RAISING YOUNG WOMEN REFUGEE VOICES TO BE HEARD AND NOT FORGOTTEN

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> *"And those who do not die in the war died in the sea, without anybody noticing. I dreamed of finishing my education just like any child who has the right to education. I want to graduate and secure my future but now everything is gone. I want to thank Europe for welcoming us but why did they stop in the middle of the road? Why make us suffer more? We did not come to Europe for tourism, we fled the war because we want to continue with our education and realize our dreams." SP, a young Syrian refugee*

> *"We had a home and we had a country. I wonder how many kids were lost, how many were displaced, and how much my country is wounded. God, how beautiful is my country? I was forced to find another country. Our tragedy is a tragedy of innocent people, and stories filled with suffering. And my crime was that I tried to survive." J, a young Iraqi woman*

NEW YORK– June 21, 2022– This week World Refugee Week marks a new record reported by the UNHCR Global Trends report that shows that there are now 100 million people across the world, displaced, forced to flee their homes to seek sanctuary.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has led to the fastest-growing refugee crisis since the end of World War II. More than 14 million people have fled their homes since February 24th, with at least 6 million civilians, mostly women and children, seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

Women and children are most vulnerable to gender based violence (GBV) and human trafficking. Internally displaced people (IDPs) are at particular risk as they remain in the besieged country but far from home, trying to care for family members and themselves. Their lack of resources and existential insecurity make them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

For the past decade Footage Foundation has been creating the world's largest digital storytelling platform for young women's narratives on GBV. This year, building on that work, Footage was able to quickly pivot to support evacuation of the most vulnerable when the war in Ukraine began. At the start of the conflict, Footage also set up an effective Compassionate Cash transfer project, channeling money directly to IDPs in Ukraine through a network of young women on the ground in that country.

"Never has our work been more important," says Dr. Kristen Ali Eglinton, Footage Co-founder and Executive Director. "Our trauma-informed work at Footage around the world humanizes. Not only do we cultivate community, we listen intensely, we see the wellbeing needs of the whole person and through our narrative and creative research we shine a light on the common threads of humanity that connect us and therefore, inspire compassionate action and transformation."

Footage has also worked with international partners to design and set up an innovative messaging programme, called FemSMS for both those fleeing and those remaining in Ukraine. FemSMS is currently providing information and resources along with reassuring and compassionate messages to women at risk of violence, including trafficking from Ukraine.

"At Footage personal development and mental wellbeing, including self-worth and human connection, are as important in international development and humanitarian crises as are food and water," says Dr.

Eglinton.

“These programmes build on our experience and the relationships with young women refugees that we’ve developed through working on the frontlines across eleven countries and four continents. Over the past decade Footage Foundation has become the global leader in creating the most innovative evidence-based psychosocial programming for young women in conflict and crisis to mitigate the detrimental impact of violence. Our primary refugee program, Her{Connect}Her engages young refugee and migrant women worldwide in empowering narrative workshops,” she adds.

This June, for Refugee Month, Footage is highlighting the oral histories shared by young women participants from refugee camps and centers in Greece. Through story sharing, participants cultivate innate agency, belonging, and resilience while fostering compassion and empathy among local and global communities. Footage is also sharing experiences from young women focusing on the intersection of forced displacement, gender identity, and state sanctioned violence around the globe including in the home countries of our young women participants.

Footage has been working with young women like S.P. who escaped from Syria and has been living in a refugee camp in Greece. “And those who do not die in the war died in the sea, without anybody noticing. I dreamed of finishing my education just like any child who has the right to education. I want to graduate and secure my future but now everything is gone. I want to thank Europe for welcoming us but why did they stop in the middle of the road? Why make us suffer more? We did not come to Europe for tourism, we fled the war because we want to continue with our education and realize our dreams.”

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XT1HHUQzTA0orpx1GsQOQtTo3Ts0AVy_/view

And J, who – with her family – fled war in Iraq. “We had a home and we had a country. I wonder how many kids were lost, how many were displaced, and how much my country is wounded. God, how beautiful is my country? I was forced to find another country. Our tragedy is a tragedy of innocent people, and stories filled with suffering. And my crime was that I tried to survive.”

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B6VsLWZ9KgqmdYIA6eRmJZLrFG4DTVe8/view

“In honoring the global refugee community Footage aims to bring awareness and compassion to those most marginalized refugee young women by raising their voices so that they are not forgotten,” says Dr. Eglinton – ends –

About Footage Foundation*: Footage is a U.S. based feminist organization raising voices to elevate lives through creative research, wellbeing interventions, and advocacy—all advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Footage has received nine Public Diplomacy awards from the U.S. Department of State to design and implement programs focusing on women and violence primarily in the Post-Soviet region. A nonprofit organization founded by PhD colleagues at Cambridge University, Footage uses narrative and expressive approaches empowering young women around the world to connect as agents of social change. Our programs provide connection — a community for women on the frontlines of gender inequality where their ideas matter and their voices count. We have a particular focus on forced displacement and gender-based violence and believe compassion and connection are as important to sustainable development as food and water.*

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