

Refugee Community Development Project

By Refugees, For Refugees

Delhi, India



Established in 2012, the Refugee Community Development Project (RCDP) is a model of urban refugee-led community-based protection for women and girls, and other vulnerable refugee groups. RCDP is developed and managed by the Afghan and Somali refugee community in Delhi, India with the support of Bosco. It focuses on utilising the knowledge, skills and capacity of refugees to plan and provide services for their own community. The project aims to improve the psychosocial and economic wellbeing of individuals, families and communities by strengthening the self-confidence of the refugee community in identifying service needs and developing solutions. RCDP project activities include women's social support and education classes, and training for volunteer youth in community development skills. A special focus of our work is empowering refugee women at risk, their families and other vulnerable groups. RCDP activities complement UNHCR and Implementing Partner initiatives by strengthening communities to address service delivery gaps, and by referring newly arrived refugees to existing services. RCDP is 'by refugees, for refugees'. Working in the project are eleven Refugee Community Workers in senior management, social work and teaching roles. They understand first-hand the difficulties faced in Delhi by refugees which has fostered responsive, flexible and informed community-based protection approaches.



Women's Social Support Project

- 7 women's groups across four areas of North & South Delhi
- 325 women's group members
- 39 women focal points in community leadership roles
- Biannual recreational picnics for over 900 women and children each year
- Enhanced social and community connections leading to improved psychosocial wellbeing

The women's social support project was established by refugee women who wanted to foster community bonds and provide social and emotional support for the many refugee women experiencing stress and isolation in Delhi. In the women's groups, refugee women share the problems of their daily lives and help each other to find solutions. It is a place where women feel safe to discuss issues, while feeling valued and heard. Women meet monthly to connect with others and participate in activities for skills development, exercise and socialising including yoga, beauty therapy, cooking, and tailoring. Groups have also acknowledged the range of skills that refugees bring to India, and assisted women to share them with others.

Women's leadership skills have also been strengthened through group participation. Each group nominates three group focal points who liaise with RCDP Refugee Community Workers to manage small grants and activities of interest to benefit women in the community.

Women participants report that they feel less isolated, do not visit the doctor as often, and are more confident to voice their opinion through awareness of rights and their decision-making roles in women's groups. RCDP also conducts over 100 home visits a year to further support isolated and vulnerable women.

Recreational picnics are a highly successful component of the Women's Social Support Project. Picnics and excursions are held twice a year for up to 900 women and children and are a space for women to relax and enjoy being with their children and friends in a safe place.

Education Project

- 28 classes per week in three areas of Delhi
- Over 600 children and adults enrolled in adult literacy, language, history and culture classes

The RCDP Education Project was planned in collaboration with Bosco Delhi to complement existing UNHCR funded education and training activities. The project provides 28 classes each week for over 600 women, youth and children in South and North Delhi. Classes were developed based on education priorities identified by the community. These include adult literacy classes for women and Somali and Dari language, culture and history for children.

Adult literacy and English classes have built women's confidence and self-esteem by supporting women in their daily lives, from filling out forms at their children's schools, to speaking with doctors, and shopping at the market. Dari and Somali classes teach young children how to read, write and speak fluently in their own language. As many refugee children were born in India, or arrived when they were very young, language, history and culture classes have enabled young people to connect with others in the community, and feel a sense of pride, belonging, and connectedness.

Education activities also include regular parent teacher meetings and ongoing professional development sessions for teachers.

Volunteer Program

The RCDP Volunteer Program was established to enhance RCDP outreach, and provide youth volunteers with community development skills and experience to enhance future work opportunities. Volunteer activities include assisting refugees to rent houses or to help in medical emergencies when interpreting is needed at the hospital. Volunteers also guide newly arrived refugees and provide information about RCDP, non-government organisations and government services.



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