THE ADVOCACY PROJECT
SUPPORTING ADVOCATES FOR PEACE

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Residents and Refugees Collaborate on Leros and in Amman

Donate tomorrow to Sewing 4 Solidarity (Greece) and the Hope Workshop (Jordan). Global Giving will match donations starting at 00.01 am (US EDT) Wednesday

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, The Advocacy Project (AP) is supporting two inspiring community initiatives in Jordan and Greece

that empower refugees from the Middle East and ease tensions in countries of first asylum. Global Giving will match donations up to $2,500, starting at 00.01 am on Wednesday June 20.

In Greece, the island of Leros is once again on the frontlines of Europe's refugee crisis after a renewed influx this year. In response, the Leros Solidarity Network, a group of dedicated volunteers, has launched Sewing 4 Solidarity to train refugee women in making bags and coping with stress (photo above).

In Jordan, we are renewing our appeal for the Hope Workshop, an initiative of the Collateral Repair Project that trains refugee women to produce and sell calendars, handicrafts, and embroidery. Their third quilt was recently assembled by Bobbi Fitzsimmons in Wilmington NC and shows in graphic detail why refugees continue to flee from war and violence in the Middle East (photo below).

Why they flee to Leros and Amman: Refugees at the Hope Workshop told their stories through squares that were assembled by Bobbi Fitzsimmons in the US.

These two successful projects show how refugees and local communities are taking the initiative at a time when traditional approaches to international refugee protection are collapsing and governments are again panicking. For example, resettlement to third countries has fallen sharply since President Trump took office. The US admitted 11 Syrians between January and April.

This has put renewed pressure on local communities and refugees in countries of first asylum. The inhabitants of Leros - who number about 9,000 - have been hosting around 1,000 asylum seekers, mostly from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and North Africa. The Greek government runs

a "hot spot" on the island where new arrivals are processed, but the burden of support has fallen mainly on locals.

Many of the refugees have been separated from their families and face the possibility of being returned to Turkey, which signed a deal with the European Union to take back "illegal" migrants on March 18, 2016. This adds to the pressure of living on a small island where the refugees do not speak the local language.

"Their biggest enemies are boredom and uncertainty," says Elektra Kostopolou, a professor at Rutgers University in New Jersey whose mother is a leading member of the Leros Solidarity Network. Professor Kostopolou described the refugee crisis in Greece as a "legal and humanitarian mess."

The Ladies of Hope: Workshop members in Amman with the first refugee quilt, made from their embroidery and exhibited in Europe and America.

The Leros volunteers introduced the bag trainings six months ago. The response has been overwhelmingly positive and Professor Kostopolou said that the women are gaining visibly in confidence. Locals are able to see them in a positive light, as skilled and hard-working.

Meanwhile in Amman, members of the Hope Workshop are selling everything they produce after their training. Jordan has given asylum to over 740,000 refugees - one of the largest caseloads in the world.

Teresa Perosa, a student at Columbia University, is volunteering at the Hope Workshop as a Peace Fellow this summer. Teresa will describe her experience through blogs.

* [Click here to donate to Sewing 4 Solidarity](#). Donations start at 00.01 am June 20 and will be matched while funds last.
* [Click here to donate to the Hope Workshop](#).
* [Click here](#) to see the first two refugee quilts from the Hope Workshop.
* Visit the pages of [Reina](#) (2017) and [Allyson](#) (2016). Both served as Peace Fellows at CRP.

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