



# 2021 Annual Report

Focusing Philanthropy is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that believes donations should be made with the same level of strategic intent, information, and confidence as other investments. We target serious human challenges that individual donors can successfully address, choose tactics that are demonstrably effective, identify confidence inspiring implementing partners, conduct ongoing monitoring, and assure substantive reporting. These services are provided free to both donors and partners in an effort to scale interventions that work.

February 2022,

I am writing this note just days before Focusing Philanthropy's 10th anniversary as a public charity, when we were officially launched as a vehicle for shared action and impact. With that milestone in sight, let's all pause and reflect on what we have accomplished together throughout the last decade. Ten years ago, we raised just over \$1 million in our first year—enough to profoundly change the lives of 8,000+ people for the better, a result of which we can be proud. Today, however, we are on the brink of cumulatively raising and deploying \$100 million and breaking the 10-million mark in lives transformed.

We have achieved steady, material year-over-year growth in contributions and resulting deployment of philanthropic capital thanks to our wonderful supporters and team. The majority has been raised and deployed through more than 100 matching challenges we have run as part of our core program.

In recent years, we have challenged ourselves to think bigger about addressing root causes of human need via what we call our Bold Initiatives: transformative, large-scale multi-year opportunities to provide catalytic funding. We now offer three such initiatives (p. 10), two of which launched in 2021 as part of the overhauling of our domestic portfolio in response to the societal challenges of which we have seen such compelling evidence over the past two years (p. 8).

Another driver of our growth is our partnership with former New York Times columnist and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Nicholas Kristof. Since 2019, we have partnered with Nick to maximize the response to his annual holiday giving column. Before our collaboration, his best guess was that the column yielded ~\$300,000 in contributions annually. Working together, we have raised more than \$27 million and recruited thousands of volunteers for extraordinary nonprofits via the three Holiday Impact Prize columns and special C-19 Impact Initiative column on which we have collaborated.

While Focusing Philanthropy has grown in capacity and resources, we end our 10th year where we began: focusing on the practical, on-the-ground impact for hardworking, motivated people who have been dealt a very tough hand.



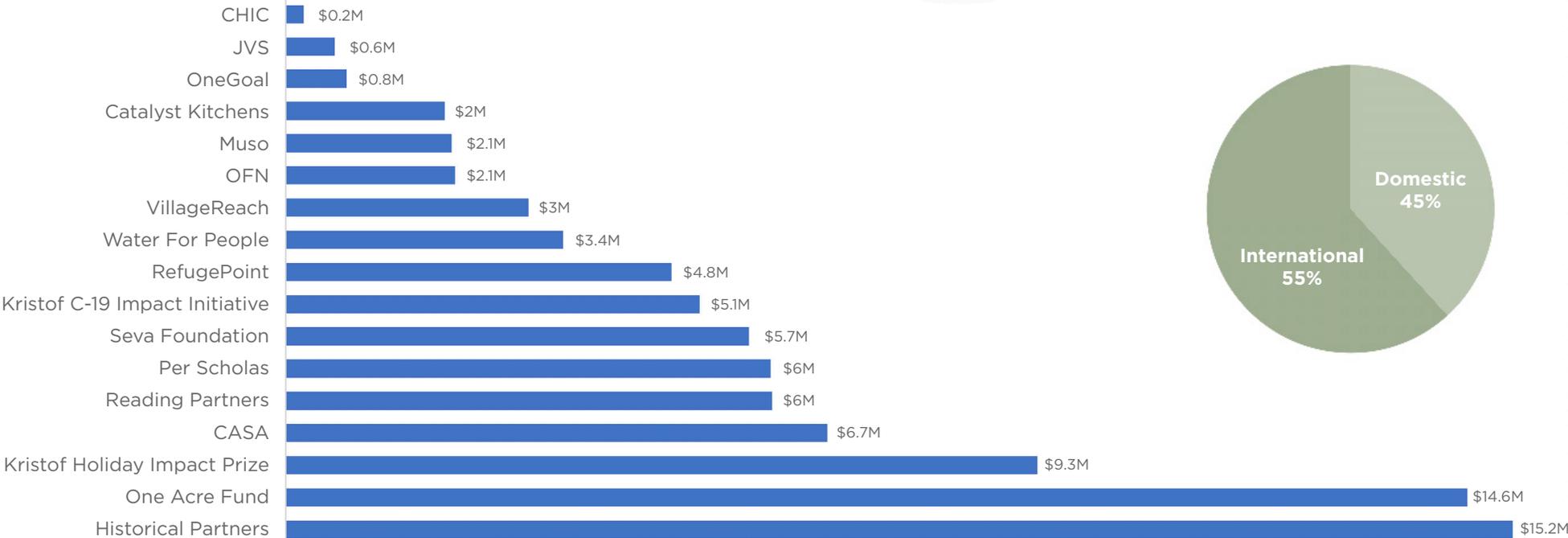
Larry Gilson  
Chairman



# Impact since inception at a glance

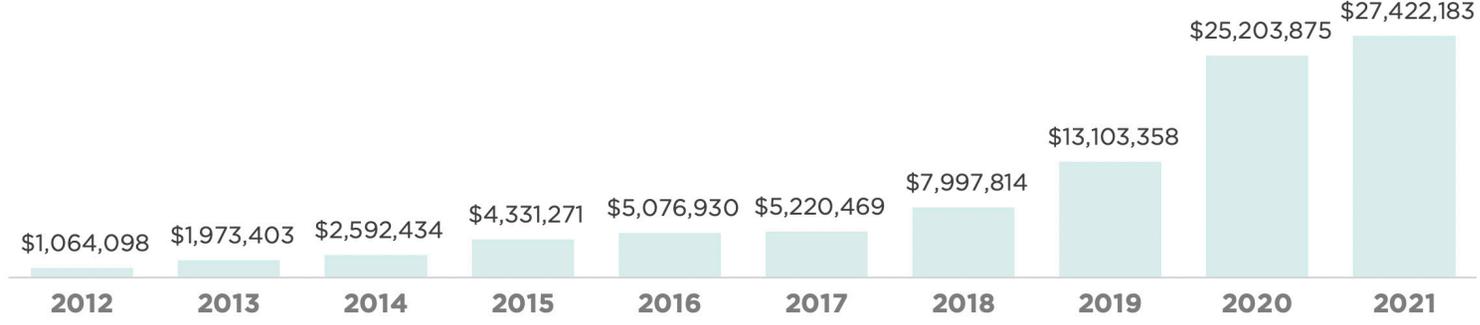
**9,873,291** lives changed  
**\$93.9** million contributed  
**127** successful campaigns  
**170** diligence and monitoring visits

## Funding by organization\*

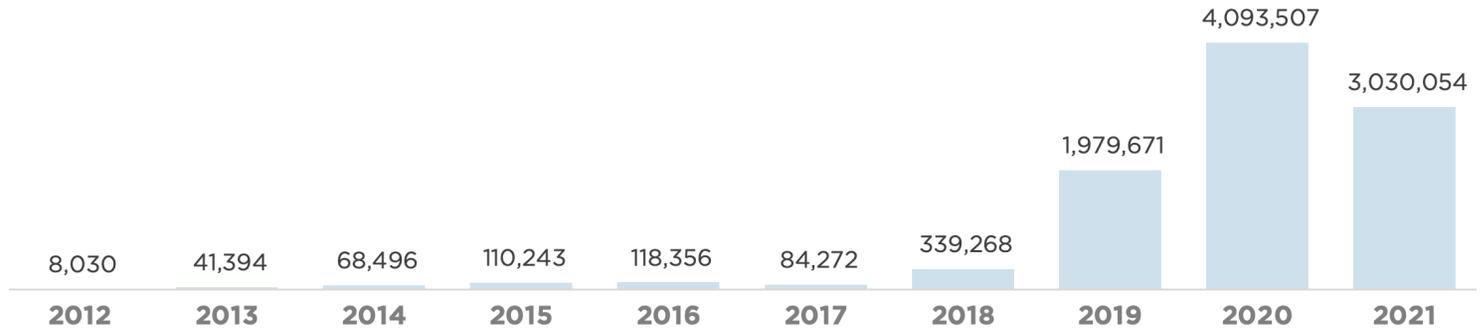


\*100% of overhead costs are covered by our founders

## Dollars per year



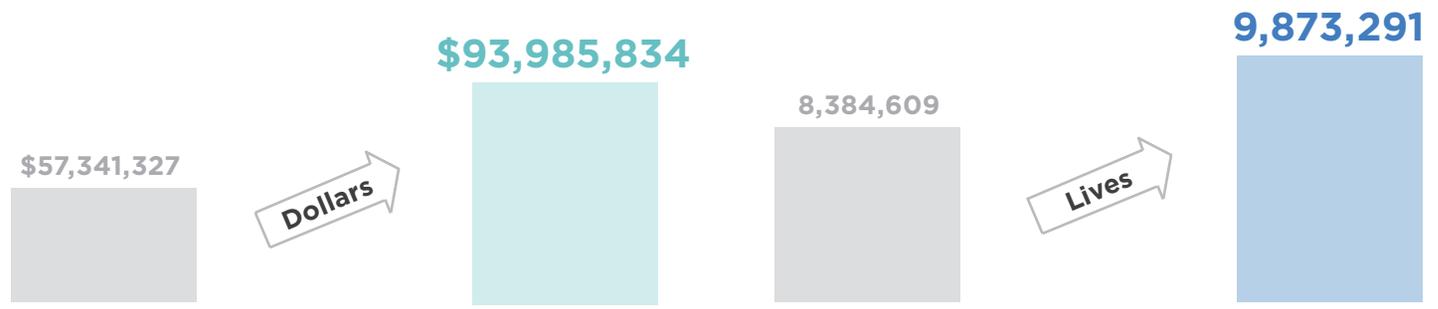
## Lives per year



## Leverage to date

Through the leverage of our matching campaigns, the impact of our donors' contributions was multiplied by 1.6x:

This has transformed an additional 1,488,681 lives as a result:



## Transforming lives here and around the world

### Internationally

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514,097 subsistence farm family members are permanently out of starvation poverty through our partnership with [One Acre Fund](#)

6,777,861 members of Africa's rural poor are building long-term cashable savings plans through a transformative tree planting initiative we launched with [One Acre Fund](#)

82,812 blind people can see again as a result of sight-restoring surgeries with [Seva Foundation](#)

104,159 people are gaining access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene training with [Water for People](#)

55,074 of the world's most vulnerable refugees are being resettled with [RefugePoint](#)

2,219 urban refugees are on a path to self-sufficiency through the delivery of interventions such as shelter, healthcare, and business training with [RefugePoint](#)

1,974,250 people in hard-to-reach areas are gaining access to life-saving preventative and diagnostic health care via drone technology—including the scaling up of the first national two-way drone delivery service in the world—toll-free hotlines, remote training, PPE, and the launch of a community-led clinic with [Muso](#), [CHIC](#), and [VillageReach](#)

### In the United States

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5,129 homeless or recently incarcerated individuals are receiving culinary training and wrap-around social services, then obtaining good-paying jobs with [Catalyst Kitchens](#)

5,937 underperforming elementary school students are closing the literacy gap with their reading-proficient peers with [Reading Partners](#)

4,522 foster youth are receiving a full year of life-changing, intensive advocacy provided by a rigorously-trained citizen volunteer with [Court Appointed Special Advocates \(CASA\)](#)

12,854 low-income individuals are attending an IT job training course providing intensive hands-on technical skills, job placement, and career development services with [Per Scholas](#)

3,012 young people without prior credible college prospects are receiving one year of a program proven to dramatically increase post-secondary success with [OneGoal](#)

132 people facing barriers to employment are gaining the training and support needed to begin high-demand careers in healthcare with [JVS](#)

6,916 people from low-wealth communities are benefiting from affordable home or small business loans and financial mentoring with [Opportunity Finance Network \(OFN\)](#)



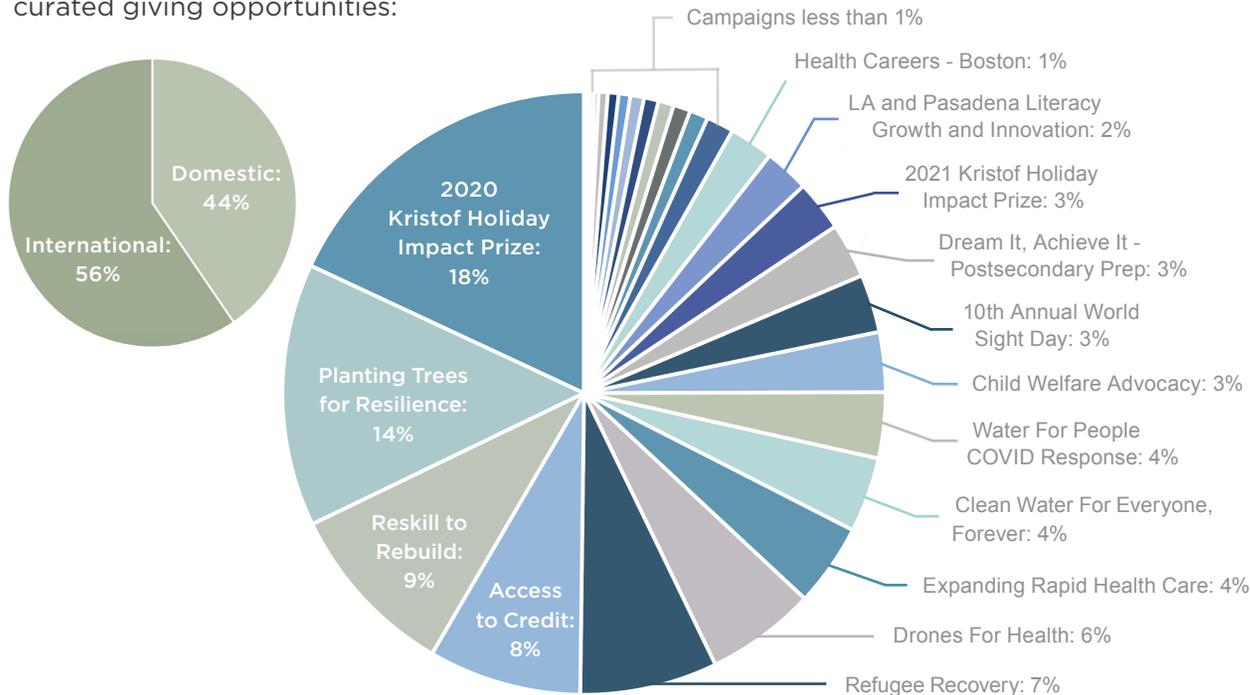


# 2021 Impact at a glance

- 3,030,054** lives changed
- \$25.5** million contributed
- 14** nonprofit implementing partners
- 17** diligence and monitoring visits

## Funding by initiative

\$21,510,406 was deployed to 29 curated giving opportunities:



## Leverage

Through the leverage of our matching campaigns, the impact of our donors' contributions was multiplied by 1.4x:



This has transformed an additional 378,909 lives as a result:



# 2021 Highlights

## Responding To Systemic Inequality



Over the past two years, longstanding societal challenges related to race and poverty played out in many interlocking ways that challenged us to think about whether and how we were using our resources and our platform to address the root causes and major symptoms of systemic inequality in the United States.

For Focusing Philanthropy, this meant employing a methodology by which we have built and reviewed our portfolio of initiatives from the beginning, what we refer to internally as our “funnel approach:”



We never start by looking at a specific nonprofit. Rather, we start with an overarching observation about some area of human need. After asking a threshold question by way of naming the problem, we engage in a wide ranging canvas of other organizations, individuals, and published research to assess the landscape.

On the basis of this landscape analysis, we develop a list of alternative intervention strategies by which various players have sought to address the problem, categorize these strategies into distinctive buckets, and develop a point of view about which ones seem most effective as well as most compatible with the kind of role Focusing Philanthropy can play.

Then, for the first time in the process, we have clarity about the type of nonprofit program we are looking for, and why. That is when we start to build a list of nonprofits with credible programs of the types we favor--a process that often takes several months. We then assess each of the programmatic nonprofits that appear to be the best fit for us and, sometimes, though not always, these critiques result in an addition to our small portfolio.

In the Spring of 2019, we asked ourselves whether we were being as effective as we could be in addressing systemic inequality in the U.S. In response, the application of this structured approach produced an extensive list of causes, symptoms and potential responses.

Five major categories emerged. Dark blue dots represent nonprofits that were already in our portfolio. In some cases, one NGO addressed more than one category:

- Economic inequality
- Educational opportunity
- Criminal justice
- Access to technology
- Health disparities

We felt we could materially increase our overall impact by adding or expanding on our programmatic offerings informed by this process. Light blue dots represent additions to our portfolio as a result (OneGoal, JVS, and OFN on p. 9). Dark blue dots with a shadow indicate the major expansion of our ambitions for a group we already supported (Per Scholas Bold Initiative, p. 10):

- Economic inequality
- Educational opportunity
- Criminal justice
- Access to technology
- Health disparities

# 2021 Highlights

## Expanding Our Domestic Portfolio

After more than six months of extensive research into the multifaceted question of how to better address systemic inequality in the United States, we had narrowed down a list of over 100 nonprofits to several that appeared to be the best fit for us. In 2021, we chose three as new additions to our portfolio.

OneGoal - a national program helping low-income public high school students who are performing in the middle 60% of their class (those often overlooked by other programs) achieve their post-secondary goals. Participating schools identify an excellent existing teacher who agrees to work with the same 25 students throughout their junior and senior years via a credit-bearing class and provide individualized support into their first year of college or vocational school. Employing OneGoal's staged approach, the teacher helps the cohort succeed in high school, identify areas of career interest, apply and gain admission to their post-secondary institution of choice, and navigate academic and life challenges to give them the best chance of reaching graduation. In communities where students typically have a 22% chance of graduating from college (compared to 67% of their peers from high-income areas), 84% of OneGoal high school graduates enroll in a postsecondary institution and 75% of those persist one year later. Our 2021 "Dream It, Achieve It" campaign funded a full year of the OneGoal program for 500+ students, and we hope to build on this effort in the future.

JVS - part of a network of 119 workforce development nonprofits with locations in 37 states. We wanted to capitalize on the national demand for healthcare workers that, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, will be needed to fill 2.4 million new jobs and replace eight million retirees over the next decade. Because so much of the credentialing and testing for these positions is handled at the state level, we sought to ally with a network of local organizations that were closely tied to the hospitals, medical practices, and social service agencies in their geographies. In January 2021, we added to our portfolio two JVS locations with a focus on healthcare training and anticipate adding other local affiliates in the years following. The JVS Boston and JVS San Francisco programs we support train low-income, non-college graduates to be certified nursing assistants, pharmacy techs, sterilization techs, dental assistants, medical assistants, medical office administrative assistants and other positions that place them on entry-level career pathways. 87% of students complete training and 81% of graduates are employed at starting wages ~3x their pre-training income.

Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) - the national network of Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) established to help maximize the effectiveness of community lenders. With the wealth divide widening in the U.S., we wanted to focus not only on means to achieving financial stability but also financial security. The average American White family has 10 times the wealth of the average Black family and 7.5 times the wealth of the average Hispanic family. A path out of poverty and into the middle class requires more than a living wage. It also depends on having access to credit to build assets, frequently in the form of a mortgage for a house or a small business loan. However, low-wealth individuals and communities are historically boxed out of traditional financial resources. CDFIs exist to fill this gap by providing fair, transparent financing and mentoring to borrowers chronically underserved by mainstream finance. Through our recent partnership with OFN and the launch of our third Bold Initiative (p. 10), more than 5,000 borrowers who would have difficulty qualifying for traditional loans will have the opportunity to grow wealth and invest in the future of their families and communities.



# 2021 Highlights

## Now Offering Three Bold Initiatives

Occasionally we can undertake far more ambitious goals that achieve transformative results at dramatic scale. We call these our Bold Initiatives, the first of which launched in 2019 with a focus on Africa. In 2021, we launched two more as part of our effort to be more effective in addressing systemic inequality within the U.S.



**Trees as savings** - Our first Bold Initiative, undertaken with partner One Acre Fund (1AF), aims to raise \$40 million to enable four million African farmers to plant 250 million trees between 2019 and 2024, laying the groundwork to ultimately reach one billion trees in the years ahead. 1AF provides smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa with the tools and training they need to grow their way out of hunger. Our prior collaboration with 1AF has resulted in the expansion of this proven program into five new countries and additional areas of Kenya. Now, we are leveraging 1AF's substantial institutional platform, deep relationships with farmers, and experience gained over five years of tree-planting experimentation at increasing scale (40 million trees pre-campaign) to help farm families take an important next step. Beyond food security, people need assets to protect against unexpected costs and allow for investments in their futures. Planting trees not only benefits the environment, it also acts as a long-term, cashable savings plan for the rural poor, generating farmer ROIs above 500%. We are in the third year of our six-year "Trees For Resilience" campaign and on track to reach our goals.

**Tech training** - Americans from underserved communities begin long-term careers in the IT sector through our partnership with Per Scholas. In 15 weeks or less, Per Scholas learners (87% people of color, 30% women) gain knowledge and skills, pass industry recognized credentialing exams, and present themselves as highly attractive candidates for technical, entry- to mid-level career-track jobs with good benefits. 85% of learners graduate and 80% of graduates obtain jobs within one year. Initially, we took the most conservative approach, supporting more learners in established Per Scholas locations. When that proved successful, we began funding new geographies. In this way, we have helped Per Scholas grow from 1,600 to 3,000 people trained per year and from six cities to 14. At the beginning of 2021, we launched our second Bold Initiative, "Reskill to Rebuild," embracing the \$40 million goal of expanding Per Scholas nationwide, reaching 25 cities and 10,000 learners trained annually by 2025. Each of the 20,000+ graduates during this period who are hired in tech jobs (55% of whom were unemployed at the time of application) will see their salaries quadruple from ~\$11,000 to \$45,000 per year.

**Affordable lending** - We know that, on average, for every \$1 of equity, Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) can borrow ~\$5 to \$7 of low-cost debt, enabling them to loan into their communities at affordable rates. This leverage makes equity funding what we believe to be the best catalyst for removing a key barrier to wealth formation in areas of the U.S. where traditional finance does not reach. We felt so strongly about this topic that in late 2021, we partnered with OFN (p. 9) to launch our third Bold Initiative. "Expanding Access To Credit" funds ~25 catalytic equity grants to help promising CDFIs accelerate their trajectory, gaining scale economies and increasing their ability to better serve their communities. Through a 1:1 match by the MacArthur Foundation of Focusing Philanthropy's \$5 million anchor commitment, multiplied by up to 7x debt funding from lenders to OFN's Finance Justice Fund, ~\$70 million in affordable loans will flow to low-wealth borrowers. In addition to creating or maintaining 4,120 jobs and financing 950 housing units, these loans will have a multiplier effect as they are repaid at a historic rate of more than 97% and recycled through further rounds of lending.

# 2021 Highlights

## Supporting At-Risk Afghan Evacuees



Many of our supporters asked how to help people forced to flee Afghanistan during the ongoing humanitarian crisis that intensified in August 2021. We worked with partner RefugePoint to expand our existing campaign and immediately deploy a team of experts to help establish a system that aims to revolutionize U.S. resettlement.

The latest spike in the Afghan refugee crisis unfolded against an already distressing backdrop. In recent years, the world has witnessed the highest level of forced displacement on record, with an unprecedented 26 million refugees languishing worldwide. The majority—about 85%—reside in developing countries. Most faced compounding hardship as the COVID-19 pandemic spread unabated in refugee communities lacking robust sanitation and healthcare infrastructure, leading to shuttered economies that refugees depend on for their livelihoods and halting life-saving relocation and resettlement programs. Many urban refugees lost their livelihoods overnight and many others continue to struggle with dangerous misinformation about COVID-19.

In January 2021, Focusing Philanthropy and RefugePoint launched their fifth matching campaign, “Refugee Resettlement, Reunification, and Self-Reliance,” to collectively raise \$1.5 million to respond to the needs of more than 12,000 refugees recovering from the impacts of the pandemic.

In response to the heightened Afghan humanitarian crisis last August, we worked with RefugePoint to expand our campaign to \$1,875,000, supporting an additional ~5,000 refugees and helping to put in place a system that aims to revolutionize U.S. resettlement—all while ensuring other refugees facing life-threatening situations around the world were not forgotten.

The \$375,000 increase allowed RefugePoint to deploy a team of experts to help 55,000+ refugees temporarily evacuated to eight U.S. military bases integrate into communities across the country as quickly as possible. In addition to coordinating legal consultations, designing and leading trainings, and developing handouts on topics including asylum, visas, humanitarian parole, and family reunification, the team supports a new initiative of the United States Department of State.

The Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans launched on October 25, 2021 to augment domestic resettlement capacity by engaging groups of local community members to

welcome refugees—both now and as a permanent part of U.S. government response moving forward. RefugePoint has been asked to play a unique role in the program, building on its 17-year history of helping to resettle more than 87,000 refugees across 41 countries. Campaign-funded caseworkers identify Afghans to participate, provide information, answer questions, and connect them with community sponsor circles that offer the same services as formal resettlement agencies.

On December 7, 2021, the first participating Afghan families were safely received by sponsor circles in Washington State and Vermont, and RefugePoint anticipates that all Afghan evacuees in the U.S. will have left the domestic military bases and resettled into communities by the spring of 2022. At that point, RefugePoint plans to continue to support the program by using remaining campaign funding to deploy its team to overseas U.S. bases hosting the largest numbers of Afghan evacuees (including the United Arab Emirates and Qatar). To date, our campaign has helped more than 19,400 refugees rebuild their lives.



# We have accomplished powerful things together

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