Refuge Egypt

Refuge Egypt is a humanitarian organization that seeks to serve refugees who have fled their original country of domain due to war or disaster, and who have well founded fears of return due to persecution or loss of rights. Refuge Egypt provides humanitarian assistance, spiritual guidance and encouragement to help build self-sufficiency and self-respect in preparation for repatriation, resettlement or local integration into Egyptian society.

Refuge Egypt is a ministry of the Anglican/Episcopal Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

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Refuge Egypt serves refugees, migrants and asylum seekers living in Egypt who have fled their original country of nationality due to war or disaster, and who have well founded fears of return due to persecution or loss of rights.

We seek to provide humanitarian assistance, spiritual guidance and encouragement to help build self-sufficiency and self-respect in preparation for repatriation, resettlement or integration into Egyptian society.

Our programs are holistic, designed to meet the wide range of refugees’ needs, acknowledging that those needs are deeply connected. And our programs are responsive, based on our decades of mutual interaction with the people we serve.

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Egypt’s Refugees

Egypt is home to hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers. The UNHCR has an active caseload of around 180,000 individuals—but the actual number is 5 or 10 times that figure.

Why? For decades, refugees and asylum seekers have escaped the multiple wars and famines that have raged in Sudan’s hinterlands, the repressive politics of the Horn of Africa, and internecine strife in the Middle East. The map on the right shows that many of these trends continue today.

For the neighbourhood, Egypt presents a land of safety and opportunity. Many diaspora communities are well-established in Cairo. And Alexandria is a tempting port of entry to the Mediterranean Sea—to Europe, and further afield.

But the problems refugees face in Egypt are many: they are unable to access medical services; many are prevented from receiving education; most lack the skills and training for a sustainable livelihood; most struggle to find even informal unskilled work; while households are vulnerable to inflation and economic shocks; many struggle with trauma, and have huge emotional and spiritual needs.

Refuge Egypt exists to serve these refugees and to meet their material, medical, and spiritual needs.
Situation Update

Like everyone, Refuge Egypt has faced many challenges due to COVID-19. However, we are happy to report that we have been able to continue to provide the majority of our services despite numerous obstacles. We continue to enforce mask wearing and promote hygiene at all the locations that we work from. The main activity, which we were forced to suspend for the moment, are those related to food distribution. We continue to help through other means, however. During the peak of Covid-19, refugees were given health education to enlighten them on how to avoid infection and hygiene/disinfection kits to help protect themselves against the virus. We managed to distribute limited cash assistance for those who had lost a job. We have also started to provide orientation sessions at some of our clinics to focus on the measures that should be taken to prevent infection with Covid-19. The overall number of refugees has also decreased due to travel restrictions.

Activities and Achievements

Humanitarian Assistance

Refuge Egypt’s Humanitarian Assistance program has been operating for over a decade, meeting the most immediate needs of refugees as soon as they arrive in Cairo. We register refugees when they arrive and conduct short interviews with them to determine their greatest needs. We then seek to provide refugees with parcels containing essential food items, as well as clothing and blankets, and refer them to other services where necessary.

Those receiving food parcels are the most vulnerable refugees, with no other means of support. This program gives support and stability for these cases for the first 2 years in Egypt—providing a safety net while they take the first steps towards sustainability.

Primary and Secondary School

St. Raphael Sudanese School, located in Arba wa Nos district, provides quality education to Sudanese children who have missed schooling in their country due to war. We aim to prepare them to take their Sudanese diploma examinations so they can graduate from secondary school and attend university in Cairo. Approximately 210 students will be enrolled for this upcoming school year. This year we will provide Grade 11 for the first time, so that students can complete their education with St. Raphael, graduate, and take their national diploma examinations. This year, there will be Sudanese national examinations for Grade 5, Grade 8 and Grade 11. This places a heavier workload on the teachers, who must prepare students for the difficult exams through extra lessons and support. Securing financing for the school remains the most pressing need, as the teachers are very poorly paid and rent of the location has gone up significantly this year due to the landlords taking advantage of the situation refugee schools are in. Classes started at the end of September. Regular teacher professional development sessions continue. One month of remediation courses were held for students who performed poorly over the summer. The school needs to relocate to a
new building, which is presenting new challenges. The only spaces available are unfinished flats, which still need a couple months of work to make liveable.

Happy Child Preschool

July was the summer break and registration for new students began in August and lasted one month. Sixty-five students registered and the new year began in September. This is an increase from the previous year, due to the improvement in the Covid situation, as things return to normal. Precautionary measures continue to be taken through mask wearing, handwashing and regular cleaning.

There are 3 KG classes (KG-0, KG-1 and KG-2):

- The KG-0 class has 25 new children
- The KG-1 class has 23 new children
- The KG-2 class has 19 returning children

Curriculum and Classroom Activities

The preschool continued implementing the Montessori curriculum to all three classes. The classes are broken up by age, with a group for 3-year-olds, one for 4-year-olds, and one for 5-year-olds. Following KG-2, the 5-year-olds enroll in Grade 1 at a primary school. The curriculum is divided up into four subjects: Arabic, Math, English, and Drawing. We approach the subjects in a different way, which is in line with the Montessori approach. For example, teachers present the letters in English and Arabic through various mediums, such as salt, sandpaper, clay, and drawing. This provides tactile exposure to the letters before they start to write. Children also completed several crafts in their classroom. The teachers and admin continued their lessons, plans, and schedules with regularity. Recently we have not been distributing any meals or food due to Covid precautionary measures.

Curriculum and Teacher Development and Evaluation

The headmaster holds a meeting with the teachers every day from 2:30 to 3:00. They talk about the negative aspects of the day and learn together how to explain the spiritual approach. The headmaster took notes from the teachers about the subjects, such as Arabic, Math and English when the teachers present the weekly plan, she guides the teachers according to the way they are explained and the means of illustration.

Monthly parent meetings have begun again with the new school year. Each meeting includes prayer and counseling of the parents. We discuss topics like how to care for your child’s hygiene and well-being, how to engage in play to help their development, and the importance of preschool procedures, such as arriving on time for drop-offs and pick-ups. Parents have commented about the positive spiritual effects that the Bible time and spiritual curriculum have on their children’s lives.
Changes and Challenges

There are some challenges that we face, including the following:

- Some of the former teachers did not agree to work safely and not to implement the orders that are required of them, so we let them go. We also hired another headmaster after Mrs. Samia (the previous headmaster) left. Many teachers left and we hired new teachers so we must teach them the methods of learning and the system of the preschool.

- There is objection towards the Bible from some parents, despite the positive results that have been seen by the parents through prayer. In some families the father is Muslim, and the mother is Christian. There is a challenge to effectively reach the parents, especially the fathers.

- There is a need for a larger place with better ventilation and an outside garden for children to play in.

- Covid-19 continues to be a challenge as we try to enforce handwashing and mask-wearing. Thankfully, none of our students or teachers have contracted the virus so far.

Success story

Over the years, many refugee children have come to the nursery, and each child has a different story and different circumstances. This year, at a working group, we noticed a child named “Eli”. Eli is more aggressive than the other children. He is violent in his games and always deals with his friends nervously. When the teachers disciplined him for his actions, he refuses to apologize and leave the. When he was brought to the administration, he again refused to apologize for his mistake. The staff also noticed that Eli had injuries to the hand and legs. When asked about these, he said; “Mama, what did you do?” It was necessary to work with the child in a different way and treat him in a holistic manner. This included, caring for him, encouraging him, always giving him responsibility in assembling the toys so that he feels he is important in the school, talk to him when he does something wrong. This method puts things into a more positive light and teaches what we can learn from mistakes and apologizing.

We also took steps to deal with Eli’s mother. This was done both with her directly, and on a managerial level. Periodic meetings were held with courses that teach parents about positive education and how to deal with their children according to their personality. Teachers also learned how to deal with parents in such cases. We continue to pray for such circumstances and Eli as these changes progress.

Capacity and Livelihoods

We work to enable refugees to access employment so that they can be self-reliant and integrated into Egyptian society. Our Domestic Placement Office places prospective employers and employees together, and provides placements in domestic work, babysitting, and elderly care, providing refugees with gainful employment.
For refugees who lack the relevant skills and experience for this work, we run a bi-weekly cleaning course. The cleaning course is a two-week course for up to 22 refugees, training them in domestic cleaning—how to clean what using which products—with practical exercises, theory, an element of cultural training (how to work in an Egyptian home), followed by a test. Those who pass the test go on to register with our domestic office for placement in domestic work.

Refuge Egypt acts as a mediator between employees and employers, negotiating contracts that ensure the rights of refugees in our care are protected. This year, we revised much of the wording in our contracts, in collaboration with the Egyptian Federation for Refugee Rights, to ensure the rights of refugees are being protected.

These jobs enable refugees to provide stable incomes for their households, making them more resilient to shocks and emergencies. As we look to expand the number and type of trainings we provide, we aim to empower refugees to be self-sufficient, independent, and thriving—even in Cairo.

Adult Education

Staff Updates

- Dani began working with Adult Education part time in July, and he started full time as both a teacher and the Adult Education Coordinator (taking Monica’s place) in September.
- Mohammed finished his temporary position with us at the end of August, when Dani took his place as teacher of four classes

End of Term 2 (2021)

- Term 2 was completed in August
- During the first two weeks, review sessions were held, oral and written final exams were administered, and the results were compiled
- Mid-August, we were able to hold a graduation celebration for students who completed their term, thanks to a decrease in cases in Egypt.
- The results were as follows:
  - 66% completed the term (about average)
  - 84.5% passed of those completed (higher than average)
- Student demographics:
  - 45% female, 55% male
  - 38% Sudanese, 11% South Sudanese, 28% Eritrean, 10% Somali, 11% Ethiopian, 1% Yemeni, 1% Chadian
• Although trends of Ethiopians and Eritreans have been increasing, they appear to have levelled off for the time being.

**Beginning of Term 3 (2021)**

• Classes this term include:
  
  o 10 classes of English (Levels 1-6, 8), 211 students registered
    
    ▪ 46 Eritrean, 32 Ethiopian, 37 South Sudanese, 22 Somali, 69 Sudanese, 5 Yemenis
    
    ▪ 85 female and 126 male students
  
  o 1 class of Arabic: students will be registered October 11

• Registration was held the last week of August with classes starting after that.

• We were able to return to our normal system of registration, which is preferable for students, who are less familiar with the online platforms. The weather and Covid situation allowed us to have registration in person.

• Our foreign volunteers are two long term volunteers with us, which has allowed that aspect to run very smoothly.
  
  o Dani has taken over Mohammed’s classes (Two Level 1 classes and two Level 2 classes)
  
  o Judy and Omar (repeat volunteers) are teaching the advanced classes

• Covid-19 precautions included requiring masks and limiting class sizes to 20-25 students. Students have been pretty good at wearing masks without prompting.

**Success Stories**

A Sudanese mother of two sons and a daughter lost her husband more than twenty-five years ago, as a result of the civil war in Sudan. After the children graduation from university, she decided to learn English. She joined the adult education program at All Saints Cathedral offered by Refuge Egypt in 2020. At first, she was feeling a bit ashamed of her old age, but she received encouragement from her children until she overcame the stigmas that she was finding from some of her colleagues and friends. In her second year she graduated into the second level and became more determined to complete all the levels. Her linguistic level has developed, and comprehension has increased greatly. She has become one of the most outgoing participants in the class.

Mesgan, is a 22-year-old Ethiopian man who came to Egypt four years ago without his parents. He did not get the opportunity to complete his basic education in Ethiopia due to the ongoing civil war. He was directly affected by the war in many ways since his family is part of one of the warring tribes in the afflicted Tigray region. His hope is that circumstances will allow him to be resettled in a third country, European or American.
eventually. But at this time, he doesn’t know if he can make it happen. Instead of waiting hopelessly and without using his time in a productive manner, he decided to learn English in the hopes that this will better his opportunities when he arrives to a third country. He is now in level two, and an excellent student, listening, reading and writing. I am quite sure that he will continue to progress and achieve his goals.

Medical Services
We have three clinics located in Zamalek, Arba Wa nos (Naser City), and 6th of October.

In the antenatal clinics, pregnancies because of rape, and pregnancies that may result in death remain our primary focus. No lives have been lost as a result of frequent follow-ups and early interventions.

In the Well Baby Clinic/Well Child Clinic, we are prioritizing referrals of children with malnutrition, stunted growth, failure to thrive, and/or who are underweight. This is done in addition to an assessment to detection developmental disabilities, in order to prioritise early intervention. The demand for pediatric care remains high and exceeds our capacity.

PLHIV continues to receive services and report that they feel safe, accepted and listened to. Support groups continue with small numbers of participants.

TB remains a significant health issue of concern among refugees and migrants. Both UNHCR and MOH maintain TB control as a priority. Refuge Egypt with the National Programme for TB continues to provide services. Refuge Egypt partnered with MOH during this period to create a larger TB campaign.

UNHCR and MOH have also flagged cases of polio and malaria in recent months. In response to this, we referred our clients to the national campaign for polio vaccinations.

Our doctors and health workers gave health seminars to beneficiaries on topics such as breastfeeding, infant brain development, gastroenteritis, microelements, such as iron, calcium, and iodine, complementary feeding, play spaces, and exercise, fever management, etc.

Psychological First Aid (PFA) interventions are helping patients coming from all health sectors, mainly cases of rape, PLHIV, and those stressed by their socioeconomic conditions.

The entire medical team has now been trained with Handicap International for improving the screening tools at the WBCC and the malnutrition clinic by providing additional developmental assessment.

Success Stories
Ahmed first came to us in February 2021, complaining of a cough that had lasted for 2 months. He also complained of night sweats, weight loss, shortness of breath, and generalized weakness. He was sent for a general medical examination and for a Genexpert test. He came back with positive results for the Genexpert and diagnosed with pulmonary TB. We started the treatment at once and told him about the recovery process and how to take his medicine. We followed up with the patient every two weeks with a clinical examination and checked on his symptoms until he completed the treatment and improvement was seen. He was discharged in August as completely cured.
Marwa is a young woman who came to us in September 2020, complaining of abdominal pain, vomiting, fever, abdominal distention, mild cough, night sweats, and weight loss. She had no history of TB contact. She was sent for a medical examination and was diagnosed with TB peritonitis and pulmonary effusion. VCT was performed to be sure that the patient was free from any viruses, then we started the year-long treatment. We followed up with the patient every two weeks with a clinical examination and general investigation until the patient completed her course of the anti-Tuberculous drug. In August 2021, the patient was discharged as completely cured.

**Challenges**

The situation and context for refugees and asylum seekers in Cairo remains very challenging. Refuge-Egypt plays a crucial role and provides essential services to this community that complements those provided by the UNHCR and other actors. The services and approach of Refuge Egypt is known in the community, and we have established strong links with government bodies particularly in the areas of TB and HIV. Planning and design of future programs is now a joint activity amongst several actors in many cases, avoiding the duplication of services.

**Looking Forward**

**Our Partners**

This work would not be possible without the support of our international donors and local partners. With special thanks to:

*International Partners*

- Anglican Aid Australia
- Embrace the Middle East
- Mennonite Central Committee
- The Merieux Foundation
- Samaritan’s Purse Canada
- Worldwide Christian Churches Ministries (WCCM)

*Local Partners*
• Canadian Embassy in Cairo
• Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Middle East
• Episcocare
• St Andrew’s Refugee Services (StARS)
• UNHCR Egypt

Financial Report
Refuge Egypt is a ministry of the Anglican Episcopal Diocese of Egypt with North Africa.

For more information on our programs and how to support us, please contact us at info@refuge-egypt.org or write to the following address:

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