

*ANNUAL  
REPORT*

**LIBERTY  
IN  
NORTH  
KOREA**

**2018**

# LETTER FROM LiNK'S CEO

North Korea is still the most repressive and closed country in the world today. 25 million people are isolated, living in enforced poverty, and have been left behind while the rest of the world develops.

But progress is being made. Change is happening. While the world continues to focus on Kim Jong-un and nuclear weapons, the North Korean people are quietly changing their country from the bottom up. They are shaking up the status quo, exposing the limits of the regime's control, and eroding the government's power.

It's impossible to know how, or exactly when, the North Korean people will achieve their liberty, but we believe that they are one of the best solutions to this issue. That's why we continue to work alongside the North Korean people to accelerate progress.

2018 was a historic year for LiNK. We rescued more North Korean refugees than any other year, we re-imagined our post-resettlement support work, and we launched a brand new

program to empower young North Koreans to share their stories with the world. We also laid the foundation for more long-term, sustainable strategies in the years to come. But this couldn't have happened without your support.

I look forward to the day I can write LiNK's last annual report. Because that will mean we have accomplished our vision – the North Korean people will be free and you will have played a critical part in helping them achieve their liberty.

The pages that follow are a testament to the work you make possible, and a reminder of the incredible impact a relatively small group of people can make when united and inspired by a single vision. Thank you for being a part of this important work.

Gratefully,



Hannah Song  
President / CEO



VISION

**We believe the North  
Korean people will  
achieve their liberty  
in our lifetime**



*MISSION*

**Working with the  
North Korean people  
to accelerate change  
and opening in the  
world's most closed  
country**

*THE WORK YOU MAKE POSSIBLE*

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- 1 Rescuing Refugees**  
Helping more people reach safety and freedom
- 2 Empowering North Koreans in Their New Lives**  
Working with resettled North Korean refugees to support their success
- 3 Changing the Narrative on North Korea**  
Focusing on the stories of the North Korean people, not just the politics

# 2018

at a glance

## RESCUED

326 people through our secret rescue routes.

## LAUNCHED

the **LiNK Advocacy Fellowship**, equipping and empowering future North Korean advocates, storytellers, and leaders.

## SHIFTED

the narrative on North Korea in the media through citations, quotes, and features on CNN, *Time* magazine, and more.



# 1 RESCUING REFUGEES

North Koreans who escape into China are still not safe. They face the constant threat of being arrested and forcibly sent back to North Korea where they could face severe punishment.

Our secret rescue routes help refugees and their children safely reach freedom.



**“Because of you, and everyone who helped us, we reached safety.**

Your warm love and kindness gives us strength and bravery – I do not know how I can possibly express my gratitude.”

– **Ru Mi**, reached freedom in 2018

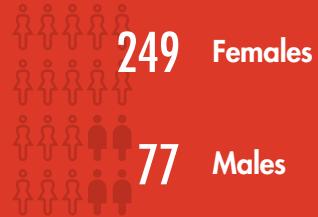
# 326

People rescued in 2018!

303 North Korean refugees

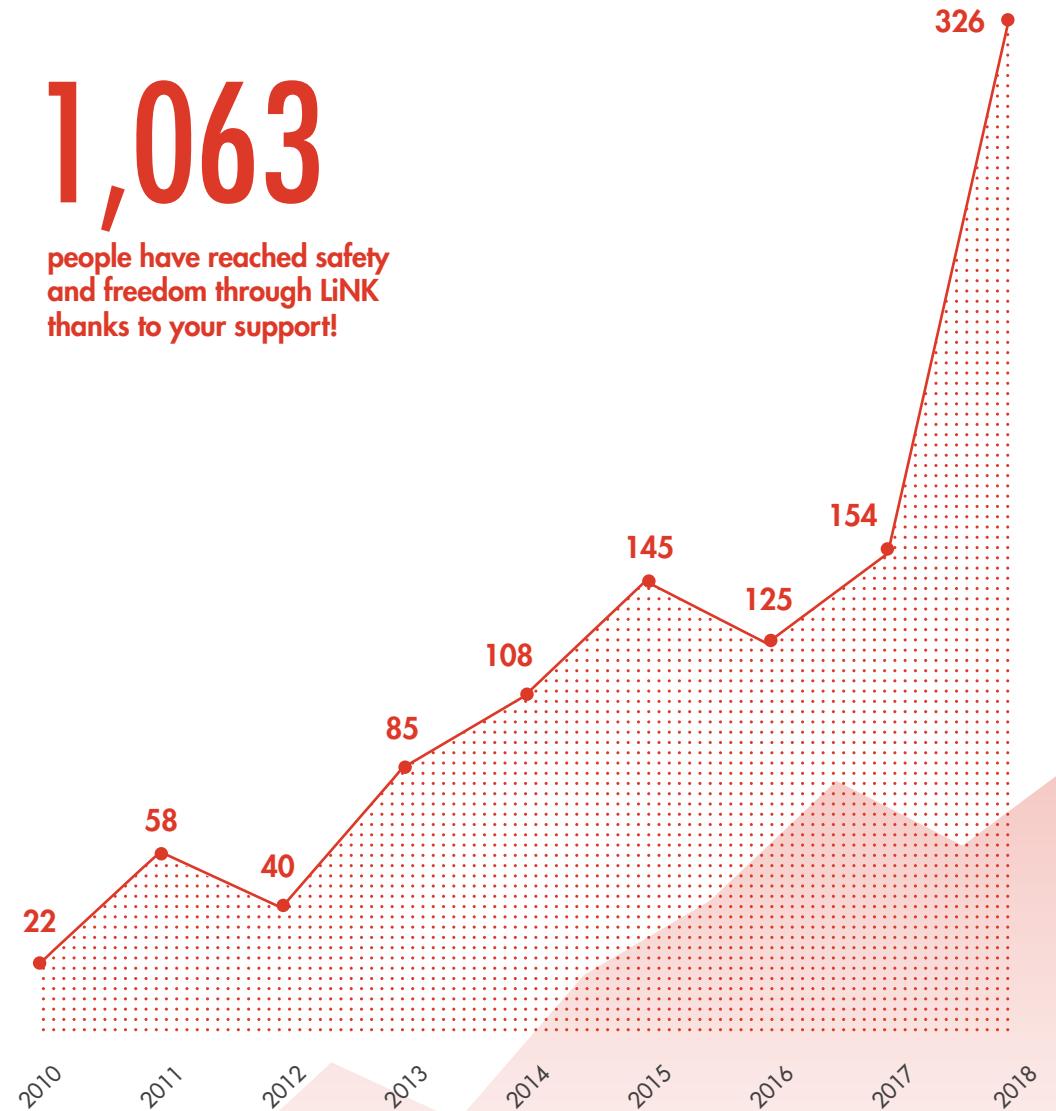
23 Children born in China to North Korean mothers\*

*\*When a North Korean mother gives birth to a child in China, we are committed to keeping the mother and child together. We do not want North Korean mothers choosing between abandoning their children and reaching safety.*



# 1,063

people have reached safety and freedom through LiNK thanks to your support!



## RESCUING REFUGEES



*Tumen River: Refugees often escape across this border between North Korea and China.*

**“Do you know that moment when you are so happy that you break into tears? That was me when I knew that I was finally safe.**

Now that I look back on my journey, everything feels like a dream. I dreamt about this moment for ten years...I still cannot believe that my dream has come true.

I didn't believe it when I first heard about LiNK. It was too good to be true. Who on earth would help us without cost or conditions when so many North Korean refugees still get arrested even after paying?

Thank you, it was only possible because of your help.”

– **Hyang Ki**, reached freedom in 2018

# 2 *EMPOWERING RESETTLED NORTH KOREANS*

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Our resettlement work focuses on building a community for North Korean refugees and supporting a smooth transition into their new lives of freedom.

While the government provides support to resettled North Koreans for many of their material needs, there are few resources that cultivate empowerment, self-efficacy, and a sense of belonging.

**So we built the LiNK Community.**



North Korean refugees risk their lives to reach freedom. But their journey is far from over. Despite overcoming serious obstacles in North Korea and China, nothing prepares them for the kinds of challenges they will face after resettling in South Korea.

And many will face these challenges alone.

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**“I still feel lonely from time to time. I really miss my family. I actually had depression when I first came to South Korea because of the loneliness.”**

– **Hae Sun**, North Korean refugee

The first year of resettlement is typically the most difficult. But the stakes are too high for them to fail in freedom. Resettled refugees are often a critical line of hope and support for their loved ones still inside North Korea.



**“I felt like I was with family again.”**

When I learned that my father had passed away in North Korea last March, I felt utterly alone. But immediately after telling LiNK the news, they came to visit me even though it was the weekend. When a LiNK staffer shared his own story of losing someone he loved, it really resonated with me and I was not as lonely anymore. Later I saw other LiNK staffers and they hugged me without saying a word.”

– **Jessie Kim**, North Korean refugee

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**38%**

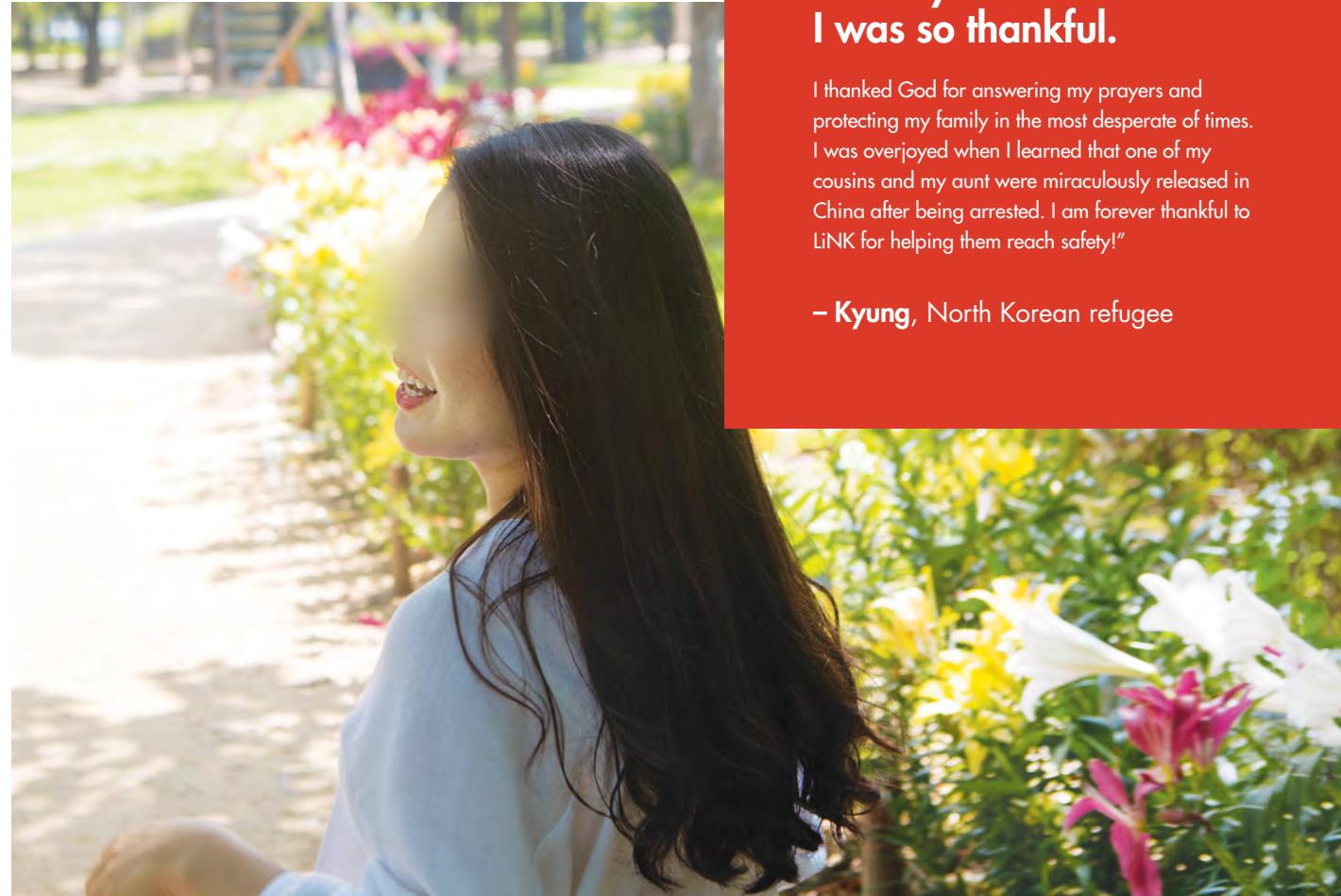
**of resettled North Koreans said there were no other North Koreans who provided advice or help adapting to their new life\***

*\*Results of survey conducted by Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) 2018*

Our LiNK Community gatherings give resettled refugees a place to meet other North Koreans who understand the unique challenges they face.

Resettled North Koreans who have a supportive community are empowered to maximize their potential. Some will even be ‘pioneers of freedom’ to their friends and family back home. North Koreans like Kyung.

Kyung reached freedom through LiNK in 2011. Since then, she has tried to help her relatives in North Korea escape. In 2018, after 7 years of hard work and patience, she reunited with all 5 of her family members in Seoul!



**“When I finally reunited with my aunt and cousins I was so thankful.**

I thanked God for answering my prayers and protecting my family in the most desperate of times. I was overjoyed when I learned that one of my cousins and my aunt were miraculously released in China after being arrested. I am forever thankful to LiNK for helping them reach safety!”

**– Kyung, North Korean refugee**



“With LiNK’s help I studied English in Canada and finished a florist training program in the United Kingdom. Last October, I finally achieved my dream and opened my very own floral shop!”

– Geum Ju, North Korean refugee

The LiNK Community in 2018 by the numbers:

Through workshops, community events, and one-on-one support, the LiNK Community is equipping and empowering North Koreans to thrive in their new lives.

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160

North Koreans supported and empowered

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41

newly arrived North Korean refugees

connected to our LiNK community

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15

orientations

introduced resettled North Koreans to resources and information that would support them in their new lives

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25

started jobs or founded their own businesses

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9

went back to school to earn a higher degree

*EMPOWERING RESETTLED NORTH KOREANS*



**“When I tell North Koreans in our LiNK Community that they are some of the strongest people I’ve ever met, they either nod in silence or laugh in disbelief.**

**But it’s true! Their ability to choose positivity despite all the reasons not to is the definition of strength.**

**Witnessing them take full ownership of their new lives with that perspective challenges me to rethink and redefine what it means to be thankful, what it means to be happy, and most importantly – what it means to be free.”**

**– Elena Lee, LiNK Program Manager**

# 2 *CHANGING THE NARRATIVE ON NORTH KOREA*

North Korea is more than Kim Jong-un and nuclear weapons. This narrow definition of North Korea has led to a lack of understanding and support for the North Korean people. But we're changing that by refocusing the attention on the people instead of the politics.



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## THE LiNK ADVOCACY FELLOWSHIP

For decades the North Korean government has dominated the narrative and isolated the North Korean people, preventing them from raising their voices and sharing their stories with the world.

So when resettled North Koreans share their own perspectives and stories, it's a radical and powerful act. When they speak out, it weakens the government's control of the narrative and inspires empathy and support for the North Korean people throughout the global community.

In 2018 we launched the **LiNK Advocacy Fellowship**. The goal:

**Empower young North Koreans to share their stories with the world.**



**“I think the LiNK Advocacy Fellowship was the best thing I’ve done since reaching freedom.”**

**– Geumhyok Kim,**  
LiNK Advocacy Fellow

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE



**“I shared my story with a lot of people through this fellowship. The more people I met, the more I realized the importance of my role for this issue.”**

– Noel Kim, LiNK Advocacy Fellow

In 3 months of the fellowship, 5 North Korean Advocacy Fellows:

**Shared their stories in English with over**

**2500+**  
people

**Spoke at**

**18**  
events

across the United States at places including:



*“Meeting the LiNK Advocacy Fellows was incredible. It opened our eyes to the tragedy and promise of North Korea.”*

– Scott Sugino, Corporate Partner, O'Melveny

## Featured in

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13

videos

7

news articles

Met with dozens of influential people from diplomats in D.C. to movie stars in L.A. **And ultimately became powerful storytellers who are changing the narrative!**

## Event Impact

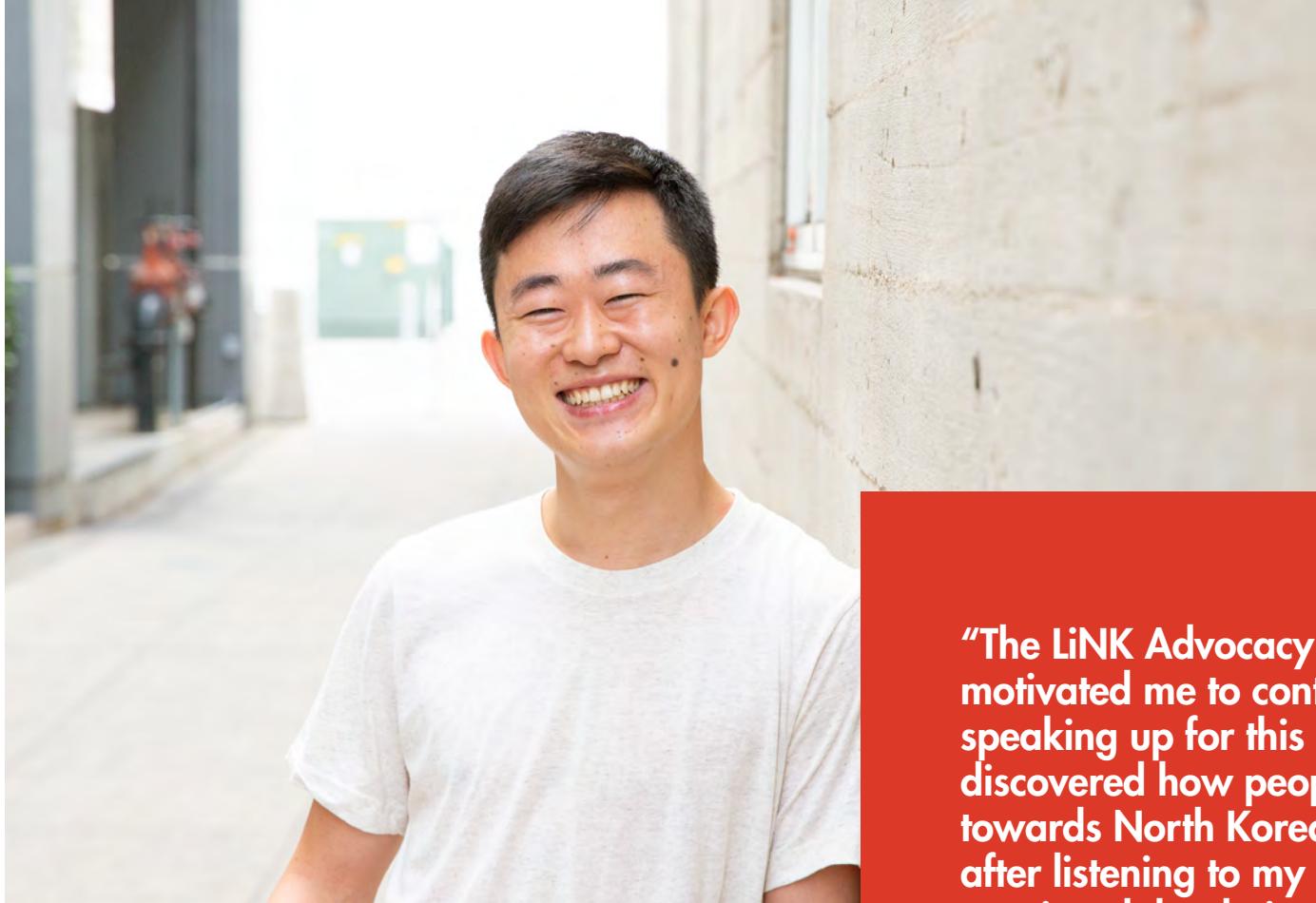
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75%

of people said it was their **first time** meeting a North Korean

81%

said the event **changed their perspective** on North Korea and its people



**“The LiNK Advocacy Fellowship motivated me to continue speaking up for this issue. When I discovered how people’s attitudes towards North Korea changed after listening to my story, I was convinced that being an advocate is the right thing for me to do... Through this work, I can bring the changes that I want to see.”**

– Ill Yong Joo, LiNK Advocacy Fellow

# WORKING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

We work with the international media to influence the way they report on North Korea.

By facilitating interviews between resettled North Koreans and journalists, sharing insights, and highlighting the stories of the North Korean people, we're changing perceptions and shifting the narrative on North Korea.

# 104

**citations,  
features, quotes**

(That's an average of two a week!)



3,054,544 VIEWS

# The Washington Post



## SEOUL SUCCESS

These young North Korean escapees are thriving in the South.

Story by Anna Fifield Photos by Jean Chung Aug 3, 2018

# TIME

## Forget Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un. Here's Why the People of North Korea Are the Real Solution

BY HANNAH SONG JUNE 13, 2018

**IDEAS** Song is the president and CEO of international nonprofit Liberty in North Korea (LINK), which helps North Korean refugees reach safety and freedom and mobilizes international grassroots support for the North Korean people.

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## CREATING MEDIA



## The Jangmadang Generation

We released *The Jangmadang Generation*, our documentary about North Korea's millennial generation, in 8 more languages!

- Portuguese
- French
- Chinese Traditional
- Chinese Simplified
- German
- Russian
- Korean
- Spanish
- Japanese

## Watching

In 2018, we produced our second short narrative film in partnership with the **Tao Brothers**.

**Watching**, which will be released in 2019, asks the question: *What would American society look like if it faced some of the challenges the North Korean people experience daily?*

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## THE MOVEMENT

### LiNK Summit 2018

Summit 2018 in Long Beach, California brought together over 200 people to hear the stories of 6 of our North Korean friends. Attendees returned to their schools and communities prepared to take action for the North Korean people. A van full of students from the University of Texas at Austin made the 20 hour drive just to be there!

### Changemakers Summit

Changemakers Summit in South Korea brought together 45 students from North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Germany, and the United States to encourage dialogue and to activate a community of changemakers for this issue.

One South Korean student was so inspired after the summit that she started an organization that cleans homes and prepares for the arrival of newly resettled North Korean refugees.



CHANGING THE NARRATIVE



University of Michigan Rescue Team at a fundraiser 

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255

Rescue Teams

in 18 countries and 615 individual fundraisers... raised nearly \$200,000 in 2018!

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66

people rescued

through the combined efforts of Rescue Teams and individual fundraisers.

# FINANCIALS 2018

**Raised** \$4,342,901

**Spent** \$3,718,609

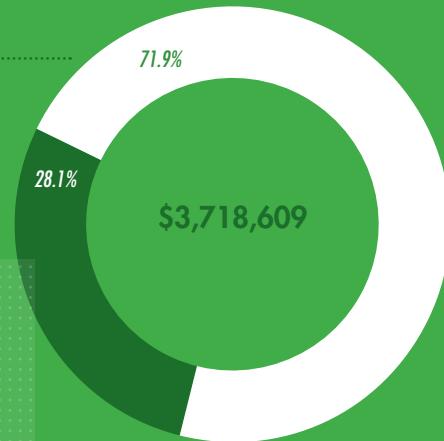
## Resources spent in 2018

\$2,673,127

Spent on **Programs**

\$1,045,482

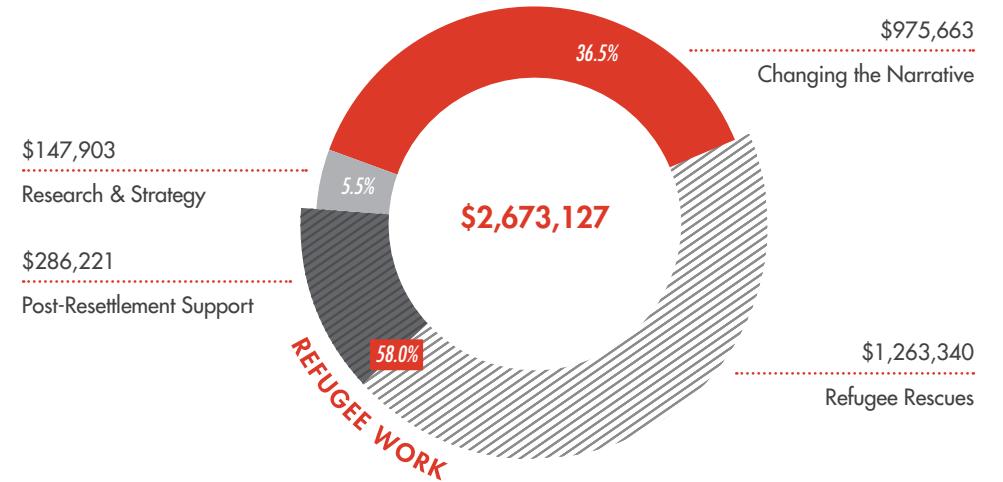
Spent on **Supporting Services**



## The 100% Pledge

We believe that 100% of your donation should go to programs that support and empower the North Korean people. Our long-term partners, and other like-minded philanthropists/foundations, cover our non-program expenses so that 100% of all other donations can go directly to our programs.

## Resources spent on Programs



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