



Refugee resettlement



More than 65 million people around the world have been forced to leave their homes due to war, conflict and disaster, according to the United Nations. Helping newcomers resettle in a new country, through our congregations and partners, is one way ELCA World Hunger is pursuing a world of justice where all are fed.



Weaving a new fabric of home

Souad was born in Darfur, Sudan, where she lived with her parents and 11 siblings. When conflict broke out in the early 2000s, Souad and her family were forced to flee and then spent 13 years living in a refugee camp in Chad.

When Souad was 25, she and her family came to live in Tucson, Ariz., as refugees. While it was an unfamiliar world, it wasn't long before Souad's father took her and as many of her siblings as they could fit in a car to Iskashitaa Refugee Network (IRN), where the whole family began volunteering.

IRN is an intergenerational network of Tucson volunteers and refugees from Africa, Asia and the Middle East who harvest and redistribute locally grown fruits and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste. Groups of volunteers glean food that would otherwise be unharvested from a variety of locations around the city, such as citrus fruit at a mobile home park where residents have given permission to pick from their trees.

IRN's goal is to empower recently arrived refugees by connecting them with a wide variety of resources and opportunities to interact with the community. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger helped support this important work in 2016 and 2017.

Programs like IRN are important ways our church accompanies our neighbors as they build lives for themselves far from home. As the number of displaced

people around the world increases, accompaniment of internally displaced people, refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers continues to meet a critical need. ELCA World Hunger works with refugees in every step of their journey, from displacement to resettlement or repatriation.

IRN founder and director Barbara Eiswerth calls the program a "multicultural exchange" that's unique in its format. The network is addressing several needs at once: reducing food waste, breaking down barriers between people and helping refugees resettle. In addition to taking home food that's been gleaned, refugees also are connected with other services through the network. At food preservation workshops, participants can practice their English skills and share recipes and techniques from their home countries, such as pickled pumpkin seed paste, fermented pumpkin leaves and date vinegar. It's a perfect example of ELCA World Hunger's integrated philosophy in action, crossing lines between food security, agriculture, education and more.

"We're ever developing the ways that we can help people," Barbara says. "It's not going to be home, but we can help refugees weave a new fabric of a new home."

Today, Souad is 27 and working at a merchandise company. While she works most weekdays and spends time at home cooking and helping care for her younger siblings, she still spends her Saturdays volunteering, picking and sorting produce. To her, volunteering is part of the fabric of her life.

"I like helping people," she says. "It's good for me."