



Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) Program Resources from A to Z

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The USCCB/MRS launched the Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) program to intensify volunteer involvement in resettlement, at the parish level. POWR's goal is to develop long-term, sustainable programs. More POWR program resources are available to parish volunteers and members of the Catholic resettlement network on [My Membership](#). This collection of resources, "POWR from A to Z," is available online, at <http://tinyurl.com/ydypucux>

My Membership: <http://community.usccb.org>

Ambassadors

The Refugee Ambassador Project in Indianapolis created a new partnership between POWR and area Catholic high schools. During one academic school year, students served as *Refugee Ambassadors* and received service learning credits. This POWR program provided students with information on refugees and the rich traditions of each participating culture. In turn, the students acted as liaisons for their high schools and home parishes. Over the year, the ambassadors collected more than 20,000 household items (at a value of \$60,000), and shared the refugee story with students, faculty and staff at nine parishes, four high schools and one university. <http://tinyurl.com/y9hlu5p4>

Anti-Muslim Sentiment

What can MRS sites do to counteract anti-refugee sentiment and work towards an inclusive vision for diocesan resettlement communities? This paper includes practical guides on how parish and community leaders can help create an environment in which all people can thrive. The resource includes recent outreach materials developed by Welcoming America, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS), Amnesty International, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service as well as the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. <http://tinyurl.com/y7wk5ena>

Awareness Raising Curriculum

The local POWR at Catholic Charities in Jacksonville, Florida, developed a set of one-hour lesson plans for grades K-12 to improve its Refugee Ministry Awareness Program. This lesson plan's objective is to promote students' awareness of violence and human rights abuses. Students are given time to reflect on their own lives as well as the holy family, and the plight of refugees. The goal is that students will learn to appreciate their own blessings, nourish their family lives and share their gifts with our brothers and sisters in need.

<http://tinyurl.com/yaagqhb5>

Background Checks and Screening

Due to an increased interest in volunteering, several MRS affiliates are rethinking their volunteer screening procedures. The goal is to identify reputable services that offer fast and affordable criminal background checks, or alternatively establish an effective and cost effective in-house screening process. To identify some good practices, MRS conducted a quick survey among POWR participants.

<http://tinyurl.com/ybn7pxyc>

Camp Simulation Guide

Catholic Charities of Louisville's [Seeking Refuge: Forced to Flee](#), is a participatory simulation in which learners gain insight into the challenges associated with seeking refuge in a refugee camp. Participants engage in an experiential process that also fosters a sense of humility, grace-filled charity, and solidarity. The agency initiative was made possible with the support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services, Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) Program. Catholic Charities has also published a Refugee Camp Simulation Guide, *Seeking Refuge: Forced to Flee*, which allows for replication in other receiving communities.

<https://cclou.org/flee/>

Communication

The POWR Post Archive – To access the archive of *The POWR Post* or locate more volunteer resources, go to [My Membership](#). Link: <http://community.usccb.org>

Volunteer Network Developments – Review volunteer training resources on.

Link: <http://community.usccb.org>

POWR on MRS Website – The POWR program also has a [designated section](#) on USCCB.org. Feel free to visit and share with your colleagues and parish and community connections.

Link: <http://www.usccb.org/about/resettlement-services/parishes-organized-to-welcome-refugees.cfm>

Cooking Projects

Refugees Welcome to Dinner is an effort to bring folks from refugee and non-refugee backgrounds around a table to break bread and break barriers. An unprecedented 65.3 million people globally have been forced from home – among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are children. Refugee-themed cooking events are a powerful way to engage the community with the goal of connecting refugees to volunteers, learning something new about the world and enjoying great international cuisine. The local POWR programs in New York and Oklahoma are currently implementing refugee dinner events.

<http://refugeeswelcometodinner.com>

Countering “Alternative Facts” with Facts

This background paper presents several talking points to provide your community with facts about refugees. This resource may be useful as you are making the case for refugees in your parishes and communities.

<http://tinyurl.com/gmomn66>

Development Impact

The positive impact of the POWR program has been significant. Since its inception in 2010 POWR sites recruited 14,500 volunteers who were assisting refugees adjust to life in the U.S. The POWR program has been successful in increasing volunteer support, as well as generating local cash and in-kind donations. Analysis of the 2010-16 POWR program cycles show that diocesan resettlement sites generated \$4 for every \$1 of USCCB funding. Since inception of the POWR program in 2010, MRS has invested \$2 million, leveraging \$8.1 million worth of donations and in-kind services.

<http://tinyurl.com/ybastw8p>

Economic Impact of Refugee Resettlement

The current political discourse spotlights the economic cost of assisting refugees adjust to life in the U.S., but frequently leaves out the considerable benefits of resettlement to the receiving societies. This backgrounder takes a comprehensive look at the economic impact of resettlement, and answers other relevant questions.

<http://tinyurl.com/y7tdgzft>

Empowerment

The previous POWR program director, Mary Alessio, published [an article](#) in the Catholic Health Association of America’s Journal, *Health Progress*, that speaks about empowering refugees. Her essay is a wonderful representation of what and who we are and how much we care about those we serve.

<http://tinyurl.com/pnpnnt8>

Employment Benchmarks

The downturn in the U.S. economy has made it more difficult for refugees to find quick employment, even in the low-wage sector. What are the best strategies for helping newcomers find meaningful work? This interactive training discusses specific milestones – or “benchmark” – agencies should aim for as they are fine-tuning their employment services efforts. This USCCB/MRS interactive training module takes a holistic look at refugee employment services in an agency-wide context, discussing communications, job development strategies, employer relations and program development activities. (→ [Job Search Resources](#))

<http://tinyurl.com/y95pyv8w>

English as Second Language (ESL) Resources

This special resource guide features an overview of English language learning resources, which may be useful for programs attempting to professionalize ESL opportunities for refugees.

<http://tinyurl.com/y73t2mtj>

Fundraising for Refugees

Crowdfunding sites allow parishioners, friends, neighbors and complete strangers to fill the gap and cover refugees' cost of living expenses, housing or travel loan payments. The following descriptions are excerpts from the vendor websites. While most apps are free, we advise you to carefully review the terms of services, prior setting up a crowdfunding site.

<http://tinyurl.com/ya442o7s>

History

POWR is built upon a series of earlier national efforts that provided funding to assist in the development of local resettlement support. In 1997, MRS developed the Volunteer Community Resource Development Program. In 2000, this program was rebranded as the Parishes and Community Resource Development Program. In 2001, the current program name was coined by former MRS Executive Director, Mark Franken. Following the 911 World Trade Center attacks, with U.S. refugee arrivals reaching a historic low point, MRS concluded that there was no need to expand capacity and decided to discontinue the POWR program.

<http://tinyurl.com/ybastw8p>

Housing Ministry

With support of the POWR program, Catholic Charities of Portland, Oregon launched a pilot program with Holy Trinity Parish. Portland has one of the highest rental occupancy rates in the country, which means that securing affordable housing for refugees with only a two-week notice can be a significant challenge. Holy Trinity stepped up by offering a 9-bedroom home and the support of their parish volunteers to welcome refugee newcomers, giving space and support for initial adjustment while their permanent housing is secured and set up (no longer than three weeks, typically less). This pilot project is a significant endeavor in growing parish relationships and involving parishioners on a human level with refugee resettlement. It is providing space for all of us to learn together and support refugee newcomers in a much deeper way that typically possible. This program can provide a new framework in working with other parishes.

Job Search Resources

This special resource guide presents a collection of job search tools you might find helpful, as you are attempting to involve parish-based job mentors. (→ Employment Benchmarks)

<http://tinyurl.com/y7bhuod9>

Learning and Sharing

USCCB/MRS continues to publish and disseminate promising practices via a bi-monthly newsletter, *The POWR Post*. This publication helps program participants (and other sites) learn from one another, and thereby leverage new funding sources and improve upon their own programs. POWR has generated a wealth of information. With the completion of six *POWR Post* newsletter issues during the 2016 POWR project cycle, the POWR archive now features a collection of 43 newsletter issues, dozens of volunteer and resource management resources. Additionally, USCCB/MRS has developed and released a brand new USCCB/MRS Parish Refugee Resettlement Ministry Manual (→ Welcoming the Stranger; Online Learning)

<http://tinyurl.com/ycxjrzns>

Mentoring

This POWR program at Catholic Community Services in Anchorage developed a three-part volunteer manual. Volunteers learn about resettlement to become **Family Mentors**. The second volume describes the duties of the **Warm Meals Committees**, which are tasked with providing warm meals or groceries for newly arrived refugees. The third volume covers the tasks of the **Transportation Committees**, which provide transportation to and from special events and doctor's appointments.

<http://tinyurl.com/ycxjrzns>

Migration and Refugee Services

The USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services is the largest refugee resettlement agency in the world. We help those who are being persecuted start a new life. On June 20th, we celebrate World Refugee Day. What would you do if you had to flee your country because of war or religious persecution? A series of videos produced for the 2014 World Refugee Day offers a good introduction to resettlement work, dedicating an entire film segment to the role of parish volunteers. This video clip also features the Parish Refugee Resettlement Ministries at Catholic Charities in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Refugee Resettlement – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XdWZRDIQhs>

USCCB/MRS is one of two agencies authorized by the Department of State to help children who enter the U.S. without a legal guardian – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N25-KCkU1dg>

USCCB/MRS is combating modern-day slavery, one community at a time – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WeSJAR7iRk>

Mission

In 2010, the USCCB/MRS launched the Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) program to intensify volunteer involvement in resettlement, at the parish level. Thousands of volunteers have helped refugees with legal work, medical services and language, offered friendship, warm meals, jobs, and welcomed the newcomers in their parishes. The high level of parish involvement underscores MRS's mission, which is rooted in the Gospel mandate that every person is to be welcomed by the disciple as if he or she were Christ Himself and in the right of every human being to pursue, without constraint, the call to holiness.

<http://tinyurl.com/ybastw8p>

Online Learning Resources

This special resource guide features several Internet-based university learning opportunities, including Coursera and Kiron. Kiron lists 18 partner universities and has staff based in Germany, Turkey and Jordan. Courses are offered in English free of charge in study tracks that include business, engineering, computer science and social science. The second guide features a collection of online courses specifically related to teaching the skills related to refugee resettlement, which may be useful for the purpose of diocesan staff training. (→ **Welcoming the Stranger**; **Learning and Sharing**)

<http://tinyurl.com/y74jolw4>

<http://tinyurl.com/y9dup6m6>

Recruiting Volunteers Guide

A collection of volunteer recruitment tools and resources you might find helpful, as you are attempting to involve volunteers and intensify outreach efforts to parishes and community partners.

<http://tinyurl.com/y7rly85a>

Resources for Helpers

This special resource guide presents a directory of volunteer resources you may wish to utilize for volunteer and client training on issues related to ESL tutoring, job and cultural orientation, volunteering and more.

<http://tinyurl.com/ycyetnze>

Share the Journey – Global Migration Campaign

On September 27th, Pope Francis will launch a two-year campaign sponsored by Caritas Internationalis aimed at raising awareness of Church teaching on migration and as a visible demonstration of the Catholic community's support for our brothers and sisters who have fled their homes in search of a decent and safe life for their families. You can also access resources for this campaign at the USCCB/MRS Justice for Immigrants [website](#). National Migration Week is an integral part of the Share the Journey campaign. *Share the Journey's* special resource library highlights many POWR program resources, including activities, program models and outreach materials.

<http://tinyurl.com/y8vyacvz> (Campaign's POWR Materials)

<https://www.sharejourney.org> (Campaign Website)

Storytellers

A particularly successful educational outreach initiative was launched in Nashville, Tenn., where the local POWR program received support from its regional public television station to train 15 staff members and clients to become videographers, tasked with telling stories about American life from a refugee perspective. Through this positive story-telling approach, refugees gained self-confidence and made social connections, and the agency got to keep video cameras, laptop computers and video editing software, to continue the project. The video clips are accessible on [YouTube](#) ("Refugee Storyteller Project").

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCifoRzIXQyPaONvAPVzgCKw>

Tea with a Nurse

The Tea with a Nurse health series is an innovative program developed at Catholic Charities in Cleveland, which is designed to help refugees understand U.S. health services. It has led, among other things, to a significant decrease of emergency room visits. It can easily be replicated by other MRS sites.

<http://tinyurl.com/yc832uuq>

Tracking of Volunteer Time

This is a sample volunteer tracking form, which allows you and your organization's volunteer to track in-kind contribution of volunteer service hours.

<http://tinyurl.com/ya4ysije>

Training

The Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR) program in Boston shared a brand-new [POWR Training Manual](#) and the corresponding [POWR Training Manual Presentation](#). These materials are meant to explain the pre- and post-arrival process to volunteers, donors and parish partners, as well as provide some concrete ideas how POWR teams can help. The document includes population-specific food supply lists, a home safety check list, Frequently Asked Questions for volunteers and much more.

<http://tinyurl.com/ybotzjhp>

<http://tinyurl.com/ycjsljvd>

Catholic Charities of Louisville shared a [New POWR Mentorship Presentation](#) with the POWR network, which is geared towards Catholic parishes, but can certainly be adapted for other audiences. The presentation includes an overview of the resettlement process, with visually appealing charts, info graphics and pictures. The presentation covers mentor expectations, cultural orientation and concludes with logistical details required for volunteers to become mentors).

<http://tinyurl.com/ybhj3fd>

T ravel Ban

The local POWR program at Catholic Charities of Atlanta, Georgia, has started a project titled “120 Stories in 120 Days” in response to President Trump’s proposed 120-day halt to the U.S. refugee program. The project staff will share one photo and one personal story each day via its new blog. The stories will feature refugee clients, resettlement services staff, volunteers, and members of the refugee community that wish to share their experiences. At the end of the 120 period, the stories will be put together into a flip book. Personal stories are an important and valuable supplement to the data that supports the continuation of a strong refugee program and a way to help the community at large realize that refugees are people just like them – seeking safe places to raise their families.

<https://catholiccharitiesatlanta.org/2017/03/21/120-stories-120-days>

V olunteer Video

An excellent example of the *empowering* effects the Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees program is available on [YouTube](#). Catholic Charities in Jacksonville produced a documentary film with support of the POWR program to intensify its volunteer recruitment efforts. This film does an excellent job showcasing the significance of volunteer work. The enthusiasm of the volunteers is evident, and the mix of volunteers, from college students, to former refugees, to parish community members, is wonderful.

<http://youtu.be/ntXYiy6IRMc>

V isual Education Resources

A directory of video resources you may wish to utilize for parish/outreach events, or staff and client training on issues related to refugee resettlement, volunteering and more.

<http://tinyurl.com/y7cwcpvo>

W elcoming the Stranger Resources

A Parish Volunteer Kit

Would you like to involve your parish and community groups to become involved in refugee resettlement? This presentation includes a step-by-step guide how your agency can strengthen its parish connections to boost volunteerism. The toolkit presents specific ideas related to conducting a needs assessment, designing a volunteer program and tracking program outcomes.

<http://tinyurl.com/jmbzp97>

A Powerful Example of Parish Resettlement Ministry

One parish sponsor group in Chicago, Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph Parish, recently established a powerful blue print of parish engagement. Church members raised \$20,469 to support the family that from Afghanistan in the spring of 2017 — far surpassing the \$8,000 that were needed. Besides this incredible financial support, so many of our parishioners graciously offered to help the family get settled and adjusted in Chicago, and offered other services as well.

<http://www.icsjparish.org/refugee-effort/>

The Parish Refugee Resettlement Ministry: A Vision for Welcoming Newcomers

This manual is intended to serve as a reference guide for diocesan resettlement office efforts to recruit, train, and manage parish involvement in the resettlement of refugees. It also includes resources and information that the diocesan staff can *share* with leaders at the parish level as the parish leaders seek to establish their programs, recruit and train additional parish volunteers, and help the resettlement ministry become an integral part of parish life. As such, programs can very much use a “train-the-trainer” approach with the resources in this manual. *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017.*

<http://tinyurl.com/y75k438w>

Welcoming the Stranger Parish Guide. Unity in Diversity

Designed for both ordained and lay ministers at the diocesan and parish levels, this document challenges us to prepare to receive newcomers with a genuine spirit of welcome that provides a bridge for them to cross from one culture into another. Sidebars interspersed throughout the text provide examples of successful programs throughout this country. A wonderful resource for communications and religious education committees, seminaries, and school superintendents. *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000.*

<http://tinyurl.com/y9brx92l>

Who are my Sisters and Brothers? A Catholic Educational Guide for Understanding and Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996

<http://tinyurl.com/y8vh3vjx>

Why Do We Help Refugees?

The MRS Office of Resettlement Services developed talking points that cover core thoughts and beliefs on refugee resettlement ministry. This resource may be useful as you are making the case for refugees in your parishes and communities. The list also includes some important facts you may wish to use to counter myths about refugee resettlement.

<http://tinyurl.com/ya9cksfh>

World Refugee Day Planner

This special resource guide presents an overview of World Refugee Day planning materials. This resource may be useful as you are making the case for refugees in your parishes and communities.

<http://tinyurl.com/y8zddur2>



Photo credits: Sarah Williamson (<http://www.sarahannayphotography.com>)

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