

With you

What's Inside

HOW YOU HELP BUILD INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Twelve cities in the Philippines are building inclusive societies where all individuals, including refugees, can live in safety, become self-reliant, and contribute to their local communities

HOW YOU RESPOND TO MULTIPLE EMERGENCIES

Your kindness has enabled UNHCR to respond to multiple emergencies affecting the most vulnerable forcibly displaced communities in Mindanao

HOW YOUR KINDNESS CAN CHANGE THE STORY OF 2020

Meet some of our donors and partners who have responded to this year's unprecedented challenges with the power of kindness



The multiple typhoons that devastated the Philippines in the last quarter of 2020 made those already living in displacement even more vulnerable. With your help, the support of the Australian Government, and in partnership with Community and Family Services International (CFSI), UNHCR Philippines provided life-saving assistance to 3,898 families who have been displaced due to the flash floods in 11 barangays in Pigcawayan, Special Geographic Area, BARMM. © CFSI

Dear valued donor,

These twelve months of 2020 placed us in uniquely difficult circumstances. The global COVID-19 pandemic redefined our lives and livelihoods around the world. Closer to home, it has affected every one of us, in every city, community, and household.

In our last issue this year, we at UNHCR want to express our deep gratitude for your continued commitment and support to enable us to continue our work for the most vulnerable while you yourselves face problems ranging from economic uncertainty, grief, sickness, isolation and/or increased caring responsibilities. You may be frontliners, new entrepreneurs, workers in the public or private sector, parents, and carers who are adapting and finding new ways to carry out multiple responsibilities, yet still extended help to those whom UNHCR is here to serve. *It has been truly inspiring to have your support in the midst of your personal challenges.*

With your help, we have continued our work to support duty bearers to deliver a positive impact to our communities and persons of concern. To this day, we are delivering life-saving supplies and training in direct response to the health crisis. You have also helped us reach more than 100,000 individuals in the most remote communities – and now they have hand-washing facilities, livelihood support, and other quick impact projects to help them become self-reliant, even beyond this pandemic. You inspire the same wave of kindness in cities and local government units who have taken concrete steps to be inclusive and leave no one behind.

This year has been unlike any other. But the kindness you continue to show is what makes it truly extraordinary.

Our traditional year-end celebrations come at a time of great disruption and loss. But it is also a time with the potential for transformation and change for the better. 2021 will come with its own challenges as we work towards rebuilding, but together, we can emerge stronger. **The mission and the values of UNHCR will be more important than ever as the effects of the pandemic have exacerbated the threat posed by climate crisis, continued conflicts, and have impacted lower income economies.**

Hence, we look forward to engaging with you and listening to your ideas. As part of our efforts to forge a meaningful journey to inclusivity, we will endeavor to create safe and self-reliant societies for everyone, where refugees are also empowered towards a sense of belongingness.

Positive change begins with each one of us. Together, let us close 2020 with unity in purpose – to emerge from an unparalleled year stronger and kinder.

We wish you and your family a safe and meaningful holiday celebration, and a blessed new year!

*With kindness and gratitude,
Your UNHCR Philippines family*

How You Help Build Inclusive Societies

Every day, Malek El Hashash carries with him a small red notebook where he jots down Filipino words and phrases he learns for future reference.

Malek was born in Syria but fled due to the war to Gaza, Palestine. Finding himself living in the middle of another war, he fled Palestine and sought asylum in the Philippines. He has been living in the country with his wife and two young children for more than six years now.

After discovering that a refugee resided in Santa Maria, Bulacan, the Office of the Municipal Mayor Russel Pleyto immediately registered the refugee and his family in the municipality and offered free immunization for the children.

Malek was also offered employment in the Management Information Systems (MIS) unit of the municipality, after years of finding means to make ends meet for him and his family. Back home, he used to operate a computer shop and possessed a degree in accounting. These skills now come in very handy in his day-to-day work.

"I am so appreciative that the government accepted me to work here and this is so kind of the mayor as well to accept me to work in this place," Malek says.

Kindness Bridges Borders

Malek's supervisor, Aris Teves, says that he and his team are also appreciative of Malek's different perspective in tinkering with computer programs and hardware. There are times when Malek's and his approaches are not the same but they end up with similar results. Aris considers this a unique experience for both of them to learn from each other. He says that sometimes Malek has ideas that they have previously never thought of, and this helps them improve their work.



The people here are very kind, very nice. I am so thankful, so appreciative, of what they did for me.

MALEK
Refugee

"Every day, everyone must learn from the people around him. I continue to learn also. I get more experience here and I am very happy to work here in the municipality."

Outside the technical aspect of his work, Malek also makes it a point to learn more about his coworkers, the municipality, and the country. It is his dream to one day receive Filipino citizenship through naturalization, one of the ways through which a refugee reaches a durable solution in the Philippines.

Malek begins by learning Filipino through the help of his colleagues at the MIS office. The notebook he carries to jot down phrases was a suggestion made by Aris.

Many more refugees like Malek could be given assistance and the chance to build a self-reliant life through the support of cities. **Even as the Cities #WithRefugees campaign expands in the Philippines, the national government, through the Department of the Interior and Local Government, has issued a Memorandum Circular on Local Government Assistance for Persons of Concern (POCs), which aims to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have uniform access to basic services and assistance at the local level, even in times of public emergencies.**

#WithRefugees

Twelve cities in the Philippines have signed the **Statement of Solidarity #WithRefugees**, joining 250+ cities all over the world in creating inclusive societies where refugees are able to live in safety, become self-reliant, and contribute to their communities.

This includes the three new cities that joined in 2020. Even as they faced extraordinary challenges with COVID-19 and natural disasters, **GUIJUAN** (Eastern Samar), **IMUS** (Cavite), and **ANTIPOLO** (Rizal) responded to the campaign and became beacons of kindness and inclusivity.



How You Respond to Multiple Emergencies

The **COVID-19** pandemic has exacerbated the burden faced by families in Mindanao who are already forcibly displaced by **continued conflicts** and a **climate crisis**.

In the last quarter of 2020, incidences of armed conflict and clan feuds caused fresh displacement in places like Sumisip, Basilan and Datu Salibo, Maguindanao. The multiple typhoons that barreled through the Philippines also brought torrential rainfall and flash flooding in areas of Mindanao, causing further displacement and making those who are already displaced even more vulnerable.

With you by our side, UNHCR Philippines has been able to support duty bearers in protecting the 277, 846* forcibly displaced individuals in Mindanao as they cope with **multiple crises**. UNHCR works closely with government and other partners to provide **life-saving assistance** when emergencies occur, help ease **access to basic services**, ensure that their **rights are safeguarded**, and build towards **sustainable recovery** and a **better future**.

Thank you for helping us **stay and deliver**. Together, let's come out of these crises, stronger and kinder.

Saving Lives



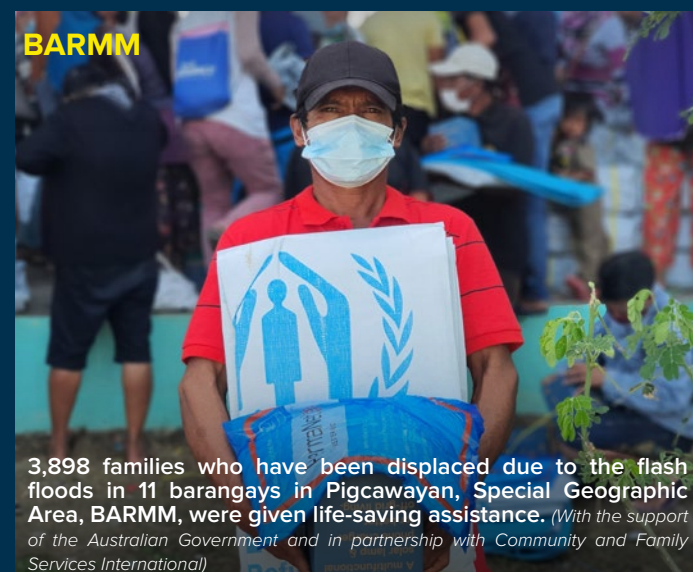
Sultan Kudarat

126 forcibly displaced individuals in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat were given plastic sheets, mosquito nets, blankets, solar lamps, and sleeping mats. (In coordination w/ DSWD XII, MSWDO and MDRRMO of Sultan Kudarat, and in partnership with Magungaya Mindanao, Incorporated)



Sulu

1,045 forcibly displaced individuals in Patikul, Sulu were given blankets, solar lamps, hygiene kits and other core relief items to help protect them from extreme weather and COVID-19. (With the support of the Australian Govt, in partnership with Integrated Resource Development for Tri-People, and in coordination with the local government of Patikul)



BARMM

3,898 families who have been displaced due to the flash floods in 11 barangays in Pigcawayan, Special Geographic Area, BARMM, were given life-saving assistance. (With the support of the Australian Government and in partnership with Community and Family Services International)

Kayo po ang unang nagresponde sa ating call sa mga affected ng flash flood dito sa 11 barangays na clustered under sa BARMM. From the deepest [part] of our hearts...nagpapasalamat kami sa UNHCR at hiqit sa lahat, sa Poong Maykapal. Salamat po!

DATU IBRAHIM LAUBAN RAHMAN
Area Coordinator of Special Geographic Development Authority
Pigcawayan Cluster, BARMM

Safeguarding Rights & Building Better Futures



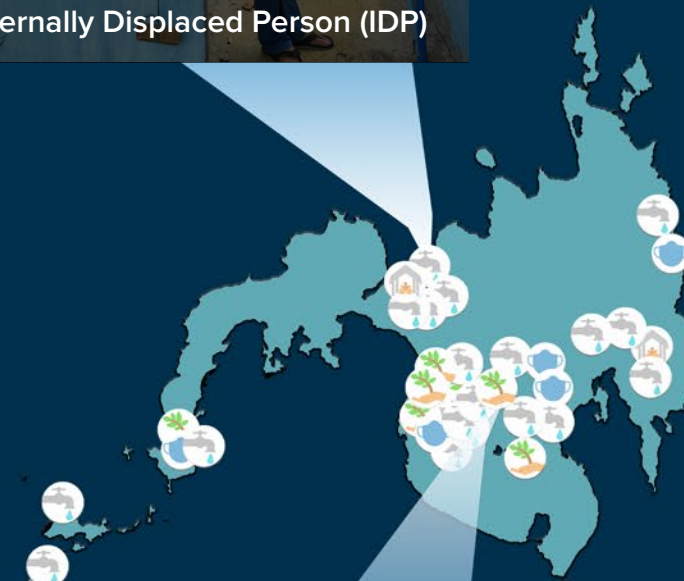
Lanao del Sur

Maraming manaming salamát po. Yung tubig dito nahihinapan kami, pero kahit papano po nabawasan po yun.
ARIFAH MONABA
Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

More than three years ago, Arifah Monaba and her family was forced to flee their home in **Marawi City** in order to survive. They originally lived in what is now Ground Zero, the most affected area of the conflict. To this day, they haven't been able to return yet and are staying in Sagonsonan Transitory Site with other displaced families.

126,835* individuals remain displaced across Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte, with almost 3,000 families still living in transitory sites, where **access to basic services** is scarce and **public health facilities** are hard to reach.

With your help and in partnership with Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and the local government, UNHCR Philippines was able to distribute **hygiene kits** to the community, conduct **health awareness sessions**, and build **communal toilets** and **handwashing facilities** in the site. To safeguard their rights while living in displacement, UNHCR and partners are implementing zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuse. The community is also empowered to **protect each other and report cases of sexual exploitation and abuse** if they occur.



Thanks to your support
117,025 Internally Displaced Persons in the most vulnerable areas of Mindanao benefited from 41 quick impact projects this 2020



North Cotabato

North Cotabato is one of the provinces with recurring incidences of forced displacement. In 2020 alone, 21,237* individuals were newly displaced due to **armed conflict** and **clan feuds**. This adds to the 8,900* who have not yet been able to return home after the October 2019 earthquakes.

Some of the displaced families currently reside in the municipality of **Midsayap**. Having left everything behind, they continue to find new ways to earn a living and **hope for a better future**.

With your kindness, the support of the Australian Govt and in partnership with CFSI and the BARMM Govt, UNHCR Philippines implemented a livelihood

support project for a women-led group in Brgy. Sambulawan.

The Maguindanaon women received sewing machines including "Habian", an indigenous wooden sewing machine for traditional fabrics. They also received textiles, accessories, tables, chairs, and tents – as part of the start-up capital they can use for a **dressmaking and event rental business**. For displaced communities who remain vulnerable and continue to yearn for home, quick impact projects like this promote confidence, self-reliance, and help **rebuild lives in safety and dignity**.

* Source: Protection Cluster Mindanao Displacement Dashboard no. 73 (September 2020)

How Your Kindness Can Change the Story of 2020

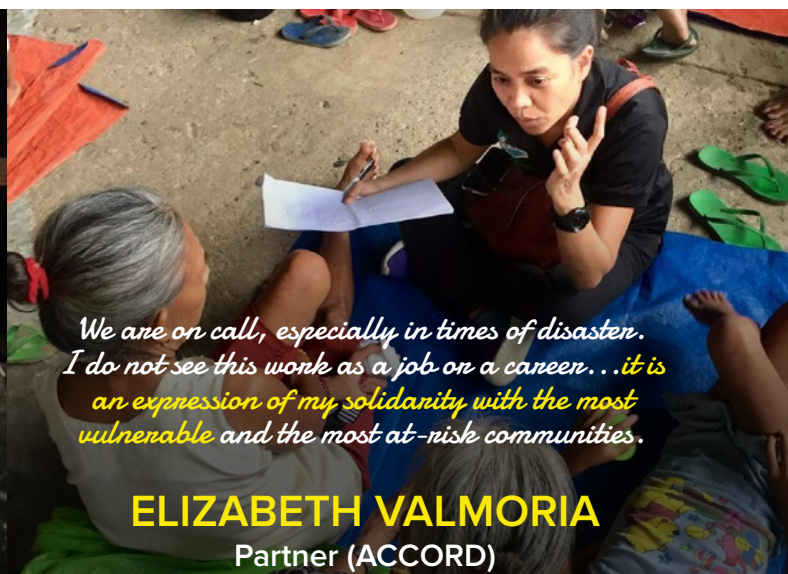
Through all the unprecedented challenges of this year, your unwavering commitment enables us to fulfill our mandate to **stay and deliver**. These are the stories of two remarkable individuals whose kindness is changing the story of 2020. Like you, they inspire us and those around them to be beacons of hope even in the most difficult times.



Kindness is a virtue that is often emphasized. I am simply blessed to exercise it. It keeps me happy to be able to do these things and to be able to share what I can with more people.

MARIA VICTORIA GIBSON

Donor



We are on call, especially in times of disaster. I do not see this work as a job or a career... it is an expression of my solidarity with the most vulnerable and the most at-risk communities.

ELIZABETH VALMORIA

Partner (ACCORD)

Thirty-two years of service with the United Nations in New York was only the beginning of **Maria Victoria Gibson's** unwavering support for the most vulnerable. Mrs. Gibson, as she fondly introduces herself, while now retired, is one of UNHCR Philippines' active donors. She started giving in June 2019. A year on, she has heeded appeals for additional donations when UNHCR responds to emergencies. Mrs. Gibson has also upgraded her monthly gift, as the pandemic has exacerbated the burden already faced by those forcibly displaced by climate crisis and continued conflicts.

While she has retired from her years of dedicated service to the UN, Mrs. Gibson is now living her passion of being a pianist, and her artistry continues to pave ways for her to keep the joy of giving alive. She has often performed recitals for different causes and has consistently extended a helping hand — another thing that she is very much passionate about, saying, *"I simply want to be able to give back."*

Mrs. Gibson shares her high hopes that through her support of UNHCR, the protection of the forcibly displaced and delivery of programs and services to them will be ensured and strengthened. About the families she is helping, she says, *"They are displaced, and are always fleeing. And, we would like to help them as much as possible because it is not an easy life."*

There's a different kind of joy in being able to help, she pointed out. For her, comfort lies in **the hope that in her small acts of kindness and gestures of generosity, while recognizing it is only a fraction of what needs to be done, can multiply and provide a deeper solace for those who are faced with extraordinary uncertainties at this time.**

With the multiple emergencies of 2020, the committed support of donors like you and the dedication of field workers like **Elizabeth Valmoria** that have made it possible to reach the most vulnerable communities with life-saving assistance.

Elizabeth is a frontline humanitarian worker for Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development, Inc (ACCORD), one of UNHCR's protection partners in the most vulnerable areas in Mindanao. She started her humanitarian work in 2011 when Typhoon Washi swept across Mindanao. She was then deployed to various provinces in the Philippines to respond to disaster-stricken communities where access to basic services are hard to reach.

Despite being a seasoned first line responder, travel restrictions, stringent community lockdowns, and the risk of being exposed to the coronavirus required double efforts to stay and deliver. *"Navigating through a pandemic makes our situation more difficult and complex. We have limited mobility and the supplies necessary in mitigating the virus are also limited."*

Elizabeth's passion to provide assistance to those in need remains strong despite these operational hurdles. She said, *"These challenges do not stop us from doing our work. While it is difficult, we have to adapt."*

Even in these challenging times, Elizabeth is grateful for the lessons she has learned. She said that **no matter how devastating the disaster can be, we always have that power within ourselves — the power to hope, to move on, and to become better.**



You can change the story of 2020 with kindness.

As we face uncertainty in the last weeks of 2020, we need to reach more men, women, and children who have braved unimaginable conditions to **find safety**, only to be confronted by **natural disasters** and now, **COVID-19**.

We are calling on your kindness once more.

We must continue to reach more families in this critical time and help ease the economic and social devastation of the pandemic. Your one-time donation this season of giving can **help save lives**: It will mean safe drinking water for vulnerable families in remote areas of Mindanao, tarpaulins and blankets to protect them from the elements, and hygiene kits to protect them from COVID-19.

In this time of year when Mindanao is beset by typhoons and floods, our teams are working hard to preposition **core relief items** for

277,846 still living in displacement*

These are families and communities who have been forced to flee due to armed conflict and calamities in the recent years.

Give the gift of life-saving emergency assistance this holiday season.



donate.unhcr.ph/emergency



CAN WE STILL CHANGE THE STORY OF 2020?

It's not too late to turn this year around.

donate.unhcr.ph/emergency

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