



# under the sun

NEWS FROM THE PRIMATE'S WORLD RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT FUND

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA



ADELE FINNEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE PRIMATE'S WORLD RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT FUND

**102-YEAR-OLD** Ramiyah Roseammah greeted me with the traditional *aayubowan* in a small community of returned refugees and internally displaced people outside Vavuniya in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. With a slight bow, hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointed upwards, she wordlessly welcomed me. I greeted her in the same way. We were, in that moment, finding the face of God in one another.

## Finding God in the stranger

Part of PWRDF's DNA belongs to refugees. At the same time as Canadian Anglicans were responding to the Springhill mining disaster in 1958, they were also organizing to send funds to refugees displaced by famine in India. It was partly through refugee experience that PWRDF learned there is so much more to responding to emergencies than the relief phase when the immediate needs for food, shelter, safety and medicine are met. Rehabilitation is about people making their community safe to live in so that refugees and/or internally displaced people can return; then they can get on with rebuilding their community's infrastructure.

What we learned in a PWRDF delegation visit to Sri Lankan refugees in India and Sri Lanka is that there are layers and layers of complexity in a refugee context during and after conflict. We also learned that out of absolute devastation can grow life-giving, peace-making ways of being and doing. Refugees, on their return, would like to be known as citizens contributing to the well-being and future of their homeland because of the education and skills they have learned in exile.

Within Canada, PWRDF is an active member of the Canadian Council for Refugees, working on advocacy for refugees within Canada. The PWRDF Refugee Network has provided Anglicans across Canada with the opportunity of investing not only their money, but their hospitality, time and energy to sponsor refugee families in Canada. That network challenged the Anglican Church of Canada to sponsor 50 refugee families in honour of PWRDF's 50th anniversary, and church people stepped up to the mark in creative collaboration.

Step #7 on the 10-step action plan tree inside states the hard truth of waiting as a sponsor. Waiting is for many refugees an agonizing spiritual discipline over many years, even decades. Proverbs says "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." Returned refugees including Ramiyah Roseammah from Kannatti village in northern Sri Lanka are rebuilding their community and trees are growing.

**PWRDF's Executive Director Adele Finney  
is welcomed by Ramiyah Roseammah.**

PHOTO: CAROLYN VANDERLIP

# Finding God in the stranger

BY SUZANNE RUMSEY  
PWRDF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM  
COORDINATOR



**T**HE BIBLE BEGINS with a migration story: "In the beginning, all was darkness and void and the Spirit of God moved [(migrated)] over the face of the chaos." (Genesis 1:1) In fact, the Biblical narrative is a series of migration stories. Joan Maruskin from Church World Service writes that the Bible is the story of the uprooted People of God seeking safety, sanctuary and refuge and the Living God giving directions for welcoming the stranger: From Adam and Eve, to Noah, Abraham, Moses, to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, all found themselves on the move, migrating, following their God, on the road to a better life.

How many of you reading this have migrated for work, for family, for school, or for many other reasons? How has that "uprooting"—chosen or imposed—impacted your life and your faith? As Christians, we often describe ourselves as being on a "journey of faith". Where

have you found God incarnate on that journey? Beyond your circle of family, friends, colleagues, have you encountered Jesus in a homeless person, an immigrant, a single mother, a refugee?

In her latest book, *The Other Face of God*, theologian, writer and refugee advocate Mary Jo Leddy writes, "If you folded your hands in prayer and asked a most ancient question, do you believe in Jesus Christ? I would cross my heart and say, yes, because a Muslim sheikh helped me help a dying man in the middle of the night. His name was Sheik Mohammed... As I repeat [his and others'] names, like beads on a rosary, I see their faces, and I remember the first time I saw them and knew that I had been failed... Strangers and foreigners, who are also called refugees... they have shown me the other face of God."

God here among us. Light in the midst of us. Bring us to light and life.

# Homes in Kenyan camps

BY SIMON CHAMBERS  
PWRDF COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

PWRDF has been working with refugee camps in Kenya for decades now. The turbulent political landscape of East Africa and the harsh environment have led tens of thousands of people to seek safety in Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps—to name just two. The majority of the 500,000 people housed in the two camps are from Somalia. But Kakuma, which currently hosts over 90,000 refugees, houses people from Ethiopia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan, as well as Somalia. Dadaab (the largest refugee camp in the world, housing over 400,000) can boast a similarly diverse population.

One of the ways PWRDF supports the work of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, our partner in the Kakuma camp, is through funding a housing project that has built over 150 houses, most of which were earmarked for people with disabilities in the camps. The project was co-funded by the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation and Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation.

The community within the camp has been intimately involved in the project-



**New homes in the desert: PWRDF funded 150 homes at Kakuma Refugee Camp.**

PHOTO: NABA GURUNG

providing mud bricks and unskilled labour to the construction of many of the houses, as well as identifying the most needy people among their population to receive the houses.

Abdullah Hossain is one beneficiary of this program. He was 35 when he left Mogadishu, Somalia five years ago. He had been in the wrong place when a fight broke out between two rival groups and received a head injury that damaged his brain. He received a wheel chair when he arrived at the Kakuma refugee camp, and has also received one of the houses built by PWRDF in the camp. His wife did not manage to escape from Somalia, so Abdullah lives alone in the camp, assisted by extended family members who are also now living in Kakuma.

# So you think you can sponsor a refugee?

We think you can, too! Follow our 10-step action plan!

BY LAWRENE DENKERS

- 1** War, tyranny, displacement, refugee camps: You want to do something to help end the suffering. You want to make a difference. Start by asking yourself whether you and your church/community could give even one refugee family help, a home, and hope.
- 2** Talk to the people in your church/community who you think might be like-minded. Work on persuading those who may not be. Establish a group or committee to talk about sponsorship.
- 3** Ask your diocesan refugee committee for advice and counsel. They'll come and talk to you—in a meeting or from the pulpit—about what refugee sponsorship involves and its many forms. They'll help you and your church/community discern what level of refugee sponsorship is a good fit and who you can help.
- 4** The paperwork begins! But don't worry — your diocesan refugee committee helps with that, too. Once your parish council has approved the sponsorship, you're off to the bishop for a letter of approval.
- 5** Lovely stuff, government paperwork! But again, you'll get all the help you need from your diocesan refugee committee.
- 6** Ask for help, and the donations will pour in! You'll need to organise housing, funding, household goods and clothing (which will arrive by the truckload!) and your volunteers and schedules. You'll have guidelines for this and a rough timeline.
- 7** This step is considered the hardest by most sponsors: You wait. That wait can be anything from a few months to a year or more.
- 8** The call comes in. You now know when the family will arrive. Give everyone the good news, confirm your housing arrangements and schedules, and get excited!
- 9** Meet the family at the airport, expect a few tears of happiness on all sides, and get everyone settled in.
- 10** Your family becomes part of your community and your community becomes a kinder, more caring, more understanding, more cohesive place (even if it was already all of those things).

**Refugee sponsorship is alive and well in the Anglican Church of Canada.**

**Help us keep up the momentum! Give your refugee committee a call today. Take the 10 steps! Make a difference.**

# 50 new families in Canada

BY CAROLYN VANDERLIP

**50** REFUGEE sponsorships: a daunting goal proposed by PWRDF's refugee network as we contemplated how to celebrate PWRDF's 50th anniversary. A challenge, indeed, but one that Anglicans across the country enthusiastically responded to, resulting in over 150 refugees beginning new lives in Canada. They came from countries around the world including Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Colombia, Sudan, Eritrea, Iran, the Congo and Somalia. They were welcomed in communities from coast to coast, from big cities like Toronto and Vancouver to small communities like Kaslo BC (population 1029). But as diverse as each sponsorship experience was, they all had something in common: a community living out its call to welcome the stranger, to love our neighbour, and to respect the dignity of every human being.

A former refugee from Iraq who was sponsored through the PWRDF program described the experience: "You have changed my life completely. I was desperate and had no hope for the future but you guys gave me hope. You gave me another chance to look at life in a different way. I will never forget how much you cared for me and my family. Actually I remember when I arrived and I was received at



**An Iraqi refugee and his son experience snow for the first time as they arrive in Canada.**

PHOTO: ROGER ASSAILLY

the airport. I asked myself: Why are these people taking care of me? Do I belong to them in any way? I'm completely different from them—in my race, religion, education and social level. Everyday I asked myself, "Why? I always tried to be brave and posed this question to myself, changing my mind at the last moment. However, with time I discovered the answer: I realized that above all considerations, the reason you helped me was because of your belief in humanity! I feel right now that all of you have become my new family here, and I will be more happy if you accept me and my family, as your family."

# Reflections on the journey

MAUREEN LAWRENCE

**I** THINK IT was when we, the nine member delegation from PWRDF visiting the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OERR) in India and Sri Lanka, walked into the Pudupatti refugee camp that I first thought, "this is not unlike Great Whale River in the mid 1960's in fact it is not unlike many Indian Reservations!"

Pudupatti refugee camp is built in an inhospitable area. Just above the camp and somewhat dominating it is a large hill of clay. During the monsoon season the torrents of rain wash down the hill and into the village. The villagers have built ditches about 10 inches deep along each street. The streets—closer to narrow walkways—are covered with rough rock which is not comfortable to walk on especially for the elders.

Great Whale River (as it was called in the 1960's) was the traditional summer meeting area of the Cree and the location of a small Hudson



**Children at the Pudupatti Camp welcome the PWRDF delegation.** PHOTO: CAROLYN VANDERLIP

Bay Company post. It also attracted the Inuit who hunted along the coast. The armed forces built a base on the hill overlooking the low lying area at the confluence of the river and the Hudson Bay. They removed the vegetation and left the ground bare sand. Across this they built two runways. Our children, like all in the village had to cross this runway to go to and from school. The sand was beaten into paths in some areas but between homes and "up the hill" was like a beach. This sand was extremely difficult to walk on for many people, especially the elderly.

At Pudupatti, we visited with women from the various self help groups (SHG) in the camp. All the



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA  
DIOCESAN MAP

## Dioceses with Refugee Sponsorship Agreements

- |                                      |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>1</b> Diocese of Algoma           | <b>7</b> Diocese of Niagara                              | <b>12</b> Diocese of Qu'Appelle  |
| <b>2</b> Diocese of British Columbia | <b>8</b> Diocese of New Westminster                      | <b>13</b> Diocese of Rupert's Land   |
| <b>3</b> Diocese of Calgary          | <b>9</b> Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island | <b>14</b> Diocese of Saskatoon   |
| <b>4</b> Diocese of Edmonton         | <b>10</b> Diocese of Ontario                             | <b>15</b> Diocese of Toronto   |
| <b>5</b> Diocese of Huron            | <b>11</b> Diocese of Ottawa                              | <b>16</b> The Diocese of Montreal has an agreement but it is with the Province of Quebec, rather than CIC. |
| <b>6</b> Diocese of Kootenay         |  |  |

## Reflections on the journey

### Continued from p. 3

groups meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of common concern: health care, finance, life in the community. They showed us the food which some groups make for sale to members of the community, and articles which they had bought in the local town for resale at a small profit. I was once again struck by the similarity of the work of the SHG and the Inuit and Cree women's groups in Great Whale River, who would order fabric, beads etc. from

southern Canada for resale.

There is one huge difference between the people of Great Whale River in the mid 1960's and beyond to the wonderful folk we met in Pudupatti and that is that the First Nations and Inuit were free to go back onto the land and pursue their traditional way of life. That has been denied to the refugees of Pupupatti who left their homes in Sri Lanka some as long as thirty years ago, and fled to India where they received sanctuary but not

freedom as citizens. In order to return they must overcome barriers of administrative paperwork, land rights, housing availability, employment opportunities and worry over the uncertainty about the future.

It is now almost three years since the end of the war between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam yet the refugee camps still remain. Frustration grows and the situation becomes more complex.

## Glossary

### Refugee:

According to the UN, a refugee is: A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. According to UNHCR, there were just under 10.55 million refugees in the world at the end of 2010.

### IDP:

An Internally Displaced Person (IDP) is someone who has been forced to flee (as in the definition of a refugee above) but who has fled within the borders of his or her country. According to UNHCR, there were 14.7 million IDPs in the world at the end of 2010.

### CIC:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) was created in 1994 to link immigration services with citizenship registration, promote the unique ideals all Canadians share and help build a stronger Canada. It is the department of the federal government which oversees refugee resettlement into Canada.

### UNHCR:

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNHCR was created to protect and support refugees at the request of a government or the UN. It currently has 33.9 million people under its umbrella, including refugees, IDPs, stateless persons, and other "persons of concern."

### Private Sponsorship Program:

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program gives Canadians and permanent residents an opportunity to get involved and help settle refugees in Canada. Sponsors are groups that commit to providing financial settlement assistance (except for Joint Assistance Sponsorship cases) to refugees for one year or until they can support themselves financially, whichever comes first. 15 dioceses currently hold sponsorship agreements with CIC.



Simon Chambers

## Thank you

Thank you to all Anglicans who make the work of PWRDF possible. Your ongoing generosity supports partners in Canada and around the globe as we strive to create a more just, healthy and peaceful world. Thank you also to all the diocesan and parish representatives, bishops, clergy, board members and youth who volunteer their time, energy and enthusiasm as ambassadors for PWRDF. Supporting the work of PWRDF improves the quality of daily life for vulnerable populations by promoting global justice and self-sustainability. Your commitment is transforming lives.

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