



*SRQ Strong joins Newtown residents in fighting Covid-19*

Dear Friends,

Covid-19 has changed the global landscape. Non-profits and grassroots groups scramble to meet escalating needs, hampered by restrictions and declining resources. Economies are crashing, unemployment is soaring, and people without safety nets are facing an uncertain future. But at the same time, something very interesting is happening: As systems fail, ordinary people are stepping in, looking for ways to help, and finding solutions.

Citizen response efforts are often spontaneous, uncoordinated, and surprisingly effective. In the chaos of 9/11, with hundreds of thousands of people trapped on the island of Manhattan, the largest sea evacuation in history occurred. Through clouds of smoke and fumes and at significant personal risk, civilian boat owners from the greater New York area rescued over a half million survivors in under nine hours. No one stopped to consider the survivors' race, social status, or political leanings as they climbed into the boats. People were in need, and strangers stepped in to help.

Historians tell us that American society is more divided now than at any time since the Civil War. We have seen in the past few years how messaging from people in leadership positions can worsen that divide. And yet, in a great, collective, spontaneous response, we have also seen the rise of the largest civil rights movement in history. It is as though the better side of human nature has been waiting in the wings for a call to action.

This newsletter focuses on grassroots efforts to respond to Covid-19 in Israel and Kenya. CRT was able to step in and provide support, but the energy, ideas and momentum came from the girls and women themselves. Here in Sarasota, CRT's newest project, SRQ Strong, has responded to Covid-19 by partnering with a coalition of community groups and individuals to combat spread of the virus in local hotspots. Just as in the 9/11 boatlift, hundreds of neighbors and strangers are finding a way to make a difference. I hope you find these stories as inspiring as I have.

In peace,

Andrea Blanch, PhD, Director

## Upcoming CRT Events

Check [www.SRQStrong.org](http://www.SRQStrong.org) for dates, times, and registration links for all events.

### Monthly Forums

Community Zoom forums on a variety of topics are held on the fourth Monday of every month.

*August 24 Remarkably Resilient.* Three sisters share their journeys of surviving, thriving, and breaking the multi-generational cycle of incest and abuse.

*September 26 Put Your Mask on First.* A panel discussion about supporting self-care and wellness for teachers during the pandemic.



### Training on Trauma and Resilience

Free Zoom training programs are offered on an as-needed basis: *Letting Go of a Traumatic Past*, *Community-Led Covid-19 Response*, and *Trauma, Mental Health and Resilience*.

### Raising Anti-Racist Children

Designed for parents of children 7 – 12 who are newcomers to anti-racism work, this workshop involves reading, self-reflection, and discussion about how to have conversations on race and racial justice with your children.

# Young Women's Parliament Stays Connected during Covid-19

The Young Women's Parliament (YWP) currently operates in two dozen Israeli Jewish and Arab municipalities. When Covid-19 restrictions were implemented, weekly meetings became difficult and larger events impossible. Initial attempts to meet online were unsuccessful, since some of the Arab girls lacked access to computers. With a grant from CRT, YWP purchased tablets for 13 girls who had no access to a computer at home. The girls began preparing and sharing short videos of themselves as a way to deepen friendships without face-to-face meetings. A filmmaker from a local college is now helping them create an edited film about the experience. The girls are extremely grateful for the tablets, which are helping them to stay connected, and are also a huge help in their studies. At a thank-you celebration in Baka'a, several of the girls made speeches and the Mayor expressed how honored he is to have YWP in his town.

When outdoor gatherings were allowed again, the girls considered what to do next. They had recently been discussing how empowering sports can be, and the obstacles that exist to women's participation. Several years before, the program had attempted to organize a wind-surfing event, but the kibbutz that offered wind-surfing objected to the presence of the Arab girls. Recalling that experience, they decided they would learn how to surf in the ocean instead! About a hundred girls met at the beach in Acco, where they shared a meal



*Religious Muslim girls go surfing in headscarves*

and received instruction in the basics of surfing. Some of the Arab girls had never been in the ocean, and had to overcome their fear. The religiously observant girls were concerned about how to dress, and decided to wear their head coverings in the water. Every girl gave it a try, and a few picked it up so quickly that they decided to pursue additional training.

Covid-19 has delayed implementation of the final activity in the YWP program, where girls from neighboring Jewish and Arab towns team up to conduct a community project in both localities. The determination they have shown in responding to Covid-19 suggests that they will figure out how to move forward, whatever the circumstances!



*Gathering in Mayor's office to say thank-you for tablets*

**“** I'm 16 years old, and for a year now I have been a member of the Girls' Parliament. Let's start with how happy and glad I am to be here today, with my second family, where I can find powerful girls who really want to change the world, and who will never give up their rights. **”**

- Rayan Marie, Arab Muslim girl from Fureidis



# Mpanzi Women and Girls Lead Covid-19 Response

CRT's partner Mpanzi knew that when Covid-19 arrived in Africa, it would be devastating. Mpanzi works in a very rural area of Kenya, where access to health care is limited. Most houses lack electricity or running water, supplies such as soap and hand sanitizers are scarce, and crowded conditions make social distancing or isolation impossible. But this area of Kenya has a hidden resource – its women and girls – and they are already making a difference in containing the pandemic.

For the past 10 years, Mpanzi has supported women's empowerment through education, programs combatting gender-based violence, and income opportunities. A group of Kisii and Masaii women leaders had already emerged and were ready to help fight the spread of the virus. A group of younger women also volunteered to get involved.



*The grain bank*

A grant from CRT helped establish an emergency transportation fund and a "grain bank" to buffer economic impact. Air time on a local radio station was purchased to begin disseminating accurate information about the pandemic. Mpanzi trained the women as "village health workers," and equipped

them with supplies and smart phones. Learning to use the phones was a challenge, but also a source of great excitement and pride for the women, since this technology has in the past been reserved for men.

Efforts are structured to benefit the local community whenever possible. Rather than purchasing masks elsewhere, Mpanzi rented a sewing machine for a young woman training for a career in textiles. She is now making an income providing masks for the village. Similarly, staples are purchased from local farmers whenever possible.

Outreach efforts focus on 1) responding to the pandemic, 2) preventing gender-based violence, and 3) supporting youth education while schools are closed. As a first step, the village

health workers asked villagers about their fears. Concerns ranged from fear of dying if they ran out of soap to questions about the healing properties of garlic and ginger. With help from CRT research interns, Mpanzi is now developing messages in direct response to villagers' concerns.

Forced intimacy, early marriage, female genital cutting, and other forms of gender-based violence have all increased during the pandemic. To address these issues, the director of Mpanzi hosted an hour-long radio show devoted to the topic. In addition, the younger girls involved in the Covid-response program are working with a facilitator to increase their self-confidence, build mutual support networks, and develop leadership skills. Once the girls feel confident, they will go on to become teachers and coaches for other village girls.



*Preparing for career in textiles*



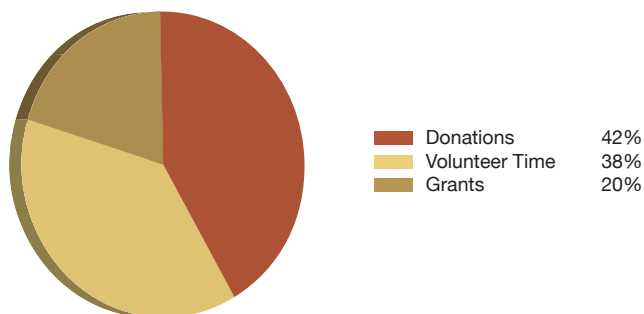
*Distributing masks and food supplies*

# CRT Financial Report

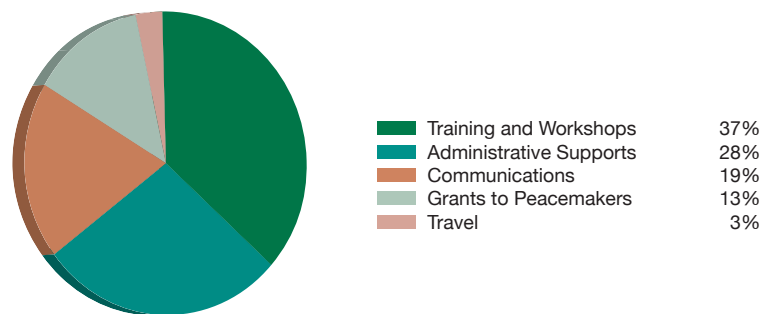
CRT activities are conducted almost exclusively by volunteers and are funded with a combination of donations and grants. Contributions from donors in 2019 totaled \$31,108 and from grants \$14,500. Estimated

value of volunteer time was \$28,000. Expenses included training and workshops, administrative supports, communications, grants to peacemakers, and travel. Total CRT expenses in 2019 were \$32,297.

## CRT Resources



## CRT Expenses



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