Enabling greater integration into their new communities, the International Rescue Committee’s New Roots Program provides refugee families with the space, materials and training to participate in community gardening activities throughout Tucson. By engaging in community gardening, refugees are able to cultivate fresh, nutritious food while connecting with their neighbors. Advanced gardeners of the program can complete a certificate course offered through the IRC’s MicroProducer Academy, which teaches refugees how to grow and sell produce for market. Graduates of the certificate program are equipped with the resources necessary for practicing small-scale urban farming in Tucson. As of 2018, the IRC has partnered with Literacy Connects and Habitat for Humanity to create the Literacy Garden, an urban garden that will dually serve as a site for language education. In addition to urban agriculture activities, the New Roots Program offers refugees access to nutrition workshops and psychosocial therapy.

### In Numbers / The Impact of the New Roots Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>50</th>
<th>Refugees participate in community gardening activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78% of gardeners are female</td>
<td>22% of gardeners are male</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Community garden locations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Through a partnership with the community gardens of Tucson, refugees garden at</td>
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| The New Roots program serves refugees from 11 nations*:

  *This statistic is representative of all refugees participating in New Roots programming; therefore, the number of nationalities represented by garden enrollments may be less.*

  *Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Pakistan, Rwanda, Syria, Somalia, & Senegal*
30 Garden workshops were taught by IRC staff in 2017.

In 2017, gardeners of the New Roots program grew $4,875 worth of produce.

3 Refugees have graduated from the Microproducer Academy certificate program*.

All 3 Microproducer graduates currently practice small-scale urban farming**.

The New Roots program has received $1,487 worth of seed donations, with donors including:

- Native Seeds/Search
- Seed Savers Exchange
- Victory Seeds
- Baker Creek
- High Mowing
- Southern Exposure
- BBB Seed
- John Scheepers
- Peaceful Valley

*The first cohort of the Microproducer Academy graduated in the summer of 2017.

**Currently, all three MicroProducer graduates are farming at the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona's Las Milpitas de Cottonwood Community Farm.
“Whenever we can, we pick the veggies & take them home & the children are so happy just to have veggies. The taste in the vegetables that we grow is very different from the ones you go buy. These are very tasty & nutritious, & they sit very well with us.”

“Gardening to me, it has been very, very important in that since I started gardening, I know how expensive vegetables in the store are. But when I garden, I get my vegetables that I can feed my children & feed myself without being controlled or calculating the outcome because they’re my own vegetables that I harvested.”

“These vegetables are so nutritious & I believe that they’re [better] than those ones in Walmart that they go pick after they have stayed more than 2 to 5 days. These ones, I pick them, take them home, [&] eat when they’re fresh.”

“We have workshops whereby the people from the agency...teach us how to cook certain vegetables, which is very important...as you can see, sometimes we can harvest too [many] vegetables. We are trained on how to keep, to preserve them in the fridge by buying containers, cooking them, & [putting] them in freezer.”

“Even though it looks small, but if it gets enough water, if there is enough irrigation, my goodness, I have been getting vegetables, cabbage, & different vegetables every time I come here.”
Building Social Connections

"The person who brought this is a person to say 'thank you' because of [two] things. One, when I come here I meet people from different countries...with different ideas, & we share those ideas. I feel welcomed & I feel at home. The other issue is it has brought me friends & unity. Despite the vegetables I get here, I get morale. I feel very okay to stay [in the U.S.]."

"When we meet here, we know each other, we share ideas. It’s our meeting place; it’s our social place. Because we all live somewhere else...when we come together here, it is like we socialize. We find out how you are doing, what is going on - so we share information."

"First of all, I use this garden to teach my children...to achieve my goal, I have decided each individual time to come with at least two children to see what I do, how I do it. You see, sometimes my children try helping me to remove weeds, helping me to water the plants - things like that...to bring my children here, it has helped me a lot."

"Most of the time, we get too [many] vegetables. We give to neighbors, friends...I call people from other apartments to come & share with me - I give them. & our kids came to like [the vegetables] - as you can see they are coming to help me, which means they like them, too. I wish I had a big place to plant as many as I can, to feed as many people as I can."

"When I come here & I meet people & we share ideas, [it] brings unity & life among us. I’ve gained some friends, different from the ones I knew & the ones I was expecting. As you can see, we come from different countries."
ACCESSING LAND & MARKETS

"NOW MY CONCERN IS THE GARDEN IS TOO SMALL, AS YOU CAN SEE. BACK HOME I WAS USED TO FARMING A VERY BIG PIECE OF LAND. I WISH I COULD HAVE A VERY BIG GARDEN IN ORDER TO PLANT & HARVEST ENOUGH FOR MY FAMILY, MY CHILDREN. ALSO, TO SEND TO THE MARKET, WHEREBY I’LL BE VERY HAPPY GETTING MONEY FOR MY SWEAT...I’M SO STRONG. I WISH I GOT VERY BIG LAND."

"I WISH – & I AM KINDLY REQUESTING YOU – IF THERE IS A WAY YOU CAN REQUEST FOR US BIGGER LANDS SO THAT WE CAN FARM, EAT, GET SATISFIED, & SEND IT TO THE MARKET. I WANT TO TEACH MY CHILDREN HOW VEGETABLES ARE GROWN & OTHER FOOD. NOT SEEING THEM IN A STORE & THINKING IT’S WHERE THEY’RE SUPPOSED TO BE. MY CHILD DESERVES TO SEE HOW [TO] PLANT & CULTIVATE, & SEE THE OUTCOME OF [A] HARVEST."

"IT’S NOT ENOUGH [VEGETABLES] BECAUSE THE GARDEN IS SO SMALL. SO YOU KNOW, EVEN WHEN YOU HARVEST, YOU GO HOME WITH THEM, YOU CAN’T EAT THEM ALONE. YOU HAVE NEIGHBORS & YOUR HEART SAYS SHARE."

"WE WERE GARDENERS AT HOME. IF YOU GAVE US ACRES OF LAND, WE SHALL DIG, NO PROBLEM. EVEN IF YOU GIVE US MACHINES & TELL US ‘YOU CAN TILL THIS LAND WITH MACHINE,’ AS LONG AS YOU SHOW ME HOW TO [USE] THAT MACHINE, I’LL DO IT."

"FOR US, THERE IS ONE WE HAVE & IT IS A PROBLEM. WE ARE GIVEN VERY LITTLE PLOTS – THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH. FROM AFRICA, WE LOVE GARDENING & IT IS SOMETHING THAT USED TO HELP US, & IT WAS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MET OUR NEEDS. ONE THING THAT WE REALLY & TRULY WANT ARE BIGGER PLOTS."

In collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, interviews were completed as a component of the project ‘Greening the Food Deserts of Tucson, Arizona.’

Research Team: Stephanie Buechler, Daoqin Tong, Ashley Erbe, & Emily Marderness
Project Website: geography.arizona.edu/greeningfooddeserts
Funded By: University of Arizona Agnese Nelms Haury Program in Environment & Social Justice