



# **ANNUAL**

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# **REPORT**

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# **2016**

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**URBAN  
REFUGEES.ORG**  
RAISING THE VOICE OF THE INVISIBLE



## **1. Support**

- a** URIP (Urban Refugees Incubation Program)
- b** SMS Up

## **2. Connect**

## **3. Advocate**

- a** Events
- b** Media
- c** Debate Forum

## **4. Governance and Management**

## **5. Contact**





# 1. SUPPORT





(Urban Refugees Incubation  
Program)

In January 2016, **Urban Refugees launched a call for applications for potential refugee community partners** for the upcoming year, and received over forty applications from refugee communities in fifteen different countries.

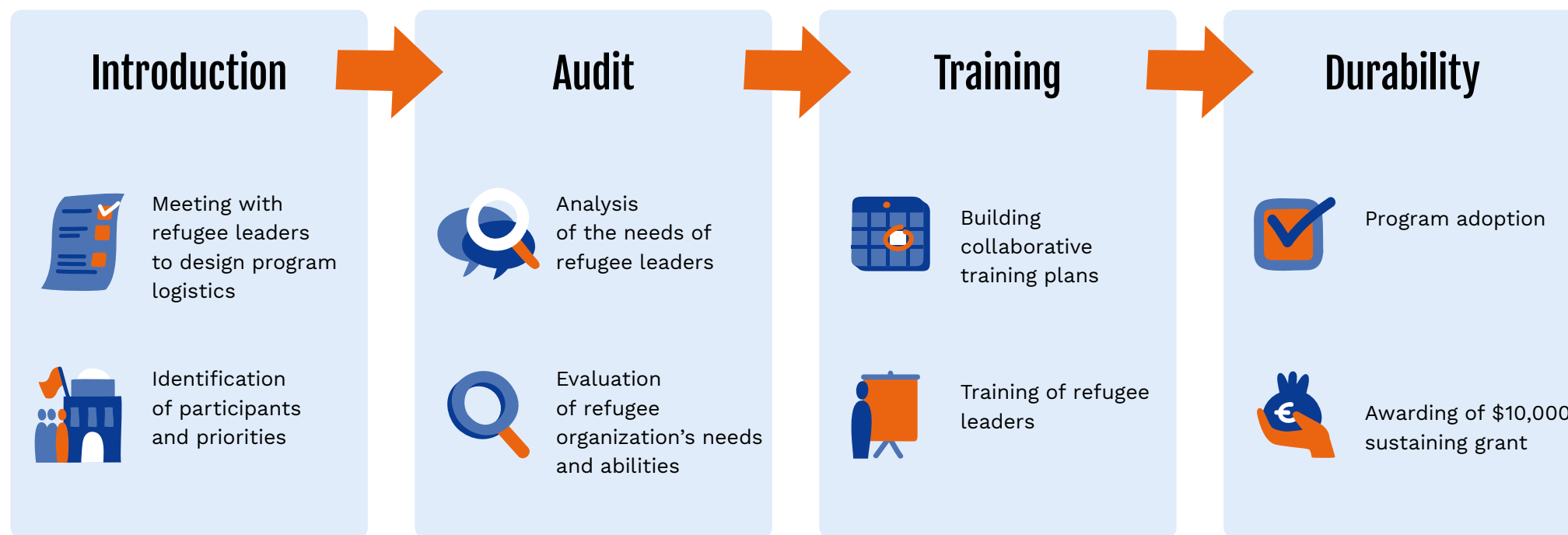
We chose to partner with the **Afghan Community Center (ACC)** in **Malaysia** for our pilot project.



## The Urban Refugees Incubation Program (URIP)

The majority of refugees today **live in the Global South, in urban areas with the hope of re-building their lives.** But without humanitarian assistance, **refugees in cities create**

**community-based organizations to support each other.** The URIP aims to **strengthen the capacity of these organizations to provide critical support to their communities.**



## The Afghan Community Center (ACC)

The Afghan Community Center (ACC) is a refugee organization based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia which offers critical services to their community and represents **over 700 refugees**.

→ [Learn more about the ACC on their website](#)





We were able to begin our collaboration with the ACC after a successful funding effort to start the program.



14,000 €

Our crowdfunding campaign raised 14,000 euros



202,000 €

Our successful grant application from the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) raised an additional 202,000 euros and enabled us to expand the reach of our program

## From April to December 2016

We arrived in Malaysia in April and stayed until the end of the year to prepare for **the launch of the URIP and begin our pilot program.**

After the success of this first program, at the end of 2016, **the Urban Refugees team began to prepare two new incubations for 2017** (Somali Refugee Community and Rohingya Refugee Community), with the funding from PRM.



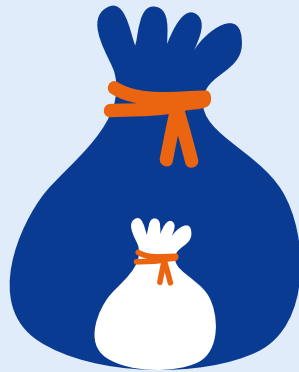


## The program's successes:



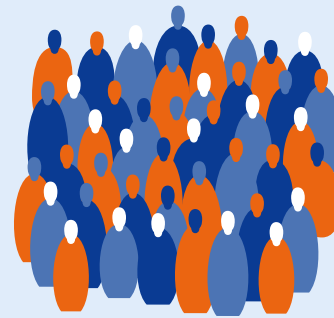
20

**trainings**  
delivered



x2

**budget increase**  
for the ACC



x3

**more beneficiaries**  
of ACC services



10

**more activities available**  
through the ACC

# b SMS Up

**SMS Up** is a group messaging service that **allows users to send SMS text messages to multiple recipients at a time, using only one phone number.**

It enables group conversations (similar to those on WhatsApp or Viber) through SMS, that can be used by urban refugees who do not own a smartphone or do not have internet access on their mobile phones.

**SMS Up** enables refugee community leaders access to a platform where they can share urgent and often time sensitive information with their community via SMS.

Urban Refugees received **a grant from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF)** to support this project, which began testing in October in Malaysia.





# 2. CONNECT



# Good Practices

We received a grant from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the end of 2015 to fund the establishment of the Good Practices program in 2016.

Good Practices is an online sharing platform for NGOs supporting refugees in cities of the Global South.

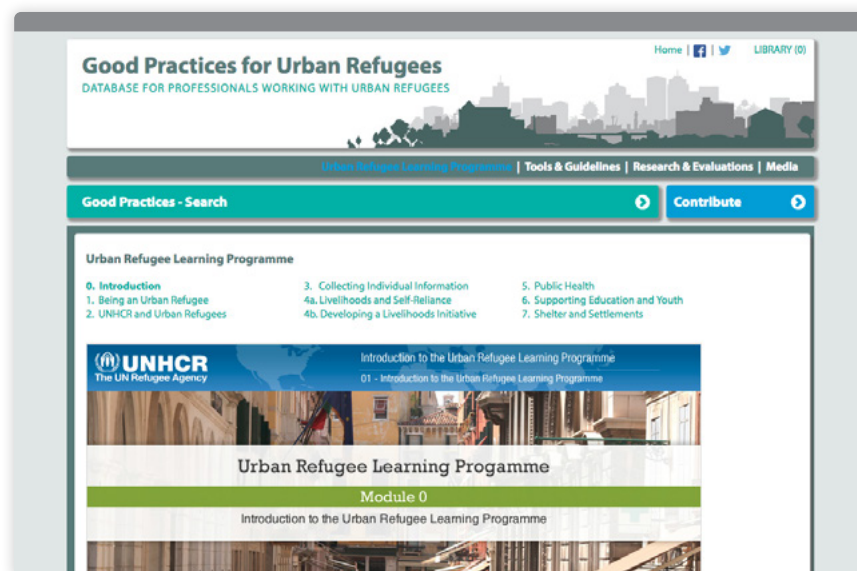
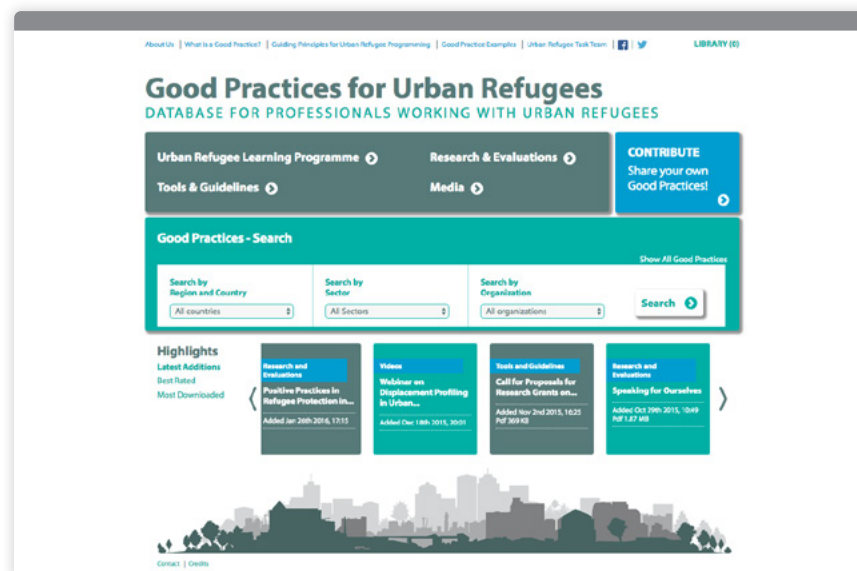
Created in early 2016, the Good Practices website is a place where our team will compile and share the most successful NGO programs around the world, by making them available to other practitioners.

The website covers 7 areas of action: **education, health, shelter, legal aid, safety, livelihood, durable solutions, information.** We recruited a consultant to carry out this project: Neil Wilson, PhD researcher.

## Examples of programs for which we have documented best practices:

- Educational workshops for refugee children
- Engaging mid-level officials to help refugees access healthcare
- Safehouses for unaccompanied and separated refugee girls

➔ [Learn more by visiting the Good Practices website](#)



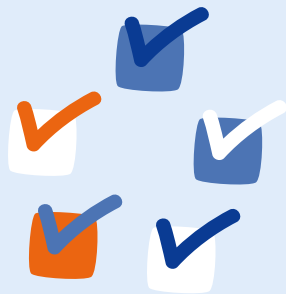


## The project in numbers:



21

**good practices**  
added in 2016



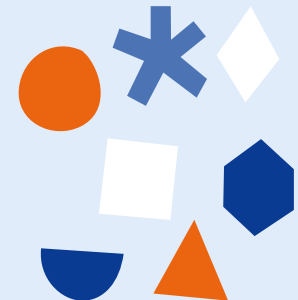
5

**criteria developed**  
to determine what  
constitutes a good  
practice



200+

**tools** accessible on  
the website



7

**fields of action**  
covered

# 3. ADVOCATE





# EVENTS

In 2016, we were invited to represent the voice of urban refugees at numerous events:

- **Urban Refugees: Making the invisible visible to seek education and employment opportunities**, organised by the German development agency, GIZ, [Berlin](#), Nov 2016
- **Urban Refugee Education Roundtable**, organised by the International Network of Education in Emergency, [Washington D.C.](#), Oct 2016
- **Asia Pacific Conference on Refugee Rights**, organised by the Asian Pacific Refugee Rights Network, [Bangkok](#), Oct 2016
- **TED X Champs Elysées**, [Paris](#), June 2016
- **WDCD Refugee Challenge**, organised by What Design Can Do, [Amsterdam](#), June 2016
- **World Humanitarian Summit**, [Istanbul](#), May 2016
- **Echoing Green Fellowship**, [New York City](#), May 2016
- **Twilio Dinner**, organised by Twilio, [London](#), April 2016
- **Techfugees**, [Paris](#) in March 2016 and [London](#) in February 2016

## TED<sup>x</sup> Champs Élysées Salon

Paris, June 2016





## Asia Pacific Conference

Bangkok, Oct. 2016



# MEDIA

Urban Refugees appeared **13 times in the media**, notably:

**theguardian**

June 2016

"Camps have become the beginning and often the end of international aid to refugees."

➔ [Read the article](#)

**Marianne**

March 2016

"It's time for public policy and humanitarian aid as a whole to reform, to better take charge of urban refugees and make the refugee camp the exception rather than the rule."

➔ [Read the article \(french\)](#)

  
**MEDIAPART**

March 2017

"In Malaysia, civil society beside Rohingya refugees."

➔ [Read the article \(french\)](#)



# DEBATE FORUM

The Urban Refugees team continued to develop the debate Forum on our website, with six new articles exploring pressing issues relevant for the global refugee population.

[Discover the Forum](#)


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## Who the “Muslim Ban” will Really Impact, and How Refugees Will Suffer

07/09/2017



By Lauren Pavao, Joshua Arshansky, Tala Markowitz and Karin Johnson, HealthRight International

*“How we respond to the causes of migration and to...migrants themselves will express a lot about what kind of people we aspire to be and what kind of societies we aim to construct.” – Dr. James D. Nye*

We at HealthRight International's Human Rights Clinic are deeply concerned with the Trump Administration's statements and Executive Orders regarding immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The Administration's second Executive Order on immigration, issued on March 5, seeks to reinstate a ban on citizens of six Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States, namely Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. It also drastically reduce the number of refugees allowed to enter the United States and suspends the refugee program for 120 days. Two separate federal judges ruled against President Trump's latest attempts to block travel, but uncertainty remains about the ultimate fate of this ban.

This Administration has sought to frame asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants as threats to our national security (the Executive Order itself is called “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States”). Yet we know from our work with nearly 5,000 immigrant survivors of torture and abuse that so many are in fact the targets of the terrorists that our country is fighting against—this is why they flee and seek safety here in the first place. We also know what is at stake if asylum seekers and refugees with valid claims for protection are turned away: our network of hundreds of volunteer medical and mental health providers evaluate and document the physical and psychological scars of torture and abuse. Forced to remain in fear of their persecutors, these vulnerable refugees—particularly those living in urban settings without the protections afforded to refugees in camps—face continued denial of basic services, as well as fear of arrest, detention, torture and death.

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Now more than ever, narratives have the power to affect public opinion and policy. Below, we share the stories of just a few of the brave men and women our program has recently assisted, all of whom, because of their citizenship in one of six countries, could now be denied the possibility of seeking safety and contributing their skills and experiences to our local communities. (To protect their identities, we have changed all names and some other identifying information).

**Farhad** developed a passion for journalism at a young age. Following the Iranian Revolution, he wrote for various local publications, working to expose political corruption. He was arrested and detained by the Iranian government on numerous occasions, suffering beatings, torture and prolonged solitary confinement. On one occasion, Farhad was beaten until he lost consciousness, later suffering a heart attack. Fearing for his and his family's wellbeing, Farhad reluctantly fled to the U.S. where he sought and was eventually granted asylum.

**Saleh** was a university professor in Libya, where he actively spoke out against the corruption and oppressive tactics of the Gaddafi regime. Given the fate of many other Libyan political activists, Saleh grew suspicious that the government was watching him, and on more than one occasion government officials arrested, detained and tortured Saleh. Given an opportunity to study abroad, Saleh made the difficult decision to leave his home country and come to the U.S., where he sought asylum on arrival.

Following his departure, Saleh learned that government officials were actively pursuing him, and he realized that the risk of being killed if he returned to Libya was immense.

**Yasmin** and her family had resided in the same village in southern Somalia for generations. When she was a teenager, a member of the terrorist organization al-Shabaab abducted Yasmin (which has become increasingly routine in the context of Somalia's Civil War). Among other indignities, her captors forced her to engage in hard labor, beat her in the genitals, and threatened her with beheading. After months of enslavement, someone in the village finally heard Yasmin's screams and assisted in her escape. Fearing her captors would retaliate, Yasmin made the harrowing choice to leave her family and village. With the help of a local nonprofit organization, she fled Somalia and, after travel by foot through neighboring countries, sought protection in the U.S.

As a soldier serving his mandatory military service in the Syrian army, **Anas** was known to voice discontent with the practices and policies of the Assad regime. His punishment for speaking out included arrest by military police and nearly a year in detention, during which he was repeatedly tortured, including exposure to *dubai*—a Syrian torture technique in which *torturers force a prisoner's legs and head into a car tire before beating them*. **Anas** suffered tremendous psychological and physical scarring from his mistreatment. After he was finally released, he borrowed funds to flee Syria. During a torturous journey that included migration through Central American and Mexico, **Anas** learned that missiles destroyed his family home in Syria, displacing and killing numerous members of his family.

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betters and anti-American views of extremist groups. As time went on with these groups increased in his town, Jamil began receiving threatening letters accusing him of acting as a U.S. spy. Armed men attacked and wounded Jamil, and began terrorizing him and his family over a period of several years. Jamil yearned to remain with his family and at a job he loved, but felt he had no choice other than to flee the country. He eventually arrived in the U.S. with the hopes of accessing safety from further persecution.

We share these stories to put a human face on what are truly matters of life or death. Each of these stories is unique and harrowing, but they all share certain commonalities. All left deep ties to families, jobs, communities and homelands. Even faced with the unthinkable—torture, persecution, detention—their decisions to leave were difficult ones. Many of these individuals, and thousands more like them, suffered further abuse when they arrived on our shores, detained as criminals while seeking humanitarian protection. Yet these six are among the lucky ones—they managed, against all odds, to escape the violence and abuse at home; to arrive here, to find a lawyer, and a doctor or psychologist through our program, to support their protection claims; and to win such claims in court. A ban that universally blocks people like Farhad, Saleh, Yasmin, Anas, Tariq, and Jamil from the prospect of protection—protection from some of the very regimes our country is fighting against—is discriminatory, wrong, and says frighteningly much about the kind of people we aspire to be and the kind of society we aim to construct.

Reference:  
Dwyer, J. (2015). On Taking Responsibility for Undocumented Migrants. *Public Health Ethics*, 8(2), 129-147.

Lauren Pavao, LMSW, MPH is Director of the Human Rights Clinic (HRC) at HealthRight International. Joshua Arshansky is Program Assistant Intern with the HRC. Tala Markowitz, MPH and Karin Johnson, LMSW, are Program Associates with the HRC.

Message

Name

Email address

Send Message



# 4. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT



## Governance and Management

The Urban Refugees team agreed on the need for an international governance structure with an international office. **Elections will take place in January 2017.**

At the end of 2016, Urban Refugees had 8 full-time employees and around 50 volunteers, mostly in France, US, and Malaysia.





# 5. CONTACT

[www.urban-refugees.org](http://www.urban-refugees.org)

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