

# With you



## Advocating for the Protection of Human Dignity

### *What's Inside?*

- Giving Hope to Marawi's Displaced
- Understanding the Rohingya Refugee Crisis





## The Spirit of Generosity, Compassion, and Inclusion

Over the last nine months of 2017, we have witnessed the continuous displacement of families due to war, conflict, and persecution. In emergency hotspots in various parts of the globe, families face threats and heightened vulnerabilities as they make dangerous journeys to safety.

But one does not have to look far to get a picture of what displacement is.

Here in the Philippines, the fighting between government forces and pro-ISIS militants in Marawi has uprooted hundreds of thousands of people from the city and from their homes in neighboring communities. Some of them have even been displaced multiple times in the past.

As of the end of September, an estimated 360,000 people remain displaced, about 94% of whom live as home-based IDPs (internally displaced persons) while the remaining 6% live in evacuation centers and community-based evacuation camps.

Another crisis recently erupted just near our shores: The new outbreak of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state has forced nearly 400,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh for several days to escape persecution and violence.

The Rohingya are a stateless Muslim minority in Myanmar. As a consequence they have faced discrimination and extreme poverty for decades.

One of our colleagues who has been doing humanitarian work for decades has described the recent displacement as “the most desperate and devastating thing” she has witnessed.

Many of the new Rohingya refugees are staying in the makeshift settlements or among local Bangladeshi host communities who generously share whatever resources they have. These spontaneous sites require proper planning to ensure basic shelter, safety and hygiene standards.

Against this backdrop, I encourage you to reach out to your family and friends to build solidarity for the families you support as a donor of UNHCR. There's no perfect time than now to show generosity and compassion, and to promote inclusion to support displaced families here in the Philippines and in emergency hotspots across the world.

Thank you for heeding our call, through your committed donation.

We are grateful that you continue to stand with us and with the vulnerable families under our care.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Yasser Saad**  
Head of Office  
UNHCR Philippines



# Hope Over Despair as Marawi's Families Dream of Peace

“I cry every night wondering where my children are. One of them is just a 10-year-old boy, and sometimes I dream of him calling my name for help,”

-Fatima Lumabao, one of the hundreds who found refuge at the Buru-un Evacuation Center in the outskirts of Iligan City.

Fatima, 49, sat in silence as she described life in the evacuation camp months since pro-ISIS militants laid siege to Marawi City. Of her eight children, four have gone missing. To date, she is still seeking help from authorities in search of her lost children.

While she waits for her family to be reunited, she tries to be resilient with the help of families she has met at the evacuation center. “A lot of people here care for me while I try to cope. I may be smiling now but at nightfall, when everyone is asleep, that’s when I yearn for my family to be complete again,” she said.



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Fatima is among the mothers who shared with UNHCR Advocate Atom Araullo stories of their harrowing journey to safety, as well as challenges while living in displacement. Last July, as conflict in Marawi stretched past its second month, Araullo met with families residing in evacuation camps in Iligan City and the Lanao provinces to listen to their plight.

According to government estimates as of the end of September 2017, as many as 359,680 persons have been displaced as a result of the conflict. Of these, just six percent reside in government-managed evacuation centers in Iligan City and in neighboring municipalities. The majority are home-based or are in community-managed evacuation camps

across seven regions.

Most displaced persons fled their homes with just the clothes on their back and the few belongings they could carry.

Among them is 100-year-old Moreg Sarakan, who walked by foot to reach Buru-un, which is approximately 40 kilometers away from home. Despite her age, Babo Moreg vividly recounted the long and tough slog away from the sound of airstrikes pummeling their homes.

## Atom Araullo visits evacuation camps

Through this visit, Araullo hoped to draw attention to the prevailing concerns resulting from more than two months of displacement.

“At this point, it’s really more of a day-to-day survival in evacuation centers. I hope the conflict does not drag on for years, and while families are temporarily displaced here, how are they going to live? They cannot rely on dole-outs all the time. When the crisis is over and when they return to their homes, how will they rebuild after they have lost all their belongings and their homes have been destroyed?” he pondered.

“Providing support goes beyond the basic needs like food, shelter, and emergency aid. It also entails assisting

them when they go back to their respective communities,” Araullo added.

Araullo concluded his mission with a visit to an evacuation center in Saguiaran, Lanao del Sur.

Here, he met mothers whose families have been displaced multiple times since 2008. Though he expressed concern about the impact of protracted displacement to families, he underscored the need to restore hope among them.



“In this evacuation center alone, I met families who fled fighting in Maguindanao and who have relocated to Marawi. They rebuilt their lives there, only to be displaced once more by fighting. So just imagine living in those circumstances. How can you hope to have a better life if you’re always back to zero? In terms of aspiration, I think most of the displaced families here really want one simple thing: to live a life free from that kind of anxiety, from that fear that all the future holds is conflict,” said Araullo.

“Providing support goes beyond the basic needs like food, shelter, and emergency aid. It also entails assisting them when they go back to their respective communities,”

-Atom Araullo, UNHCR Advocate





## Saving Lives, Restoring Hopes, Rebuilding Futures

More than four months since fighting erupted in Marawi City, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children continue to live in displacement. Families yearn for home and a life away from fear and conflict. With you by our side, we can continue addressing their most urgent protection needs and be with them every step of the way as they try to rebuild their lives.

When fighting broke out in Marawi on 23 May, its residents had no inkling that the armed conflict would drag on for several months—leaving their lives hanging in the balance.

Massive civilian displacement occurred as a result of the clashes between the military and pro-ISIS militants. Based on the Department of Social Welfare and Development's report as of end-September, the estimated number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has reached a total nearly 360,000 persons.

As conflict continues, the level of vulnerability among the displaced families continues to rise.

But with your support, UNHCR remains on the ground to help provide them with protection and to help strengthen the government's response to the displacement crisis.



The nature of the response has already transitioned from emergency assistance to early recovery and rehabilitation. UNHCR is on the front lines of advocating for displaced families' greater participation, and in shaping the national plan of the government-led Task Force Bangon Marawi.

We thank you for your committed donation, which helps us restore the hopes and dreams of our displaced brothers and sisters from Marawi City and neighboring communities. Your support will not just help us protect their rights, it will also help them get back on their feet so they can resume living their lives in safety and dignity after displacement.

### Where are displaced families staying?



EVACUATION CENTERS



COMMUNITY-BASED EVACUATION CENTERS



HOST FAMILIES

## Giving Displaced Families a Voice



Hanifah Acmad is one of the hundreds of thousands of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Marawi. Led by her hope to be a voice for them, she volunteered with UNHCR to help identify the most pressing issues and challenges confronting her fellow IDPs.

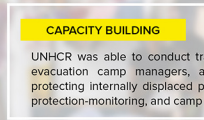
"I told my cousin, 'Let's volunteer. Anyway, we are IDPs ourselves and we know what the needs of the IDPs are,'" shares Hanifah. This is her third time volunteering as an enumerator following the conflict that broke out in Marawi City in May 2017.

## How UNHCR was able to respond, thanks to you



### DISTRIBUTION OF CORE RELIEF ITEMS

In the immediate aftermath of the crisis, UNHCR delivered core relief items like tarpaulins for emergency shelter, plastic sheets, and kitchen sets to evacuation centers and community-based evacuation camps.



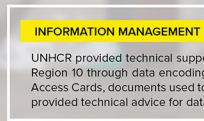
### CAPACITY BUILDING

UNHCR was able to conduct training for local social welfare officers, evacuation camp managers, and volunteers to educate them on protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs), safeguarding IDP rights, protection-monitoring, and camp management.



### PROTECTION MONITORING

UNHCR conducted visits to IDPs residing in evacuation centers, community-based evacuation camps, and home-based IDPs. UNHCR consolidated their protection concerns to help local authorities determine the proper course of action.



### INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

UNHCR provided technical support to local authorities in the ARMM and Region 10 through data encoding of the Disaster Assistance and Family Access Cards, documents used to identify and register IDPs. UNHCR also provided technical advice for data consolidation and analysis.



### ADVOCACY AND COORDINATION

With other members of the Mindanao Protection Cluster, UNHCR lobbies for added support to be extended to home-based IDPs, strengthening of Family Tracing and Reunification protocols, proper verification and registration of IDPs, and the recognition of community-based evacuation camps as official evacuation centers.

Hanifah, 22, is just one of over 200 enumerators working with UNHCR in conducting the Community Engagement Intent Survey and Needs Assessment among IDPs. In her trips, she uses a phone app to record the data she collects.

"They asked us why we wanted to volunteer, and we said we really just wanted to help the IDPs. They asked us if we would still do it even without a salary, and we said it's all right as long as we will be able to help them and see for ourselves the situation of other IDPs like us," Hanifah describes. Because of their deployment to different areas, Hanifah and her friends parted ways, but working with UNHCR now helped bring them together.

Some 14,000 IDPs participated in the survey. Initial results showed gaps in humanitarian assistance and prevalence of protection issues. Spearheaded by UNHCR, the survey intends to serve both as an advocacy tool urging duty-bearers to continuously address humanitarian and protection needs arising from the Marawi conflict.

UNHCR will turn over the survey results to Task Force Bangon Marawi and help shape the government's planning for the recovery and rehabilitation of Marawi City.



How is it like being on the front lines of providing aid and protection to families who have just fled fighting and left everything behind? Get to know Cliff Alvarico, one of the hardworking humanitarians at UNHCR.



## CLIFF ALVARICO

Program Officer, UNHCR Philippines

### *Please introduce yourself briefly.*

I am Cliff Winston Alvarico and I serve as the Program Officer of UNHCR's Philippine office. Since the conflict in Marawi broke out nearly three months ago, I concurrently headed our satellite office in Iligan City.

### *How long have you been with UNHCR and why do you find your work fulfilling?*

Being a humanitarian connects directly to me, as a human being. Perhaps nothing can be more fulfilling than being able to demonstrate compassion to the people we serve. This must have been why I have been a humanitarian worker for nearly two decades now, the last seven years of which have been with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

### *What is a typical day like?*

Whenever we do Protection Monitoring in evacuation camps in Iligan City and other municipalities neighboring Marawi City, we provide a listening ear to families who have fled the fighting. We capture what they say and elevate their concerns to the proper forum.

We amplify their voice; protection is all about that. If I were to summarize what protection is without being too technical and legalistic, it's a matter of listening to displaced families' pleas. In doing so, we are able to understand what rights are at stake and what their vulnerabilities are. They may not be aware that their rights are being compromised, but we do. We do not confront if they think they are violated. We simply ask them, "How are you now? What are the difficulties you encounter? How are these being addressed? What are your observations? Are you being discriminated against?" For

every issue, we try to understand how and where we can effectively respond.

### *What are some of the threats you face on the job?*

Every day, aid workers put their lives on the line to provide life-saving assistance to underserved families affected by conflict. However, humanitarians worldwide are increasingly being targeted. In 2016, for example, there were attacks against health workers and facilities in 20 conflict-affected countries, resulting in 863 medical personnel being killed or injured.

When I joined UNHCR's Emergency Response Team after civil war broke out in South Sudan in 2013, I learned first-hand that humanitarian work is fraught with real threats to life, especially when you come face to face with armed actors. You are serving a displaced community or population that could be perceived as a problem. When you negotiate for access to reach them, you are being accused of siding with one party by both parties. Even if you position yourself as a humanitarian

worker, you are still being threatened.

“Whoever saves one life saves the world entire.”  
This Oscar Schindler quote keeps me going as we humanitarians rise to the challenge of supporting people affected by humanitarian crises.

### *What makes being a humanitarian worthwhile?*

Despite the challenges that we encounter, being a humanitarian worker brings me contentment and fulfillment that no other job would.



Last August 19, we marked World Humanitarian Day to celebrate humanitarians around the world who continue to help save lives, protect rights, and build better futures for the millions of people who have been forced to flee.

The day is a meaningful one of us at UNHCR. On that very day in 2003, 22 aid workers were killed, and more than 100 others injured, in a blast that ripped apart the UN Headquarters in Baghdad. Since then, we mark 19 August to honor humanitarians everywhere.





# Understanding the Rohingya Emergency Crisis

This is not how Mabia Khatun, 75, imagined she would spend her old age: as a refugee, cocooned in a blanket and carried for 17 days through the jungle, fleeing devastating violence in Myanmar.



As Bangladeshi fishermen pass the blanket by on the way to their boats, a weak hand emerges to beg for water. Slowly, Mabia's dusty face emerges as her sons lower the bamboo stick that the blanket is hanging from.

"I didn't know what was happening because I was in the blanket," she wheezes. She is sick, and thirsty. It is hours since she last drank, and sweating heavily in the blanket, she is wilting. "I am unable to walk, but to live, I have to fight."

Mabia is among the estimated **430,000 Rohingya** who have fled the latest bout of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state since August 2017.

Arriving by foot and boat, they are in urgent need of shelter, food and medical care, and are stretching Bangladesh's ability to cope.

This latest outbreak of violence has made their displacement one of the fastest growing refugee crises of recent years, creating enormous humanitarian needs in an area of Bangladesh already affected by earlier refugee influxes, recent floods and not equipped to cope with large number of new arrivals.

## UNHCR's Response

Kutapulung and Nayapara, the two official, established UNHCR refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh are now completely overcrowded and families are spilling into makeshift sites on the side of the road. UNHCR is fully functional on the ground in the two camps and have already been distributing shelter and life-saving assistance.

In response to the unfolding crisis during the first two weeks of September, UNHCR has emptied its warehouses in Bangladesh to assist the newly arrived stateless Rohingya refugees.

Priority in distribution is given to shelter materials and basic aid items as thousands of new arrivals are struggling to find even rudimentary protection from the elements.

Many Rohingya refugee families are sleeping rough on roadsides and riverbanks. UNHCR has also witnessed remarkable generosity of Bangladeshi communities in Teknaf and elsewhere who have been welcoming refugees into their homes and sharing resources with them.

UNHCR continues to deploy additional emergency staff.

Based on the numbers of arrivals and needs assessments made by field staff, UNHCR urgently requires additional funds to meet the immediate needs of new arrivals and to provide protection and life-saving assistance.

With the influx increasing daily, UNHCR is appealing for an initial amount of **USD 24 million** for the emergency humanitarian response in Bangladesh until the end of year.

### Rohingya Displacement

# 430,000

forced to flee to Bangladesh  
since August 2017

Nayapara & Kutapulung  
are official and established UNHCR camps

Shelter materials and basic aid items are being distributed by UNHCR on-ground staff



**EMERGENCY APPEAL**

**Shelter and life-saving assistance needed for thousands of Rohingya refugee families**



Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees have been forced to flee to Bangladesh escaping violence since August 2017. Most are women and children.

Much more needs to be done to respond to the emergency needs of children, women and men fleeing conflict. Please donate now to provide **emergency shelter and a Rescue Kit** that includes sleeping mats, blankets, solar lamps, jerry cans, kitchen sets, and mosquito nets.

**[donate.unhcr.ph/rohingya](https://donate.unhcr.ph/rohingya)**

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