



IRC's New Roots Program: *Growing Good from the Ground Up*

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Who we are

The IRC's New Roots program emerged from the strong farming and food cultures of refugees, developing gardens, urban farms, and marketplaces that produce food, leaders, livelihoods, and connected, resilient communities. New Roots programming currently engages over 5,000 participants in 62 farms and gardens, and 20 markets from Sacramento to New York.



IRC has active New Roots programs across 13 locations.

What we do

What began as an opportunity for people to grow food to feed their families and reconnect with their cultural heritage has blossomed into much more. New Roots incorporates innovative, strengths-based approaches that grow into long lasting change in the lives of refugees and their surrounding communities.

Growing community food security:

All New Roots initiatives help refugees and other new Americans access land, tools and training to grow healthy food and nourish their families. Growers interested in income generation can receive support and technical assistance through the New Roots Micro-Producer Academy to improve their business skills and access to markets. Community markets also provide access to high quality and culturally familiar produce in refugee communities, and IRC pioneered a "Fresh Fund" program to increase the purchasing power of SNAP and WIC shoppers at these markets.

"I don't have to buy vegetables for six months out of the year because [of the] land and seeds."

Farmer from Bhutan living in Dallas



Creating welcoming and nurturing community spaces:

Beyond food production, New Roots gardens are safe and engaging spaces that promote mental and physical wellbeing and a sense of place. Through community-driven events, New Roots provides opportunities for new Americans to connect with their neighbors. In a growing number of locations New Roots combines support groups with garden settings to ease refugee adjustment to their new home and reverse the isolating effects of cultural differences and language barriers.



Cultivating new skills:

New Roots refugees who may have had limited employment or educational experience can benefit from learning environments that are tailored to their needs and bolstered by a supportive cohort of peers. Farm-based job readiness programs improve transferrable skills and rebuild livelihoods through hands-on practice, links to professional contacts, and gainful employment opportunities.

"The IRC not only helped me with my school work but encouraged me to try new things. I learned the importance of community involvement and gained valuable skills."

*Youth Food Justice Participant
from Burma living in Atlanta*



Building young leaders:

IRC engages youth in agricultural and culinary activities and internships. Programs use food as a medium to study a variety of academic and real-world topics, build meaningful social connections, and develop leadership and critical thinking skills. These programs stretch student understanding of the world and position them as agents of change in their lives, in their families, and in their broader communities.