



Refuge Egypt Bulletin

Creating sustainable change

Like so many, Ahmed* approached our office looking for cash assistance. At only 20 years old, he had already experienced the killing of his entire family by the Somalian militia government and witnessed atrocities most of us won't experience in a lifetime. He escaped the attack, but as he was fleeing, he fell down the side of the mountain and was taken for dead. He survived; however, his leg was permanently injured and he now walks with a crutch. When he arrived in Egypt about a year ago, he had no family, no friends, and no money. He was living on the streets when he came to our office. With his disability and no English or Arabic, he was unable to find work or navigate life in Egypt.

In response to individuals such as Ahmed who face myriad barriers to life in Cairo, our Humanitarian Assistance Office has grown over the past year to provide comprehensive case management to refugees and asylum-seekers. It has always been Refuge Egypt's vision that refugees would build self-reliant lives for themselves and their families in Egypt; however, medical conditions, disability, poor mental health, protection concerns, and cultural and language differences create barriers to self-reliance.

As our case manager sat with Ahmed, it became clear that a bag of food would do him little good. His case needed to be considered in its complexity, so that the underlying issues would be addressed. The case manager found him a room for a few days while he searched for an



apartment. She connected Ahmed with other young men to live with, so that they could share the housing expenses, and contributed to his rent payments. In order to give him basic language skills necessary for daily survival, she connected him with our English and Arabic language courses. Now he is able to speak basic Arabic and can communicate more easily. After several meetings, Ahmed began to build rapport with the case manager and started to open up and share more of his story. It became clear that psychosocial support was needed, so she referred him to a partner organization.

While his situation was improving, he faced a couple of setbacks. First, he was approached by human traffickers, who made promises about work and tried to kidnap him. When the car he was riding in was involved in a traffic accident, he was able to escape. We contacted IOM regarding the matter and they were able to provide him resources. After a few months, he became sick with a mysterious skin condition. The case manager referred him to the clinic, who examined him. Because of other symptoms he was experiencing, they were concerned that it could be a form of Tuberculosis, but the tests came back negative. When they were unable to determine the cause, Ahmed was sent to an outside lab for bloodwork. It turned out that his symptoms were the result of poor hygiene. The case manager met with him to describe how to take care of himself and properly shower so that he doesn't get rashes or become sick again. Already his skin condition has cleared up.

Thankfully, after a long process, we were able to find a job for Ahmed, and for the time being, he is able to support himself. However, Ahmed represents the many barriers to self-sufficiency that refugees face. Although the goal is always for refugees to find dignifying employment and become self-reliant, Ahmed reminds us that the situation is not always so simple. Poor language makes basic interactions, employment, and accessing health care difficult, and puts refugees at risk for exploitation or protection issues. Disability restricts one's ability to find gainful employment, all the more difficult for those without family or friends to provide them support. Thanks to the generous support of Embrace the Middle East, our new case management approach can better consider the needs of the whole person and address underlying issues of poverty, opening the door for greater self-reliance and long-term sustainability in Cairo.

**Names have been changed to protect our beneficiaries' privacy. The picture is not of the beneficiary described in this newsletter.*