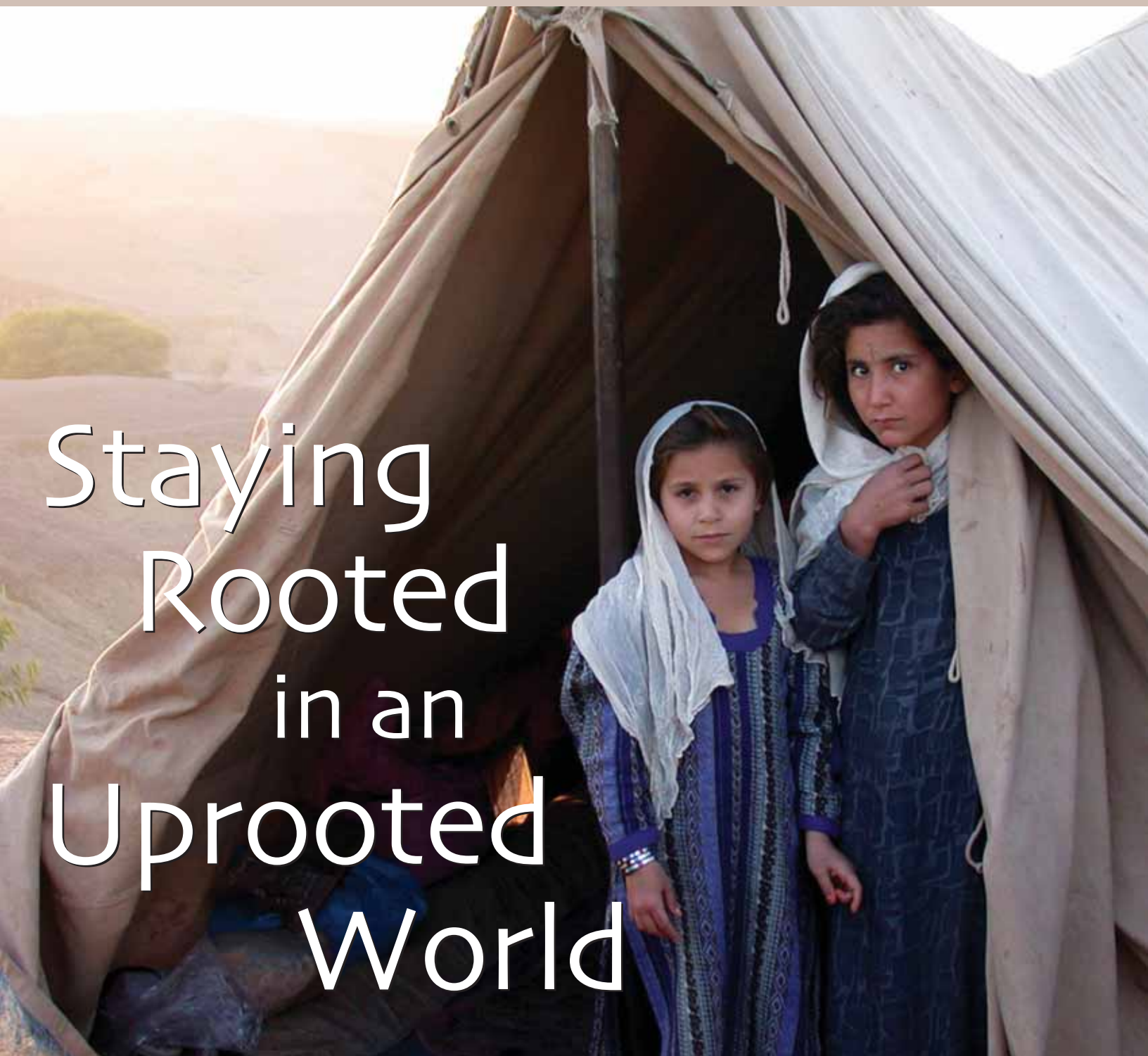


# Making Connections

A photograph of two young girls standing in the doorway of a tent. They are wearing traditional blue and white patterned dresses and white headscarves. The background shows a desert landscape under a hazy sky. The text 'Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

## Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World

by Glynis Williams, Huda Kandalaft and Shuling Chen

The Church's Study 2010-2012 • The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Making Connections

# Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World



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The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

# Making Connections: Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Study 2010-2012

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# Introduction

## Why study uprooted people?

Since the beginning of time there have been uprooted people. Too often, individuals, families and whole communities have been forced from their homes in order to survive. War, political upheaval, ethnic discrimination, religious strife, natural disasters, ecological destruction and poverty all lead to people being uprooted from their homes against their will. Many uprooted people are left struggling to survive and are vulnerable to further exploitation.

The Bible is full of stories about people on the move, both by choice and without choice. This study looks at what Scripture has to say about people who are unjustly uprooted and at the current reality many people face today. Using real life stories\* from refugee ministries supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, you will explore God's call to both welcome the stranger and address the underlying causes that force people to be unjustly uprooted. While this study focuses primarily on refugees, it also encourages you to learn how people are uprooted in other ways and apply what you learn to all people.

When we root ourselves in the stories of our faith, we recognize that the stories of uprooted people are also our stories. We also discover that we are not so different from the people in the Bible or in refugee camps today. We have the same needs and the same yearnings. May this study and its stories of hope, faith and love inspire you and your congregation to find ways of living out God's call.

*\*Note: Sometimes names and some details in these stories have been changed to protect people's identities.*

## How can church groups use this study?

The study is designed for groups to gather for five 60-90 minute sessions with members sharing leadership. In each session participants have the opportunity to hear stories from uprooted people, study Scripture, share their experiences and apply what they have learned. Leaders are welcome to select from the material offered or to add to it.

- Each session assumes that one member of the group will use the study book as a leadership guide. The "prepare" instructions give the minimum number of copies you will need to print. Instead of photocopying the pages, you can print them from the electronic copy of this study found at [www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/1291](http://www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/1291).
- The prayers may be read as a group, or one person may be assigned to pray each session. The opening prayer is the same for each session. You may want to photocopy it once and keep it to have the group read together.
- Bibles are needed for each session. Have people bring their own or have enough for each member of the group.
- Songs suggested for each session are from *The Book of Praise, 1997*. Feel free to use them to open or close the sessions, or as desired.
- The suggestions for action are offered as options to be considered in light of the group's interests and time. Many of the actions suggested are longer-term actions that may continue after the study has been completed. You may want to choose one or two that suit your group according to their gifts and abilities.



# Background Information on Refugees

## 2008 Migration and Refugee Statistics\*

- As of January 2009 there were 42 million forcibly displaced people worldwide: 15.2 million refugees, 827,000 refugee claimants (pending cases) and 26 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The UNHCR is providing protection to 10.5 million refugees and 14.4 million IDPs.
- Refugees from Afghanistan (2.8 million) and Iraq (1.9 million) account for almost half of all refugees under the UNHCR's care. Colombia, Somalia and Sudan follow with almost half a million refugees from each country.
- 80% of refugees are hosted by developing countries, most of whom are already struggling to care for their own populations.
- Approximately two-thirds of refugees have lived in long-term (protracted) refugee situations averaging 17 years. Many have been confined to camps in remote areas. (Dr. James Milner, Carleton University, Ottawa)
- There are about 192 million people living outside their place of birth, which is about three per cent of the world's population. This means that one person out of every thirty-five people in the world is a migrant. (International Organization for Migration)

\* Unless otherwise indicated, statistics are from *2008 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons*, UNHCR, June 16, 2009. [www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html)

## How is the United Nations involved?

Today most refugee issues are handled by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR was initially created as a temporary organization to address the needs of refugees in Europe displaced by WWII. However, it was soon recognized that the needs didn't stop there, and today the UNHCR works in more than 100 countries and has a staff of about 6,500 people.

The UNHCR has been mandated by the United Nations to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It protects and supports refugees when they are outside of their country of origin and helps them return home when it is safe to do so, integrate locally or resettle in a third country.

By creating the UNHCR, the international community agreed that people had legitimate reasons for fleeing their countries, and that there needed to be some way to help and support them. It was hoped that the UNHCR would promote regional and international stability by coordinating governments' responses to refugees.

As the number of refugees has increased around the world, the UNHCR has discovered that persuading countries to host, protect and find solutions for refugees is no easy task. Too often governments have seen refugees as a burden on their resources and a threat to their security. The UNHCR is often assisted in caring for refugees and in persuading governments to live up to their responsibilities by non-governmental organizations, including churches. Through Presbyterian World Service & Development, Canadian Presbyterians have supported refugees in refugee camps overseen by the UNHCR. The refugees sponsored to come to Canada by Presbyterian congregations are first identified as refugees by the UNHCR.

### How is Canada involved?

The Canadian government accepts refugees for resettlement to Canada and provides funds for the UNHCR and other agencies to provide humanitarian aid for refugees in the places where they have fled. There are two ways that the Canadian government resettles refugees in Canada:

- By identifying refugees overseas and bringing them to Canada for resettlement (refugee sponsorship programs)
- By providing a system to determine refugee status for people who declare they are seeking protection as refugees at Canada's international borders and airports (refugee claimants)



Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together

A woman living in a camp for internally displaced people in Democratic Republic of Congo. PWS&D is providing food, shelter and psychosocial care through the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International network.

## How is The Presbyterian Church in Canada involved?

### Sponsoring refugees

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) with the Government of Canada, allowing it to authorize congregations to undergo the sponsorship of a refugee. Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) administers the agreement and helps congregations undergo the work that needs to be done to sponsor a refugee.

Canada Ministries supports the refugee sponsorship and advocacy work of Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) in partnership with the Presbytery of Montreal and with funds from *Presbyterians Sharing*. ARM helps groups sponsor refugees and supports refugee claimants.

### Providing humanitarian aid and support

PWS&D supports refugee situations in other countries by providing food, water, housing, education, health care and other services through Action by Churches Together and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. PWS&D has provided significant humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced people over the years, most recently, Kosovo, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Congo, Afghanistan and Colombia. Much of this work is coordinated through the UNHCR.

Mary Gorombey, a PCC International Ministries staff person working in Hungary with the Hungarian Reformed Church, is supporting refugees who are being settled in Hungary. Mary is supported by gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing*.

### Advocating for refugees

Justice Ministries and the International Affairs Committee have often brought refugee issues to the General Assembly for advocacy action. Moderators of the General Assembly have often written to the Canadian government on refugee issues on behalf of the General Assembly. The PCC is also a member of a number of Canadian refugee advocacy groups including the Canadian Council for Refugees.

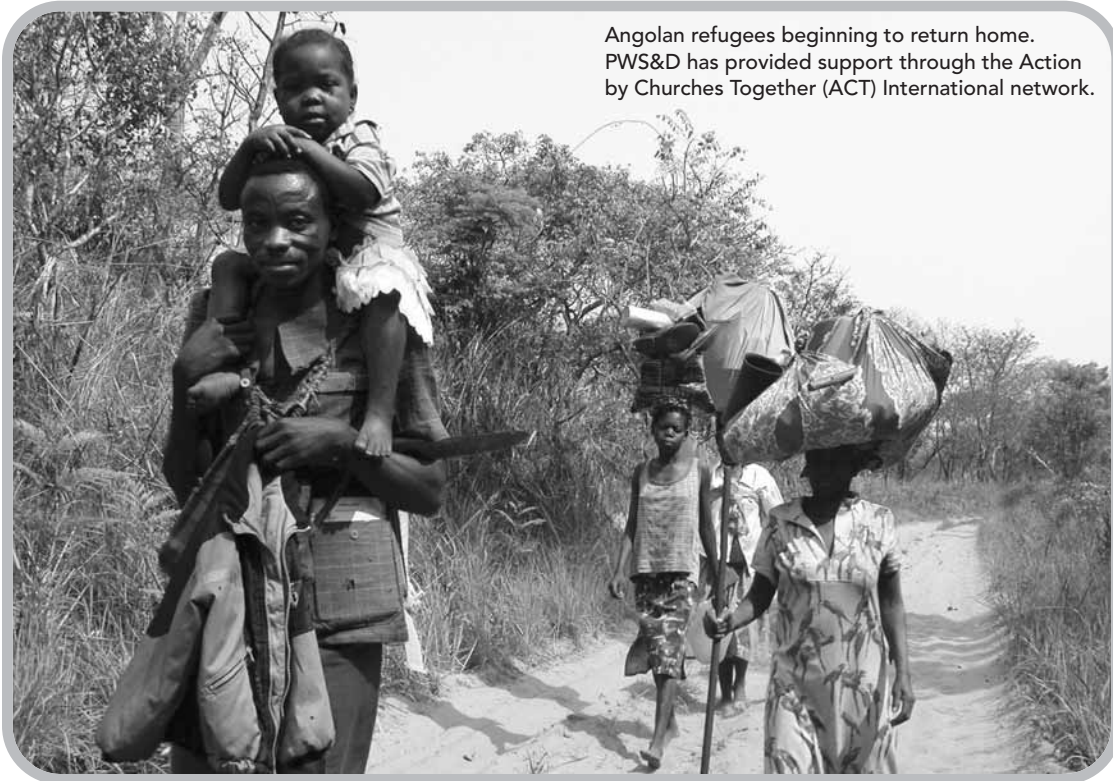
Mary Gorombey (standing far right) with a group of students who have been accepted as refugees in Hungary and are learning how to integrate into Hungarian life.



Photo: Mary Gorombey, International Ministries



# Why care about uprooted people?



Angolan refugees beginning to return home. PWS&D has provided support through the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International network.

Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together

## Stories of being uprooted and becoming refugees

### Goals

- To learn about the different ways people may become uprooted and how some people become refugees.
- To reflect on stories in the Bible about uprooted people.
- To explore our relationships with uprooted people, particularly refugees.
- To act on what we have learned.

### Prepare

- Photocopy and cut out the seven different stories (p.10) so that they can be distributed for different people to read.
- Photocopy the definitions (p.11) for each member of the study, and write them out on a large piece of paper to display for the group or project on a screen.
- Decide if you will do any of the actions at this session and bring any material needed to do so.

## Pray

God, our creator and sustainer,  
you loved us long before we knew ourselves to be lovable  
and love us still.

Give us, we pray, a greater awareness of your love for all people,  
and a confidence in the action of your grace in us and in your church.

Grow in us a greater awareness of the oppression  
and acts of greed that create refugees.

Give us the courage to welcome the stranger among us  
and the wisdom to speak up on their behalf.

We praise you for your mysterious ways among us:  
for your presence in the midst of human affairs,  
even in ways we do not understand.

By the power of your Spirit, may we grow in the truth  
that compels us to act justly;  
giving expression to the compassion of your son Jesus.

We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Source: Adapted from *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities* by Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988, p.110.

## Sing

Help us accept each other (#632), Bring many names (#310)  
When the poor ones (#762)

## Listen

People are uprooted for many reasons. This exercise will explore why and how. Divide up the stories on pages 10-11 and have each member of the group read one story aloud. Then proceed to the discussion questions.

A child who was internally displaced by violence in Colombia. Displaced families have received support from PWS&D through Action by Churches Together. Presbyterian churches in Canada have sponsored refugees from Colombia.



Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together

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## 1 The story of Paw Say

When Paw Say fled Myanmar (Burma) with her four children in 1995, she wondered if they would make it to Thailand together. For four years her family lived in the jungle and her youngest child was born there. While there, Paw Say's husband was killed. As members of the Karen ethnic minority, they had lived with extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, forced recruitment of young men to fight in the army, arbitrary fines, crop destruction and confiscation. They were persecuted because they were Karen and because they were Christians.

When Paw Say's family arrived at the Thai border they asked for protection from the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees).

---

## 2 The story of Karim and Roya\*

Karim and Roya are from central Afghanistan, members of the Hazara ethnic minority who are primarily Shi'a Muslims. They are proud of their distinct language and traditions. After their marriage, they moved to Kabul, hoping to escape the ethnic and religious discrimination against Hazara people in their home province. In 1995 the Taliban was growing in strength in the countryside not far from Kabul, often targeting Hazara people. Then, more and more violence was happening in Kabul.

When their daughter, Sima, was only four months old, Karim and Roya decided to flee to Pakistan. Travelling by minibus, they were stopped by Taliban militants. Roya could speak some Pashto and begged that their lives be spared. She considers it a miracle of God that they made it safely to Pakistan.

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## 3 The story of Eduardo\*

It is becoming harder and harder for farmers in Mexico to survive. They cannot compete with the cheap corn imported from subsidized farms in the US. They are faced with dilemmas of how to support their families and help their children have a better future.

One Mexican farmer, Eduardo, wanted to send his children to school. He heard about people like himself working in Canada and making a good wage – enough to cover their children's schooling costs. So Eduardo came to Canada under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program to pick fruit. The work was hard and the days were long. He was paid less than a Canadian worker would be paid and worried about what would happen if he got sick or injured. He missed his family, but Eduardo resolved to keep working because of his children, and because he could earn more in Canada than he could in Mexico.

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## 4 The story of Marian

In January 1991, with civil war raging in Somalia, gunmen invaded Marian's home and killed her father and nine-year-old brother. She was sprayed with shrapnel and her mother and other brothers and sisters fled, believing her to be dead. But somehow Marian survived. Neighbours found her with a broken leg and shrapnel fragments imbedded all over her body. They cared for her and eventually carried her with them to a refugee camp in Kenya.

## 5 The story of Elizabeth\*

Back home in the Philippines, Elizabeth was a nurse. But good jobs were scarce and she found it hard to make sufficient money for her family. There were lots of ads in the papers about a special work program in Canada for live-in caregivers. She decided to apply and was very happy when she was accepted. She came to Canada and worked in the home of a Canadian family, caring for the pre-school children and doing some housework. It was supposed to be 40 hours a week, but often it was longer.

Elizabeth focused on her personal goals and eventually she applied for and received permanent resident status. After living for five years in Canada and never going home to visit her family, Elizabeth was able to bring her two youngest daughters to Canada. Her eldest daughter had married and was no longer considered a dependent child, so she was not eligible to be sponsored by her mother. Elizabeth is happy to have her two younger daughters living with her, though it hasn't always been easy getting to know each other again. They all miss the eldest daughter.

## 6 The story of Nouri\*

Nouri is a Presbyterian minister who was born in Egypt. Over the years he had contact with numerous Canadian Presbyterians and he started to discern a call to ministry in Canada. He applied to the committee on reception of Ministry and Church Vocations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and he was approved under a specialized immigration program. After doing some additional studies, he is now the minister in a Presbyterian church in Canada. He and his family are very happy that God called them to this ministry.

## 7 The story of Papi\*

In 2006, fearing for his life, Papi fled to Canada from his home in a country in northwest Africa. He was just 17 years old. When he arrived in Canada, he said he was a refugee and went through the process of writing up the details of his story and submitting it to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). Then he waited. He spent 27 months, lonely and anxious, waiting for his refugee claim to be heard. He was fearful that his story would not be believed. He could not pursue his education. He constantly checked his mail, waiting for news of the hearing date. His family back home didn't understand. "My father told me that I must have done something bad in Canada and that was why things were not moving forward for me. He stopped believing me. I felt even lonelier."

\*name has been changed to protect the person's identity

## Definitions

**Refugee:** A person outside of his or her country of origin who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted in their home country for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

United Nation's 1951 Geneva Convention definition

**Internally Displaced Person (IDP):** A person who has fled war, famine and/or persecution, but has not left his or her country of origin. Many have fled for similar reasons as refugees and may live in temporary camps for the internally displaced, but they remain inside the boundary of their country and under the care of their government. The UNHCR has a limited mandate to care for IDPs and is doing so in places like Darfur, Sudan.

**Permanent resident:** A person who has been granted permanent resident status after having come to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee. This term has replaced the term *landed immigrant*.

**Immigrant:** A person who has chosen to move to another country and settle there – most often in search of work or for other personal reasons. To immigrate to Canada, people must apply and be selected while living outside of Canada.

**Migrant:** A person who moves to another country without being granted the rights of permanent residence. Migrants often leave their homes due to extreme poverty, environmental catastrophes and forced displacement due to projects such as dams or mines that destroy livelihoods. In Canada, most migrants come under temporary worker programs such as seasonal agricultural or live-in caregiver programs, which afford few rights or protection from abuse.



## Biblical stories and uprootedness

The Bible has many stories about people leaving their homes and living in other lands. For example, in the Old Testament consider Adam and Eve, Noah, Abram and Sarai, Joseph, David, Elimelech and Naomi, Ruth, and the Israelites exiled in Babylon. As we read such stories we learn not only about people experiencing uprootedness, but also about people practising traditions of generosity, hospitality and compassion to the stranger, the foreigner or the “alien.”

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### What’s our tradition?

Paw Say, Karim and Roya, Eduardo, Marian, Kiza, Elizabeth, Papi and Nouri all left their homes and lived in new places as strangers. They have felt like outsiders; at times they have felt marginalized, as though they were not valued and did not belong. Uprooted people need support and understanding to find their place in a new society. Everyone wants to be valued and to belong, but belonging happens only when one is accepted and welcomed. How do we in the church practice hospitality and compassion to strangers?

## Discuss

On one side of a sheet of paper, list the names of the main characters of the stories you have just read. On the other side list these words: refugee, internally displaced person, immigrant, migrant worker. Discuss the meaning of each word, using the definitions to assist.

1. Discuss the stories and help each other apply the definitions to the characters. Note that different definitions may apply to the same person at different points of the story. See the answers below.
2. Share experiences – your own or those of people you know or have heard of – of being defined by one of these words.
3. What are the main factors that differentiate you from people defined by one of these words?

## Answers:

1. Paw Say and her family were internally displaced when they were living in the jungle in Myanmar and then became refugees when they entered into Thailand. *Note:* When they are sponsored to come to Canada, they will become permanent residents.
2. Karim and Roya were internally displaced when they moved to Kabul. They became refugees when they fled into Pakistan.
3. Eduardo is a migrant worker in Canada.
4. Marian became a refugee when she was taken to Kenya. *Note:* When she is sponsored to come to Canada she will become a permanent resident.
5. Elizabeth was a migrant worker in Canada and then became a permanent resident.
6. Nouri is a permanent resident who immigrated to Canada.
7. Papi was a refugee claimant when he arrived in Canada. (A refugee claimant is someone who has claimed refugee status and is waiting a determination.) He was finally accepted as a refugee in 2009.

*Note: You will learn more about Paw Say, Karim and Roya, and Marian in the upcoming sessions!*

## Study and reflect

Divide into two groups, each reading and reflecting on one of these passages:

- Matthew 2:13-15. Recall the story of the wise men that precedes this passage. How is the experience of Jesus’ family a story of uprooted people?
- Exodus 3: 9-12. Recall the Exodus story, particularly the Israelites’ experience in the wilderness (Exodus 16:3 and 17:3). How is the experience of the Israelites a story of uprooted people?

Come together and have each group share their biblical reflections. What other biblical stories seem relevant? See the sidebar *Biblical stories and uprootedness* (p.12) for more information.

On a sheet of paper list some biblical characters who were uprooted. Then read the list of definitions again and talk about how they apply to this list of uprooted people.

How might these biblical characters and their stories help us today to understand uprooted people and to sort out our relationship with them? Read *What's our tradition?* (p.12)

## Act

- Use words and images from your discussions and the background information to make a banner encouraging solidarity with uprooted people. Display it in the church on a Sunday that works for your congregation. Consider Refugee Rights Day (April 4), World Refugee Day (June 20) or International Migrants Day (December 18). You may want to work on the banner each week, adding to it what you have learned.
- Work together to summarize a few of the interesting things you have learned in a few paragraphs. Use these as a *Moment for Mission* on uprooted people in your Sunday worship service. Photos to complement your stories can be downloaded from [www.presbyterian.ca/refugees](http://www.presbyterian.ca/refugees)
- Create a bulletin board so you can share with your congregation what you are learning about refugees and uprooted people. Add to the board after each session. Additional resources for statistics and photos can be found at the websites of UNHCR ([www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)), Canadian Council for Refugees ([www.ccrweb.ca](http://www.ccrweb.ca)) and PWS&D ([www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd](http://www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd)).

## Pray

All-embracing God, no one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care. In your kindness, watch over refugees and exiles.

For those separated from their loved ones when they fled war and conflict, re-unite them and give them protection.

Inspire us to make our churches places of refuge for those in search of safety and peace. Help us to show by our words and our actions the welcome you gave to the strangers you met.

We pray,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,  
In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,  
In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,  
We give our praise and thanks. Amen.



Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together

Internally displaced women in Darfur, Sudan collect water at a water point supplied by Action by Churches Together. PWS&D supports internally displaced people in Darfur through the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International network.

# Why get involved with uprooted strangers?



Ta Mla Lar, 17 (left) explains how he and his sister, Ta Mla Say, 13, and mother, Paw Say, escaped Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, and arrived in Woodstock as refugees sponsored by Knox Presbyterian Church.

Photo: Elliot Ferguson, Woodstock Sentinel-Review

## Stories of becoming sponsors

### Goals

- To learn how congregations become private sponsors of refugees.
- To study the Bible for guidance on helping strangers.
- To reflect on our relationship with uprooted people, particularly with refugees of a different faith.
- To act on what we have learned from uprooted people.

### Prepare

- Photocopy Case Studies I and II (p. 43-46) so that each member can have a copy of at least one of the case studies.
- Gather a number of squares of sticky notes or index cards and pens.
- Photocopy *Rewards and challenges*, (p.16) *Expectations* (p.17) and *But they are a different religion!* (p.17) so different people can read them to the group.
- Make a copy of *Different world views* (p.18) for each member of the study or write examples on a large sheet of paper for people to see
- Decide if you will do any of the actions at this session and bring any material needed to do so.

## Pray

God, our creator and sustainer,  
you loved us long before we knew ourselves to be lovable  
and love us still.

Give us, we pray, a greater awareness of your love for all people,  
and a confidence in the action of your grace in us  
and in your church.

Grow in us a greater awareness of the oppression  
and acts of greed that create refugees.

Give us the courage to welcome the stranger among us  
and the wisdom to speak up on their behalf.

We praise you for your mysterious ways among us:  
for your presence in the midst of human affairs,  
even in ways we do not understand.

By the power of your Spirit, may we grow in the truth  
that compels us to act justly;  
giving expression to the compassion of your son Jesus.

We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Source: Adapted from *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities* by Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988, p.110.

## Sing

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love (#229); Brother, sister, let me serve you (#635); Teach me, God, to wonder (#704)

## Listen

Divide into two groups. Have one read *Case Study I: The story of Paw Say*. Have the other read *Case Study II: The Story of Marian*. After each story has been read, pause to let those who wish share their reactions.

### Sharing reactions:

- *The part of the story that affected me the most was...*
- *It made me feel...*
- *I felt this way because...*

## Discuss

Come back together and have each group summarize the story they read and how they felt about the story.

Set out colourful squares of sticky notes or index cards and pens. Invite everyone to write down the main reasons why they think congregations get involved in refugee sponsorship. Use one piece of paper for each reason. When participants are finished, ask them to place their papers on a central table or in the middle of

## Sponsoring refugees

Private sponsorship is a legal agreement signed by a congregation. Congregations raise the funds to cover all expenses including accommodation, food, transportation and other expenses. They may collect donations of clothing and furnishings to help offset the financial cost. They may also help the refugee family find housing, settle into educational programs, find work and learn new life skills. Members of the congregation may provide tutoring, find interpreters, arrange medical appointments and find furniture, clothing and other goods for the family.

Congregations in The Presbyterian Church in Canada have a long history of sponsoring refugees. When US forces withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, thousands of Vietnamese fled the new communist regime, often taking to sea in over-crowded boats. Sponsorship agreements signed by many denominations with the government of Canada helped these "boat people" settle into Canada. Within 18 months, 250 families were sponsored by PCC congregations and a total of 10,000 refugees were settled in Canada.

*Statistics from the Board of World Mission report to General Assembly 1980, p. 207*





## Rewards and challenges

Many congregations have found that refugee sponsorship can be personally rewarding and have a positive impact on the congregation. Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alberta has sponsored refugees from Kosovo, Iraq and Eritea. As one member of Varsity Acres said, “It provided an opportunity to invite the whole congregation to be involved – and people responded generously both with their time and their belongings.”

The experience can be profound, inspirational and demonstrate the capabilities of the congregation, involving people who might otherwise not be engaged. However, it can also be challenging. There is the tendency for some individuals to become overextended. Some people may believe that there is an excessive use of resources to help only a few people. The trauma a refugee has faced may make it difficult for them to trust people and form relationships. It is important for the congregation to keep communication lines open and talk about issues and challenges that arise. It’s not always easy. “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

Glynis Williams (right) with Marguerite Nyandwi. Marguerite was a refugee from Burundi living in Kenya when she was sponsored to come to Canada through Action Réfugiés Montréal.

the floor, arranged in a straight vertical line. Ask someone to read out all of the reasons even if there is repetition.

Then invite everyone to note the challenges they think about when considering refugee sponsorship. Again, use one piece of paper for each challenge. When participants are finished ask them to place their papers across the vertical line so that it forms a cross. Ask someone to read out all the reasons even if there is repetition.

1. Which line is longer (i.e. has more pieces of paper)? Why do you think this is?
2. How might the symbol of the cross relate to the motivation and challenges of sponsorship? See *Rewards and challenges* (to the left).
3. What role do you think expectations might play in relationships between sponsors and refugees? See *Expectations* (p.17).
4. How do you feel about Presbyterian churches sponsoring refugees, particularly refugees of other faiths? See *But they are a different religion!* (p.17).
5. How would you expect sponsor-refugee relationships in inter-faith situations to be different? To be similar? Do you think such situations would only present difficulties or could there also be opportunities? Explain.

## Study and reflect

Read aloud Luke 10:29-37, the Parable of the Good Samaritan. How are the events in this story similar to the refugee and sponsorship stories we have heard? How are they different? What were the risks of stopping and helping the traveler?

- Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In the first column, list the characters who come across the traveller, leaving space between them: the robbers, the priest, the Samaritan. Read and discuss *Different world views* (p.18).
- Think of some examples from our world today of people holding each of these different world views. List some of them in the second column across from the corresponding character.
- What do you think motivated the Good Samaritan to help the wounded man? Why do you think Jesus used a Samaritan character for this role? Read *What an example!* (p.18). What is the significance for us today as we consider sponsorship of people of different faiths like Marian?
- What other teachings and actions of Jesus might be relevant for a congregation wondering whether or not to help resettle refugees?
- Reflect on the relationship you and your congregation have had over the years with refugees and uprooted people. How do you think your faith calls you to continue or change this relationship?

## Act

- Read aloud *Don't call me a stranger* (p.18). As a group, prepare a recital of this poem and talk to worship leaders about offering this to the congregation in an upcoming worship service. You could add simple gestures or sign language for significant words and phrases to increase the impact.
- December 18 is International Day for Migrants. Organize a special worship service in your congregation to celebrate God's love to all people. Light the "Love" candle in your advent wreath, saying, "We pray for migrants who are forced to leave their countries in search of work."
- Join the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) as they call on the Canadian government to forgive the transportation loans for refugees with their *Hidden Costs* campaign. Refugees resettled to

## Expectations

Resettling in Canada can be tough. Jean Patterson of Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alberta, says, "Often the expectations of refugees are unrealistic. They envision the perfect life on arrival and are naturally disappointed to discover that they can't communicate, that they don't have their own home and good job and resources. This leads to frustration and disappointment." The support of a congregation can help refugees through the adjustment process.

Sponsors can also have unrealistic expectations, forgetting that refugees didn't choose to leave their homelands for Canada, and forgetting that refugees are people like ourselves struggling to raise children, coping with roles and relationships, and wanting to hold on to traditions.

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### But they are a different religion!

Sometimes, as in the first story of Paw Say and her family, the refugees are Christian and want to attend church with their sponsors. But many congregations sponsor refugees who don't come to church. Indeed, some congregations knowingly sponsor refugees of a different religion who will never be a part of their congregation.

Jean Patterson's church, Grace Presbyterian in Calgary, Alberta, has sponsored Muslim Somali families. Jean says, "The hard part for people in the congregation is to see that we are using time, money, effort and commitment for people who will never come to our church. And I am always moved to reply, 'But they are God's creatures. We are all God's children' ... We bring whoever is in need, like we feed whoever is hungry...it is a tradition that is part of hospitality." Passionate about this, Jean continues, "Scripture is full of how we are to treat the stranger and the alien, showing how we are to relate to the excluded, be they widows, like me, or orphans. We are always to *include* them. Scripture is always about *including* people."

## Different world views

Consider the different world views held by the robbers, the priest and the Samaritan.

The robbers thought, “You have what I want, and I am going to take it, even if it requires force.” They attacked the traveller, stole his money, and left him for dead at the side of the road.

The priest and the Levite both thought, “What is mine is mine, what is yours is yours; I don’t have time to get involved.” They walked by on the other side.

The Samaritan thought, “What I have is yours, and I will share it with you, if I need to.” The Samaritan shared what he had – his money, donkey, time – to care for a person who wasn’t his ethnicity, religion, caste or creed.

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## What an example!

Jesus couldn’t have chosen a person more radically opposite to the Jewish lawyer, the priest and the Levite than a Samaritan (Luke 10:25). In *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching – Luke*, biblical scholar Fred B. Craddock writes, “This man who delayed his own journey, expended great energy, risked danger to himself, spent two days’ wages with the assurance of more, and promised to follow up on his activity, was ceremonially unclean, socially an outcast, and religiously a heretic.” (p. 151)

## Don’t call me a stranger

Have different people read each stanza of this poem “Don’t call me a stranger.” Share reactions.

Don’t call me a stranger;  
I need to feel at home;  
Especially when loneliness cools my heart.

Don’t call me a stranger;  
The soil we step on is the same;  
But mine is not “the promised land.”

Don’t call me a stranger;  
The colour of my passport is different;  
But the colour of our blood is the same;

Don’t call me a stranger;  
The language I speak sounds different,  
But the feelings it expresses are the same.

Don’t call me a stranger;  
I toil and struggle in your land;  
And the sweat of our brows is the same.

Don’t call me a stranger;  
Borders, we created them;  
And the separation that results is the same.

Don’t call me a stranger;  
I am just your friend;  
But you do not know me yet.

Don’t call me a stranger;  
We cry for justice and peace in different ways  
But our God is the same.

From *Study: Making Room Good Samaritan*.  
Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, Philippines, 1995  
(Abridged version).

Canada must pay back a loan to the government that covered their medical exam and their travel to Canada. As a result, refugee families may start their new life in Canada with a debt of up to \$10,000. They must repay this loan with interest. Order postcards from the CCR for everyone to send to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Citizenship or your Member of Parliament. For more information go to [www.ccrweb.ca/transportationloans.htm](http://www.ccrweb.ca/transportationloans.htm).

- **A longer term action!** Get personally involved in refugee resettlement. Read *Appendix I* (p.40) and contact PWS&D for more information. Many congregations work ecumenically in their community to sponsor refugees together. The Canadian Host Program (CHP) is an alternative which has no financial commitment. It matches newcomers with a Canadian family or individual, requiring a minimum volunteer commitment of four months. Your local immigrant-serving organization can direct you to a host program organization in your community. See [www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/host.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/host.shtml)

## Pray

Lord Jesus, you swept away centuries of prejudice and legalism when you reached out and accepted people as they were.

Help us understand that there is not one of us who deserves your grace, yet you grant to us all, whether Muslims, Jews, Christians or non-Christians; whether believers or non-believers; rich or poor; black or white; status or non-status; the love of God.

Strengthen us Lord, where we are weak, and give us courage to withstand the seduction of a society obsessed with wealth and power. Help us build bridges instead of erecting barriers. Help us live in peace and harmony with your creation where no one is a stranger anymore.

We pray,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

Refugees from Myanmar (Burma) in a refugee camp in Thailand.



Photo © Jerry Redfern/onasia.com, UNHCR



# But they came a different way!



Photo: Action Réfugiés Montréal

Bridget and her daughter Jesse, refugee claimants, were matched with Maro, a volunteer in Action Réfugiés Montréal's twinning program. Claimants routinely wait 18 months for their refugee hearing.

## A story about refugee claimants

### Goals

- To learn about some experiences of refugee claimants in Canada.
- To study the Bible for guidance about helping refugee claimants.
- To reflect on our relationship with uprooted people, particularly with refugees claimants who are detained or imprisoned.
- To plan an action based on learning and reflecting about our involvement with the detainee and prisoner.

### Prepare

- Photocopy Case Study III (p.47) for all members.
- Photocopy *Determining Refugee Status* (p.25) so that there are enough copies for each member.
- Decide on how many small groups you will break into (4-5 people to a group) and make enough copies of *Detaining Refugees: Basic Facts* (p.24) for each group.
- Decide what actions you will do at this session and bring any necessary material.

## Pray

God, our creator and sustainer,

you loved us long before we knew ourselves to be lovable  
and love us still.

Give us, we pray, a greater awareness of your love for all people,  
and a confidence in the action of your grace in us and in your church.

Grow in us a greater awareness of the oppression  
and acts of greed that create refugees.

Give us the courage to welcome the stranger among us  
and the wisdom to speak up on their behalf.

We praise you for your mysterious ways among us:  
for your presence in the midst of human affairs,  
even in ways we do not understand.

By the power of your Spirit, may we grow in the truth that compels us to act justly;  
giving expression to the compassion of your son Jesus.

We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Source: Adapted from *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities*  
by Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988, p.110.

## Sing

Arise, your light has come (#712); In Christ there is no east or west (#480);  
Lord, in this broken world (#723)

## Learn

Open this session with the following refugee quiz to test the group's knowledge  
on refugees. Have fun by running it like a contest.

### Canada and refugees quiz

1. Refugees arriving in Canada are:
  - a) sponsored by the Federal government, referred by the UNHCR
  - b) sponsored by Canadian congregations or organizations that have signed agreements with the Federal government
  - c) making a refugee claim in Canada which is determined by the Immigration and Refugee Board, having travelled here on their own
  - d) all of the above

*Answer: d). Refugee claims can be made upon arrival in Canada. Refugees may also be brought to Canada by the Canadian government, or by congregations or groups who have sponsorship agreements with the federal government.*

2. Anyone in Canada who is detained by the police is:
  - a) a criminal
  - b) an immigrant or refugee whose identity papers are being confirmed
  - c) a refugee claimant awaiting a refugee determination process
  - d) any of the above

Answer: d). *In addition to detaining criminals, the police may detain an immigrant whose identity papers are being confirmed or a refugee awaiting a refugee determination process. Being detained may make a refugee feel like they are a criminal and may traumatize them, particularly if they have experienced abuse or torture by police in their home country.*

3. True or False? Refugees can use fraudulent documents to arrive in Canada.

Answer: True. *The Canadian government recognizes that people fleeing persecution in their own countries may need to use fraudulent documents to get to Canada. But they must establish their true identity and tell their story under oath when they testify before the Immigration and Refugee Board.*

4. When it comes to policies for admitting refugees, Canada:

- a) is difficult to get into and difficult to stay in.
- b) provides basic support for people who prove they are legitimate refugees, but expects all to find work and become productive members of society.
- c) is Club Med: providing all the income, health care, education and work a refugee could ever dream of.

Answer: b). *Some people think that Canada is "Club Med" for refugees, but life isn't easy for a refugee. When they are sponsored the government or sponsoring group provides their expenses for the first year to help them get resettled and find work. However, finding work can be harder than expected, especially if they don't speak or understand much English. Credentials are often not recognized and they often face deep rooted prejudices. Many work very hard to become productive members of society.*

## Listen

Read *Case Study III: The story of Sara and Amina* (p.47) by having a different person read each section aloud. After the story has been read, pause to share reactions. Break into small groups to do this if desired.

### Sharing reactions:

- *The part of the story that affected me the most was...*
- *It made me feel...*
- *I felt this way because...*

## Discuss

1. Talk about Sara's story. This is the story of a person claiming refugee status in Canada. Read the definition of a refugee claimant. Share your understandings of, or experiences with, refugee claimants. How complete and accurate do you think the public's knowledge is about refugee claimants?

2. Break into small groups. Have the small groups read *Determining Refugee Status* (p.25) and answer the questions. Use *Detaining Refugees: Basic Facts* (p.24) for more background information on refugee detention. Then come back together as a large group to share your thoughts and reactions.

- Under international law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canada has a legal obligation to protect refugees. How successful do you think it is in doing this now? What seem to be the main challenges and problems with Canada's refugee determination system? Why do you think some people consider Canada's refugee determination process a model for other countries to emulate?
- How important is it to you and your congregation that Canada strives to fulfill this obligation? What would you and your congregation be willing to do to ensure the protection and support of refugee claimants?



Photo: Action Réfugiés Montréal

Salimata\* (name changed) was a victim of trafficking who escaped and made a successful refugee claim. Being matched with Julie through Action Réfugiés Montréal allowed her to recover trust and confidence in herself as she built a new life in Montreal.

## Refugee claimant

A person outside of his or her country of origin who is seeking asylum and has made a claim for protection as a refugee, and is waiting for a determination on the claim. Refugee claimants have the right, under Canadian and international law, to remain in the country until the claim has been reviewed and either accepted or rejected. Sometimes the term *asylum seeker* is also used.

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### “The least of liars?”

“The refugee system was put in place to save people's lives, after WWII, and relates to the Geneva Convention,” says Karen Cho, a Canadian filmmaker. “But I have been disturbed to see this shift of late, after 9/11, in which the media is essentially trying to paint [refugee claimants] as liars – they are depicted as line-jumpers and pariahs. There's this Canadian mythology, this assumption that everyone wants to come here because we're Canada, we're the best. But refugees are not immigrants. Many of them were successful politicians, doctors, leaders in their home countries – they left lives of luxury and are literally fleeing for their lives.”

Check out Cho's 43 minute movie *Seeking Refuge*. Copies are available for loan from the PCC's Book Room.



## Detaining Refugees: Basic Facts

### What are the reasons that refugees might be detained in Canada?

- To determine identity
- To avoid flight risk of someone who may not present themselves for immigration proceedings
- For reasons of national security or a belief that they are a danger to the public

### Who is detained in Canada for immigration reasons?

- People awaiting removal from Canada because they made failed refugee claims or have no legal status allowing them to stay in Canada
- Refugee claimants, people seeking safety here, may be detained for the reasons given above.

### How is detention like prison?

- Detention feels like prison for someone seeking a safe place. In Laval, Quebec, the centre is surrounded by barbed wire and chain-link fence; there are numerous surveillance cameras and all the doors are locked. Detainees are closely watched by many guards. Husbands and wives are separated, but can eat meals together with their children and meet during visiting hours in the visitor's room.
- In Toronto and some other communities, people may be sent to federal prisons and mixed in with the criminal population, even though they have not been convicted of a criminal offence. Family members, lawyers and non-governmental groups may have a hard time gaining access to these prisons. For the refugee claimants who are held in these prisons, it is difficult to find a lawyer who will visit and assist them to prepare their refugee application within the required 28 days. Language barriers further complicate the process.



### Of the 34,800 refugee claims made in Canada in 2008 how many people were detained?

- The Canadian government does not release these statistics; refugee advocates estimate that ten percent of claimants are detained, for anywhere from a few days to more than one year.
- Pregnant women, newborns, children and the elderly can all be detained. In 2008, Action Réfugiés met 15 detained pregnant women.
- An 11-year-old unaccompanied girl was held for 33 days in isolation in 2008. Immigration cited reasons of safety, believing her to be a victim of trafficking. Canadian law states that “children are to be detained only as a last resort”. No alternative to detention was found as the youth protection authorities declined to get involved since she was a foreigner, detained by the Canada Border Services Agency.

## Determining Refugee Status

Canada has recognized that there are legitimate reasons for a person to arrive at our border seeking protection. Therefore, Canada has a refugee determination system that permits people to make a refugee claim that is heard by an independent quasi-judicial tribunal: the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).

### Filling out the Personal Information Form

Once admitted to Canada, a refugee claimant has to find a lawyer and submit a completed Personal Information Form (PIF) within 28 days or the claim will be considered “abandoned” and removal proceedings will begin. It is critical that the information in this form is accurate and detailed. This is what the Board Member of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) uses to determine whether or not the refugee claimant is a refugee.

The PIF can be challenging to fill out. Individuals must recount the details of why they had to flee their country. It can be traumatic, culturally shameful or frowned upon to admit to being beaten, harassed or raped. A refugee may not trust government officials, knowing that they were persecuted by the government in their own country. They need to know the legal language that the people reviewing the forms will understand. This can be particularly challenging if English or French is their second language. Cultural differences can also make it difficult to tell their story in ways that will be understood by legal minds. Claimants go to lawyers who can help them answer the questions thoroughly and truthfully in ways that the IRB will understand.

Once a person has claimed refugee status they must get a hearing by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). While waiting for a determination, refugee claimants stay in Canada. While they are here they can go to work and their children can go to school. Some find jobs and pay taxes which go toward services for Canadians to which they are not yet entitled. They are entitled to emergency health care and basic social assistance if unable to find work.

### Refugee Detention

Like Sara, refugees can be detained when they first arrive in Canada to claim refugee status, or at any point in the processing of their claim. Not only is this traumatic for refugee claimants, but it can make things difficult for them to find a lawyer who is willing to help them fill out their personal information forms. Many lawyers will not agree to visit the Detention Centre since it takes so long to get there, and the visiting times are restricted – even for lawyers.

### The long wait for determination

While Canada’s system is considered a model system, it is under criticism for the backlog of refugee claims. According to the Auditor General in her March 2009 report, refugees wait years for their determination because “the high number of Board member vacancies at the IRB has a significant impact on the board’s capacity to process cases on a timely basis. The inventory of unresolved cases has reached an exceptionally high level.” IRB members are appointed by the government. Unfortunately, a slow determination process can be an incentive for people to make a claim in Canada in order to work here for a few years and can slow the process even more.

Sonia was 18, pregnant and detained in Montreal's Immigration Detention Centre when staff from Action Réfugiés Montréal met her. Her story of persecution was so powerful that the Refugee Board accepted her claim immediately.

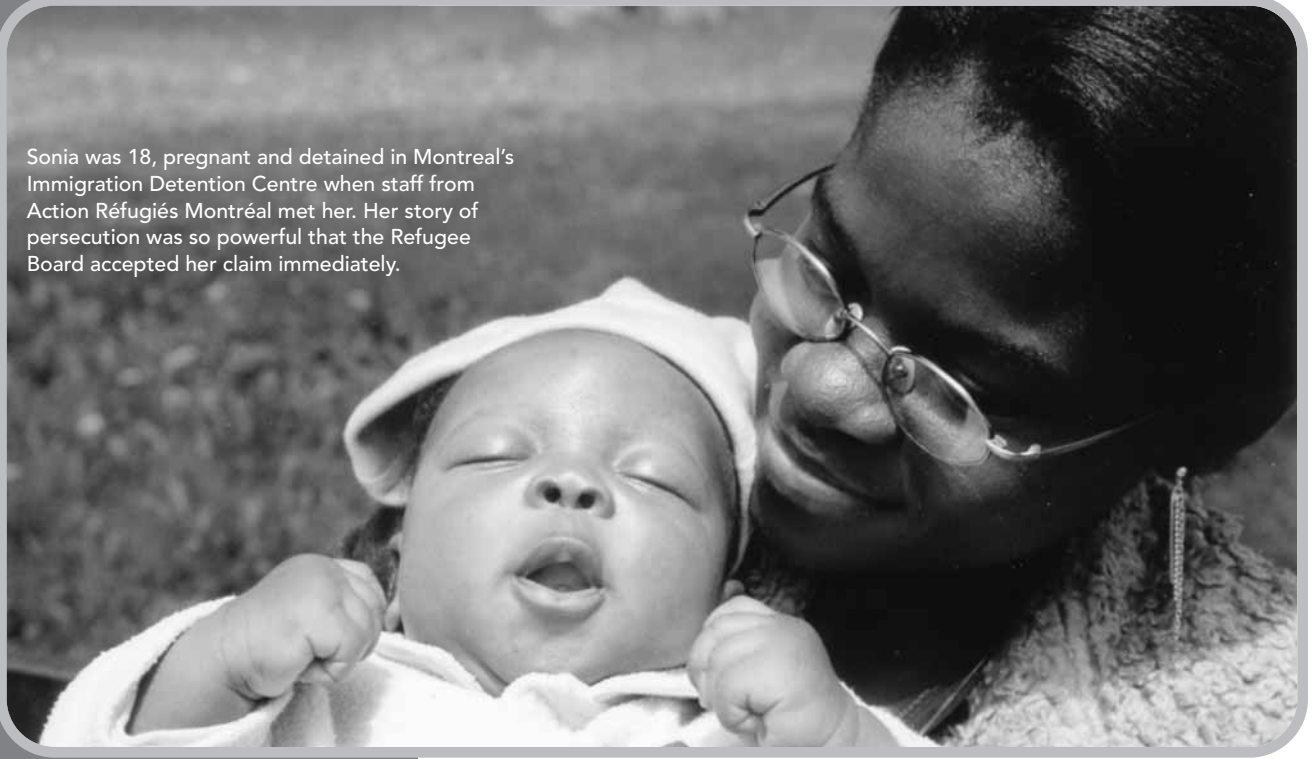


Photo: Action Réfugiés Montréal

## Action Réfugiés Montréal

Action Réfugiés Montréal in downtown Montreal works in solidarity with refugees and refugee claimants. Action Réfugiés facilitates the private sponsorship of refugees to Canada and helps refugees integrate into life in Canada through its matching/twinning program. It assists refugee claimants held in the Laval immigration detention centre near Montreal by giving them accurate legal information and ensuring they have access to legal services. The work of Action Réfugiés is supported through your gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing*.

## Study and reflect

Read Matthew 25:31-46. Try reading it dramatically, dividing up the parts of the narrator, king, people on the king's right and people on the king's left.

In this passage Jesus speaks of the consequences of helping "the least of these who are members of my family" (vs. 40). He says that when those people were helped, he was helped. He identifies the "least of these" as strangers who are hungry, thirsty, without clothes, sick, and imprisoned. He rewards the actions of those who give food, drink, and clothing, and those who welcome, care for and visit "the least of these".

- There are people living in poverty today who are criticized and blamed for their own problems, and therefore, are offered little help. What are some examples? Why do you think this happens?
- How are refugee claimants in Canada among "the least of these"? Read *The least or liars?* (p.23)

## Act

- Share the *Canada and Refugees Quiz* (p.21) with other groups in your congregation to start a discussion on what you have learned about refugees.
- Learn more about refugees in Canada by going to the website of the Canadian Council for Refugees. Read the pamphlet called *Facing Facts: Myths and Misconceptions about Refugees & Immigrants in Canada* at: [www.ccrweb.ca/eng/media/mediakit/facingfacts.pdf](http://www.ccrweb.ca/eng/media/mediakit/facingfacts.pdf). Download it and post it on your bulletin board, insert copies one Sunday in the worship bulletin, or share this information with a friend or neighbour.

- Join with the Canadian Council for Refugees to call for the implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division as provided for in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. It was approved in 2001 but never implemented. Call, meet with or write your Members of Parliament, urging them to press for rapid reintroduction and passage of Bill C-291. For more information see <http://www.ccrweb.ca/eng/campaigns/RADaction.htm>.
- Support the church's work helping refugee claimants find safety and support. Read *Action Réfugiés Montréal* (p.26). Offer members of your congregation an opportunity to give to this ministry. See project CM31 in the *Gifts of Change* booklet at <http://www.presbyterian.ca/donate/giftsofchange/cm31>.
- Learn about prison ministries in your area. Talk to a prison chaplain about the needs of prisoners and the special needs of people experiencing immigration detention. How could your congregation support this ministry?

## Pray

Holy God, you are a God on the move.

You move in the world and in our lives.

You shape and direct your creation and us.

Your people have always been on the move.

Moses led your people out of slavery in Egypt.

Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt with Jesus to escape the murderous King Herod.

Today people continue to move.

War, poverty, oppression and injustice drive people from their homes and countries.

We pray that you will move with today's refugees and migrants.

Comfort and sustain them.

For all who serve those forced to move in our world, and for all who are on the move, we pray,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

Asmorom was 14 when he fled as a refugee from Eritrea. He was trying to reach safety in Europe when he was intercepted and detained in a Russian jail. After several months he was found by the Red Cross. He was sponsored to come to Canada by Action Réfugiés Montréal.



Photo: Action Réfugiés Montréal



# Returning home – a durable solution?

Two girls from Afghanistan in a refugee camp in Pakistan. PWS&D is helping Afghan refugees return home and build new lives in Afghanistan.



Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together

## An Afghan refugee story

### Goals

- To hear a story about refugee repatriation.
- To learn from the Bible about God's relationship with exiles.
- To reflect on the challenges of and solutions to the worldwide refugee situation.
- To act on our learning and reflections.

### Prepare

- Photocopy Case Study IV (p.49) and *Conditions for Voluntary Repatriation* (p.31) so that there are enough copies for each member.
- Find some recent articles in newspapers or magazines on Afghanistan and bring them. Find and bring a map which includes Afghanistan and Pakistan on it.
- Write the *Landmine stats* (p.33) on a large piece of paper and post them on the wall so people can read them.
- Decide what actions you will do at this session and bring any necessary materials.

## Pray

God, our creator and sustainer,

you loved us long before we knew ourselves to be lovable  
and love us still.

Give us, we pray, a greater awareness of your love for all people,  
and a confidence in the action of your grace in us and in your church.

Grow in us a greater awareness of the oppression  
and acts of greed that create refugees.

Give us the courage to welcome the stranger among us  
and the wisdom to speak up on their behalf.

We praise you for your mysterious ways among us:  
for your presence in the midst of human affairs,  
even in ways we do not understand.

By the power of your Spirit, may we grow in the truth that compels us to act justly;  
giving expression to the compassion of your son Jesus.

We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Source: Adapted from *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities*  
by Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988, p.110.

## Sing

By the Babylonian rivers (#98); Those who wait on the Lord (#662);  
Will you come and follow me (#634)

## Listen

Read *Case Study IV: The story of Karim and Roya* (p.49) and then share your reactions.  
You could have different people read each section aloud.

### Sharing reactions:

- *The part of the story that affected me the most was...*
- *It made me feel...*
- *I felt this way because...*

## Discuss

Many people in our society have experiences of returning home after relocation.  
Draw on these experiences as you try to understand the emotional trauma and  
challenges of repatriation after years of exile.

1. Have you, or anyone you know been faced with a decision like the one that faced Karim and Roya? Share the experience with the group.
2. Talk about the current situation in Afghanistan. (If possible, browse some recent articles in newspapers or magazines.) Look at a map of the region. Find Peshawar, Pakistan, and study the terrain of routes to Kabul, Afghanistan. To better understand one of the threats faced by Afghan refugees journeying home, have one member read aloud *Landmines in Afghanistan* (p.30).
3. Does it surprise you that refugees like Karim and Roya would think about returning to Afghanistan? Why or why not? See *Durable solutions* (p.30). What are the pros

## Landmines in Afghanistan

Mines and unexploded weapons are located in almost every conceivable type of terrain in Afghanistan. Major military and civilian positions were covered with landmines, including the cities of Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Khost. Mines pose a big danger to refugees returning home through provinces bordering Pakistan and Iran. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, mines were most often placed along unused footpaths, tracks and roads; on the verges of tracks and roadways; in vehicle turn-around points; near culverts and bridge abutments; along damaged building walls; in the doorways and rooms of deserted houses; in and around wells; around military posts; on or near destroyed vehicles; in areas where people might hide.

From *Afghanistan: Landmine Fact Sheet* at <http://www.afghan-network.net/Landmines/>

## Durable solutions

The UNHCR's ultimate goal is to help find durable solutions to allow refugees to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace. UNHCR can help refugees with these three solutions:

- Returning home voluntarily (voluntary repatriation)
- Settling into the country to which they fled
- Resettling in a third country like Canada

Most refugees are hosted by neighbouring countries. Often these are poor nations struggling to meet the needs of their own citizens. Less than 0.5 percent of the world's refugees will be resettled in countries like Canada. Few countries will be able to permanently absorb and integrate refugees, granting them rights equal to their own citizens. Voluntary repatriation remains the most likely solution for most refugees. Sadly, many refugees may be in exile for years, even decades, waiting for the conditions that will permit them to return home safely.

and cons that they might have considered in trying to make this decision? What mixture of emotions might accompany these considerations?

4. How "voluntary" do you think such decisions to repatriate really are? See *Voluntary or not?* (p.31)
5. What do you think of the "start-up" assistance and circumstances for Karim and Roya? Name the items and conditions that you think would be required to enable refugees to return home and live safely after years of war. See *Conditions for voluntary repatriation* (p.31).

## Study and reflect

Read Ezra 1:1-11. This passage tells of the Israelites returning to Judah, particularly to Jerusalem, after living in exile in Babylon for several decades. Following the defeat and destruction of Jerusalem by the forces of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Israelite survivors were taken captive (2 Chronicles 36:15-21).

- The Ezra passage tells of a new ruler over Judah, King Cyrus of Persia, inviting the exiles to return. In light of the experience of Afghan refugees being repatriated, comment on the "start-up" assistance described. What difference might this sort of assistance and welcome make to refugees being repatriated?

Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together



A refugee who has returned home to Angola draws water from a well installed by the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International network. PWS&D provided support to Angolan refugees returning home through ACT.

- Biblical accounts of the Babylonian exile raise issues that relate to the experiences of refugees like Karim and Roya – issues of longing and sorrow, identity and exploitation. Discuss the personal and community challenges of a group of people living in exile. What can we learn from the Israelites’ experiences to help us understand the exile experiences of refugees like Karim and Roya? Read *In exile* (p.32).
- Have someone read aloud *Migrants as exiles* (p.32). Some migrants say there are migrant workers in Canada who are enslaved. Review the stories of Eduardo and Elizabeth from session one. What might be some needs of migrants? How might they be similar to refugees? How might the church support people vulnerable to exploitation? Share, or make inquiries to find, stories of churches reaching out to migrant workers in their communities.
- Prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah spoke to the Israelites about God’s continued love and care for them in exile in Babylon. They urged the Israelites to stay faithful and practice God’s ways. How can we and our congregations be like the prophets, comforting refugees in exile, helping them to maintain their faith and hope, accompanying them when they choose repatriation? Read *God aligns with refugees* (p.32).

## Act

- PWS&D provides food, shelter, clean water and health care to meet the immediate needs of those in refugee camps who have fled for their lives. When situations stabilize and refugees can return home, PWS&D partners provide housing, seeds and tools, income generating opportunities and education to help families rebuild their lives in their home countries. Currently PWS&D is supporting a program that is bringing education to young girls. Read *Bringing hope to Afghan girls* (p.33). Give your congregation an opportunity to participate in this project. Organize a fundraising event or a special offering. See the available resources at [www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/afghan\\_hope](http://www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/afghan_hope) and make a donation to support the work.
- Advocate for the abolition of landmines to make returning home a safe solution for refugees. Download the *People’s Treaty* for members of your congregation to sign or choose another action from those suggested on the Mines Action

## Voluntary or not?

Is voluntary repatriation really voluntary? Do you think refugees like Karim and Roya genuinely want to return to Afghanistan? Is staying in exile a real alternative or do they feel pushed out of Pakistan? Are they simply fed-up with being treated as inferior citizens, exiles without any real rights or freedoms?

Refugees today are experiencing longer periods in more difficult situations of exile, with fewer options to live in dignity and security. Generations of children are born in exile. People sometimes marry in the same refugee camp in which they were born. Therefore, the UNHCR promotes returning home if the conditions for return seem at all feasible.

## Conditions for voluntary repatriation

UNHCR’s priorities when it comes to return are to promote conditions that make voluntary repatriation possible; to ensure the exercise of a free and informed choice; and to mobilize support for returnees. In practice, UNHCR promotes and facilitates voluntary repatriation through various means, including organizing “go-and-see” visits for refugees; compiling updated information on their country and region of origin; engaging in peace and reconciliation activities; promoting housing and property restitution; and providing assistance and legal aid to returnees. The following conditions are promoted, but not always in place:

- A functioning government that has declared its commitment to welcome refugees back home.
- Effective disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation programs for former combatants, especially for youth, so that they are not forced to return to arms to survive.
- Adequate public services such as schools, housing and health care, especially for those who have suffered serious human rights abuses and may need specialized care.
- Immediate access to food and the means to earn a living.
- The presence of humanitarian and development organizations who are working hard to provide a safety net to returnees and civilians who have experienced long term devastation due to war.
- Removal of land mines and disarming of other lethal weapons.



## In exile

- “The experience of the exiles in Babylon was one of deep anguish.” See Psalm 137.
- “The exiles in Babylon experienced a forced migration, had strong ties to their homeland, were alienated from the new culture, and longed to return home.” See Lamentations 1:3.
- “Economic exploitation was at the heart of the experience of Judah in Babylonian exile. The empire of Babylon focused upon the domination and exploitation of non-Babylonian populations for the benefit of the ruling elite.” See Lamentations 5:1-15a.

Quotations from *Strangers in a Strange Land: Exile, Immigration, Survival, and Identity* by Leo Hartshorn, Minister of Peace and Justice with Mennonite Mission Network

## Migrants as exiles

“For sending countries, migrants are an export product and ever more lucrative source of wage remittances. For receiving countries, workers are a cheap and easily disposable source of labour, who are discarded or sent home when their services are no longer required. These precarious and largely racialized migrant workers and non status people are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and regularly face abuses of their rights and dignity.”

From *Statement of Unity*, National Migrant Justice Gathering: Building Solidarity, Taking Action, York University, June 10-11, 2006

## God aligns with refugees

The theologian Walter Bruggemann describes God as the *exile-ender* and the *home-bringer*. “God is not only the shepherd who seeks out the lost (Isaiah 40:11),” Brueggemann writes, “but also the powerful warrior who will defeat the exiling agent in order to permit the people to go home (Isaiah 40:10). God is powerful and tender. The good news is that God is aligned against the world on behalf of the homeless ones who yearn to go home.”

*The Bible Makes Sense*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1997

Canada website [www.minesactioncanada.org](http://www.minesactioncanada.org). Alternatively, organize a fundraising event to contribute towards a particular demining project or the training of a mine detection dog as described on the Canadian Landmines Foundation website [www.clearlandmines.com/Projects.cfm](http://www.clearlandmines.com/Projects.cfm).

- Refer to the Kairos church resource kit *God’s People – A People on the Move* ([www.kairoscanada.org/en/solidarity/migrant-rights/migrants-kit/](http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/solidarity/migrant-rights/migrants-kit/)). Read a fact sheet that seems relevant for your community – perhaps fact sheet #7 or #8 about seasonal agricultural workers or live-in caregivers. What could your congregation do to reach out to disadvantaged migrants in your area?
- Share with your congregation your learning from this session by planning a worship service that focuses on the experience of exiles and God’s call to offer hospitality and care for them. Use the worship resources and stories from the study for this service. Talk to worship leaders about when and how to do this.

## Pray

God of mercy and grace, we seek genuine mercy that renews our spirits to right the wrongs in our world, to love the unloved, to free the oppressed. Deliver us from cheap grace; grace without repentance, grace without the cross, grace without transformation.

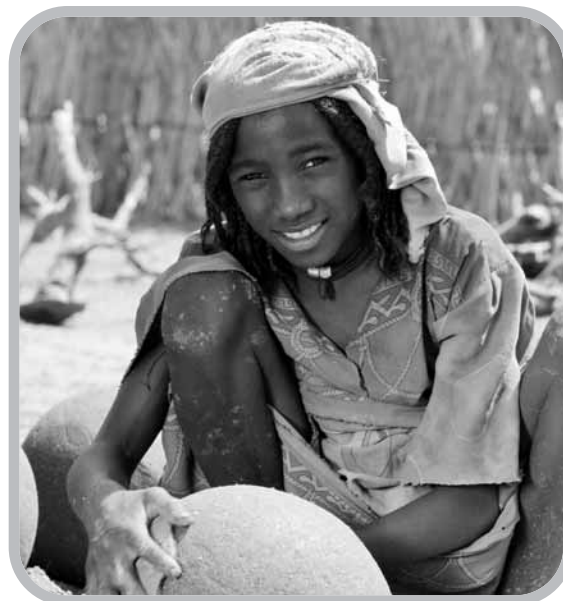


Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together

A young girl who fled Darfur, Sudan in the Aradib refugee camp in Chad. PWS&D supports refugees from Darfur and internally displaced people in Darfur through the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International network.

An Afghan girl going to school in a refugee camp in Pakistan.



By global comparisons, we are people of power and privilege. Too often we have left politics to politicians, preaching to preachers and the affairs of other nations to fate. We commit ourselves this day to engage in your world, to hear the cries of your people, certain of the presence of your Holy Spirit leading us.

Loving God, help us understand that you are present with us in every encounter with others whose lives have been touched by death. Help us to listen for your voice God, beneath the human word spoken to us. May we be bearers of life and may we know your life-giving love in our lives.

In the name of our God  
who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God  
who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God  
who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

## Bringing hope to Afghan girls through PWS&D

Since 2002, more than five million Afghan refugees have returned home after fleeing violence in their country. Upon return they face many challenges, one being to reduce the obstacles preventing girls from getting an education. In a country where the female literacy rate is under 18%, the chance for girls to receive an education, get a job and overcome poverty seems impossible. PWS&D's partners have undertaken an innovative and holistic new program to bring education and health care to girls in Afghanistan. The program focuses on girls between the ages of 5-12, currently not enrolled in school. With

cooperation from their families and community, the program brings girls back into the classroom for the chance to have a brighter future. Support this work by giving a donation to PWS&D.

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### Landmine stats

- Landmines cost \$3-\$10 to make and \$300-\$1000 to disarm.
- Landmines kill or maim 2,000 people a month, mainly children.
- The UN estimates that landmines are 10 times more likely to kill or maim a civilian after the conflict than a combatant during war.
- Over 70 countries are mined with landmines. Afghanistan and Cambodia are the most affected.

# From compassion to justice!



Photo: Action Réfugiés Montréal

Kiza, a Burundian refugee in Cairo, with Lucinda Lyman, a member of St. Andrew & St. Paul, Montreal, Quebec who visited him in Cairo.

## Stories from congregations about transformation

### Goals

- To learn from the Bible about God's transformative love and assurance of new life.
- To reflect on moving beyond charity to advocacy and justice.
- To act on what we have learned about uprooted people.

### Prepare

- Photocopy Case Study V (p.51) so that there are enough copies for each member.
- Bring copies of *The Book of Praise*, choose what songs you will sing and have someone prepared to play the music.
- Write quotes from *Transforming experiences* (p.35) out on large pieces of paper and display them in the room so people can read them.
- Decide what actions you will do at this session and bring any necessary material.

## Pray

God, our creator and sustainer,  
you loved us long before we knew ourselves to be lovable  
and love us still.  
Give us, we pray, a greater awareness of your love for all people,  
and a confidence in the action of your grace in us  
and in your church.  
Grow in us a greater awareness of the oppression  
and acts of greed that create refugees.  
Give us the courage to welcome the stranger among us  
and the wisdom to speak up on their behalf.  
We praise you for your mysterious ways among us:  
for your presence in the midst of human affairs,  
even in ways we do not understand.  
By the power of your Spirit, may we grow in the truth  
that compels us to act justly;  
giving expression to the compassion of your son Jesus.  
We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Source: Adapted from *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities* by Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988, p.110.

## Sing

Isaiah the prophet has written of old (#30); What does the Lord require of you (#709); We cannot own the sunlit sky (#717)

### Sharing reactions:

- *The part of the story that affected me the most was...*
- *It made me feel...*
- *I felt this way because...*

## Listen

Read *Case Study V: The story of Kiza* and then share your reactions.

## Discuss

1. What is the difference between acts of charity or compassion and acts of solidarity, advocacy or justice? Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. Title one "charity" and the other "justice." Brainstorm examples of actions for each column – accepting everyone's suggestions without discussion. Then discuss. How difficult was this exercise? Did some suggestions seem to fit into both columns? If so, explain.
2. Think about the other case studies that you have read throughout this study. In these stories, sponsors have felt personally enriched and changed by the experience: Read

## Transforming experiences

The experience of sponsoring refugees has deeply affected some Presbyterians and their congregations:

**"Being this close to the journey of these two men...has deepened my faith. This was up close and touched me personally."**

Hildy Stollery,  
Morningside High Park  
Presbyterian Church,  
Toronto, Ontario

**"The blessings have flowed two ways. God has blessed us all. Thanks be to God."**

Margaret Douglas,  
Knox Presbyterian Church,  
Woodstock, Ontario

**"We discovered the power of transformation. We thank God daily that He brought her to us."**

Pauline Hall,  
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church,  
Fergus, Ontario

**"This whole experience has moved us from compassion to solidarity, seeking justice for refugees."**

Brian Merrett,  
St. Andrew & St. Paul,  
Montreal, Quebec

**"Lives will be changed and lives will grow and blossom as our Lord intended them to."**

Jean Patterson,  
Grace Presbyterian Church,  
Calgary, Alberta



*Transforming experiences* (p.35). What do you think happened to cause these reactions? Recall and share any similar experiences you have had.

3. In refugee sponsorship, Presbyterians become personally involved and transformed through relationships with uprooted people. What opportunities exist in your local community for you and others in your congregation to have this sort of involvement, accompanying people who are uprooted?
4. Over the past three decades, the PCC's General Assembly has made recommendations to congregations to encourage advocacy on behalf of uprooted people. Have someone read aloud *Advocating for the uprooted* (p.38). How do you feel about the church having made such statements? What themes or topics are most relevant to your community and might be of particular interest to your congregation?

### Study and reflect

Read aloud Isaiah 58:1-11. Scholars suggest that these words were spoken to the Israelites once they had returned from their Babylonian exile. The prophet was reminding them of God's desire for them to give up oppressive ways and to live according to God's justice. Read aloud Luke 4:18-21. Recall the context of this passage.

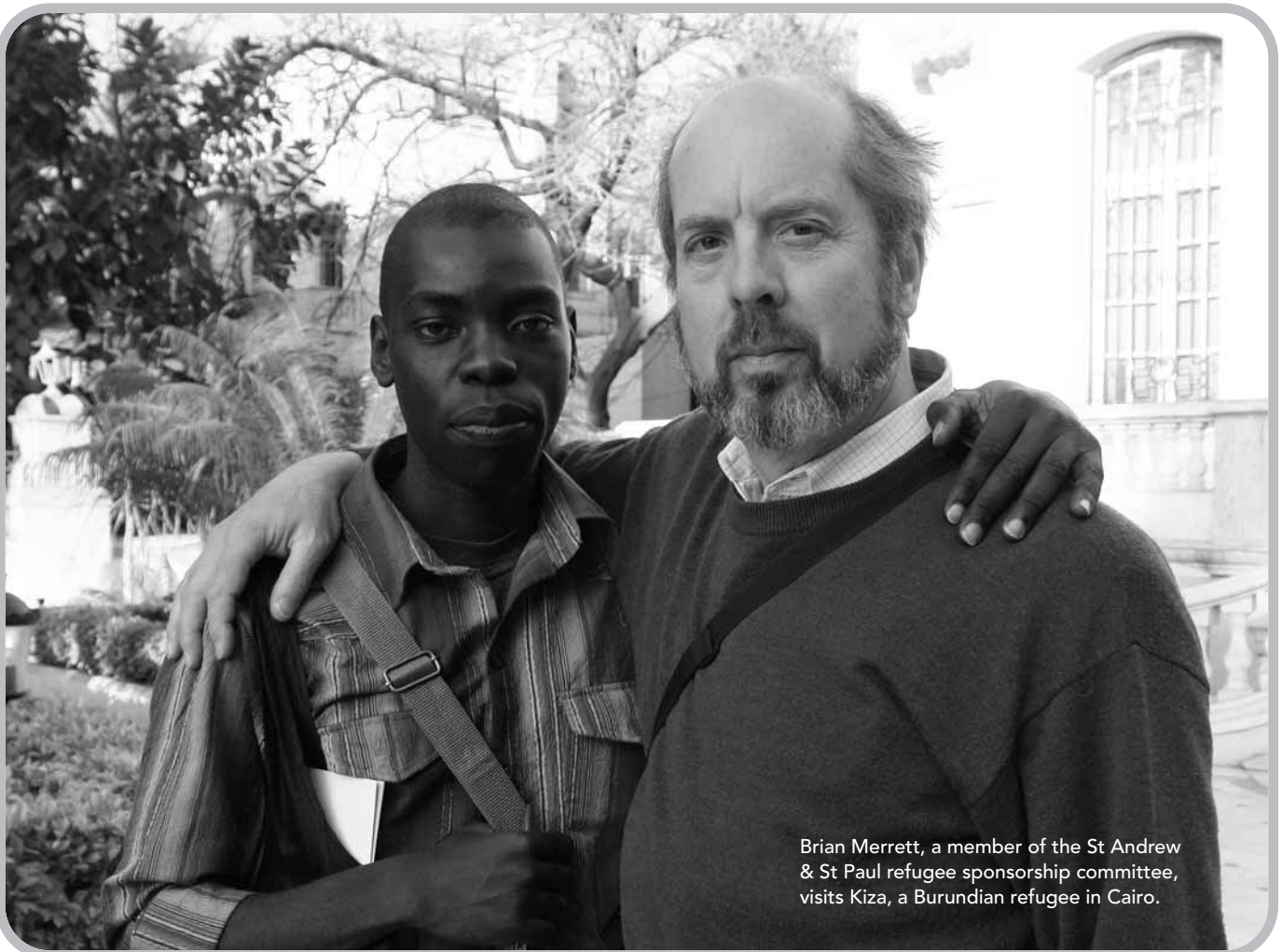


Photo: Action Réfugiés Montréal

Brian Merrett, a member of the St Andrew & St Paul refugee sponsorship committee, visits Kiza, a Burundian refugee in Cairo.

- What are the specific actions and images from these passages that describe the social order of God’s just new world? Look up other passages that come to mind like Isaiah 11:6-9 and Revelation 21:3-4. How are these words and images comforting?
- What are the implications of these passages for uprooted people like the migrants and refugees whose stories are in this study? And what are the implications of these passages for our relationship with uprooted people? Read *Living out our faith* (see sidebar).
- What are the challenges you see for yourself and your congregation in living out your faith with people who are uprooted, poor and oppressed?

## Act

- What are some words, symbols and images from this session that remind you of living God’s way and creating a just, new world? Use these to add to your bulletin display or create a PowerPoint presentation or a banner that would help people in your congregation think about acts of justice. As you work together on this, talk about the challenges for people – in and outside of congregations – to move from acts of charity to acts of solidarity, advocacy and justice.
- Pray for God’s guidance in discerning how you and your congregation are called to act in solidarity and relationship with uprooted people. Discuss and formulate a plan with the objective of getting your congregation involved in advocacy related to one of these issues. Review the information in the recent postings in the “Media Room” of the website of the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) [www.ccrweb.ca](http://www.ccrweb.ca). Do any of the advocacy actions from the previous sessions that you haven’t had a chance to do yet. Check out the CCR campaigns on the “Take Action” link. Take turns sharing how the stories and information affect you and what you feel called to do. Allow time for prayer and silent reflection.
- Give to the refugee ministry of PWS&D. Funds will be used to help refugees who have fled for their lives, refugees who are returning home to begin the long process of re-building, or refugees building new futures of hope and safety in Canada.

## Living out our faith

The people of God have a long tradition of giving hospitality to the stranger or “alien.” God instructed Moses that the Israelites must care for the alien, as they too were “aliens” in Egypt. (Exodus 22:21, 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34). Indeed, God places the alien or stranger in the same category of need as orphans and widows (Deuteronomy 6:17-19). God also expects that love for the stranger will include providing just working conditions and sharing one’s harvest: the “resident alien” is entitled to the Sabbath day of rest (Exodus 20:10, 23:12) and some of the harvest is left in the field for the “poor and alien” (Leviticus 19:9-10). Ruth, the Moab, benefits from this latter custom when she glean food in Bethlehem (Ruth 2).

Biblical stories recounting the plight of strangers reveal God’s continuing presence with them. The story of Joseph illustrates both the stranger’s potential to contribute economically (Genesis 41:46-57) and the stranger’s vulnerability to oppression as a foreigner (Exodus 1:8-11). In the Gospels, Jesus emphasizes God’s unwavering, unconditional love for the stranger regardless of economic or social status, and makes such love central to discipleship (e.g. Luke 10, the Good Samaritan; John 4, the Samaritan woman).

Jesus too was a stranger – descended from Ruth (Matthew 1:5), born in a stable far from home (Luke 2:7), a refugee in Egypt (Matthew 2:13), repatriated but still the outsider (John 1:11). Jesus identified with the poor including the homeless, the refugee and the stranger: “I was a stranger and you did not welcome me...” (Matthew 25:31). By doing so, Jesus made the actions of following and serving him synonymous with welcoming and caring for the stranger – actions that are, therefore, fundamental to living our faith.

From the Justice Ministries Report to the  
135th General Assembly, June 2009

## Advocating for the uprooted

The PCC supports national immigration policies centred on the responsible sharing of resources and the development of a society rich in social, cultural, moral and spiritual values. It has advocated that Canadian society value equally all immigrants, refugee claimants and migrants regardless of economic or educational levels.

The 101st General Assembly (1975) recommended that Canadian immigration policy reflect a concern for immigrants as people who make a real contribution socially, culturally, politically, and spiritually as well as economically. Two years later the 103rd General Assembly (1977) recommended that immigration officers serving abroad be trained to represent a realistic picture of life and opportunities in Canada; and that immigration officers in Canada receive orientation about cultural differences.

The 112th General Assembly (1986) recommended that educational resources about immigration and its value be provided to members of the church. The 123rd General Assembly (1997) recommended that congregations show solidarity with uprooted people by sponsoring refugees and that the Canadian government accept larger numbers of refugees from specific parts of the world in crisis.

The church has recommended that its members become informed and involved with issues about the most vulnerable in our society including immigrants (the 101st General Assembly, 1975), refugees (the 105th General Assembly, 1979 and the 113th General Assembly, 1987), illegal immigrants (the 111th General Assembly, 1985), refugee claimants (the 114th General Assembly, 1988), sanctuary (the 132nd General Assembly, 2006), and migrants (the 133rd General Assembly, 2007).

From the Justice Ministries Report to the  
135th General Assembly, June 2009

For more details about actions of General Assembly see Appendix II: Specific actions on refugees from General Assembly (p.41).

## Pray

Almighty and merciful God,  
whose Son became a refugee  
and had no place to call his own;  
look with mercy on those who today  
are fleeing from danger,  
homeless and hungry.

Bless those who work to bring them relief;  
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;  
and guide the nations of the world towards that day  
when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice  
and of peace.

We pray,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,  
In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,  
In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,  
We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

Source: *A Prayer for Refugees*.  
The first two stanzas of the prayer are from  
[www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/prayers/](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/prayers/)

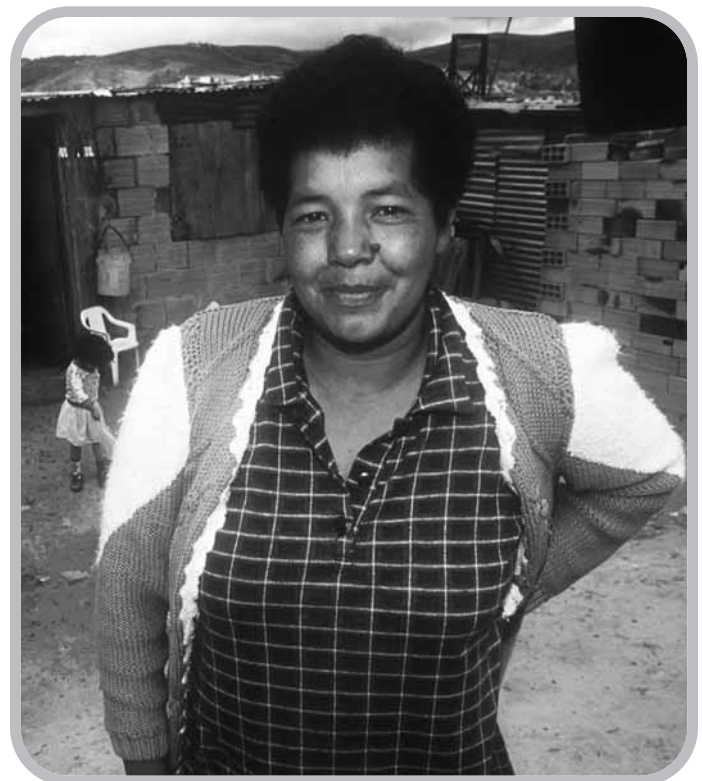


Photo: Paul Jeffrey, Action by Churches Together

A woman who was internally displaced by violence in Colombia. Displaced families have received support from Action by Churches Together and PWS&D. Presbyterian churches in Canada have sponsored refugees from Colombia.

# Resources

**Want to learn more? Check out these recommended resources.**

**At the border called hope: Where refugees are neighbours**

by Mary Joanna Leddy (Author) Harper Collins Canada 1997

**This Flowing Toward Me**

by Marilyn Lacey R.S.M. Ave Maria Press 2009

**On Frequent Journeys: Worship Resources on Uprooted Peoples**

edited by Rebekah Chevalier, United Church Publishing House 1997

**Refugee Sandwich Stories of Exile and Asylum**

by Peter Showler, McGill-Queen's University Press 2006

**The Kite Runner**

by Khaled Hosseini, Riverhead Books, 2003

*Now also a major motion picture.*

Deborah Ellis's novels **The Breadwinner** (2000), **Parvana's Journey** (2002) and **Mud City** (2003) have been a phenomenal success, touching the hearts of readers the world over. All published by Groundwood Books.

## Useful Websites

**[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)**

This is the website for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). There is good information here on both refugee protection and information on different refugee populations.

**[www.ccrweb.ca](http://www.ccrweb.ca)**

This is the website for the Canadian Council for Refugees, a non-profit umbrella organization committed to the rights and protection of refugees in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada.

**[www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/host.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/host.shtml)**

Find out about host programs in your area where you may volunteer to help with refugees.

**[www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/](http://www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/)**

Find information about PWS&D's work with refugees.



# Appendix I:

## Private Sponsorship of Refugees

Canada has a private sponsorship program which allows faith and ethnic communities who sign an agreement with the Quebec or Canadian governments to sponsor refugees for resettlement. Under this agreement, the sponsoring organization is responsible for all the financial costs for the first year in Canada as well as assistance with other settlement needs.

Congregations wishing to sponsor a refugee should first contact Presbyterian World Service & Development. PWS&D's expertise will be invaluable as you walk a path strewn with paperwork and pitfalls. Presbyterian congregations across Canada have been engaged in this program for more than 20 years. We thank God for the opportunities to bless and be blessed by these newcomers.

One route is to sponsor a refugee who has already been approved by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, but is waiting for a private sponsor to complete the process. PWS&D can provide approved sponsors with a list of such cases. Often, these refugees arrive within a year.

Another route is that the congregation identifies the refugee – either through a contact in a developing country, a reference from an organization dealing with refugees or through a family member who is already in Canada. This may have the advantage that the congregation may know the refugee or have the support of family members or friends who will help the refugee integrate into life in Canada. However a congregation should contact PWS&D to find out if the individual qualifies as a refugee as there are numerous factors that impact eligibility. The application must include details about the relationship between the church, family member or co-sponsor and the refugee.

Either way, in order to become a sponsor, a congregation must:

- 1) Develop a settlement plan and budget for the refugee. You will need to raise the necessary funds to support the refugee for one year. The necessary amount will depend on the local cost of living and the number of refugees being sponsored. The

Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, for instance, budgeted \$10,000 to provide for a single man in Montreal, whereas a trio of churches budgeted \$30,000 to support a mother and two children in Etobicoke, Ont.

Congregations with limited financial resources may consider the government's *Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program*. These are refugees that the government has identified as a priority for sponsorship, and the costs are shared between the government and the sponsoring group. Some of these refugees may need extra assistance in terms of time because they have special circumstances or challenges.

- 2) Provide PWS&D with an application form, including proof of the session's approval and the church's financial statement.
- 3) Organize a team to support the refugee when they arrive. Plan to show how things in the house work and how to get around town, accompany them to the doctor and other appointments, find out about ESL classes, etc.

The refugee must complete a substantial application before he or she can qualify for permanent settlement in Canada. The applicant must prove that he or she has suffered persecution in the past, and has strong reasons to believe that he or she will be persecuted again if he or she returns. It is important for PWS&D's refugee coordinator to look over this form before it is submitted to ensure that it builds a strong case.

Once all the sponsorship paperwork has been submitted, it may be more than two years before a refugee is interviewed. If he or she is approved, he or she must pass medical and security screenings. This process can take years and in the end the congregation may have as little as a couple of weeks to make the final preparations. Be ready, don't lose hope, seek guidance: For more information and resources, including a sponsorship handbook, see [www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/refugee](http://www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/refugee).

# Appendix II:

## Specific actions on refugees from General Assembly

*(Note: IAC is International Affairs Committee, GA is General Assembly, GOC is Government of Canada, BWM is Board of World Mission LMA is Life and Mission Agency)*

- 1943: An overture deplored the persecution of Jewish people and called for the GOC to admit Jewish refugees. An ecumenical statement to the same effect was signed by the Moderator in 1944.
- 1974: The IAC reported on refugees fleeing the military regime in Chile.
- 1975: The BWM reported that funds were raised for the Canadian Fund for Refugees from Chile.
- 1980: The 106th GA encouraged congregations sponsoring refugee families to take a particular interest in handicapped refugees, and called on the GOC to extend its maximum one-year assistance for handicapped refugees so they could reach their maximum level of functioning.
- 1981: The 107th GA, in recognition of the difficulty refugees faced in paying transportation costs of about \$700 per person, called the GOC to "give relief to those refugees who are finding the repayment of their transportation costs a heavy burden."
- 1983: The 109th GA noted the growing problems of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico and instructed its agencies to give serious consideration to requests for action from sister churches in Mexico.
- 1984: The 110th GA commended the work of PWS&D and encouraged congregations to find ways to show solidarity to refugees. It adopted the IAC report which noted refugee problems in Africa, the Middle East, Central America and South-East Asia and commended the work of the Inter-Church Committee on Refugees. GA also appointed a special committee to discuss with the GOC a broader and more humane application of the criteria under which illegal immigrants could access an amnesty currently offered by the government.
- 1985: The 111th GA asked that the GOC declare a period of amnesty for all those residing illegally in Canada who were not a security risk. It also asked the GOC to press for changes in US policy on Central America and for a generous response to refugees from Central America.
- 1986: The 112th GA recommended that resources be provided to explain the need for new immigrants and dealing with the twin "myths" that immigrants create unemployment and that Canada stands in jeopardy of being overrun with immigrants. The Hon. Walter F. McLean, Minister of State for Immigration, was thanked for "his sincerity and determination in dealing with the refugee backlog" and he was encouraged to continue his fight for a just and equitable program for all genuine refugees.
- 1987: The 113th GA called on the GOC to uphold the human rights of refugees entering Canada. It also called on presbyteries and congregations to work with refugees through the refugee co-ordinator of The PCC.
- 1988: The 114th GA encouraged congregations to sponsor refugees and asked congregations to study and act on the root causes of refugees and to explore the connections between racism and resistance to refugees in Canada. It also called on the GOC to give asylum to refugees from Central America and sent a message of support to the Hungarian Reformed Church which was settling refugees fleeing persecution in Romania. It asked PWS&D to respond to requests from the HRC and to publicize the plight of the refugees in Hungary.

- 1989: The 115th GA (1989) asked the GOC to protest the repressive policies of the Romanian government relating to political expression, religious freedom and ethnic minorities. PWS&D was mandated to monitor the needs of Hungarian churches as they cared for refugees from Romania. The GA also endorsed the Canadian Council of Churches' challenge of the new regulations governing refugees under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- 1990: The 116th GA called on the GOC to work for international mediation of the conflict in Sri Lanka and to refrain from the involuntary repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees.
- 1992: The 118th GA commended the GOC for steps taken to bring gross and systematic abusers of human rights to account in Guatemala and for participation in and support of a UN observer mission in El Salvador. GA asked the GOC to maintain an open door to Central American refugees whose fears remain legitimate. The GA also asked the GOC to relax immigration laws for Yugoslav refugees stranded in camps in Hungary due to the war in Yugoslavia.
- 1993: The 119th GA commended the GOC for its support of the international peacekeeping operation in former Yugoslavia and Somalia and asked that governmental involvement in relief efforts be increased. The LMA (Canada Ministries) reported that negotiations were proceeding for a new master agreement on sponsorship, but that the GOC was asking that the churches take on more administrative tasks which "will lead to more bureaucratic paper work and diversion of monies from sponsoring of refugees." After 18 months of negotiations a new master agreement was signed.
- 1994: The 120th GA sent a message of support to the Middle East Council of Churches and its Department of Service for Palestinian Refugees. Congregations were urged to pray for the end of the killing in Rwanda and to donate generously to the PWS&D appeal for Rwandan refugees.
- 1996: The 122nd GA urged the GOC to end the imposition of landing fees on refugee claimants and to add a meaningful appeal process to the Immigration Act based on the merits of the case. The LMA was asked to set up a task force to continue discussion on these issues and develop a statement on The Church and Immigration.
- 1997: The LMA report noted that 1997 was the UN Year of Uprooted Peoples and encouraged congregations to sponsor refugee families.
- 1998: Responsibility for refugee issues was transferred from Canada Ministries to PWS&D except for the financial support to Action Réfugiés Montréal.
- 2003: The 127th GA urged the GOC to significantly increase the number of refugees sponsored from Sudan and urged congregations to privately sponsor Sudanese refugees. A new sponsorship agreement was signed with the GOC. The new agreement runs indefinitely with either party able to withdraw given due notice.
- 2006: The 132nd GA adopted a report on providing sanctuary to a refugee and suggested guidelines for congregation deciding to offer sanctuary. It also expressed its dismay over the lack of a merit-based appeal process for refugee claimants as set out in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and called on the government to live up to the commitments of the Act.
- 2007: The 133rd GA adopted a report on the vulnerabilities of migrants and urged the GOC to sign the International Convention of the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Congregations were urged to support migrants in their communities and remember migrants in prayer on December 18, International Migrants' Day. Fair trade products were recommended as one tangible response to an unjust global order that forces many people to migrate.

From *The Social Action Handbook* [www.presbyterian.ca/webfm\\_send/1992](http://www.presbyterian.ca/webfm_send/1992)

# Case Study I

## The story of Paw Say

**W**hen Paw Say fled Myanmar (Burma) with her four children in 1995, she wondered if they would make it to Thailand together. As members of the Karen ethnic minority, they had lived with extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, forced recruitment of young men to fight in the army, arbitrary fines, crop destruction and confiscation. They were persecuted because they were Karen and because they were Christians. For four years her family hid in the jungle and her youngest child was born there. While there, Paw Say's husband was killed.

### Life as refugees

When Paw Say's family arrived at the Thai border, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees) admitted them to Mae La Oon refugee camp on the Burma-Thai border. Set up to provide temporary shelter for refugees from Burma, the area has become one of the world's protracted\* refugee situations. Home for more than 20 years to mostly ethnic Karen refugees, children have been born and raised in these camps. Paw Say and her family lived here for the next twelve years.

While the UNHCR provided food, water and shelter, the conditions in the camp were harsh. It was overcrowded with minimal health care. Many refugees got malaria, especially children and the elderly. The annual monsoon rains washed away the only supply access road; they were often hungry.

While restricted to living within the camp, Paw Say's family rarely felt safe. Burmese soldiers made periodic night raids, kidnapping young refugee boys to fight in the army. Ta Mla Lar, Paw Say's son explains: "I was scared I'd be killed or taken away by the soldiers who had killed my father."

### Beginning a new life

In 2006 the Thai government agreed that the international community could resettle refugees from the overcrowded camps on the Thai border with Myanmar (Burma). The Canadian government agreed to resettle about 800 refugees from Mae la Oon, the most

remote and crowded camp. Recognizing that people with such prolonged camp experiences would need extra support, churches and community groups were invited to assist.

In a special resettlement program, the Canadian government would provide four months of income support and some start-up donations of clothing, household goods and school fees.

The sponsoring congregation or

Ta Mla Lar, his sister, Ta Mla Say, and mother, Paw Say.

Photo: Elliot Ferguson, Woodstock Sentinel-Review





## Case Study I continued

group would provide eight months of income support along with accompaniment and personal support to help refugees adjust to a new way of life.

Presbyterian World Service & Development advertised this sponsorship opportunity to PCC congregations. One congregation that came forward was Knox Presbyterian Church in Woodstock. PWS&D provided a list of refugees approved by the government. Knox saw a profile for a family of three: mother, son (17) and daughter (13) and choose Paw Say's family.

### Life in Canada

So it was that in 2007, after 12 years in a refugee camp, Paw Say and two of her children arrived in Toronto. They boarded a bus to London, Ontario where they were met by members of Knox Presbyterian Church in Woodstock.

Paw Say's family discovered a welcoming congregation ready to help them settle into their new home. Over the next year, and beyond, members of the congregation helped the family learn basic skills, like how the stove and shower worked and how to get bus passes. They helped them register for ESL classes and accompanied them to doctor and dentist appointments.

"So many things were different for us here," says Paw Say. "I had never lived in an apartment with a bathroom, or used an electric stove. Learning English has been very hard but everyone has been very helpful. At least we do not have to worry about being killed."

Under the special program for Karen refugees, Knox Church was responsible for eight months of financial support in the first year. Even at the end of the formal sponsorship period, the relationship continued. The refugee group coordinator, Margaret Douglas, continues to support the family in numerous ways. It is now a friendship, and Margaret is known as "Mummy"! The family is grateful for all the support and affection they have received.

This sponsorship has had another bonus. Paw Say's family was eager to join a church family when they arrived. All of them now attend Knox Church, singing in the choir, being part of the Praise team and liturgical dance group. During summer 2009, Ta Mla Lar, now 19, had a great time working for one week at Kintail Presbyterian Camp as assistant cook and as a camp counsellor.

### Beyond the sponsorship

However, Paw Say's suffering is not over. She had two older sons who were separated from her. They ended up in separate refugee camps. One married and the other mentally disabled, they were not resettled with her in Canada. "The worst thing for me," she says, "has been the worry for my sons, left behind in the camps. At first, I did not even know where they were."

Within a year, Knox Church decided they would sponsor the older children as well. Margaret Douglas explains, "Worrying for their safety was preventing Paw Say from really moving forward in her new country. Sponsoring them was the right thing to do."

Today, as they anticipate the arrival of the last members of the family, Paw Say continues to learn English and the kids attend high school, daring to dream of a future with possibilities including college.

"The blessings have flowed two ways," Margaret Douglas affirms. "God has blessed us all. Thanks be to God!"

*\*A protracted refugee situation refers to refugee situations which have become long-term. In protracted refugee situations which have extended 25-30 years, some refugees have been born, grown-up, married and had their children in refugee camps.*

## Case Study II

# The story of Marian

In January 1991, with civil war raging in Somalia, gunmen invaded Marian's home and killed her father and nine-year-old brother. She was sprayed with shrapnel and her mother and other brothers and sisters fled, believing her to be dead.

But somehow Marian survived. Neighbours found her with a broken leg and shrapnel fragments imbedded all over her body. They cared for her, eventually carrying her with them to a refugee camp in Kenya.

### Life as a refugee

Over the next nine years, Marian lived in four different refugee camps in Kenya. While she felt relatively safe, she was afraid she would never have a chance for a new life, so she made her way to Nairobi. In Nairobi she found that she faced new dangers as Kenyan police and vigilantes often took advantage of people without proper identification.

Eventually Marian was taken in by a woman in Nairobi. She wanted to find her family, which she believed was still in Somalia, but she had no means of travel or communication, especially as she could not walk without crutches. She began to look for a way that she might be resettled in a country where she would feel safe, a country like Canada.

### Resettlement begins

In 2002 Marian, a young Muslim Somali refugee in Nairobi, made a connection with Terry Smith, a committed refugee advocate in Waterloo-Wellington Presbytery. Terry asked St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fergus, Ontario, if they would help by becoming sponsors.

"Terry sent us a photograph of Marian along with her story," explains Pauline Hall of St. Andrew's. "When I brought this to Session there was immediate and unanimous agreement that we should sponsor Marian as a refugee. We had to respond to the need of this person. All of a sudden all kinds of barriers melted down. We believed our call was to help her and not to think whether she is Christian or not. Christ called us to help others, not because they are followers of Christ but because they are in prison, naked, sick or wounded." Thus began a long process of applications, forms and correspondence.

On September 28, 2004, Doug and Pauline Hall and the Rev. Dave Whitecross went to the Toronto Airport to meet Marian. Pauline recalls when Marian finally came

## Case Study II continued

through the arrival gate. "She seemed so small and alone in her black hijab,\*" says Pauline. "As I walked to the car with my arm around her shoulders, I knew that the whole process had been guided by God."

### New Life in Canada

Marian moved in with the Halls and very quickly became like another daughter to them. Members of St. Andrew's Church rallied around to help Marian adjust to life in Canada. Volunteers took turns driving her to Guelph for English classes. Marian's positive attitude and sense of humour helped break down barriers and she soon had many friends within the congregation.

As the injuries Marian suffered in Somalia continued to plague her, a doctor agreed to take her as a patient and eventually referred her to an orthopaedic surgeon. Major surgery repaired her leg so that she is almost free of pain now. Although she continues to wear a special brace on her leg, she gets around very well.

### Rediscovering family

Even as Marian made progress in her new country, she longed to contact her family again. Then, in early 2005, a friend in Nairobi told her that he was returning to Somalia. Marian asked him to visit her home. The young man called from Mogadishu, the capital city, to report that her old home had been demolished, but that a neighbour thought she knew where a sister of Marian's was living. He promised to let Marian know what he found out. A week later the friend called to say that not only had he found Marian's sister, but her mother as well.

Marian's mother at first couldn't believe Marian was alive. "You must be mistaken" she told him, "my Marian was killed in 1991." Even after he explained what had happened, she still could not believe it. Then, after two weeks of trying, Marian was able to get through to her mother on the phone and speak to her family for the first time in 14 years. It was a wonderful moment as the Hall family gathered around Marian. Pauline reports that there wasn't a dry eye in the house! Since then Marian has been in touch with her grandmother and a dear cousin who had made her way to London, England.

The Halls helped Marian connect with a mosque in Guelph, but she also frequently attended social functions at St. Andrew's church and became part of the family there. "We would have frequent discussions about our respective faiths and Marian was always interested in what we believed. Of course, we prayed that she might come to know Christ. In the meantime, she was very devout, praying five times a day, reading the Qur'an\*\* and listening to it on tape," explained Pauline.

Marian continued attending ESL classes and got a part-time job after school at I Love Chocolate, a store in Fergus. Then, in January 2007, Marian left for Edmonton where she has friends from Somalia. When the Halls took Marian to Toronto Airport on January 10, it was very hard to say goodbye, but Marian was looking forward to this new phase in her life and seemed confident that she would be fine. "I think Marian found it hard to express her gratitude to the people of St. Andrew's," said Pauline thoughtfully, "but she has told us that she doesn't know where she would be now had we not sponsored her. As for us, Marian is family and we thank God daily that he brought her to us."

\* The hijab is the head covering worn by many Muslim women.

\*\*The Qur'an is the holy book of the Islamic faith.

## Case Study III

# The story of Sara and Amina

On Christmas Day 2008, an Ethiopian refugee claimant, Sara\*, was taken to the Laval immigration centre with her 11-year-old daughter, Amina\*. Dreaming of being safe in Canada, they had already spent two exhausting days detained at the border, waiting for an immigration agent to interview them. The border waiting room was locked each night. They had no place to lie down, no washing facilities and little food. Even with valid identity documents and an adult daughter already living in Canada, Sara and her daughter were held until their identity documents could be verified.

Once their documents were verified, Sara and Amina were taken to be detained at the Laval immigration centre, 20 km from downtown Montreal, a prison-like building surrounded by chain link fences topped with barbed wire. Men and women at the centre are separated, coming together only at mealtimes. Children usually stay with their mother unless a son is too old to be in the women's section. It was here that



Audry and Fatyme became friends in Action Réfugiés Montréal's twinning program. Fatyme is from Chad and had her refugee claim accepted in 2008.

Photo: Action Réfugiés Montréal



### *Case Study III continued*

Sara and Amina began the long process of making a refugee claim, asking Canada to provide them with protection.

Sara and Amina had a bedroom to themselves in the centre but shared the bathroom with other women detainees. They were locked in and escorted by guards to the cafeteria for meals and meetings with lawyers. They were transported to downtown Montreal for their detention review hearings in an armored van with guards. "When Amina and I were taken in the detention van to immigration hearings downtown," Sara said later, "I was shocked to see that people are handcuffed. I had the impression they thought we were criminals." Schooling was supposed to be provided after one week, but the Canadian Border Services Agency has a hard time organizing teachers to come when there are few students, and so Amina never went to school. While in detention, Sara worried about Amina's health as she was eating very little and was withdrawn. Her only diversion was a television.

While in Laval, Jenny Jeanes, the detention program coordinator from Action Réfugiés Montréal, visited Sara and Amina. Jenny visits the Laval detention centre weekly, and was able to provide Sara with accurate information on the legal procedures of detention and making a refugee claim, as well as giving emotional support. She also showed Sara what needed to be done to fill out the Personal Information Form for the refugee claim to proceed.

Fortunately, Sara submitted the completed PIF in time and her claim is now in the "system." Because of the growing backlog, she will wait two or more years before the IRB hears her claim and makes a determination. After 29 days in detention, Sara and Amina were released and re-united with their family. They visited Action Réfugiés to express gratitude for their support. Although the decision hasn't been made about whether or not they can stay in Canada, they are both glad to be out of detention, glad to feel like free people again and no longer like prisoners.

\*not their real names

## Case Study IV

# The story of Karim and Roya\*

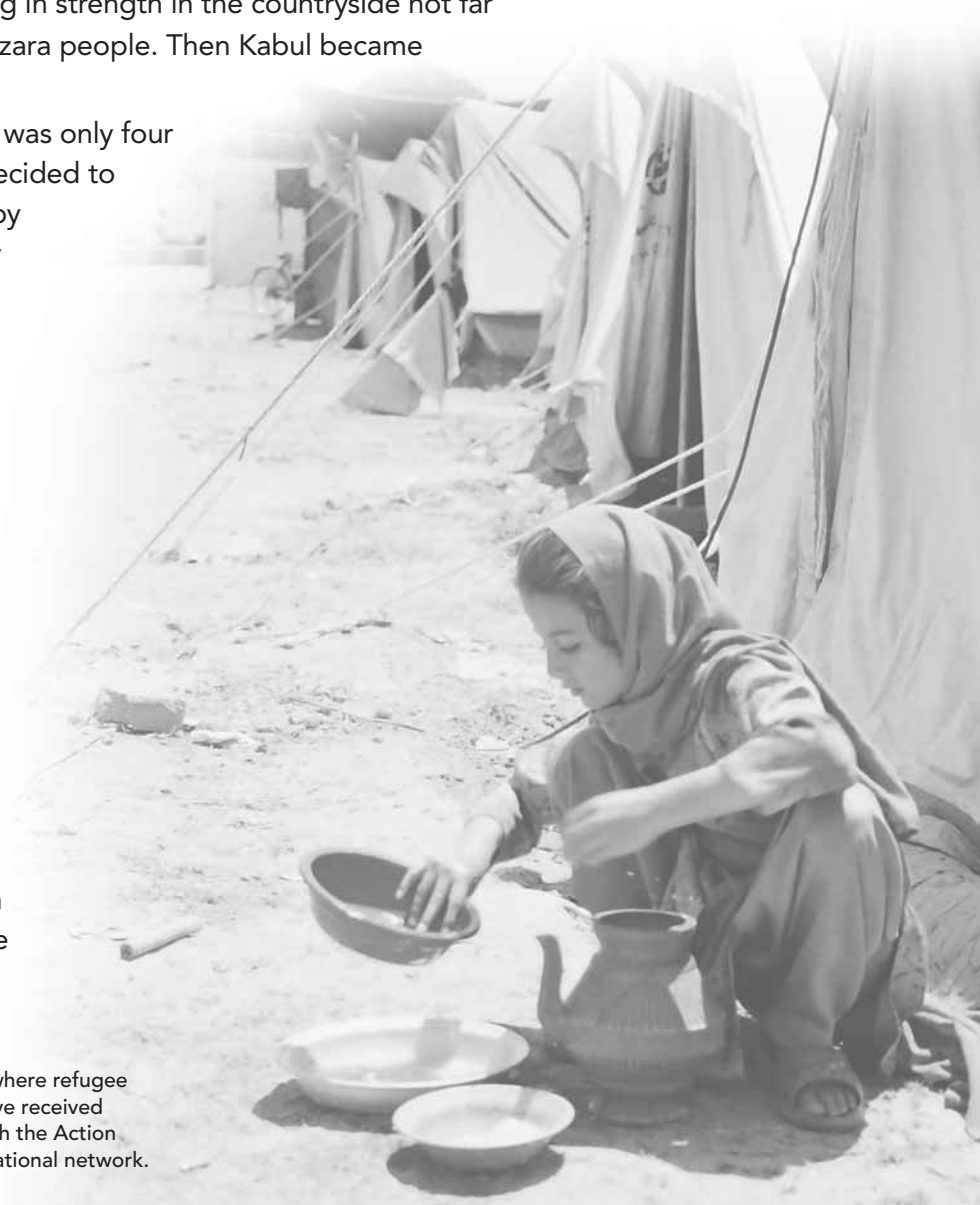
**K**arim and Roya are from central Afghanistan, members of the Hazara ethnic minority who are primarily Shi'a Muslims. They are proud of their distinct language and traditions. After their marriage, they moved to Kabul, hoping to escape the ethnic and religious discrimination against Hazara people in their home province. In 1995 the Taliban was growing in strength in the countryside not far from Kabul, often targeting Hazara people. Then Kabul became more and more violent.

When their daughter, Sima, was only four months old, Karim and Roya decided to escape to Pakistan. Travelling by minibus, they were stopped by Taliban militants. Roya could speak some Pashto and begged that their lives be spared. She considers it a miracle of God that they made it safely to Pakistan.

### Life as refugees

Karim and Roya had three more children in the 12 years that they lived in an Afghan refugee settlement in Peshawar, Pakistan. For all four children life in exile was the only way of life they knew. Thankfully they received health care and the children were able to attend school. Karim and

A refugee camp in Pakistan where refugee families from Afghanistan have received support from PWS&D through the Action by Churches Together International network.



Roya had sheltered them from most of the difficulties of being refugees. As non-citizens, whenever Karim and Roya went out of the settlement they were easy targets for exploitation by corrupt officials and common criminals in their poor host community.

### **A big decision**

After the Taliban government in Afghanistan was chased out by multinational forces, Karim and Roya cautiously started to think about returning home. Conversations with their neighbours focused on what was happening inside Afghanistan. The UNHCR officials offered assistance to those returning although they also spoke of the many challenges facing Afghanistan as a result of almost 25 years of war. Countries, including the United States and Canada, had pledged funds for reconstruction; but Karim and Roya wondered if they would really be safe. Even though the Taliban was no longer in power, it was still well-funded and committed to overthrowing the new government.

Karim and Roya weighed the arguments for staying in Pakistan against the arguments for returning to Afghanistan. In the end, they decided that Afghanistan was home – their hearts were there. Even their children, who were now aged four to fifteen, knew that they were Afghans. The thought of going home was both exciting and frightening.

### **Returning home**

For those deciding to return home, the UNHCR provided a small sum of money, a few kitchen supplies and some plastic sheeting. Karim and Roya were grateful for any help at all. They had no house to return to in Kabul, so they joined other returnees who encamped on the outskirts of the sprawling capital city. The tent would not withstand the winter months but it would do for now. More pressing concerns were finding work for Karim and schooling for the children.

Karim and Roya knew that education was essential to ensure a hopeful future for their children and for Afghanistan. The neighbourhood school was nothing but a tent with a rug on the floor, but the teacher was keen to teach and allowed them to pay what they could. There were rumours that a non-governmental agency was going to build a school and pay the teachers. They certainly hoped this rumour was true and that classes would not be disrupted by the fundamentalists who thought girls did not need schooling. That was not what the Qur'an said and it was not what Karim and Roya believed. Sima, their oldest daughter, had been an excellent student in Pakistan and was anxious to continue her studies. She dreamed of being a teacher herself.

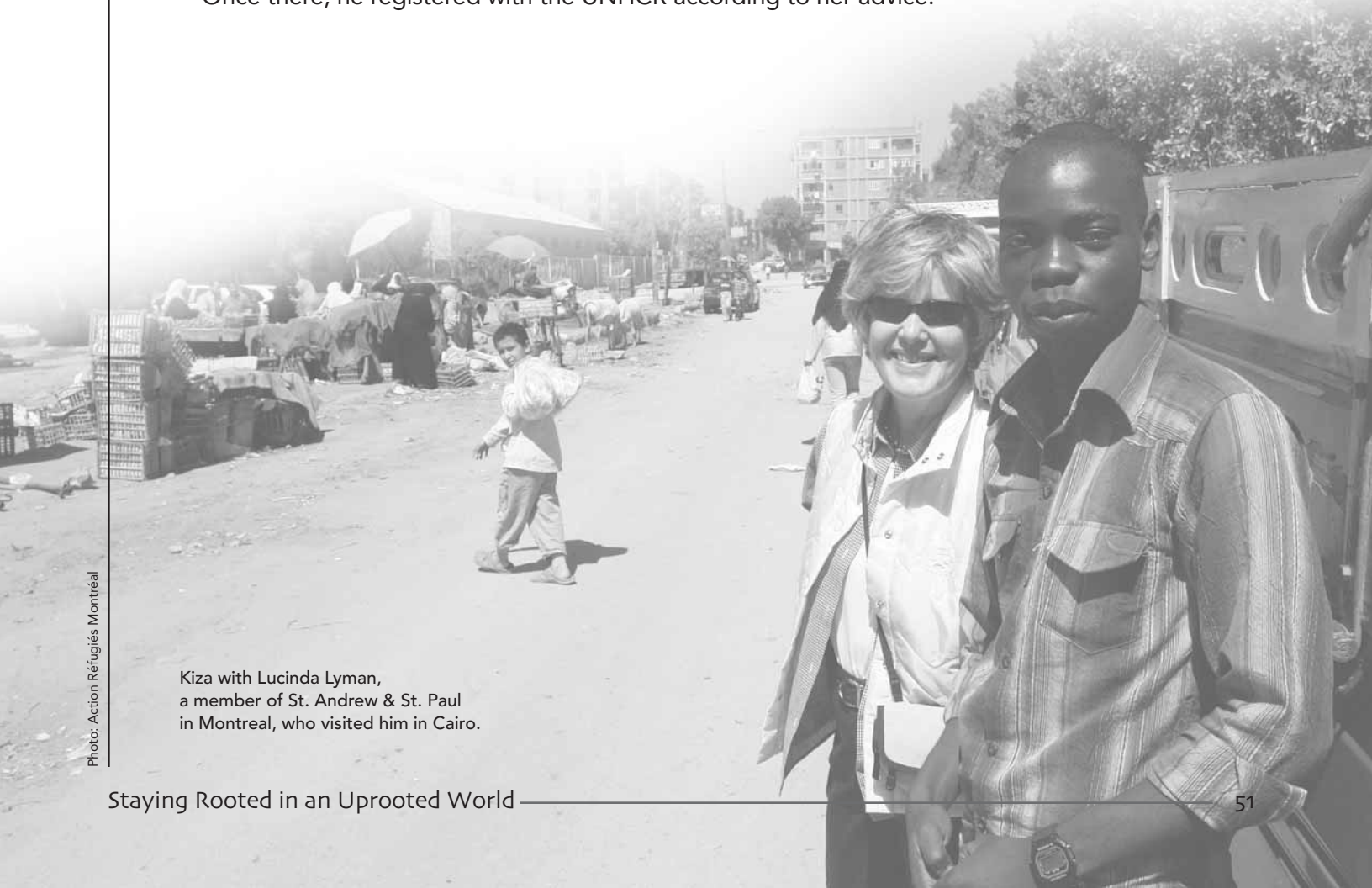
Karim and Roya knew returning home was going to be tough. They also knew there was no place like home, but only *if* that home could provide their family with physical safety, human rights and freedoms into the future.

## Case Study V

# The story of Kiza

**K**iza's Hutu family lived peacefully in a Tutsi neighbourhood of Bujumbura, Burundi. Kiza attended private school and his father was a politician. But everything changed the night of the national elections in October 1993. Tutsi army officers assassinated President Ndadaye and a Tutsi political rival, who had lost the election to Kiza's father, came to the house and killed Kiza's father and sister. Kiza and his brother and mother escaped and went to stay with a Tutsi neighbour and friend. They feared for their lives and became focused on surviving. They never stayed long in one place. In the town of Kinama, frequent attacks forced them to flee to the mountains for two to three days at a time. Then in 1995, while their mother was working at the market, they were told to leave Kinama. They never saw their mother again.

Separated from their mother, the boys were even more vulnerable. One morning when Kiza was 14 and his brother was 16, soldiers with guns arrived. They had a list of names they were to recruit to fight the Hutu rebels. They forced boys named on the list, including Kiza's brother, onto a truck. Kiza never saw his brother again. Knowing he needed help to escape, Kiza returned to Bujumbura where a Muslim Tutsi friend from years before, at great risk to herself, arranged for him to get to Cairo, Egypt. Once there, he registered with the UNHCR according to her advice.



Kiza with Lucinda Lyman,  
a member of St. Andrew & St. Paul  
in Montreal, who visited him in Cairo.



### **Life as a refugee**

In Cairo, Kiza learned from other African refugees about AMERA, a non-governmental agency working with refugees. A Canadian law student from McGill University, Delphine Nakache, was in Cairo doing a summer placement with AMERA and befriended Kiza. Once back in Canada, Delphine approached Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) to ask if anything could be done for Kiza. Glynis Williams, the Director of ARM, shared Kiza's story with the Presbyterian Church of St. Andrew & St. Paul. They agreed to sponsor him. Brian Merrett of St. Andrew & St. Paul explains, "We were moved by compassion when we heard Kiza's story."

In Canada, the church completed the application forms and related paperwork for sponsorship. Kiza submitted his applications to the Canadian Embassy in Egypt and then awaited his interview. He was delighted when he was able to communicate with his sponsorship group through email. He wrote them saying, "The pain of being a refugee is one of the worst a human being can experience: the pain of living your life in the hands of someone else."

### **Roadblocks to resettlement**

All went well until his interview with a Canadian visa officer in July 2007. The visa officer refused to give him admission to Canada, telling Kiza, "I find it unreasonable that with [only] four years of formal education in Cairo you were able to learn excellent English and Arabic. In addition, I do not find your story of escape credible."

St. Andrew & St. Paul's refugee committee members were devastated by the refusal. They had no concerns about Kiza's credibility; they had undertaken extensive research on his need for protection before the sponsorship had been submitted. All the money they needed to support Kiza for his first year in Canada had been raised; they were simply waiting for him to arrive. A few committee members had even visited Egypt and met Kiza. He was no longer a stranger, but their friend.

Believing that an injustice had been done to Kiza, the committee decided to hire a lawyer and request a judicial review in the federal court. The review was granted. The case was finally conceded by the lawyer for Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Kiza was granted a second interview at the Canadian Embassy in Cairo, a daunting experience for him. There was much rejoicing when he received the good news that he had succeeded and would be admitted to Canada!

Lucinda Lyman, an elder and head of the outreach committee at St. Andrew and St. Paul, says the process did not dampen their passion. "What's the church all about if it's not reaching out even in such a small way? It gives us more of a window on the world," she said. "And I honestly, totally feel, at least personally, that we're gaining a lot more than Kiza is." Brian Merrett explains, "This whole experience has moved us from compassion to solidarity, seeking justice for refugees."

Kiza arrived in Montreal on June 16, 2009, where he was welcomed by the refugee team from St. Andrew and St. Paul. His new life was about to begin.



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