
Media inquiry - Seeking comment on Basham's book / World Relief

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From:

Date: Wed, Aug 14, 2024 at 2:51 PM

Hi Josh,

Thanks for reaching out. I've included information below that can be attributed to World Relief.

Please let me know if you need anything else!

Federal Funding and the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program

World Relief is proud of our longstanding partnership with the federal government to resettle refugees through the U.S. refugee admissions program, where federal funds are combined with privately-raised funds, volunteer hours and in-kind donations to facilitate refugees' integration into the United States, including covering their initial housing upon arrival. World Relief has participated in this public-private partnership since the 1970s, under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

However, Ms. Basham's reporting on the amount of federal funding that World Relief has received as a part of the refugee resettlement program is dramatically inaccurate. In 2018, for example, World Relief received less than one-tenth of the federal funding for refugee resettlement that Ms. Basham alleges. In fact, as our [publicly available IRS-990 forms and audited financial statements demonstrate](#), our total organizational revenue in 2018 was only about 30% of the \$215.3 million that Ms. Basham inaccurately alleges World Relief received from the federal government for the refugee resettlement program "in 2018 alone." This error seems to have been the result of misquoting a [report](#) on federal refugee resettlement funds received from *2008 through 2018*.

To be clear, individuals who arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border and seek asylum are *not* a part of the U.S. refugee admissions program, whether they enter lawfully or unlawfully, and World Relief does not receive federal funds from the U.S. State Department's refugee resettlement program for assisting these individuals. The federal refugee admissions program is focused upon individuals vetted by the U.S. government overseas who are found to meet the U.S. legal definition of a refugee, having fled a well-founded fear of persecution for specific grounds established in U.S. law, and they come to the United States via airplane flights.

Alongside secure borders, World Relief advocates for humane treatment and due process for asylum seekers who arrive at the border because we believe it is our biblical obligation to do so – concerned particularly (but not exclusively) with the wellbeing of [persecuted Christians](#) in need of refuge – not out of any sort of financial interest.

Evangelism and Proselytism

Ms. Basham argues that it is disingenuous for World Relief to highlight the missional opportunity for the U.S. church related to immigration, as we often and unabashedly do, because, as a recipient of federal dollars, we agree to not engage in proselytism. Ms. Basham seems to conflate the concepts of *evangelism* and *proselytism*, but our view at World Relief is that those terms are not synonymous and, in fact, are often at odds. Here's how World Relief leaders have publicly explained that distinction, in *Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis* (Moody Publishers, 2016, pp. 44-45):

World Relief is an unabashedly evangelical organization. We believe in evangelism—an open invitation to a personal relationship with Jesus—but we reject proselytism, which is not synonymous. In fact, proselytism, which is a coercive effort to convert someone, is in many ways counter to evangelism. Evangelism must never pressure or compel; it should never qualify service, acceptance or compassion based on anyone's response to faith. Theologian John Stott described proselytism as “unworthy witness,” which occurs whenever our motives, our methods, or our message are unworthy. As evangelicals, to quote the Lausanne Movement, “while the nature of our faith requires us to share the gospel with others, our practice is to make an open and honest statement of it, which leaves the hearers entirely free to make up their own minds about it. We wish to be sensitive to those of other faiths, and we reject any approach that seeks to force conversion on them.”

In serving refugees who have fled traumatizing situations of persecution, it is vital that we be particularly sensitive to avoid even implied expectations of religious conformity. As we welcome and serve refugees, we have many opportunities “to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have,” but we must also do so “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Whether a refugee is a Christian or not, our firm belief at World Relief is that we should provide the same caring service. But as our staff and local church-based volunteers build relationships with those whom we serve, the refugees very often ask what motivates our kindness, and we have seen many subsequently choose to follow Jesus.

Several World Relief staff also contributed to an edited volume on the theme of evangelism called *No Longer Strangers: Transforming Evangelism with Immigrant Communities* (Eerdmans, 2021), seeking to further affirm the importance of evangelism – which is an essential part of our organizational commitment to Integral Mission – while clearly distinguishing genuine evangelism from harmful practices of proselytism that are inconsistent with our organizational and national commitment to religious freedom.

The Evangelical Immigration Table and Partnership with the National Immigration Forum

World Relief is proud to have helped launch the Evangelical Immigration Table in [June 2012](#). We did so in partnership with a number of other national evangelical organizations, including our parent organization, the National Association of Evangelicals (led at that time by Leith Anderson) and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (led at the time by [Dr. Richard Land](#))

Since the launch of the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#), we have been focused on advancing immigration reforms guided by six principles that we believe are consistent with biblical principles, calling for an immigration solution that:

- Respects the God-given dignity of every person
- Protects the unity of the immediate family
- Respects the rule of law
- Guarantees secure national borders
- Ensures fairness to taxpayers

- Establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents

World Relief has stood by these principles consistently and will continue to do so. Each of these principles has been affirmed by a broad range of [national and local evangelical leaders](#) and, according to a January 2024 survey by [Lifeway Research](#), is supported by at least 75% of all evangelical Christians

Since the launch of the Evangelical Immigration Table in 2012, we have been grateful for the partnership and facilitation support of the [National Immigration Forum](#), a non-partisan immigration policy organization.

Contrary to mischaracterizations, the National Immigration Forum is not a “liberal” organization, and it does not advocate for “open borders.” The Forum’s past and current board members include the president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, a Roman Catholic bishop, a Trump administration Department of Homeland Security official, former Republican elected officials and senior staffers for Republican Members of Congress. The Forum intentionally engages constituents across a broad political spectrum, seeking to forge consensus on immigration matters, [including active advocacy](#) for a more secure, orderly border.

While we’re grateful for the longstanding and ongoing partnership with the National Immigration Forum, the Evangelical Immigration Table is governed by its leading member organizations, which currently include World Relief, the NAE, the ERLC, the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, World Vision, Bethany Christian Services, the Asian American Christian Collaborative, the Christianity Today Public Theology Project, Faith and Community Empowerment and The Wesleyan Church. While we appreciate the National Immigration Forum’s policy expertise, all decisions on public statements and policy positions for the Evangelical Immigration Table are made only by our members, which are all Christian organizations – not by our friends at the Forum.

While the National Immigration Forum received some funding from the Open Societies Foundation (OSF) around the time that the Evangelical Immigration Table was first launched, the National Immigration Forum has consistently assured us that any funding that supported the specific efforts of the Evangelical Immigration Table (including purchasing radio ads on behalf of the Evangelical Immigration Table) were from other donors to their organization. To be clear, the National Immigration Forum never received more than a small share of their overall operating budget from OSF, they no longer receive any funding from OSF, and they have never been a “puppet” of the foundation.

World Relief’s funding comes from a broad range of funders – from individuals motivated by their faith to local churches to the U.S. government and corporations and foundations. We never accept funds [with conditions that would in any way limit us from pursuing our mission of boldly engaging the world’s greatest crises in partnership with the church.](#)

Contrary to the allegation that World Relief or the Evangelical Immigration Table advocates for “open borders,” we have consistently affirmed the responsibility of the U.S. government to ensure secure national borders and have long supported policy reforms that would dramatically increase funding for border security. World Relief praised the [2013 Senate proposal](#) co-led by Senators Marco Rubio, John McCain and others that included [\\$40 billion](#) for border security funding and we have recently affirmed [the Dignity Act](#), led by Republican Congresswoman Maria Salazar, that includes \$35 billion for border security funding. We also praised the [efforts](#) at a border and asylum reform bill co-led by Senator James Lankford (R-OK), which was endorsed by the [Border Patrol Union](#).