



**Christian
World Service**
ACTION AGAINST POVERTY
actalliance

Autumn Story

CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR REFUGEES

In Afghanistan families fear for their future. Many have been displaced and the United Nations reports widespread hunger. Community World Service Asia is providing emergency cash transfers in Afghanistan and for refugees in Pakistan as funding allows.

Photo: CWSA

BY GILLIAN SOUTHEY | CWS COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR.

When people have fled their homes and countries because of conflict or persecution, they look for safety and ways to support their families. However, rapidly rising refugee numbers are putting a huge strain on host countries. Unable to cope and with inadequate international humanitarian aid, countries like Lebanon are becoming increasingly fragile. Young refugees appear most at risk. School-aged children should not have to work to support their families or miss out on basic healthcare and education. Ensuring all refugees are treated with fairness and dignity is a matter of justice.

CWS partners like the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees have decades of experience in helping displaced people face the challenges of living with few resources. Central to their approach is developing communities of care that draw on the rich cultural traditions that can help sustain people far from their homes. Mona is one young woman who knows what that means.

Mona's mother, a Palestinian refugee, died when she was three years old. This left Mona and her older brother living with their father in the cramped Sabra/Shatila camp in Lebanon. Local schools would not accept her because they thought Mona had Down syndrome. So she spent the days with neighbours while he worked. Finally when Mona was 12 years old, her desperate father sought help from DSPR Lebanon.

When father and daughter came to the office, the Director took up the challenge. She enrolled Mona in the literacy class for women aged 40-70. It was perfect.



Mona has flourished thanks to the community of Palestinian and Syrian refugees living in Shatila. She can't decide whether to work with young children or be a hairdresser so at 19, she is keeping her options open. Photo: DSPR Lebanon.

Mona got lots of attention and the love that she craved from the women. Under the guidance of the teacher, she learnt to read. With greater self-confidence, the teacher moved Mona to the programme for young people at risk, those who were not going to the local schools. She kept up with her reading, writing, maths and English but it was the traditional folk dancing that she loved the most.

Now 19, Mona is looking at job options. She is enjoying the hairdressing training programme run by DSPR and helping out at the kindergarten it runs at the Sabra Centre. She has even started to write short stories. In seven years Mona's life has been transformed. She is happy and self-confident. Her father is proud of her and cannot speak highly enough of DSPR's care and concern.



Maryanna and her sister packed only their favourite toys before leaving Odessa in the east of Ukraine. The sisters were delighted to find the playroom in the Budapest airport after weeks of travel.

Photo: FCA/Antti Yrjönen

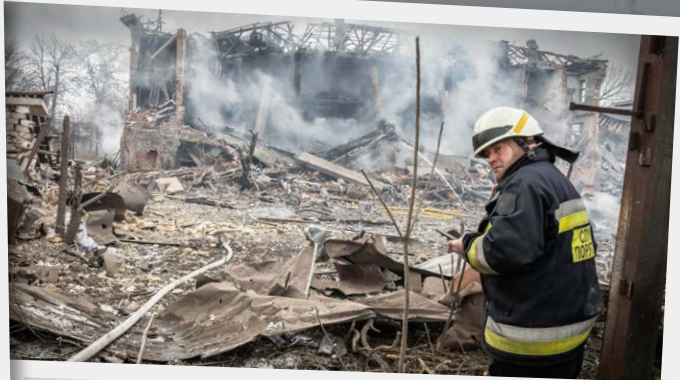
I love Flowers says a young Ukrainian Refugee

Ten year old Maryanna and her sister were delighted to find the children's play area run by ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) at the Budapest Airport. Talking to Ulriikka Myöhänen of Finn Church Aid (FCA) while she unzipped her backpack, Maryanna said she had spent the last three weeks travelling. "I have sweets and a bottle of water, and here's my cat. In Ukraine, I have a real cat," she explains.

Maryanna packed her own backpack. She opens a pencil case full of colourful wristbands, necklaces and rings that she has made. She says she had used the pillow that she had made herself on the long train and bus trips from Odessa in the east, to Poland and now Hungary. With their mother and grandmother the sisters were heading to Bulgaria to meet her father and grandfather who was receiving medical treatment at a hospital.

Maryanna left many things behind in her family's flat. "But it's okay", she says. At home she shares a spacious room with her sister she explains. Their wardrobe has a squirrel on it. They also have two beds, a table, and some seats in their room. "Near my bed, there is a little, little table for a telephone and my books." Maryanna says that the walls are white and full of flowers. "I love flowers."

Creating safe spaces for refugees is vital for their long-term well-being. Many stay in their host countries for decades. Children need good food, adequate hygiene and the chance to attend school. They need to be part of healthy communities and learn their cultural traditions. When you donate to the Autumn Appeal, you will be giving children a better future and assisting their parents to improve their livelihoods.



Top: Maryanna's mother and grandmother were determined to protect the sisters from the horrors of war. Photo: AM

Above: Maryanna has a notebook for writing and is trying to keep up with her lessons by Zoom. She misses her school and her friends. Her family is heading for Bulgaria where Maryanna says they will be close to their home in Odessa. Photo: FCA/ Atti Yrjönen



OPERATION REFUGEE PLAN TO JOIN US

The focus of this year's Operation Refugee campaign is on gatherings.

We invite you to get together with friends, at work or as a church to stand with refugees. Pray. Walk. Eat. Between June 20 and August 20, we encourage you to pray, organise a special meal, live on refugee rations or walk a set number of steps by yourself or with others. We want this time to be both fun and reflective. If you can, make it an opportunity to raise funds so refugees can learn, receive emergency support and feel welcomed.

Find out more: cwsoperationrefugee.nz or talk to Meghan or Murray on 0800 74 73 72.

**Please support our Autumn Appeal
for displaced people seeking safety
and hope.**

Donate now at www.cws.org.nz.

Phone 0800 74 73 72 or post to CWS, PO Box 22652, Christchurch 8140.



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