



MPC Social Services

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Task Force against Racial Violence and Harassment Annual Report 2015

Purpose

Since 2001, Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy's Task Force against Racial Violence and Harassment has interviewed people of color about the racially motivated attacks and harassment they experience in Russia, while seeking to support and assist victims and potential victims. Twice each year, the Task Force reports on these surveys and on the experiences of people of color in Russia. Though non-white people get noticed in the streets of Moscow, the violence that they suffer is all too invisible. By documenting these incidents, we hope that we can inspire a dialogue about diversity, cultural acceptance, and public safety.

Executive Summary

This report contains two main components. The first part describes a survey that we conduct to understand how often migrants experience racially motivated harassment and attacks. The second part describes incident reports in narrative form to help readers to understand the unprovoked violence that migrants often suffer.

The Task Force works mainly with the African community. However, it documents all cases of physical attacks or harassment reported to it and determines their motive on a case-by-case basis. The Task Force defines *attack* as a physical assault regardless of whether or not it causes serious lasting injury to the victim. Racially motivated *harassment* takes many forms, including verbal assault and intimidation.

Among the 48 people of color surveyed in 2015, the majority were attacked and harassed in the six months preceding the interviews. In most cases, these incidents appeared to be motivated by race.

Table 1: Combined 2015 Surveys (48 respondents)

	Count	Percent	No Response
Attacked	25	54%	2
Harassed	30	67%	3
Harassed by Police	26	60%	5

The narrative reports provide a similarly discouraging account. This year, we were especially troubled by an incident involving a 7-year-old girl from Congo-Brazzaville. The child died from injuries two days after being assaulted by a Russian girl of the same age. Their dispute began weeks earlier when the Russian child called her a nigger. For us, this sad story and a mother's enduring grief represent the costs of dehumanizing hate speech and the responsibility that we have, as adults, to take action and change the narrative about the value of human life, regardless of skin color. We can only hope that telling her story will help to raise awareness of the importance of improving minority children's life chances in Russia.

Survey Report

This report includes a description of our sampling strategy and a new format for presenting information on our respondents and their perspectives. We also ask questions on perceptions of racism in Russia and the frequency of incidents.

Survey Methodology

Table 2 reports on the characteristics of the June and December samples. In each survey, we ask respondents to report on incidents that occurred within the previous six months. Surveys are conducted in French, Russian, or English. Non-response often occurs when people are worried about authorities finding their demographic characteristics. Rates of non-response are relatively low on most question items.

It is quite difficult to maintain contact with the African people living in Moscow. Many migrants live on the outskirts of the city, and they are often forced to move between different housing situations. Many people are understandably reluctant to talk about difficult experiences, so it is necessary to build trust with each person before they will open up and report harassment or an attack. For these reasons, we do not believe that our sample is representative of Russia or even of the whole of Moscow. Still, the results give a sense of at least one population of migrants and refugees of color living in Russia.

		Both	June	Dec
Gender	Women	14	4	10
	Men	34	23	11
Age	Less than 15	1	0	1
	15 to 20	2	1	1
	21 to 30	20	11	9
	31 to 40	15	8	7
	41 to 50	10	7	3
Country	Cameroon	10	4	6
	Congo-Brazzaville	1	0	1
	Côte d'Ivoire	6	6	0
	Democratic Republic of Congo	8	3	5
	Gambia	1	1	0
	Ghana	3	1	2
	Guinea	5	3	2
	Mali	3	2	1
	Nigeria	4	2	2
	Senegal	3	2	1
	Uzbekistan	1	0	1
	Zimbabwe	1	1	0
No Response	2	2	0	
Years in Moscow	Less than 1	14	8	6
	1 to 5	22	11	11
	6 to 10	5	2	3
	11 to 15	1	1	0
	16 to 20	1	1	0
	No Response	5	4	1

To find respondents, we rely upon the convenience sample of people who are a part of the extended MPC community, many of whom come to our medical advice center or attend Russian classes that we offer. This introduces some selection bias to our sample. However, in past years when we had larger samples, we found even higher rates of victimization. It is equally likely that the people who have found their way to the MPC community may be relatively better off than the victims of human trafficking who remain isolated in Moscow.

Tables 3 and 4 report the results summarized in Table 1. Responses are relatively consistent, though, as you can see in Table 2, the December sample had a much higher percentage of female respondents than the June sample. We usually find that women are relatively less

likely to be attacked than men, though some women that we serve are victims of other kinds of domestic abuse and sex trafficking violence. We do not report on these risks here.

	Count	Percent	Non-Response
Attacked	16	59%	0
Harassed	18	72%	2
Harassed by Police	16	62%	1

	Count	Percent	Non-Response
Attacked	9	47%	2
Harassed	12	60%	1
Harassed by Police	10	59%	4

Though not reported in the tables, we also ask questions about whether racism in Russia is improving or getting worse. Of those surveyed in June, 30% believed the situation was improving, but only 7% of the December respondents gave the same answer. Our best indication is that things remain relatively consistent with previous periods. 61% of respondents in the June survey and 93% in the December survey said that the racism they faced in Russia was unchanged relative to previous periods.

Relative to 2014, respondents report slightly less racially motivated harassment and violence in 2015. For example, in June 2014 (17 respondents), 94% reported harassment and 65% physical violence, whereas 72% reported harassment and 59% reported violence one year later. While this may signal a positive trend, it is troubling that the rates of harassment and attack remain high among the migrants and refugees surveyed. Our respondents are particularly vulnerable to harassment and attack because they are highly visible through their work distributing flyers (реклама) near metro stations.

For the first time, the December 2015 survey revealed that the percentage of women reporting racially motivated violence (40%) was similar to the percentage of men (56%). The high percentage of attacks on women may be partially explained by the fact that we made a concerted effort to survey people who have not yet fully adapted to life in Russia: many of our respondents have lived in Moscow for one year or less.

Narrative Reports of Violent Incidents

Please note that all names are changed in the report for the safety of the victims, but all other information including country of origin, age, attack details etc. are unchanged. The number of attacks is counted by incident, not by the number of people attacked in a given incident.

The Task Force recorded 11 incident reports of physical attacks during 2015. These reports include qualitative descriptions of what happened and the apparent cause.

- 5 physical attacks with an articulated racist motive (accompanied by racist verbal abuse or symbols)
- 6 physical attacks suspected to be racially motivated

The Task Force also recorded one incident of institutional racism in health care.

On a weekday in March, Matthew, a 45-year-old man from Zimbabwe, was walking on the street near Mayakovskaya metro station. Two white men, who Matthew described as “junkies,” stared at him in a hostile way. They got up from where they were sitting and walked against the flow of pedestrians to approach him. One of the two men used his shoulder to crash into Matthew’s shoulder. They did not say anything and continued walking in the opposite direction. Two passersby witnessed the incident but told Matthew just to continue on. The attack surprised Matthew, but he was not seriously injured and did not report to the police. He reports that on other occasions people have spat at him and told him to “go back to Africa.” He does not go out when it is late in order to avoid dangerous situations. This is the first time he has been attacked during his five months in Moscow.

During the daytime in May, Donald, a man from Côte d’Ivoire who did not wish to give his age was working at his job handing out fliers near the Lubyanka metro station. Three men with blond hair and light skin approached him and began hitting his arm, smacking it so that he could not hand out fliers. Donald asked why they were hitting him. They did not respond, but instead called over the local police who were standing nearby. The police asked Donald for his documentation, but he could not produce it, so they demanded that he give them a bribe of 4000 rubles. Donald was not seriously injured, but reported that a month later a similar incident occurred when a passerby called the police over to him. When he could not present documentation, the police demanded that he pay 500 rubles, which he paid.

At around 20:00 on the 2nd of May, Francois, a 47-year-old man from Cameroon, was returning from the home of his friend, a Cameroonian diplomat. He was changing metro lines at Tretyakovskaya metro station when he was approached by three Russian men. One of them asked to take a photo with him, and he agreed. However, while posing for the photo, the man put his arm around Francois’ neck, not around his waist as he would have expected. This made Francois uncomfortable and he objected. The men then started asking questions about his profession and why he was in Moscow. As the train started to approach, they suddenly began hitting him, punching his face, hands and body until he fell down. He saw some police on the platform, but they did not intervene. The men then jumped on the train. Two Russian women helped him get up. A man approached and asked if he wanted to tell the police, but he said there was no point since the men had already left on the train. Francois suffered a swollen thumb and eye. He sought help at the MPC Medical Advice Center. It is the first time he has been attacked during his five years in Moscow.

At around 23:00 on the 25th of May, Frank, a 28-year-old man from the DRC, was walking home to his apartment near metro Bulvar Dmitri Donskovo. Three men aged 28 to 30 with shaved heads or short hair stopped him in the courtyard outside his building and asked if they could take a photo with him. He agreed and they took a photo. Frank then reached for his house keys and realized that he had lost them. He did not have any credit on his phone to call his housemates, so he asked the men if he could borrow a phone. They agreed and he called his friends, but nobody answered. The men then started asking questions about where he worked and how much he earned. He told them that he hands out flyers on the streets and earns 900 rubles per day. They asked him to buy them beer, and he refused, explaining that he had not been paid that day and had no money on him. One of the men then moved behind him and grabbed him around the neck with his arm, and demanded that he give them money. The other two men started beating and kicking him in his stomach, face and hands. He tried to protect his head and didn’t fight back. He managed to struggle free from them, but they grabbed his bag with his documents in, his phone and his hat. He ran, shouting in Russian

that they were trying to kill him. He passed a man and tried to explain what was happening, but the man ignored him. When the attackers heard him shouting, they ran away, taking his possessions with them. Frank suffered swelling and cuts on his hands, face, neck and stomach, and general pain in his body. He sought medical help at the MPC Medical Advice Center and was referred for an x-ray of his hand. This is the first time he has been attacked during his two years in Moscow.

On the 17th of June, Sophia, a 7-year-old girl originally from Congo-Brazzaville, was attacked by a Russian girl of the same age. Sophia died two days later. The youngest victim that the Task Force against Racism has ever reported on, Sophia's story is one of the most difficult to tell. Her attacker, Julia, had called Sophia a nigger two weeks earlier. At the time, Sophia didn't know the meaning of the word, so she responded by telling Julia, "No, you are!" On the day of the attack, Julia was with her family having a barbecue in the street when she saw Sophia. Julia said to Sophia, "You remember you called me a nigger?" and began to hit her with a stick. A 10-year-old witness, Dima, intervened to stop the beating. Sophia went home distressed, and asked her mother what a nigger was. She was sad, asking "Why was I born black?" Her mother bathed her and massaged her to check for injuries but found no bruises, and Sophia insisted she wasn't in pain. The next day, Sophia stayed at home and said she didn't want to play with her friends. In the evening she vomited. Sophia had sickle-cell anemia and goes through periods of illness, but vomiting was extremely unusual. She said she wanted to sleep and went to bed. The next morning, the 19th of June, her mother found her dead. She called an ambulance and they tried to resuscitate her, but were unable. The doctors reported that she died of internal bleeding. The police came and Dima told them about the attack. The police conducted an investigation.

Early Sunday morning, at 2:00 on the 12th of August, Oumar, an 18-year-old man from Senegal, was standing near the toilet in the bar Tryom near the metro Oktyabrskoe Pole. A drunk Russian man about 22 to 24 years old approached him and asked, "Where are you from?" Oumar replied "I'm from here." The Russian man said, "Speak to me normally!", and Oumar responded "I am speaking normally." The Russian man said "You're a negro, a black, why do you speak such good Russian?" Then the man grabbed Oumar by the neck and pushed him against the wall. Oumar pushed him away and said "Go away! Why are you doing this?" Then a second Russian man who was sober and about the same age as the first attacker punched Oumar and he fell down and lost consciousness for a moment. Oumar quickly regained consciousness and got up. He saw the man leaving the club, but the guard was asking him why he had punched him. Other witnesses were following and wanted to hit the attacker, but Oumar said "No need, I'll follow him myself." Oumar followed him saying "Let's fight one-on-one." The Russian man said no and walked away. The next day, Oumar's jaw was swollen, so an MPC volunteer took him to the hospital and an x-ray showed that he had a broken jaw. His jaw needed to be reset with a wire, meaning that he could not eat solid food for four weeks.

Friday evening, around 21:00 on the 21st of August, Mike, a 33-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was walking across Manezhnaya square with another African friend who was walking slightly ahead of him. Five Russian men about 20 years old were standing there. They started shouting at him "What are you doing here? Where are you from? Black! American! Drug-addict! You gave us these sanctions – go back to your America!" He walked past and ignored them. The men attacked Mike from behind. He couldn't see how many people were attacking him or what they were using to hit him: he fell to the ground and banged his head. They continued kicking and punching him. Some

passersby intervened to stop the attack and helped Mike up. He ran to the police officers near the gates to Aleksandrovskiy Sad. The police called an ambulance for him. His head was hurting and he doesn't know what happened next or whether the police officers pursued the attackers. His friend managed to run away and was not harmed. Mike's shoulder and left arm were badly injured: he needed a sling for four weeks. He also had cuts on his eye and right arm, as well as pain in his head and back. He has been in Moscow for 6 years and was attacked at least twice before this incident.

One Sunday evening in October around 16:00, Fred, a 20-year-old man from Cameroon, was riding the metro from the south on the grey line going toward the center. Three Russian men around 20 to 25 years old entered the metro and started insulting Fred, calling him a monkey and making offensive gestures (imitating a monkey). He changed seats, but they followed him. Then one of the Russian men hit Fred on the cheek, while another called the police (presumably to blame Fred for starting a fight). When the police came, a Russian lady said Fred was innocent. Fred and the attacker were taken to the police station at metro Blvd. Dmitriy Donskovo for 10 minutes. Then the police let him go.

On Sunday the 12th of November, Ojo, a 39 year-old woman from Cameroon, was going to church at metro Cherkizovskaya. She exited the metro and was waiting at the bus stop for her friends when a police car pulled up and a police officer about 30 to 35 years old asked for her passport. He discovered that her migration card had expired. Her friends said they didn't have their passports with them, so the police searched their bags, took the 5000 rubles they found inside, and started insulting them. Ojo believes this bribe-taking was racially motivated because her passport and visa were in order. The police officer targeted Ojo and her friends because they were African, probably suspecting that they wouldn't have their documents and using this vulnerability to take their money and shout at them in Russian. She says the police often wait for Africans on Sunday mornings near the metro exit.

At night on the 31st of December, Lilia, a 44 year-old woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and her friend Thomas were going home from a party at the Bolshevo train station outside of Moscow. Lilia was waiting for Thomas when three Russian men approached her. One of the men started talking to her, but she didn't answer. When the three men saw Thomas coming, they attacked him with a knife. Lilia tried to stop the man with the knife by pushing him away, but another man punched her in the forehead and they kicked Thomas in the jaw. The men took Lilia's bag and ran away. Her bag contained two tablets, her passport, and other documents. The only witness was a taxi driver who helped Lilia and Thomas to follow the Russian men, but they were unsuccessful in catching them. The taxi driver brought Lilia and Thomas to the police station, but the incident was not registered and the police officer asked them to come back the next day. They didn't return. Lilia suffered swelling in her forehead for two weeks after the attack. She sought medical help from a local trauma center and received medicine from MPC's medical advice center. Thomas suffered pain in the ribs and received medical help at the local trauma center. A chest X-ray showed that he had lung problems, so he was referred to a TB clinic in Moscow for another X-ray, where the doctors detected advanced-stage tuberculosis. He was immediately hospitalized. For Lilia, this was the first time she was attacked over the four years she has been in Moscow. Thomas had been insulted and harassed during his time in Russia, but had never experienced a physical attack before.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism accounts for a large part of the difficulty of living in Moscow as a person of color because it prevents or delays people from accessing essential services such as health care, public safety, and legal documentation. Our clients and volunteers have noted two particularly troubling examples of institutional racism, as described below.

Tuberculosis dispensaries have refused treatment and testing for Africans, particularly in the smaller cities just outside of Moscow. People who live together in close quarters with someone who may have tuberculosis are at high risk of contracting the disease themselves, but are often unable to get tested, or are told to go to a dispensary in Moscow, where they are often sent back to their local dispensary in an endless cycle of refusing testing and treatment.

After giving birth in a Russian hospital, African women are often denied their children's birth certificates and told they need to pay for this service that is a parent's legal right. With the assistance of MPC and Civic Assistance volunteers, they are typically able to receive their birth certificates without paying, but sometimes years pass before they are able to do so.

Although there were several cases throughout the year, one incident highlighted the effects of racism in health care. **At around 14:00 on the 8th of May**, Helena, a 30-year-old woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo who was 30 weeks pregnant, called an ambulance from home because she was suffering from a severe asthmatic attack. The ambulance came and took her to a hospital near metro Partizanskaya. When they entered the emergency room, a male and female doctor came out and started talking with the paramedic who had brought her in the ambulance. The doctors stayed far away from her in a way that suggested they thought she might be contagious. She could hear them discussing her case, and understood that the paramedic was trying to explain that her problem was asthma and that she did not have a fever. The doctors looked concerned and said that they don't receive Africans in that hospital. Although she could hardly breathe, she tried begging them to help her. They sent her outside so she could no longer hear the conversation.

The paramedic emerged and said they needed to go to a different hospital. Helena was very distressed and the paramedic tried to reassure her. She was still having a severe asthmatic attack. They drove to another hospital at Sokol. There they gave her something to calm her, but did not treat her and left her to wait for three hours.

Eventually, the hospital told Helena she had to go somewhere else. A new ambulance came and took her to a hospital at metro Babushkinskaya. She arrived at around 20:00, still having an asthmatic attack, and was treated immediately. She was kept overnight, but was given a small fold-out bed, much smaller than the other people in her ward. Despite her legal right to free emergency treatment, the next day she was told she had to pay 9000 rubles, and another 9000 rubles for each day she continued to stay in the hospital. Although she wasn't feeling fully better, she couldn't pay and so she left the hospital.

Conclusion

Our findings from 2015 reflect the persistent nature of racially motivated violence and harassment in Moscow, and the unprovoked and unpunished character of such abuse. While the incident reports give us insight into the nature and consequences of these attacks through the eyes of those targeted, the survey results help us to gain a broader picture of the

experiences faced by the African community. Perhaps the most notable figure is that of the violence experienced by men: 62% of male respondents experienced violence in 2015 (in total, 34 men were interviewed and 20 of them reported violence, while two of them did not answer this question). While reported levels of harassment were lower overall in the 2015 surveys, one plausible interpretation is that incidents that would previously have been reported as harassment more frequently turned violent. According to the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis (www.sova-center.ru/en), one potential factor in the lower number of physical attacks and harassment in 2015 compared to previous years is the conflict in eastern Ukraine, which began in 2014 and drew the focus of the majority of right-wing activists. Another possible factor is the Russian media's silence on the topic of racially motivated hate crimes.

Another outcome of the 2015 surveys is the identification of a difference between men's and women's experience of violence and harassment. In future research, we will seek to differentiate more explicitly between male and female experiences and to identify trends among each group.

In 2015 we made a concerted effort to survey people who have not yet fully adapted to life in Russia. Most of the recent survey's respondents (83% in the June survey and 85% in December) have lived in Moscow for five years or less; many are in their first years. We have found in the past that new arrivals are particularly vulnerable to abuse. We also surveyed people who share an apartment with existing MPC clients, but have not yet come to our center. The goal of this outreach was to acquire more accurate information about the number of hate crimes, as well as to help newcomers in their adaptation process by providing more information for prevention. The majority of newcomers were 20-30 years old. We also tried to survey more women. We would like to continue monitoring the dynamics, but to get honest answers it takes time to create a relationship of trust, especially with newer members of the community and those who have never been to the MPC center before.

In 2015 we saw more cases of institutional racism, particularly police harassment, discrimination in hospitals, and discrimination in the educational system. This shows that racism is not limited to an extremist minority in Russian society.

We will continue to strive to help victims of attacks, and where possible to reduce the risk of violence against those most often targeted through training and advice. Our experience so far suggests that not all victims wish to share the full stories of the attacks they have faced, even if they are willing to report through the survey that such attacks took place. However, we continue to place a high importance on providing an opportunity to share these stories, to give a voice to those targeted. We hope that this will in turn create a greater awareness of the experiences of Africans in Moscow, as one step towards reducing the level of racially motivated violence and harassment in the city.

If you have any questions regarding the information in this report, or would like to learn more about the work that we do to document racially motivated violence and harassment, please contact Anna Voronkova, Coordinator, MPC Task Force against Racial Violence and Harassment, at taskforce@mpcss.org.

Task Force Activities in 2015

The Task Force held several community events this year to provide support and advice to the African community in Moscow. The event in March took place during Racism Awareness Week and included a discussion on responding to racially motivated harassment and a workshop by a Playback Theatre group. The Task Force also marked Racism Awareness Week by distributing brochures to Russian and foreign churches that discussed the issue of racism and welcoming the stranger. We organized a roundtable for church leaders from different confessions to discuss how churches can better respond to racism as it touches their congregations.

In May and June, comics artists from the organization Respect (www.respect.com.mx/en) interviewed our clients to create the comic “Coats” (www.respect.com.mx/en/comics/6), which focuses on the experience of African migrants in Moscow. The comic is being used to raise awareness among Russian schoolchildren and the wider public about the difficulties faced by migrants in Russia.

On the 3rd of June, we held our annual Refugee Children’s Party, attended by 50 children. The event included games, activities, crafts and snacks organized by a visiting group of students from the University of Hong Kong. All families were sent home with a bag of food supplies.

In June, the Task Force held two interactive health workshops focusing on nutrition and exercise. Participants were sent home with reusable water bottles to help them remain hydrated during the summer months.

On the 15th of August, football enthusiasts from the African migrant and refugee community were invited to participate in Sport Rhythm (www.спортивныйритм.рф), an intercultural sports festival organized by a local Muslim women’s karate club. Held in Izmailovo Park, Sport Rhythm featured sports demonstrations and tournaments with Paralympic athletes and people from Central Asia, the Caucasus region, and other parts of Russia. The teams displayed great sportsmanship and one of the African teams ultimately won the football tournament. It was an excellent cross-cultural experience for all - many of the other attendees wanted to take photos with the African athletes!

The Children's Club for Francophone African children continues to run in partnership with Civic Assistance’s Adaptation and Education Center for Refugee Children. Volunteers teach the children French, Russian, math, and other subjects with the aim of improving the children’s readiness to apply for a place in Russian schools. On the 18th of September, in partnership with Civic Assistance, the Task Force against Racism organized a back-to-school party for children and mothers who attend the Children’s Club of Civic Assistance to celebrate the start of the school year. An art workshop was held for children, while children's mothers and volunteers organized activities and served food. All of the children went home with new backpacks full of school supplies. Twelve children participated in the event.

In the second week of October, during the Action Week against Racism organized by Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE, www.farenet.org), the Task Force against Racism and the Moscow Youth Soccer League (www.moscow-soccer.ru) organized a tournament for children ages 3 to 6 and for adults, where 10 players (two teams) participated. As a result of this event, we met new members of the African community in Moscow who

had not yet participated in the Task Force against Racism's programs. Another achievement during this week was the organization of a football training workshop at one of Moscow's technical schools for 16-18-year-old Russians. Five African football players went to the school to coach teenagers for their game at the Moscow Youth Soccer League tournament. Many of these teenagers tend toward right-wing ideas, so at the beginning they showed some skepticism, but by the end of this training workshop they shook hands with their African coaches and showed them great respect. At their next meeting at the tournament itself, the Russian students joyfully greeted their African coaches. Shortly afterwards, several of the Russian players who had not been at the initial training workshop expressed hatred toward black people and a desire to beat them, but the students who had participated replied "What, are you crazy?" and went on to describe the positive training session they had with the African coaches.

November's community event included advice about how to stay warm in winter and how to deal with harassment from the police by a human rights activist from OVD Info (www.ovdinfo.org). Volunteers also played instruments and prepared a hot lunch to raise the community's spirits.

In November, the MPC Task Force participated in a round table discussion organized by Goethe Institute Moscow at the Tolerance Center to discuss methods of preventing xenophobia in Russia.

In November and December, women from our community center made Christmas cards and souvenirs to be sold at holiday markets around Moscow. The Task Force's goal was to give single mothers with young children an opportunity to earn some money and learn new skills. Two of the women hosted a table at one of the holiday markets and had the chance to directly sell their crafts, which was a positive integrative experience for both the Russian public and the women.

In December, advocates from our partner organization Civic Assistance (www.refugee.ru) presented on the rights of migrants and the procedure for applying for refugee status. This personal meeting with human rights advocates who protect migrants' rights in Moscow was very important to counteract some of the stereotypes and illusions about the state of refugees in Russia. We believe this meeting encouraged future communication and support of this community in registering their status on a legal basis. It was a Christmas event, so participants were sent home with presents including warm hats, scarves, gloves, socks, hand cream, and chocolate.

In December, two people from Cameroon gave a presentation about their country and their lives in Moscow at a private school in the town of Mytishchi. The presentation invited students ages 9 to 17 and their parents. The result was positive and encouraging from both sides. The teachers, students, and parents confessed that they knew little about Africa. They asked questions about life in African countries. When the Russian audience asked what difficulties Africans face in Moscow, they were generally surprised by the answers, including the different food available and the difficult climate. The African guests asked the children why Russians call them monkeys in the metro. This genuine exchange of questions aroused compassion and greater mutual understanding.