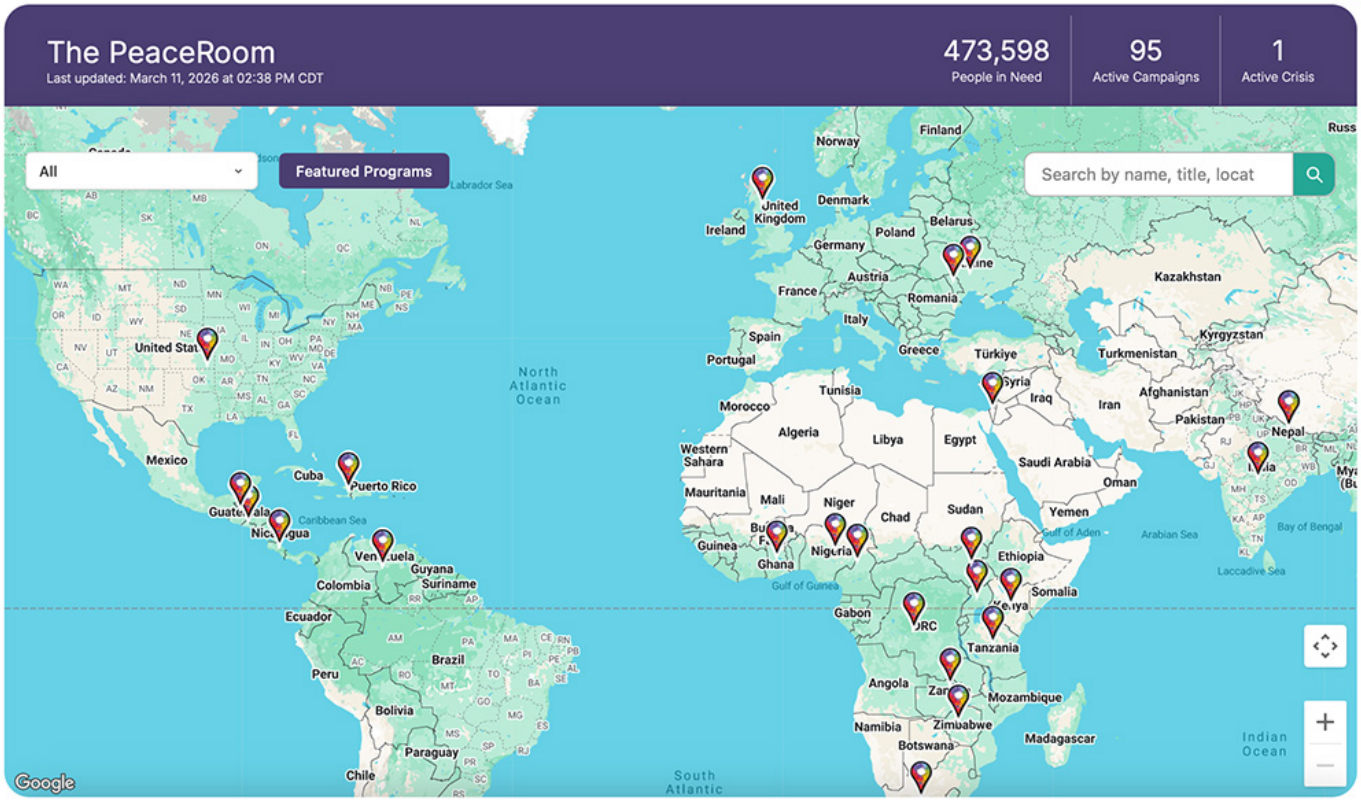
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The PeaceRoom platform, run by Sisters Rising Worldwide, features a world map; each country that has sister projects has a tag to click on, which then shows all the work sisters are doing, including photos. (GSR screenshot)



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## Join the Conversation

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The PeaceRoom, which had been a private, secure website for Catholic sisters to connect to each other and needed resources, has gone public.

Sisters Rising Worldwide, a nonprofit network that connects sisters around the world with funding and resources, launched the PeaceRoom platform in 2021. But while the public could see projects that needed funding on the Sisters Rising Worldwide website, the PeaceRoom itself remained a closed system for sister collaboration.

The needs of people that sisters minister to around the world have always been great, but since the Trump administration abruptly gutted the U.S. Agency for International Development a year ago, cutting off at least $72 billion in foreign aid, the need has grown exponentially.

Now, potential donors can connect directly to the 650,000 sisters in Sisters Rising Worldwide's network, who are uniquely positioned to address poverty, health care needs, human trafficking, education and disaster relief.

"It goes right to the ground — [potential donors] know the sister's name, they can see her photo, it's very personal," said Sr. Irene O'Neill, founder and president of Sisters Rising Worldwide, and a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet. "It's a glimpse of how the world can be."

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In the five years before opening the PeaceRoom to the public, more than $3 million was raised, supporting 184 projects in 44 countries, and serving more than 500,000 people, O'Neill said. Now, donors to Sisters Rising Worldwide have funded the operational and administrative side, so 100% of funds donated to sisters' projects go to the project itself.

Sr. Remya Thomas has seen firsthand how the projects make a difference in the lives of the people sisters serve. The Sister of St. Joseph of Annecy in India has had three projects funded by the PeaceRoom: providing food, toiletries and other needs of schoolgirls during the COVID-19 pandemic; educating women to help them and their families escape poverty; and providing job training for youth in an area beset by religious violence.

"What they're doing is a great mission for people like me," Thomas told Global Sisters Report. "During those days, I was so helpless, seeing the pain of the people, and I had no means of supporting them. I would go to bed without sleep because I didn't know how I would support these people."




Student dancers who took part in a job skills training program run by St. Joseph of Annecy Sr. Remya Thomas in Manipur, India (Courtesy of Sisters Rising Worldwide)

O'Neill said people who are overwhelmed by the news, eager to help in some way but don't know how, can use the PeaceRoom to make a real difference in the world. The platform features a world map; each country that has sister projects has a tag to click on, which then shows all the work sisters are doing, including photos.

O'Neill said donors love being able to choose projects that are most meaningful to them.

"Frankly, this is the only place on the web you can do this," O'Neill said. "This is a fabulous way to help, and the sisters' impact increases as they get resources."

Unlike donating to a large nonprofit where your money could go to one of any number of projects, these are tailored to the local needs because the sisters live and minister amid those needs.



St. Joseph Sr. Irene O’Neill (Courtesy of Sisters Rising Worldwide)

"The thing about the sisters people don't think about is every place where they are, every solution is different because the people there are different," she said. "The projects may sound small, but the impact is generational. And the sisters know the people, they know the kids they're educating."

Kelly Mallon Young, Sisters Rising Worldwide's chief operations officer, said the platform connects people who want to help directly to those providing it. Projects

have kept girls safe from human traffickers, helped farmers replenish their soil, and ministered to those in war zones such as Ukraine.

Sisters at LifeWay Network in New York City have helped 155 trafficking survivors build job skills and find employment, sisters in Kenya installed a clean water system so girls wouldn't miss school collecting untreated lake water, and sisters in Nigeria are providing school students with refurbished laptops to take mandatory computer-based exams.

"Sisters are highly educated and bring their diverse professional backgrounds — as doctors, lawyers, educators, and visionaries — and work together to solve problems inventively and affordably," Mallon Young said in a statement announcing the PeaceRoom going public. "People may be unaware of the innovative, low-cost methods that sisters implement to tackle complex problems but, with the PeaceRoom, now people can see how their donations have a direct impact."