

With you

Share the Gift of Hope This Season

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“ As we close another year, allow me to thank you for standing with us every step of the way. Your generous gift allows us to do our work. Our staff is on the ground, putting people first and delivering results – thanks to you. ”

THANK YOU FOR BEING WITH US EVERY STEP OF THE WAY THIS 2016

This season is a wonderful reminder of what we have accomplished the past year. As we take stock of our work to save lives and restore hope and dignity of families displaced by war and violence, we cannot help but be deeply grateful of your continued support.

Let me first tell you about Elmer Tulawie, a 37-year-old father from the far-flung coastal village of Simariki in Zamboanga City. When armed conflict hit the city three years ago, stray bullets coming from the mainland reached Elmer's community. They had no choice but to flee and leave everything behind. It was only after a year later that the residents of Simariki were able to return home, but they had to rebuild their lives from scratch.



Through donors like you, we were able to help families from Simariki and other coastal villages get back on their feet through the provision of fishing boats and other materials to boost their livelihood. In Simariki, a bamboo boardwalk now connects homes, making it easier and safer for children and their families to go around the community.

These are just some examples of the community empowerment programs we provide for populations affected by protracted displacement in southern Philippines. As co-lead of the Mindanao Protection Cluster, we are working with the national government and our partners on the ground to build better futures for families coping with the effects of displacement.

Thank you very much for sharing this commitment with us.

Your support also enables thousands of our humanitarian workers worldwide to respond the most pressing displacement crises. As the number of forcibly displaced is at a record high of 65.3 million, your generous gift is an expression of solidarity to vulnerable families in need of assistance.

Your donation to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency, is a critical lifeline to many. It helps us save lives, safeguard fundamental rights, and provide durable solutions to the persons we serve.

On behalf of UNHCR, I want to personally thank you for your being with us, and for walking with us every step of the way. Though much remains to be done, our work would not be possible without you.

As we close another year, we wish you a wonderful 2017! We hope you will continue to join us as we help build better futures for millions of refugees and displaced families in emergency hotspots in the Philippines and across the world.

Yours sincerely,

Yasser Saad
Head of Office,
UNHCR Philippines



UNHCR Turns Over Fishing boats to Zamboanga Returnees



Your support for UNHCR continues to rebuild lives.

Last September, we marked the third year since armed clashes took place in Zamboanga City between government forces and non-state actors. The conflict, which lasted for more than 20 days, displaced more than 119,700 people. These included families from the coastal villages of Leha-leha, Layag-layag, and Simariki.

Thanks to you, we have turned over a fishing boat to Leha-leha village to support families' livelihood projects. The boat will also serve as transportation for children attending school in Zamboanga City's mainland. The boat may also be used for emergency situations.

Since 2014, UNHCR has been advocating and coordinating with government agencies to facilitate their return to their communities. An estimated 550 families from these villages have already returned to their homes.

As they rebuild their lives, UNHCR continues to support them through Community Empowerment Projects that help them get back on their feet to boost their resilience after displacement.

These projects include the construction of solar dryers to augment the seaweed livelihood of the community. UNHCR supported Simariki by constructing a boardwalk that would connect homes to one another and to a small island where a mosque and daycare center are located. The boardwalk is especially beneficial to families that did not have boats to move around the community.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, co-leads the Mindanao Protection Cluster with the Department of Social Welfare and Development. As of September 2016, there are nearly 160,000 internally displaced persons in the region who are still in need of durable solutions.



UNHCR Welcomes Unprecedented Support for Refugees



UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has welcomed the historic adoption of a declaration that expresses the political will of world leaders to save lives, protect rights, and share responsibility for refugees and displaced families.

Last September, 193 governments at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York adopted the agreement – titled the New York Declaration, during the first-ever UN Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants.

Amidst unprecedented levels of people on the move, the Summit brought together governments, the international community, and civil society leaders to better safeguard the rights of refugees and migrants and share responsibility on a global scale.

During the event, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also received the **#WithRefugees** petition signed by more than 1.2 million people expressing solidarity with millions of people across the world driven from their homes by conflict and persecution. Of these signatures, 4,000 are from the Philippines.

“The **#WithRefugees** petition is about compassion and solidarity. And it’s about standing together with people who have left everything behind – except their hopes, dreams, and determination,” said UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi.

The petition called on representatives of the 193 governments attending the Summit to make sure all refugee children can go to school; that all refugees have a safe place to live and that all refugees can work and contribute to their local community; among others.

THE DIFFERENCE WE MADE THIS 2016

Your support this year enabled and empowered us to save and transform lives. As we bid 2016 goodbye, allow us to convey our gratitude for making our work possible. Here is how your generous gift this year helped us and the people we serve.



Responding with Life-Saving Aid

With the continued support of donors like you, we can deploy emergency goods such as tents, blankets, solar lamps, and hygiene kits to at least 600,000 people within 72 hours. Our staff can get to the field to assess and organize the delivery of life-saving items to people forced to flee.



Safeguarding Basic Rights

Every human being deserves a life free from persecution and discrimination, but displacement can affect anyone. Hundreds of thousands of people are forced to flee their homes every day – young and old, sick and healthy, sons and daughters. Your support allowed us to protect and safeguard the rights of especially vulnerable displaced individuals like children, minorities, women, youth, the LGBT, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.



Delivering Durable Solutions

Though we work hard to protect vulnerable families uprooted from their homes and countries due to conflict and violence, our ultimate goal is to find solutions that allow them to rebuild their lives. Finding solutions that enable refugees and displaced families to live their lives in dignity and peace is a core part of our work. These durable solutions include livelihood support, family reunification, reintegration in new host communities, and resettlement.



Providing Shelter

On cold nights or hot afternoons, our help can be the difference between life and death. Shelter is a vital survival mechanism in times of crisis or displacement. It is also key to restoring personal security, self-sufficiency and dignity. At UNHCR, a core part of our protection mission is to guarantee access to adequate shelter in humanitarian emergencies. This year, we provided tents, distributed plastic sheeting, and developed emergency strategies, tools and guidelines, rushing aid and restoring a sense of home to those who need it most.



Protecting the Most Vulnerable

Over half of the world's refugees are children. Many will spend their entire childhoods away from home, sometimes separated from their families. They may have witnessed or experienced violent acts and, in exile, are at risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking or military recruitment. UNHCR works with its partners to assist, protect and find solutions for displaced children. We ensured that those who are unaccompanied or separated are cared for and have access to family tracing and reunification services. Thank you for helping us restore their future.



Promoting Belongingness by Ending Statelessness

Today, at least 10 million people around the world are denied a nationality. As a result, they often are not allowed to go to school, see a doctor, get a job, open a bank account, buy a house or even get married. Stateless people may have difficulty accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement. Without these things, they can face a lifetime of obstacles and disappointment. In the Philippines this 2016, UNHCR helped more than 2,900 stateless individuals get out of legal limbo, gain a nationality, and have the right to belong.



ASPOTLIGHT ON SYRIA

"Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, a continuing cause of suffering for millions which should be garnering a groundswell of support around the world."

- Filippo Grandi, UNHCR High Commissioner

We provided life-saving humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees, helping the most vulnerable with cash for medicine and food, stoves and fuel for heating, insulation for tents, thermal blankets and winter clothing. Last February, with Syria's war heading into its sixth year and with no end to the fighting in sight, we joined forces with other United Nations humanitarian and development agencies to appeal for USD 7.73 billion in vital new funding to help 22.5 million people in Syria and across the region.



SAVING LIVES, PROTECTING FUTURES

In the Philippines, UNHCR co-leads the Mindanao Protection Cluster together with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). We help address the concerns of the nearly 160,000 displaced individuals who are still in need of durable solutions. Your support restores their hope and rebuilds their lives in dignity and safety.



We'd love to know your story! In 100 words, tell us why you support UNHCR by sending a short write-up with your photo to phimapfsr@unhcr.org. You might get featured in our next newsletter!



Get to know UNHCR's Deputy Director for its Asia and the Pacific bureau. In her nearly four decades of service, Jojo has personified the Filipino *bayanihan* spirit while helping save lives in the most critical displacement crises across the world. Be inspired by her story.



JOSEPHA “Jojo” OJANO

Please introduce yourself briefly.

My name is Josefa Ojano and I currently serve as the Deputy Director of UNHCR's bureau overseeing 13 countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific (SEAP). I have been with the UN Refugee Agency for 37 years now, including over seven years as national staff in the Philippines and 30 years in the international category. The engagement with the organization brought me to five of the seven continents in the world. The countries and the people I have come across with make me who I am today.

Please take us through your journey towards your assignment as Deputy Director of the Asia bureau.

Just 15 days after my college graduation, I got my first job as a clerk at UNHCR in April 1979. While serving as national staff in the Philippines, the exposure to the Indo-Chinese refugees made me realize there is spirituality in humanitarian work. I started my international career in Eastern Sudan for nearly one million Eritrean refugees. I then moved to Uganda for the Sudanese refugees and transferred to UNHCR's Headquarters in the late 1990's. I also served in the Afghanistan operation between 2000 and 2003 where I witnessed hundreds of thousands of refugees returning mainly from Pakistan and Iran. The Africa Bureau served as my next “home” for five years as Senior Resource Manager. I then moved to the Programme Budget Service in the beginning as Deputy Head and eventually headed it until I moved to my function as Deputy Director for the Asia and the Pacific

What is an average day like in your office?

I usually spend a large part of the day responding to the field concerns and/or proactively strategizing what the next move would be to support operations so that refugees and displaced families could remain the centre of what we do. Often I asked myself the question, “What did I do today to make a difference in the lives of the people we care for?”

What are the major challenges in your role?

There are few challenges but they are not insurmountable. Balancing organizational issues and interests with field realities are often the most difficult ones. In the end, we need to sustain our determination to find solutions to every situation. Despite the ideal environment, there is at least a “diesel drop that spoils a highly pure potable drum of water”! I consider this, if not part of experience, an opportunity to self-introspect – I myself have a lot more to learn in life.

Why is it important for Filipinos to extend their concern and compassion to refugees and displaced families outside the Philippines?

It is important because we Filipinos are a privileged and kind people! One virtue we have as Filipinos is hospitality – sharing what we have. We also set our actions on faith in God and hopefully on love for others. This may sound religious to others but in my view, the realization that the world is round and spinning at all times, means that we could be in a situation like the refugees and displaced

people at any time. It means we need to ask ourselves how we want to be treated if such is the case. Lend a hand now and reach out when you can for a more rewarding life and a better world!

What has been your most memorable experience working at UNHCR?

I have many good memories during my 37 years at UNHCR. Some of the most striking ones include the happiness I felt after meeting with a Ugandan Minister who signed off for land not only to establish homesteads for Sudanese refugees but also to be used as their farms so that these refugees could be self-reliant.

I also could not forget the fear I felt when the first bazooka was pointed at me and a colleague at the Uganda-Democratic Republic of Congo border during our visit to newly arriving refugees fleeing from what they claimed to be military activities in their home areas. I thought I was going to die for humanity at that moment.

Another memorable experience that immediately comes to mind is the realization that a 12-year Afghan girl begging for food or money at the door of the guest house I was staying in Kabul was actually a mother! I cried so much that no box of milk and loaf of bread I gave her could help me console myself. Stories about girls sold due to poverty, forced into marriage, taken at puberty and become mothers at this early age become suddenly so real. She was close to the age my two daughters!

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISPLACEMENT

By Rama O. Co

When forced displacement becomes the topic of conversation, rarely does talk of climate change become part of the discussion. Images of refugees and displaced persons are often accompanied by buzzwords like 'war' and 'armed conflict', but not much is said about the role environmental degradation plays in the global humanitarian crisis we face today.

A World Bank study estimates that by 2030, more than 100 million people will be pushed into poverty by climate change. According to the report, the effects of rising sea levels and severe weather conditions are borne disproportionately, with the world's poorest carrying the brunt of the impact. While the year 2030 seems like a lifetime away for some, skeptics need only turn to the 22.5 million individuals displaced by climate-related events since 2008, for a preview of what is to come.

While African nations are the most affected by water deficits, Asian countries lie on the opposite end of the natural disaster spectrum, suffering heavily from rising sea levels, flooding, and intense storms. In the last decade, the most prominent example of the latter would be Typhoon Haiyan (local name Yolanda) in the Philippines.

In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in the central Philippines. Packing maximum sustained winds of up to 315 KPH, the strongest tropical cyclone in recorded history claimed more than 6,300 lives and left an estimated 4.1 million displaced.

UNHCR staff dispatched to affected areas were tasked with accomplishing five main goals: provision of emergency shelter and core relief items, protection monitoring and mainstreaming, capacity building and protection training, mobile civil registration, and advocacy.

In the aftermath of the initial relief effort, 700,000 affected persons have benefitted from life-saving assistance. About 90,000 civil registration documents have been processed

for the most vulnerable. UNHCR was also able to distribute 88,000 blankets, 123,337 tents, 14,000 kitchen sets, 8,800 mosquito nets, 19,000 solar lanterns, and 33,000 jerry cans.

These figures, though small compared to the millions displaced by climate-change, proved to be invaluable in the road to recovery. They represent the combined efforts of dedicated UNHCR staff, volunteers, and generous donors.

The damage caused by climate change does not end there.

Even events that seem divorced from climate or weather-related developments are in no way independent. One prime example of this would be the Syrian civil war. Perhaps the poster child for the global refugee crisis, the conflict that has raged-on since 2011 has internally displaced over 13.5 million people, and has forced over 4.8 million to seek refugee status in other countries. Experts such as the Washington-based Center for Climate and Security has highlighted the role climate change played as a catalyst of the conflict.

Between 2006 and 2011, Syria's agricultural regions suffered one of the worst droughts on record, destroying crops and killing 85% of livestock. As a result, millions of rural citizens were forced to seek refuge in already overcrowded cities like Daraa, Aleppo, and Damascus.

As urban unemployment and a rising scarcity of water drove once prosperous farmers into poverty, the civil unrest that followed grew into the multi-sided armed conflict that continues onto its sixth year in 2016. According to the Center for Climate and Security, even if the climate-stressed country recovers politically, Syria is on the path to losing nearly 50% of its agricultural capacity by 2050. Given this projection, it is expected that the suffering faced by displaced persons will only continue, as climate change remains a looming threat.

Despite this daunting task, the UNHCR remains steadfast in its mission to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of refugees and forcibly displaced persons affected by conflict and natural disasters. Nearly seven decades since our founding in 1950, we continue to rebuild lives after displacement with humanitarian and solutions-based efforts.

Rama O. Co is an 18-year old student at the Chinese International School Manila. He served as an intern for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, in 2016. He writes for the Philippine Daily Inquirer as student correspondent and is part of the National Youth Council of an environmental organization.

When people are forced
to flee, you can help shelter them
in this season of giving.

NOBODY LEFT OUTSIDE

Shelter brings safety and protection to refugee families forced by war, conflict, and violence to leave everything behind.

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