergence in opinion between what Dutch volunteers perceived as a “significant improvement” and refugee newcomers reported as their own experience is noteworthy. While fluent and native Dutch speakers may not have perceived a significant improvement in all cases, newcomer respondents attributed their connections with the Welcome Groups as a strong contributor to their capacities, as measured by the average improvement from no language facility to a functional use of Dutch.

They were also asked about the cultural ambassador's dependence on communication:

- **30% and 4% of the status holders indicated that they respectively “completely disagree” and “somewhat disagree” with the statement that they were dependent on the cultural ambassadors of Samen Hier for communication with the Welcome Group** (see also Chapter 4.3). On the contrary, many status holders indicated that after the first months of their match they could communicate with their group without the intervention of a cultural ambassador.

The process of language acquisition is still in progress during the mid-term review. The majority of Status holders considered language learning to be one of the top three activities they carried out with the Welcome Groups, with Dutch practice seen as the most important and on which they spent the most time.

4.2 Work

Around the world, and indeed in the Dutch context, governmental and public attitudes see employment outcomes as the most significant indicator of newcomer integration. However, participation in the labour market is more difficult to measure than seems at first glance, as newcomers, even when employed, are often unable to find work in their field of expertise or where they have past work experience.

In addition, paid work usually requires a good degree of proficiency in local languages, which makes it considerably more difficult for newcomers to find full-time work or to receive training in their field, especially within the first two years after arrival. Most Samen Hier participants are focused on language learning, for example the intensive language lessons which are mandatory for integration. Of the status holders, eighteen were enrolled in language lessons at the time of the mid-term review, some as full-time pupils and some in addition to other activities.

In addition, we see several other forms of participation in the labour market. Of the 29 who responded to the mid-term review:

- **Two were working full time and three were working part time;**
- **Three had volunteer placements and three had internships; and**
- **One was a full-time university student; and.**

Data collected at the end of the pilot will provide more insight into employment outcomes. However, several Status holders already indicated that members of their Welcome Group were directly and indirectly responsible for finding new jobs or volunteer positions (see also Chapter 4.4). This was also confirmed in the check-in calls. Moreover, many Welcome Groups indicated that the ambition and drive of their match was incredibly admirable. For example, a Welcome Group member said, ***“Yordanos is very active and ambitious and that’s a lot of fun to see, she wants to move forward in the Netherlands and doesn’t just give up.”*** The data collected at the end of the pilot will provide more insight into the developments of participants in the field of employment participation.”

Starting out in the labor market

When five friends from Haarlem met the family of Qusay and Intisar and their six children, they clicked instantly. Matched to a large Syrian family of eight people, it was a challenge for the Welcome Group to coordinate everything properly and quickly start activities. Qusay and Intisar wanted their children to find their own way in the Netherlands, but because of shyness and language barriers their children found it difficult to look for a (side) job and during the quarantine they rarely went outdoors.

The Welcome Group members immediately rolled up their sleeves and practiced job interviews with the children, went together in search of jobs, and even went along to a job interview. This was all done in consultation with Qusay and Intisar. Qusay explains that the Welcome Group members “always ask me when they’re going to do something with the daughters. I always say I really want them to.” The family’s 14-year-old son was also looking for work, so the group discussed his options with him. Now he delivers local newspapers and “has to work hard”. For this, several members of the group helped him fill out online forms and do a telephone interview. As one group member explained: “He wanted to work, but because of his age there are not many options. We told him that he can do a newspaper route because of his age.”

Although the first contacts were mainly aimed at practical support for the children, the bond between the Welcome Group and the family has slowly developed. Qusay explains: “At the beginning I only had contact about the language and their network. That’s what I needed. Now that I know the group, we go out more often to get to know the city. I learned a lot from them because of it, and I didn’t expect that.”

4.3 Trust and Equality

Promoting sustainable and equal connections was an important objective of Samen Hier. In prevailing opinions, employment rates are generally very much valued as an indicator of integration. However, integration is usually a decades-long, sometimes even intergenerational, process. In this context, social connectedness can provide a crucial form of support, which cannot be easily measured with the most common integration frameworks (such as employment and language skills).

Because equality can be measured in different ways, Welcome Groups and Status holders were asked about their relationships and interactions with each other, in particular the extent to which participants see the relationship as a formal or functional relationship, or whether more informal relationships have developed. The vast majority of both the Welcome Group members and Status holders indicated that they trust each other and that they feel comfortable sharing feelings and emotions. A large majority of participants reported that they experienced the contact as informal and friendly:

- **Respectively, 92% and 82% of Welcome Group members and Status holders agreed with the statement that the interactions with their match were informal and friendly;**
- **Respectively, 98% and 77% of Welcome Group members and Status holders indicated they trusted their match; and**
- **Respectively, 70% and 91% of Welcome Group members and Status holders felt comfortable sharing emotions and feelings.**

Social connectedness, however, involves more than a relationship based on trust and friendship. Social support also often takes the form of important moments or memories, which are difficult to measure with usual integration frameworks. Our midline evaluation found that:

- **Two Status holders indicated had been visited and helped by Welcome Group members at the time of illness; and**
- **23% of the Status holders indicated that the relationships between their own children and those of the Welcome Group members were among the top three most important aspects of their match.**

However, only slightly more than half of the Welcome Group members indicate that they actually experience the relationship as equal (see Figure 4.1). Welcome Group members often describe their role in terms of volunteer or coach. Welcome Groups are reluctant to describe the relationship as friendship, unlike the participating Status holders:

- **80% of the status holder indicates that they have become friends, compared to about 45% of welcome group members.**

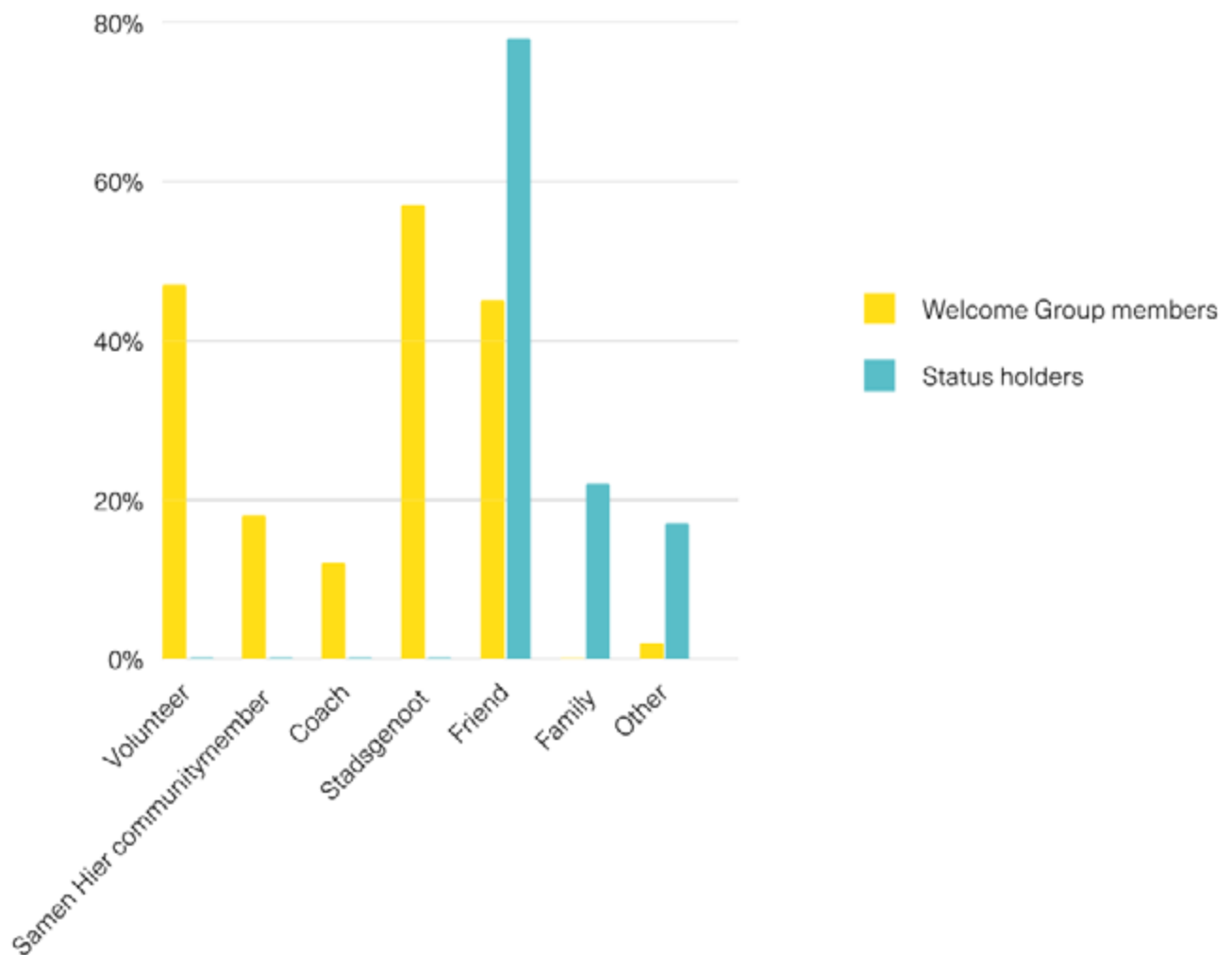


Figure 4.1 Participants were asked to identify up to three roles that best defined the role of Welcome Group for them

Discussions with participating status holders show that when contact with the Welcome Group develops into a friendly relationship, the impact on their personal lives is great. For example, a participating refugee told us:

“For the first six months in [Samen Hier City] I had no contact with people at all. I didn’t know anyone and was home 24 hours a day. I felt like an orphan. [...] Since I met the group everything is better: the language, social contact, integration. I missed my sisters and family, but with this group it feels like we’ve known each other for a long time. They remember my birthday and celebrate with me. This gives a lot of positive energy. Little by little I also dared to say more and talk to others. They’ve become my sisters.”

Navigating language barriers and a lockdown

Mirjam (56) started a Welcome Group in Almere with her partner, and some of her good friends. In December 2019 they were matched with Senait, an Eritrean woman and mother of two young children aged 8 and 1. Senait had not taken Dutch lessons at that time and hardly spoke Dutch. Although this was a challenge for communication – especially in the lockdown period – a close bond was formed by the approach of the Welcome Group.

For both Senait and the Welcome Group, it was important that Senait's daughter felt safe and would not fall behind in school. Senait was afraid of this, because she didn't speak Dutch herself and therefore couldn't help with homework, or communicate with teachers. That's why the Welcome Group supported Senait in the search for activities for her daughter, such as swimming lessons, and in parent conversations at school. The group made agreements with each other via WhatsApp voice messages so Senait didn't have to type in Dutch. Usually Senait's daughter or their cultural ambassador Kaleb helped translate the voice messages.

When the COVID epidemic broke out, Welcome Group members looked for Tigrinya translations of public health measures and press conferences, and explained to Senait both themselves and through the cultural ambassador Kaleb what was going on. Because Senait's daughter suddenly had to attend home schooling, the group members kept in touch with Senait more intensively. "During the lockdown, we created a schedule to ensure that contact with Senait and her daughter would not be diluted and we could help with the homework for example." In this way, the group members called Senait and her daughter daily to chat in Dutch, think about homework, or read a story together - in Dutch, of course. When more appointments were possible in the summer, they completed this daily contact and met again one on one.

According to Mirjam: "At the beginning, a lot of the contact went through Senait's daughter, whereas Senait now more often contacts us herself, sends messages, or responds to something herself. During the year she was able to find us better and better with questions." Despite the language barrier, both Senait and Mirjam feel that they have achieved their goal.

4.4 Intercultural communication and the role of cultural ambassadors

Cultural differences were perceived as a barrier by a number of participants at the start of the match, in particular by the Status holders:

- **55% of the Welcome Groups and 81% of Status holders indicated that the sense of cultural distance has decreased during their participation.**

It turns out that the status holders not only learned something about Dutch culture, but that this process also took place the other way around:

- **77% of the Welcome Groups and 82% of the Status holders said they understood the culture and customs of the other person better than immediately after the match.**

This finding is important because in Samen Hier integration is seen as a two-sided process, in which no attempt is sought to assimilate newcomers.

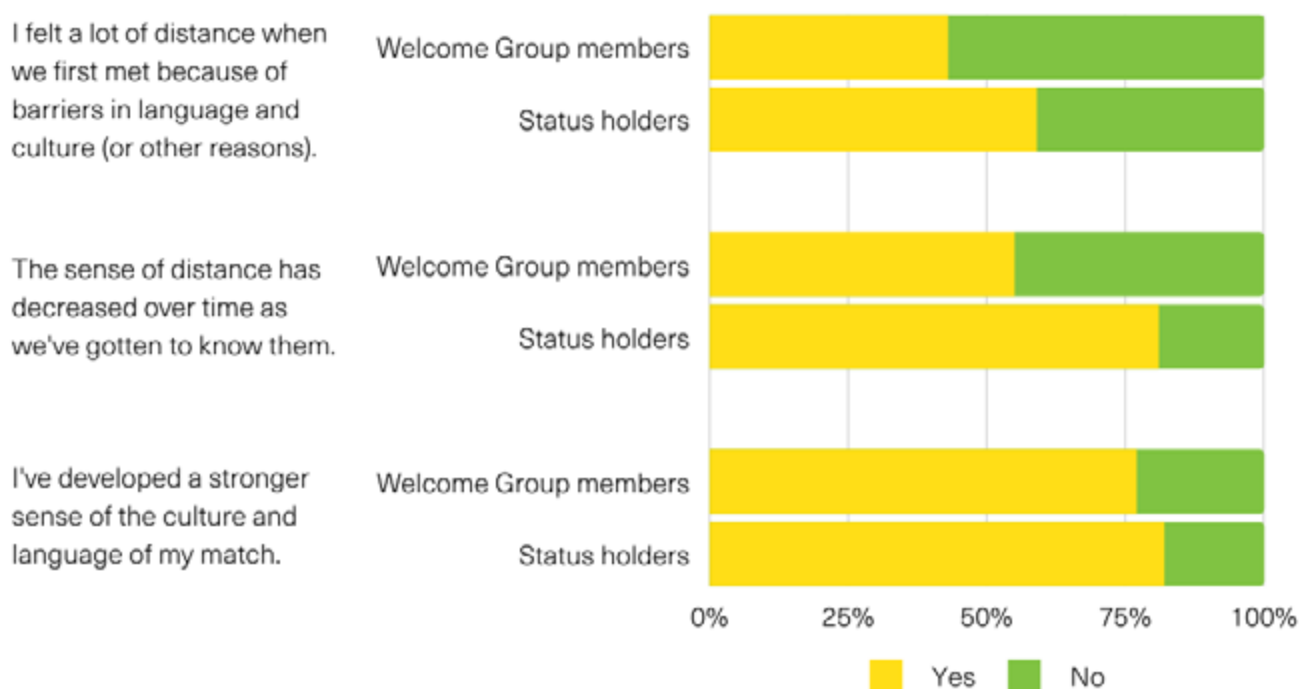


Figure 4.2 Participants' experiences of intercultural communication

Cultural ambassadors

Participants are supported in the process by cultural ambassadors.

The interim surveys show that the experience with the cultural ambassadors is different, and that there is room for improvement here.

- **For example, 15.7% of Welcome Group members and 8.7% of Status holders indicated they are not satisfied with the availability or guidance from the cultural ambassador.**
- **More than 60% of Status holders indicated that the cultural ambassador plays an important role in the contact, while for the Welcome Groups only 23.5% did.**
- **Also, 38% of Status holders indicated they are largely dependent on the cultural ambassador for communication, whereas only 20% of the Welcome Groups said so.**

This shows that both the Welcome Groups and the Status holders benefit from a proactive cultural ambassador, which is available through WhatsApp contact and in physical encounters to help with language barriers, communication, and cultural differences.



"I also learn a lot about my own culture through the questions of the family. And then I notice what I'm very used to in Dutch culture when that's not obvious. Like ordering something online without tripping over words I don't understand."

Thomas (24 years)

4.5 Social Capital and Network Building

One of the central goals of Samen Hier is to give Status holders access to the network and social capital of established Dutch people. Status holders were therefore asked in the mid-term evaluation whether their Welcome Group had helped them find volunteer opportunities, employment, or help enrolling in a suitable school. The answers provide an important first proof of the effectiveness of the matching and the importance of the social network of the Welcome Groups for the integration process.

Of the Status holders:

- **Four respondents indicated that the Welcome Group was responsible for new work, either for themselves or for members of their household;**
- **Four respondents indicated that they had found volunteer work for members of their household through the Welcome Group;**
- **A Status holder credited the Welcome Group with enrolling in a university training programme;**
- **Four reported that the Welcome Group had helped their children access education and other services;**
- **Four reported that the Welcome Group had helped them gain access to social and medical services; and**
- **A partner of a Status holder (who also has refugee status) found an internship in her field through the Welcome Group.**

These findings show that Welcome Groups have played an important role in connecting Status holders with relevant individuals or agencies.

The survey also asked whether getting to know the Welcome Group gave them access to broader social networks. Social connections often go beyond an immediate network of friends, family, or coworkers. Importantly, the surveys revealed that, in accordance with theories about social capital and social networks, that the Samen Hier programming facilitated access to broader social connections:

- **A status holder indicated that he had received a job through a friend of a Welcome Group Member, a second respondent enrolled in higher education because of the acquaintances of a family member of a Welcome Group Member; and**
- **Nine Status holders met people from the wider network of Welcome Groups for social purposes, which they perceived as meaningful.**

These extensions of the social network of status holders are important not only for instrumental purposes, such as finding a new job or training, but also for social cohesion and trust (see also Chapter 4.3). An important measure of social cohesion and trust is the extent to which Status holders have also introduced the Welcome Group Members to their own network.

Of the status holders surveyed:

- **Two indicated that they had introduced Welcome Group members to friends;**
- **Five introduced Welcome Groups to family members;**
- **Two introduced Welcome Group members to their romantic partners; and**
- **One introduced the Welcome Group to housemates; and**

- **One introduced them to other people in their newcomer community.**

Though the final report will offer significantly more detail and context given the inclusion of the control group, we can say with a high degree of confidence that participation in Samen Hier, even at the mid-point of programming, had meaningful effects on newcomer integration and social cohesion.



The dog of the friends of the daughter of...

The Hague group of Nur – originally from Iran – and Margreet know how to use networks. Margreet explains: “Through my work I came into contact with the Spinozahof, a kind of courtyard where a group of people set up a fantastic city garden in an old parking lot. Nur knew this place, but didn’t know it was possible to visit the garden. He has now been there more often to meditate or help with wood chopping.” The Welcome Group also asked for help within their own network when Nur said he would like to have a pet. Margreet: “Nur is a true animal lover and missed having a pet. Friends of my daughter had just adopted a dog from Morocco, so we introduced them and Nur. Those friends got along with Nur, too. Nur has now gone for a walk with them and the dog, or just picks up the dog for a walk. He loves him.”

Nur has also built up a larger social network in The Hague which he involves in the Welcome Group. So he asked the group members if they wanted to meet a friend who is also from Iran and would like more contact with Dutch people. The connection was good, so the group has met her often for a dinner or beach walk. In addition, the group members used their network again for Nur’s girlfriend, because it turned out that she would like to improve her Dutch. The Welcome Group members have rounded up a number of friends from The Hague who practice Dutch with her.

Friendship

The answer is simple to the question of what they do most together: “eat and talk”, say Khalaf (29) and Nienke (26) from Almere. Often this happened in someone’s home, sometimes in a café and with good weather they could often be found in a park. Khalaf (29) is originally from Egypt and has been living in Almere for two years. Last year he met Nienke, Samantha, Lotte, Merel and Mo: five roommates in their graduation year, or just starting their first job. Both Khalaf and the Welcome Group members wanted to get to know each other and undertake social activities.

By eating or having coffee together, the group said they had many exchanges about the Dutch language and customs, and about the Egyptian language and culture. “Because of the social activities I learned a lot about colloquial language, for example that Ally is short for Almere,” Khalaf says with a laugh. In addition to eating together, the group played board games. They interacted spontaneously, if anyone wanted to watch film, it was shared on WhatsApp and everyone who wanted to participate participated. If someone was busy once, it wouldn’t be a big deal.

The social contact helped Khalaf further: “At the beginning I thought: I’m not going to send anything, because they don’t have time for that. Now I know better how making appointments in the Netherlands works and I feel more comfortable proposing something myself. Dutch people are very honest so if they are free or really don’t have time, they just say so.”

The relationship between the group members has grown into a natural friendship.

"This is the only group of Dutch people we have contact with. If it had not been for Samen Hier, we would not have been able to meet Dutch people until now. It's just hard here. [...] . Honestly, I didn't think it would be very long before they would stop, especially the older people in the group, but things have turned out very differently."

Abdulrahman (36 years)

5. Matching & Guidance

This chapter provides some findings of the mid-term evaluations in the field of matching, the training and other guidance given by Samen Hier and the impact of COVID-19 on the course of the pilot. The survey used a Likert scale (i.e. 'totally agree', 'somewhat agree', 'disagree with, nor disagree', 'somewhat disagree', or 'totally disagree').

5.1 Matching

In the interim surveys, extensive attention was paid to the experiences of both Status holders and Welcome Group members around the recruitment and Pairity matching methodology.

Drop-outs

Nine of the original matches ended during the evaluation period. Of this group, three status holders and two Welcome Groups were matched again.

Matches ended for several reasons, including dissatisfaction with the quality of the match (in particular with regard to family composition), excessive vulnerability on the Status holder's side, different expectations around time investment, difficulty with online communication at the time of COVID-19, or lack of interest in the project among Status holders who had found a full-time job or training in the period between their intake interview and the match. In one case, the Status holder probably ended the match because of the sexual orientation of the group. In order to avoid this situation in the future, the principles of non-discrimination in future intakes will be more explicitly explained to all participants.

Although not quantified, 'breakdown' is a well-known fact in sponsorship initiatives. In Canada, where private refugee sponsors are financially and legally liable during the first year after arrival, this also occurs.^{xix} This outcome is therefore not surprising, especially considering that the matches in Samen Hier are voluntary and therefore prone to the interpersonal dynamics inherent in any relationship. However, lessons can be learned from the reasons given for the break-up and the degree of satisfaction with the match.

Method and process

- **41% and 10% of The Welcome Group members respectively indicated “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” with the Pairity matching methodology. 12% of members were neutral, 28% were “somewhat dissatisfied” and 4% “very dissatisfied”; and**
- **44% and 30% of the Status holders were “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” with the Pairity matching methodology. 22% were neutral, and 4% were “somewhat dissatisfied”.**

Feedback from the Welcome Groups was twofold: the online intake surveys were perceived as too long and too detailed, and members indicated that they had to wait too long between the intake surveys and a match. The main lesson is that surveys should be briefer and that the time between intake and meeting should be shortened.

Expectations

The results of the mid-term evaluations also showed a difference in the desire to spend more time with the match:

- **Respectively, 65% and 13% of Status holders said they were “totally agreed” and “somewhat agreed” with the statement that they would like to spend more time with their Welcome Group;**
- **By contrast, 20% and 29% of Welcome Group members respectively indicated that they “totally agree” and “somewhat agree” with this statement. 35% disagreed with this statement, and 16% “totally disagreed”.**

This difference is probably due to the fact that integration and developing new relationships is of very great importance for newcomers, while participating in Samen Hier for Welcome Group members is more often a part-time activity. However, this does not indicate a negative experience, especially given the level of trust and emotional openness mentioned earlier in this report.

In addition to time:

- **18% and 14% of The Welcome Group members respectively “totally agree” and “somewhat agree” with the statement that they lived too far away from their match; and**
- **Respectively, 26% and 17% of Status holders indicated that “totally agree” and “somewhat agree” that the geographical distance was too far.**

The lesson about geographical distance is important for the programming, but will be difficult to overcome in future programming. One of the central lessons from the pilot is that those who volunteer with Welcome Groups and refugee newcomers who are placed by municipalities in social housing live in segregated sections of cities. These insights might offer important lessons for newcomer housing policies.

5.2 Training, guidance and community building

Both Welcome Groups and Status holders were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the guidance they receive from Samen Hier. The vast majority of both are satisfied with the guidance offered (see Figure 5.1), which include training (to Welcome Groups), monthly contact with a contact at Justice and Peace, and through the cultural ambassadors. In addition, Samen Hier also organizes informal events to strengthen the Samen Hier community and to give participants of different groups the opportunity to meet.

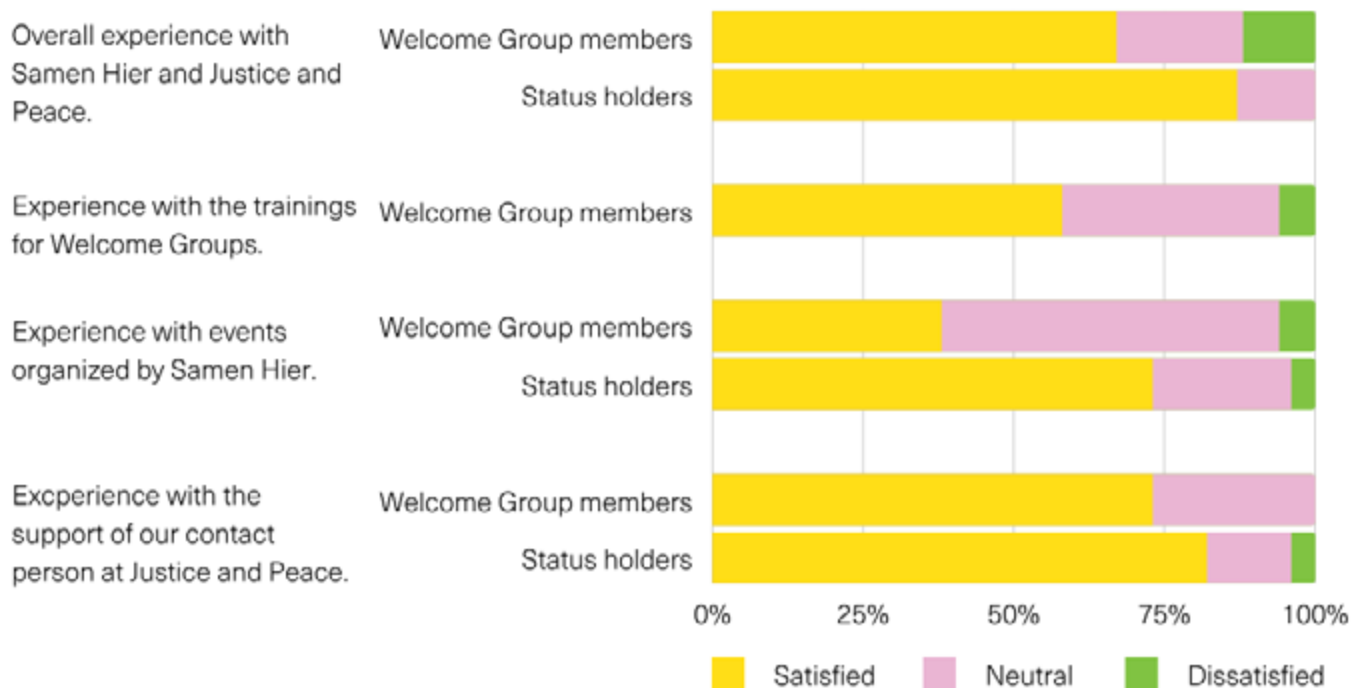


Figure 5.1 Participants' experiences with the design and organization of Samen Hier.

Teamwork

Participants indicated that they attach great importance to practical examples and opportunities for mutual contact between different Welcome Groups. A Welcome Group Member from Almere said: "At some point I realized that I have become part of a community, we obviously meet Genet [their matched Status holder], but we are working with a whole club of people on this as a bigger whole". It is also noticeable that Welcome Groups reported that they would like to work with the specific situation of the newcomer in their group. A large proportion of the groups indicated that they expected Status holders to receive more coordinated support from the government. See groups in that context for itself a large role as a link, to refer if necessary to different offer and arrangements in the city. Welcome Groups underline the importance of close contact and coordination between Samen Hier and various service providers such as the Municipality and Dutch Refugee Council.

Setting goals

Most Welcome Groups indicated that at the beginning of the match they were well aware of the priorities of the status holder(s) in their group. At the same time, it appears only:

- 20% of the Welcome Group members, together with the Status holder(s), have drawn up a detailed plan on achieving the desired goals.

Facilitating Welcome Groups to play a greater role in this and working together with the Status holder(s) on concrete objectives can be further developed in the next phase of the project (see also Chapter 6).

5.3 COVID-19

Almost 94% of the participants indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic and public health measures had a major impact on their participation in Samen Hier and the contact with their match. This is unsurprising since participants were suddenly forced to reinvent modes of communication, which led to some unavoidable challenges. For example, some groups found it difficult to maintain the continuity of contact during the lockdown and to find a good rhythm with which they could keep the contact going. For example, a Welcome Group member said, “We are very limited by Corona, because it’s hard to estimate how the newcomer in our group experiences it and with what degree of physical interaction she feels comfortable with.” They also sometimes found it difficult to keep the contact ‘organic’ when it all had to be online.

Nevertheless, participants have come up with all kinds of creative ways to stay involved. For example, Skype conversations with whole families took place and one of the groups has collected several instructional videos that allowed their match to continue practicing Dutch. Even when the measures were relaxed, the participants adapted quickly and for example Eid al-Fitr celebrations, picnics and walks took place while observing physical distancing.

As part of the national measures, the Samen Hier project team of Justice and Peace also had intensive contacts with other stakeholders involved in the situation of status holders. A municipal employee indicated that through COVID-19 she had seen the added value of Samen Hier even more clearly. As groups had established a relationship of trust with each other, they stayed in touch during the lockdown, while case workers sometimes had much more difficulty staying in touch with status holders and knowing how they were doing.

"Through Samen Hier I learned how important it is that we help these new people integrate. It's a small effort on our part, but can help them tremendously. It is certainly very instructive and I proclaim this to my whole environment."

Sarah (30 years)

6. Impact, improvements and perspective

The first experiences from the Samen Hier pilot provide a good basis to continue the program after the pilot. Surveys show that:

- **65% of the members of Welcome Groups and 86% of Status holders indicate that Samen Hier has had a lasting impact on their lives.**

A member of a Welcome Group explains: “I have gained a lot of respect for our newcomers, they are so ambitious in building a new life. It enriches my life to know them.” In line with these findings

- all Status holders state that they would recommend Samen Hier to other newcomers and over 85% of the Welcome Group members would recommend Samen Hier to friends, colleagues or family.

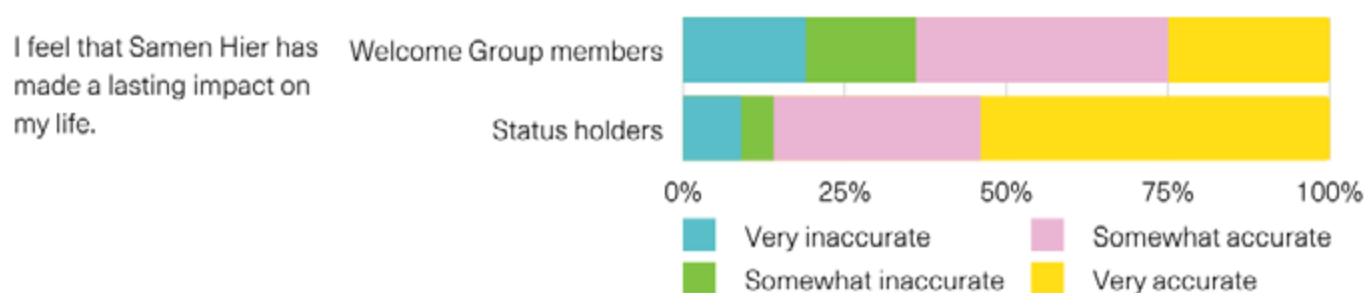


Figure 6.1 Impact of Samen Hier on the participants.

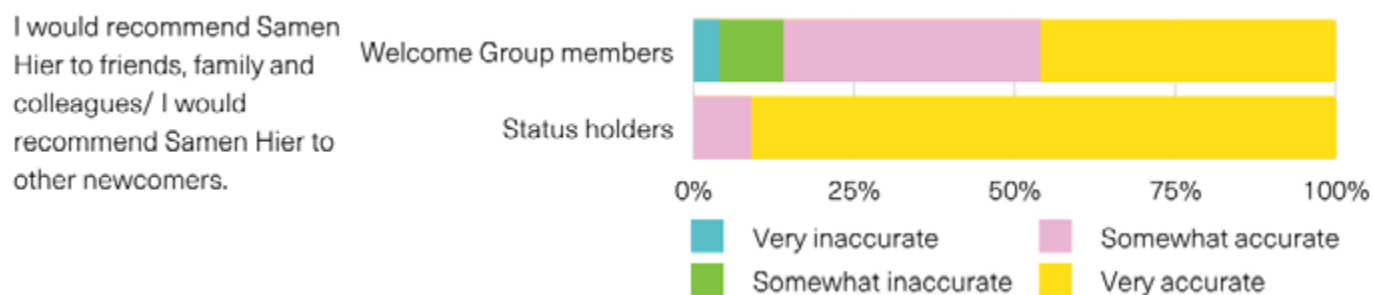


Figure 6.2 Participants who would recommend Samen Hier to friends, colleagues or family.

Are the (underused) support and capacity of Dutch citizens by Samen Hier more effectively used to receive refugees in local communities, to open up established social networks for them and to accelerate a process of mutual integration?

The previous chapters show, among other things, that participants in Samen Hier build informal contacts with each other that are described by many Status holders as friendship, Welcome Groups have deployed their own networks to achieve goals of participating status holders, Welcome Groups (in the experience of the Status holders) have contributed to a better understanding of the Dutch language and culture and that mutual learning is provided. In the final evaluation of the pilot, these experiences will be compared with those of the control group. The first experiences and feedback of the current participants in Samen Hier at least give a good basis to continue and improve the program:

- **Cultural ambassadors** have proved very important in the pilot to support participants in the areas of language, communication and cultural differences. However, the interim surveys show that not all participants are satisfied with their availability. Based on the monthly contact calls and internal evaluation, two factors prove important to ensure that the role is optimally exploited: that groups know when they can employ their cultural ambassador, and that cultural ambassadors themselves know their own role well. In the coming period, Justice and Peace will explore whether cultural ambassadors can take a more **active role**, becoming more involved in the organisation of Samen Hier and also providing more support for the proactive and coaching aspect of their role through training. For example, the cultural ambassador could also assume the role of contact person in some groups, so that participants have an unambiguous point of contact.
- **Expectations:** Both Status holders and Welcome Groups jump into the deep end when they embark on Samen Hier: they don't know their match yet, how the relationship will develop, and where they can best provide support. In short, they don't know what they can expect. In a number of early discontinued groups, different expectations played a role. This was the case for both newcomers and groups, for example, the expected time investment or the nature of the contact. In the latter case, the group seemed strongly 'goal-related', whereas they were matched with a Status holder who mainly wanted to build friendship. By discussing and reflecting on the expectations of participants more **explicitly** in the first contacts with potential participants with previous experiences and the design of the programme, and also making this topic more extensive in group start-up training, better outcomes can be achieved. In addition, it is advisable to organise a start-up meeting with Status holders for future participant groups, so that they too have a better understanding of the year they spend together with the Welcome Groups, and how they can cope with the expectations of the group. These measures are expected to lead to fewer drop-outs and higher participation satisfaction.

- Welcome Groups indicated that they would like to work with **concrete objectives and practical tasks**. Herein lies an as yet untapped potential for citizens' involvement to facilitate integration. Welcome Groups have proven to be in the solutions they find to challenges and the activities they organize, and the trust they build provides a good foundation to achieve common goals. A Welcome Group from Rotterdam organised a dinnerparty for their entire network where the Status holder could make contacts for her catering company; a Welcome Group in Haarlem went camping with each other. These are examples of activities that professional service providers cannot undertake. During the nationwide lockdown, where service authorities sometimes risked losing contact with their clients, Samen Hier participants sent each other mail or visited each other remotely.
- Welcome Groups can **open up networks** and use their time in a way that is often not possible for professional service providers (and often for volunteers working in social support). This **potential** can be exploited more by guiding groups more specifically after the match to jointly set the goals and priorities and translating this into a joint plan. In the area of employment participation, more profit can be achieved by actively collaborating with the Welcome Group and the status holder with case workers of the municipality. Such collaboration would need a clear division of roles and require municipalities to modify their way of working.

Samen Hier and Resettlement

Based on the experience of the pilot, Justice and Peace also sees opportunities to develop Samen Hier into a sponsorship programme as in other European countries, in which citizens play a more central role in the arrival and reception of refugees and take responsibility in this together with local authorities. In **Rotterdam**, a first step in this direction has been taken: Welcome Groups of Samen Hier Rotterdam are working together in coordination with the municipality of Rotterdam and The Dutch Refugee Council on the reception of resettled refugees (see page 43). Promoting equal and lasting relationships will always remain an important starting point within Samen Hier. As the previous chapters show, the added value that participants experience lies mainly in that personal relationship and the contact they have established.

A resettlement Network

Tom is Rotterdammer at heart and formed a Welcome Group together with friends. Samen Hier matched them with a refugee from Sudan, Ahmed, who was resettled to the Netherlands. Tom and his group members think you should be there for someone else. According to Tom: "I spent a long time in foster care and took care of several foster children at my house as if they were my own children. So, in that sense, for me personally, there is a common ground at Samen Hier, because I know what you should and should not do so if you want to guide someone to find their place. I also worked in education, so I do have a social education."

In addition to their hobbies and job, the friends wanted to do something meaningful. "Through the news and media, you know what kind of misery refugees are going through and we think you should be there for others. This boy comes from the hell of Sudan, then he was in a slightly less big hell in Egypt, but for him life was really no fun there. This gives us motivation to create a safe and pleasant environment for him in Rotterdam. We hope that Ahmed feels at ease, and that he will eventually be happy in Rotterdam and won't want to leave." Tom and his friends will be involved in his integration from the first day Ahmed arrives in Rotterdam. This requires intensive guidance that the group picks up without any problems. The group has been shopping prior to Ahmed's arrival, so that everything is in the house when he arrives at his new home. Tom: "besides groceries, the form is ready to quickly receive a public transport chip card and we are currently asking acquaintances if they would like to donate furniture. We have to slow ourselves down so that we do not arrange too much for him, because we want him to have control over what furniture he likes or doesn't like to place in his house, for example. We are very motivated to make sure that he finds his place in the Netherlands."

Annex 1: Composition of Welcome Groups by City

Table 1: Age groups, relationship to each other and professions of Welcome Groups			
City	Age groups	Relationship	Profession
Almere			
Almere	53 - 66 (59)	Friends, Family, Colleagues, Partners	Dagbestedingscoach en contactclown Coördinator Informele Zorg Service engineer Onderzoeker/docent aan universiteit
Almere	23 - 28 (25)	Friends, Colleagues, Neighbours, Partners	Student Interim professional Banking & Insurance Logistiek medewerker Supermarktmedewerker
Almere	46 - 48 (47)	Got to know each other through the children	Maatschappelijk werker Verpleegkundige Sph-er (wandel)Psycholoog Tolk Programmamanager
Almere	54 - 62 (58)	Friends	Ambtenaar Hulpverlener Projectmanager Trouwambtenaar Systeemtherapeut Functioneel beheerder
Almere	60 - 83 (70)	Acquaintances	Natuurgeneeskundige Sociaal pedagoog Secretaresse Inkoper Fotograaf

City	Age group	Relationship	Profession
Haarlem			
Haarlem	30 - 48 (37)	Got to know each other through an event of Samen Hier	Freelance Project Manager Coördinator web VvE Bestuurder Wetenschap coördinator Beleidsadviseur gemeente
Haarlem	31 - 40 (35)	Friends	Teamleider klantcontact vliegmaatschappij Vilter Sociaal ondernemer Business analist Sales verantwoordelijke Europa
Haarlem	28 - 36 (39)	Friends	IT Manager Office Manager Onderzoeker (promovendus) Ingenieur Horeca medewerker
Haarlem	27 - 50 (33)	Colleagues	Beleidsmedewerker cultuur Projectmedewerker (2x) Teamleider economie Afdelingsmanager Communicatiemedewerker Beleidsmedewerker (2x)
Haarlem	47 - 50 (48)	Friends	Advocaat Directeur stichting Kinderpsychiater Freelancer commercial development Fysiotherapie, vrijwilliger gehandicapten en opleiding edelsmid Freelance culturele marketing

City	Age group	Relationship	Profession
Haarlem			
Haarlem	51 - 61 (57)	Friends, Neighbours, Partners	Ingenieur Oefentherapeut- Mensendieck ICT deskundige Fysiotherapeute Loods Onderwijzeres
Haarlem	43 - 49 (47)	Friends	Ondernemer in maatschappelijke sector Marketing Strategisch adviseur voor gemeenten Vastgoedondernemer Partner bureau stedelijke ontwikkeling
Haarlem	49 - 56 (52)	Friends	Conflict coach en interim manager Directeur reclamebureau Laborante HR manager
Haarlem	37 - 41 (39)	Friends	Lobbyist Leerkracht Interim manager Financieel Directeur
Haarlem	46 - 60 (51)	Womens network	Social worker Consultant Teamcoach Communicatiemedewerker Make-up artiest
Haarlem	52 - 58 (55)	Friends, former colleagues, school acquaintances	Projectcoördinator senioren sport Verpleegkundig specialist GGZ en psychotherapeute Projectleider in de zorg Docent Communicatieadviseur Doktersassistente Luchthavenbeveiliger

City	Age group	Relationship	Profession
Haarlem			
Haarlem	37 - 47 (42)	Neighbours	Consultant IT directeur Orthopedagoog Vermogensbeheerder Hoofd binnendienst Accountmanager
Den Haag			
Den Haag	41 - 59 (49)	Friends, Colleagues, Neighbours	Senior adviseur Student Gezondheidspsychologie Ontwerper Beleidsmedewerker Projectmanager mediaproducties
Den Haag	26 - 61 (34)	Family	Junior Financieel Analist Analytics Consultant Financieel Medewerker Sensualiteitscoach Coördinator Dagbesteding
Den Haag	23 - 36 (29)	Colleagues	Communicatiemedewerker Museummedewerker Hoofd Educatie Medewerker Planning Educatiemedewerker
Den Haag	24 - 30 (27)	Colleagues	Projectmedewerker Consulent participatie Student Jongerencoach Accountant
Den Haag	25 - 44 (32)	Friends, Political acquaintances	Vakbondsbestuurder Ondernemer Consultant Beleidsmedewerker Executive director NGO Creative designer

City	Age group	Relationship	Profession
Den Haag			
Den Haag	22 - 25 (24)	Friends, Students in the same school	Rijkstraine Stagiair Rijkstraine Beleidsadviseur Stagiair
Den Haag	31 - 41 (34)	Neighbours	Sociaal wetenschapper Computerprogrammeur Ondernemer
Den Haag	31 - 76 (56)	Friends, Family, event Samen Hier	Verpleegkundige en lactatiekundige Projectsecretaris Vastgoed Gepensioneerd docente Nederlands Ingenieur pensioen Communicatie professional
Den Haag	26 - 68 (58)	Friends, Family, partners	UX Researcher Consulente Beeldkunstenaar Maatschappelijk werker Business consultant
Den Haag	37 - 49 (44)	Friends, colleagues	Beleidsmedewerker Zelfstandige Beleidsmedewerker Ambtenaar
Den Haag	37 - 42 (40)	Friends, neighbours	Gedragswetenschapper Docent Gemeente-ambtenaar Orthopedagoog Leerkracht basisonderwijs Hulpverlener
Den Haag	26 - 33 (29)	Know each other through foundation/ club	Journalist Beleidsmedewerker ministerie (2x) Onderwijzer op middelbare school Receptioniste

City	Age group	Relationship	Profession
Den Haag			
Den Haag	26 - 42 (32)	Friends, family, partners	Communicatieadviseur (2x) Project manager nonprofit sector HR Manager Student
Rotterdam			
Rotterdam	25 - 26 (26)	Friends, colleagues	Ambtenaar (4x)
Rotterdam	27 - 34 (30)	Friends, colleagues	Wetenschappelijk onderzoeker (2x) Arts User experience designer Manager
Rotterdam	23 - 37 (31)	Know each other through an event of Samen Hier	Docent kunstacademie en freelance presentatrice Student Arts & Culture en coördinator bij stichting Leerkracht basisonderwijs (in opleiding) Fotograaf en filmmaker
Rotterdam	27 - 35 (31)	Friends	Ondernemer Studio manager Museum educator Ingenieur
Rotterdam	22 - 35 (30)	Friends, Neighbours, house mates	Student (5x) Ontwerper

Stad	Leeftijdsspreiding	Onderlinge Relatie	Beroepen
Rotterdam			
Rotterdam	25 - 42 (29)	Friends, colleagues	Projectcoördinator en docent Coördinator en docent Zelfstandig ondernemer Fotograaf en stadsgids Ondernemer Logopedist Orthopedagoog Coördinator en illustrator Content marketeer en vlogger
Rotterdam	30 - 40 (35)	Friends, Neighbours	Sales Manager Afrika & Midden Oosten bij internationaal bedrijf Schilder, timmerman, en voormalig galeriehouder Muzikant Manager HR Projectleider Projectleider in de welzijnssector
Rotterdam	42 - 57 (49)	Neighbours	Beleidsmedewerker Docente Leerling Psychotherapeut Architect
Rotterdam	21 - 21 (21)	Friends	Student (5x)
Rotterdam	31 - 70 (51)	Neighbours	Finance Manager Salesmanager Rechter Software engineering manager Gepensioneerd onderzoeker onderwijs Gepensioneerd huisarts

Stad	Leeftijdsspreiding	Onderlinge Relatie	Beroepen
Rotterdam			
Rotterdam	30 - 32 (31)	Friends	Consultant Voedingsmiddelenindustrie Docent Economie VO Milieuadviseur Lucht verkeersleider Docent PO
Rotterdam	49 - 74 (58)	Friends, Partners	Gepensioneerd docent Manager radiologie & nucleaire geneeskunde Begeleider in de zorg Docent

Endnotes and sources

i See <https://www.haagsehuiskamer.nl/> and <https://justiceandpeace.nl/van-welkom-hier-naar-samen-hier-een-logisch-vervolg/>

ii See for example the nomination of Samen Hier for the VPRO Backlight Prize for Pioneers in Migration (available via <https://www.vpro.nl/programmas/tegenlicht/lees/specials/2019/winnaar-matchmakers-in-migratie.html>) and the mention of Samen Hier by Civic Foundation in their White Paper on integration (available via https://fsw.vu.nl/Images/2019-White-Paper-Civicintegration-as-a-key-pillar-in-societal-resilience-for-newcomers-FINAL_tcm250-915491.pdf).

iii European Resettlement Network (2017). Private Sponsorship in Europe: Expanding complementary pathways for refugee resettlement. <https://www.resettlement.eu/resource/ern-scoping-paper-private-sponsorship-europe-expanding-complementary-pathways-refugee>

iv For example, see IntegrationBarometer 2018 of the Dutch Refugee Council on [https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/sites/public/Vluchtelingenwerk/nieuws/Rapport%20The Dutch Refugee Council%20IntegrationBarometer%202018.pdf](https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/sites/public/Vluchtelingenwerk/nieuws/Rapport%20The%20Dutch%20Refugee%20Council%20IntegrationBarometer%202018.pdf)

v OECD and European Commission. 2018. Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration. <https://www.oecd.org/publications/indicators-of-immigrant-integration-2018-9789264307216-en.html>.

vi See Ferris, Elizabeth. 2020. "Making Sense of Public Policy on Refugee Integration," Annals of the American Academic of Political and Social Sciences 690(1): 200-224.

vii See Fratzke, Susan. 2017. "Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection: The Potential for Private Sponsorship in Europe," MPI Policy Briefs. Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/engaging-communities-refugee-protection-potential-private-sponsorship-europe>.

viii Hynie, Michaela. 2018. "The Social Determinants of Refugee Mental Health in the Post-Migration Context: A Critical Review," The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry 63(5): 297-303; Bogic, Marija, Anthony Njoku, and Stefan Priebe. 2015. "Long-Term Mental Health of War-Refugees: A Systematic Literature Review," BMC International Health and Human Rights 15(29): 1-41.

ix For influential literature on social networks and opportunities see Granovetter, Mark. 1983. "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," Sociological Theory vol.1: 201- 233. Sleeve, Ted. "Social Capital and Finding a Job: Do Contacts Matter?" American Sociological Review 68(6): 868-898. For refugee newcomer-specific research see Ager, Alastair and Alison Strang. 2008. "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," Journal of Refugee Studies 21(2): 166-191; Lamba, Navjot K. and Harvey Krahn. 2003. "Social Capital and Refugee Resettlement: The Social Networks of Refugees in Canada," Journal of International Migration and Integration 4: 335-360. For literature on the Dutch context see Tinnemans, Kirsten et al. 2020. "What works in promoting the employment rate of status holders?" Knowledge platform Integration & Society (Online).

x Ager, Alastair and Alison Strang. 2008. "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," Journal of Refugee Studies 21(2): 166-191.

xi Hope Cheong, Pauline et al. "Immigration, Social Cohesion, and Social Capital: A Critical Review," *Critical Social Policy* 27(1): 24-49.

xii Schmid, Katharina, Miles Hewstone, and Ananthi Al Ramiah. 2015. "Diversity, Trust, and Intergroup Attitudes: Underlying Processes and Mechanisms," in Koopmans, Ruud, Bram Lancee, and Merlin Schaeffer (eds.) *Social Cohesion and Immigration in Europe and North America*. London: Routledge.

xiii Knapprt et al. 2020. "Personal Contact with Refugees is Key to Welcoming Them: An Analysis of Politicians' and Citizens' Attitudes Towards Refugee Integration," *Political Psychology* (Online).

xiv <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/canada's-world-2017-survey>

xv Statistics Canada. 2019. *Immigrant Entrepreneurs as Job Creators: The Case of Canadian Private Incorporated Companies*. Ottawa: Government of Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190424/dq190424c-eng.htm>; Bouchard, Isabelle and Pierre-Olivier Bédard. 2019. *A Nation of Entrepreneurs: The Changing Face of Canadian Entrepreneurship*. Ottawa: Business Development Bank of Canada: https://www.bdc.ca/EN/Documents/analysis_research/bdc-etude-sbw-nation-entrepreneurs.pdf?utm_campaign=Changing-faces-Study-2019--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua

xvi Neuman, Keith. 2020. "Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees," Environics Institute, 27 October 2020. <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/canadian-public-opinion-about-immigration-and-refugees>.

xvii Smyth, Geri, Emma Stewart, and Sylvie Da Lomba. 2010. "Critical Reflections on Refugee Integration: Lessons from an International Perspective," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23(4): 411-415.

xviii Council of Europe's explanation of the CEFR at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions>.

xix Canadian Council for Refugees "Secondary Migration and Sponsorship Breakdown" <https://ccrweb.ca/en/psr-toolkit/other-useful-info-secondary-migration-and-breakdown>; Refugee Support Training Program "Sponsorship Disputes and Breakdowns" <http://www.rstp.ca/en/infosheet/sponsorship-disputes-breakdowns/>; Kyriakides et al. 2020. "Transactions of Worth in in Refugee-Host Relations," in Laubman, Shaun and Geoffrey Cameron (eds.) *Stranger to Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship in Context*. Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press.

