

ADDRESSING REFUGEE FOOD INSECURITY

through agricultural and community garden programs



SOWING SEEDS FOR SOLUTIONS
APPROACHES TO FOOD INSECURITY

CHASE PARK CHICAGO, IL

Addressing food insecurity through agricultural and community programs allows refugees to improve their own food security and also aids in building community among refugee populations and with local neighborhoods.

AN EMPOWERING SOLUTION TO FOOD INSECURITY

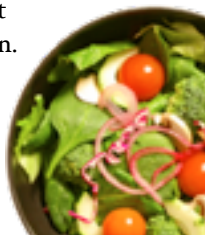
The process of resettling in a new country creates many vulnerabilities for refugees while also offering the chance for a new life. Refugees must adapt to a completely unfamiliar environment with the assistance of passionate, yet overworked and under resourced resettlement staff. Across the United States, agriculture and garden programs are emerging to address these issues.



Training refugees to address their food insecurity by growing their own food has multiple benefits. Traditional foods can be grown by utilizing existing farming and gardening skills

many refugees have. Empowerment of this typically disadvantaged and marginalized group can occur by making contributions to their local communities and ecosystems.

Challenges to full scale implementation of these programs include long training periods for becoming an independent farmer or market gardener due to learning English and adjusting to life in the U.S. Finding land and transportation to farmland can also limit potential participation. Addressing these issues can ultimately lead to enhanced food security.



Model Programs

Kansas City

New Roots for Refugees

This women's refugee farm project now has a CSA program that facilitates relationships between Americans and refugee farmers and provides supplemental income to families.

Maine

New American Sustainable Agriculture Project



The project offers farming, business, and leadership training to community gardeners, market gardeners, and farmers. A Refugee Farm Committee manages the project's incubator farm.

Idaho

Global Gardens

Seven refugee community agriculture sites are hosted by Idaho Office for Refugees and community partners. The garden sites are farmed by refugees from Africa, Russia, and Eastern Europe, who sell produce at local farmers markets.

San Francisco

Food Security and Community Health Program, IRC

Created as a response to food insecurity, the New Roots Community Farm builds and fosters community among various immigrant and refugee groups living in the City Heights neighborhood.

Addressing Food Security in Rogers Park:

Building upon Gardening Experiences to Empower Refugees to Address their Food Needs

This past November, Bhutanese gardeners attended a garden celebration commemorating their participation in the Ruby and Chase Park Community Gardens. When receiving certifications of appreciation, many of the gardeners offered thanks to their community. One gardener explained that they had “worked together equally to grow and share vegetables in the garden.”

During the growing season, the Bhutanese participated in workshops on container gardening, urban gardening, season extension, and cold frame construction. The Bhutanese shared the work at their communal garden plots and equally divided the harvest among the participants.



Sarah Eichberger, the Refugee Nutritionist at Heartland Health Outreach's Refugee Health Programs, invited the Bhutanese to participate in the garden as a way to address refugee food insecurity. Throughout the growing season Sarah advertised garden events by posting flyers in the Bhutanese's apartment buildings with



A summer view of Ruby Garden in Schreiber Park. This garden is one of two that Bhutanese community gardeners worked at during the 2009 growing season.

translation assistance from Uma Devi Mishra, Bhutanese health promoter.



The community garden project began as an effort to address food security among refugee communities. Since then it has also led to an awareness of

other barriers to food security issues and had laid the groundwork for gardeners to become participants in addressing their food needs. Powerfully, in this process, the Bhutanese have traded the label of “refugee” for the title of “gardener”.



What is community food security?



This term is defined by Milka Hamm and Anne Bellows as a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound diet through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system that promotes community self-reliance and social justice.

Providing Culturally Appropriate Emergency Food: New Hampshire Food Pantry Searches for a Solution

Relying on donations from food suppliers and individual contributors, food pantries typically offer a variety of canned and packaged foods and a small array of fresh bread, fruits, and vegetables. Unfortunately, refugees seeking food assistance are often not familiar with canned and processed foods and may not have the English proficiency to communicate their needs to pantry staff. Addressing this issue, Helen Costello, of the New Hampshire Food Bank, has helped create a garden at the food pantry in partnership with the International Institute of New Hampshire, a local refugee resettlement agency. In this garden, refugee participants grow culturally appropriate food and donate extra harvest to the food pantry. This partnership has helped to increase vital communication between the food pantry and the refugees, beginning the important process of addressing emergency food needs in a culturally appropriate manner.