UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Philippines Office Newsletter, 2020 - Volume 2

What’s Inside

1 % OF HUMANITY IS DISPLACED
Read the latest Global Trends Report about forced displacement

STAY AND DELIVER: Responding to COVID-19
Amid a global health emergency, your support has brought life-saving aid and essential services to the most vulnerable forcibly displaced families here in the Philippines and around the world.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY
Join us in honoring the strength and resilience of refugees past and present. Everyone can make a difference and every action counts.

UNHCR Philippines delivers critical aid to forcibly displaced families in Mindanao. We have also provided equipment to government-run health facilities, localized COVID-19 key messaging to support community level health awareness raising, and supported government operations in providing essential services to the forcibly displaced. © UNHCR / Venus Lozano
Dear valued donor,

Together we have stood in the frontlines of many emergencies. Your committed support enables us to stay and deliver each and every time. Yet today we find ourselves in uncharted waters – facing challenges that are of an entirely different magnitude.

The latest Global Trends report shows that one per cent of humanity is displaced. UNHCR has not seen a higher total. These numbers are staggering, and we do not even have to look very far to see displacement. Within our borders, more than 370,000 are repeatedly displaced in Mindanao due to conflict and natural disasters.

At the same time, we need not look far to see what can be done to respond. The Philippines has a long humanitarian legacy of being a safe haven for the world’s most persecuted. YOU uphold this legacy by choosing to act with empathy, solidarity, and kindness in these difficult times.

We are sharing with you the impact of your support to those whose lives have been torn apart and who are now at their most vulnerable because of COVID-19.

With you by our side, UNHCR and our partners have been working around the clock to make sure that critical aid and essential services reach the most vulnerable communities in the Philippines, and other places facing crisis on top of crisis, like Bangladesh and Yemen. Refugees themselves are contributing on the frontlines of the pandemic: a reminder of how interconnected we all are and of the importance of leaving no one behind.

In the face of increasingly complex emergencies, you have shown us how we can all become heroes by stepping up and leaning in to help.

Thank you for making a difference and being a beacon of hope for the forcibly displaced around the world.

With our sincerest gratitude,

Your UNHCR Philippines family

1% OF HUMANITY IS DISPLACED

As of the end of 2019, an unprecedented 79.5 million were forcibly displaced around the globe. 80 percent are in areas affected by acute food insecurity and malnutrition – many of them facing climate and natural disaster risks. Every region of the world is impacted in some way and today a volatile mix of political, environmental, economic, ethnic, and territorial factors often combine to ignite conflicts.

Within all of these numbers is a multitude of individual and very personal crises. As many children (estimated at 30-34 million) are among the displaced than, for example, the entire populations of Australia, Denmark and Mongolia combined.

Behind these figures are people whose lives have been torn apart, leaving their homes, family, jobs and schools behind. These statistics speak to immeasurable heartbreak, desperation, sacrifice of millions who are struggling to survive.

We are witnessing a changed reality in that forced displacement nowadays is not only vastly more widespread but is simply no longer a short-term and temporary phenomenon.

We need a fundamentally new and more accepting attitude towards all who flee, coupled with a much more determined drive to unlock conflicts that go on for years and that are at the root of such immense suffering.

FILIPPO GRANDI
UN High Commissioner for Refugees
Increasingly Complex Emergencies

The interplay between the COVID-19 global health pandemic, climate, conflict, hunger, poverty and persecution creates increasingly complex emergencies across the world.

In Bangladesh, the first confirmed cases of coronavirus among the refugee population and the monsoon season bringing heavy rainfall and flooding creates emergency on top of emergency for Rohingya refugees.

Relentless rain in Cox’s Bazar has led to flooding & soil erosion in refugee camps. UNHCR & partners are assessing the damage & assisting affected families to relocate temporarily, while providing support. With heavy rain continuing, UNHCR Emergency Response Teams have been deployed to assess damage, support repairs & distributions for affected families. Refugee volunteers are working hard to stabilize slopes while additional supplies have been pre-positioned.

In Yemen, COVID-19 is exasperating an already tragic situation, with only 50% of the health facilities fully functioning due to the conflict and a fatality rate among the highest worldwide. With your help, UNHCR is on the ground providing humanitarian relief and protection: delivering cash and emergency supplies like food and medicine, as well as, providing families with shelter and information on disease prevention and control.

With your support, UNHCR is mitigating the spread of COVID-19 while also ensuring that critical activities continue, including health, nutrition, hygiene promotion, construction of health facilities and WASH infrastructures as well as key distributions such as food, LPG and hygiene kits.

UNHCR and partners have constructed isolation and treatment facilities to serve both refugees and host communities in the District. Information-sharing has also been expanded through a network of more than 2,000 community volunteers, religious leaders and humanitarian workers.

There are currently more than 370,000 individuals who are forcibly displaced in Mindanao as a result of persecution, conflict, and violence. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, fresh displacement is still taking place.

In times of crisis, UNHCR stays and delivers. With your support and commitment, we are working closely with the government and other partners to provide essential goods and services to forcibly displaced families – standing side by side in the commitment to stay and deliver, while ensuring that protection remains at the center of humanitarian responses.

Since March, we have been working relentlessly to provide key interventions on ground. We have distributed core relief items, provided equipment to government-run health facilities, localized COVID-19 key messaging to support community level health awareness raising, and supported government operations in providing essential services to the forcibly displaced.

Much has been done, but the work continues. Concerns on limited access to basic services and livelihood remain as needs and challenges, demanding provision of durable solutions. IDPs are living in overcrowded areas and social distancing is impossible to implement in such conditions. Moreover, the urgency in addressing violence against women and children across Mindanao, including women and children displaced, calls for prompt action and support from humanitarian actors and state agencies.

UNHCR Philippines, with your help, guidance from our government partners, and support from protection actors, relentlessly fulfills its commitment to continuously provide essential services to these forcibly displaced families, during and beyond this global health emergency.
With fellow Syrian refugee volunteers, Shadi shops at a teers, who head out several times a day to shop on demand.

"I MADE THE SOAP MY COMMUNITY NEEDS."

"I HELPED EDUCATE MY SIBLINGS AND NEIGHBOURS."

"IN THE TIME OF COVID I CURED THE SICK."

"IN THE TIME OF COVID I BROUGHT THE SICK TO SAFETY."

"IN THE TIME OF COVID WE KEPT PEOPLE INFORMED."

"IN THE TIME OF COVID I HELPED MY COMMUNITY STAY SAFE."

"I grew up in the Philippines, born and raised. Life in the Philippines offered me the opportunity to understand life in its true sense. Not the Hollywood style of life, but the true difficult existence that people have...That allowed me to take what I learned and transmit it to my children and to my wife, to really contribute as much as they can with their lives to people who do have needs.

Philippines will show [the world] the way. Because they’re the only people that stand up, ever, and have done something for somebody for people whom they had no reason to help.

I have met so many of the Manilans and their descendents, and they have such an affection and a sense of belonging to the Philippines that lasts through the rest of their lives.

The Philippines was not reative, it was proactive. It saw a problem and came up with a solution and didn’t have to be asked, a solution that provides both a home, and a heart, for the people that come here.

The Manilans story shows that a country can still welcome people whom no one, no other place, will welcome and that they can become a vital part of the nation, the people. And that will reap its own rewards simply by doing the right thing when doing the right thing is urgently, urgently needed. I think it’s a good story to model humanitarianism for us now everywhere.

I believe that we can bridge this gap of humanity, and we just need to tap them because they are an asset to any country.

We are the torchbearers when it comes to fulfilling our obligations under the Refugee Conventions... We will ensure that our policies, our rules, regulations will be geared to towards the attainment of providing the necessary support to our refugees. Because we believe that they can be proactive, because we believe that they can be leaders, we just need to tap them because they are an asset to any country.
Thousands of forcibly displaced families in Mindanao still live in densely populated transitory sites, making them vulnerable to health and protection risks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your continued support ensures access to water, sanitation, and health (WASH) facilities like this water pipeline in Saguiaran, Lanao del Sur.

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