Washington Global Rotary Refugee Report *2020*

Providing Relief and Creating Opportunities for Refugees

Rotary
Club of Washington Global
www.WashingtonGlobalRotary.org

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Washington Global Rotary Refugee Report *2020*

Abstract

This report was prepared by the Rotary Club of Washington Global to honor World Refugee Day 2020 and as a contribution to an event organized jointly with the Organization of American States. The event aims to draw attention to the plight of refugees in Latin America and elsewhere. A key objective of this report is to mobilize Rotarians globally towards providing relief and creating opportunities for refugees, and to show in concrete ways through examples of local engagement how individual Rotarians and other people of action can make a positive difference on the ground.

Disclaimer

This report was prepared by the editor in a personal and volunteer capacity, and not as part of his employment with the World Bank. The author is a Lead Economist with the World Bank and, as part of his volunteer work, he serves as 2020-21 President of the Rotary Club of Washington Global. The views expressed in the report are those of the authors of the individual articles only and need not represent the views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. Similarly, the views in the report need not represent those of the Rotary Club of Washington Global or Rotary International.

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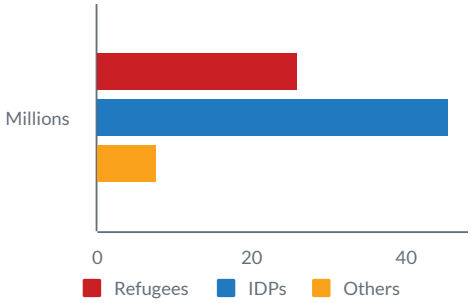
Cover photo: Cristal Montañéz, a native from Venezuela, serving food to Venezuelan refugees in Colombia. © Hope for Venezuelan Refugees.

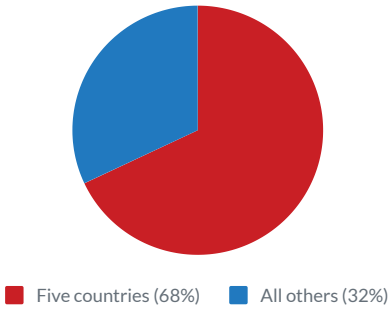
Refugee Crisis - Global Statistics

Number of refugees, IDPs, and persons of concerns (2019)



Top 5 Countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar

Refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad



Selected statistics on the refugee crisis

- Number of forcibly displaced persons: 79.5 million in 2019, including 26.0 million refugees and 45.7 million internally displaced people
- 40% of forcibly displaced persons are children
- 68% of refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad are from just five countries, and 85% are located in developing countries
- Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees (3.6 million), followed by Colombia (1.8 million including Venezuelans displaced abroad)
- The number of forcibly displaced persons almost doubled in the last decade from 41.1 million in 2010 to 79.5 million in 2019.

Source: UNHCR's *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*.

"Nearly 80 million women, children, and men around the world have been forced from their homes as refugees or internally displaced people. Even more shocking: ten million of these people fled in the past year alone. On World Refugee Day, we pledge to do everything in our power to end the conflict and persecution that drive these appalling numbers."

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General, Message for World Refugee Day 2020

Examples of projects by Rotarians - Venezuela crisis

Meals and support for refugees (Colombia)

Participation in Operation Welcome (Brazil)

Hospital equipment (Colombia)

"The grandest opportunity to serve humanity is directly before us. Let us remember that it is always darkest just before dawn. These are the before daylight hours. Let us fervently hope that when the sun does rise it will usher in a day of unprecedented glory - the day of the brotherhood of man."

Paul Harris, Founder of Rotary International, in a speech in Toronto in 1942.

Examples of projects by Rotarians - Global crisis

Education and relief in camps (Turkey)

Access to healthcare (Germany)

Rotaract club in a camp (Uganda)

Integration of refugees (Canada)

"Dealing with these problems is inextricably linked to achieving peace, upholding the rule of law and entrenching a human rights culture and democracy. Solutions to the refugee problem therefore require us to realize the principles of the African Charter emphasizing political and civil rights and improved socio-economic conditions."

Nelson Mandela, Message on Africa Refugee Day, 1997.

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FOREWORD

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are among the most vulnerable people on earth. Their number has increased dramatically over the last decade due to both conflicts and economic crises. In 2019, according to the latest report from UNHCR, 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced. After the Syrian Arab Republic (6.6 million people displaced), Venezuela is the country with the largest number of displaced people (3.7 million).

Rotarians have been implementing humanitarian projects to support refugees for many years. Some of these projects focus on providing relief, while others create opportunities for refugees and IDPs. It is with great pleasure that I welcome the Washington Global Rotary Refugee Report 2020. Through stories from all over the world, the report shows in practical ways how Rotarians and other people of action can alleviate the suffering of refugees and invest in their future.

This report is being released ahead of a high level event on the refugee crisis in Latin America organized by the Rotary Club of Washington Global and the Organization of American States (OAS). The purpose of the event is to address the challenges resulting from the crisis and think about multisector solutions that can incorporate governments, civil society, and the private sector. Speakers will include Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS, John Hewko, General Secretary of Rotary International, and Her Excellency Alexandra Hill, Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador. In addition, a panel with representatives from OAS, the private sector, and civil society will be moderated by Gustau Alegret, US News Director for NTN24. The panel includes among others David Smolansky, Commissioner of the OAS Secretary General for the Crisis of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees; Ingo Ploger, President of the Latin American Business Council' and Cristal Montañéz from the Rotary e-Club of Houston who will talk about the HOPE for Venezuelan Refugees initiative, one of the projects featured in this report.

This joint event is exemplary of the long collaboration between Rotary and the OAS. Rotary International maintains relationships with many United Nations agencies, as well as other organizations such as the OAS and the World Bank. Apart from organizing joint events, these relationships have led to joint funding or implementation of projects that have made a difference in the lives of millions. We are thankful to the OAS as well as other international organizations for these partnerships.

Finally, let me wish all the best to the Rotary Club of Washington Global. This is a new club chartered in 2020 with a young membership. a majority of women, and members from around the world in addition to a core group in Washington, DC. Most members work in international development and use their professional skills in their service work. The preparation of this report – which is to be followed by other reports in the areas of focus of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, shows that these new Rotarians can indeed help us build on our experiences to expand and improve our projects on the ground.

Yours in Rotary Service,

Peter Kyle
Dean of the Rotary Representative Network (2018-2020)
Member of the Board of Directors of Rotary International (2020-2022).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Four of the articles included in this report were published by Rotary International on the organization's website. One of these four articles was also published in *The Rotarian* magazine. The editor is grateful for permission from Rotary International to include these articles in this report.

The article on the refugee crisis in Venezuela is reproduced from the Executive Summary of the OAS Working Group Report on the crisis. The article on the Hope for Venezuelan Refugees Project was published in March 2020 in iF Magazine, with minor edits for the version published in this report. The article on global grants in Colombia was translated by the editor and adapted from the background notes for a presentation in Spanish by the author at the International Assembly of Rotary International in January 2020. The discussion of the global refugee crisis is adapted from the latest global trends report by UNHCR. The article on Operation Welcome in Brazil was translated by the editor with minor edits from a version in Portuguese by the author.

The introduction for the report builds in part on descriptions of projects prepared by staff from Rotary International for individuals who were recognized for their work with refugees at the Rotary Day at the United Nations in New York in November 2019. The box on the program for Venezuelan refugees of the Trust for the Americas is adapted from materials provided by Lara Bersano.

The idea for the report emerged from discussions with Rotarian friends. In particular, the editor is especially grateful to Lara Bersano, Rich Carson, and Jane Lawicki. The editor is also grateful for help and feedback as well as support for an event organized with the OAS on the refugee crisis in Latin America from Fatima Barnes, Ademar Bechtold, Rose Cardarelli, Bill Davis, Sahar Fhamy, Gustavo Flamerich, Anna Olefir, and Daniela Tort.

The report was prepared in part for a joint event organized with OAS for World Refugee Day 2020. Special thanks are due to Gisela Vergara and her team at OAS for a great collaboration on planning the event.

INTRODUCTION: PROVIDING RELIEF AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEES

Quentin Wodon

Each year on the occasion of World Refugee Day, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) releases a report with a wide range of statistics on global trends for refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and other persons of concerns. At the time of writing this report, the latest statistics available are for 2019. That year, 79.5 million people were considered as persons of concerns. This included 26.0 million refugees, 45.7 million IDPs, 4.2 million asylum seekers, and 3.6 million Venezuelans displaced abroad (see Box 1 on definitions).

Some 40 percent of forcibly displaced persons are children, and 85 percent of refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad are hosted in developing countries. More than two thirds of all refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad are from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. The countries with the largest number of refugees are Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda, and Germany. The number of forcibly displaced persons has increased dramatically over the last decade, from 41.1 million in 2010 to 79.5 million today. Over the last year the situation in Venezuela has been deteriorating especially rapidly, leading to the largest displacement in the region's history.

This report was prepared by the Rotary Club of Washington Global to mark World Refugee Day 2020. The report also serves as a contribution to an event organized jointly with the Organization of American States (Box 1) to draw attention to the plight of refugees in Latin America. A key objective of this report is to help mobilize Rotarians and other people of actions towards providing relief and creating opportunities for refugees, and to show through examples of local engagement how Rotarians, other individuals, and nonprofits can make a difference.

Box 1: Terminology

Refugees include individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; its 1967 Protocol; the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; individuals granted complementary forms of protection; or those enjoying temporary protection.

Asylum-seekers are individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined, irrespective of when they may have been lodged.

IDPs are people who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border.

Returned refugees or IDPs are former refugees or IDPs who have returned to their country of origin but are yet to be fully integrated. Such return would normally only take place in conditions of safety and dignity.

Stateless persons are persons who are not considered as nationals by any State, hence do not possess the nationality of any State.

Others of concern refers to individuals who do not necessarily fall directly into any of the groups above, but to whom UNHCR extends its protection and/or assistance services, based on humanitarian or other special grounds.

Source: UNHCR.

Event with the OAS

This report is being released ahead of a high level event on the refugee crisis in Latin America organized jointly by the Rotary Club of Washington Global and the Organization of American States (OAS). Held to honor World Refugee Day 2020, the event aims to address the challenges resulting from the crisis and think about multisector solutions that can incorporate governments, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector.

Box 2: OAS and Rotary

OAS brings together all 35 independent states of the Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the Hemisphere. The OAS uses a four-pronged approach to implement its essential purposes based on its main pillars: democracy, human rights, security, and development.

Rotary, as a volunteer civil society organization, is committed to making the world a better place. With 1.3 million members in over 35,000 clubs in 200 countries and regions, Rotary brings together people of action from all continents and cultures who deliver real, long-term solutions to the world's most persistent issues. Each year, Rotary members contribute millions of dollars and volunteer hours to promote health, peace and prosperity in communities across the globe.

The Rotary Club of Washington Global is a new club chartered in 2020. Most of its members are women, and 40 percent are under 40. A core group meets in Washington, DC, but the club has members joining online form multiple other countries. Most of the club's members work in international development. The club aims to serve as a premier "knowledge club" focused on international development, including the plight of refugees and IDPs. See the Annex for more information on the club or go to our website at https://www.washingtonglobalrotary.org/.

At the time of writing, confirmed speakers at the event include Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS, John Hewko, General Secretary of Rotary International, and Her Excellency Alexandra Hill, Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador. A presentation of recent trends in refugees and IDPs as well as the challenges they face will be made by a representative of the International Organization for Migration.

In addition, a panel with representatives from OAS, the private sector, and civil society will be moderated by Gustau Alegret, US News Director for NTN24. The panel will include among others David Smolansky, Commissioner of the OAS Secretary General for the Crisis of Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees; Ingo Ploger, President of the Latin American Business Council' and Cristal Montañéz from the Rotary e-Club of Houston who will talk about HOPE for Venezuelan Refugees, one of the projects implemented by Rotarians featured in this report.

OAS has been actively supporting solutions to the refugee crisis in the Americas. The organization released in June 2019 a comprehensive analysis of the crisis as well as a range of recommendations. Parts of this document are reproduced in this report. OAS has also played a leading role in mobilizing resources towards solving the migrant crisis, including from international donors. In addition, in the wake of turmoil and increasing humanitarian needs in the region, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro designated The Trust for the Americas to lead and foster private sector collaboration to support displaced Venezuelans.

As part of its mandate, the Trust for the Americas is launching with its OAS partners a multi-year intervention to improve the lives of displaced Venezuelans and receiving communities (see Box 3 for a brief program description).

Box 3: Trust for the Americas

The OAS Working Group and The Trust for the Americas have jointly identified support for employment as a key gap in the support provided to refugees. Initiatives for employment of migrants who have temporarily resettled outside of Venezuela remain limited. In particular, information on how to establish a pathway towards employment is an area that has received little attention and insufficient funding from humanitarian agencies.

Through training in life and employability skills, migrants should be better prepared to access economic opportunities such as obtaining a job or creating their businesses, thus achieving financial self-sufficiency. POETA (Programa de Opportunidades Económicas a través de la Technología en las Americas) will empower Venezuelan migrants and refugees by providing digital, entrepreneurial and technical skills training to access employment or start small businesses. The program will also promote understanding and collaboration between Venezuelan refugees and receiving communities through inclusive and safe spaces, as well as workshops on human rights and prevention of xenophobia. The program provides a multi-dimensional solution to a critical roadblock to improving the lives of refugees, migrants, and receiving communities.

Individuals and corporations can help, including through donations. Other support, including through mentorships for the program, awareness campaigns within social media platforms, opportunities in small businesses for refugees, conversations to avoid xenophobia, and various collaborations with NGOs and other organizations that help migrants and refugees are welcome. The goal is that after three years of implementation, displaced Venezuelan will be integrated into host communities as economically independent families contributing to economic prosperity. For further information, contact Lara Bersano at lbersano@trust-oea.org.

Photo: Helping refugees through technology. Credit: Trust for the Americas.

Rotarians as People of Action

Refugees, IDPs, and other persons of concerns to use the terminology of UNHCR are among the most vulnerable individuals and families in the world. Rotarians globally have implemented projects to provide relief and create opportunities for refugees. While support to refugees is not itself a core area of focus of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, projects in the Foundation's six areas of focus are all essential to provide assistance to refugees as well as IDPs (see Box 4 on the six areas of focus).

For many years, Rotary International has organized Rotary Days at the United Nations, often in New York, but also in other locations. At the November 2019 event in New York, five Rotarians and a Rotary Peace Fellow alumna were honored for their work with refugees and IDPs. The projects that were recognized show how Rotarians are "people of action", ordinary individuals who can achieve extraordinary things with their clubs. Box 5 provides the names and pictures of the six individuals who were recognized. Below, a summary of these individuals' achievements prepared by staff from Rotary International for the Rotary Days at the United Nations is reproduced with minor edits.

Dr. Bernd Fischer (Rotary Club of Berlin) is a career diplomat who has served in Germany, Japan, and the United States. Since retiring in June 2015, Dr. Fischer has stepped up his Rotary involvement to lead a project that involves clubs and resources well beyond his Berlin-based club. He initiated the project and manages an ongoing

global grant to integrate 240 Syrian refugee women into German society over the course of two years. He coordinated with sponsor clubs from Europe and the U.S., as well as with local Rotary clubs, organizations, and government officials and is credited with "making it happen." Two full-time, trained, female mentors, who have lived in Germany several years, work with the refugee women to implement their selected goals. The project has already trained 100 Syrian women with children and provided mentoring in their own language, childcare so they can get medical and psychological treatment, job training and placement and German language and cultural integration. The pilot project has filled a vital gap to help refugee women, who face serious obstacles to active participation into German daily life, and can serve as a model that could be continued by governmental and private organizations in other parts of the world.

Box 4: The Rotary Foundation

The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International is dedicated to six areas of focus to build international relationships, improve lives, and create a better world to support our peace efforts and end polio forever. The six areas of focus of the Foundation are as follows:
- Peace and conflict prevention/resolution.
- Disease prevention and treatment.
- Water and sanitation.
- Maternal and child health.
- Basic education and literacy.
- Economic and community development.

Refugees and IDPs often face major difficulties in all the six areas of focus and need support. In 2018-19, the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International disbursed US$301.4 million through program awards and operations, including for grants benefitting refugees.

Since August of 2017, **Hasina Rahman** (Rotary Club of Dhaka Mavericks) has been working in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. An estimated 900,000 refugees have fled to Cox's Bazar camp to escape violence in Myanmar, which has made it the largest refugee camp on earth. Rahman is a humanitarian worker, and currently is Assistant Country Director for Concern Worldwide, who has combined her professional and personal efforts to aid mothers and children in the refugee camps. She has raised funds and awareness through Rotary and other networks to construct an Out-Patient Therapeutic Center. The center provides life-saving preventative and curative nutrition services for children under five years of age and pregnant and lactating women in Camp 17 in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar. The Center has screened an estimated 23,700 Rohingya children and given lifesaving assistance to 500 severely malnourished children. Several dozen staff members and volunteers have been trained on Infant and Young Child Feeding, and the community has received training on breastfeeding and hygiene, in the Rohingya language. Her work has provided life-saving assistance to the Rohingya children and reduced malnutrition, as it also works to prevent future malnutrition in the affected community.

Ace Robin (Rotary Club of Mataram Lombok) led her club and community's efforts in disaster response after a series of earthquakes hit the Lombok region of Indonesia in July-August 2018, destroying nearly 90 percent of area structures, killing 460 people and displacing 400,000 persons. Robin was a vital point of contact for Response Teams with her first-hand knowledge of the area and provided language and logistical support. She even provided the garden of her hotel for people displaced by the earthquakes – while also working to bring ShelterBox aid to her country in the form of 685 units, which took a lot of surveying and coordination on the local level and with government officials. This was followed by a Rotary program to build temporary housing (Huntara) in villages of North, West and East Lombok – for a total of 230 additional units. She and her club helped bring water, food and other necessities to displaced persons, and subsequently distributed teaching materials, uniforms, shoes and bags for students and have

started a global grant program for a cervical cancer testing project. Even a year later, Robin is still working to assist displaced persons: supervising activities of a mobile ambulance, renovating a school, providing supplies for students, and constructing a clinic, with ongoing Rotary support.

Ilge Karancak-Splane (Rotary Club of Monterey Cannery Row) was born in Turkey and moved to the U.S. when she was 10 years old. Since December 2016, she has been involved with Syrian refugee camps in Turkey, and after her first fundraising effort, she visited her first Torbali tent camp. In 2017, Karancak-Splane visited eight more camps and started a district-wide project to provide 1,000 pairs of shoes and 1,000 pairs of socks and raised additional funds to provide aid to the camp refugees. Residents of these tent-camps work and live near the fields and farms outside the city centers and lack transportation. Without nearby educational centers, children aged 6 to 12 receive no primary education. To address these critical education needs, she and her club launched a project to help educate and integrate children of these refugees. In March 2019, 101 Syrian refugee children were brought to Hasan Salih Cetinel elementary and middle school. This is the third and largest project Karancak-Splane has led in the Torbali tent camps, and it has three phases: 1) Turkish Language classes (including computers and materials); 2) Integration workshops (to learn art, music, film, etc.), and 3) Proficiency tests for middle or high school. This project will help build relationships, cross-cultural understanding and trust between Turkish and Syrian families.

Lucienne Heyworth (Rotary Peace Fellow alumni) has worked in the field of educational disadvantage since 2009. She worked with migrants and refugees in her native Australia, and with displaced persons and young people affected by conflict and disaster in the Middle East and North Africa, as a volunteer with Caritas Switzerland and UNESCO. Heyworth traded a comfortable option as a suburban teacher to become an expert in providing education in areas of conflict, and has embedded herself in the Middle East to give refugee and displaced children a better future. While working in the Middle East, she developed an "Education in Emergencies" curricula, which was originally readied for quick deployment in the 2016-17 conflicts. It provides education modules for delivery in makeshift learning spaces for displaced persons or "on the road" for those in transit. Seeing education as a basic human right that is often overlooked in conflict or protracted crisis, Heyworth's efforts are designed to fill that important role for young children. In addition, schools and places of learning can become critical safe spaces for entire communities, where families can address other basic needs (hygiene, health, food, etc.) and develop other skills and connections. Schools and education can provide a sense of normalcy in a turbulent environment, and help young people's self-esteem and well-being, while also supporting the broader community. Her hands-on work can serve as a model for bringing education to conflict zones.

Vanderlei Lima Santana (Rotary Club of Boa Vista Caçari) is President of Rotary Club Boa Vista Cacari, the only club in his state, which is in the Roraima region of Northern Brazil. Since 2015, Venezuelans refugees have been entering the area in large numbers, reaching to as many as 1,000 refugees arriving per day. A thousand refugees were sleeping in a plaza outside a bus station as more continued to arrive, and Lima Santana initiated efforts to welcome and care for the refugees – before the government even got involved. He and his club created a Facebook page describing the crisis and appealed to clubs around the world. The site provided details where Rotary Clubs and others could donate or deposit funds as well as coordinate in-kind donations. The club also coordinated local efforts to more efficiently provide meals to the refugees. The Rotarians partnered with local non-profits, religious organizations and, later, the government (through what became known as the Welcome Project) to provide 1,200 lunch

boxes daily, 1,200 vaccinations (including polio), professional development assistance and places to sleep. Today, the Welcome Project, led by the Brazilian Army, lessens the impact of the migratory process, and saves lives.

Box 5: Honorees for their Work on Refugees at the November 2019 Rotary Days at the United Nations in New York

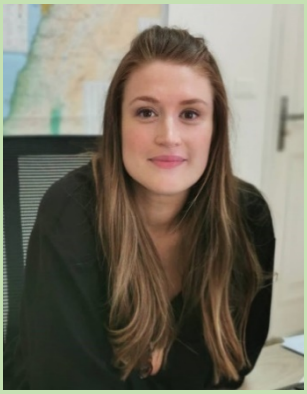
Dr. Bernd Fischer

Hasina Rahman

Ace Robin

Ilge Karancak-Splane

Lucienne Heyworth



Vanderlei Lima Santana

The projects of these six awardees are exemplary, but they are just the tip of the iceberg. Many other Rotarians and friends of Rotary have provided relief and created opportunities for refugees and IDPs globally.

As mentioned earlier, a key objective of this report is to help mobilize Rotarians towards supporting refugees and IDPs. This is done by showcasing the work of Rotarians who have already answered this call, while also providing information on the extent of the refugee crisis.

Contribution of this Report

Given that this report was prepared in part for a joint event with OAS to mark World Refugee Day, Part I of the report focuses on refugees from Venezuela. Part II focuses on refugees from other countries. Finally, an annex provides

information on the Rotary Club of Washington Global that may be of interest to some readers.

The first part of the report on Venezuela includes five articles. The first article consists of the executive summary and conclusion of the June 2019 report by the OAS Working Group to Address the Regional Crisis Caused by Venezuela's Migrant and Refugee Flows. While the crisis has worsened over the last year, insights from the report remain valid today. The next four articles in Part I focus on Rotary's work with Venezuelan refugees. The first article, "Exodus: Stories of Venezuelan Refugees", tells the story of three refugees. The second article, "The Hope for Venezuelan Refugees Project", explains how a group of Rotarians have provided relief for refugees in Colombia, especially through the provision of meals. The third article, "Improving Education and Healthcare for Refugees in Cúcuta, Colombia", tells the story of another project that help improved education and health facilities used by both local residents and refugees in the city near Venezuela's border. Finally, the last case study for Rotarian involvement tells the story of Rotarians in Brazil who have supported refugees from Venezuela.

Part II of the report focuses on refugees from other countries follows the same structure. The first article is based on the latest Global Report from UNHCR. It provides key facts and statistics on the global refugee crisis. Thereafter, four articles explore on the work of Rotarians with refugees from many parts of the world, in both Africa and Asia. The first article. "A Rotaract Club in a Refugee Settlement in Nakivale, Uganda" tells the story of the creation of a Rotaract club in the largest refugee resettlement area in Uganda. The second article. "Welcoming Syrian Refugees in Nova Scotia, Canada" explains how Rotarians have helped for the integration of Syrian refugees in their country. The last article, "Providing Healthcare for Refugees in Berlin, Germany" explains how Rotarians helped provide healthcare, again for Syrian refugees. The last article tells the story of how Rotarians helped provide relief and wheelchairs as well as support for the education of children in camps for Syrian refugee in Turkey.

Conclusion

The refugee crisis in Venezuela and globally is worsening. Governments and international organizations have a leading role to play in funding the humanitarian response and in adopting programs and policies to support refugees, IDPs, and other vulnerable groups. But the private sector and civil society can also play an important role in solving this crisis through projects and relief provided at the local level.

With its 35,000 clubs and 1.3 million members globally, Rotary International can help, and indeed has been helping. The hope is that this report will help mobilize even more Rotarians around the world to invest their time, resources, and passion to the service of refugees and IDPs.

Box 6: Contact Us

If you are interested in collaborating with our Rotary club to make a positive difference, or perhaps even join as a member (we have members in multiple countries apart from a core group based in Washington, DC), please contact us. To learn more, visit our website at https://www.washingtonglobalrotary.org/ or write to WashingtonGlobalRotary@gmail.com. The annex to this report also provides additional information on our club and some of our members actively working on refugee issues.

HELPING REFUGEES FROM VENEZUELA

THE VENEZUELA REFUGEE CRISIS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OAS WORKING GROUP REPORT

Organization of American States[1]

In June 2019, the Organization of American States published an authoritative report on the regional crisis caused by Venezuela's migrant and refugee flows. To provide context for subsequent articles on helping refugees from Venezuela, this article reproduces the executive summary of the report and its conclusions. While the crisis has worsened over the last year, key insights from the report remain valid today. The full report is available here.

OAS WORKING GROUP TO ADDRESS THE REGIONAL CRISIS CAUSED BY VENEZUELA'S MIGRANT AND REFUGEE FLOWS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current crisis of Venezuelan migrants and refugees is unprecedented in the region. As of publication (June 2019), at least 4 million Venezuelans have fled their country, representing over 13 percent of the country's total population. Globally, only Syria, which has suffered from war for more than 8 years, surpasses Venezuela in the flow of migrants and refugees.

The majority of Venezuelan migrants and refugees are in Colombia (1.3 million), Peru (768,100), Chile (288,200), Ecuador (263,000), Brazil (168,300), Argentina (130,000), Panama (94,400), Trini- dad and Tobago (40,000), Mexico (39,500), Guyana (36,400), Dominican Republic (28,500), Costa Rica (25,700), Uruguay (8,600) and Paraguay (5,000). In absolute terms, 4 nations, Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Ecuador, host more than 65 percent of the Venezuelans who have left their country. In Curaçao (26,000) and Aruba (16,000), Venezuelans represent 15 percent of the total population of each island, the highest in the region in relative terms.

Despite not suffering from a war or a natural catastrophe, five thousand Venezuelans flee daily. The Working Group, through testimonies of Venezuelans who have been forcibly displaced, consultations with civil society, and information provided by the governments of recipient countries, concluded that the main determinants for the forced displacement are the humanitarian crisis, reflected in the shortage of food and medicines; the economic collapse, reflected in a hyperinflation of 10,000,000 percent; the systematic and generalized violation of human rights, through persecution, repression, social control, and crimes against humanity; the repeated failures in the supply of basic services, such as electricity, water, and gas; and widespread violence with a homicide rate of 81 people per 100,000 inhabitants. All these determinants can also be considered as alterations of public order in the daily life of the Venezuelan citizen.

In the absence of a political, economic, and social solution in the short term in Venezuela that allows access to food and medicine, reduction of crime rates, reinstatement of rule of law that guarantees full freedoms to citizens avoiding widespread persecution, and an improvement of the economy, the Working Group estimates that by the end of 2019 there could be between 5.3 and 5.7 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees and by the end of 2020 between 7.5 and 8.2 million.

In view of this serious situation, the Working Group considers that Venezuelans should be granted refugee status at the regional level,

[1] The executive summary and conclusion of the OAS Report are reproduced with permission from the OAS.

according to the Cartagena Declaration, which establishes that the definition of a refugee also includes people who fled their country because their lives, security, or freedom have been threatened by widespread violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive human rights violations, or other circumstances that have disturbed public order. Many of these reasons, we consider, formally apply to the current crisis in Venezuela.

To walk thousands of kilometers across the continent to reach another country, as the "walkers" do, or to take a small boat or raft for long hours to reach an island in the Caribbean, as the "rafters" do, is powerful evidence of the desperation that exists to flee to satisfy basic needs, such as the right to food, and to avoid being a victim of generalized violence and disturbance of public order. Additionally, it showplaces the high economic vulnerability that prevents migrants and refugees from making their journey using conventional transport routes, whose costs are beyond the reach of much of the Venezuelan populace.

The Working Group praises efforts made by different countries in the region who have implemented various legal instruments to grant temporary protection to about 1.8 million Venezuelans who, with this condition, receive access to health, education and opportunities to enter the labor markets. However, about 2 million Venezuelans migrants in the region are in irregular status or at risk of being there soon.

The increase of migratory restrictions on Venezuelans, far from solving the crisis, will aggravate it. Apart from the vulnerable conditions which the people of Venezuela are leaving, requesting a passport renewal or issuing a new one in that country is practically impossible because of the costs, corruption networks, the lack of material, and the widespread discrimination of the regime against those who do not agree with their ideas.

To walk thousands of kilometers across the continent to reach another country, as the "walkers" do, or to take a small boat or raft for long hours to reach an island in the Caribbean, as the "rafters" do, is powerful evidence of the desperation that exists to flee.

The Working Group is aware of the infrastructure, services, and financial limitations of recipient countries. In fact, after the first semester of 2019 the United Nations has only been able to collect 21 percent (158 million dollars) of the total estimated in the Regional Response Plan for Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees. The gap to complete the estimate is 579.5 million dollars, equivalent to 79 percent. When compared with other global migrant and refugees crises, the financial donations by the international community to the crisis of forced displacement of Venezuelans ($ 325 million) are significantly lower than donations to the crisis of the Rohingya (1.2 billion dollars), South Sudan (9.4 billion dollars), and Syria (33 billion dollars).

Comparing the figures mentioned above and if we take an example, the funding received per capita for Syrians is $5,000, while for Venezuelans it is only $100 per person.

The Working Group recognizes the efforts of many countries in the region and beyond to cooperate financially to assist Venezuelan migrants and refugees. Unfortunately, the efforts to date are not enough for the size of this crisis. The forced displacement of millions of Venezuelans should not be interpreted in regional or much less sub-regional dimensions. It should be seen in a global dimension.

This crisis of migrants and refugees represents an unprecedented challenge in the region for the member countries of the OAS and the rest of the international community. We cannot fail to high-light the welcome that the Venezuelan people have received from the governments and host societies since this crisis began. Despite the difficulties, the migrant and refugee crisis also

creates an immense opportunity to integrate millions who are willing to work, study, and positively impact the countries that receive them.

As many Venezuelans have expressed when we visited the region: "I want to work here to be better and be able to help my family that is still in Venezuela. When things change there (Venezuela), I will return". To achieve the integration of millions who flee dramatically, it is necessary to create the basis for a regional consensus that guarantees the permanent protection and integration of Venezuelans. It will be the strongest contribution of the continent in the short term due to the prosperity that will be generated in the receiving nations and in the long term with the return of many to Venezuela trained to contribute in its reconstruction.

CONCLUSION

- By June 2019, there are 4 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees. About 80 percent of them are in Latin America and the Caribbean. This forced migratory flow represents the largest in the history of the region.

- According to information provided by the member states of the OAS and the United Nations coordination platform, the majority of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the region are in the following countries: Colombia (1.3 million), Peru (768,100), Chile (288,200), Ecuador (263,000), Brazil (168,300), Argentina (130,000), Panama (94,400), Trinidad and Tobago (40,000), Mexico (39,500), Guyana (36,400), Dominican Republic (28,500), Curaçao (26,000), Costa Rica (25,700), Aruba (16,000), Uruguay (8,600) and Paraguay (5,000). In the case of Curaçao and Aruba, Venezuelans represent 15 percent of the total population of each of the islands, the highest in the region in relative terms.

- The systematic violation of Human Rights, widespread violence, humanitarian crisis, economic collapse, repeated failures in the provision of basic services, and efforts at social control and are, as the Working Group has identified, the determinants of Venezuelan forced migration.

- If the problems mentioned above continue and worsen, the projection of Venezuelan migrants and refugees could reach between 5.3 and 5.7 million by the end of 2019 and between 7.5 and 8.2 million by the end of 2020.

- Considering that the Cartagena Declaration establishes that a refugee is a person who flees from his country because his life, security or freedom have been threatened by widespread violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of Human Rights or other circumstances that have disturbed public order, the Working Group proposes that said Declaration be implemented so that Venezuelans are granted refugee status throughout the region.

- Defining Venezuelans who fled, and continue to flee, their country as refugees will guarantee them permanent protection with the right to identity, access to services such as health and education, and the opportunity to enter the labor markets. Approximately 2 million Venezuelans are in irregular status or at risk of being so in the short term.

- We recognize the efforts made by several countries in the region to implement legal instruments that have granted temporary protection to Venezuelan migrants and refugees, despite the limitations of resources, infrastructure and services. About 1.8 million Venezuelans have been regularized in the region.

- We call on countries that have not yet implemented a legal instrument to regularize Venezuelan migrants and refugees to begin doing so. Keeping Venezuelan migrants and refugees without any protection violates their rights. The region should implement integration mechanisms, such as a regional identity card, that unifies criteria to regularize and protect Venezuelans.

- We call on the member states, permanent and observers, not to deport Venezuelans who arrive in vulnerable conditions without a criminal record and/or who have not committed crimes in the receiving countries.

- Of 460,000 Venezuelans who have applied for asylum, only 21,000 have been granted this status. We call on the recipient countries of Venezuelan migrants and refugees to speed up asylum applications to guarantee them protection and avoid a state of uncertainty that many have been suffering for years.

- Since the beginning of the crisis of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, more than four years ago, the international community has donated US$325 million, a figure well below what has been donated to the Rohingya crisis (US$1.2 billion), South Sudan (US$9.4 billion) and Syria (US$33.0 billion). Comparing the figures mentioned above, the financing received per capita for Syrians is $5,000, while for Venezuelans it is $100 per person. After the first semester of 2019, the United Nations has only been able to collect 21 percent (158 million dollars) of the total estimated in the Regional Response Plan for Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees. The gap to complete the estimate is 579.5 million dollars, equivalent to 79 percent.

- The Working Group recognizes the financial contribution that some countries have made to assist Venezuelans who flee their country in vulnerable conditions. However, the donations granted at the time of publication of this report are insufficient given the number of migrants and refugees, the conditions in which they leave their country and the financial limitations, infrastructure and services that many of the receiving countries have.

We call on the entire international community to give a global response to the crisis of Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

- We call on the entire international community to give a global response to the crisis of Venezuelan migrants and refugees. This should not be considered a regional or much less sub-regional issue.

- The Working Group calls on all authorities, from the local to the national level, to implement policies and actions against discrimination and xenophobia towards Venezuelans.

- We call on recipient countries to eliminate migratory restrictions on Venezuelan migrants and refugees. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of Venezuelan refugees were forcibly displaced.

- We believe that if, in the short term, a solution to the political, economic and social crisis is generated in Venezuela there will be a decrease in forced migration and incentives will likely emerge for Venezuelans to consider returning to their country.

- According to visits made by the Working Group in the region where there have been meetings with local and national authorities, as well as with civil society, multilateral agencies and the Venezuelan migrant and refugee community, the

biggest challenges that currently exist to address the migratory crisis are: the right to identity, access to public health and education, and formal employment opportunities.

- Incorporate Venezuelans with moderate, severe and acute malnutrition in nutritional recovery programs.

- Incorporate Venezuelans, particularly children under 5 years of age and pregnant and lactating women with chronic malnutrition, into food security programs.

- Strengthening exclusive breastfeeding in postpartum women who have migrated in order to protect the life and health of babies under 6 months of age and prevention of complications.

- The situation of widespread violence in Venezuela has led various irregular armed groups to recruit migrants and refugees, especially minors under vulnerable conditions, to participate in illegal activities. This situation is a clear evidence of groups that act outside the law to take advantage of a humanitarian crisis to increase their presence in Venezuela, the border areas, and the region.

- The Working Group recommends implementing preventive policies to reduce human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

- We recognize the work that is currently being done by various NGOs, Church groups and cooperation agencies to assist Venezuelans fleeing their country. However, it is necessary to reinforce feeding programs, legal assistance, psychological support and communications centers due to the size of the migratory flow.

- We call on the private sector of the region to deepen training and entrepreneurship programs to facilitate the labor integration of Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

- The working group urges the region to accept the extension of the validity of Venezuelan passports as established in Decree No. 6 signed by the Interim President of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó.

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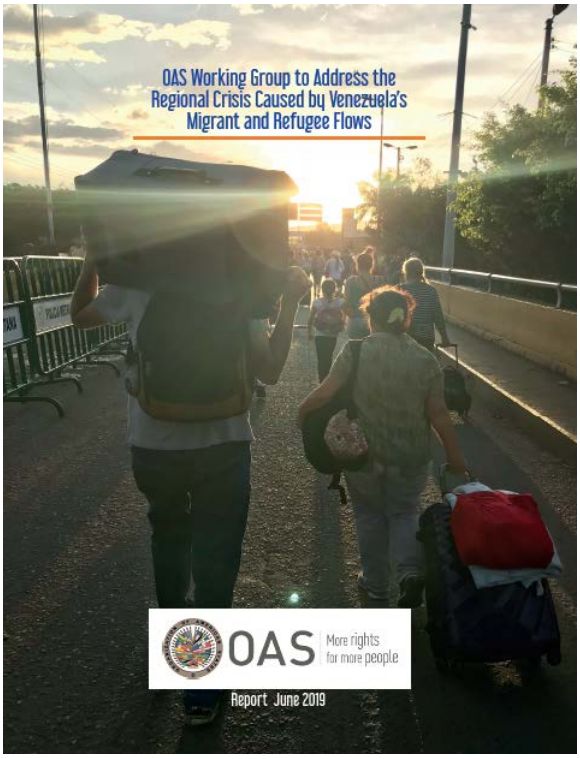


Visual: OAS Working Group Report.

EXODUS:
STORIES FROM VENEZUELAN REFUGEES

Vanessa Glavinskas [2]

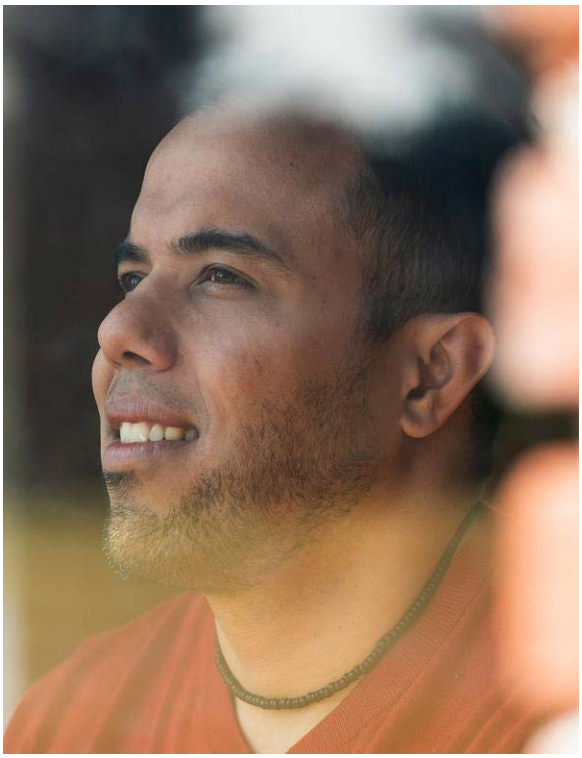
Since 2015, more than 4 million people have fled an economically devastated Venezuela. This article, originally published in The Rotarian, tracks the stories of three who left puts faces on that staggering statistic.

Héctor Herrera

Héctor Herrera was driving his father to José Tadeo Monagas International Airport in northeastern Venezuela when they approached a government food stand. Even at 5 a.m., the line was long. "I never thought I'd live in this misery," Herrera's father said. Suddenly a fight spilled out into the street in front of them as two men wrestled over a frozen chicken. "At that moment, my father said to me: 'Son, if you have the opportunity to leave, go,'" recalls Herrera. "'I will miss you, and it will be difficult, but this is already as low as a person can live.'"

That was in the summer of 2015. A teacher, Herrera was 28 years old and a member of the Rotaract Club of Maturín Juanico. A city that boomed in the 1980s as the oil capital of eastern Venezuela, Maturín is now crippled by the country's collapse — an economic meltdown that, for the people living there, is worse than the Great Depression. According to a survey released in 2018, 9 out of 10 Venezuelans did not earn enough to buy food, and more than 17 million had fallen into extreme poverty. The BBC reported that desperate parents have been giving away their children rather than watch them starve.

Those conditions are fueling the biggest migration in the history of Latin America as more than 4 million people flee Venezuela. Economists say the country's collapse is the worst outside of war in at least 45 years, while the Brookings Institution predicts that Venezuela's refugee crisis will become "the largest and most underfunded in modern history." From a distance, those facts and statistics can be mind-numbing, obscuring the individuals caught up in this social and economic catastrophe. But the stark reality comes into focus in the stories of three people who fled.



Héctor Herrera in Mexico City
Photo credit: Pato Portillo

Eduardo José Campechano Escalona, a Rotarian from Barquisimeto, fled to Peru after being targeted for speaking out against government policies. A onetime Rotary Youth Exchange student, Victoria Garcia Baffigo returned to the

[2] This article is reprinted from the March 2020 issue of *The Rotarian*. The title of the story has been changed.

United States after her former host family grew concerned about her safety and her future in Venezuela. And taking his father's advice, Héctor Herrera left for Mexico with only $200 and the promise of a place to stay. Each of them had ties to Rotary, which in the end would be their hope and, to an extent, their salvation.

On 10 November 2015, the day Herrera left Venezuela, he took a photo of himself to remember the moment. "When I look at that picture now, I see fear, uncertainty, and sadness," he says. Fortunately, he knew Ferdinando Esquivel through Rotaract.

Herrera had met Esquivel, now a member of the Rotary Club of Zinacatepec, on a trip to Mexico in 2013. The two men became close friends, and Esquivel offered to help Herrera if he ever decided to leave Venezuela.

At the time, Herrera thought things would improve in his native country. But two years later, life was much worse. "The stores had nothing," he says. "Not even toilet paper." He had a passport, but without access to dollars, he couldn't buy a plane ticket. So Esquivel bought it for him and invited Herrera to stay with him in a small town near Toluca. After two weeks, Herrera thanked his friend and boarded a bus for the 40-mile ride to Mexico City, where he hoped to find a job that would give him a work visa.

When he got off the bus in Mexico City, Herrera started to panic. "Left? Right? I didn't know where to go," he recalls. "It felt like there was no floor beneath my feet." He found a place to sit and pulled out his cellphone to text Alonso Macedo, a friend he had met at a Rotary event in Mexico. Macedo had agreed to pick him up and let him stay with him for a few days. But what if he didn't come? Herrera thought. Where will I sleep tonight? And then, Macedo appeared.

"After that I looked for work every day — anything that would give me papers," Herrera says. "I couldn't sleep, so I'd get on the computer at night and search for jobs." Finally, a school run by Venezuelans that taught English asked him to come in for an interview, but the school was located four hours from Mexico City. Then another problem arose: He had nowhere to stay. His host was leaving on a trip.

"That night, it was storming," Herrera says. "I walked to a restaurant, opened my laptop, and started to send messages to people in Rotary and Rotaract whom I didn't know personally, but whom I had a connection with through Facebook." He had no choice but to ask strangers if they would be willing to take him in for the night. He finally got a response from Laura Martínez Montiel. They didn't know each other, but they had several mutual friends on social media through Rotaract. She gave him her address and told him to take a taxi. Herrera wrote back and explained he didn't have enough money, so they agreed to meet in a closer neighborhood where Martínez was heading to a Christmas party.

> "My plan is to get my family out. I don't have any hope that things are going to change in Venezuela. The damage to the country has been huge." — Héctor Herrera

"I was in such a bad state," Herrera remembers. "I was all wet, and my clothes were dirty." He worried that Martínez would take one look at him and change her mind about hosting him. Instead, she took him back to her home and introduced him to her mother, who washed his clothes and fixed him something to eat. He explained that he had a job interview the next day, and together they mapped out how to get there on public transportation. At 6 a.m., Martínez gave him a ride to the metro.

When Herrera arrived for the interview, he saw a familiar face. It turned out he had reviewed the interviewer's thesis a few years earlier. After talking awhile, the interviewer asked if Herrera could start on Monday. "No," he replied, "I want to start today."

Herrera's job was to make hundreds of calls looking for clients for the school; if someone signed up, Herrera was paid a commission. He stayed with Martínez and her mother for another week and commuted four hours each way until he asked for an advance on his salary so he could rent an apartment closer to his job. "On 15 January, I got my first commission," he says. "It was a relief, because as of the 14th, I only had $2."

By April, Herrera was promoted to advertising manager, and in July, he finally received a work permit. Two years later, he found a job that better suited his teaching skills, working as a trainer for a company that advises businesses on streamlining their processes.

"I started giving lectures around this beautiful country," Herrera says. "But on 3 December 2018, I received an email from the national migration authority saying I had to leave Mexico in 20 days." A migratory alert had been issued for him after immigration authorities visited his previous employer, the English school. When they rang the bell, no one answered the door, so they flagged it as a fake company. "I could not believe it," Herrera says. "I was doing well, but now it was worse than the beginning because I no longer had papers. I had to start over."

For the past year, Herrera has been fighting the alert with the help of a public defender. Each day that it remains unresolved, he's at risk of being deported. He's seeking asylum to be able to stay, but with Venezuela's crisis worsening, his claim is one of thousands. "Mexico is now returning Venezuelans immediately when they arrive at the airport," Herrera says. Still, he says he will not give up. "Until I have my dream of a visa, I will not rest."

Eduardo José Campechano Escalona

Eduardo José Campechano Escalona started having anxiety attacks in 2015. "There were constant riots in my city," says Campechano, a former member of the Rotary Club of Barquisimeto, Venezuela's fourth-largest city. "My children could not attend school or go out. They had to live literally locked up in our apartment."

Though he and his wife were university professors, their income no longer covered basic necessities. At the time, hyperinflation was 181 percent. (At the end of 2019, the International Monetary Fund estimated that the annual inflation rate was 200,000 percent.) What's more, several incidents led Campechano to believe the government was targeting him.

Eduardo José Campechano Escalona in Trujillo, Peru
Photo credit: Florence Goupil

"I had questioned government policies," he explains. "[Government-issued] textbooks omitted parts of Venezuelan history and only highlighted facts related to the government of Hugo Chávez," the country's president from 1999 to 2013. After speaking out publicly about the inaccuracies and biases in the mandated textbooks, Campechano says that he started being denied access to grant funding. When he and his family decided to leave for Peru,

Campechano went to a state-run bank to get a credit card so he could access dollars for a plane ticket. Again, he was denied. “It was a way to intimidate me,” he says. When he posted about it on social media, he received a threatening email.

“It was painful to leave, but we are very grateful for the opportunity in this country. Now we feel safe.” — Eduardo José Campechano Escalona

Running out of options, Campechano asked a friend living abroad if he would be willing to buy him a plane ticket to Lima. Campechano had secured a position at Universidad César Vallejo in Trujillo, a city in northern Peru that he had often visited as a guest lecturer and where he had a work visa lined up.

Campechano moved to Peru in March 2017. Four months later, he brought his wife, their two adolescent children, and his mother-in-law, who was sick with cancer, to Peru. “During those first months, my family was the Rotary E-Club of Fusión Latina Distrito 4465,” says Campechano. When his mother-in-law died, their Rotary family consoled and supported them.

Campechano remains connected to the members of his former club in Barquisimeto, and he says they are still engaging in service, despite the hard conditions. “There is no Youth Exchange program anymore,” he says. “They are just trying to get basics, like food and medicine, to people.” Alberto Avelino Camacaro Zerpa, a former governor of District 4380 in western Venezuela, estimates that 20 to 30 percent of the country’s Rotary members and nearly 40 percent of its Rotaract members have left Venezuela. Yet many clubs continue to meet when members aren’t limited by access to gasoline and electricity.

“It was painful to leave,” Campechano says, “but we are very grateful for the opportunity in this country. Now we feel safe.”

Victoria Garcia Baffigo

“I think everyone who returns home after studying abroad gets reverse culture shock,” says Victoria Garcia Baffigo. “I had that, but worse.”

After spending the 2015-16 school year living as a Rotary Youth Exchange student with Dave Siegfried and his family in Aurora, Illinois, Garcia went home to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Venezuela. “Some days we didn’t have power for 10 hours,” she says. Hyperinflation had gotten so bad that her family could afford very little at the supermarket.

One day the phone rang. The caller told them they had her brother and demanded money for his release. Thankfully, they didn’t really have him, she says. Still, the call rattled the family.

Chris Olson, a member of the Rotary Club of Aurora Sunrise, had been monitoring the situation in Venezuela from Illinois. “Chris told us Victoria had gotten back to Venezuela and found things had changed dramatically from when she left,” says Charlie Schmalz, who, like Olson and Siegfried, is a member of the Aurora Sunrise club. “She had spent all that time studying here, and now her whole future was destroyed. It was a terrible thing. So a group of us got together and said we should do something.”

“The first call that Chris made was to my mom, and then my mom talked to me about going back to the United States,” Garcia says. “I didn’t ever think about staying in the U.S. because my parents couldn’t afford for me to get an education there, and I wanted to get my college degree.”

Now Garcia had the opportunity to get her degree in the United States, fully paid through a fund the Aurora Sunrise club set up for her. “It’s still hard for me to understand,” she says. “I can’t believe that people who are not family are doing this for me.”

It took more than a year to make the arrangements. Much of that time was spent waiting to get a student visa. “Airlines started pulling out of Venezuela,” says Schmalz’s wife, Mary. “We were so close to Victoria getting the last papers, so Dave bought a seat on the chance that she could come. He bought the seat, and the day before the flight left, Victoria got her visa. It was a miracle.”

Victoria Garcia Baffigo in Aurora, Illinois
Photo credit: Ramon Perez Palacios-Pelletier

Garcia is now in her third year of college, at Aurora University, majoring in biology and health science with a minor in biotechnology. She’s the first person in her family to go to college. Though the original plan was to rotate host families, she has stayed with Charlie and Mary Schmalz for more than two years now. “We’ve bonded over board games and watching TV,” Garcia says. Adds Mary: “She meshes so easily into our lifestyle. She’s like a grandchild to us.”

Still, the couple knows Garcia misses her family, so one Christmas, they surprised her with a ticket to visit her mother, who had recently migrated to Peru. When Garcia and her mother lived in Venezuela, they shared an apartment with her grandmother, who remains there. “Every evening, we used to sit on my grandmother’s bed, and my mom, my grandma, and I would talk about our day,” recalls Garcia. “Then I’d do homework and my mom would make dinner. My grandma and I used to read the same books and talk about them.”

Garcia is concerned about her grandmother’s health, but her uncle, a member of the Rotary Club of Valencia, has been crossing into Colombia to get her medications. “My grandmother worries about getting food,” Garcia says. “She worries a lot about money and if she’ll have enough. It’s really hard.” Garcia hopes to see her grandmother again one day in Venezuela after she finishes college.

Until then, she’s focused on her studies and talking to local Rotary clubs about her experience in the United States and the crisis in Venezuela, raising awareness about the people suffering in the country she loves.

“At the beginning, Victoria was often sad,” Mary Schmalz says. “She’d say, ‘There’s no way I can ever pay all of you back for this.’ I told her, ‘We don’t need to be paid back. What you need to do is, when you’re in a position to help someone, you do.’”

“Some days we didn’t have power for 10 hours,” Garcia says. Hyperinflation had gotten so bad that her family could afford very little at the supermarket.

My father died in August,” says Herrera. “I feel 1 percent pain and 99 percent gratitude. I’m grateful for his love and that he was always there for us.” Herrera was unable to return to Venezuela when his father died; had he traveled there, he would have been denied re-entry into Mexico. He takes solace in knowing that his father would want him to continue trying to

build a life in his new home. “My plan is to get my family out,” he says. “I don’t have any hope that things are going to change in Venezuela. The damage to the country has been huge.” The Brookings Institution estimates that the number of Venezuelan migrants could eventually rise to 8 million, even more than the 6 million who have fled Syria — yet Venezuelans have received less than 10 percent of the international aid committed for Syrian refugees.

“The hardest part of migrating is changing your heart,” Herrera says. “When I encounter Venezuelans in Mexico, the first thing they talk about is the bad things happening in Venezuela.” Instead, Herrera has chosen to honor his father by working toward his dream of success. He even started an Instagram page called “Migrating to Success”; he uses it to share inspirational quotes with his 4,000 followers. “Having to start over isn’t all bad,” read a recent post. “It’s shown me that anything is possible.”

How you can help: Examples of Projects by Rotarians

Brazil: Welcoming displaced families

“A year ago, I was walking into a bakery in Brazil when a little girl came up to me and asked me to buy her some cake,” recalls Vanderlei Lima Santana. At first, Santana said no. But the girl’s mother explained that it was her daughter’s ninth birthday and they had nothing to eat. He went inside and bought the girl, a Venezuelan migrant, a cupcake. “That day, I went home and cried,” Santana says. “I knew I had to do more to help.” Since then, Santana and his club, the Rotary Club of Boa Vista-Caçari, have partnered with local nonprofits, religious organizations, and the government’s Operação Acolhida (Operation Welcome) to offer daily meals, medications, and professional development opportunities to families arriving in northern Brazil from Venezuela. In November, Santana was honored at Rotary Day at the United Nations for his work leading this project. To learn more, contact Santana atsantana.delei@gmail.com.

Colombia: Offering hope to the walkers

They are called *los caminantes* — the walkers — and they are pouring into Colombia from Venezuela by the tens of thousands, looking for work, shelter, and food. “Imagine the psychological condition of a person who has to leave everything behind and walk for days,” says Cristal Montañéz, a member of the Rotary E-Club of Houston. A native Venezuelan and longtime activist, Montañéz has seen firsthand how the flood of refugees overwhelmed Colombia’s social service organizations. Inspired to help, Montañéz and Isis Mejias, another Houston e-club member from Venezuela, created a project called Hope for Venezuelan Refugees; it distributes meals to migrants at several points along the route taken by los caminantes. The project is a partnership between the Houston e-club and the nonprofit Rise Against Hunger, which supplies the meals. To facilitate distribution, the e-club works with the Rotary Club of Cúcuta in Colombia along with several food banks and shelters along the route. Mejias says that the Houston e-club wants to continue Hope for Venezuelan Refugees, but that it needs to raise enough money to cover the cost of administering the project (it’s also counting on the continued cooperation of Rise Against Hunger). “Venezuelans are praying for the kindness of international organizations like Rotary.” To learn more, contact Cristal at cristalmontanezvenezuela@gmail.com.

Venezuela: Supporting communities

"Every day is harder," says José Bernardo Guevara Pulgar, who lives in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. A human rights lawyer and member of the Rotary Club of Baruta/Las Mercedes, Guevara says he worries most about the lack of medicine. The cost of medical care has skyrocketed, making it unattainable even on a professional's salary. "Public health care is at the brink of collapse," he says. "People have to bring their own syringes, their own medicine. The government is not providing these things." Despite the hard conditions, the majority of Rotary members have stayed in Venezuela, and many clubs continue to meet. "I'm going to stay here and fight for my country," says Francisco Morello, governor of Venezuela's District 4380. "Venezuela is going through the most difficult internal crisis in its history," adds Ricardo Diaz, governor of Venezuela's District 4370. "We need medicine and medical-surgical implements such as ultrasound scanners, glucometers, and blood pressure monitors." Diaz also expressed a need for wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers, regardless of their condition. "I would ask Rotary clubs to not stop looking at our country," Diaz says. "Today we need your help. Tomorrow we will be the ones who can help you." Rise Against Hunger responds to sudden and ongoing crises to meet immediate needs of affected populations and support the transition toward recovery. We have responded to emergencies by delivering food assistance, nutrition, water filters and hygiene kits to those displaced by natural disasters and man-made crises. In building the resilience of vulnerable people, Rise Against Hunger is working hand-in-hand with a host of organizations to ensure that our meals and other life-changing aid can reach communities in crisis effectively and according to need. To learn more, contact Diaz at ricardodiaz1964@hotmail.com.

Cristal Montañéz feeds los caminantes.
Photo credit: Cindy Catoni.

THE HOPE FOR VENEZUELAN REFUGEES PROJECT

Cristal Montañéz [3]

For 12 years, I had the opportunity to work for a Pakistani humanitarian foundation where I helped develop and implement several women empowerment, food security, health, education, and emergency relief programs in different regions of Pakistan. I remember the evaluation visits to the I-12 U.N. refugee settlement for Afghan refugees located in the outskirts of Islamabad. However, I never imagined that my work in Pakistan would prepare me to help Venezuelan refugees in Colombia.

The Venezuelan Humanitarian Crisis

Venezuelans are struggling to survive in a country experiencing the worst political and economic crisis in its history. With a monthly minimum salary of US $2.20 plus food stamps equivalent to US$5.49, the salary is barely equivalent to eight dollars. The economy reflects a hyperinflation of 10,000,000 percent. The lack of food, medicines, essential services such as electricity, water and gas, no job opportunities, and widespread crime has forced 1 in 7 Venezuelans to abandon their homeland. Children, the elderly, and the sick are increasingly dying of causes related to hunger, malnutrition, and disease.

As a result, the Western Hemisphere is facing the most significant refugee exodus in Latin American's history. Globally, only Syria, which has suffered from war for more than eight years, surpasses Venezuela in the flow of migrants and refugees. According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and IOM (International Organization for Migration), the number of Venezuelans leaving their country has reached 4.7 million, representing over 13 percent of the country's total population. According to the U.N. World Food Program (WFP), eighty percent of Venezuelan refugees in Colombia suffer from food insecurity, according to a survey presented in September 2018.

Helping Venezuelan Refugees in Colombia

I traveled to Colombia to evaluate the refugee crisis in the border city of Cúcuta where I met with local and international organizations. We agreed to join efforts and form a coalition to implement the Hope For Venezuelan Refugees project, an initiative sponsored by the Rotary e-Club of Houston, the Rotary Club of Cúcuta 1, and Rise Against Hunger.

Hope For Venezuelan Refugees is a humanitarian project responding to the food insecurity affecting thousands of Venezuelan refugees, migrants, walkers '*caminantes*,' and Colombian returnees. The project operates through selected food distribution centers and shelters on the Cúcuta-Pamplona route.

During Phases 1 and 2 of the Hope for Venezuelan Refugees project, a total of 647,136 Rise Against Hunger meals were distributed to Venezuelan refugees, migrants, and *caminentes*.

During Phases 1 and 2 of the project, we worked very closely with our logistic partners and allied organizations to develop a comprehensive plan to distribute a donation of 46 tons of rice-soy fortified meals from Rise Against Hunger (RAH). A total of 647,136 RAH meals were distributed through 11 food distribution centers/com-munity kitchens (*comedores*), 7 communities in Comuna 9 in Cúcuta, and 6 shelters (*albergues*) and 3 food distribution centers from Los Patios to Pamplona.

[3] This article is reproduced with minor edits from an article published in March 2020 in iF Magazine.

Additionally, we purchased 31 tons of locally produced complementary food commodities (chicken, can tuna, eggs, oil, bread, table chocolate, milk oats, vegetables, herbs, condiments, grains, etc.) to support the local economy, help decrease the xenophobia towards migrants, increase nutritional value, complement the Rise Against Hunger meals, and add diverse local flavor. The project benefitted thousands of Venezuelan refugees, migrants, *caminantes*, and Colombian returnees.

The Shelters of the Red Humanitaria

Thousands of people cross the Venezuelan-Colombian border every day in search of jobs, food, and a place to live. Hundreds of women, children, and men walk to other cities. The *caminantes* as they are known walk approximately 556 kilometers from Cúcuta to Bogotá. Others walk for weeks to other countries on a narrow road in life-threatening weather conditions without money or food. They have no place to go and feel hopeless for leaving everything they worked for behind.

An average person walks at a speed of 5 km per hour; one hour by vehicle equals 10 hours walking. The walking time is relative and depends on the weight *caminantes* carry, their physical condition and resistance, the weather, food and shelter availability, type of shoe, whether or not they walk with children, and senior citizens, among others. The Cúcuta Bogotá route is known as the Red Humanitaria (Humanitarian Network). Some Colombians citizens with great compassion for the suffering of the Venezuelan refugees, migrants, *caminantes*, and Colombian returnees have turned their home into temporary shelters for this population.

A group of *caminantes*.
Photo credit: Hope for Venezuelan Refugees.

Food distribution under the project.
Photo credit: Hope for Venezuelan Refugees.

The Hope For Venezuelan Refugees logo marks the shelters we support with the donation of RAH meals and complementary foods. These shelters provide a hot meal and a place to spend the night before continuing the long and arduous journey. Unfortunately, two of the shelters in the most vulnerable areas have closed due to a lack of resources or xenophobia leaving unattended the most critical region between Pamplona and the Berlin Páramo located at 2,800 and 4,290 meters above sea level, where temperatures can drop to below 32°F at night.

Supporting Local Communities

Our team implemented another food project for Venezuelan migrants and vulnerable Colombians in the Comuna 9 in Cúcuta, aiming to support 855 refugees and migrant families who could no longer eat in the food distribution centers or community kitchens. These migrants were identified and qualified by the World Food Program to receive a one-time food bonus for three months and had exhausted their term. This specific group of migrants lives in invaded lands or overcrowded homes, but they can cook over an open fire. Most of them participate in the informal economy and do not earn enough money to support themselves and their families. The Rise Against Hunger Meals were distributed as part of food packages given regularly to these families through the parishes.

Empowering Yukpa Indigenous Communities

Due to the economic and social crisis of Venezuela, it is no longer profitable for the Yukpas to sell their crops, so they are migrating to the Colombian cities or border towns in search of food. In partnership with JUCUM Carpa Esperanza and Phebe Children, we supported a micro-enterprise program to empower women from two Yukpa indigenous communities that are making crafts to earn money and promote their traditional culture.

In August 2019, the Institute de Caridad Universal held the historical “Encuentro, Alianzas y Cooperación Humanitaria” (Meeting, Alliances and Humanitarian Cooperation) at the ISER Institute in Pamplona to discuss the challenges and possible solutions to the needs of the local and migrant populations in this region. During this meeting, the GIFMM (Inter-Agency

Mixed Migration Flows Group) recommended including the 'historically poor' Colombian population in the humanitarian programs to help decrease xenophobia caused by the food insecurity and lack of local resources in the area.

In response to this request, our team, in conjunction with the Fundación Banco de Alimentos de Pamplona implemented a small short-term initiative to benefit 936 vulnerable low-income Colombian families in Pamplona through the *Mil Gramos de Ayuda Program* (Thousand Grams of Assistance Programs).

Humanitarian Aid From Houston

The Hispanic Network of a large Houston company and Action for Solidarity donated a shipment of humanitarian aid and medical supplies. A group of nursing students from Instituto Bolivariano Esdiseños joined our team and facilitated basic medical attention in the shelters. More than two dozen volunteers, nurses, and nursing students provided basic medical care to close to 700 children, women, and men refuges and *caminantes*.

Hundreds of children, women, and men benefitted from donated clothing, shoes/socks, and hats that our team distributed directly into the hands of beneficiaries in the shelters of the Red Humanitaria. This helped ease the refugees and *caminantes'* long journey as they walk from city to city and from country to country.

As we traveled to visit the different facilities we support, we distributed hundreds of teddy bears in food distributions centers, Erasmo Meoz Hospital in Cúcuta, shelters in Pamplona, and on the road from Pamplona to Bucaramanga. These furry friends bring hope, joy, and smiles to the children affected by this humanitarian tragedy.

Gracias Colombia

We are very grateful to Colombia and the wonderful people that have opened their doors and hearts to help the people of my home country, Venezuela. As we help alleviate hunger and reduce malnutrition among Venezuelan refugees, we hope that our support of the host communities and local economy will help diminish the xenophobia and signs of resentment to-wards the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population.

We are very grateful to Colombia and the wonderful people that have opened their doors and hearts to help the people of my home country, Venezuela.

Currently, Colombia is hosting more than 1.6 million Venezuelan refugees, migrants, and *caminantes* in addition to half a million Colombian returnees, and another half million migrants in transit to other countries such as Ecuador, Perú, Chile, and Brazil. The Venezuelan exodus into Colombia is unprecedented in the region and represents a challenge too great for Colombians to handle alone. Colombian President Ivan Duque has announced a generous policy toward Venezuelan refugees in Colombia, including giving citizenship to children born in Colombia. But a portion of this burden must be shared with other countries since the destabilizing effects of the Venezuelan situation also affect other Latin American nations.

Unprepared to receive the large migration, these countries are under a lot of pressure to create policies effectives and programs in response to the increasing challenges the crisis is causing in the job market, food supply, healthcare, and public services, as well as infrastructure and education. As the crisis in Venezuela worsens and the Venezuelan migration increases, Colombia will have to consider long-term solutions to the refugee crisis.

PHASES 1 & 2 RESULTS

DONATED

- **46** Tons of Rise Against Hunger - **647,136** meals
- **31** Tons of locally procured food commodities

DISTRIBUTED TO

- **11** Food distribution centers/community kitchen & **7** communities in Cúcuta
- **6** Shelters (Albergues) route Cúcuta - Pamplona
- **3** Food distribution centers from Los Patios - El Alto of Pamplona

PROJECT DURATION

41 Weeks

Photo credit: Hope for Venezuelan Refugees.

IMPROVING EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE FOR REFUGEES IN CÚCUTA

Gladys Maldonado [4]

Ever since I started my journey in Rotary in 2000, I have been inspired by the benefits of belonging to a group of friends, but it is only a year later when I learned about the Rotary Foundation and the possibility of implementing projects that I truly felt like a Rotarian. This article tells the story of projects that we implemented together with a hospital in Colombia that today serves many refugees from Venezuela.

Implementing Global Grants

We have been implementing several global grants over the last few years. These projects have taught us about the importance of international collaboration and the "magical multiplication of money" that the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International enables.

At the beginning of my journey, global grants seemed unattainable to me. As Rotary changed the process for approving grants, it became necessary to know and involve the beneficiary community much more. The amount of funding to be raised also increased (See Box 1). However, the needs in my country and especially in my city, also increased. So we started working towards implementing global grants, and as we started, we never thought of stopping.

Today, whenever I make personal trips, I seek to contact Rotarians all over the world to seek collaborations. I carry my personal cards and if I travel to Rotary events, I seek to meet and make friends with Rotarians who might be interested in helping.

Box 1: Global Grants in Rotary

Global grants support international activities with sustainable, measurable outcomes in the Rotary Foundation's areas of focus. By working together to respond to real community needs, clubs and districts strengthen their global partnerships. Global grants can fund: (1) Humanitarian projects; (2) Scholarships for graduate-level academic studies; and (3) Vocational training teams, which are groups of professionals who travel abroad either to teach local professionals about their field or to learn more about it themselves

The minimum budget for a global grant project is $30,000. The Rotary Foundation's World Fund provides a minimum of $15,000 and a maximum of $400,000 in co-funding for grants. Clubs and districts contribute District Designated Funds and/or cash contributions that the World Fund matches. Global grants can also be funded with endowed earnings and directed gifts.

To be approved, a grant application must describe how the project, scholarship, or vocational training team: (1) Is sustainable — ensuring long-term success after the global grant funds have been spent; (2) Includes measurable goals — aligning with one of Rotary's areas of focus; (3) Responds to real community needs — being based on a community assessment designed based on what they learn through that assessment; (4) Actively involves Rotarians and community members — meeting the eligibility requirements in the grants terms and conditions. Measuring outcomes is an integral part of global grant projects. Proper monitoring and reporting ensure that Rotary grants have a positive impact.

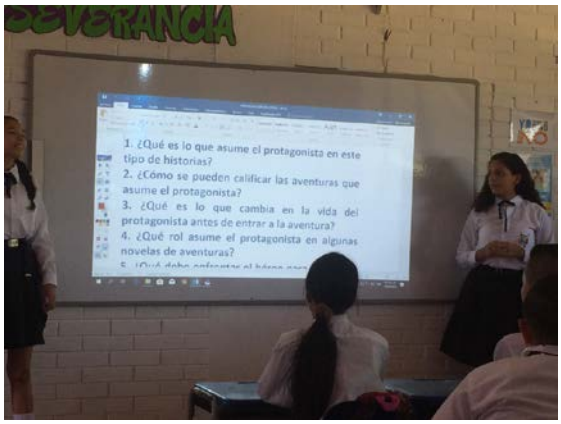
[4] This article was translated by Quentin Wodon and adapted slightly from a presentation by Gladys Maldonado at Rotary's International Assembly.

At the Atlanta Rotary International Convention in 2017, I met Bill Davis, a Houston Rotarian, from the Humble Texas Rotary Club. Bill does not speak Spanish and I do not speak English, but in Rotary there is a common language — the language of a smile, trust, and friendship. Through a friend who translated for us, we managed to communicate, and ever since we have been working on global grants together, focusing on the needs of my city, which lies at the border of Colombia with Venezuela.

Only a river separates our city from Venezuela, and every day we are receiving hundreds of people in search of shelter, food, aid, and health.

Only a river separates our city from Venezuela, and every day we are receiving hundreds of people in search of shelter, food, aid, and health. In order to help, we started with a global grant in education since many nearby schools in Venezuelan shelters needed support to improve. We raised a total of US$ 55,670 and endowed schools with smart virtual classrooms. Now, I can say that as conditions improved, the youth in the neighborhood want to study even more. Some 5,600 students have benefited from our project and there are dozens on the waiting list to enroll in the school that we have supported.

A school benefitting from our global grant.
Photo credit: Rotary project team.



A school benefitting from our global grant.
Photo credit: Rotary project team.

Improving Healthcare

Subsequently, and listening to the community's expressions of its needs, we focused on supporting Erasmo Meoz Hospital, the city's public hospital. We started by equipping the Pediatric Emergency Department to reduce infant morbidity and mortality. With a second global grant of USD 49,579, we managed to provide equipment that was used to the benefit of 14,134 children under the age of five in just one year. Infant mortality has declined, but needs have increased in the past 6 months because of the influx of refugees. The hospital's technical team does its job very well, caring for the equipment we donated. They know that if the equipment is damaged, this increases health risks for children.

Newborns at Erasmo Meoz Hospital.
Photo credit: Rotary project team.

Patients at Erasmo Meoz Hospital.
Photo credit: Rotary project team.

Only a river separates our city from Venezuela, and every day we are receiving hundreds of people in search of shelter, food, aid, and health.

We continued with a donation for obstetrics. Venezuelan women of many different ages come to the hospital to deliver their children. They often walk for long hours in search of care, because in their country the health system has collapsed. Bill Davis who by then had visited our city helped us raise funds in Texas. We regularly send reports to our donors on our achievements.

Aware of our needs, they decided to help us again with another global grant of US$ 129,000 for OB/GYN medical equipment. It is incredible to note that we started with only US$ 1,000 dollars from my club for the project. The funding grew to US$ 129,000 with the help of many other clubs and districts, and matching funds from the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.

The generosity of the clubs and Districts, mostly from Texas, made it feasible to grow the funding. Over a period of one year, 6,375 women came to the hospital to deliver their baby. While we still do not have not enough incubators, we have managed to save lives, provide shelter to newborns, and help conduct 4,300 ultrasounds for early illness arrests, all thanks to the equipment donated by our grant.

Women receiving prenatal care.
Photo credit: Rotary project team.

For newborns who are not delivered in hospitals, conditions can be hazardous.
Photo credit: Rotary project team.

To think about a global grant, you don't need to be the oldest Rotarian of the club. You don't need to be an expert in projects. You don't have to be the President of your club or the Chair of a committee. Looking around us, observing the needs and letting our hearts speak, we are blessed to belong to Rotary International. We have everything in our own hands. When our international friends review our reports and achievements, they want to participate!

Last August, we delivered another global grant (US$ 125,000), to improve care for pediatric patients and newborns. As incubators were arriving at the hospital, my phone rang: the nurses asked if they could take the Incubator to the newborn floor because they needed it, or whether they should wait for the official opening of the project with the Rotarians. The answer was obvious! We donated an incubator for surgeries for newborns with special equipment for critical moments. The hospital never had had equipment like this, and it is being used all the time!

Newborn benefitting from an incubator.
Photo credit: Rotary project team.

It is amazing what Rotary can do through global grants. Right now, we are finalizing a new grant to prevent breast Cancer and provide better care to those who suffer from this disease. When our heart is touched, our mind starts to act differently. A wonderful synergy is created, and we no longer want to stop. It is said that when this kind of synergies fill the heart, the human being approaches happiness, and happiness is what we all want to achieve.

Let's plan global grants! Thank you so much.

IMPROVING LIVING CONDITIONS FOR VENEZUELAN REFUGEES IN BRAZIL

Celso Bergmaier [5]

During the 38th Conference of Rotary District 4740, I was invited to learn about Operation Welcome, an initiative from Brazil's federal government to coordinate emergency assistance for vulnerable Venezuelan refugees, including in the State of Roraima which borders Venezuela.

Upon arriving on premises in Boa Vista, I was received by Interior Commander Colonel Carvalhães. He explained how the operation works, its objectives, and difficulties. The reason for my visit was to understand how to support Rotary clubs in our district in their projects with refugees, including in support to find jobs.

The visit started at Abrigo Rondon III, a settlement with a capacity of close to 1,500 people. We also visited some tents such as Espaço Rodoviária I, II and III, which are spaces for people to bathe, eat, and sleep. The place really caught my attention. A large number of people arrived looking for basic amenities. Yet many more people were arriving than could be welcomed. At the time, surveys indicated that 3,000 immigrants slept on the streets, under trees, squares, or vacant lots.

The next destination was the city of Pacaraima on the border with Venezuela, some 200 kilometers away from the capital Boa Vista. This is the main gateway for refugees coming to Brazil. The conditions are dire. Children have been left to the care of others by parents who were not able to care for them. Pregnant women have delivered babies in the streets. People are desperate for a glass of water and a piece of bread, or any food to satisfy their hunger after the long and dark journey they faced to finally set foot on Brazilian soil.

All I saw were people running around trying to help, doing the best that was within their reach in the middle of the Amazon jungle, a region of difficult access, with few resources and in a city that I would never have imagined would receive so many refugees seeking a safe haven, a place to start their life again. It is common to find among refugees highly trained professionals, including lawyers, doctors, teachers, judges, military personnel - in short, from all professions and backgrounds, looking for a fresh start.

Photo: Celso Bergmaier with military personnel.

What could a Rotarian's reaction be when arriving at a shelter and seeing the desperation of mothers asking for help, of parents emotionally shaken without being able to react, of children hanging in their pants?

Sun, rain, heat, and a piece of cardboard for comfort – this is the reality of those affected by this crisis, including children without shoes, few clothes, and no access to education. Refugees vie for spaces on roofs or near stores to spend the night, knowing that the next day they would need to leave the place so that the stores or other businesses could open their doors. The rain, frequent at that time of year, made it very difficult for people to find adequate spaces.

As I visited a temporary shelter, a girl about 5 years old gave us sweets. She gave one to the Operation Commander and one to me. At the time I was happy, I gave the girl a hug and took a

[5] This article was translated and adapted for this report by Quentin Wodon from the original article in Portuguese.

picture, but then the Commander said: “This was her last candy, she gave it to you.” Refugees want to thank the reception they receive here. This explains the fact that many rooms of Operation Acolhida have walls lined with drawings made by children, with thanks to Brazil and the people who work there. Of course, hearing these stories, I was very moved.

A young girl gave us sweets. She gave one to the Operation Commander and one to me. At the time I was happy, I gave the girl a hug and took a picture, but then the Commander said: “This was her last candy, she gave it to you.”.

Photo: Drawings from children as expression of thanks for Operation Acolhida.

Many refugees traveled on foot from Pacaraima to Boa Vista, as they did not want to wait for means of free transport or were unable to pay for travel. The 200 kilometers between the two cities must seem endless, but the refugees are not discouraged and firmly face the road.

Providing Support

When participating in an interagency meeting, I heard from a representative that there was a lack of bleach to clean areas frequented by refugees. In a phone call with Teresinha Lando, the 2018-19 Governor of Rotary District 4740, and Darci Luiz Campo, the previous Governor, I asked how we could help. The District contacted other Districts in Brazil requesting support for the purchase of a sodium hypochlorite manufacturing machine, a machine that can produce bleach. The mobilization paid off as funds were raised to purchase the equipment, which is now operational.

Civil society organizations have been asked to provide support in several areas, including helping refugees find jobs, providing donations as well as legal advice, and providing training and qualifications. Rotary clubs in the district have come together around this cause. Clubs have contacted firms that could be hiring refugees, and explained how the process of integration works. Currently, clubs sent their demands to me or directly to Operation Welcome. When refugees arrive in their city, Rotary clubs help within their means with donations of household items, clothing, collections, and food. They also help refugees search for a place to live. During the eight days of my visit with Operation Welcome, I had an unparalleled, unique experience. It really helped me think about our role as Rotarians and the contributions we can offer humanity.

Flying with Dreams

The first interior flight to Chapecó-Santa Catarina, the city where I live, happened on May 28, 2019, carried out with a Brazilian Air Force plane in which I was one of the crew. In total, 180 refugees traveled with us. They already had their jobs guaranteed in slaughterhouses in the region. Before boarding, anxiety took hold of all refugees, so much so that the departure was postponed for three hours. For some refugees it must have seemed like three days, given their eagerness to go on with their life, to have a fresh start in a new city.

The flight took about nine hours during which the refugees looked from above, seeing the beautiful fields and plantations of Brazil. Some must have whispered” *"So much opportunity, here we will have work!"* It was no wonder that during the whole stretch of the trip I was unable to contain my emotion, because on that plane

there were not only people, there were dreams, human beings willing to start a new journey, to establish themselves so that in the future they could bring their family close to them again.

On that plane there were not only people, there were dreams, human beings willing to start a new journey, to establish themselves so that in the future they could bring their family close to them again.

Photo: Flying with dreams.

My fellow Rotary members tell me that I was the first to get off the plane. I don't remember this detail. The only memory I have is that I needed a lot of help to get myself together and I remained hugging my companions for a long time in order to complete my task. A Rotary club had prepared a dinner for newly arrived refugees. There were press agencies everywhere. What I saw most were the refugees praying in front of that table full of food, thanking the Rotarians for being able to eat. These are scenes I will never forget.

The mission did not end here, several clubs have helped refugees finding a home. This is what I heard from refugees when I met them, in addition to receiving numerous hugs and thanks. Initially, all refugees were housed in the same space, with security and guaranteed minimum living conditions. They prepared their meals with products supplied by the company for which they worked. One day, as I visiting their place, they offered me a piece of bread. I accepted it and the owner of the place told me that many of the refugees could not eat their meals, because when they saw that "abundance", they remembered the family members who were left behind who had nothing to eat.

Providing Training

The Rotary E-Club District 4740, of which I am a member, also carried out a project to offer Portuguese classes to the refugees, as the inability to communication was one of the difficulties that these people encountered. Many refugees arrived on other flights, went to other cities and settled, and the vast majority managed to overcome their difficulties and are living well in our region.

In August 2019, we received a delegation from the International Organization for Migration and the Brazilian Army, which visited firms, unions, and industry associations, in order to seek job openings for refugees. This helped for the integration of many more refugees.

Overall, being engaged in these projects and actions was certainly a remarkable experience for me, something that I never imagined I would experience one day, something that made me think a lot, took me out of my comfort zone and helped me feel empathy. In the midst of those people, I felt like I was one of them, I felt part of it all.

Photo: Celso Bergmaier with refugees.

HELPING REFUGEES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS:
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE UNHCR 2020 REPORT

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees[6]

In June 2020, UNHCR published its report Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019. To provide context for subsequent articles on helping refugees from other countries, this article reproduces part of the first chapter of the report, and its section on finding solutions. To keep the article short, Figures, footnotes, and boxes have been deleted. The full report as well as further information on global displacement are available on UNHCR's statistics website.

UNHCR GLOBAL TRENDS: FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN 2019

GLOBAL FORCED DISPLACEMENT

At least 100 million people were forced to flee their homes during the last 10 years, seeking refuge either within or outside the borders of their country. Forced displacement and statelessness remained high on the international agenda in recent years and continued to generate dramatic headlines in every part of the world. As we approach two important anniversary years in 2021, the 70th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 60th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, it is clear these legal instruments have never been more relevant.

Several major crises contributed to the massive displacement over the past decade, and the numbers include people who were displaced multiple times. These crises included but are not limited to the ones listed here:

- the outbreak of the Syrian conflict early in the decade, which continues today;
- South Sudan's displacement crisis, which followed its independence;
- the conflict in Ukraine;
- the arrival of refugees and migrants in Europe by sea;
- the massive flow of stateless refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh;
- the outflow of Venezuelans across Latin America and the Caribbean;
- the crisis in Africa's Sahel region, where conflict and climate change are endangering many communities;
- renewed conflict and security concerns in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Somalia;
- conflict in the Central African Republic;
- internal displacement in Ethiopia;
- renewed outbreaks of fighting and violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- the large humanitarian and displacement crisis in Yemen.

Tens of millions of people were able to return to their places of residence or find other solutions, such as voluntary repatriation or resettlement to third countries, but many more were not and joined the numbers of displaced from previous decades. By the end of 2019, the number of people forcibly displaced due to war, conflict, persecution, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order had grown to 79.5 million, the highest number on record according to available data.

The number of displaced people was nearly double the 2010 number of 41 million and an increase from the 2018 number of 70.8 million.

[6] This article is adapted from the latest UNHCR reported on global displacement with permission from UNHCR.

The number of displaced people was nearly double the 2010 number of 41 million and an increase from the 2018 number of 70.8 million. The most recent annual increase is due to both new displacement and the inclusion in this year's report of 3.6 million Venezuelans displaced abroad who face protection risks, irrespective of their status – a category that was not included in the broader global forced displacement total in previous versions of the Global Trends report.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burkina Faso, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Venezuela) and Yemen represent just a few of the many hotspots in 2019 driving people to seek refuge and safety within their country or flee abroad to seek protection.

The proportion of the world's population who were displaced continued to rise. One per cent of the world's population – or 1 in 97 people – is now forcibly displaced. This compares with 1:159 in 2010 and 1:174 in 2005 as the increase in the world's forcibly displaced population continued to outpace global population growth.

During 2019, an estimated 11.0 million people were newly displaced. While 2.4 million sought protection outside their country, 8.6 million were newly displaced within the borders of their countries. Many displaced populations failed to find long-lasting solutions for rebuilding their lives. Only 317,200 refugees were able to return to their country of origin, and only 107,800 were resettled to third countries. Some 5.3 million internally displaced people returned to their place of residence during the year, including 2.1 million in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 1.3 million in Ethiopia. In many cases, however, refugees and IDPs returned under adverse circumstances in which the sustainability of returns could not be assured.

At the end of 2019, Syrians continued to be by far the largest forcibly displaced population worldwide (13.2 million, including 6.6 million refugees and more than six million internally displaced people). When considering only international displacement situations, Syrians also topped the list with 6.7 million persons, followed by Venezuelans with 4.5 million. Afghanistan and South Sudan had 3.0 and 2.2 million, respectively.

Turkey hosted the highest number of people displaced across borders, 3.9 million, most of whom were Syrian refugees (92%). Colombia followed, hosting nearly 1.8 million displaced Venezuelans. Germany hosted the third largest number, almost 1.5 million, with Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers constituting the largest groups (42%). Pakistan and Uganda hosted the 4th and 5th largest number, with about 1.4 million each.

During crises and displacement, children, adolescents and youth are at risk of exploitation and abuse, especially when they are unaccompanied or separated from their families (these children are referred to as UASC). In 2019, UASC lodged around 25,000 new asylum applications. In addition, 153,300 unaccompanied and separated children were reported among the refugee population at the end of 2019. Both figures, however, are significant underestimates due to the limited number of countries reporting data.

FINDING SOLUTIONS

Finding durable solutions that enable displaced people to rebuild their lives and live in safety and dignity is at the core of UNHCR's work. Planning for solutions from the outset of displacement is one of the primary objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

Solutions include voluntary repatriation, resettlement to a third country and local integration. However, a growing number of people remain in precarious protection situations with little hope of a durable solution.

This chapter focuses primarily on durable solutions for refugees. Traditionally, durable solutions include voluntary repatriation, resettlement to a third country and local integration. However, a growing number of people of concern to UNHCR remain in precarious protection situations with little hope of a durable solution.

Over the last decade, the world recognized that governments, humanitarian actors and development partners must come together with refugees to find durable solutions for those in need. This recognition for comprehensive and situation-specific solutions is at the heart of the GCR and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The GCR seeks to strengthen solutions in two main ways:

1. to expand access to resettlement and other complementary pathways in third countries;
2. to foster conditions that enable refugees to return voluntarily to their home countries.

Despite these initiatives, solutions for refugees are in decline. Resettlement benefits only a fraction of the world's refugees. In 2019, only half a per cent of the world's refugees were resettled. Over the past 10 years, just over one million refugees were resettled, compared to 3.9 million refugees who returned to their country. Thus, for every refugee resettled since 2010, approximately 4 have repatriated. This is in stark contrast to one for every 12 during the prior decade when almost 10 million refugees repatriated and 810,400 refugees were resettled – a strong sign that as conflicts rage on without end, voluntary repatriation as a solution for refugees is diminishing over time.

Returns

Returning home in safety and dignity remains the preferred solution for the majority of the world's refugees. Over the last decade, some 3.9 million refugees returned to their country of origin. Voluntary return was at its lowest in 2014, when only 126,800 people were able to go home.

The peak came in 2018, when 593,800 were able to return. Nearly one quarter of returnees during the decade (875,800 or 23 per cent) were Afghan. Afghanistan today has a population of about 38 million people and about one fifth are former refugees who have returned home in the last two decades. Nevertheless, only 8,400 Afghans returned in 2019, one of the lowest levels recorded in many years. Almost three-quarters of all refugee returns during the last decade were to one of ten countries. In 2019, 317,200 refugees returned to 34 countries, most commonly to South Sudan (99,800 or 31%), Syria (95,000 or 30%) and the Central African Republic (46,500 or 15%).

Close to 383,100 Syrians returned to their country between 2017 and 2019. UNHCR does not promote refugee returns to Syria. Returns have been spontaneous or organized by host countries or other humanitarian actors assisting returnees through ongoing programmes. Since 2017, UNHCR has conducted five return perception and intention surveys among Syrians, the latest of which was published in March 2019. Conducted in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, the survey canvassed more than 13,000 Syrian refugees, out of a total of 1.9 million.

From late 2017 to early 2019, the estimated percentage of Syrian refugees hoping to return increased from 51 to 75 per cent. Nevertheless, only 6 per cent of those surveyed intended to return during the following 12 months. Of the remainder, only 1 in 5 intended to move to a third country, highlighting that return remains the preferred solution for the vast majority of Syrians surveyed. Some 47,800 Syrians from these four countries (3 per cent of the refugees hosted) have been resettled to a third country with UNHCR's assistance during the same period.

Resettlement

Resettlement is a critical tool for the protection of the most vulnerable refugees. It is also a tangible mechanism for responsibility-sharing and a demonstration of solidarity, allowing States to help share each other's burdens and reduce the impact of large refugee populations on host countries.

Over the last decade, over one million refugees were resettled by States with or without UNHCR's assistance. During this period, the number of States providing resettlement places increased from 24 in 2010 to a high of 35 in 2016 and 2017, only to drop again to 29 in both 2018 and 2019.

Over the last decade, the number of refugees in need of resettlement has increased dramatically. UNHCR estimates than more than 1.4 million refugees need to be resettled, an 80 per cent increase since 2011. At the end of this tumultuous decade, there was only one resettlement spot available for every 20 vulnerable refugees in need. While the number of refugees increased over time, the number of resettlement places offered by States remained well below 100,000 between 2011 and 2013. It increased gradually to a peak of 163,000 UNHCR resettlement submissions in 2016 to drop to almost half of that at about 81,000 in both 2018 and 2019.

Resettlement is used to assist refugees in countries that cannot provide them with appropriate protection and support. Of all cases submitted by UNHCR in 2019, 76 per cent were for survivors of torture and/or violence, people with legal and physical protection needs, and particularly vulnerable women and girls. Just over half (52%) of all resettlement submissions concerned children.

According to official government statistics provided to UNHCR over the last ten years, 55 per cent of all resettled refugees were welcomed in the United States of America (575,600), 20 per cent to Canada (210,600) and 11 per cent to Australia (114,500). European countries have increased the number of resettlement places made available to refugees from an average of about 6,000 per year during the initial part of the decade to more than 30,000 in 2019. Overall, more than 144,000 refugees were admitted by European countries between 2010 and 2019.

In 2019, 107,800 refugees were resettled to 26 countries with or without UNHCR's assistance, including 31,100 to Canada. The United States of America admitted 27,500 and Australia 18,200. Resettlement is primarily facilitated by UNHCR in most countries around the world. However, in Canada, almost 3 in 5 (58%) resettlement arrivals during the decade were conducted through private sponsorship resettlement schemes. A similar community-led approach commenced in Ireland in 2019.

Studies over the last decade proved that resettled refugees contribute significantly to the economic and social fabric of communities.

Predictable, efficient and effective resettlement schemes do benefit host States. Several studies published over the last decade proved that resettled refugees contribute significantly to the economic and social fabric of communities. Research commissioned in 2019 by UNHCR in Canada shows that refugees are creating jobs for themselves and other Canadians, with almost 1 in 7 refugees self-employed or business owners.

Refugees are on average just over 11 years younger than those born in Canada, which means they are more likely to be of working-age, with many years to contribute. Notably, the research proved that 20 years after being resettled to Canada, refugees were contributing more in income tax than they received in public benefits and services.

Local integration

Millions of refugees around the world live with little hope of ever returning home. When resettlement or repatriation are not options, building a new life in the country of asylum offers a durable solution to their plight.

Local integration of refugees can include the provision of legal status and naturalization. It is a dynamic and two-way process. Refugees must be prepared to adapt to their new country, while host communities and public institutions who welcome refugees must strive to meet the needs as well as local communities and civil society, should proactively foster social cohesion and ensure refugees can access the job market.

Globally, the integration of refugees in the countries' labour markets remains challenging.

Globally, the integration of refugees in the countries' labour markets remains challenging. For example, in Uganda, a 2018 survey by the World Bank estimated that 4 in 5 refugees were unemployed and refugees earn wages that are 35 to 45 per cent lower than the host population. Refugees have a lower employment rate than compared to the native-born population and other migrants, making refugees one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market.

Data from a 2014 European Labour Force Survey shows that approximately 50 per cent of refugees in Europe had jobs. More recent data for Germany show that while only some 40 per cent of the working-age refugee population were employed by the third quarter of 2019, the integration of refugees in the labour market is progressing faster than expected compared to previous arrivals of refugees,66 according to the Institute for Labour Market and Occupational Research (IAB).

The International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics make several recommendations on appropriate indicators for measuring and quantifying local integration in a way that is comparable and consistent across different contexts. However, throughout the decade, the availability of data about refugees has remained very poor. Naturalization – the legal act or process by which a non-citizen in a country may acquire citizenship or nationality of that country – is therefore used as a proxy measure of local integration. However, even this proxy is limited by the uneven availability of data and poor coverage as well as policy and legal changes over time. In particular, it can be difficult to distinguish between the naturalization of refugees and non-refugees.

Therefore, the data are only indicative at best and provide an underestimate of the extent to which refugees are naturalized. In view of the current challenges with the availability of relevant statistics on naturalization, UNHCR continues to explore opportunities with governments to address these gaps.

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Visual: UNHCR Report.

A ROTARACT CLUB IN A REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN UGANDA

Jonathan W. Rosen [7]

It's Monday morning in one of Uganda's largest refugee settlements, Nakivale, and the line at Paul Mushaho's shop is out the door. Mushaho has lived in Nakivale since 2016, when he fled violence in his native Democratic Republic of Congo. After receiving death threats, he crossed into Uganda and joined a friend in the 184-square-kilometer settlement that serves as home to 89,000 people.

The soft-spoken 26-year-old, who has a university degree in information technology, runs a money transfer service out of a wooden storefront that doubles as his home. Business is booming because he offers his clients – other refugees from Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, and South Sudan – the ability to receive money via mobile phone from family and friends outside Uganda.

He also exchanges currency, and his shop is so popular that he often runs out of cash. On this day, he's waiting for a friend to return with more money from the nearest bank, two hours away in the town of Mbarara.

Sitting behind a wooden desk, armed with his transactions ledger and seven cell phones, Mushaho grows anxious. He's not worried about missing out on commission – he's worried about leaving his clients without any money. "I don't like making my customers wait," he says, looking out onto the lively street of tin-roofed stores, women selling tomatoes and charcoal, a butcher shop displaying a leg of beef, and young men loitering on motorcycles. "There's nobody else around who they can go to."

Paul Mushaho formed a Rotaract club in Nakivale. Photos by Emmanuel Museruka

The Rotaract Club of Nakivale may be the first Rotaract club based inside a refugee settlement or camp. Its founding … is a tale of young people who've refused to let conflict stifle their dreams.

As a young entrepreneur who is intent on improving the lives of others in his community, Mushaho is in many ways the quintessential member of Rotaract, the Rotary-sponsored organization for leaders ages 18 to 30.

Yet his story and that of his club are far from ordinary. Established in late 2016, and officially inaugurated last July, the Rotaract Club of Nakivale may be the first Rotaract club based inside a refugee settlement or camp. Its founding, and the role it has played in the lives of its members and their fellow Nakivale residents, is a tale of young people who've refused to let conflict stifle their dreams; of a country that sees the humanity in all the refugees who cross its borders; and of a spirit of service that endures, even among those who've experienced unspeakable tragedy.

[7] This article is reprinted with minor edits from a web story at rotary.org. The title of the story has been changed.

A Place Where Refugees Are Welcome

Refugees fleeing war, genocide, and persecution find safety in Nakivale. New arrivals to Uganda are allocated a plot of land, are allowed to work and run businesses, and can move freely around the country.

If Nakivale doesn't sound like a typical refugee camp, that's because it isn't one. Covering 184 square kilometers and three distinct market centers, Nakivale feels like anywhere else in rural southwestern Uganda, an undulating land of banana trees, termite mounds, and herds of longhorn cattle.

Nakivale blends in with its surroundings in part because it's been here since the 1950s, when it was established to accommodate an influx of refugees from Rwanda during a flare-up of pre-independence violence there.

Over the years, its population has ebbed and flowed as it accommodated those seeking refuge from a variety of regional conflicts, including civil war in South Sudan, violent state collapse in Somalia, and rebellions and armed militias that continue to terrorize eastern Congo, the area that accounts for the majority of Nakivale's current residents.

"Uganda has realized that the sooner a country looks at refugees not as a burden but as an opportunity, it changes a lot of things," says Bernad Ojwang, Uganda country director for the American Refugee Committee.

Many have been here for a year or two, others for decades, but most consider Nakivale home. Unlike other governments in the region, Ugandan authorities grant new arrivals plots of land for farming, as well as materials to erect a basic house, so they can move toward self-reliance. Refugees also have access to free primary education for their children and permission to work so they can contribute to the economy.

Uganda hosts more than 1.5 million refugees within its borders and allows all registered refugees to move about at will. If they can do business in cities or towns, the logic goes, there's no reason they should be trapped elsewhere.

"They're going about their lives just like you and me," says Bernad Ojwang, Uganda country director for the American Refugee Committee (ARC), which works closely with the Rotaract club in Nakivale.

Although an abundance of arable land allows for the nation's liberal refugee policy, he explains, the system also reflects a high-level belief that refugees can be assets rather than liabilities. "Uganda has realized that the sooner a country looks at refugees not as a burden but as an opportunity, it changes a lot of things," he says.

A Change Maker's Idea

This mindset — of refugees as catalysts for change — ultimately led to the Rotaract club's founding. Mushaho learned about Rotaract after entering a competition in 2016 organized by the American Refugee Committee for the young people of Nakivale. The competition, co-sponsored by Uganda's office of the prime minister, challenged young residents in the settlement to propose business plans or innovations that could improve lives.

Out of nearly 850 entries, Mushaho's proposal – a beekeeping business that would sell honey – was among 13 winners. They each would receive a small amount of seed money and present their ideas to a wider audience in Kampala, the nation's capital.

More than 60 Rotarians attended the Kampala event in October 2016, including Angela Eifert, a member of the Rotary Club of Roseville, Minnesota, USA, and an ARC engagement officer, and then Rotary president-elect Sam F. Owori.

Refugees fleeing war, genocide, and persecution find safety in Nakivale. New arrivals to Uganda are allocated a plot of land, are allowed to work and run businesses, and can move freely around the country.

Eifert, who first visited Nakivale in 2014, had previously proposed creating an Interact club for 12- to 18-year-olds to help engage its large population of young people. After the event, she mentioned her idea to Owori, who embraced it with one modification: He believed the 13 winners could become leaders in their community, so he proposed a Rotaract club.

"He told me, 'I was once a Rotaractor,'" Eifert says. "When he saw these young people on stage, he felt they were ideal Rotaractors. He loved their ideas. He saw they had talent and potential, and thought we should be getting behind them."

Leaders from the Rotary Club of Kiwatule in Kampala and Eifert's Minnesota club agreed to work together to get the club started and support its growth. The duo then approached Mushaho about serving as the new club's president. Of the 13 winners, he'd stood out to them. Humble and charismatic, he also spoke fluent English, had helped the other winners communicate their ideas, and appeared eager to assist the wider Nakivale community. Mushaho and another winner, Jean de Dieu Uwizeye, hosted the Nakivale Rotaract club's first official meeting in late 2016. "He was really into it," says Eifert, who began texting regularly with Mushaho. "He was learning everything he could about Rotary. I think it gave him a great deal of reward and purpose."

Bettering the Settlement

Rotaractors and Rotary members help new arrivals by giving out clothes, sugar, and soap. For all of Nakivale's advantages over more traditional refugee camps, daily life remains a struggle for many. Families are encouraged to farm the land they're given, but many rely for

months, or even years, on UN food assistance. Rations have decreased recently because of a shortage of global funding.

Barious Babu, a 27-year-old Rotaractor from eastern Congo helps young people navigate the daily struggles of refugee life and provides entertainment and dancing with performances by his All Refugees Can Band.

Children in the settlement have access to free primary education, but few families can afford the fees for secondary school – a situation that contributes to high levels of youth idleness, early marriage, alcohol abuse, and domestic and gender-based violence. Even simple boredom, particularly among a population that's lived through conflict, can be crippling. Mushaho says he often sees young people loitering around his shop. "They sit for hours, just thinking, and many of them are traumatized. Others just sleep from morning until night."

The Rotaract club's first project, launched in 2017, was designed to help Nakivale's new arrivals, many of whom had endured harrowing journeys to escape violence. About 30 new families arrive every day. They sleep in rows of tents, which are periodically overrun with bedbugs and cockroaches. After hearing reports of an infestation, the Rotaractors pooled their modest savings and, with assistance from ARC, purchased chemicals and sprayers to fumigate the area. Additional projects quickly followed.

Nakivale Rotaractors fund most of their projects with their own money. Martin Rubondo, left, and Jean Lwaboshi spend their mornings making bricks, which they sell to raise money to fund music lessons for refugees. Jean and Patrick Sabag, below, practice.

Over the past year, club members have visited the elderly, orphans, and people living with albinism, who face cultural stigmas in the region. Often the Rotaractors bring highly coveted items, such as sugar and soap.

To promote girls' empowerment, the club also has co-sponsored a jump-rope contest for girls that featured cash prizes. To promote interaction among refugees of different nationalities, they organized a soccer tournament with eight teams from across the settlement. The Roseville club provided support to both projects, donating soccer balls and hygiene products for the Rotaractors to distribute.

Much of the Nakivale club's community outreach, however, is self-funded. Members have earned money by raising and selling chickens, and even participated in a 5K race, held in conjunction with World Refugee Day in June 2017, which brought in online donations.

To promote girls' empowerment, the club also has co-sponsored a jump-rope contest for girls that featured cash prizes.

"We don't want to have to call someone every time, asking for support," says Uwizeye, a computer scientist who fled his native Burundi in 2015 to avoid being forced into a youth militia. "It's better to show someone I've raised some money on my own – and then maybe ask them, 'Can you top up?'"

Several Rotaract members have been mentoring other young people in the camp. Alex Ishingwa trains fellow refugees in masonry and helps them bid for local contracts. Byamana Bahati, a dressmaker, trains apprentices at her shop, a short walk from Mushaho's.

One club member, Jean Lwaboshi, a musician with several love ballads posted on YouTube, spends his mornings making bricks with fellow Rotaractor Martin Rubondo. From their earnings, the two have bought guitars and now give performances and lessons to other young people. "It's a rewarding feeling to support others through music," Lwaboshi says.

Rotaractors and Rotary members help new arrivals by giving out clothes, sugar, and soap.

Mushaho keeps an eye out for refugees who could benefit from the club's assistance. Recently, when one of his customers approached him about starting a farming project, he helped the woman and a group of friends find a plot of land and connected them to ARC, which provided seeds, fertilizers, and watering cans. "We appreciate so much that others are thinking of us," says Ange Tutu, one of the project's beneficiaries, while tending to her new rows of tomato plants.

Forging a Rotary Family

Members of the Rotaract Club of Nakivale have become like family. In addition to its own projects, the Nakivale club has galvanized Uganda's Rotarians to help refugees.

The Rotary clubs of Kiwatule and Mbarara, the closest large town to the settlement, advise and assist with projects. The Kiwatule club has sponsored individual Rotaractors to attend training events and other leadership activities across Uganda. Members of both clubs have donated clothes and other necessities that the Rotaractors deliver to Nakivale residents.

Rotary clubs in Uganda are planning to do more, says a member of the Kiwatule club. In October, local Rotary leaders signed a memorandum of understanding with the office of the prime minister to help refugees in other settlements and possibly form additional Rotaract clubs.

Several of Uganda's Rotary clubs are planning to improve refugees' access to water, sanitation, hygiene, and basic education. Rotaractors support their own projects by raising chickens to fund projects. Byamana Bahati, a dressmaker, trains apprentices at her shop.

For Xavier Sentamu, the desire to help refugees comes in part from his own experience with conflict. Aside from pockets of the north, most of Uganda has been at peace for the last three

decades. Yet the country experienced multiple violent upheavals during the 1970s and 1980s. As a child, Sentamu spent several nights hiding in the bush during the guerrilla war that ultimately brought the current president, Yoweri Museveni, to power.

"All these people are like family," Mushaho says. "The people in the club become replacements for those people they have lost."

"I have a bit of a feeling for what they've gone through," says the Kiwatule club member. "Though when you have a person who's outside their country, who has no idea if or when they'll go back home, it's much tougher. The fact that they have gone through that hardship and are willing to offer a little bit of their resources to make others more comfortable is so encouraging."

After an initial surge in the Nakivale club's membership, which peaked at more than 40 people, the number of active members has fallen to roughly 20 over the last year. Uwizeye attributes the drop to a misunderstanding: Some thought the Rotaract club was a job opportunity rather than a service group.

The departure of less dedicated members, however, has left the core group of Rotaractors more unified. Many lost relatives to violence or had to leave family behind, and the relationships they have formed in the club are helping them cope. "All these people are like family," Mushaho says. "The people in the club become replacements for those people they have lost."

Members of the Rotaract Club of Nakivale have become like family.

WELCOMING SYRIAN REFUGEES IN NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

Ryan Hyland [8]

This explosion was close – much closer than the others that had rattled the village on the outskirts of Homs, Syria, where Sultanah Alchehade lived with her four young children. This one hit the school next door, blasting out one of the walls of their house.

Alchehade grabbed the children and ran into the night and the choking smoke and dust. A neighbor helped her carry her three-year-old twin boys, Mounzer and Kaiss; another drove the pickup truck they all clambered into. Over the next several days, as bombs continued to fall, the family – including daughters Kawthar, age six, and Roukia, a baby – took refuge in a nearby forest, sleeping under the trees as Sultanah tried to figure out their next move.

In neighboring Lebanon, Sultanah's husband, Mazen, frantically tried to contact his wife. For years, Mazen had shuttled back and forth across the border every few weeks to do construction work on high-rise buildings in Beirut. While the jobs provided an income for his family, he says, the separation was hard. But their situation had just gotten much harder.

With the Syrian civil war now engulfing his village, Mazen couldn't return. And it would be four months before his wife and children could cross into Lebanon. Eventually, the family was reunited. They were alive. But they were refugees, seeking asylum in any country that would take them, hoping to get far away from the violence that had driven them, along with millions of other Syrians, into foreign lands.
The Alchehade family registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the agency responsible for resettling Syrian refugees, and waited. They were still in Lebanon nearly three years later.

The Alchehade family registered with UNHCR, the agency responsible for resettling Syrian refugees, and waited. They were still in Lebanon nearly three years later.

Meanwhile, 8,000 kilometers away, Rotarians in the small town of Amherst, Nova Scotia, were watching images of Syrian refugees on television and looking for ways to help. The Alchehade children love singing the alphabet song, which they quickly learned from English tutors.

A New Culture

In September 2015, members of the Rotary Club of Amherst were thinking about their next international project. Over the years, the group has helped build and equip a school in South Africa, provided educational materials to students in the Bahamas, and raised funds for disaster-stricken areas around the world, but their thoughts turned to Syria as the plight of refugees dominated the news.

"We as Rotarians couldn't ignore what we were watching each and every day," says Ron Wilson, a semiretired civil engineer. "Families dying while making their journey to Europe or other places. Families desperately trying to flee war and, sadly, their homes. The heart-wrenching images were the impetus for our club to do something."

[8] This article is reprinted with minor edits from a web story at rotary.org. The title of the story has been changed.

The Alchehade children love singing the alphabet song, which they quickly learned from English tutors.

Ann Sharpe had joined Rotary specifically to get involved with projects to help refugees. In May 2014, she had attended the wedding of some friends in Turkey, which has taken in nearly 3 million Syrian refugees since 2011, more than any other country. While in Istanbul, Sharpe saw refugee children on the streets begging for food or money.

“I felt so guilty because I couldn’t do anything. It really touched me in a way that I never felt before,” Sharpe says. “We are fortunate that we don’t see those types of things in Canada. For me, Rotary was the best way to do something about this.”

In November 2015, Canada’s newly elected Liberal government began welcoming Syrian refugees in larger numbers. The country pledged to grant asylum to 25,000 refugees by the end of February 2016. By February 2017, the total had surpassed 40,000.

Bill Casey, a Liberal member of Parliament for Cumberland-Colchester district and an Amherst resident, endorses the move. The country’s willingness to accept refugees, he says, will lead to a multicultural renaissance in communities and neighborhoods across Nova Scotia.

“We’re excited to have exposure to a new culture because there hasn’t been much immigration here in Nova Scotia for the last 100 years,” Casey says. “When Syrians come to Canada, many start a business. I think opening our doors to refugees will be something we can be proud of and learn from.”

At Sharpe’s first Rotary club meeting, members started to put together a plan to bring a Syrian family to Amherst. Her enthusiasm about the initiative led the international committee to make her a co-chair of the refugee project that night.

The club began by gauging the community's interest in the project. They learned that two local churches, First Baptist and Holy Family, were also looking for ways to support refugees.

There was a logistical benefit to working with the churches: Both are sponsorship agreement holders, meaning they signed an agreement with the government to bring refugee families into the country – something that would take the Amherst club two years to obtain. In return, the club handled administrative tasks, communicated with the Canadian government, and led fundraising efforts. It also donated $5,000 in seed money to get the project off the ground.

"Because of the organization that Rotary offered, it was a no-brainer for us to partner with them," says Frank Allen, a member of the Holy Family congregation and of the project's steering committee. "This took such a weight off us; we were able to concentrate on other parts of the project. It was a gift."

Sharpe says the club members did their due diligence but didn't overthink things. "Just take a leap of faith and do it," she advises clubs considering a similar project. "If we had thought it through too hard, we might have convinced ourselves not to move forward. But we all knew we were doing this for the right reasons."

The Canadian government administers the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program, which matches refugees identified by the UNHCR with private sponsors. The program provides up to six months of financial support, while private sponsors provide another six months' worth of funding as well as up to a year of social support, including translation services, language training, and employment counseling.

Within a few months, the partnership between the Rotary club and the two churches raised enough funds to sponsor one family – a minimum of $27,000 per family is needed, the government estimates – and they filed the paperwork to be matched with a family. The group raised more than $72,000.

The Alchehade family registered with UNHCR, the agency responsible for resettling Syrian refugees, and waited. They were still in Lebanon nearly three years later.

The Canadian government and the UNHCR conduct an intense vetting process for refugees being considered for potential resettlement in the country. It includes biometric and fingerprint checks, health assessments, document verification, and several in-person interviews.

But successfully integrating a refugee family into a community takes more than paperwork and tests; it hinges on the community's acceptance. The Amherst group held a public meeting in November 2015 at a local school to inform residents about the project, answer questions, and gauge opinions.

"There was zero resistance," says Sharpe. "We didn't know what to expect. There were many people in the country wondering if there was a security issue with bringing in refugees from Syria. I can honestly say I can't believe how much the community embraced the project. They came out with donations, in-kind support, furniture, and anything we asked of them."

With the Amherst community firmly behind them, the club welcomed its first Syrian family, the Latifs, in January 2016. The success motivated the group to work on bringing over a second family.

In August of that year, the Alchehade family boarded a plane for Canada to become group's second family. Their long journey to a new home had ended. Their journey into a new life was just beginning.

Rebuilding a Life

Amherst is a sleepy Canadian town of about 9,000 that lies on the eastern boundary of the picturesque Tantramar Marshes, one of the largest salt marshes on the Atlantic coast. The streets surrounding its five-block-long main thoroughfare are lined with ornate Victorian homes. The nearest fast-food and grocery chains are two miles away.

Rotary member Ann Sharpe helps Kawthar navigate the ice rink during the family's first experience with ice skating, a national pastime of Canada.

While many Syrian refugees prefer to settle in Toronto or Montreal where there are more resources and jobs, the Alchehades wanted a smaller community, like the one where they had lived in Syria. There, they had land where they grew almonds and olives, and raised cows, goats, and sheep.

Rotary member Ann Sharpe helps Kawthar navigate the ice rink during the family's first experience with ice skating, a national pastime of Canada.

The family arrived in Amherst with what they could carry. Most of the furnishings in their new home, a two-bedroom apartment in a modest house on a street that dead-ends at the marshes, are donated.

The four children are energetic and open with one another and the Rotary members who visit. They love playing in the snow and singing the alphabet song, which they quickly learned from English tutors who regularly visit their home. They sing it while watching TV, while playing outside, when guests come over.

Many refugees prefer to settle in Toronto or Montreal where there are more resources and jobs, but the Alchehades wanted a smaller community, like the one where they had lived in.

The Rotary club helped connect Mazen with a job at Fundy Landscaping, which does stonework and builds retaining walls and decks. There, he is using the skills he learned doing construction in Lebanon.

"He does great work," says business owner Peter Michels. "I don't need to tell him anything twice. Everything we ask him to do, he runs with it. His skills and work ethic are very impressive." Michels, whose parents immigrated to Canada after World War II, says he sees a little of himself in Mazen and his family.

Each week, Sultanah and her three youngest children visit Maggie's Place, a family resource center in town that provides social and educational programs to parents and their kids. There, the Alchehades get a chance to interact with other families in the area, a crucial step to their integration into the community.

"Everything you had is completely gone," he says. "Trying to start a new life in a place where you don't know if you're going to be accepted or if you're going to be rejected. I try to see things through his eyes. That's probably what my family went through – hoping that when they came to this country, there would be somebody to help them."

The town has rallied behind the refugee families, with teachers volunteering to tutor the kids and dentists offering free care. Mazen has earned his driver's license, and Sultanah has joined other mothers in the community for cooking classes, even leading a class on preparing Syrian dishes.

Each week, Sultanah and her three youngest children visit Maggie's Place, a family resource center in town that provides social and educational programs to parents and their kids. There, the Alchehades get a chance to interact with other families in the area, a crucial step to their integration into the community.

The kids are learning to ice skate, Canada's national pastime. These are small steps in the long process of integration that the club hopes will help them find their place in Canadian society. "We want them to be able to help improve this community and the country," says Wilson.

The Alchehades don't know if they will ever return to Syria. But right now, Canada is their home. This is where they want to see their children grow up. While Mazen still struggles with English, he has no trouble finding the words to describe his dream for his children: "I want them to be pioneers."

The Alchehade children enjoy playing in the snow.

PROVIDING HEALTHCARE FOR REFUGEES IN BERLIN

Rhea Wessel

As thousands of refugees streamed into Berlin, they strained the health care system. Rotarian and physician Pia Skarabis-Querfeld spent the last three years building a network of volunteer doctors to help those in need.

On the nightly news and around her city, Pia Skarabis-Querfeld saw the refugees arriving in Berlin after fleeing war, persecution, and poverty in their home countries. Wanting to help, she gathered a bag of clothes to donate and headed to a nearby gym filled with refugees.

What began as a single act of charity eventually evolved into an all-encompassing volunteer project: Over the next three years, Skarabis-Querfeld would build and run a network that, at peak times, would include more than 100 volunteers helping thousands of refugees at community centers, tent camps, and other shelters across the city. Today, her nonprofit, Medizin Hilft (Medicine Helps), continues to treat patients with nowhere else to turn.

That day she went to the gym was a few days before Christmas 2014. Skarabis-Querfeld had been busy with work and preparing for the holidays. She was looking forward to a much-needed break, and she thought clothes for the refugees would be a kind gesture befitting the spirit of the season.

When she arrived at the gymnasium to drop off her donation, Skarabis-Querfeld found sick children, most of them untreated because hospitals in the area were overrun. Helpers were not allowed to give out pain relievers or cough syrup due to legal constraints. All they could do was send people to the emergency room if they looked extremely ill.

Seeing this, and knowing about the treacherous journeys the refugees had just made across land and sea, Skarabis-Querfeld, who is a medical doctor and Rotarian, returned that same afternoon with medical supplies and her husband, Uwe Querfeld, who is a professor of pediatrics and a Rotarian. The couple spent most of that holiday treating patients in the gymnasium. “The suffering of the people, their bitter fate, it wouldn’t let go of me,” says Skarabis-Querfeld.

‘You Just Don’t Forget’

In 2015, the German ministry in charge of refugees received more than 1 million applications for asylum, straining the public health system.

Germany was a popular destination during the mass migration of people from Syria and other countries with conflict, in part because Chancellor Angela Merkel embraced them. Unlike some other European leaders, Merkel said it was Germany’s responsibility to help, and she called on citizens to welcome those escaping hardship elsewhere.

When she arrived at the gymnasium to drop off her donation, Skarabis-Querfeld found sick children, most of them untreated because hospitals in the area were overrun.

By 2017, the political winds had changed. Many Germans had become indifferent to or skeptical about the immigrants. The balance of power in Germany’s parliament shifted during the September election, and the country continues to grapple with the logistics and cost of helping refugees and their families. While the politics played out at the famed Riechstag building in the heart of Berlin, Skarabis-Querfeld and other volunteers were treating patients only a few kilometers away.

“I had a young girl whose whole family was almost beaten to death because they were Christians,” says Skarabis-Querfeld, a member of the Rotary Club of Berlin-Tiergarten. “The girl began to have epilepsy after being beaten into a coma. I’m not used to seeing these kinds of scars and burns.”

In another case, Skarabis-Querfeld treated a Syrian girl named Saida who had fever and bronchitis. When the examination was almost over, Skarabis-Querfeld noticed Saida was limping. She coaxed Saida to take off her shoes and saw both feet were infected. “I had seen a lot of children with small shoes on. Some had probably started walking in those shoes and worn them for one year,” Skarabis-Querfeld says. “The soles of both feet were infected. These are things that you just don’t forget.”

After she treated Saida with antibiotics, the girl from the war-torn country took an interest in helping at the clinic when the doctor was in. She would wait at the door half an hour before Skarabis-Querfeld arrived and delight in taking on small tasks, such as making copies. “Her biggest wish was to become a doctor,” Skarabis-Querfeld says. “I told her, ‘You’re a smart girl. You can do it.’”

Dr. Pia Skarbis-Querfeld's Medizin Hilft project received the 2017 Berlin Health Prize for its care of refugees.

Meeting the Enormous Need

In the weeks after Skarabis-Querfeld started treating patients in makeshift clinics, volunteers from every discipline began to show up looking to help the tens of thousands of refugees arriving in Berlin.

During the peak of the 2015 refugee influx, Medizin Hilft had more than 100 volunteers, and she was receiving dozens of emails a day with offers of help. In addition to providing immediate care, the nonprofit conducted immunization campaigns and helped immigrants navigate the German health care system.

“Many of our volunteers felt compelled to help because we’ve got it so good here, living in a democracy with access to health care. They felt it is their humanitarian duty,” Skarabis-Querfeld says. “It became clear that we would need whole new organizational structures … to cope with this completely new situation.”

The Rotary Club of Berlin-Nord was quick to support Skarabis-Querfeld’s nonprofit. National media took notice of her efforts. She estimated she was volunteering 20 hours a week in addition to working her regular job. Other Rotary clubs, including Rotary Club of Berlin-Tiergarten, joined the effort. “I had moments when I thought, ‘I’m going to throw it all away, and then I’ll get my life back.’ But then my sense of responsibility kicked in again for this project that has grown so much and grown together,” she says.

Treatment First

A steady stream of patients is treated at open.med, a clinic funded by Medizin Hilft in the Zehlendorf neighborhood of southwest Berlin.

On a weekday in September, a Ghanaian woman named Anita visited the clinic, which consists of a few rented rooms in a naturally lit basement. Anita, a refugee, had come for pain and bleeding in her uterus, and the clinic was the only place she could turn to.

Anita lives under the radar in Berlin: unregistered, uninsured, and unable to pay for basic care. She has little chance of staying in Germany legally because Ghana is not on the government list of extremely dangerous countries. Anita is among the roughly 15 percent of clinic patients who are either unregistered or homeless, says Dorothea Herlemann, the open.med project coordinator.

Many patients are refugees living in temporary homes who have difficult medical problems, have not yet learned the German health care system, have no language support, or cannot find a doctor who will see them. Some have temporarily lost access to the health care system, usually because of paperwork problems.

“For us, it’s not important whether a refugee is registered or not. These are people who need help, and we help them.”

“For us, it’s not important whether a refugee is registered or not. These are people who need help, and we help them. We also conduct information campaigns in their languages to help refugees learn how to use the regular health system. We are not trying to build up a parallel medical system here,” says Herlemann, whose staff position is made possible through a grant from Rotary.

Temporary Home

Medizin Hilft works alongside Doctors of the World and other groups in refugee container villages. At one such village in Ostpreussendamm in southwest Berlin, Medizin Hilft doctors see patients once a week. Meanwhile, other volunteers provide general support, helping residents to manage paperwork and begin building a life.

The 280 residents at the Ostpreussendamm village come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia, Cameroun, Russia, and Togo.

Many of them, including children, remain traumatized by what they experienced before fleeing to Germany.

Twenty-six-year-old Khalat Saleh is from Iraq's Kurdistan region and uses a wheelchair. Wearing a black sweatshirt that says "Break the rules," Saleh gives a friendly smile as he finishes a German language lesson conducted by volunteers.

In broken German, Saleh, who has been granted political asylum, explains his daily struggle to wash and eat independently. Saleh has seen the Medizin Hilft volunteer doctors numerous times, and volunteers help him receive the care he needs. He hopes to eventually work with computers.

Karmen Ishaque is a 31-year-old Iraqi who fled religious persecution and has been approved to stay in Germany for three years. She was treated by Dr. Barbara Grube of the open.med clinic for high blood pressure and borderline diabetes.

Ishaque lived in a camp in Zehlendorf for just a few months until she got her own room. It was a big step for Ishaque, who has been officially recognized as a refugee. She arrived in Germany at the beginning of 2015 and says she could imagine making her life here. She plans to get training to work as a kindergarten teacher. "I would like to marry, have kids, have a job," she says.

Lead pharmacist, Sabine Weyermann, and nurse, Jens Peter Schmidt, sort the medicine that has been delivered to the clinic.

Looking forward

Not every person who seeks refuge or a new life in Germany will get their affairs sorted as fast as Ishaque or have a real chance at integration. Many are being deported or asked to leave voluntarily.

For Medizin Hilft, times have changed as well. "It's much harder to attract volunteers now. On one hand, the political atmosphere changed, and on the other, news about refugees is not so front-and-center anymore," said Dr. Laura Hatzler, who helps run the open.med clinic.

For Hatzler, who was also part of the network from the beginning, helping Skarabis-Querfeld during those first days in the gymnasium, the work of Medizin Hilft is not finished, even if support and interest has dwindled. What keeps Hatzler going is the joy of taking action for something she believes in.

"If you really have an idea in your mind, and you really want it, and you connect with people who have the same ideas or similar, you can really move something," she says. "We have created something here that is very big and beautiful. And very needed."

A global grant of $160,000 will make it possible for Medizin Hilft to run the open.med clinic and the information campaigns until March 2018.

A Rotary global grant of $160,000 will make it possible for Medizin Hilft to run the open.med clinic and the information campaigns until March 2018. As Skarabis-Querfeld thinks about the ups and downs of the last three years, she worries about funding moving forward. She is also concerned about Germany's massive task of integrating hundreds of thousands of immigrants into society and the economy.

"I am just as clueless as our politicians seem to be if you ask me where we will be in 10 years. No one can give us an answer," she says. "But I still think about Saida, a special girl from Syria who wants to be a doctor, and I wonder what her future will look like."

CHILDREN CAUGHT IN WAR:
MEETING SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

Ilge Karancak- Splane[9]

After so many years of seeing the misery and suffering of the Syrian refugees, I still did not know how to help until I came across an online photo of refugee children without shoes. The photo stuck in my mind for days. I spoke with my Monterey Cannery Row Rotary Club President, Sharon Pira, and shared my thoughts about helping the Syrian refugees. She asked "what's on your mind?". I replied: "I have no idea, but probably we could provide shoes."

In January 2017, I went to Turkey to provide some aid from Rotary Clubs in District 5230 and friends to the refugee camps in Izmir-Torbali, which is a district of the city of Izmir (the current name for the ancient city of Smyrna) in Western Turkey on the Aegean Coast.

During my visit, I was heartbroken by the stories that I heard, witnessing the harsh living conditions of the refugees and especially the children. My faith in humanity shattered for a moment. I could not help my tears, but then I was encouraged and felt very hopeful to see many children smiling despite their pain and losses. Being a Rotarian has helped tremendously. I believe anything is possible. We all can be part of bringing Peace and hope for the future and help people their dignity.

Today, most Syrian refugees remain in Turkey , and to a lesser extent in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Slightly more than 10 percent of the refugees have fled to Europe. Peace negotiations continue despite an inconsistent ceasefire. In such a context, there is much that we should do.

Visiting the Refugee Camps

On January 3, 2017, I arrived at the WAHA/SMDD[10] socio-medical center in Izmir and met with the staff and founder of SMDD. They showed me their social classes for women and children, and introduced me to their volunteer doctors and nurses. I was amazed by the stories of the staff. The founder of SMDD, Muhammed Saleh, is a retired Syrian teacher who came from Syria 17 years ago. Claudia is an amazing Armenian young lady from Syria whose father and brother have been kidnaped by ISIS. She still has no news about their whereabouts. Civan is a Turkish interpreter and driver. Samira is Kurdish/Syrian interpreter. Doctor Ahmed is a Syrian refugee Pediatrician. All of them as well as many others shared their stories and why they got involved in helping refugees. I just gave them hugs and admired their humanitarian efforts. Several were refugees themselves.

Photo: Ilge and children in the refugee camp.

[9] This article is based on a project with Rotary District 5230. Minor edits were made by the editor.

[10] The acronyms stand for Society for Syrian Relief (SMDD) and Women and Health Alliance (WAHA).

I have also realized how people from different background and religion got together, holding to to each other in order to help the refugees with everything they have. It was so beautiful to see that for the future. They made my heart melt.

It was difficult to digest what I saw at the informal tent camps. The tent areas were lacking toilets, showers, clean water. There were getting covered with mud after every rainy day. These conditions affect children and pregnant women the most. There are lots of children suffering from pneumonia, lice, diarrhea and malnutrition, leading to risks of development disabilities as well as allergies in the camps.

In less than 2 minutes, I was surrounded by 17 children who were trying to give me hugs and kisses. I had never experienced such a thing.

In less than 2 minutes, I was surrounded by 17 children who were trying to give me hugs and kisses. I had never experienced such a thing. We all held on to each other and started walking in the camp for several minutes. Leyla was trying to impress me with her Turkish. She said “abla, abla, abla, bir, iki uc” which meant “sister, sister, sister, 1, 2, 3”. I have never seen that many children who were hungry for connection, attention, and love.

Providing Relief

After distributing food boxes and talking to some of the refugees with the help of our interpreter Civan, we continued visiting three more tent camps in Caybasi, Yazbasi, and Bayindir villages. The scenery at each camp was fairly similar, with different faces but the same hope to be able to go back to Syria one day. I met children whose fathers were beheaded by ISIS in front of them. How could you survive something like this without being emotionally scarred for life?

I asked many families about what they need urgently, and how Rotary could help? They all asked for education for their children. None of them asked for food, money, or clothing. I was so touched. Most of the children have not been in a real school for more than five years.

Every child I saw or met was smiling. They acted like they were the happiest children in the World. Regardless of being hungry, sick, having dirty clothes, not having shoes, toys, and books, and not being able to go to school for years, they kept smiling and posing for me when I took their pictures. Those smiles gave me tears and hope at the same time. My heart was melting once again! At the end of the day, I was a different person.

Photo: Children in the refugee camp.

Wheelchairs!

The very next day I went back to the WAHA/SMDD office again to discuss what else I could do while I was there for one more day. All of a sudden we heard this horrible cry outside of the office. A few staff and I immediately went outside to see what happened. There was this 13 year old Syrian disabled refugee boy who was crying. His family brought him to the office hoping they could help, since he had refused to eat the last three days due to his broken wheelchair. His mother said “Ahmed feels happy when he is outside, but now we cannot take him anywhere.” “Can you help.” she asked?

Mr. Mohammed said I am so sorry but we just gave our last wheelchair to another family two days ago. We do not have resources at the

moment. Ahmed's mother started to cry. Then I said to Mr. Mohammed to tell the mother to go home now, and we will deliver Ahmed's wheelchair tonight. Mr. Mohammed looked at me and said "How?" I said "Trust Rotary," and smiled.

He did tell the family to go home. I told Mr. Mohammed that one day before I left California, one of my Rotarian friends, Sam Alladeen from the Rotary Club of Seaside Club, gave me $500. That was the only cash I had since other donations were sent before my arrival. Mr. Mahmoud and I were able to buy five wheelchairs and 20 blankets with those $500. And Ahmed got his wheelchair that night. To see his smile was priceless!

Photo: Ahmed in his wheelchair.

After returning to Monterey in California, my club – the Rotary Club of Monterey Cannery Row and 10 other local clubs started to work with the Rotary Club of Kusadasi in Turkey towards the Syrian Refugee Children Education and Integration Global Grant. As of today, over 200 children have received basic education in elementary and middle school. Our project has three phases. Although COVID-19 has slowed us down, we will continue with implementation of the project as soon as the schools reopen, probably in September 2020.

Photos: Children in school with the support of a Rotary global grant.

If we deny refugees' humanity that means we betray our own! Those children showed me their unbreakable spirit! And we need to put down our guns and show them there is still hope and good in the World!

ANNEX

ROTARY CLUB OF WASHINGTON GLOBAL

The Rotary Club of Washington Global was chartered on February 28, 2020. We are a new, dynamic, and friendly Rotary club. More than two thirds of our members are women, and 40 percent are under the age of 40. We have a core group based in Washington, DC, in the United States, but our membership is global.

We meet on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at lunch time (from 12:30 pm to 1: 45 pm EST). Members can attend meetings in person or online. Our membership dues are low to ensure that all those who want to join can. For information on our club, including about the process to apply for membership, please go to https://www.washingtonglobalrotary.org/. For information on Rotary international and the activities of the organization's 1.3 million members, go to https://www.rotary.org/en. Information is also available in other languages.

Many of our members work in a professional capacity in international development. This includes work in the six areas of focus of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary international:

- Promoting peace;
- Fighting disease;
- Providing clean water, sanitation, and hygiene;
- Saving mothers and children;
- Supporting education; and
- Growing local economies.

Program of Seminars

We aim to serve as a premier "knowledge club" in Rotary by using our professional skills to provide pro bono support for nonprofits, other Rotary clubs, and other organizations, especially in the developing world. Taking knowledge seriously, we create a range knowledge products such as this report, as well as learning opportunities for our members.

This includes a program of seminars held during club meetings with leading experts in their field. Our program of seminars from March to December 2020 is available on our website. Seminars are typically held in series of three by topic or area, with three speakers on that topic or area over a period of six weeks.

Areas for which we have had recent speakers or have planned a series of speakers between now and December 2020 include Rotary strategy, conflict and displacement, health, "summer school" training for members, disability, and education. If you would like to attend one of our seminars, please register on our website for the specific seminar you would like to participate in. If space allows, we will welcome you online.

Refugees as a Priority Issue

We welcome collaborations with other Rotary clubs, as well as other organizations, whether for service projects or knowledge products that can help inspire Rotarians and other people of action to make a positive difference in the world.

Our club has identified issues related to refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) as a potential priority area of focus for our service and knowledge work in coming years. Four reasons inform this choice.

- First, refugees and IDPs are among the most vulnerable people in the world. They are in dire need of support.
- Second, because refugees face challenges in multiple areas of their life, the expertise of our members in various areas – including education, health, social protection and labor, poverty and housing/basic infrastructure to cite only a few, can be relied upon for solutions.
- Third, we have many Rotary Peace Fellows as members of our club who

have experience on issues of fragility, conflict and violence that are key factors leading to refugee flows and also affect refugees in host countries.

- Fourth, several of our members are engaged in work on refugees and IDPs as part of their employment or in a volunteer capacity.

Given our expertise in this area, members of our club are exploring the possibility of creating a Rotary Action Group (RAG) on refugees and IDPs. This would require a detailed proposal and approval from Rotary International, but if you are interested in joining such an initiative, please let us know, and together we can assess whether this would be useful as well as feasible.

If you would like to work with us on refugee or other issues, please send us an email to WashingtonGlobalRotary@gmail.com. We may have a limited capacity to respond to requests for support or joint work given that we are all volunteers in Rotary, but we will do our best.

Selected Members Working on Refugees/IDPs

As mentioned above, several of our members are working on refugees and IDPs in a professional capacity. Below are a few examples that are illustrative of the typical profile of many members of our club, but we also actively welcome members with a different profile.

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Lara Bersano Calot is Communications Chair for the Rotary Club of Washington Global. She is also the Communications Director for the Trust for the Americas, a non-profit affiliated to the Organization of American States in Washington DC. Lara lived and worked in Venezuela. She leads one of the programs at the Trust for the Americas to benefit Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Latin America gain access to digital training though private-public partnerships. As part of her tenure, she oversees efforts to raise awareness about Venezuelan migration in the region. Lara has more than 20 years of experience managing critical strategic communications endeavors and public relations efforts for institutions and corporations.

Rose Cardarelli is a former Army Medical Service Corps Officer and Professor of Human Security. She is currently the CEO of the Education for All Coalition. She serves as Director on various nonprofit boards. Her work has focused on meeting the needs of displaced children living in refugee camps through education, wellness, and related activities. She has coordinated and/or conducted international humanitarian, medical assistance, or education missions in: Haiti, Jordan, Turkey, Algeria, Thailand, Greece, Lebanon and on the U.S.- Mexico border. Her organization is a Global Refugee Forum partner with the UNHCR, and she was a delegate to the OXFAM International Refugee Congress in Istanbul, Turkey that developed the Global Compact on Refugees. She served as a reviewer and presenter for the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, in Geneva, Switzerland and a Partner and Co-Sponsor of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, also in Geneva.

Gustavo Flamerich heads the Committee for Venezuela within the Rotary Club of Washington Global. A civil engineer, he is an expert in technology and information systems. He has more than 25 years of experience in project management, systems architecture and development, institutional capacity building, and online education and training. As an international consultant, he has worked with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Republican Institute, and regional and national governments in Latin America. Gustavo helped a Venezuelan tasks force identify technology solutions that would help them get better online services and connectivity. He has also overseen the preparation of proposals for international grants to benefit refugees as well as Venezuelan NGOs.

Carlos Güiza works at the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Unit within the Department of Sustainable Development of the Organization of American States in Washington DC. A member of the Rotary Club of Washington and a Rotary Peace Fellow, Carlos has worked in the development of income alternatives for IDPs in Colombia, first as part of the Colombian government's strategy for IDPs, and later as part of the Inter-American Development Bank's Lab design team for Regional Economic Development projects in post-conflict areas of the country.

Anna Olefir is a Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank and Board member of the Rotary Club of Washington Global. She is leading the preparation of Additional Financing to Ethiopia General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity supporting the Government's efforts to reintegrate children of internally displaced persons into the schooling system, while building the education sector resilience to withstand COVID19 pandemic. She also participated in the assessment of the situation of refugee education in Ethiopia and took part in meetings of the IGAD Education Experts Taskforce on Implementation of the Djibouti Declaration and Plan of Action on Refugee Education supporting durable solutions for refugees and returnees in Eastern Africa.

Daniela Tort is Rotary Foundation Chair for the Rotary Club of Washington Global and a former Peace Fellow at the Duke-UNC Center. She is currently Technical Advisor for an Institutional Capacity Strengthening Fund at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Daniela has extensive experience in migration-related issues in Latin American. She established the 3X1 for Migrants Program in Queretaro (Mexico) to fund infrastructure and social programs in poor communities. At the IDB, she designed technical

assistance projects for migrant integration and institutional strengthening of migration public entities. She also served as judge for the Better-Together Challenge, an initiative to fund and scale up innovative solutions from Venezuelan migrants. Daniela has over ten years of experience managing projects on public sector reform and social development, and leading initiatives with international financial institutions, NGOs, governments, and the private sector.

Christopher J. Wahoff is Secretary for the Rotary Club of Washington Global. He currently works to promote social and human development in conflict and violence-affected contexts at the World Bank. An international development manager with a decade of experience, Christopher has led regional, national, and local initiatives with government officials in Latin America and the Caribbean to promote public policy reform with a focus on refugees and IDPs. Previously, Christopher served as Regional Coordinator for the Organization of American States' Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia. His sectoral expertise spans public education reform, human rights, citizen security, security sector reform, and humanitarian emergency preparedness planning. Christopher became interested in Rotary as an International Youth Exchange student to Tacna, Peru, where he volunteered working with populations displaced during Peru's internal armed conflict.

Quentin Wodon is a Lead Economist at the World Bank and currently serves as President of the Rotary Club of Washington Global. At the World Bank, he recently received funding under the DFID-World Bank-UNHCR Young Fellows Program on Forced Displacement to host a fellow in the Education Global Practice to conduct research on human development outcomes for refugees and IDPs in West Africa. The analysis will consider outcomes among others related to education, health-nutrition-population, and social protection and labor. It will be based on a unique new nationally representative household survey implemented in 10 different Francophone countries, many of which have large numbers of refugees and IDPs.

Rotary Club of Washington Global
www.WashingtonGlobalRotary.org

Washington Global Rotary Refugee Report 2020: Providing Relief and Creating Opportunities for Refugees

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