

..... Overseas Partner Fact Sheet.....

St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS)

How it all started

Many African refugees, mainly from Sudan but also from Somalia and Eritrea, flee to Cairo to escape persecution, war or disaster in their homelands. There are no refugee camps in Egypt, so these displaced people have to fend for themselves in an unfamiliar and, at times, hostile culture. There is little support or assistance for them aside from what the churches can offer.

One of the main problems that displaced people from Sudan face is that they are not legally recognised as refugees, since Egypt and Sudan have an open border. This means that they receive few, if any, benefits from the United Nations High Commissions for Refugees (UNHCR). The Refugee Services provides care whilst their claims are being considered.

Saint Andrew's Refugee Services works closely with other local churches and organisations around Cairo that also support these displaced Africans, including Refuge Egypt, another of BibleLands' Overseas Partners.



Above: Every child is given a nutritious hot meal each day, provided with a grant from BibleLands. For some, this may be their only meal of the day.

Key facts

Founded: 1979
 Location: Cairo, Egypt
 First Grant from BibleLands: 1990
 BibleLands' Grant: £22,140 p.a.



Above: Peter Johnson, StARS director, with a member of the 2010 graduating class.

Current Activities

St Andrew's Refugee Services offers assistance and aid to refugees and displaced people through various programmes.

Children's Education Programme: Classes are offered to refugee children who are denied access to Egyptian schools and cannot afford private schools. Both primary and secondary education are offered, including collage preparatory classes for those teenagers who wish to pursue higher education. Because of the limited space, the primary section meets each morning, from 9:00am – 12:30pm, and the secondary classes meet in the afternoon. There are about 180 students in the school, with a waiting list of over 200 names. For many years, this programme has operated as an informal education programme, but it is currently transitioning to a formal School. Many of the teachers are themselves Sudanese refugees, and the range of experience is vast, from a former district supervisor of the Sudan Services of Education, to an illiterate sports teacher. Therefore, all the teachers are undertaking a 2-year teacher training course.

St Andrew's Refugee Services also runs an Inter-School Summer Programme, where over 200 children are offered subjects including English, Art, Music and Sports.

Adult Education Programme: About 700 people participate in this programme, learning practical skills for future employment in an English-speaking environment. Classes include English, Business, Accounting and Computer Literacy. The English classes, in particular, are very varied, ranging from basic literacy and conversation classes for those who are illiterate in their own language, to advanced British curriculum levels. These classes allow the participants more chance to access employment opportunities upon resettlement abroad, or return to their homeland (English is the official language of Southern Sudan). Vocational education is also enhanced via the ARC (below).

The education programme also teaches more social issues, such as conflict resolution through communication, domestic violence, and cultural issues abroad. This helps refugees who hope to be resettled in a Western country to gain an understanding of the new culture in which they will live.



The African Refugee Cooperative (ARC): This income generation project assists the refugees to produce African arts and crafts. The programme employs the many skills that artistic refugees bring with them, offering handicraft classes in sewing, macramé and jewellery making. As well as allowing them to learn the concepts of a small business, it also provides a place of refuge and community, where people can come and work at their own pace, socialising with other refugees and asylum seekers who are living through the same stresses and problems.

Work made at the ARC is sold at local bazaars and shops throughout Cairo, helping to buy more materials for future products made at the ARC and allowing participants to earn an income.

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Most of the activities at St Andrew's Refugee Services are taught by refugees themselves, which both helps individual's self-reliance and also bolsters the morale of the overall refugee community. Through these programmes, St Andrew's Refugee Services not only provides the refugees and displaced people with education, skills and income but also with renewed self-confidence and friendships in a community of other people in a similar situation.

St Andrew's Refugee Services describes itself as 'not simply a programme for refugees, but rather a community of people serving each other.' Thank you for your support of this centre, which serves those who have often suffered an incredible amount, helping them to begin to get back on their feet and to have a hope and an optimism for the future.

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