

High Commissioner António Guterres presents a letter of appointment to UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador in China, Yao Chen, in Beijing.



Support *Celebrity*

Growing numbers of high-profile individuals are raising their influential voices in support of the refugee cause. These personalities, moved by the tragedy of displacement and inspired by the courage and resilience of populations in exile, do all they can to raise awareness, generate funding and convey important advocacy messages.

This chapter honours the many ways goodwill ambassadors and other high-profile supporters helped UNHCR in 2013. These efforts included going on media missions, making films, highlighting major campaigns, staging thematic events and endorsing fundraising initiatives, including emergency appeals. ●●●

Driving visibility and awareness

High-profile supporters are able to reach a broad range of people who might otherwise never hear of UNHCR and the plight of refugees. Largely through the media (including social media), goodwill ambassadors and celebrities helped build empathy for UNHCR's work in 2013. In a year of unprecedented demand on UNHCR's emergency response capacity, their voices were particularly valuable in gathering support for the organization.

In 2013, four new goodwill ambassadors were appointed. Chinese actress Yao Chen, acclaimed writer and former Afghan refugee Khaled Hosseini, Kazakh musician

Aidos Sagat, and supermodel and former Sudanese refugee Alek Wek were selected, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to humanitarian endeavours and commitment to supporting refugees. UNHCR was also privileged to benefit from the support of more than 30 other new celebrity supporters during the year.

Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi of the United Arab Emirates was named Eminent Advocate in 2013. This title is awarded to individuals of particular standing and influence in their own communities and beyond. In recognition of her influential role and contribution to UNHCR,

including in support of displaced women from Somalia and Syria, Her Highness was the first to receive this newly established honorary title. In her new capacity, she visited UNHCR's operation in Lebanon and launched the nationwide "Big Heart Campaign" for Syrian refugee children in the United Arab Emirates. The campaign galvanized generous support from the public, private sector and other sources. UNHCR's celebrity supporters dramatically increased the audience reach of key campaigns and special events, such as World Refugee Day and the Nansen Refugee Award, and helped keep the humanitarian consequences of the Syria crisis in the spotlight.

Audience reach via celebrity social media grew to **129 million** in 2013.



Celebrity social media drove **53 per cent** of all online traffic to the World Refugee Day webpage on 20 June 2013.



UNHCR videos featuring celebrities were the **largest driver** of new subscribers to the organization's YouTube channel during the year.

Acclaimed writer Henning Mankell, author of the popular Kurt Wallander detective novels, visited Uganda with UNHCR in 2013. On his return, he wrote a moving report in the Sunday edition of Sweden's biggest daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, reflecting on the impact of conflict on refugee families from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who had fled to Uganda, and on the importance of education for the future of young refugees. He also spoke on these and other humanitarian issues on radio and

television, reaching an audience estimated at more than 3 million people.

British writer AA Gill, who went on missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, and the Italian island of Lampedusa, produced an award-winning, three-part series of articles in *The Sunday Times*. The articles communicated concerns about the impact of conflict and displacement to a large audience in the United Kingdom, generating many sympathetic online comments and triggering donations.



UNHCR / M. SIBILONI

Writer Henning Mankell speaks with refugees, in Rwamwanja refugee settlement, Uganda.

“If any of these refugees knocked on any of our front doors and asked for help, we would give it. We would insist they be protected and offered a chance to be doctors and civil engineers, nurses and journalists. We would do it because we are also good and kind. It is only by not looking, by turning our backs, that we can sail away and think this is sad, but it is not our sadness.”

(AA Gill, *The Sunday Times*, 8 December 2013)

Supporting advocacy efforts

Whether through their knowledge of refugee issues garnered over many years of support (as with Honorary Lifetime Goodwill Ambassador Barbara Hendricks), or through their personal experience of human displacement (Alek Wek, Khaled Hosseini and Olympic runner Guor Maker) UNHCR's high-profile supporters add significant weight to the organization's advocacy efforts.

In 2013, Ms. Hendricks spoke at a global forum in Geneva on the empowerment of women. She eloquently steered the focus onto the particular challenges facing refugee women worldwide. Football manager Pep Guardiola and singer songwriter Alejandro Sanz added their support to the “In Their Shoes” campaign, aimed at building more empathy for refugees in Latin America.

During the year, former refugee Guor Maker made an emotional

return home to South Sudan, where he was reunited with his family after a 20-year separation (see *News and Views*). He witnessed UNHCR's work and was able to convey important messages to the displaced community and decision-makers in the country. He also took part in the distribution of sports kits donated by the International Olympic Committee through its “Giving is Winning” partnership with UNHCR.

Backing major campaigns and events



COURTESY OF KHALED HOSSEINI

Goodwill Ambassador Khaled Hosseini shares the 'Most Important Thing' he would take if he fled – his father's watch.

Goodwill ambassadors and other high-profile supporters made a significant contribution to **World Refugee Day** in 2013, bringing UNHCR's core message and call to action to audiences across the globe. Nineteen supporters made public service announcements in a variety of languages. World-renowned music group Lady Antebellum produced a special public service announcement on the plight of Syrian refugee families that was screened in New York's Times Square on 20 June.

Celebrities with a large social-media following were the main drivers of a World Refugee Day "Thunderclap." The Thunderclap social media tool, which enables a single message to be shared across multiple social networks, was used to direct a mass audience to UNHCR's World Refugee Day online portal. Those who tweeted or posted in support of UNHCR included African musicians Rokia Traoré and Maurice Kirya, Somali supermodel Iman, Swedish singer Maher Zain, British comedian Stephen Fry, American pop star Paula Abdul, artist Yoko Ono, Scottish actor Ewan McGregor, Swiss singer Bastian Baker and Brazilian author Paulo Coelho.

Meanwhile, acclaimed Spanish film director Fernando León and actress Elena Anaya produced a short film for World Refugee Day 2013, *Welcome to My Country*. Recorded in Ethiopia, the film depicts the life of a refugee.

Goodwill ambassadors and celebrities from around the globe also participated in the World Refugee Day action, asking the public to consider what "*most important thing*" they would take with them if they had to flee their home. For celebrities such as French actor and former footballer Eric Cantona and British actor David Tennant, it was a family photo; for Mexican actor Diego Luna, it was photos of his children; and for Malian musician Rokia Traoré it was her guitar. Writer Khaled Hosseini chose a watch of great sentimental value:

"My family and I left Afghanistan in 1976 and we were never able to go back because of the war. This watch was given to me by my father when I was 13 and it's my most prized possession because it represents the oldest surviving relic of my childhood."

A video on the same topic of "*one thing*" produced by Kat Graham and other stars of the hit television series, *The Vampire Diaries*, has proved especially popular online, underlining the difficult choices that displaced people have to make when they are suddenly forced to leave home.

The 2013 Nansen Refugee Award Ceremony in Geneva was graced with performances by Malian duo Amadou & Mariam, British singer Dido, and Malaysian artist Yuna. Acclaimed writer and UN Messenger of Peace Paulo Coelho provided the keynote address in honour of the 2013 laureate, Sister Angélique Namaika from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A celebrity social media campaign in honour of the laureate included messages from Yao Chen, Alek Wek, Annie Lennox, Stephen Fry and Bastian Baker, reaching a global audience of over 95 million people.



Strengthening emergency appeals

High-profile support throughout the year played a key role in alerting the public to the rising tide of humanitarian catastrophes, including

the Syria crisis and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

In addition to missions by Special Envoy Angelina Jolie (see article on the work of the *Special Envoy*),

Goodwill Ambassador Jesús Vázquez travelled to Jordan to drive media interest in the Syria crisis and public response in Spain. Celebrity social media amplified UNHCR campaigns to highlight tragic milestones, including the rise in the total number of Syrian refugees (to 2 million) and Syrian refugee children (1 million). Social media also promoted *The Future of Syria*, a report on children, in December 2013. The campaigns reached a global audience of millions.

Those who issued messages of support for UNHCR's emergency response in the Philippines included former refugee and basketball star Luol Deng, writer Neil Gaiman, pop group Maroon 5, comedian Stephen Fry, actress Kat Graham and influential figures in the world of TV, including screenwriter-producer Shonda Rhimes and photographer-TV presenter Amanda de Cadenet.



UNHCR / C. LOPEZ

Goodwill Ambassador Jesús Vázquez meets Syrian families being registered as refugees in Amman, Jordan.

Increasing fundraising efforts

Growing support for UNHCR was generated in 2013 via all forms of media and the personal efforts of high-profile supporters. In addition to donations for emergencies inspired by celebrity social media (see above), goodwill ambassadors also endorsed new initiatives with the private sector. Barbara Hendricks supported a campaign carried out in cooperation with train operator Thalys in France to highlight the plight of refugee women. Ms. Hendricks

also continued to serve as Chair of UNHCR's national fundraising partner in Sweden.

In a unique media project in Italy, eight celebrities travelled with UNHCR to refugee camps to record their experiences for a "fly-on-the-wall" series aired by the broadcaster RAI TV. The public response resulted in more than EUR 280,000 donated through SMS messaging. Francesco Pannofino, an Italian film actor who participated in the project, boosted fundraising efforts by adding his

name to direct-mail appeals to individual donors.

UNHCR's operations also benefited from direct donations by goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters, given personally or via their foundations. On top of the important advocacy work they do, this is a testament to their immense personal commitment to the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

1 Family: Olympic runner without a country returns home for family reunion

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

14 JUNE 2013

PAN DE THON VILLAGE, South Sudan, June 2013 | *Guor Mading Maker has finally come home. Almost a year after touching the world's heart at the London Olympics and 20 years after leaving his village, the South Sudanese marathon runner returned late last month to an emotional welcome.*



UNHCR / T. ONGARO

Guor's mother, overwhelmed by emotion, during their first meeting in two decades

It was all too much for his mother, who collapsed when Guor arrived at Pan de Thon village in South Sudan's Unity state. She had last seen him in 1993, when he went to live with relatives in Khartoum before fleeing for his life at the height of the north-south war, when the country was part of Sudan.

Guor, a United States-based refugee whose reunion was made possible by UNHCR, picked his mother up. Weeping, they hugged under the hot sun. "Guor? Is it you, my son?" she asked. "It is me, Mama," replied the 29-year-old, who ran in the 2012 marathon under the Olympic flag because South Sudan (the world's youngest nation) did not have

a recognized national Olympic committee. The runner without a country came 47th in a time of 2 hours, 19 minutes and 32 seconds.

Arm in arm, Guor and his mother started to get to know each other once more. Getting over her shock, Guor's mother Athieng Majak Kon soon broke into a stream of chatter and took him round the family home, pointing out where he was born.

The news soon spread through the village that a son had returned from across the seas. A sprightly old man leapt around with a stick and sang – it was Guor's father Mading Maker Deng. He rubbed cow dung ash on his son's

forehead in a traditional sign of welcome.

But the joy was tinged with sadness. Guor was forced to flee Sudan because of the devastating 1983-2005 civil war, which left hundreds of thousands of people dead, including eight of his siblings.

"Conflict damages families," Guor said.

"Our country is blessed with untold wealth. Yet, death and wasted potential are the price that families – entire communities – were made to pay by the conflict. I have not met a compatriot who was not affected by the war. My mother's situation is a case in point."

Unity state was a dangerous place when he was young. And the rural areas lacked basic services such as education and health care. So, when he was eight years old, Guor's mother sent him to live with an uncle in Khartoum. But southerners were regarded with suspicion in the Sudan capital and often accused of spying. Guor and his relatives fled to Egypt, unnerved by the persecution and fearful for their lives. It was a difficult time, but

in 2001 they were resettled in the United States.

The 16-year-old took full advantage of the educational opportunities and his athletics ability was soon noted by his high school teachers. Guor went to Iowa State University on a scholarship, graduating with a BSc in Chemistry in 2011. Then came the Olympics.

The young man did not forget the people who had helped him over the years, above all his foster parents in the United States.

"They are my family," he said. "From them I received guidance to grow into a responsible adult. They helped me push my limits to receive a university education. The families that fostered me and those who mentored me helped make me who I am today".

"I am especially grateful to UNHCR for bringing me home to the two most important people in my life – my mother and my father," he stated, adding that had they not sent him away he may have died like his siblings. For his mother, his visit ended years of uncertainty. "Thank you for bringing Guor home. I have seen my son. My heart has finally rested," she said. ○