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DID YOU KNOW THAT OUR MUSLIM CLIENTS CALL WORLD RELIEF "THE CHURCH"?

One Somali businessman told us, "We Somalis know that when we really need help, we can go to the church." Thank you for all the ways you honor Jesus and his church through your generous giving and serving.

Somali Outreach Conference

140 people from 70 churches gathered in March to be equipped and encouraged by World Relief in reaching out to their Somali neighbors. Participants, following the conference theme of humility and hospitality, were encouraged to open their homes and lives to their Somali neighbors by building friendship through English tutoring, cooking, quilting and sharing activities and food.

Retired Pastor Marc Erickson and his wife Nancy, founders of Eastbrook Church, Milwaukee, told how God called them to Somalia as medical missionaries and how hospitality was central to living out the Gospel. They recounted how Ahmed Haile came to faith and how Pastor Haile practiced hospitality as he shared his life and Jesus with his own people. Before he died last year, Pastor Haile published his life story dedicated to hospitality and peacemaking, in the book "Teatime in Mogadishu."

If you are looking for practical ways to put your faith in action please contact World Relief Minnesota's Somali outreach ministries – rajo@wr.org or salt@wr.org

Rajo Ministries

Rajo continues to engage church members and the Somali community in dialogue around shared interests; has expanded existing quilting sites; and at two locations church volunteers are building bridges with Somali friends at their local community centers.

Moreover, God is opening doors of opportunities to reach out to the Somali community and touching the hearts of the believers to be sensitive to this burgeoning population. Rajo Ministries is helping to equip new partner churches in Hopkins, Plymouth, Rochester, and the Pelican Rapids area while continuing to serve existing partners in the Twin Cities.



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Why do they come?

God's Bigger Answer

CERTAINLY REFUGEES COME TO THE UNITED STATES looking for hope and safety, to escape horrific persecution, fear and isolation. But, as scripture brings to light, the reason they come to our communities is not only about their appalling situations but also about God's sovereign movement in history. The Apostle Paul declared the following:

In community with the local church, World Relief envisions the most vulnerable people transformed economically, socially, and spiritually.

"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." Acts 17:26-27

This articulates that it is God who is bringing the nations to the U.S. and illuminates the "why" behind this unprecedented movement of people. It's not just that our new neighbors might experience peace and security and find God. But, that they are also God's agents to bring you and me a new understanding of God, to help revitalize our churches and to bring the Gospel into the lives of those unreached or un-churched in our own communities, who need to hear of God's love and God's provision through passionate new voices.

Closely aligned to this concept is what Jesus spoke as recorded in Mark's Gospel:

"My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." Mark 11:17

This speaks to the identity of the Church not just as a place to pray about all the nations but as a place for all the nations to gather together and worship God. This vision is captured in Revelation 7 as people from every tongue, tribe, nation, and language gathered around the throne of God in worship. While it is a future vision it is also a future-now vision. Surely God delights in church communities where refugees and native born gather together to worship; living out God's purpose to unite all nations under his leadership.

So, thank you for the part you play in "welcoming the stranger" and for opening your hearts to what God wants to teach us through those who have travelled a hard road to call themselves our friends, neighbors and joint heirs of God's blessings.

Bob Oehrig, Executive Director

Blessed *to be a* Blessing

BAHERU HAILE IS A LONGTIME VOLUNTEER at World Relief Minnesota, and one of the estimated 8,000 Ethiopians living in the Twin Cities area. As a former refugee himself, he brings a unique, insider's perspective to his work as a volunteer, and was willing to sit down with us and share some of his insight.

When he was a teenager, Ethiopia was embroiled in a civil war. Worried at the prospect of being drafted into the army, Baheru fled to Kenya in pursuit of a better life elsewhere. He was eventually resettled in the U.S., and with the help of his host family, learned the language, culture and social systems enough to build a life for himself here. Now, he wants to pay it forward by blessing those in similar situations today.

According to Baheru, the biggest challenges he faced as a refugee were the language, the culture, and adjusting to Minnesota's frigid climate. Refugees arriving today face many of the same struggles. The first six months are often very lonely, but as the family goes to work and

school, they begin to make friends and adjust to their new life. It helps that there are many more resources and social services available than there were when Baheru first arrived. He is grateful to his host family for the help and support they offered him many years ago.

Today, Baheru's volunteer work consists of picking up new families at the airport, taking them to the Social Security office to get their Social Security cards, and helping them register their children for school. Of these tasks, school registration and airport arrivals are his favorites. He loves to see the way people react to their first view of America. He says: "If I could go to the airport every day, I would be happy."

Baheru has some advice for his new friends: "Learn English as quickly as possible, and interact with American culture, even if it is intimidating at first. Make American friends, be patient with yourself, and don't isolate yourself, but adapt to the culture and become a part of the community."

We at World Relief are grateful to have Baheru on our team!



IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, WORLD RELIEF SAW:

- 153 additional refugees resettled including 87 Burmese; 29 Somalis; 23 Bhutanese and 14 Russians and Ukrainians.
- Over 300 refugees receive immigration and legal services.
- 17 churches work with one or more refugee families in our Refugee Life Ministries program
- New Somali Adult Literacy Training (SALT) sites open in Nairobi and Seattle.

World Relief Refugee Gardening

Since welcoming our new Community Gardening Coordinator, Dennis Murnyak, to the World Relief team there have been many inquiries about getting involved with community gardens. The enthusiastic interest is compelling evidence that the gardening movement has generated support for the concept that fresh, healthy vegetables and fruits can be produced right within the city for family consumption, income generation for low-income refugee families and for stocking local food shelves.

We rejoice that more and more churches are offering land to neighboring apartment dwellers and new refugees settling in their communities. As churches get involved, World Relief and our partners such as KOM (Karen Organization of Minnesota) envision: offering community supported agriculture food baskets, teaching gardening skills to children and conducting classes in food preservation and nutrition. These are all fertile opportunities for the Gospel to be proclaimed in word and deed.



Welcoming *the* Stranger

HEIDI AND ERIC BROWN HAVE BEEN VOLUNTEERS with World Relief since Fall 2011. They were new to the area and eager to get involved in local ministry, so with the help of a close friend and former World Relief intern, they were connected with World Relief and attended an informational meeting on refugee ministry. Moved by the situation of our new neighbors, they decided to become volunteers.

Their first assignment was with a Burmese couple whom they met at the airport. At first, the Browns struggled to define their role, as the couple had no children and was already well-connected with many whom they had known in the refugee camps in Thailand. They did not seem to need as much help navigating social systems or getting from place to place. Though the Browns were occasionally able to drive the couple to appointments or help them with other tasks, much of their work was simply meeting the couple in their home and interacting with them as best as they could in spite of the language barrier. They met other couples in the apartment complex, played with the children, and focused more on getting to know their new neighbors than on doing a series of tasks.

Over time, however, the Browns came to realize just how much their Burmese friends appreciated their presence and their willingness to visit them in their homes and build relationships. Even though the Browns initially felt that the Burmese community was meeting the couple's needs, there was one need that only the Browns could meet—to provide them with English-speaking, American friends who were willing to cross those cultural barriers.

One of Eric's favorite stories was when he invited one of his new friends to come along with him on that quintessential Minnesota tradition—ice fishing. Though they didn't catch any fish, the man was thrilled to be able to walk across a frozen lake, and the leftover minnows in the bucket made a fun few hours for his children, and a tasty soup for supper that night!

The Browns offer this advice for those wanting to do ministry with refugees: don't be afraid of the awkward silences. The language and cultural barriers can be frustrating, but presence matters, and eventually, those awkward moments will lessen and be replaced with friendships that last a lifetime.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

"Volunteering for World Relief has been one of the highlights of my life over the past several years. We moved to Minneapolis four years ago and I searched for a volunteer organization that would be meaningful to me. I chose World Relief for two reasons – it is a Christian organization and it works with refugees. I thought that I had chosen World Relief, but now I realize that God had chosen World Relief for me."

— Joan Leverenz, WRM Volunteer



"I feel very much like without my Karen family as a living, breathing example of God moving... I don't know where I'd be. I'm incredibly grateful for that continued and consistent place they've had in my life and in my heart."

— Rhianna Huizenga, WRM Volunteer