

# REFUGEE LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROJECT REPORT, 2020

**1 City, 18 Workshops, 8 Outreaches, 38 Refugee leaders,  
from 4 Nationalities**

*"As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people  
permission to do the same – Nelson Mandela"*

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**Disclaimers**

The views expressed in this publication are based on the research and outreach reports conducted between February 2020 and January 2021 under the Refugee Leadership Training project. The presentation of the material does not imply facts outside of the framework and timing of the RLT project. The composition of other data used in this report is based on direct qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

For more information on this report or further analysis of the RLT project 2020, inquire with the project coordination & Refugee Egypt.

# Contents

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### SUMMARY

|  |    |
|--|----|
| About Funding Partner.....                       | 6  |
| About Implementing and Supervisory Partners..... | 8  |
| About RLT Project.....                           | 13 |
| About RLT Outreach Research.....                 | 15 |

### SECTION 1

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Overview of Training Sessions Input.....                   | 18 |
| Impact of Training Sessions, Life Stories & Testament..... | 24 |

### SECTION 2

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Summary of the Eight Outreach Activities..... | 26 |
| Future Project Recommendation.....            | 55 |

### SECTION 3

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Meet the RLT Leaders, Project 2020.....         | 57 |
| Lessons Learned from the Covid-19 Pandemic..... | 61 |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Needless to say that a lot of work and time has gone into the execution of the RLT project by incredible people than I can fully express on paper. I cannot say enough thanks to EO-Metterdaad for investing in Cairo's refugee community at such a time.

My sincere appreciation to the committee for the opportunity given me to manage this project and be impacted by it. Completing this project would have been impossible without the support of my assistant, Dani Missangwa. I am blessed to have your language skills and firm conviction in the goal we seek to achieve for refugee leaders and the youths in the refugee community. Thank you to Dr Ashraf Azer and his UNHCR colleagues, and all our speakers and trainers who championed every session with rigour and fun. To Sister Tereza of the Comboni Missionaries for her endless commitment and support during leaders' outreaches. A special thanks to Drs. Cornelis Hulsman for his encouragement during this project.

Thank you to all our local partners and Refuge Egypt for providing management and hosting our workshops in their beautiful auditorium. And kudos to all our leaders who matched fearlessly and are working very hard to bring peace, safety and prosperity to the refugee community in Cairo. My sincere gratitude.

Thank you!

Oluwapelumi Comfort Dickson



# About the Funding Partner



## About EO Metterdaad

EO-Metterdaad is the fundraising arm for diaconia projects of the Evangelical Broadcasting Company (Evangelische Omroep, EO) in the Netherlands, an association with over 440.000 members. Metterdaad is a Dutch word meaning 'actually doing something.' For a Christian organization, this means bringing faith into practice. EO-Metterdaad aims to support various projects in healthcare, education, income-generating activities, food security, evangelistic work, and emergency aid. Attention is paid to quality, cooperation, and sustainability. Fundraising is done through weekly television and radio broadcasts in which EO-Metterdaad tells its audience stories about projects that they can support. EO-Metterdaad also obtains donations for projects through bequests of members or friends of the Evangelical Broadcasting Company. EO-Metterdaad works together with different churches and Christian organizations in the Netherlands, and channels funding to local partners. For more than 45 years, EO-Metterdaad has been able to portray people in distress and provide assistance. EO-Metterdaad donors' gifts are channeled in close cooperation with Dutch Christian aid organizations to their local partners, to reach out to people in need. One of these partner organizations is the Deputaten Diaconaat Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken

(Deputation Diaconia of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands). EO-Metterdaad informs their partners every six months about the destination reserves for distribution, for projects that meet certain criteria.

In October 2019, they informed their partners that they were looking for projects that would support leaders worldwide. The aim was to build up the capacity of leaders through training and coaching, to serve their community. Deputaten Diaconaat informed the Center for Arab-West Understanding about this opportunity. The Center formulated, in collaboration with Refuge Egypt of the Anglican Diocese of Egypt a proposal that both Deputaten Diaconaat and EO-Metterdaad accepted.

# About Implementing and Supervisory Partners

## \*About Refuge Egypt



Refuge Egypt, (a ministry of All Saints' Cathedral,) began in 1987. Over the years, their programs have expanded to cover a broad range of refugees' diverse needs through:

Medical: Refuge Egypt operates four clinics around the city, providing primary health care services to refugees and referrals to governmental facilities as appropriate. Services include comprehensive antenatal health care, HIV counselling and testing, TB

and HIV clinics, malnutrition clinics, and well-baby/child clinics.

Humanitarian Aid: Refugee newcomers to Egypt are registered with our office and interviewed to identify their unique situation and needs. Vulnerable families are eligible for emergency assistance, including food bags and blankets in the winter. While they get on their feet, refugees are supported and encouraged to create a sustainable life for themselves and their families by registering with our Job Placement Office.

Education: Adult Education courses provide English and Egyptian Arabic language classes and other courses as available. A preschool and primary school provide high-quality education to refugee children, opening the doors for achieving a high school diploma and admission to a university.

Job Placement Office: Refugees are profiled to determine their qualifications and skills in order to identify the best job opportunities. The office provides a cleaning course for individuals seeking work in the domestic labour market, while others requiring specific training are referred to those opportunities, internally or externally. The office facilitates interviews with potential employers and contracts between employers and refugees.

Spiritual Work: Currently, the youth pastor provides pastoral counselling and leadership development. In the past, we have worked with gangs in various neighbourhoods.



### **\*About the Center for Arab West Understanding**



CAWU is an Egyptian NGO registered in 2007 with the Ministry of Social Solidarity under number 6985, dedicated to promoting and bridging intercultural dialogue in the Arab World and between the Arabic World and the West. CAWU has been hosting Egyptian and non-Egyptian student internships over the years, leading to intercultural and interreligious understanding and peacebuilding. CAWU also runs an electronic database of Arab-West reports used for academic purposes.

In 2018 CAWU discovered the need for remedial education for low-income English-speaking refugees. This developed in 2019 to a learning centre with 20 refugee students and 30 students in 2020. The goal is to prepare them for an internationally recognised high school diploma that gives them opportunities to pursue higher education. CAWU's experience in refugee education made it a natural partner, in the refugee

leadership training project, with the cooperation of Refuge Egypt of the Anglican Diocese, the Comboni Fathers and Sisters, and the Egyptian Moral Rearmament Association.



### **\*About the Comboni Missionaries**

The Comboni missionaries include sisters, brothers, and priests who are dedicated to the poor and the most abandoned people in society.

The Comboni Missionaries presence in Egypt goes back to the 19th century, working in schools, hospitals, inter-religious settings and local groups. However, working with refugees started in 1984. At this time, some refugees were coming to Cairo, Egypt. The Comboni missionaries saw that most refugees have no place to go and welcomed them, particularly South Sudanese, Sudanese refugees, and Eritrean refugees.

### **Our work with refugees include**

- Education: we have schools from Kindergarten to grade 12. In adult education, we offer different short courses (English language, computer etc.).

- Human formation (Pastoral care and human growth): We work with all categories of women, youth, and the entire family.
- Human aid: We help low-income families with medical assistance, rent, food supply etc., and we also visit inmates in prison.
- Psychosocial: We do individual counselling and a psychoeducation program.



#### **\*About the Egyptian Moral Rearmament Association**

The Egyptian Moral Rearmament Association, EMRA, has been established and registered in the ministry of social welfare (Solidarity) since March 1988 (registration number 3563). Its main goals include: Reviving shared moral values and reinforcing the national fabric as well as human ties at the local, national, regional and international levels, together for a better future spelled in terms of: **Serene and peaceful soul, Sound family life, Sound and cohesive community, Safe and clean environment, Secure and peaceful world.**

**ERMA operational goals include:**

- Reviving shared moral values by reinforcing the national fabric, and incorporating human ties at the local, national, regional and international levels.
- EMRA collaborates with national civil society associations, that share its values and aspirations. e.g. The Egyptian Council For Foreign Affairs (ECFA) The Egyptian Association of University Women (EAUW) (member of the International Federation of University Women IFUW) the Centre for Arab West Understanding (CAWU) and Al-Tawba Zakkat (Charity) and Community Development Committee registered in Nassers Social Bank etc.



EMRA encourages training and self-development in related fields in Egypt and internationally.

- Strengthening loyalty and a spirit of citizenship amongst Egyptian people.
- Contributing to developing and upgrading the local communities on the basis of moral values.

**Breaking Barriers Building Trust conference and the Sangam meeting (global lofC consultation) in Panchgani, Asia Plateau.**

# About the RLT Project

**The Refugee Leadership Training Project was initiated by EO Metterdaad in 2019 with a mission to support community development amongst refugees in Cairo. The RLT project commenced in February 2020 based on a recognized need for improved leadership amongst increasing refugee populations, and because of the increasing anxiety and delinquency amongst the refugee youth in poor urban Cairo neighborhoods.**

The RLT projects primary focus, between February 2020 to January 2021, was in training 30 to 40 refugee leaders in leadership techniques, with the necessary tools to promote social inclusion of youths in their community and develop mini-projects to tackle crime and violence among youths, and supporting them in accessing legal and medical aid and resolving conflicts. On the orientation day, 59 leaders attended, representing Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. The atmosphere was vibrant, with a shared expectancy in the coming months. Then, the Covid-19 pandemic happened, almost dashing the project's optimism and mission. However, determination prevailed. We arranged and moved the workshop online. Although held online until July 17 they were explicitly tailored to give practical applications and in the understanding of the struggling refugee youth, in the light of new information.

The RLT project implementation was divided into two parts. The first part had its focus on leaders' capacity building, with the following topics as the focus of exploration:

- Development of Mental and Psychological well-being,
- Development of Conflict Resolution Skills,
- Practical Approach to Leaders as Counselors,
- Enhancing Capacity in Accessing Legal Aid,
- Peace Talks and Tribal Conflict Resolution,
- Partnering and collaborating with Existing Organizations
- Ethical Leadership.

The second part, (an exercise to manage a community outreach with an emphasis on research), turned into eight outreaches in Maadi, Giza/Dokki, Ard el-Lewa, Ain Shams, Nasr city, Mohandessin, and the Brajid area in Greater Cairo. Leaders of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan nationalities living in these locations coordinated themselves to dig down and explore some of their community problems and use findings from their research to develop and implement strategies that will help improve situations.

The utmost goal of the RLT project was for the leaders to become better at engaging with their community, and to be better at diagnosing community problems, by researching the

basis to deal with problems facing their communities. To be better at coordination, beyond the theoretical framework, it was important to give the leaders the opportunity to apply workshop information to real-life incidences among refugees, which has helped eliminate premature guesses and ambiguities.

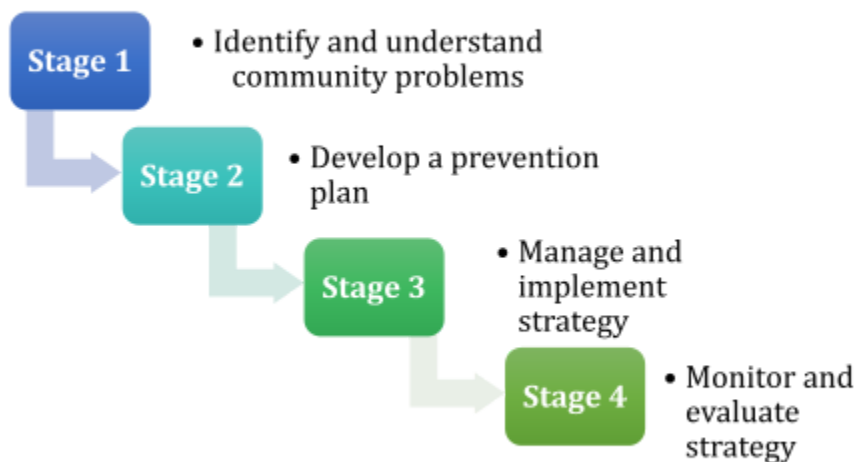
# About RLT Outreach Research

## The focus of the RLT project research

| Focus                              | Districts                                 | Organization/Program  | Page |
|------------------------------------|---|---|------|
| <b>Street gangs &amp; violence</b> | South Sudan & Sudan (Ain Shams/Nasr city) | Cultural event, profiling, focus group discussions,   | 26   |
| <b>Street gangs &amp; violence</b> | Sudan (Ain Shams/ Zaiton)                 | Music & art auditions, talent selection, crafting (preparation), and performance  | 32   |
| <b>Robbery</b>                     | Ethiopia (Maadi)                          | Counselling sessions, 'being heard' session, mental fitness, highlight pathways and streets covered by CCTV, police support   | 35   |
| <b>Street robbery</b>              | Eritrea (Ardelewa)                        | Mapping pathways street robbery incidences often happens, counselling sessions, care plan for trauma victims.                 | 40   |
| <b>Street harassment</b>           | Eritrea (Mohandeseen)                     | Counselling sessions, stress management and confidence-building sessions, responding to street offenders (practical session). | 45   |

|   |                            |   |    |
|---|----------------------------|---|----|
| <b>Physical attacks and abuse at workplaces</b> | Ethiopia (Maadi)           | Education training, Counselling sessions  | 48 |
| <b>Harassment &amp; antisocial behavior</b>     | Eritrea (Giza/Dokki)       | Psychological awareness and interpersonal skills, Stress management & mental strength sessions, cultural responsiveness and behavioral change session | 51 |
| <b>Home robbery</b>                             | Eritrea (Ardelewa, Faisal) | Home protection practical session, counselling meetings   | 53 |

### Research Framework:



### Methodology

The following methodology aims to produce practical and theoretical truths about refugee's experiences and daily life. The data was randomly and primarily collected from the refugee community members already stated, social workers, religious leaders, local educators, community-based organizations, and members.

Survey; traditional written survey and electronic survey system in English, Arabic, Tigrigna, Amharic, and Oromic languages.

In-depth interviews; audio/video calls interview and face-to-face interviews in Arabic, Tigrigna, Amharic, and Oromic languages.

Focus group; round-table face-to-face talk in Arabic, Tigrigna, Amharic, and Oromic languages.

### **Research & Outreach Reach**

Nationality: Ethiopian, Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan

Count: over 500

Age; 16 – 21, 22 – 30, 31 – 40

Sex: Female & Male

### **Research Ethics:**

With each group and the individuals spoken to, there was a simple rule: to be clear about the purpose and use of the collected data. This was strictly adhered to, and furthermore, with the consent (written or oral) from the interviewee, and the use of their initials, where recorded testimony matters. Also, we ensured that the interviewees' rights, to disclose or not to disclose information was upheld amicably. No manipulation or coercion was used in the process of the collection of this data. Each interviewee understood the purpose, and most were eager to share their common struggles in the refugee community.

# Overview of Training Sessions Input

*“... a diverse, practical, and well- structured study program” – Amani Abdallah*



The sessions were designed to cause leaders to think of the complex state of community affairs, to understand their own plight and opportunities through analyzing tangible and intangible factors, to be challenged by them and to lead by example. The RLT project leaders comprise health social workers, CBO workers, teachers, and a few university students, who are demonstrating a commitment to knowledge seeking, for improving the well-being of refugees in Cairo. Many illuminating discussions heightened the rooms temperature, even tears, but surely produced a connected humility in all. The workshops centered on case studies and stories shared by leaders. Most importantly, diversity and inclusivity being the approach, with the exchange of ideas among all four nationalities. Even though there were only four nationalities, the second series (Conflict Resolution Skills and Tribal Conflict Resolution) showed evidence of a wide range of ethnic groups, cultural differences, and traditions among participants.

## **Main Themes**

- Development of Mental and Psychological well-being;  
Mental well-being, physical well-being, emotional well-being, social well-being, indicators of psychological vulnerability, physical manifestation of psychological vulnerability (refugee context), management of psychological vulnerability, psychological first aid, ethics, managing practical problems i.e. unemployment, managing anxiety and stress, how to improve the activities level, and strengthening social support networks.

- Development of Conflict Resolution Skills;  
Change and growth in conflict resolution, root causes of conflict, common escalation points during interpersonal conflict, differentiating between a position and an interest, interest vs impact, conflict styles, communication styles, influencing factors in conflict, empowering communication, effective listening, constructive and destructive tendencies in conflict, practical conflict tendencies in a cultural and cross-cultural context.
- Practical Approach to leaders as counselors;  
Counselling and leadership, roles of counselling, goals of counselling, basic skills and techniques, code of ethics, stages of counselling, identifying needs and psychological neglect, self-esteem.
- Enhancing Capacity in Accessing Legal Aid;  
Refugee and International Humanitarian law
- Peace Talks and Tribal Conflict Resolution;  
Qualities of a peacemaker, mediation methodology (analyzing case studies), the call for a new alliance, signposts along the road to peace and liberation, training for effective action.
- Partnering and Collaborating with Existing Organizations;  
Practical examples of collaborative community programs, a general framework to collaborating with established institutions, research potential partners, steps to writing a proposal,
- Ethical Leadership;  
Principles of ethical leadership, common mistakes and failures, impacts of unethical leadership, mentoring, and qualities of a mentor.









**A beautiful example of leaders from different religious and cultural backgrounds learning together and in unity about improving the welfare of fellow refugees.**

**#RLT Workshop**

# Impact of Training Sessions, Life Stories & Testament

## Participants' perspective



"My name is Walet Fiseha. I am from Eritrea. When I first started this training, I certainly had my own expectations, but the reality turned out to be so much better. It is hard to mention all the good things I experienced in this course, but I will try to highlight a few. The training gave me a diverse view of the community, a structured study program, wise and kind teachers and staff that helped guide us, and the

unforgettable lunches we all had together. Since I got accepted to this course, my life has drastically changed. I learnt how to make decisions by myself and take responsibility. I gained new knowledge and experiences and I have acquired new skills, and I have also made new friends."

**- Walet Fiseha**



"The leadership training for refugee community leaders is not simply a title for a project; it is rather a powerful reality and a unique event that has affected my life deeply. Since the beginning of the training, we began to get used to words such as hope, work, development, dilemmas, solutions, understanding society and people, strengths, leadership, and ethics. These concepts have had a great impact on my life. I remember that at

that moment, many members of the group turned to me to receive advice and guidance, and from the valuable information I now possess and with methods, these surely will contribute to changing their lives.

It is true to say that in this course we have received a lot, we were helped a lot in our way of thinking and in our way of life, as it taught us to organise our lives, take responsibility, strategies, and the way to apply knowledge to resolve conflicts and meet our needs. The way to solve problems and social conflicts have become easier for us, and our knowledge has expanded.

Thanks to all those involved in the project."

- **Ayman Gundi**

# Summary of the Eight Outreach Activities

## i. Street Gangs & Violence (Ain Shams district)

**Background information:** According to the results of a questionnaire on refugee youth problems in the Ain Shams area of greater Cairo, (which were gathered directly in cooperation with some social institutions in the area) gang violence is an ongoing phenomenon, that breeds other problems, which have so far had no success in being resolved. Mostly, these conflicts are between the Sudanese and South Sudanese nationalities, both young and old who live in that neighborhood, with the horror of fights breaking between rival gangs, which are often common in the area. And at times, these fights extend to other neighborhoods. The RLT outreach in this area reveals that the gang violence issue is caused by other problems.

### Pre-outreach data

#### The general survey (43 P)

- Gangs cause the most common crimes amongst Sudanese and South Sudanese youth.
- Most groups involved are between the ages of 15 and 20
- The involvement of indigenous youth.
- 75% of the survey participants say the impacts of crime and gang activity is very high upon the inhabitants of Ain Shams/Nasr city, i.e. robbery, harassment, lack of safety at home or on the street, etc.
- The proposed solution is to provide employment opportunities for this age group. Keeping them engaged to reduce the time and attention spent on wrongful activities. It provides financial incentives, as many are stricken with poverty. Lastly, it builds their capacity. Other suggestions are to organize youth events and other outreaches.

Interview data with local community leaders, education leaders, and other concerned entities can be summarized as follows:

- The refugee community is socially collapsing because of the long waiting period for UNHCR procedures.
- Poverty and the harsh living conditions experienced by refugees as a result of insufficient subsidies and almost non-existent programs.

- The long working hours at low wages has made some people seek to create other income, i.e, alcohol.
- Conflict of cultures contributed to creating new problems
- The absence of oversight from all official, humanitarian and social agencies from the scene, causes an escalation.
- The absence of educational opportunities and aspirations for the future generated great jealousy that turns into attacks
- The use of drugs and alcohol has contributed to an increase in youth crime.

Proposed recommendations are:

- Helping refugees with equal and adequate services to meet their living needs.
- All civil society organizations, public organizations, churches, and all concerned parties must cooperate in combating this phenomenon.
- Dealing with this phenomenon seriously.
- Putting guarantees for the future of these youths and opening job and study opportunities.
- Really protecting refugees from all forms of racism, tyranny and independence from official agencies.

### Post-Outreach Evaluation

A highly committed group of leaders embarked on a 10 weeks outreach, speaking with rival gang groups, listening and comforting grievances, meeting with local actors to collaborate in providing social support for youths in Ain Shams

#### Objectives:

- Take advantage of youth energies in innovation, creativity and development.
- Organize sporting activities and cultural events.
- Gain the support of local institutions for education with employment support for youths.

#### Activities & Achievements:

- Organized a cultural and orientation event for Ain Shams youth
- Series of focus group discussions that led to an understanding and consensus among youths of the urgency and need for improvement.
- Profiled 80 youth for education, employment, vocational skills opportunity

- Achieved support from 5 education institutions in the Ain Shams area to give a partial scholarship to youth wishing to finish their primary and high school education.
- “Right now, there’s been a positive change in the air when I walk through Ain Shams district, among the youths. Almost six months have passed since we started the outreach in that area, and we have not heard of any rival fighting or violence in Ain Shams. And the gangs often call us in preparation for events or training courses that they could take part in, that might benefit their lives.” – Rose Peter



**South Sudan leaders (left) and local education partners**



**Ain Shams Cultural & Awareness day**



**Youths of Ain Shams event day (a)**



One of the focus group discussions held with gang members

### Challenges:

- Insufficient funds and support in helping profiled youth with partial tuition.
- The short duration of the RLT project and its outreach, resulting in an ending of follow-ups with partner institutions, for employment and vocational skills opportunities for refugee youth.
- Insufficient funds and time. The current pandemic also limited our ability to organize sporting and creative development events.

### Recommendation(s):

Many refugee youths in the Ain Shams area of Greater Cairo have lived there for a minimum of five years, some more, waiting to be processed by UNHCR to go to another country where they could start a better life. Some of the youths are here with family, and others are not. Some of the youth we talked with came to Cairo as children, but have grown to become young adults. And while they wait, they wallow in the stagnancy of their lives and hopes. These are recommendations collected directly from youths living in this area.

- Create educational and vocational skills.
- Community projects and recreational programs that engage young people, redirecting negative energy to more productive uses.
- Providing jobs in line with youth capacities.

- Help young people in small investment projects.
- **The Covid-19 pandemic has reduced work opportunities.**

## ii. Street Gangs (Ain Shams, Zatoun district)

*“The problem of street gangs is one of the biggest problems facing our community.” Says Suzan, a South Sudanese refugee and 2020 graduate of the faculty of commerce, Cairo University.*

A questionnaire was created to identify the problems facing South Sudanese refugees living in Ain Shams. Street gang problems occupied the survey charts, primarily with over 50 per cent of the 100 respondents. Street gangs were also identified as the primary cause of other problems. Our interest was within the groups of youths that people complained about. 15 youths agreed to an interview with a group of leaders from the RLT project, which covered violent activities and attacks, and why they are involved in activities that disturb the community, and whether there is remorse or willingness to do otherwise if given the opportunity. A further inquiry also went into likely solutions to these problems.

### **Key Findings:**

- Gang members are between the ages of 18-37
- Mostly male; very few females
- Only a few live outside their family, but the rest live with families members, and some have their own family
- Nine out of fifteen individuals are students. The rest is either due to the circumstances of life or from the opinion that it is too late and he must have his own family (marriage).
- Reasons for joining gangs include family and social problems, emptiness and loneliness, feelings of neglect and life-direction, the desire for revenge, the insecurity from the area where they live, and the influence of peers.
- The feelings, after becoming a member of a gang group, for most is at first fear, then safety and protection But after a while disagreements on gang activities often lead to some members feeling insecure, yet they are often afraid of leaving the group.
- Most have an interest in artistic and creative artwork. They all share a longing to build something they can be proud of.

### **Post Outreach Evaluation**

In June, a few South Sudanese leaders organized several meetings, exploring the talents amongst the youth of Ain Shams and the Zaitoun districts. These leaders planned a way to help these youths explore meaningful ways to express themselves, and build their self-esteem. Objectives were then set to discover and develop talents among youths in the South Sudanese community. First, we want the youth to use their talents to enhance their

own mental well-being, and to inspire a message of hope in the refugee community. Second, we want young people to be an example of the possibility of transformation for the rest of other youngsters in the refugee community and beyond.

**Objectives:**

- Hold auditions in art & music categories,
- Select talented candidates
- Give two months preparation
- Stage a performance



Music jam session with Ain Shams & Zaiton's youths

### Activities and achievements:

- More than 20 youths were interested in performing arts such as drama, dance, and music
- Discovered youths who produced great musical beats, youths who wrote their own songs, rappers, and traditional dancers
- The auditions brought groups that wouldn't stand each other together
- Staged a performance at the Cairo Afri-Choir Concert of CAWU-Learning Centre at St. John the Baptist Church, Maadi, December 2020



### Outcome:

- 70 per cent of the objectives were achieved except for the extension of similar activities that engages the youths
- This outreach brought joy and future anticipation to all the young people that participated.

### Recommendations:

From the execution of this outreach, the solution to this problem is to fill youths spare time. First: To educate them about the consequences of their violent impulses and behavior to their lives, their family and other refugees, and to their host country. Second: Social awareness for the community. Some of the youths who we conducted the interview with said that their refugee community's view of them is also responsible for their behavior. Religious and social entities need to know these young people's predicament and support them, beyond labeling them as delinquent. Third, provide them with employment and education opportunities, as well as organize cultural and sports programs to bring them together.

### **iii. Robbery and Assaults (Maadi district)**

"I was on my way to collect my son's food assistance from the 77 street, Zamalek branch. It was around 9:00 AM. I was with my child. I was carrying my son on my chest and the tuk tuk driver drove to me straight there. I was walking from the street to the pavement when a man started pulling my bag from me. I was attached to my bag as he pulled me and my son onto the ground. I was screaming and some bystanders were trying to catch the tuk tuk driver but the robber left. Inside my bag was my UNHCR card, my phone, and money. I did not remember the amount, and my son's birth certificate and all my documents were also in the bag. I went to isaaf office and there I received treatment. They dressed my injury and also my son's. It was reported at the police station but I did not get any further help. I was scratched on my face and my hands. When I remember the trauma, I become emotional and psychologically damaged up until now and whenever I see a tuk-tuk and I always feel bad." - YB

"I have lived for about four years in Maadi when this happened to me. It was early morning at 6:30AM, I was on my way from my home to go to work to catch a microbus. At the station two unknown men came out of a car from behind me and one grabbed me, whilst the other one opened the car door, and pushed me inside. Then they covered my face and my mouth with some fabric cloth and started questioning me. I did not see anything because my eyes had been covered. They

then took out a sword which they put on my neck and said "if you do not give us money, we will slaughter you!" I did not have much money, and there was only 300 le in my wallet. Then they beat me on my face and on my body and they took the money which I had in the wallet. After driving for a while, they threw me out of the car in an unknown location. I had two phones in my bag and fortunately the robbers left me with one small phone, and I called my friends to tell them about my situation and asked one of them for my location. After that, my friends came and found me. I reported to my community what had happened to me. But I did not get any help. I have experienced pain in my body. I did not have any witnesses, but it seemed like they were drunk. They looked as if they were from South Sudan, aged about 30-40 years old." - NJ

**Background information:** The absence of safety and security in poor urban neighborhoods of greater Cairo for refugees is the cry of Ethiopian women and men living in the districts of **Maadi**. Maadi is a big district divided into sections. Survey reports show that the poorest sections of Maadi receive little or no police patrols. Stories of MK and NJ are not uncommon; however, this was one of many experiences that caused the most trauma.

Early March 2020, a survey was conducted in Amharic and Oromic languages to get a close up look of street robbery among Ethiopians living in the Maadi area.

#### **Pre-outreach data**

##### **The general survey, in-depth interviews (246)**

- 182 responded that crime is a very serious issue in their district
- Only 20 per cent report feeling safe where they live
- Bullying of women and men and knife attacks came back as the highest crime encountered
- Survey reports show that perpetrators are young adults, between age 20 – 29, are mostly male but include a few females
- These violent assaults happen regularly
- Involvement of alcohol
- 72 per cent believe that the impact of violent assaults during robberies, are very bad especially to females

- Most of the victims have had lingering effects from the incidents, to include nightmares and worries in every moment of their daily activities.
- Only 12 per cent believe robbery and assaults against Ethiopian refugees can be reduced without a strong intervention program.

Participants' recommendations are:

- Participants recommend that the UNHCR communicate with the Egyptian authorities to focus on stopping these robbers and the assaults, i.e., involve active local police intervention
- Raise awareness of the negative effect of crime and violence acts among offenders and perpetrators.
- Raise awareness on drug and alcohol effects.
- Help distressed youth
- Organize educational programs and events for youth

## Post-Outreach Evaluation

Street robbery, assaults, and possible ways to minimize the violent incidences were the focus of the interview, conducted with social workers and Ethiopian refugees in Maadi. After the survey results and the knowledge gained from a one-on-one interview with 25 people, who have suffered directly from the robbers' assaults, a group of Ethiopian leaders in the RLT project honorably intervened to raise awareness around protection mechanisms. "These people have suffered physically and emotionally, resulting in behavioral change, such as isolating themselves from people, preference for loneliness, depression, constant fear of people, and everything connected." These people have not only lost possessions, but their mental health has suffered too.

### Objectives:

- Enhance victim's confidence and educate them on how to protect themselves better.
- Illuminate with effective street lighting those pathways & streets which are more likely to be covered by CCTV.
- Officially, bring to the police's attention or cantonal prosecution services about the level of street robbery in the area.

### Activities and achievements:

- Focus group sessions for victims to speak about their experiences. 'Being heard by others restored a bit of humanity and compassion to the group. "
- Counselling session for victims.

- [illegible]

**Outcome:**

- 39



Ethiopia leaders preparing for outreach

#### iv. Street Robbery (Ardelewa district)

**Background information:** Street robbery is amongst the most reoccurring acts of violence against Eritrean refugees on a daily basis in the Ardelewa area of greater Cairo. These incidences have been found to be directly caused by the low security of the poor urban neighborhoods where most Eritrean refugees and other refugees can only afford to live. The information below shows analyses of the situation before and after the outreach carried out in the area, by Eritrean leaders participating in the RLT project.

##### Pre-outreach data

##### The general survey (60 P)

- One hundred per cent of survey participants confirmed having experienced some form of violence since they arrived in Egypt, such as street robbery, harassment, domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination, and exploitation.
- 78% of participants rate street harassment and street robbery as **the largest** acts of violence perpetrated against them.
- The frequency of its occurrence is high, causing individuals to live in constant fear and worry, with 90% of survey participants saying they feel unsafe living in their neighbourhoods.
- 59% of these acts are caused by young adults (age 20 -29), with teenagers (age 13 – 19) at 41%, who are mostly male with a few females.
- 72% of survey participants remarked it had affected them, more mentally than physically, and others, financially, with Eritrean females as the highest targeted group.
- About 42% say they sometimes get help from churches, mosques, and CBOs.
- All survey participants believe street robbery and harassment has impacted Eritreans and the neighbourhoods negatively.
- Only 16% believe that harassment and street robbery can be reduced. However, others think that providing direct awareness of the negative effects of violent acts to youth in the neighbourhoods could reduce its rate and frequency. Providing accurate information to Eritrean leaders who help distressed

youth, and lastly with support programs that build ethical character and improve young peoples mental states.

#### The in-depth interviews

- Robbing is common during the evenings after 8 pm and early mornings.
- Most of the robbers were alcohol users, and they use knives, blades, and machetes to attack their victims.
- Most robbers move in groups to steal people's property.
- The robbers use physical attacks during the robberies.
- Perpetrators are identified as Sudanese youth, Egyptian bus and tok-tok drivers.
- Most victims approached the police for help, but they were asked to give the names and address of the robbers. An impossible task for the beaten victims.
- Most robbers steal smartphones, money, wallets and also necklaces, etc.

"It was on a Saturday, at 8:00 pm. My employer had just given me my weekly wage. Suddenly, I saw 4 Sudanese youths with 2 Egyptians in the street. It was getting dark, and it was a narrow street too. There weren't any people in the street at that time. The boys were around 20 years old. They took out knives and blades and threatened to kill me if I tried to protect myself, and they then took the 1500LE and my phone from my pocket, and they ran away."- LR

"It was on a Sunday, I was carrying my shopping in my right hand and my wallet in my left hand, when a tok-tok driver and his colleagues brushed by me and took my purse from my left hand, and they then escaped."- JS

#### Post-Outreach Evaluation

Street robbery has had profound implications on the living conditions of refugees living in the Ain Shams area. Cases of knife and machete attacks, and other threats have left lingering psychological and physical suffering on Eritrean refugees, living in the neighborhood. This has led Eritrean leaders participating in the RLT project to carry out an eight week long outreach, to decrease street robbery and harassment and its impact, and to build the psychological well-being of victims.

**Objectives:**

- Mapping to show clearly, the common areas where street robbery incidents happen.
- Conduct 3 counselling sessions for victims of harassment and robbery. (Victim support)
- Organize a physical activity for mental release and team building
- Create a care plan for trauma victims.

**Activities & Achievements:**

- Facilitated group sessions where victims shared their experiences with others.
- Mapping out and sharing with outreach participants, where typically the main streets robbers work, and who often patronize these areas, and suggest the best times to avoid them.
- Holding counselling sessions for traumatized victims.
- Held a football match for stress release and team building.
- Created a support group where victims can update each other and reach out for help.



**Sessions with Eritrean youths in Ardelewa**



**Ardelewa outreach football event**

**Impacts:**

Three months after the outreach, 19 out of 23 victims reported that the criminals and street robbery incidences have decreased. 4 responded that street robbery had not changed. The mapping out of the dangerous streets has helped the victims. They have changed their behavior and have limited movements and the time of movements to only the safe zones. However, the victims who responded back negatively, said that street robbery and harassment have not reduced due to the criminals changing areas/locations, and some reports of rape happened, when one was on her way home from work.

According to the participants' feedback, the outreach provided awareness, and counselling sessions helped reduce stress and anxiety levels after incidences. 92% of the victims report that the leaders sessions were very helpful and supported them in dealing with challenges with street robbers. The victims indicated that it had built strong integrations within their communities, and the information related to social service providers had been very beneficial.

Overall, the victims built strong relationships with each other, and with the Eritrean community's centers. They have continued to have activities, such as group discussion sessions, with peer support, and are planning to have weekly football matches to build friendships with other refugee nationalities and indigenes around the Ardellewa area.

## v. Street Harassment (Mohandeseen district)

**Background information:** Mohandeseen district has since housed Eritrean refugee and other nationalities. Recently, many have complained to community leaders about the safety of their young teenagers and women on the street. The community meetings, group discussions, and surveys reveal that sexual harassment happens very often and happens openly on the street. This makes Eritrean leaders participating in the RLT project investigate further and carry out an intervention plan on the issue.

### Pre-outreach data

#### The general survey, group discussions (180 P)

- Reports of whistling, honking, or making kissy noises, butt and breast grabbing, scarf and other possessions grabbing, and someone physically following and calling improper sexual names.
- Over 60% report a frequency of one or more of the acts of sexual violence
- Most harassment happens on the street, on the bus or taxi, and even on the phone.
- Offenders are between the age 17 and 35 years.
- Participants report that offenders are mostly indigenes.
- Offenders are mostly male, with a few females
- Less than 20% reported incidents to the police and some refugee organizations.
- None received any help.
- Participants report that they have had to change their route, change the time they walk outside, move out of the area, fight on the street with the offender, shout and cry on the street, and feel fear, anxiety, and depression (trauma) from the incident.
- Most participants say they feel insecure everywhere they go and have suffered very low self-esteem and numbness.

### Post-Outreach Evaluation

Refugees in this area experience daily sexual harassment that has affected their emotional and psychological well-being. Some of the outreach participants experiences have caused them severe stress (observed during our stress management and counselling sessions.) In this outreach, Eritrean leaders focused on the following objectives.

**Objectives:**

- To increase the awareness of victims on how they can better protect themselves.
- To increase victims' knowledge on how to better communicate with offenders.
- To help victims overcome fear and to build their mental strength.
- Improve victims' confidence.

**Activities and achievements:**

- Conducted 3 counselling sessions.
- 2 Stress management sessions.
- 2 Practical sessions on dealing and communicating with offenders on the street.
- Support from refugee organizations to help victims.

**Indicators of outreach evaluation**

- Increase levels of awareness and understanding of victims about street harassment.
- Improve the confidence of victims to move about safely in the street.
- Improve the level of communication of victims with offenders.
- Willingness and ability of victims to report sexual harassment to the police or other organizations

**Outcomes:**

- These results are based on an evaluation conducted after two months of implementation.
- The reliance capacity and the coping mechanism of the victims increased incredibly.
- Feeling of confidence to move in the street increased by 25.58%( A good report), 55.81% reported very well, and 16.60% reported excellent after they had attended the session.
- Victims understanding about street harassment and the ability to protect themselves against street harassment increased above 50%.
- The programs impact had a great contribution for victims, to encourage reporting personal incidents to the police or other organizations. From 14.8% increase to 44.18%, which was a significant achievement.

## vi. Physical Attacks and Abuse at Work Places

**Background information:** In April 2020, when a first survey inquiring about the nature of workplace attacks and violence was conducted, 80 Ethiopian women and men responded. Aside from the street attacks and harassments that most refugees are subjected to in their daily lives, Ethiopian women working as stay-home babysitters, adult care-givers, and cleaners are often subjected to physical and verbal maltreatment from their bosses. A group of Ethiopian leaders from the RLT project investigation has provided insight on the nature and causes of workplace violence against domestic workers, directly from the stories and records of these women.

The challenge during the interview was the victims' need for justice and the frustration of talking about what has happened to them, without expecting any kind of formal security or protection, as past experiences have proven.

What can be done to resolve the plight of employers abusing their power against vulnerable domestic workers, who are mostly refugees?

"I started work at an Egyptian house as a cleaner. The lady that I worked for kept giving excuses as to why she could not pay my salary. For a while I did not complain because work was difficult to find, but when I told her I'd stop working for her without my salary, she accused me of stealing money from her. There was no proof but the police put me in prison. I was pregnant and I had my baby in prison. With the help of the UNHCR, I was released but not after suffering unjustly" - SR (female)

"This happened while I was working in an Egyptian household. The madam only started paying my salary after two months of work and she promised me another payment the following month. She wouldn't give me food, so I took prepared food from my home to last me the entire day while I was working at the house. In the end, she also refused to let me go for my monthly three days holiday. I became

sick and went back home to recover but she wouldn't pay me for the months that she owed me." - SH (female)

## Post-Outreach Evaluation

For Ethiopian leaders, the effort to secure legal protection for refugee women working as domestic workers is still an ongoing struggle. A conclusion from talking with 30 Ethiopian women was that for there to be an effective solution to the abuse and maltreatment of refugees at workplaces, there must be structural conditions and guidance for employers and an accountability system in place. But within a month, Ethiopian leaders organized workshop sessions that provided information on how this vulnerable group can strengthen their position at the workplace, communicate better when repressed, and where to ask for help.

### Objectives:

- To educate 30 women on protecting themselves from future workplace abuse
- To provide psychological support





**Ethiopian women outreach sessions**

**Outcome:**

- Created the Ethiopian Womens Domestic Worker's Group
- Integration and unity among the women in the community. Before the outreach, many report feeling isolated and unsheltered during crises.
- The women reported feeling educated and confident about preventing abuses in the workplace
- Ethiopia Maadi CBO supporting women at work

## vii. Harassment and Anti-social Behavior (Giza district)

**Background information:** Eritrean leaders teaching in refugee schools report constant complaints of harassment among junior and high school students. A report of fighting, in the way of defense against street bullies became very common. Sometimes, students absenteeism from school is caused by the fear of being harassed on their way to school. Among this group, about 70 per cent of the survey respondents identified street harassment and violence as the major cause of stress travelling to school.

**Key findings:** Most of the victims are female and below the age of 20 years. The abusers are teenagers and sometimes under the influence of alcohol and drugs. The abusers are mostly located in Ard-elewa and Liwa. They are found mostly in public places and services. They attack young brown skinned girls (Eritrea and Ethiopian refugees). Most of the time they use sharp objects like razor blades and knives. Other actors participating in harassing young refugee boys and girls are taxi drivers, Sudanese youth gangs, Egyptian drivers (motor cycle and bus), and local shop owners. Many of the victims we interview were still traumatized by what had happened to them.

**"It was in Dec2018, when I had my appointment at the UNHCR. On my way I was confronted by 3 teenagers. They tortured me and took my smartphones and the money that was in my wallet."- M**

## Post-Outreach Evaluation

We selected 40 students from the community, who have experienced victimization by abusers and from the respondents who have been interviewed 25 were female and 15 were male.

### Objectives:

- 1) To educate victims and vulnerable students to reduce violence in the Eritrean community.
- 2) To help build the robust mental strength of victims who have been traumatized by severe accidents.

### Activities and achievements:

- A lecture about basic psychological awareness and interpersonal skills
- Practical guidelines on mental strength sessions
- A stress management session
- A cultural responsiveness and behavioral change session

**Outcome:**

- An evaluation was conducted 3 months after the outreach
- Students behavior has changed with regard to fear and anxiety
- An 80 per cent positive response, that the sessions helped change their attitude towards the abusers
- 13 participants reported, saying that they were less victimized after going through the sessions
- 50 per cent of participants became highly involved and 40 per cent moderately involved in local activities
- All participants including parents asked for a repetition of similar sessions



Eritrean junior & senior high school students at a session

### **viii. Home Robbery (Ardelewa, Faisal district)**

#### **Background information:**

Home robbery is one of the crimes perpetrated by gangs, and the lack of security in Ardelewa and Faisal districts. Refugees living in that area said they always have to be on the lookout for intruders which has affected their daily routine and living. During interviews, some reported that it has led to psychological distress, fear, and anger for them. “During the home robbery, the gangs use knives, and machetes to attack the victims which sometimes causes serious physical injuries to the refugees.”

#### **Post Outreach Evaluation**

Based on the information gathered during the research, a group of Eritrean leaders built a plan with the goal of reducing the likelihood of refugees living in Ardelewa and Faisal, falling victims to home robbery with what they could do in the face of a robbery and to improve their psychological well-being. Therefore, we decided to work with 40 Eritrean refugees, who have different backgrounds and experience of home robbery. 20 male and 20 female from Ardelawa and Faisal.

#### **Objectives:**

- To educate the victims on home protection in order to reduce the number of home robbery incidences.
- To build mental strength for the victims who have been traumatized by home robbery.

#### **Activities and achievements:**

- 6 Practical sessions covering home protection; before and after a robbery, information of organizations and police stations that can help them, activities on community and trust-building, psychological well-being, mindfulness practice, meditation, and behavioral change, which has helped create relationships with each other and has increased better communication.
- 2 Counseling meetings

**Outcomes:**

- The evaluation was conducted 2 months after implementation.
- Outreach participants reported that the awareness and counseling sessions helped reduce their stress and anxiety levels.
- 95% report that the sessions supported them in dealing with challenges of home robbery. The information related to service providers helps where needed to report any criminal acts that may have happened.
- Elevated confidence.
- Over all, this improved relationships and communications among the group, and also with Eritrean CBO leaders.
- The starting of a peer support session.

# Future Project Recommendation

## **Practical Intervention Project**

Every survey, focus group, and interview that we did throughout the refugee leadership training project has deepened our understanding of the ongoing crisis in refugee communities, which the pandemic has now magnified, cries out for a continuing intervention program that focuses on achieving visible, tangible, and transformative results in the targeted refugee communities. The lack of opportunities that facilitates youths development and contribution to society has increased criminal gang activities, idleness, and hopelessness among refugee youths, with drunkenness, street harassment, and home robbery, among Sudanese, Eritrean, and Ethiopian and other refugees. The refugee leaders are unanimous that this urgently needs to be addressed.

Through this leadership project, we have trained leaders among refugees, met and established relationships with CBOs, and some religious and educational institutions in places where refugees live. The execution of a practical intervention project in computer literacy, education and vocational skills training will greatly improve the prospect of many refugees' employability. It will also maximize the youthful energy and talents of young refugees (ages 18 – 30) while reducing criminal activity in gangs, which we know to be the source of other problems in the community. Our research and interviews with many gang members have informed our strategy and what we thought was possible. We see a drive and willingness amongst these youths if given access to opportunities and guided learning goals.

Through the RLT outreaches, we have profiled 50 South Sudan and Sudanese youths who are presently expecting a call back from us; 15 in need of scholarship for computer literacy, 7 in need of support to either resume or enrol for college, 6 in need of scholarships to complete high school, 15 in need of some vocational skills, and the rest in need of employment. There are more youths on the sideline. Education scholarships or any other kind of scholarship for refugees in Cairo are very few and are highly competed for by high performers. With nothing left for the average student/person to benefit from. Every day, many of these youths live in despair of not having opportunities to rebuild their lives or even explore their talents for future possibilities, just because they are refugees. And with the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been a massive dropdown of opportunity and those who previously had employment, including some RLT leaders, reported getting laid off. Please help these young refugees grow into their positive and shining angelic natures and turn away from the violence that destroys their lives and their families, and communities.

## **Refugee & Egyptians' Integration**

Between most refugees and Egyptian people, especially in the poor urban neighbourhoods where people live in close proximity and social amenities are rare; refugees reported receiving animosity from Egyptians. The language and cultural barrier build tension and distrust that only a form of interaction can bridge. Without seeking government intervention, I recommend organizing cultural, music and art, sporting, and community work social events that include the participation of Egyptians and refugees. International and local organizations should support programs that create an environment where indigenous people and refugees can play, share knowledge, and experience life together. Sustainable welfare programs would be more efficient considering engaging and aiming at both refugees and poor natives.

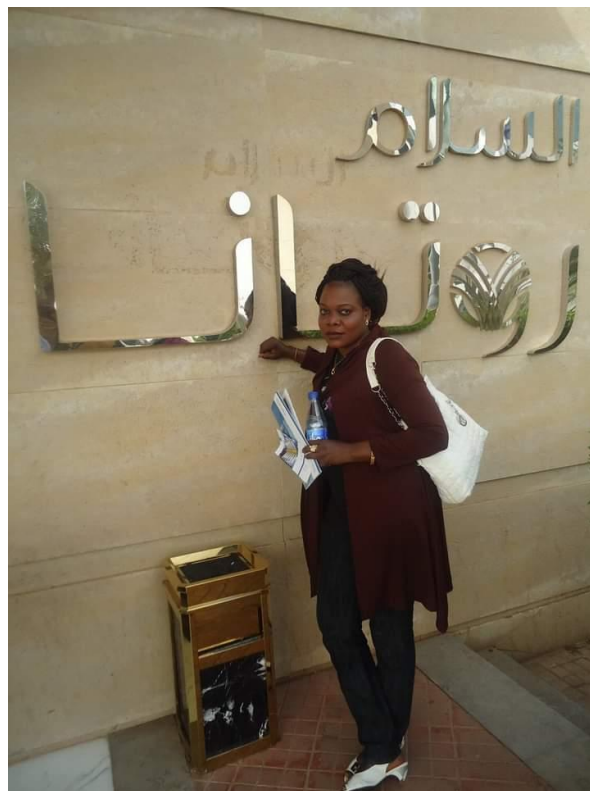
**Sincerely,**

**Oluwapelumi Comfort Dickson, Project Coordinator**

# Meet the RLT Leaders, Project 2020









# Lessons Learned from the Covid-19 Pandemic



**Samia M. Hassanein, Management Training Facilitator**

Starting with the development of the Mental & Psychological well-being series was the perfect start at the time of the emerging Covid – 19 Pandemic. That was in early March 2020. As no one predicted at that time that the pandemic was to last so long and stay with the whole world for almost 15 months. This workshop, I believe, had a tremendous impact on the refugee leaders and their communities.

Starting simply with the understanding of words like Mental, Psychological, Physical, Social and Emotional (well-being) created a basis for what came after. In talking about the basic needs for refugees, with what affects their mental health and the real problems they now face in their communities, the likely paths to solutions and how to overcome those problems, this experience prepares them on how they can make a difference in the world around them.

There have been three workshops that included a practical outlook on stress and extreme stress management, signs and effects, and how to deal with them in practice—how to solve practical problems. We also touched on some steps on improving leaders' levels of action, connecting with their community and others outside their community, in strengthening

social support networks. And in how to take good care of themselves; how to stay positive and active while serving with excellence.

There were lots of reflection and discussions, examples and lessons drawn from their community and personal experiences, making the learning applicable, relatable and enjoyable. And a follow-up community project supervised by the project coordinator gave the leaders a field to cultivate. It was a great success.



**Dr Sammy Muthini, Conflict Resolution Facilitator**

Changes are never comfortable. This is because they can move us away from our normal way of doing things, into embracing other ways that we were not used to before. Covid 19 has woken us up in different ways and by various means. It has also brought a lot of devastating effects into our lives that we shall never forget, with scars that cannot easily be erased. Regardless of our status, these are some positive and negative ways I see the pandemic has commonly affected us.

1. Times of family reunion have been forcefully created. Many parents were forced to work from home, and children were stuck inside with their parents, and therefore the bonding that was not as strong before was restored between the family members. Even if not fully effective in all ways, it did bring some positive changes.
2. In handling conflicts and ways of managing differences, many people were not used to being together for long periods, but this time they had no choice but to be confined together in their homes. When differences arose, they had to learn how to manage and even handle conflicts. This helped people to listen and to understand each other.
3. With wise management of available resources and proper usage, many resources were constrained and became rare. This is because movements were limited, and many had to work from home. What was available had to be managed and used more efficiently to avoid shortfalls. Some management skills with the available resources had to be learned.
4. New methods and ways of doing things were created. Meetings were banned, and even places of worship were closed. This opened room for other forms of bringing people together; this meant using applications like zoom. Many firms accommodated these technologies and have been found to be very useful. Virtual meetings, even in schools, have become normal.

5. Levels of hygiene and cautiousness became part of people's lives. The Covid-19 protocols had to be followed, like washing of hands, wearing masks and keeping distances, became normal and helped reduce the spread of the virus as people became more careful in handling things daily. This was a positive move.

Some negative effects.

1. Many family conflicts arose, and because of failures in handling them, some families broke up. Their differences became irreparable.
2. Many could not manage their lives because of the changes. This caused many deaths due to suicide, killing others, drinking and drug abuses because of the short-term feelings of escape with the associated feelings of happiness and relief.
3. With the degradation of morals, many children became involved with bad company and other associations that negatively affected their normal lives. Some became drug addicts, and drunkards and also thieves, with all manner of antisocial behaviour. This was in addition to long periods of absence from school and being exposed to the wrong values.
4. A non-hygienic way of living that resulted in sickness and death.

It is important to learn that these changes are here to stay, and we may now need to embrace them so that we are not swept away by the pandemic. I wish you all the very best as we all must learn from these new developments.



**Cornelis Hulsman, Director of the Arab-West Report & CAWU-Learning Centre**

Being a refugee in a country that is not one's own is difficult. That person is neither equal to the citizens of the host country, nor are they able to return to their own country. The only effective way to support refugees in any country is through education, giving individual refugees the skills needed to address the difficult circumstances they are living in, and use these skills to uplift their own community. Skills-building, therefore, should never be an effort that serves the interest of an individual refugee only, but a refugee with strong motivations to serve other members of his or her community as well. This is why Dutch donor EO-Metterdaad has done well to support the "Training Community Leaders in the refugee community in Egypt," project.

Egypt has been a sanctuary for refugees since ancient times. When there was a drought in countries surrounding Egypt, people came to Egypt as we read about the arch fathers Abraham and Jacob. Centuries later Joseph and Mary escaped to Egypt to protect Jesus from the wrath of king Herod. With the prosperity following Muhammad Ali's reign, Syrian, Lebanese, Greek and Italian immigrants entered the country. The Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire in 1917-19 led to thousands of Armenians seeking refuge in Egypt. All these migrants received Egyptian citizenship.

The Second World War resulted in the movement of millions of displaced refugees, which in turn led to the creation of the office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950. The support for refugees was regulated in the 1951 UN Refugee convention. Egypt played a major role in the formulation of this convention since Egypt was host to large numbers of refugees following the Second World War. Egypt became the first non-European government to allow the UNHCR to establish an office on its territory. New

crises, such as refugees fleeing Hungary after the Hungarian revolution in 1956, showed the work of the UNHCR was indispensable.

The decolonisation of Africa in the 1960s led to new crises. When Africa, a continent with a great and fascinating history, was divided between the European powers in the 19th century, Africa was deeply divided into numerous tribes mostly identified by the diversity of languages that were spoken.

Colonisation brought Western education, but African kingdoms and tribes lost their political power. New borders were drawn, often disrespecting existing tribal borders. Countries were formed, hosting tens of different tribes that had never formed a political unity before the Europeans had arrived. Many colonisers exploited these countries for material gain, whilst Muslim and Christian missionaries spread their own belief systems at the expense of traditional African religions. Africa changed dramatically during the period of colonisation but it did not end the tribal divisions. This resulted in African leaders having to choose between allegiances of the newly created nation-state or the old tribal allegiances. We see many types of African leaders, those working towards unity while others have embarked on increasing tribal sentiments. It is therefore not surprising that decolonized countries faced instability, some more than others, with tribes and nations fighting each other for resources and power. It became necessary to extend the UN Refugee Protocol in 1967. Egypt also ratified this protocol.

The most important provision of the 1951 Refugee Convention is the prohibition for states to forcibly return a refugee to a country where he or she fears persecution. Barbara Harrell-Bond (1932-2018), a British American social scientist in the field of refugee studies, who was teaching at the American University in Cairo, describes in "Voices in Refuge", the difficulties refugees in Egypt face. Egypt will not expel the approximately 500.000 recognised refugees but for the millions of non-documented migrants, (a group that is hard to count) this is less certain. The Egyptian census does not distinguish between them and other foreigners who migrate to Egypt. Most of them are illegal. The Egyptian police routinely check people in the streets and if someone overstayed his/her tourist visa or has no refugee status the police may return the migrant to his/her country, whether a host country is believed to be safe or not.<sup>1</sup>

Barbara Harrell-Bond writes that "the lack of national laws on refugees and the unwritten non-integration policy of the Egyptian government have all contributed to the hardship of

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<sup>1</sup> Cornelis Hulsman, Arrested and Expelled, Arab-West Report Newsletter, September 30, 2018, <https://www.arabwestreport.info/en/arrested-and-expelled>

refugees in Egypt.”<sup>2</sup> Egypt has unofficial reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention which “do not permit refugees to enjoy their basic rights.” The consequences are that a refugee is not able to send their children to an Egyptian school and cannot work without a permit. “Most ratifying states allow refugees to work immediately although some require that they have been resident for three years before allowing them to work. After the three years, refugees should not have to have a work permit,” Barbara Harrell-Bond states.<sup>3</sup>

Egypt hosts refugees from around 40 nations. The largest groups are Sudanese, South-Sudanese, Eritreans, Ethiopians, Syrians, Iraqis and Somalis. The “Training Community Leaders in the refugee community in Egypt,” project served refugee leaders from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and South-Sudan.

The UNHCR recognises a portion of the refugees, which creates a difference in status between recognised refugees and unrecognised asylum seekers or migrants. Eritreans and Ethiopians are mostly recognised, but this does not apply to most Sudanese, South-Sudanese, Syrian and Iraqi refugees. These, however, are mostly Arabic speaking and integrate more easily within Egypt. Many of the rejected refugees, nevertheless, cannot return to their own country because of the fear of persecution. Egypt, therefore, hosts thousands of refugees with closed files who continue to live in the country illegally. It is particularly hard for refugees whose native language is not Arabic.

Refugees have come to Egypt because Egypt has been, and still is one of the most stable countries in a region full of unrest. Refugees also come to Egypt because they know they can apply for asylum at the UNHCR in Egypt which will protect them from expulsion.

The numbers of refugees in Egypt have been growing in the past decades. The largest group is from Sudan and South Sudan.

Sudan gained independence in 1956 and hosted about 600 ethnic groups speaking over 400 languages. Fighting started rapidly between the Muslim dominated north and the south where traditional African religions and Christianity were dominant. Decades of fighting have created many millions of refugees. I have witnessed the camps around Khartoum in the 1990s where Southern Sudanese refugees were living in horrendous circumstances that were far worse than anything one could have seen in Egypt in recent years. No wonder many tried to escape to Egypt where life was hard but far better than in Sudan. Southern Sudan became independent in 2011 but without the charismatic John Garang (1945-2005)

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<sup>2</sup> Barbara Harrell-Bond, Foreword in Nora Eltahawy, Brooke Comer, Amani Elshimi, *Voices in Refuge; Stories from Sudanese Refugees in Cairo*, the American University in Cairo Press, 2009, p. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

at the helm, tribal fights erupted in the newly independent country, resulting in more refugees fleeing north to Egypt.

The next largest group of African refugees is that of the Eritreans and Ethiopians. The history of Eritrea and Ethiopia is strongly related with Tigrinya both widely spoken in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Both countries were also strongly influenced by Christianity since the 4th century and later experienced Muslim influences. In 1890 Eritrea became an Italian colony, which after a short period of British and UN administration became an autonomous part of Ethiopia in 1952 under US pressure. The authoritarian rule of emperor Haile Selassie and the Marxist government that succeeded him resulted in a 30-year war for independence. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) defeated, under the leadership of Isaias Afwerki (1946 - ) the Ethiopian forces in Eritrea and helped a coalition of Ethiopian rebel forces take control of the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. Since then, Ethiopia has been a federal democratic republic.

The achievements of Isaias Afwerke have been huge since Ethiopia had, and still has far more resources than Eritrea. The Eritrean population has been growing from 1 million in 1960 to 3.2 million in 2010. Meanwhile the Ethiopian population has been growing from 20 million in 1960 to 112 million in 2019. The achievements of president Afwerke have come with a high price. He created the national service in 1995 that regulates that nationals, between the ages of 18 and 50 have the duty to participate in national service in the armed forces. With this, Eritrea has become a deeply militarised country that was able to defend its own interests at the expense of the interests of individual citizens. In May 1998 a border dispute resulted in the Eritrean–Ethiopian War, which lasted until June 2000. I have visited Eritrea in this period and met a delegation of the Cairo Foreign Press Association, with president Afwerki. We were allowed to visit the trenches at the frontline where we saw the body of a recently killed Eritrean soldier and heard stories of young recruits who wished the war would be over. The final peace agreement between the two countries was only signed in 2018, twenty years after the initial confrontation.

Eritrea has built a well-trained army that has 250.000 – 300.000 personnel, which is roughly the same size as that of Ethiopia. The national service is mandatory since the termination of the war with Ethiopia, and conscription is open ended. And there has been no demobilisation.<sup>4</sup>

Continuous political disturbances in the Horn of Africa including the Tigray war that started in 2020, and the ongoing national service in Eritrea, continues to create new refugees. Eritrean refugees in Cairo explain that the national service is harsh, it makes it hard to maintain a family and this has created a steady stream of refugees who escape

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eritrean\\_Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eritrean_Army) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopian\\_National\\_Defense\\_Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopian_National_Defense_Force)  
Accessed April 9, 2021.

overland to Egypt through Sudan, where living conditions for refugees are not only very difficult but Sudan also uses the Cessation Clause in the 1951 Refugee Convention, which allows a host state to declare the conditions in the home state to be 'okay' so that refugees must return there. It is this fear of forced return that makes many refugees move as fast as possible to Egypt.

Refugees from many other countries fled political disturbances in their countries and came to Egypt, including other African and Arab countries in the region.

The government of Egypt provides very limited social services to these refugees, asylum seekers and low-income migrants. This is not surprising. The country is overpopulated since 99% of the population lives in the Nile Valley and Delta. The percentage of people living below the poverty line has increased from 27.8% in 2015 to 32.5% in 2019.<sup>5</sup>

Refugees are, unfortunately, often perceived to be a threat for poor Egyptians in the informal sector. That is not entirely justified. Refugees perform many jobs that even the Egyptian poor do not want to perform, such as women working as cleaners, housekeepers or nannies, in Egyptian and expatriate families, and they live with the family. The life for refugees is a struggle for sheer survival. Most refugees are unemployed, under employed, or exploited for their work by being paid lower salaries than Egyptian workers. Access to education and health services is poor. A substantial number of refugees depend on support provided through the World Food Program. Others are somewhat better off since they attract remittances from relatives who are living abroad. For one Eritrean family we are aware of, the mother with children lives in Egypt while the father is working illegally in Saudi Arabia, which is risky since if the Saudi authorities discovered this he would be expelled to Eritrea, where he would be enlisted into the Eritrean National Service, which would end any support for his family in Egypt.

Since Egypt lacks the means to provide these communities with support, the most desperate among them roam the streets of Cairo and target fellow black Africans, since the Egyptian police would surely clamp down on them if they would dare to target Egyptians or Western residents or visitors to Egypt. Others try to escape to Europe and in doing so often fall into the hands of human traffickers. Many have perished.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cornelis Hulsman, Poverty, Water and Stability, Arab-West Report Newsletter, August 6, 2019, <https://www.arabwestreport.info/en/poverty-water-and-stability>, Cornelis Hulsman and Jonathan Holslag, Serious Negative Consequences of Egypt's Impending Population Explosion, Arab-West Report, March 22, 2018, <https://www.arabwestreport.info/en/serious-negative-consequences-egypt%E2%80%99s-impending-population-explosion>

<sup>6</sup> Cornelis Hulsman, Coptic Demographic, Migration and Bureaucracy, Arab-West Report Paper, December 23, 2019, <https://www.arabwestreport.info/en/coptic-demographics-migration-and-bureaucracy>

There are hundreds of unaccompanied minors in Egypt. They are provided with a stipend of the UNHCR which is discontinued after they or an older sibling turns 18.

Services are often difficult to locate and access for refugees. Barbara Harrell-Bond wrote. “One’s access to these services is also dependent on the individual’s legal status, language abilities, and religion, as well as his or her gender, knowledge and understanding of the city, and ability to express oneself and so on.”<sup>7</sup>

“Egyptian authorities would be wise to recognise that in order to prevent refugees from becoming an economic burden in the long run, they must be given assistance and opportunities to integrate and ultimately contribute to Egyptian society. Most important is education, so that they are less likely to resort to criminal activities in order to secure a living,” Barbara Harell-Bond concludes.<sup>8</sup>

This is precisely what Oluwapelumi Comfort Dickson and Dani Missangwa have provided with the December 13, 2019, EO-Metterdaad Award. Where other refugee and non-refugee projects collapsed with the covid-19 pandemic, Comfort and Dani have moved on and have achieved remarkable success. The results of these are documented in this report.

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Harell-Bond, Foreword in Nora Eltahawy, Brooke Comer, Amani Elshimi, *Voices in Refuge; Stories from Sudanese Refugees in Cairo*, the American University in Cairo Press, 2009, p. xv.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Harell-Bond, p. xvi.