



With you

The great humanitarian crisis of our time

More than 70.8 million people have been
forcibly displaced worldwide, now what?

More than 70 million people displaced worldwide | War | Conflict | Violence | Natural Disaster | Syrian War | Marawi Conflict | Protracted Displacement in the Philippines | #StepWithRefugees | Humanitarian Crisis | Rohingya Refugees | Eight Years of War | Hope | Stateless | Uprooted from their homes | Unaccompanied children | Elderly | Displacement | Host Communities | Building Better Futures | Highest Level of Refugees | 3.9 Stateless Persons | 1 million Rohingya Refugees | 41.3 million internally displaced families | Saving Lives | 25.9 Refugees | Global Refugee Compact | Safeguarding Rights

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Thank you for taking a #StepWithRefugees



#StepWithRefugees

Dear Donor,

Warmest greetings!

This month, I was briefed on a record that I wish was never broken. According to the recently released Global Trends Report, there are now 70.8 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes. This statistic is up by 2.3 million from last year's 68.4 million.

This is an unfortunate, but not a new incident. For the past six years, the number of people who fled from their homes continues to increase. The number of refugees and internally displaced families doubled in the last twenty years.

The refugee crisis is one of the many problems going on in the world. Every day, we are bombarded by images of xenophobia, closing borders, and irrational violence. People are tired, frustrated, and at wits' end because of the negative incidents in the world. Each of us are dealing with our own problems – political, financial, professional, and personal. We often wonder if there is even space to help others in their time of need. But there is. I have seen this when there was an influx of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, a country not so far from the Philippines, is one of the most challenged nations in the world. But when the stateless Rohingya

people came to seek safety, the people of Bangladesh opened their arms and provided refuge. They shared their lands, their homes, their food with the people who had none. It was proof that there is still kindness and compassion in the midst of all the despair and destruction in the world.

Being kind is at the core of humanity. That even when faced with problems, there are those who continue to be genuine people. This is something that I truly believe in and something that you prove every time.

As part of our community of givers, you continue to open your hearts and minds to the forcibly displaced families. In a world where one in 108 people are forced to flee because of violence and persecution, your kindness and compassion are proof that there is good in the world.

Thank you for continuing to do the right and kind thing.

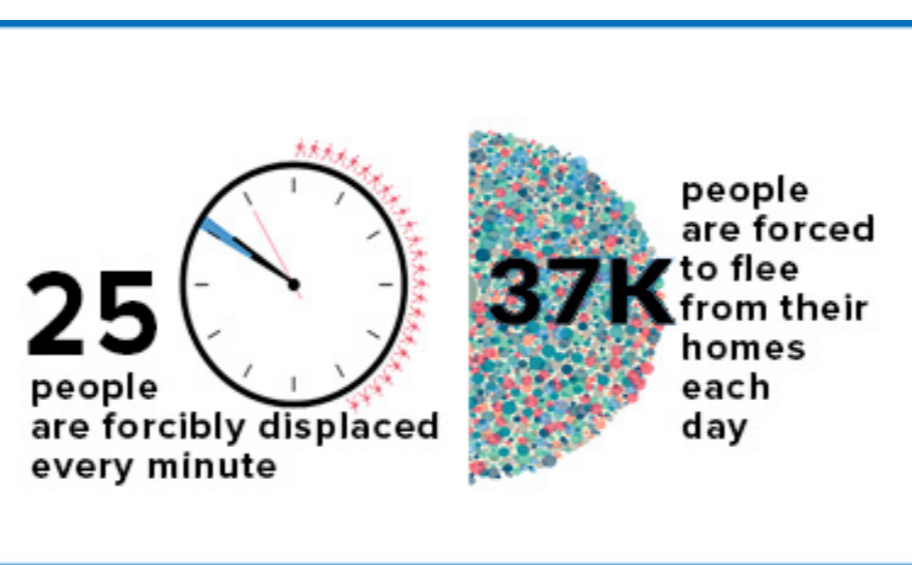
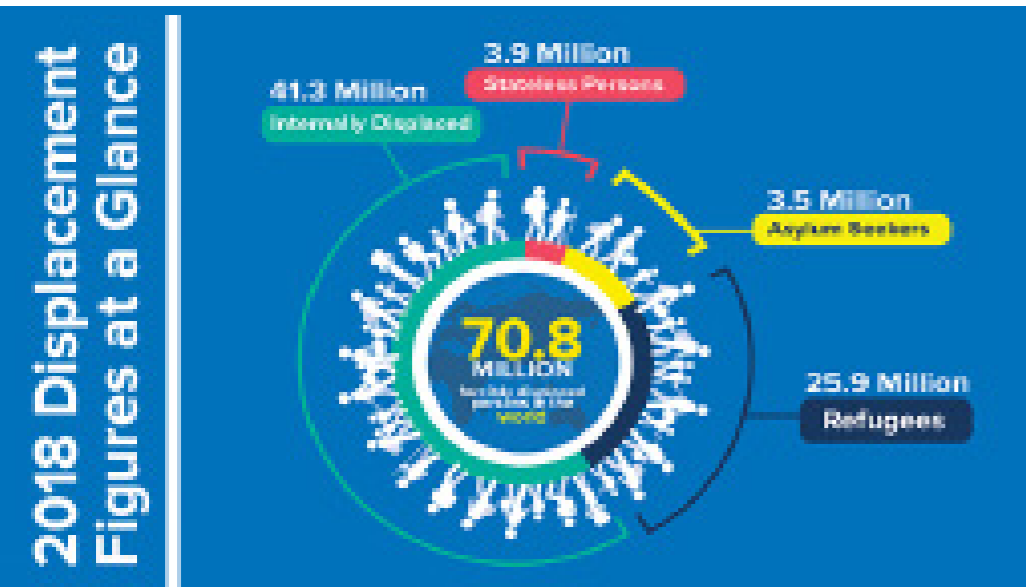
Warmest regards,

Shinji Kubo
Representative
UNHCR Philippines

The Great Humanitarian Crisis of our Time

Forced displacement in the world reached a peak high in 2018, according to the Global Trends report of UNHCR

According to the yearly report, over 70.8 million people in 2018 were displaced from their homes due to conflict, persecution, and other forms of generalized violence, posting an almost 6.5 million increase from 68.5 million in 2017.



Saving lives, creating solutions

Throughout the year, the UNHCR ordered a total of 285 emergency deployments to act on ten active emergencies across the world. The agency also launched five new emergency declarations as quick responses to emergent situations in Cameroon, Chad, the DRC, Central America, and Venezuela.

In 2018 alone, the UNHCR delivered over \$34 million worth of core relief items to 39 emergency -affected countries via 19 chartered airlifts. The refugee agency also provided 3.4 million refugees with shelter in planned settlements. Shelter infrastructure comprised of 134,540 tents and 13,602 refugee housing units deployed to 39 countries and 27 operations.

The agency also implemented livelihood and economic inclusion initiatives across 75 countries affecting 1.8 million beneficiaries comprising people of concern and members of host communities.

In the Philippines, UNHCR continued to lead humanitarian efforts for the 77,650 IDPs in Mindanao, especially those who were displaced by the Marawi siege of 2017. Around 350 local government representatives and key stakeholders were also trained by UNHCR staff to enhance protection responses to displacement across Mindanao.



“*This is complex work in which UNHCR is constantly engaged but which also requires all countries to come together for a common good. It is one of the great challenges of our times.*”

-Filippo Grandi,
United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees



Struggle and hope

The millions displaced have different experience, but every one of them has lived through the challenge of losing homes.

While their lives are reduced to sleeping on floors and spending the day in the heat, Darfuri refugees are nevertheless safer in Niger than their homeland.

“This is a safe place for me. But I would still like to work and help my mother and brothers in Darfur,” said Abu Bakr, who fled conflict in Sudan to Libya and then Niger.

Meanwhile, Rohingya refugees asserted that there could be no return to Myanmar without addressing questions of citizenship, rights, and restitution.

“If I go back, I want freedom of movement and to play an active part in daily life. I want access to services like a normal citizen of Myanmar,” shared Nurul, a Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh.

Refugees and IDPs who had returned to their homes also expressed their anxieties about the future. “We may not be



here tomorrow, but our children will be,” said Zardan, an Afghan returnee.

Currently, UNHCR and its partners are assisting returnees and other people of concern alike in accessing basic needs, jobs, and services.

Continuing our journey

“At this moment when division and intolerance have gained ground in many parts of the world, it is critical that we are able to demonstrate, in practical, meaningful ways, that international cooperation and multilateralism still work,” said Filippo Grandi.

The number of displaced population has doubled in the last 20 years. Even with this rising trend, development actors, private sector entities, and individuals such as UNHCR’s community of donors are continuing their engagement and support for the most vulnerable people of our time.

Together, UNHCR with its partners and donors will stand in solidarity with the displaced and stateless families.



Marla Moran watches on as a customer orders a plate of hummus. The slip is delivered to the kitchen where they prepare the meal made of chick peas, tahini, and mushrooms. Every day, hundreds of dishes pass through the kitchens to feed hungry customers.

The hummus bowls which consists of five colorful and tasty dishes are a crowd pleaser. Proceeds from every bowl sold go to the men and women who lost their homes because of the syrian war. That a restaurant specializing in Mediterranean cuisine would support refugees in the Middle East seemed obvious to Marla. “We would give to refugees and I’d like to do that simply because we need to help everybody around the world,” Marla said.

From Hummus to Hope

How a restaurant reached the most vulnerable Syrian refugees

Taking a stance

The Café Mediterranean started 25 years ago with the goal of making Mediterranean food more accessible to Filipinos. “At that time, there was nowhere to eat this kind of food, except maybe in obscure places in Malate,” Marla said. Now, The Café Mediterranean has branches in malls across Makati.

The first time that the refugee crisis made a blip on the restaurant’s radar was 12 years ago or more. “There was a civil war either in Alegria or Tunisia, I can’t forget, we supported both of them. I came up with a menu called Peace Plates and the proceeds per plate went there,” she said.

In 2017, the Café Mediterranean began donating to UNHCR for the benefit of Syrian refugees. From the onset, Marla and her staff had in mind affecting those affected by the war.



“You ask me what inspired me to do this menu for the Syrians... It’s not about inspiration. It’s something we must do.”

- Marla Moran

An evolving recipe

The Syrian menu as fondly called consisted of recipes that originated from Syria. Years later and the menu continues - a testament to the evolving palette of Filipinos. To date there have been 12 variations of their menu. The dishes that they put out are inspired by other chefs or sometimes the result of kitchen experimentation. “(Sometimes) we were just messing around with the chefs and go ‘hey, this is good,’ she said with a laugh.

Not of all the Syrian recipes were a success. A personal favorite of Marla’s is the Saya-diyeh, a fish dish with rice. “I kinda felt bad. It was a Syrian dish. It was a bit weird, but we had to remove it.” Most successful of the Syrian plates are the current iteration—the hummus bowls. “Our contributions have gone up all of a sudden because of the hummus bowls,” she said.

The team doing good

With a desire to good, their support goes beyond refugees and displaced families. They work with different local non-profit organizations with different advocacies from ending hunger to providing education. “We want to do what we can to help here and abroad,” she says.



The desire to build a better life for others starts from the top. The chefs and wait staff in Café Mediterranean all have an urge to do better and extend a hand whenever they can. “Natutuwa yung mga guys dito, yung hindi lang dahil sa trabaho nila pero yung nakakatulong din sila kahit sa Syria,” said Beejay Ordonez, a manager in Café Mediterranean.

Caring Kids

“What can we do to help?” this is what one of the fifth year students of Mr. Andy King’s class asked when they learned about the children and the families who were forced to flee from their homes.

The Year 5 students of British School Manila with the support of their parents and teachers joined the global movement to #StepWithRefugees. In June 2019, teacher Mr. Andy King and his students held a fundraising photo essay exhibit in solidarity with the people who have lost their homes because of war, violence, and persecution.

The proceeds of the exhibit have gone to the internally displaced families in Mindanao who are still struggling with protracted displacement.



A Lesson in Empathy

It all started months ago when the mostly 10-year-old students were shown photos of refugees and internally displaced families who were in the midst of fleeing from their homes. The children took a look at the photos of the men, women, and children who were crossing seas, scrapping for food, and waiting by fenced borders. The connection that they made was instantaneous.

“I asked myself if I was a refugee, then how would I feel?” a student said. Fear, sadness, hopelessness, and anger were just some of the things that coursed through the students. With the guidance of their teacher, they put themselves in the shoes of the most vulnerable people, processed their feelings and wrote it down on paper.

“I am proud of how the kids are able to learn empathy,” one parent said about the exhibit.

In Solidarity

“This is just a step for them,” said Glenn Hardy, the BSM Primary Head teacher. BSM follows a think, feel, act rule which aims to foster the students’ empathy and leadership skills. “We don’t just aim to show that there is a problem, but that they can be a part of the solution.” he said.

The children with their ability to put themselves in the situation of others and their creativity in finding solutions are, indeed, able to make a difference in the lives of many.

Pia Paguio

leading the charge in saving lives

The future is female and we clearly see it in Pia Paguio, one of the many outstanding Filipino women who are blazing the trail of humanitarian work in the international stage. For the past two decades, she earned her keep in challenging missions in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Burundi, bringing along Filipino values of hospitality and bayanihan.

Now, she heads UNHCR in Thailand as its deputy representative, delivering a holistic impact in the region with her transformative leadership. This is the story of how this inspiring Filipina get things done for the refugee cause.



Journey to service

Protecting displaced people had been Pia's calling for most of her adult life, but her younger self initially had sights on somewhere else. Her specialized training in international relations and development politics groomed her into the fields of foreign service and political affairs. The UNHCR swiftly swerved her life's trajectory into a life of service.

"[Once] I got into UNHCR, I was hooked! I was motivated by the relevance of UNHCR in world affairs, but more so by the feeling of giving hope to people who have lost so much, and helping them to rebuild their lives," Pia recounted.

Twenty years since taking that first step, the Quezon City native now leads a diverse team of professionals and humanitarian workers whose primary task is to safeguard the rights of people-of-concern in Thailand. Their major goal is to build better futures for refugees displaced in camps as well as an urban refugee community. They are also providing assistance to the Thai government in resolving statelessness.

"My day usually starts with catching up with the different teams I manage – both in the field offices as well as in Bangkok – to troubleshoot any outstanding issues and to make sure that we are all on the same page," Pia shared. She also works closely with crucial partners in delivering lifesaving support for refugees.

Career milestones

A particularly life-changing experience in Pia's career was at a mission in wartorn Afghanistan in the early 2000s, her first field posting for the UNHCR. This was an important assignment for Pia as it further opened her eyes to the importance of the UNHCR's work.

"It is sometimes hard not to be frustrated by the time it takes for advocacy to bear fruit."

"I remember the optimism as our female colleagues took off their burqas and came back to work for the first time in years, as the positive developments allowed for UNHCR to rebuild its operation and deliver aid inside Afghanistan, and as thousands of refugees came home from exile every day," Pia recalled of this experience.

Another memorable experience was at an airport in Bangkok when Pia ran into a refugee whom she helped to resettle in the United States. "She remembered me as her caseworker and was so grateful. I was incredibly humbled at how my efforts had helped to give her this opportunity," she shared. These incidents are just a small sample of the innumerable cases where Pia's competence for humanitarian work translated to concrete solutions that made a difference in the lives of hundreds of refugees.

Compassionate leadership

While assuming a management role, Pia never shies away from engaging herself with individual cases from the field. Not only an astute problem solver, Pia also possesses



a unique pulse on human empathy. She is often moved by stories that narrate the difficulties that refugees go through.

For example, Pia cited a current Thai policy that only exempted children and their mothers from detention if arrested for immigration violations, while the father must remain in detention. "While this policy definitely represents a step in the right direction, as a wife and mother of two children myself, I cannot imagine being in such a situation," she said. Despite these challenges, Pia acknowledges the bountiful feelings of hope and joy that come as a reward whenever they accomplish their job.

Lessons from the present and past

The monumental task of leading a team that rebuilds lives requires a lot of grit, patience, and endurance. Pia gathers strength from the solidarity and friendship that are formed among her team during tough times. "One common thread in all these years is that I have been fortunate to be part of or led great teams. The dedication and energy of so many of our colleagues, often in the face of adversity, is truly inspiring," she shared.

Pia also draws inspiration from the Philippines' rich history of welcoming refugees from around the world - from Spanish Republicans in the 1930s, German and Austrian Jews escaping in the early 1940s.



Indeed, the Philippines' tradition of hospitality towards refugees continues to inspire among the region. In a regional meeting on statelessness, Pia shared that the participants had been hearing about the many best practices of the Philippine division of the UNHCR. Most of them looked forward to their Filipino colleagues to share their knowledge and experience to the region.

"It made me so proud to be a Filipino! At a time when the situation of forced displacement is worse than it has been since the Second World War and where borders are closing everywhere, positive examples of solidarity such as these give hope and show leadership and courage. This should drive us all to do more and better."

**Saving Lives
Safeguarding Rights
Building Better Futures**








UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



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