

**Report of the World Relief Officer to the World Relief Committee
November 3, 2016**

At the time that I wrote my June 2016 report, the latest figures on global displacement were from June 2015 and counted the displaced at one in every 122 humans. Figures released this summer show that this crisis continues to grow. Today, measured against the world's population of 7.4 billion people, one in every 113 people globally is now either an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee – putting them at a level of risk for which United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) knows no precedent.

One way to capture the magnitude of what is happening is as follows:

- On average, 24 people were forced to flee each minute in 2015---that's four times more than a decade earlier, when six people fled every 60 seconds.

OR

- A total 65,300,000 people were displaced at the end of 2015, compared to 59,500,000 just 12 months earlier.

Whether you break it down to the minute-by-minute reality, or look at the totality of numbers of those displaced, what is true is that this is a crisis of historic proportions---and the end of the plight of many of those that are displaced is nowhere in sight.

The reasons are threefold:

- conflicts that cause large refugee outflows, like Somalia and Afghanistan – now in their third and fourth decade respectively – are lasting longer;
- dramatic new or reignited conflicts and situations of insecurity are occurring more frequently. While today's largest is Syria, wars have broken out in the past five years in South Sudan, Yemen, Burundi, Ukraine and Central African Republic, while thousands more people have fled raging gang and other violence in Central America;
- the rate at which solutions are being found for refugees and internally displaced people has been on a falling trend since the end of the Cold War, leaving a growing number in limbo.

Today, only .5% of all refugees can hope to be resettled in the U.S. Yes, that is correct---only ½ of 1%. At a recent Church World Service meeting I learned that between October 1, 2016-September 30, 2017, the U.S. has committed to the resettlement of 110,000 people. While that pales in comparison to the need, that represents a 25,000-person increase. The challenge to Americans today is to participate in the welcoming and resettlement of 110,000 people within 1 year. As Erol Kekic, CWS Executive Director for the Immigration and Refugee Program boldly stated, "Each person resettled is a life saved--now more than ever."

What has changed dramatically within the U.S. is the role of the church in the resettlement of refugees. During the 1970s, 1980s, and early in the 1990s, the U.S. church played a very active role in the resettlement of the majority of refugees accepted for resettlement. Today, less than 10% of refugees are resettled with the active engagement of a local church. It is true that as the U.S. has become more wonderfully diverse, resettled refugees have formed their own supportive communities and therefore

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provide for the newly resettled in ways that were once provided by the church. But the increase in the number to be resettled, coupled by the growing global crisis, brings this critical need once again to the doorsteps of our own churches. How will we respond? How will we today embody Matthew 25 and indeed “see” the needs of the displaced and assist in welcoming them within our own communities?

I encourage any local church interested in the ministry of refugee resettlement in the coming year to be in touch with me. I will work with American Baptist Home Mission Societies staff to personally connect them to Church World Service or another U.S. resettlement agency in their local community to begin the process of welcoming the stranger.

Report on 2016 Year-to-Date Giving

Year-to-date receipts through September 2016 totaled \$1,243,556 compared with \$1,396,418 for the same period last year. The major difference is the YTD September 2015 giving included almost \$200,000 for Nepal Earthquake Relief.

World Relief Committee Meeting – November 17, 2016

At its’ upcoming meeting, the World Relief Committee will approve the overall 2017 OGHS budget, consider new development projects presented by ABHMS and IM, ecumenical commitments to Church World Service, the ACT Alliance, the World Council of Churches, and IMA World Health, and the World Relief Office Administrative Budget. Guests expected at this meeting included Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, ABHMS, Dr. Brenda Halliburton-Williams, National Coordinator for Intercultural Ministries – Black Churches Strategist, ABHMS, and Karen Smith, Director of Mission Design, IM.

Note: I timed how long it took me to read this report---3 minutes. In that brief amount of time an estimated 72 people have been displaced from the place they call home.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Rothenberger
World Relief Officer