



With you

What's Inside

A YEAR OF COVID-19:

HOW YOU HELPED WHEN WE ALL WENT THROUGH A GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

Since the beginning of the pandemic, your committed and timely support made it possible to stay and deliver for the world's most vulnerable, as UNHCR responded to the world's worst public health emergency in its 70-year history.

A FATHER'S PLIGHT AND THE JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

COVID-19 has exacerbated the vulnerabilities of communities facing recurring conflicts and displacement. For a father like Ryan Gulo, a new WASH facility means more than just a source of safe water for his children – it is the first step to a journey towards recovery.

RIPPLES OF KINDNESS

Acts of kindness have a ripple effect that bridges generations and surmounts challenges. See kindness through the eyes of a UNHCR donor, a campaigner, and a project partner.



The women no longer have to walk all the way to the river to wash clothes, thanks to the new water system benefiting 3,500 individuals in Brgy. Ampuan, Buldon, Maguindanao, a community affected by displacement. This WASH facility is among the fifteen projects funded by Coca-Cola Foundation, which in total benefit at least 45,000 vulnerable individuals across Mindanao.

© UNHCR/Jonathan Porras

Dear valued donor,

In March 2020, exactly a year ago, our lives turned upside down when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic. The threat spread across the world, and for many months, we all lived in uncertainty.

To some extent, that uncertainty is still there, but with the promise of vaccine, all of us are keenly moving towards the path to recovery. The goal is for everyone, including refugees and forcibly displaced persons, to recover in the same manner that acts of kindness were extended when all of us were coping with the worst pandemic this generation faced. Even with your own challenges, you have responded with compassion – knowing that we can all truly be safe only when the most vulnerable among our societies are safe too.

The stories in this newsletter will show how acts of kindness, which are just as contagious as any pandemic, have also spread across the world. The solidarity that you have shown alongside the many partners we work with – national and local governments, the private sector, and other humanitarian actors – have created a ripple effect, reaching forcibly displaced populations around the world who are most at risk and have been disproportionately impacted.

You will read about how you and our partners have helped reached communities affected by displacement in Mindanao; how life-saving water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities have eased the burden of

mothers who used to walk to the river to wash clothes and fetch potable water, and fathers who worry every single day about how to provide for children and keep them safe amid a pandemic. Your committed support helps them in their journey towards recovery and rebuilding their lives in safety and dignity.

In this issue, we also feature a project partner and a prolific campaigner – frontliners who continued to go out following COVID protocols to reach as well as raise awareness and seek support for and on behalf of the people we serve, at a time when financial aid is needed the most. You will read about a donor like yourself, whose actions are shaped by the lifelong example of generosity shown by her parents to anyone who needed their support.

This crisis is not over yet, but these acts of kindness give us confidence that we can surmount any challenge if we continue standing together.

Thank you for responding with compassion and helping ensure that as we recover from the pandemic together, we are not leaving anyone behind.

Stay safe and be kind,

Your UNHCR Philippines family

A Year of COVID-19: How You Helped UNHCR Stay and Deliver

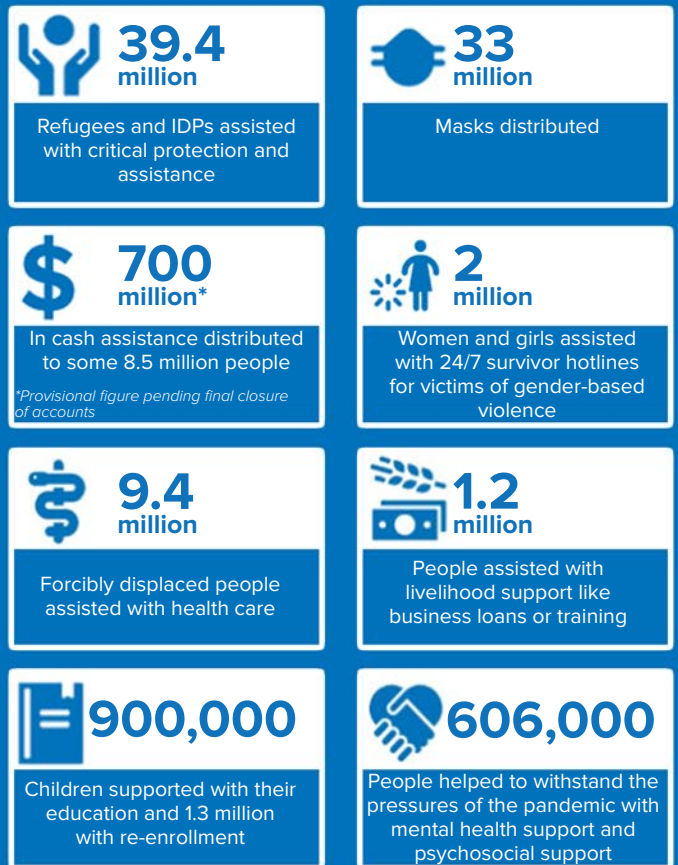
For 70 years, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has been **on the frontlines of every displacement crisis** – yet 2020 was a year unlike any other. The coronavirus exposed the fragility of our **health and livelihoods**, while magnifying the already **acute vulnerabilities** refugees and the displaced face around the world.

But the pandemic has also exposed remarkable resilience. The resilience of the people we serve, who continue to endure life-threatening journeys in search of safety. The resilience of UNHCR's global team, which stayed and delivered. **And the resilience of our supporters – you – who have remained by our side throughout this global crisis.**

As an organisation almost entirely funded by voluntary contributions, **we simply cannot save lives without your help.** I want to thank you for your continued support.

FILIPPO GRANDI
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR'S COVID-19 RESPONSE IN 2020



Source: UNHCR's Global COVID-19 Needs for 2021 | February 2021 reporting.unhcr.org/covid-19

The Impact of Your Support to the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Ongoing UNHCR Operations in the Philippines

Since the beginning of the pandemic, UNHCR Philippines, with your support, in coordination with partners, and together with other United Nations agencies in the country, has mobilized rapidly and comprehensively to help the government respond to this unprecedented crisis – particularly in communities with **refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced populations, stateless, and persons at risk of statelessness**. They are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, and they cannot be left behind in the response.



UNHCR **advocates** for persons of concern to have **access to health facilities and services**, including COVID-19 testing and the ongoing national coronavirus vaccination program.



UNHCR **communicates critical health, hygiene, and safety information** in languages used by our populations of concern, and conducts **community level awareness-raising sessions**.



UNHCR **coordinates with the government** both at the national and at the local level to ensure that persons of concern are included in **pandemic assistance and livelihood programs**.



Together with project partners, UNHCR also supports persons of concern and their children in accessing **educational opportunities**.

100,000+ individuals reached with **quick impact projects in 2020**



Your support reached the most remote and vulnerable displacement-affected communities through 41 quick impact projects that provide ease of access to clean water supply and livelihood support, as well as promote self-reliance, empowerment, and peaceful co-existence between displaced families and their host communities – helping them to recover and rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

63,000+ individuals provided with **life-saving assistance in 2020**



Your support ensured UNHCR's timely response during emergencies brought by recurring conflicts and natural disasters amid the pandemic – complementing government efforts with core relief items such as blankets, hygiene kits, mosquito nets, personal protective equipment (PPE), plastic tarpaulins, sleeping mats, and solar lamps.

A Father's Plight and the Journey to Recovery

Water used to be a constant source of worry for Ryan Gulo and the residents of Brgy. Buayan, Datu Piang, Maguindanao. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, Ryan, 35, was perpetually worried about the safety of his two children. Restrictions on mobility as well as the remoteness of their barangay made it very difficult to provide for his family's needs, and the lack of access to clean water exposed them to additional health and protection risks.

Ryan shares, *"Naapektuhan talaga. Hindi tayo nakakananap ng pang araw-araw kasi nga hindi makakalabas eh,"* **(We were really affected. I couldn't provide for the day-to-day because I couldn't even go out.)**

Construction work, his usual means of livelihood, was put on a standstill, so Ryan turned to planting and selling vegetables. He would then ration his earnings to feed his two children and meet his family's basic necessities. There was no other source of potable water, so he had to wait for the refilling station that would service their barangay – setting aside 15 pesos for a 20-liter bottle of water that would last them for the next two to three days.

Thanks to the water system provided by Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines Inc, Ryan and his family now have ready access to clean water for drinking, handwashing, and bathing.

With a smile of relief, he shares, "Nagpapasalamat ako dahil may palibreng tubig... pang-araw-araw na tubig pang-inom, panghugas din." **(I'm very thankful for the free water supply, which we can easily access for our daily needs of drinking and washing.)**

Recurring conflicts amid a global pandemic

Access to basic services like water is only one of the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by the residents of Brgy. Buayan. Recurring armed conflicts in Maguindanao have displaced thousands of individuals over the years, particularly in the SPMS Box (Salibu, Pagatin, Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak) and its peripheral communities.

Due to its proximity to the SPMS box, Brgy. Buayan has long been a host community and safe haven for internally displaced persons (IDPs) forced to flee from the conflicts in neighboring areas. Ryan himself used to reside in Talitay, Maguindanao, but given the recurring armed conflicts and clan feuds in their area, he had to move to Brgy. Buayan, which is where he eventually started a family.

Despite its capacity to host forcibly displaced families, Brgy. Buayan has limited resources to provide for the basic needs of the caseload IDPs like Ryan's family. As Ryan has experienced, restrictions on mobility have hampered access to livelihood opportunities and critical services.



The water system has been a tremendous help not only to Ryan's family but to the 350 households residing in Brgy. Buayan. With no direct water source, households had to rely on scheduled deliveries before the construction of this water system in late 2020.
© UNHCR/Jonathan Porras



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Nagpapasalamat ako dahil may palibreng tubig... pang-araw-araw na tubig pang-inom, panghugas din.

”



Ryan Gulo

Brgy. Buayan, Datu Piang, Maguindanao

Through the Php4.8M grant provided by **Coca-Cola Foundation**, and the complementary work of our partners, local government and IDPs themselves, **fifteen remote and vulnerable communities** will benefit from the projects, which are being implemented from **October 2020 to June 2021**.

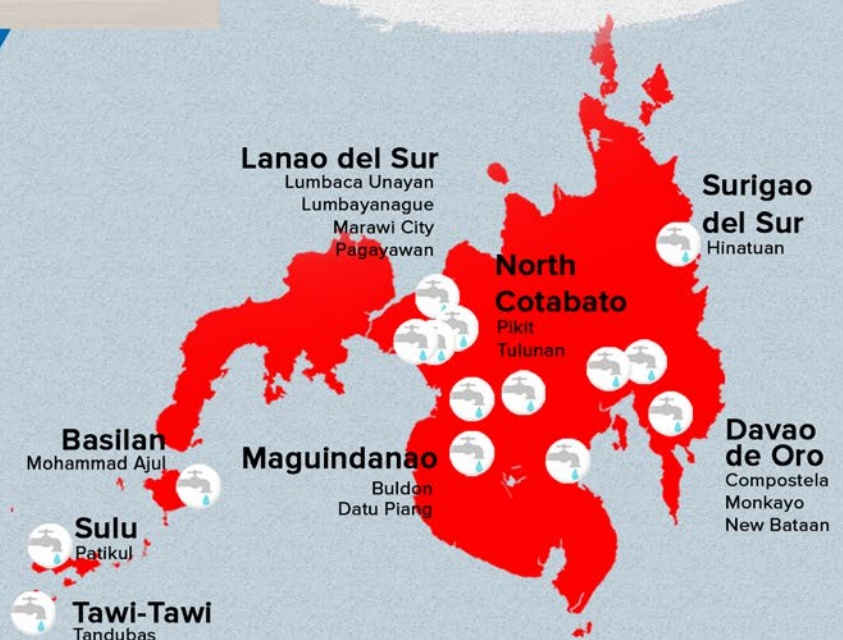
This ensures that throughout and beyond this period, access to clean water and sanitation, communal latrines, toilets, wells & water systems, and hygiene education are being provided to these fifteen displacement-affected communities around Mindanao.

Working together to bring life-saving WASH facilities to vulnerable communities

With the help of donors like you and through partnerships with corporations like Coca-Cola, UNHCR is able to mainstream and integrate the protection interventions for COVID-19 into the planning and design of quick impact projects like this water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facility, which provides access to clean water, promotes community empowerment and peaceful co-existence, and strengthens the resilience of the forcibly displaced.

As of January 2021, there are 236,525 forcibly displaced individuals around Mindanao due to conflict and natural disasters. As new emergencies arise and older ones like recurring conflicts persist, they need sustainable solutions now more than ever.

Your committed support makes it possible for UNHCR to stay and deliver for those who have been driven from their homes and the communities they now live in. Together, let us recover from this pandemic without leaving the most vulnerable behind.



Ripples of Kindness

Kindness has become a conscious choice for **Kristel Marie Gonzales**, who wants to live a life of purpose. A loyal monthly giver since 2017, Kristel believes that her support as a donor is one of the solid acts of kindness she can do today.

Kristel sees her support to UNHCR as a privilege that has given her the opportunity to be involved and to be in solidarity with those in need of a sense of belongingness and hope. She shares, **“I feel like we generally take for granted the comforts we have here in Manila. The security, the freedom, and the stability of our not-so-perfect metropolitan is still a huge blessing compared to what our brothers and sisters go through in living through the remnants of conflicts in Mindanao.”** She continues, **“to me, it is important that we help them rebuild their lives through a steady and reliable stream of support.”**

Part of the development sector herself, Kristel is deeply passionate about discovering how the world works – how societies, people, systems and technology work together to promote development. With this, she noted her belief that while true progress can be achieved through systemic changes, we can also contribute something as individuals through simple acts of kindness like committing to give to charity on a monthly basis.

Taking pride in her story, she honored the biggest influence of her life, who not only taught her the value of kindness, but continuously manifested and exemplified this principle all throughout – her parents.

Humbled as she shared, **“my parents also started in life without much of the comforts and resources. Yet, they found ways to help their families and always give support, even if it emptied their own pockets. I grew up seeing them constantly extending a helping hand to relatives, friends, and even strangers, and witnessing this played a critical role in shaping who I am and what I am today.”**



Kristel with her parents

Kristel may be modest about the amount of her monthly gift, but her long-term commitment to UNHCR enabled us to have a sustained pipeline of resources when emergencies happen. **“It is my hope that with my small act of kindness, it allows forcibly displaced communities to be one step closer to living a life of dignity and inclusivity,”** she shares.

“

The security, freedom, and stability of our not-so-perfect metropolitan is still a huge blessing compared to what our brothers and sisters go through in living through the remnants of conflicts in Mindanao.

To me, it is important that we help them rebuild their lives through a steady and reliable stream of support.

”

Kristel Marie Gonzales
Monthly Donor since July 2017



**UPDATE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS AND
SHARE YOUR DONOR JOURNEY**

unhcr.org/ph/donors-update



“*Never get tired of believing in the goodness of others. A lot of people want to help out, despite COVID-19.*”



I greatly appreciate our UNHCR donors. They give without expecting anything in return.

”

Linea Denise Donasco

Campaigner since October 2019

Every day, **Linea Denise Donasco** looks forward to going to the field and witnessing the ripple effect of kindness firsthand. She loves interacting with different kinds of people, and she knows that she carries with her the responsibility of sharing the plight of forcibly displaced families to those who may want to help.

COVID-19 posed multiple challenges to UNHCR’s efforts in reaching potential donors through face-to-face booths. As extended lockdowns made face-to-face fundraising difficult, innovation was imperative. Denise adapted and learned telemarketing as an alternative way to reach potential donors during that period. She was worried at first but this did not stop her from doing her best to generate support for the most vulnerable.

When UNHCR’s face-to-face campaign resumed, campaigners like Denise adhered to the health protocols in malls, airports, supermarkets. Our teams are fully equipped with personal protective equipment, contactless devices, and hygiene kits for sanitary management and health protection. There was much uncertainty brought by the pandemic, but Denise persevered, saying, **“If you set your mentality straight, and you never fail to see the goodness in other people, you’ll never get tired. Every day is a new opportunity. There are a lot of other people who want to help. I take pride in the fact that our job makes people realize a meaningful sense in giving.”**

Denise considers it an honor to see how the kindness of donors trumps any initial hesitations to donate, after they are made to understand the challenges and hardships forcibly displaced families face on a daily basis. Through her efforts, 420 new donors were given the opportunity to be part of UNHCR’s growing community of monthly givers.

Visit our website to check the schedule of our face-to-face campaigns and list of authorized campaigners:

unhcr.org/ph/visit-our-booth

The life-saving work of UNHCR continues even with the coronavirus pandemic adding a layer of challenge when movements are restricted. With the help of donors and project partners like the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), we were able to stay and deliver for the most vulnerable at the time they needed it the most.

Joey Cabilao, one of ACTED’s community organizers, was determined to reach out to communities at the height of the pandemic, even amid challenging circumstances. From his experience of being on the receiving end of life-saving emergency assistance during Super typhoon Haiyan (*Yolanda*) in 2013, he knows how important it is to persevere and ensure that the most vulnerable receive aid when they need it the most.

“I was a 2013 Typhoon Yolanda survivor and have seen a lot of humanitarian workers who are willing to devote their lives and time in helping and serving the affected communities, as a result it is what motivated me to do the same,” he says.

Joey remains positive despite the uncertainties on the field, and continues to spread the ripples of kindness that he himself received before.

“*It is overwhelming for me to think back that I used to be the one who needed help, and now I am the one offering help.*”

”



Joey Cabilao

Project Partner (ACTED Philippines)



Let us all recover from the pandemic without leaving the most vulnerable behind.

Forcibly displaced **children, women**, and the **elderly** are at greatest risk today. **Loss of livelihoods, disrupted learning**, and **deepening poverty** on top of a global **health emergency, climate crisis**, and recurring armed **conflict** are endangering the lives of **236,525*** displaced individuals in Mindanao.

We are calling on your kindness once more.

Many more are in need of help. Access to clean water, sanitation, hygiene, and vaccines will help the most vulnerable recover from the global pandemic. Including them in national health response plans means we will all recover in dignity and safety.

**Source: Protection Cluster Displacement Dashboard Issue no. 77 (Jan2021)*

GIVE AN ADDITIONAL ONE-TIME GIFT TODAY TO EASE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Php 10,000

helps install water tanks and pumps in transitory sites and rural centers for internally displaced families and their host communities

Php 5,000

helps construct communal toilets with a handwashing station for a community affected by displacement

Php 3,000

helps rehabilitate water systems in the most vulnerable and remote communities



SCAN TO DONATE
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