

Inside Stories

Humanitarians and Philanthropists working together

January 2024



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Sergey, 58, with his children Lusine, 6, and Alex, 9, speaks with UNHCR staff member Sahakanush in Goris, south-eastern Armenia. In the last week of September 2023, following renewed hostilities in the South Caucasus region, refugees began arriving rapidly in Armenia. Within a week, some 100,000 refugees had crossed the border. UNHCR teams have been on the ground and at the border since day one, providing immediate assistance and closely monitoring the situation, in support of the government-led response. © UNHCR/Karen Minasyan

A message from Emma Cherniavsky CEO of UK for UNHCR

Welcome to *Inside Stories*, our biannual newsletter about UNHCR's projects that generous supporters like you have helped to fund.

In this edition, we cover a range of stories – from a mental health programme transforming the lives of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar camps in Bangladesh to the latest news from our colleagues on the ground in Sudan and neighbouring countries. We're also pleased to feature The Caring Family Foundation, one of our philanthropic partners.

Right now, the world's focus is on unfolding events in the Middle East. But all over the world, from Sudan to Gaza, Ukraine to Myanmar, far too many lives are being uprooted by war and persecution – 114 million people, each with their own story of survival.

December was a pertinent time for UNHCR to host the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), given the need for bold, ambitious action on refugee protection and inclusion. I was pleased to be there and see so many governments, international organisations, charities and private partners come together to pledge new commitments and solutions to support refugees and host countries. You can read more about the GRF in this newsletter.

Protecting refugees is a responsibility we all share, and it is thanks to you that UNHCR is mobilising to support a record number of refugees and displaced people in 2024. With your continued support, we

will deliver humanitarian assistance and protection services to refugees whilst also widening access to schools, employment and other pathways to self-reliance. We will expand collaborations with development banks to ease the burden on refugee-hosting countries, tackling displacement at the root. And we will help refugees who want to return home, upholding the integrity of our mandate.

Whether you donated to our appeals, joined our new Emergency Fund, attended our events, or have been involved with our work in any other way: thank you for your support. In these turbulent times, you give us the optimism to approach our responsibility towards refugees with even greater resolve.

I hope you enjoy reading about the UNHCR activities that you have invested in – if you'd like to learn more or you have any questions, please do get in touch anytime.

Wishing you a Happy New Year, I look forward to rising to the challenge of 2024 with you at our side.

With gratitude and best wishes,



Emma Cherniavsky
Chief Executive Officer
United Kingdom for UNHCR

Bridging the gap: Empowering Rohingya refugees to deliver mental health support

Equipped with training by UNHCR, Rohingya refugees and local Bangladeshis are delivering counselling and raising awareness about mental health.

Nur Kalam, 21, sits cross-legged on the floor of a community health centre in southern Bangladesh's sprawling Kutupalong camp listening carefully to the soft voice of a Rohingya mother.

The young mother, a new patient at the health centre, shares her struggles to survive amid food ration cuts, growing violence between criminal groups, and the extreme weather that batters her family's bamboo and tarpaulin shelter every monsoon season.



Nur Kalam conducts a counselling session with a Rohingya refugee at a community health centre in Cox's Bazar. © UNHCR/Shahirah Majumdar

Nur Kalam — himself a refugee — helps her understand how such precarious circumstances give rise to negative thoughts, and what happens when those thoughts build up. Using a rubber band stretched tight between two hands, he explains how stress can make us snap. Releasing those feelings before that happens is critical to good mental health.

Nur is one of 100 community counsellors, 80 of them refugees, trained by UNHCR and partners to provide mental health and psychosocial support to nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees forced to flee Myanmar who now live in densely packed settlements in Cox's Bazar and on the island of Bhasan Char. They are supported by 182 community psychosocial volunteers, 87 per cent of whom are Rohingya refugees while the rest are from local Bangladeshi communities.

“Mental health is a new concept for the Rohingya here. Previously, they understood physiological disease, but not the idea that problems with our physical health can be due to stress or anxiety, which can be addressed by mental health awareness and counselling.” - Hivine Ali, UNHCR Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Officer in Cox's Bazar.



A volunteer runs a peer-to-peer support session for Rohingya refugee children. © UNHCR/Fahima Tajrin

UNHCR's mental health and psychosocial support programme currently reaches over 150,000 Rohingya refugees. Alongside individualised counselling — by psychologists as well as by community counsellors — volunteers and staff provide clinical consultations, specialised trainings, and support group sessions on topics such as parenting and anger management. UNHCR also operates the only two in-patient mental health facilities within the camps through partner Gonoshasthaya Kendra.

In group sessions, the psychosocial volunteers create safe spaces for participants to understand their thoughts and feelings and to share their struggles. They take children and adults through exercises and offer techniques to bring emotions under control. They look for warning signs of poor mental health and people needing individualised counselling.

Bangladesh hosts the largest refugee settlement in the world. With limited mental healthcare capacity in Bangladesh, these volunteers form the backbone of UNHCR's mental health and psychosocial support. Not only do they help bridge a gap, but they understand their community's problems and the daily stresses of life in a refugee camp.

One of the world's largest protracted refugee situations, the international community's continued support is crucial to ensuring life-sustaining assistance for Rohingya refugees. You can support now via: unrefugees.org.uk/rohingyacrisis

UK for UNHCR Emergency Fund: Preparing for the Unpredictable

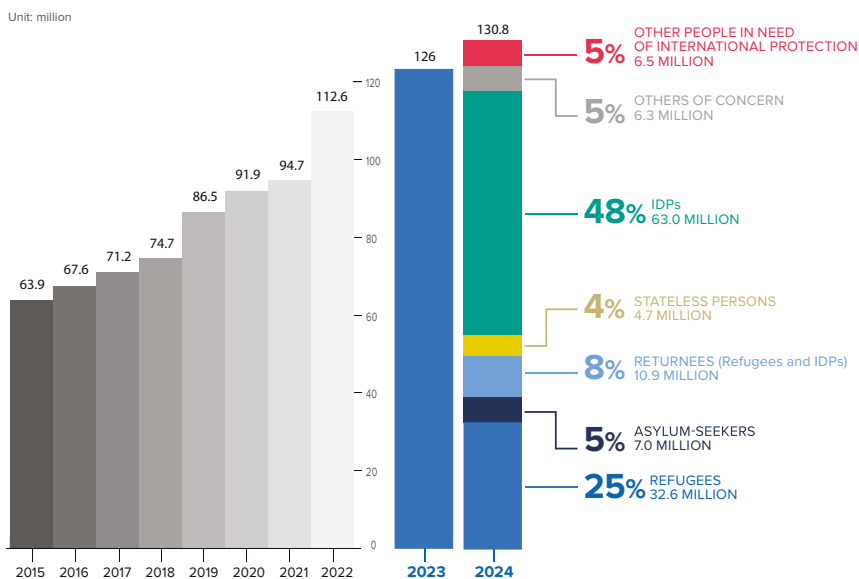
In September 2023, UK for UNHCR launched our Emergency Fund – a critical new initiative to support UNHCR’s lifesaving emergency response work. The Fund is already attracting interest and profile among our supporters, and we are extremely grateful to the founding members who have committed generous support.

Responding to emergencies is a significant part of UNHCR’s mandate. Thanks to the continued generosity and solidarity of our supporters, UNHCR has provided lifesaving aid to people caught up in emergencies for over 70 years.

Close to breaking point

However, recent years have seen humanitarian needs skyrocket to unprecedented levels. Emergencies are growing in scale, pace and complexity, with people being forced to flee as the most common and immediate result. Today, over 114 million people - more than 1 in 73 people worldwide - are now forcibly displaced.

In 2023, UNHCR responded to 44 emergencies in 31 countries, capping off a record number of crises in one year. This represents nearly four times the number of emergencies declared by UNHCR in 2019.



To mark the launch of our Emergency Fund, we hosted a private event at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

The evening included a speaker panel moderated by BBC Correspondent Hanan Razek, featuring UNHCR technical expert Omer Elnaiem, former refugee and NHS emergency doctor Dr Waheed Arian, and author and former refugee Josée Kana Bizimana.

Music was provided by Senegalese musician Malick Kouyate and drinks and canapes by Imad’s Syrian Kitchen.

Last year, UNHCR's emergency response capacities continued to be tested to their fullest.

In response to record humanitarian needs, we scaled up our emergency response in many countries. This includes deploying 396 UNHCR and standby partner staff to emergencies, dispatching \$42.9 million worth of core relief items from UNHCR's global stockpiles and 43 airlifts as of the end of September 2023. However, much of our ability to do so depends on proactive preparedness, emergency deployments and strong supply capacities.

Multiple crises, in multiple countries, have placed UNHCR's resources under pressure like never before. Many crises remain forgotten from the news agenda and chronically underfunded, such as the Sudan Emergency, as highlighted by our colleague Omer Elnaiem on page 7. Nobody wants to see certain humanitarian needs getting left behind. In today's increasingly volatile world, UNHCR needs flexible funding. These are resources that are not restricted to a specific project or location, enabling UNHCR to use them wherever they are most needed.

“New and ongoing wars are spreading and getting closer to each other in a jigsaw that is dangerously closing. Additional, deadly pieces can only cause more needs, suffering, or displacement at a time when none of us – none of us – are sufficiently resourced to deal with the humanitarian consequences. We are very close to breaking point.”

Filippo Grandi – High Commissioner,
UN Refugee Agency

Workers unload relief kits from the UNHCR truck for distribution to newly arrived Sudanese refugees at the Madjigilta site in Chad's Ouaddai region, on the border with Sudan.
©UNHCR/Colin Delfosse





“Flexible funding goes straight to the most urgent frontline cases and helps UNHCR to raise its game, rather than subsidising back office overhead costs. Flexible funding is emergency funding”.

Dominique Hyde – UNHCR
Director of External Relations

You can play a leading role in UNHCR’s lifesaving humanitarian response

To ensure UNHCR can continue to respond and save lives in humanitarian emergencies, we are inviting our supporters to join together to maximise the impact of their donations through our new, much needed Emergency Fund.

Through a flexible donation, supporters can help UNHCR be on the ground before, during and after an emergency.

Support to the Emergency Fund maintains UNHCR’s impact in three critical areas.



Readiness

Your donations will ensure UNHCR’s early warning systems can identify potential humanitarian crises. Your gift will also make sure expert staff are fully trained to respond to local challenges, and that stocks of humanitarian supplies in UNHCR’s seven global warehouses are maintained and can be shipped anywhere in the world within 72 hours.



Response

When they flee in fear of their lives, people are often terrified, disoriented, hungry and exhausted. Many have to leave behind all their possessions and arrive under UNHCR’s protection with nothing but the clothes on their back. Your support can ensure UNHCR provides displaced people with the lifesaving shelter and essentials such as bedding, warm clothes and hygiene kits.



Recovery

Through the Emergency Fund, you can help UNHCR stay and deliver for refugees and displaced people, particularly those affected by under-reported crises in places like Iraq and Ethiopia, where a lack of media attention can lead to dangerous levels of underfunding for humanitarian assistance. Your support could mean traumatised children have access to psychological support. It could mean specialist services for disabled people, or cash assistance so a widowed mother can feed and clothe her children.



An Emergency Fund Spotlight: nine months of conflict in Sudan

On 15 April 2023, fighting erupted in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

Now nine months later, engulfed in a conflict that has spread to other parts of the country, Sudan has one of the largest and fastest-growing internal displacement situations in the world.

To date, over 7 million people have been forced to flee their homes. With no end to the violence in sight, people are desperately seeking safety and protection, both inside Sudan and in bordering countries such as Chad, South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic. These countries are host to large pre-existing refugee and internally displaced populations and UNHCR's operations were already severely underfunded before this crisis started.

Zeinab (pictured above), a 22-year-old mother of two, lost her husband when armed men attacked her home in Sudan's West Darfur State. She hid with her two boys for a while after their house was burned down.

Fearing for their lives as the conflict escalated, Zeinab undertook a dangerous journey to Adre, Chad.

After a few weeks, she was registered and relocated to Farchana, where she now has shelter and hopes to provide for her children's education and needs.

Despite insecurity and access challenges, thanks to emergency funding, UNHCR continues to deliver lifesaving assistance in Sudan and to neighbouring countries absorbing the influx of displaced people.

Inside Sudan where the security situation permits, UNHCR has strengthened its operations to continue providing protection and assistance, and has opened new offices in Port Sudan, Wad Madani and Wadi Halfa.

UNHCR has also fast-tracked the delivery of medicines and medical supplies and supported the Ministry of Health in conducting measles vaccination campaigns, reaching nearly 52,000 children.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring countries UNHCR is working with governments and partners to meet refugees' immediate needs, relocating them from border areas to safer locations and scaling up assistance.

For example, in Chad over 180,000 individuals have been relocated to safer areas away from the borders whilst in Egypt, UNHCR has distributed 150,000 hygiene kits and 80,000 sanitary items at the border crossings with Sudan.

But more needs to be done. UNHCR's response in Sudan is chronically underfunded and remains largely forgotten from the news agenda. Last year's funding only reached 38 per cent of the budget requirements.

A flexible donation of a minimum of £10,000 to our Emergency Fund means UNHCR can respond nimbly and effectively to humanitarian emergencies, such as the conflict in Sudan, that otherwise risk being neglected.

Flexible funding is the most powerful way to save lives and help millions to build a better future.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss how the Emergency Fund can meet your philanthropic goals, please contact emergencyfund@unrefugees.org.uk or your UK for UNHCR focal point.

“The situation in my homeland, Sudan, is heartbreaking on all fronts – especially for our children who are battling diseases like malaria, cholera, measles and malnutrition. Global attention is slipping away from Sudan.

UNHCR stands united and firm on the ground but our strength lies in unity – all refugees and displaced people around the world need to know that they have material, financial and moral support”.

Omer Elnaiem – Head of Africa Content Hub, UNHCR





Refugees and officials participating in the Global Refugee Forum 2023 attend an orientation session on Tuesday, 12 December.
© UNHCR/Pierre Albouy

Global Refugee Forum – the world’s largest gathering in support of refugees

At the end of a devastating year marked by new, resurgent and unending refugee situations, it can feel like we are on a precipice. Yet there is hope.

One month ago, UNHCR hosted the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva which our CEO, Emma Cherniavsky, attended. Held every four years, the first being in 2019, the Forum represents the world’s largest gathering on the subject of refugees and is designed to support the objectives set out in the Global Compact on Refugees. Established in 2018, the Global Compact reframes how refugees, and critically the countries they are hosted in, are supported during displacement.

The forum saw over 4,200 participants from 168 countries, including refugee leaders, heads of state, governments, businesses and non-profit leaders come together in solidarity. This diverse participation reflects the Forum’s belief that lasting solutions must involve everyone in society, as everyone has a role to play and must be guided by those affected. After all, forced displacement is a global challenge demanding a global response.

At the heart of the Forum are generous pledges and impactful commitments by stakeholders to achieve tangible benefits for refugees and their host communities. It’s also an opportunity to take stock on the progress made towards building a better future for refugees and importantly, the concrete actions needed to strengthen the global response and

search for urgently needed solutions to the record levels of displacement we are seeing across the globe.

Across the three days, the Forum mobilised ambitious pledges including from philanthropists, businesses and foundations who generously pledged over \$250 million in funding.

Among these was the Vodafone Foundation committing €20 million as part of a pledge to give refugees access to high-quality, digital education on par with nationals by 2030.

‘It was inspiring to see the determined unity of more than 4,000 participants from governments, international agencies, refugee-led organisations and private sector partners, coming together in the face of global division and crises to pledge transformative action for refugees and host countries. More than 1,600 pledges of financial support and concrete measures were committed for delivery over the next 4 years, with a focus on expanding opportunities, exclusion and self-reliance so that refugees can build a better future for themselves and their families.’

Emma Cherniavsky, CEO, UK for UNHCR

Overall, the Forum showed that change, when we work together, is possible – that there is a path from despair to hope, and from hope to action. We look forward to updating you on the progress made following the Forum over the coming months.



© Soraila Correia

“If I can save just one life or one family, it makes everything we do worthwhile”

The Caring Family Foundation generously stepped up to support UNHCR’s lifesaving emergency work in response to the war against Ukraine in 2022 and 2023’s devastating earthquakes in Türkiye-Syria. As co-founder of the Foundation with husband, Richard Caring, we sat down with Patricia Caring, to learn more about what philanthropy means to her.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

Born in Brazil and having lived in the UK for over ten years, I have forged a strong bond with both countries. A mother of four, I’m acutely aware of the importance of building a better future for the next generation and it’s this personal connection that drives and inspires the work we do at The Caring Family Foundation. Our work spans both Brazil and the UK, focusing on three critical issues: child poverty, domestic abuse, and reforestation, and when global crises arise such as the conflict in Ukraine and natural disasters in Syria and Türkiye, we extend our support to help families and children in need.

My journey of giving back is more than just a mission; it is a heartfelt commitment to fostering positive change, making tangible and enduring differences in my two beloved homes. I am passionately dedicated to supporting initiatives that empower women, protect children, and safeguard the environment.

In my role as Co-Chairwoman at The Birley Clubs which comprises of five private members clubs in

Mayfair, it is also my mission inspire the hospitality industry to embark on their own philanthropic journey. It is an honour to be able to include our employees, members and guests in our work and I am hugely proud of the socially conscious community that we have created with our business. It not only allows them the opportunity to give back, but they have a sense of pride knowing they are part of a meaningful movement.

What inspired you to take the step into philanthropy?

My path into philanthropy is a deep-rooted seed in my heart. It has always been there, and I am lucky to have a partner who shares the same sentiment of compassion and a sense of responsibility. Over the years, my husband Richard and I received numerous requests for charitable donations. We were always eager to help, but there was a persistent question about how effectively our contributions were reaching those in need, and it was this uncertainty that ignited the idea of establishing our own foundation.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a pivotal moment for The Caring Family Foundation that spurred us into action. It was a time of global crisis that exposed the extent of deprivation and child poverty on a wider scale. And being a mother, seeing the heartbreak and hardships faced by mothers and children resonated deeply. We realised we couldn’t stand by, we had to act.

During the pandemic, our Million and One Meals campaign galvanised our employees and volunteers to help prepare and distribute over a million meals to NHS key workers and as restaurants reopened, our commitment to ending hunger continued with the 'Food from the Heart Campaign' in the UK and later, 'Amor Que Nutre Campaign' in Brazil. Together, we've provided close to 2.5 million meals and have continued our work to deliver meals to communities in Sao Paolo and across the UK.

In Brazil, the circumstances women face due to domestic abuse is heartbreaking and an issue that is widespread. Throughout the pandemic, I heard from my friends about the increase of cases, and I just knew I had to do something. When we got the opportunity to partner with 'Bem Querer Mulher,' a refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence, we built a centre from scratch with the aim to provide comprehensive support, including medical, social, psychological, housing, and legal assistance. To date, we've delivered almost 19,000 services, and our goal is to replicate this model in the UK in 2024 to offer vital support to victims in need.

On a more global scale, while our current reforestation work centres on the Amazon rainforest, our work benefits the planet. With my children and their futures in mind, we set out to reforest parts of Brazil's rainforests to help the fight against climate change. It was during our work that we realised planting trees is hugely important but what can really make a difference is the protection and support of the indigenous families of the rainforests. We are on track to planting 2 million trees, but this has also created jobs and sustainable ways of living for the indigenous communities, so that they have the resources they need to go on to protecting the Amazon rainforest for us all.

What made you choose to support UK for UNHCR so generously?

The decision to support UNHCR aligns with the mission of The Caring Family Foundation, to make a positive impact on global issues.

Our support for the Ukraine emergency and the Türkiye-Syria earthquakes was not something we could pass on. With so many children and families affected, it was an instinctive feeling to offer our support. UNHCR are experts in standing with those who face the most challenging of circumstances and we recognise that their work plays a vital role in ensuring that those who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict, persecution, or natural disasters, receive the assistance and dignity they deserve.

Together we have provided hundreds of thousands of people with lifesaving supplies such as food, medical supplies, blankets, and baby kits. The funding has also provided safe spaces, 'blue dot centres', for children and provide mental health, psychosocial support. These centres also work to identify unaccompanied and vulnerable children to reduce the high risk of child trafficking. 100 per cent of The Caring Family Foundation's donation has directly supported children and families in Ukraine and Türkiye-Syria and we are so proud to work alongside UNHCR in creating a safer and more compassionate world for all.



Following the war in Ukraine, Sergei and his family fled to Poland. Here they have received support in the form of cash assistance at one of UNHCR's Blue Dots. © UNHCR/Maciej Moskwa

Do you have any advice for those looking to start their own philanthropic journey?

My first piece of advice for those starting their philanthropic journey is simply to start and do what you can, because even the smallest of acts can have a ripple effect to touch someone's life. Philanthropy is not just about giving money, giving your time is also valuable. There are so many charities that are in need of volunteers, there may be a skill that you can offer, or lend a listening ear sometimes, even this could mean a lot to someone.

Be humble and have an open mind. Your philanthropic journey can make a difference and inspire others to join you in making the world a better place. My belief is: if I can save just one life or one family, it makes everything we do worthwhile.

[UK for UNHCR is enormously grateful for The Caring Family Foundation's extraordinary support for our emergency work and for their continued support for displaced and marginalised communities across the globe.](#)

unrefugees.org.uk/philanthropy

Thank you for standing with refugees.

We cannot thank you enough for your show of solidarity with displaced people during 2023. This year we look forward to continuing to work with you so that we can provide lifesaving and life changing support wherever and whenever it is needed across the globe. Together we can build a better future for people forced to flee. It is your empathy, generosity and motivation that helps us to make a difference.

If you would like more information on any of the topics mentioned or on any part of our work, please contact us via the details enclosed. You can also find out more about our philanthropy programme via unrefugees.org.uk/philanthropy.



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