



*Antoinette N. and grandchildren, at home in Yaounde, Cameroon. Photo by Graeme Rodgers.*

### **Where do refugees live? Increasingly, in cities.**

Did you know that half the world's 15+ million refugees now live in cities? Increasingly, people uprooted by conflict and persecution are trying to find jobs in urban centers of neighboring countries rather than rely on humanitarian aid in isolated, self-contained refugee camps.

Not that city life is easy. Antoinette N. can attest to that. A 53-year-old widow from Central African Republic, she has lived as a refugee in Yaoundé, Cameroon, for 10 years. There, she shares a sweltering 10'x10' plank shelter with her four children and three grandchildren. Antoinette used to travel east to buy fresh fish and cassava for resale in Yaoundé, but poor health forced her to stop. Today, her eldest son's income as a cargo handler feeds the family, but isn't enough to pay the \$30 a month rent. The landlord is threatening eviction.

Despite such struggles, Antoinette said she prefers to remain in Yaoundé rather than move to a rural area. The city's refugees are well-organized into general and women's committees, with Antoinette serving as president of the refugee women's organization. Yaoundé residents can more easily access UNHCR services, including basic health care, school fees for primary school children, renewal of residency documents and small grants to very vulnerable refugees.



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## Church World Service response

Church World Service, UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations are stepping up efforts to help urban refugees survive. As it proceeds, CWS is building on several already well-established programs:

- In Jakarta, Indonesia, where CWS offers medical care and cultural and educational programs for refugees, and helps local service providers better understand refugees' needs.
- In Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa, where CWS supports work to protect refugees' rights in a context of worsening xenophobia and anti-immigrant public policies.
- In 36 cities across the United States, to which CWS resettles about 8,000 refugees and entrants every year. Since 1946, CWS has welcomed 500,000 refugee newcomers to the United States.

Furthermore, CWS has just interviewed Antoinette and hundreds more urban refugees in Cameroon, Indonesia and Pakistan for their experience and advice. The goal is to identify and share models for community development that benefit both refugees and their hosts.

### Join us!

CWS assists refugees in both urban areas and refugee camps by improving their access to health care, education, income-generating activities, legal services and physical security. CWS also advocates for the resolution of long-term refugee crises, so that forcibly displaced people are able to live their lives in safety and with dignity.

**Join us as we help refugees create more choices for themselves and build on the knowledge and capacities they already have.**



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