Refugees entering the United States find themselves in an unwelcoming new environment. With little government support to speak of, recent years have seen a significant uptick in anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment, often manifesting in overt violence and destructive new policies directed towards refugees and immigrants. With these worsening factors in play, it’s little surprise that it takes an average of seven years for refugees to reach a state of stability and self-sufficiency.

ARTogether’s vision is to help build communities that ease this difficult transition process, promoting long-term stability, wellbeing, and social inclusiveness that can provide a community safety net for those who need it most. Our goal is to welcome everyone into our Bay Area community, transforming the social and cultural fabric of our common community for the better.
Dear Friends and Community,

What a journey. Two and a half years ago, ARTtogether was just a single monthly art workshop offered to a refugee community in Oakland. Now, we have workshops throughout the Bay Area, numbering over 134 in total. We have provided services to over a thousand refugees and immigrants from over 36 different countries. We have launched new media projects, new community partnerships, and support a growing refugee artist network. Though we’ve faced more than our share of challenges, it’s worth taking stock of all we have accomplished this year.

2019 was a year of development for ARTtogether. Our three areas of focus—Community, Artists, and Education—were defined in ways that will add more substance to our efforts going forward. For Community, we launched our new after-school art classes at Oakland International High School, and continue to grow our art workshops and social events. For Artists, we have developed our new network of refugee artists, providing support through public art exhibitions, grant-funded art projects, and employment as art teachers for our workshops. And for Education, we are proud to announce that California Humanities has funded our new documentary and oral history project, From Killing Fields to Sanctuary: Voices of Oakland’s Cambodian Refugees, which will shed light on Cambodian refugees and raise awareness of refugee issues overall. Moreover, this year we finished development of our new K-12 educational outreach and refugee awareness program, which will be introduced to Bay Area schools in 2020.

This year, I want to give thanks for all the support that we have received. Our volunteers have dedicated hundreds of hours to this project, and our donors have helped make it a reality. As we begin to develop our organization, hire paid staff, and refine our programs, it should never be forgotten that none of this would have been possible without the support of driven members of our community who believe in our mission: to welcome and support refugees and immigrants in our community.

With Gratitude,

Leva Zand
Executive Director
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**MISSION AND PROGRAMS**

**OUR MISSION**

ARTogether mission is to design creative programs that ensure refugees flourish in their new homes. We organize art workshops and inclusive social gatherings, support refugee artists, and educate the public about refugees’ stories in the Bay Area and around the globe.

**OUR PROGRAMS**

**Community Art Programs**

- We bring refugees, immigrants and the community together through art workshops and social gatherings.

**Supporting Refugee Artists**

- We support refugee and immigrant artists in our community, helping to promote their art and partnering with artists to lead our workshops.

**Public Education and Awareness**

- We promote positive images of refugees and immigrants, through public media projects and classroom workshops in Bay Area schools.
COMMUNITY ART PROGRAMS/
COMMUNITY ART WORKSHOPS

We offer art workshops and creative activities in a setting that supports creativity, human connection, and community-building. Our workshops provide welcoming, creative spaces for refugees and immigrants to meet, connect, and build lasting connections with others in the community.

Workshops In
- Dance and Movement/Aromatherapy
- Painting/Jewelry-Making/Vision Boards
- Poetry/Quilting

Participants 231
Nationalities 26

“Today was fun. I hung out with my friends, listened to music and painted. I want to see more classes like this.”
—Phi, 54
“I have always been interested in learning how people make music. I think now that I know, I like music more. I like that this class helped me connect with other students and my teacher. I want to take this class again.”

—Fikadu, 16

COMMUNITY ART PROGRAMS

I have always been interested in learning how people make music. I think now that I know, I like music more. I like that this class helped me connect with other students and my teacher. I want to take this class again.”

—Fikadu, 16

COMMUNITY ART PROGRAMS/
AFTER-SCHOOL ART CLASSES

We offer weekly after-school art classes to Bay Area schools with limited arts programs. In 2019, ARTogther provided classes to students at Oakland International High School, a public school for refugee and immigrant students in the Bay Area.

MUSIC STUDIO WORKSHOP
An exploration of music production in a hands-on environment. Using music studio hardware and software, students learn how to use live and electronic instruments to compose their own music.

CREATIVE STORYTELLING WORKSHOP
Combining storytelling, drama and new media, students learn how to creatively tell their personal stories, using digital media to compose, edit and produce their own video shorts.

WATCH OUR VIDEO HERE
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35RLcazaaTM

Our after-school art program is made possible with support from the Sam Mazza Foundation and the Morris Stulsaft Foundation.

Classes 31
Students 17
Nationalities 12
I decorated a big cupcake and then ate it! Can we decorate pasta next?

—Jenny, 6

COMMUNITY ART PROGRAMS/
CHILDREN’S SUMMER ART CAMP

Since 2017, we have conducted art activities at the International Rescue Committee’s summer camp for children from refugee and immigrant families. This year, in collaboration with the Center for Empowering Refugees & Immigrants, we offered our first three-day summer camp to children between the ages of 2 and 12.
Thank you for giving everyone a night out and, more importantly, a priceless memory. The families are asking when we can have another parents night out because for some, they have not gone out on a real ‘date’ since they became parents! Their hearts were full and the connection was real and deeply felt.

—Jacqueline Smith, Family and Community Partner Manager
To help keep refugee artistic traditions alive, we work to support local refugee artists, connecting artists with local exhibition spaces, collaborating on community art projects, and providing employment as art teachers for our workshops and events.

The Supporting Artists Program officially launched in June 2019 with an exhibition at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center. Titled “Shadows and Light,” the exhibition was held for one month and showcased the work of 3 female immigrant artists. Over the course of 2019, we also helped 3 refugee artists compile art portfolios, provided fiscal sponsorships to 2 refugee artists, and worked with 9 refugee artists to lead our art workshops.

“I wish this program existed when I came to the U.S. ten years ago. I was a painter and dancer back in my country. But when I came here, I went to business school and now I work in a bank. I feel like there is a hole in my heart. I know I didn’t have any choice because I had to feed my family, but it hurts every time I think about my paintings.”

—Bahar, 45
Our efforts work to promote positive images of refugees and immigrants through media projects and educational outreach. Our new Education Program will bring this mission into Bay Area K-12 schools, developing in-the-classroom education modules that engage students with nuanced refugee narratives designed to combat harmful xenophobic stereotypes. This program will launch in select San Francisco schools in 2020.
To raise awareness of refugees in the Bay Area, we have begun production on our new documentary, *From Killing Fields to Sanctuary: Voices of Oakland’s Cambodian Refugees.* Funded in part by California Humanities, the documentary will explore the history and challenges faced by Oakland’s Cambodian community.

### Public Education & Awareness Programs

**Media Projects**

To raise awareness of refugees in the Bay Area, we have begun production on our new documentary, *From Killing Fields to Sanctuary: Voices of Oakland’s Cambodian Refugees.* Funded in part by California Humanities, the documentary will explore the history and challenges faced by Oakland’s Cambodian community.

#### A Path to Healing

The I.C.E. raids of 2019 saw the sudden attempted deportation of four Cambodian refugees, galvanizing Oakland’s Cambodian community to stand up and fight back. We told this story in our 2019 film project, *A Path to Healing,* directed by Nadim Badiee and Ido Bartana. Developed in partnership with the Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants (CERI), the film explores Cambodian members of CERI’s community, the obstacles they face, and the variety of experiences felt by first- and second-generation Cambodian refugees living in Oakland. The 30-minute film was presented at the CERI community event, "Remembering the Cambodian Genocide: A Tribute to a Resilient Community" in October of 2019.

#### From Killing Fields to Sanctuary: Voices of Oakland’s Cambodian Refugees

*From Killing Fields to Sanctuary: Voices of Oakland’s Cambodian Refugees* is a multimedia oral history project that will combine recorded interviews, photography, online resources, documentary film and community dialogues to tell the story of Cambodian refugees as part of California’s cultural fabric. The project will present historical and current perspectives on Cambodian refugees and their families living in the San Francisco Bay Area, highlighting the real-life experiences of those who have fled violence and persecution to seek safety and rebuild their lives in the United States. ARTogether has been awarded a grant by California Humanities to complete this project over the next two years.

**Watch A Path to Healing Here**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jKaCQ1XT7o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jKaCQ1XT7o)
ARTOGETHER: ZURICH

Led by artist and teacher Shima Sheikholeslami, ARTogether: Zurich was founded to bring art to the children living within the emergency shelter refugee camp located near Zürich, Switzerland. In 2019, the chapter provided 45 youth art workshops, and organized a public art exhibition for all the camp’s residents to enjoy.

ARTOGETHER: FORT WORTH

For two years now, artist and social worker Bahareh Rezaeian has catered classes to the refugees and immigrant communities of Fort Worth, Texas. Notably this year, the chapter launched a popular art class for preschool children at a local elementary school, partnered with Refugee Services of Texas to host Fort Worth’s World Refugee Day, and offered a total of 29 art workshops.

ARTOGETHER’s mission and message grew to spread worldwide, forming two sister chapters in Zürich, Switzerland and Fort Worth, Texas in 2018. This year we’re proud to see them flourish into their second years.
ZURICH CHAPTER / Torn Paper Landscapes Class
FORT WORTH CHAPTER / Watercoloring class
Our Board of Directors was formed, and threw ARTogether’s first official fundraising event. We developed ARTogether’s Theory of Change, and focused our efforts within the categories of community art, artist support and education. We redesigned our website, with a planned launch in 2020. We vastly improved our measurement and evaluation system, increasing our ability to gather essential demographic data, receive feedback, and shape our programs to better meet the needs of our participants. We began the first phase of our donor relationship program, enabling us to engage with our existing donors and reach out to more members of the community. We greatly increased our social media presence, engaging with more and more people through more platforms than ever before. We filmed and produced a number of informative and promotional videos about refugees in the Bay Area and about ARTogether, all available on our newly-improved YouTube channel.
ARTOGETHER is built on our relationships with others in the community, and the partner organizations we work with form the cornerstone of our efforts. In 2019, we began new partnerships with the following organizations and institutions:

- Center for Empowering Refugees & Immigrants
- International Rescue Committee
- Jewish Family & Children’s Services East Bay
- Flying Carpet Children’s Festival
- Cesar Chavez Center–Unity Council / Head Start in Concord, CA
- East Bay Refugee Forum

In addition, we continued and strengthened partnerships with the following organizations, many of which have worked alongside our efforts since our founding:

- Oakland International High School
- Oakland Asian Cultural Center
- Gathering All Muslim Artists
- The Contemporary Jewish Museum
- StoryCenter
- SOIL Film Productions

OUR DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH/
PARTNERSHIPS
IN 2019, WE RECEIVED $26,970 FROM 127 INDIVIDUAL DONORS.
ART TOGETHER DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT/2019

DIVERSITY

- Refugees & Immigrants

GENDER COMPOSITION

- Non-Binary
- Female
- Male
ARTogether has a lot in store for 2020.

Our Reflection of Home Exhibition, featuring female artists of color from the Bay Area.

The launch of ARTogether’s new website.

New after-school art classes.

New community art programs offered at the Jewish Contemporary Museum.

From Killing Fields to Sanctuary: Voices of Oakland’s Cambodian Refugees, a new oral history project.

Our K-12 Education Program, raising awareness of refugee issues across Bay Area schools would officially launched.

THERE ARE A FEW PROJECTS ON THE HORIZON

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON OUR LATEST PROJECTS: www.arttogether.org
This year, our volunteer staff and interns donated hundreds of hours to help make ARTogether possible. Thank you to all of you who have helped us along!

Thank you.

ARTOGETHER
THANKS
YOU
Finally, we’d like to express our deepest love and appreciation for Dr. Mona Afary and the Center for Empowering Refugees & Immigrants. Without Dr. Afary’s constant support, advice and guidance, ARTogether wouldn’t be half of what it is today. Thank you so much Mona, and to everyone at CERI who has been such a source of strength and inspiration to us!