

2019 Ministry Summary



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A high school refugee works hard to graduate at the top of his class.

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"I Really Love This Place"

English classes give life new meaning for a recent immigrant from Colombia.



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Local churches work together to help refugee and immigrant students improve their English.

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Standing With Our Neighbors

In 2019, thousands of lives were changed because of your generosity. Refugees and other immigrants found new jobs, gained financial stability, connected to health care, improved their English, began healing from trauma, reunited with family, became citizens, and connected with supportive volunteers who, for many, will become lifelong friends. Through our three office locations in Chicago, DuPage County, and Aurora, we served alongside church and community partners to support immigrants throughout Chicagoland.

With your help, we are helping refugees and other immigrants find hope and rebuild their lives.

The story of Lian and Sian

In 2008, Lian Mung and Sian Nu fled their homeland of Burma in search of safety abroad. They were resettled in the U.S. a few years later on a snowy February 14 in Wheaton, Illinois—the perfect day for a young couple in love.

It was not long after the couple's arrival that they realized they couldn't meet their needs with entry level jobs. With their education and growing English skills, Lian and Sian just needed a bit of job assistance to find greater success.

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Introducing: World Relief Chicagoland



Susan Sperry

The Way Forward

Over forty years ago, World Relief began serving in the Chicagoland region, responding to requests from local churches and the Department of State to facilitate the resettlement of refugees following the Vietnam War. Since that time, our locations in Chicago, DuPage County, and the city of Aurora have grown in scope and partnership. Today, we join with hundreds of churches, volunteers, and organizations to walk alongside refugees and other vulnerable immigrants as they rebuild their lives here.

In 2019, we decided to unite all three offices in the Chicagoland area under

shared leadership to work together as one region, learning from each other and increasing impact among our immigrant neighbors. In this ministry update, we share a picture of this work together, ministry that is made possible because of YOU, our incredible family of partners who are committed to loving and welcoming your neighbors.

This past year, over 6,500 refugees and immigrants connected with the vital services offered through World Relief, including the services and relationships facilitated by over 350 church partners and nearly 1100 volunteers.

Thank you for being a part of this journey of welcome with us. We look forward with hope to the coming year, and all that God will do through it.

Serving together,

Susan Sperry
Executive Director
World Relief Chicagoland

**Read more stories of impact
online on our blog.**

Visit our websites at: worldreliefdupageaurora.org;
worldreliefchicago.org

New Programs Launched in 2019

Last year was one
of growth across
our region

Asylum Seeker Program

World Relief's asylum seeker program assists immigrants who are in the process of seeking refuge in the United States. The goal of the program is to support people in navigating life in the U.S., and to provide services that will lead to a greater quality of life and an increased sense of financial and social independence. Some of our core services include enrollment in English classes, employment aid, school enrollments, government applications, and referrals for legal representation, medical care, and housing.



Career Pathways

World Relief's Career Advancement Program provides immigrants with opportunities to acquire the education and skills needed to pursue high-demand career pathways. This program is possible because of strong partnerships with over 400 local employers, vocational training programs, post-secondary educational institutions, local volunteers, and community service providers.

Would you like to
volunteer?

Learn how on page 9

The Three Pillars of World Relief's Work



Our work is not finished when new families arrive. It is only just beginning.

World Relief provides a holistic approach to helping refugees and other immigrants become stable, well-integrated members of the Chicagoland region.

1. Providing Vital Services

Refugees and other immigrants need specific and experienced support as they navigate life in the United States, whether that is through help understanding the culture and systems, finding jobs, learning English, or understanding the complexity of the immigration legal system. World Relief provides services that address these needs for support, walking alongside each person with compassion and care.

2. Building Welcoming Communities

Churches, community partners, and volunteers are at the core of our joint mission to welcome the stranger. This is why World Relief works to train and equip these valued ministry partners to best serve refugees and other immigrants. Along with equipping partners, World Relief actively engages in advocacy at the local and national levels around issues that impact the lives of refugees and immigrants in this country.

3. Bringing People Together

Whether it's a friendship formed between mentor and mentee or a strong community formed in an English classroom, World Relief's ministry brings people together in life-changing relationships across culture, race, and ethnicity.

Who We Served in 2019

6.5K
Immigrants

Who came from
113
Countries



Mohammad Marie

Helping People Begin Again

340

Attended After-School Clubs

942

Cases Managed

100+

Received Trauma Counseling

Mental health is of critical importance

Many refugees suffer from PTSD and other psychological trauma. Upon arriving in the United States, it is vital for World Relief staff to identify those in need of counseling and refer them to a clinical therapist on staff or through a partnering organization.

Learning the Skills to Succeed

Refugees and immigrants arrive in this country with a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with their new neighbors. But moving to a new country is not easy, especially when arriving with nothing, as is the case for so many refugees. Newcomers will need help acquiring the skills necessary to live and thrive in the United States. These skills span everything from learning how to apply for a job to learning how to apply for health insurance and other benefits. But two of the most important skills are learning English and, for immigrant children, navigating the American school system. That's why World Relief offers free English classes for adults and free tutoring and after school clubs for students—because we want our new neighbors to live their best lives possible here.

Starting from Zero

A story about after-school success

Mohammad Marie looks and acts like a typical high school senior—one that has spent his entire life living and learning in the United States. But he's anything but typical.

Mohammad and his family fled war-torn Syria earlier in the decade in order to seek safety in the neighboring country of Jordan.

"We left Syria because of civil war," he explains. "Syria wasn't livable anymore, so we just fled."

In 2016, Mohammad's family was resettled as refugees in the United States.

"We came to the U.S., but we started from a zero. I did not go to middle school at all. It was during war time. I like went to half of the sixth grade and little of the fifth grade, but I didn't go to seventh or eighth. There was a war and stuff."

With the help of World Relief's Aurora office, Mohammad enrolled as a freshman at Aurora West High School. He spoke no English.

Three short years later, Mohammad speaks fluent English and has a 3.8 GPA. He credits World Relief's volunteer-based after-school program led by World Relief staff member, Cyndi Fusek, for his success.

"Cyndi is doing a great thing," Mohammad says. "She's doing one of the most beneficial things. It's very, very great for newcomers and people who come from other countries to find somebody like Cyndi. I really thank her for what she's doing for people. A lot of students have really benefitted by all the stuff she does. I think that what she does is just as great as saving people from dying in a war. Because if children don't get the help they need, they're not going to be able to live much anyway."



Lian Mung and Sian Lu

The Story of Lian and Sian

Continued from Page 1

Through World Relief's partnership with the organization workNet DuPage, Lian and Sian attended vocational training classes. Sian enrolled in the Computer Numerical Controlled (CNC) training program, a skill in high demand by area manufacturers, while Lian cared for the couple's ten-month-old son and worked as a machine operator for a meatpacking plant.

Sian finished the program in August 2019 and quickly secured a full-time job at Tru-Grind, a machine shop in Arlington Heights. She became the family's primary wage earner, allowing Lian to follow a similar path to pursue IT training and find a new job.

In less than two years, Lian and Sian have made remarkable strides. They are pursuing different career tracks motivated by their passions. With hard work, tenacity, and support they are contributing to their new community and see a brighter future for their son.

Building Bonds With English

For many immigrants, learning English is the first step on the path to belonging. Upon arrival to our community, many immigrants feel isolated and alone, but by learning the language, they can begin connecting with their new neighbors and building bonds of friendship.

World Relief English Teacher, Robyn Hackett, describes the power of a shared language:

“Learning English is essential for meaningful communication about students’ lives,” Robyn explains. “For example, after reviewing family vocabulary, students were able to share about new babies born here in Illinois, beloved family members who are still in countries of asylum waiting for a chance to be reunited, and even family members who passed away in those countries. Students from diverse language backgrounds were able to share these meaningful stories with each other in English, and celebrate, mourn, and comfort one another.”

Throughout Chicagoland, we offer a total of 21 classes in partnership with churches, schools, and a local company.



Daniel Diaz

“I Really Love This Place”

Daniel Diaz smiles more than most people, and his happiness is contagious. He speaks affectionately about his time as a student with World Relief’s English class, as well as his relationships with the Chicago office staff and his former classmates there. English classes help immigrants like Daniel learn to read, write, and speak the English language so that they can live confidently here in the United States.

In early 2019, Daniel moved to the U.S. with his wife, who is herself a U.S. citizen that was living and working in Colombia when the two met. He was unafraid of the challenges that would await him in a new country, and began tackling those challenges—citizenship, employment, education—the day he arrived. Soon after, he contacted World Relief about English language learning. Within days, he was enrolled in one of World Relief’s English classes in Chicago, and he couldn’t have been happier to be there.

“When I came to class, I felt I was with family,” he says with a smile. “I came here and I felt the love of the people for each other. Everyone gave me a hug and welcomed me to English class.”

“The teachers here are so amazing,” he continues. “I’m really grateful. I think that in one month I learned a lot—a lot of things. What my teacher has taught me is fundamental.”

“People from around the world are coming to this country in hard situations.” He points to the table to signify he is now speaking about World Relief’s ESL classroom. “When they come here,”—he taps the table with his finger—“they feel at home.”

“You feel like people love you. A lot of people are alone, and here they feel they are important. This place gives confidence to people. Before I came here, I didn’t want to go outside and talk to people. After I studied here, I felt confident. I could go outside and do several things by myself.”

“I just want to say thanks to people that help World Relief because you are changing lives. You are helping people to be someone in their lives. Thanks to you, people can get the confidence to do things, to feel loved, to be loved.”

English Learning in 2019

715

Learned English
through World Relief

135

Volunteers Tutored
Students in English

Work + Purpose = Vocation

World Relief is not content just helping refugees and immigrants find entry level jobs. We work hard to build partnerships with local area businesses, training centers, and financial institutions to help equip refugees and immigrants with the training, schooling, and resources they need to find the best jobs available to them; jobs that are personally fulfilling and that allow newcomers to use the talents God gave them. For many immigrants, their dream is to open their own business here in the United States. This dream becomes a reality thanks to the support of our partners and the hard work and determination exhibited by the people we serve.

From Refugee to Artisan Shop Owner



Ibtisam

Back in her home country of Iraq, Ibtisam was a successful fashion designer whose business employed many people. When war broke out, she lost many of her relatives, and she and her husband lived in constant fear. After they began receiving anonymous death threats, they knew it was time to leave their home. With the help of World Relief, they were welcomed to the United States in 2008 as refugees.

For the last eleven years, Ibtisam and her husband have worked to rebuild their lives here, which included Ibtisam returning to school to complete her certificate in fashion design from the College of DuPage. In 2019, Ibtisam opened up a new fashion design shop in Lombard called Ibtisam Tailor Shop. She regularly gives back so that other refugees may be welcomed to the community with the same love and support that she received more than a decade ago.

581

Jobs Found

400+

Employment Partners

Employment partners are vital to the success of refugees and other immigrants

Thanks to the many job providers, schools, training centers, and financial institutions that partner with World Relief, refugees and immigrants are given access to the resources they need to thrive.

From Asylee to STEM Educator



Bilel Dekhili

Bilel Dekhili is a brilliant young man from Tunisia who is using his heart and mind to educate the next generation of thinkers.

He first came to the World Relief office in Chicago as an asylee with dreams of running his own business. Thanks to your support, World Relief was able to help this exceptional man find office space for his STEM education start-up, and help him find steady employment so that he can afford to live here while he continues to grow his company and finalize his own patents. Bilel works eight hours a day to pay bills and then works on his own company at night.

His company, Engineering DN@, teaches children how to build robots and other machines, while also creating pathways for kids to grow and succeed in life.

Says Bilel: "We are not only teaching. We are forming a personality. We are forming leaders."

Legal Status = Stability

To obtain the right to work, become citizens, and reunite with family members, refugees and other immigrants must navigate the complex US immigration system—a difficult process, even for native English speakers. To help them on this journey, World Relief’s nationally accredited Immigration Legal Services program provides legal consultations and represents their immigration cases, some of which can take years to be decided. At the same time, World Relief and its partners advocate for just immigration policies that respect both the dignity of all human beings and the needs of our country and community.



Helping Dreams Come True

Sofia first came to the U.S. in 2001 on a tourist visa. It was a time of hope for her amid a period of unrest for her home country of Guatemala. Tragically, once here in Illinois, Sofia suffered domestic abuse at the hands of her partner.

As a victim of domestic abuse, Sofia fell under the list of qualified recipients for a U-visa, which aims to protect immigrants who are victims of a violent crime. Sofia applied for the U-visa, but her real dream was to become a permanent legal resident in the U.S.

That’s why World Relief’s Immigration Legal Services (ILS) team in Chicago fought so hard to help get Sofia’s green card approved. It took nearly six years in court, but ultimately their efforts were a success. Sofia would be granted her Green Card.

Upon learning the good news, Sofia immediately started crying and couldn’t stop.

Sofia tearfully admits that she has never had the words to fully express her gratitude, but she musters the first words that come to her. “I just thank you for helping people like me.”

Legal Services Milestones

4k+

Received Legal Aid

500

Became U.S. Citizens



Bunga and his two sons

A Very Special Graduation

A story about a family reunited

Bunga and Hortence, a husband and wife from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), first arrived in the United States as refugees in 2013 with their youngest son. Unfortunately, their eldest son, Jonas, was away from home when they were forced to flee, and he couldn’t join them.

Over the course of many years, World Relief’s Immigration Legal Services team worked to bring Jonas to the United States by helping the family navigate the many stages of the legal process, which included maintaining constant communication with the U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and the U.S. Embassy in the DRC.

After more than two years of advocacy and prayers, Jonas was finally approved to reunite with his family in the United States. When Hortence first saw her son exit the terminal at O’Hare International Airport, she let out a cry of joy and fell to her knees in gratitude.

In May of 2019, Jonas graduated from high school. His mom, dad, and younger brother watched from the stands as he proudly accepted his diploma.



Creating Coalitions of Love

Church partners are at the core of World Relief's work

Jesus calls us to love God and love our neighbors. At World Relief, we are committed to partnering with local churches to live this out through a ministry of welcome and service. In 2019, we partnered with over 350 churches of all sizes and ethnic backgrounds. This included:

- Speaking at church services, Sunday school classes, and other gatherings to help churches grow in their understanding of God's heart for refugees and immigrants
- Providing volunteer and service opportunities like citizenship application clinics, English classes, or friendship partners that walk alongside a refugee or immigrant family
- Donations of diapers, household items, gift cards, and financial assistance to support refugee and immigrant families
- Praying together for our immigrant neighbors, our community, our country, and our world

A Christmas Miracle in Chicago

Chicago churches and individuals raise more than \$30,000 for World Relief English students to attend class

Immigrants need to learn English to succeed in the United States, but the inability to afford transportation to and from these classes can prevent many from attending, despite their level of need.

In an attempt to provide free transportation to all English students at the Chicago World Relief location, the office launched a fundraising campaign in November to raise funds to purchase transit passes for students who needed public transportation to get to class.

Several churches heard about this need and collected offerings during the Christmas season to help out.

Thanks to the efforts of these churches and the generosity of so many individuals, they collectively donated more than \$30,000.

Now, immigrants can attend English classes in Chicago without having to worry about the cost of transportation.



Susan Sperry, Pastor Michelle Dodson, and Church Engagement Director, Keith Draper

Helping to Build Healthy Multi-Ethnic Churches

In partnership with pastors and church leaders in the suburbs, World Relief started a six-month program in the fall of 2019 that aimed to facilitate a healthy discussion on ethnic diversity and representation in church congregations.

The program was open to all participants and was based on Mark DeYmaz's book, "Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church."

Every session featured a notable guest speaker with experience on the topic and who approached the subject matter from their own unique perspective.

Speakers, such as Pastor Michelle Dodson, helped us think more about different aspects of the multiethnic church, from the Biblical underpinnings for this church movement, to core commitments of these churches. As a result of this series, we received encouraging words from churches who reused the materials provided, changed their hiring practices, reshaped worship, and redoubled efforts to work alongside those we serve.



Volunteers Are the Heart and Soul of World Relief's Ministry

Thank you to the more than 1,000 community members who give their time to help out

World Relief volunteers are changing lives. This past year, more than one thousand volunteers across the Chicago region helped build communities of welcome for their refugee and immigrant neighbors.

Volunteers mentored young adults, provided in-home English tutoring, helped immigrants study for citizenship and driver's license exams, delivered food and supplies, helped run after-school clubs, tutored students with their homework, and provided life-changing friendship to their neighbors in need of extra support.

In return, our volunteers were transformed by the love, wisdom, and perspective of the people they were working to serve.

In-Home Tutors Make Learning Possible

For many who can't leave their homes due to disability, or for those who can't attend classes due to work schedules, World Relief in-home tutors provide an invaluable service. And since the tutors are volunteers, the service is completely free. Thanks to them, our new neighbors working hard to learn English can receive personalized lessons at home.

Students in the program dramatically improve their English skills and volunteers report a high level of personal fulfillment from the experience. Both students and tutors often cite their new friendship with one another as the best result from the volunteer pairing.



350+

Partnering Churches



1077

Volunteers in the Region



281

New Volunteers in 2019

Would you like to volunteer?

Join us to walk alongside refugees and immigrants in your community

From English classes and citizenship clinics to mentoring and tutoring after school, there are so many ways to build relationships and show welcome to refugees and immigrants in your community. Bring your gifts, abilities and interests, and World Relief will help you use them to walk alongside these families and individuals as they rebuild their lives in the Chicago region.

To apply in Chicago: worldreliefchicago.org/volunteer-opportunities

To apply in the western suburbs: worldreliefdupageaurora.org/volunteer



We Were Blessed By Your Generosity in 2019

\$1.65M

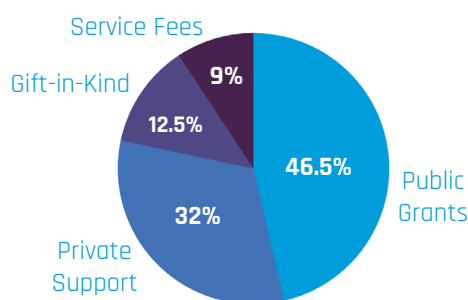
Generously Donated

\$5.95M

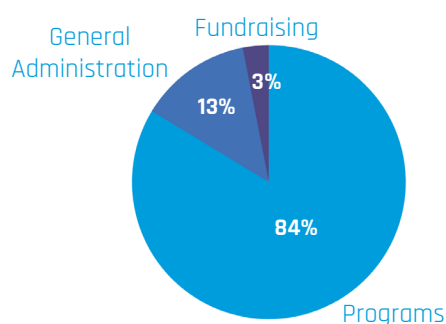
Total Operating Budget



Income



Expenses



We are grateful

Many private and public partners make this impact possible. In 2019, the local operating income of \$5.95 million included a mix of public grants, generous individuals, foundations, businesses, and churches; and legal service fees. An additional \$600,000 was given in in-kind donations, including professional pro-bono services, classroom space, vehicles, and household items.

A New Set of Wheels

A generous donation will take World Relief English students a long way

In 2019, churches, businesses, foundations, and people like you invested an incredible \$1.65M in the lives of their immigrant neighbors. In addition to direct support to families through rent payments, driving lesson scholarships, and more, these financial partners also support our programs, operating expenses, and capital costs.

For example, our fleet of vans and passenger vehicles is used to transport immigrants to

English classes, doctor appointments, youth clubs, job interviews, and more.

In 2019, one of our older 15-passenger vans became too expensive to maintain, so a generous church (Christ Church of Oak Brook), foundation (the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley), business (AJR Group), and individuals all contributed to the purchase of a beautiful new van, which will be used by hundreds of people in the years to come.

A #GivingTuesday Record

Over 100 people gave a record-setting \$55,000 to support refugees and immigrants on #GivingTuesday

Every year on the Tuesday after the Black Friday shopping weekend, non-profits from across the United States come together to raise money for their respective causes using the social media hashtag #GivingTuesday.

World Relief offices in the U.S. had participated in Giving Tuesday before, but none had ever seen quite the same level of awe-inspiring generosity that was on full display during the 2019 campaign.

Thanks to more than 100 generous donors and \$20,000 in matched donations, World Relief offices in Chicagoland raised more than \$55,000 for vital programs, including English classes, job training, citizenship classes, driver's education, after-school clubs, trauma counseling, and more.

The one-day giving total was the most money raised by a World Relief office on #GivingTuesday.

\$55k

Total Raised

\$20K

In Matched Donations

What Your Support Means

The following testimonials serve as heartfelt reminders of the very personal and life-changing impact your support can have on people

Providing Vital Services

"I would like to extend my gratitude to you, the great people who have supported me so much during my most challenging times. I appreciate it so much. You have helped me become an independent and self-reliant woman."

Selena, World Relief Client

"You have helped me obtain direction, support, affection, and the necessary tools to start a new life here in the USA. I could not have reached my goals so quickly without your help. Thank you very much!"

Ysbelia, World Relief Client

Building Welcoming Communities

"Your support to World Relief has given me so many opportunities to love my neighbor. I've formed so many friendships with refugees and fellow volunteers, and it's an honor and a privilege to get to love them."

Cameron, World Relief Volunteer

Bringing People Together

"More than an immigrant support organization, World Relief and its partners make us feel like we are part of a group of FRIENDS. You are a blessing from God to our family. May God bless the gift of your service so that you can continue to be a blessing for other immigrants. Thank you!"

Rivero Tarre Family, World Relief Clients

We believe there is a biblical mandate to help the widows and orphans, or 'the most vulnerable.' We believe our work with World Relief does this. We are not just helping them survive. We are helping clients thrive! As a business owner, I love it! Partnering with World Relief helps us see beyond our own safe world and gives us more of a global perspective, which we believe God has called all Christians to do.

Mark Berg, World Relief Donor

Thank You From All of Us at World Relief

None of this work would be possible without you



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world relief 
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