



Annual Report



2022



Bellwether International

Message from the Executive Director:

Bellwether has grown enormously in the past year and we wouldn't be where we are today without the many people who have offered their time, advice, financial support, and encouragement along the way. When I started Bellwether just a few years ago, I didn't anticipate our impact would grow this fast, but what I am most proud of is not what we have achieved but what we have learned from the people we have worked with all over the world. I hope I can share a few of those lessons with you. Thank you for being a part of our journey.

-Rachel Miner

Our Team



Rachel Miner
Founder & CEO



Jacob Bell
Board of Directors



Ross Montierth
Board of Directors



Stephanie Barclay
Board of Directors



Nicholas Baird
Board of Directors



Saba Zaman
Board of Directors



Simran Stuelpnagel
Board of Directors

Our Vision

BELLWETHER INTERNATIONAL
ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Bellwether responds to pre- and post-genocide. We focus on freedom of religion or belief, education, gender equality, and aid to displaced persons to enact measurable and sustainable interventions.

Highlights

2022 held enormous growth for Bellwether. We helped sustain 5,000 people during the war in Ukraine, improved mental health outcomes for 300 Yazidi women, and engaged with over 1,885 Nigerians in strategic dialogue and providing critical aid to those displaced because of their faith. We are immensely grateful for our partners, donors, and directors who make our work possible.

1

300 Yazidi women benefited from trauma care

2

1,885 Nigerians engaged in conflict-resolution, youth empowerment and received aid

3

5,000 Ukrainians sustained during the war



Iraq

Bellwether worked directly with Yazidi social workers to create a cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) group therapy manual that reflects best practice for trauma response and also reflects all the sensitivities of the Yazidi community including language, religion, culture and current needs. All 252 Yazidi women who participated in our program reported drastic improved mental health outcomes with a total of 885 therapy sessions provided. Bellwether implemented this project in partnership with Free Yezidi Foundation.

Additionally, in partnership with the University of Utah Doctorate of Nursing Program, Bellwether worked with Yazidi social workers to develop Mental Health Guidebooks which include best practice guidance on various mental health topics requested by the Yazidi community. These guidebooks will be used to empower Yazidi social workers across Iraq.

Gule, ISIS survivor shared "Before therapy, I decided I would never return to Sinjar and that I just wanted this life to end. Now I feel more in control especially because I am not having nightmares anymore. I want to go back to my house, see my farm, and restart what my family had left behind..."

Sozan has experienced immense heartbreak in her life. A mother of seven children, she raised them alone as the head-of-household after her husband died years ago. Soon after the death of her husband, her son drowned and her daughter, recently divorced, committed suicide. Sozan fell into shock and deep depression. She blamed herself for their deaths and felt survivor's guilt. Her wellbeing diminished rapidly, she was unable to perform basic housework and self-care. However, after a few sessions and teaching Sozan relaxation and self-care techniques, including breathing and stretching, small signs of improvement began appearing. Sozan began smiling a little during the sessions and was becoming more talkative as she participated in the exercises and shared her story with our social workers. During a reflective exercise, Sozan's sense of humor emerged and our social worker's viewed this as a turning point for her treatment, observing, "at this moment I felt that she [Sozan] would change and talk for the rest of the sessions as well." Sozan shared that she felt safe speaking with our social workers. Gradually, session by session, Sozan's wellbeing symptoms improved and she began positively coping through her grief. Although she still deeply feels the loss of her husband and children, Sozan is more optimistic today and feels a renewed sense of life.



Nigeria

Our current focus in Nigeria centers on empowering youth, engaging religious leaders across differences, collaborating with media, and engaging tribal leaders. Additionally, we have delivered humanitarian aid and support to Boko Haram victims.

In May 2022 we launched a civil society fund that allowed us to partner with 8 local organizations in Plateau state to lead on the ground projects related to freedom of religion or belief in collaboration with Bellwether. These projects included:

- Human Rights Training for 20 beneficiaries of various background implemented with partner Stefanos Foundation.
- Radio show and religious freedom sensitisation workshop for 60 beneficiaries implemented with partner CAPP.
- Roundtable workshop on religious freedom for 108 beneficiaries with partner COWAN.
- Youth interfaith leadership training for 60 beneficiaries with partner INTERCEP.
- Survey of current perceptions of religious freedom in the Nigerian Constitution and webinar on findings with partner ASOMBEN.
- An extended Tribal Leaders Training on religious freedom for all 53 Royal Fathers from 18 Northern states implemented with Stefanos Foundation.

After an initial investigation into the current situation of internally displaced persons (IDP) living in four camps in Benue state, Bellwether is collaborating with those in the camp to launch a new education and well-being initiative for over **10,000** youth and children.



Bellwether sponsored a conference for girls teaching on the importance of female health which was attended by 220 women who learned to sew their own menstrual pads in addition to receiving menstrual pad and resource materials.



Youth Empowerment Workshop for 154 youth who learned a series of vocational skills including shoe repair, bead making, hair cutting, soap, textile, and baking.



Interreligious Dialogue Conference Sagamu where 123 participants of Muslim, Christian, and Traditional background participated in a dialogue on how to unify the community. At the conclusion of the conference, participants delivered aid to widows in the community.





Bellwether International led a delegation of UK Members of Parliament to Nigeria to further investigate the unraveling of human rights and where civil society can better partner with government to build genocide resistance. Members of the delegation included Jim Shannon MP, Brendan O'Hara MP, Baroness Caroline Cox House of Lords, David Burrowes Deputy Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, and Julie Jones Assistant Director for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Freedom of Religion or Belief. As part of the delegation, Bellwether organized the assembly of 200 food aid kits for families in Kuchingoro IDP camp in Abuja with the help of our partners Stefanos Foundation. Each bucket sustained a family with vital food needs for two weeks.



The delegation met with survivors of Boko Haram attacks and recorded testimony of ongoing atrocities. Additionally, all levels of government were questioned and petitioned to respond to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, security chaos, and human rights violations. A full report of the trip was published by the APPG for Freedom of Religion or Belief and can be read online at:

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/Nigeria-Delegation-Report-final.pdf>



Bellwether convened a conference with local civil society groups to aid UK Parliamentarians with on the ground perspectives of issues ranging from religious freedom in the Constitution to current cases before the Supreme Court.



Afghanistan

Bellwether has been working with the Afghan Hazara community in Salt Lake City over the last year to secure a site for a new community center that will serve as a place of learning, worship, mental health support, and vocational training. Hazara refugees have built new homes across the US but to date have never had a community center of their own. In partnership with Lloyd Architects, Bellwether has secured a site and is now finishing final fundraising to complete the final renovations for the center.

In December, Bellwether convened a National Hazara Conference for the larger diaspora attracting scholars, advocates, and leaders from across the United States. Strategic panels and discussions included genocide designation for Hazara in Afghanistan, current community needs, and ongoing partnership with Bellwether. The conference was convened with our local partner the Utah Hazara Association.

Additionally, Bellwether contributed to a Parliamentary report directed by Dr. Ewelina Ochab and a coalition of lawyers, advocates and humanitarians, compiling evidence on the situation of the Hazara in Afghanistan. The full report can be found online at: https://www.hazarainquiry.com/_files/ugd/525f48_c697e483f02c4c10a7eb04947eefb72b.pdf

Executive Director Rachel Miner rallied with Hazaras in London, UK in October to acknowledge the ongoing atrocities. The #StopHazaraGenocide campaign garnished international attention.



Over 150 Afghan Hazaras gathered from across the United States for a two day conference sponsored by Bellwether International.

Ukraine

In May 2022, Bellwether sponsored a trip for the UK Parliament to travel to Poland/Ukraine to visit with senators, religious leaders, and victims of the Russian invasion which began February 2022 and investigate ongoing claims of genocide. The delegation included Jim Shannon MP, Brendan O'Hara MP, Lisa Cameron MP, Dr. Ewelina Ochab, and Julie Jones Assistant Director for the APPG for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

As part of the visit, Bellwether sponsored humanitarian aid for over 3,000 Ukrainian refugees delivering 1,123 food items and 1,548 clothing items including diapers, socks, and underwear. Following the trip, Bellwether continued to support 5,000 Ukrainians through monthly shipments of food through Kaganek, our local partners on the ground in Ukraine.



(Pictured Above) Bellwether sponsored dozens of art kits for children who had just escaped the front lines of war. They drew pictures with the delegation and were happy to receive their new gifts.



(Right) The delegation volunteered at the Polish Expo Center where 2,800 Ukrainian refugees were staying awaiting a final destination.



Advocacy

Bellwether continued global advocacy efforts to increase awareness and coordinate response to growing freedom of religion or belief violations that affect genocide communities.

As part of these advocacy efforts, Bellwether launched its first annual freedom of religion or belief art contest with a special category honoring the Yazidi people and culture. There were over 24 international submissions which are all pictured online at www.forb-art.org along with the names and titles of the 2022 contest winners. Bellwether hosted a closing art awards gala in Parliament which you can read more about here: <https://www.express.co.uk/finance/crusader/1694339/bellwether-international-art-exhibition-genocide-communities-yazidi-people-iraq>

Next year the art contest will continue, each year honoring a different group affected by genocide. The 2023 theme is "Honoring the Uighur People and Culture."

Pictured below the award winning art from Bellwether's contest



Bellwether also sponsored and attended a number of conferences including:

- UK Ministerial for Freedom of Religion or Belief, London, UK
- The International Religious Freedom Summit, Washington D.C.
- The International Religious Freedom MENA Forum, Washington D.C.
- Covenantal Pluralism: LGBTQ+ Divides Event at Notre Dame Keough GA Campus, Washington D.C.
- Religious Freedom and Business Conference, Washington D.C.
- ICLRS Annual Review, Provo, UT
- Notre Dame Religious Liberty Initiative Conference, Rome, Italy
- Concordia Summit, New York, NY



Bellwether partnered with the Wheatley Institution to sponsor a university case competition for social impact at their yearly SCRIPS conference. Three student projects were selected for Bellwether funding. Projects will increase the understanding of religious freedom for local communities in Utah, Virginia, and Arizona.

Bellwether co-sponsored an event with the former Ambassador at large for Religious Freedom Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook and her organization Women on the Worldstage. Together we joined forces to increase support for Black women in ministry. Bellwether is investing in religious freedom training at a new theology center opening in Virginia which will be named after Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook. Bellwether nominated Fatima Njoku and Rev. Jennifer Bailey as outstanding Black Women Advocates of Freedom of Religion or Belief.



Thank you!

Integral to our model is partnering with experts and local communities. We are grateful for the impact we have had with the many other incredible organizations that we call partners and friends. We couldn't do this work alone nor would we want to! Together we can unite our efforts to help those in need. We look forward to another successful year in 2023.



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