

Inside Stories

Humanitarians and Philanthropists working together

SUMMER 2024



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A message from the field...

Dear friend,

Welcome to the summer edition of Inside Stories, UK for UNHCR's biannual newsletter about our projects that generous supporters like you have helped to fund.

In this edition, you'll hear from my colleagues across the globe, including those working around the clock to support people fleeing war in Ukraine, and those in the UK supporting refugees into employment.

The overwhelming scale of human suffering worldwide can sometimes be daunting. That's why I wanted to seize this moment to share a concrete example of how your compassion is making a transformative difference here in Yemen.

The relentless conflict and economic collapse have devastated every family in my country. We encounter families enduring unimaginable conditions. I met one family outside the city living under a tree, with only a few pieces of cloth for shelter. Another family was forced to live in a cave. With no income and no hope for employment, people are resorting to desperate measures. One woman, Fatimah, was boiling leaves when I visited – the only food available for the seven children she cares for.

It is heartbreaking to witness such extreme hardship, especially knowing that much of the world remains

indifferent to our people's plight. However, what fuels my colleagues and me with hope and unwavering determination is the knowledge that UK for UNHCR supporters have steadfastly stood by displaced people in Yemen.

UNHCR remains the sole agency protecting and ensuring the well-being of refugees and asylum seekers across Yemen. My team is here on the ground, delivering vital shelter, cash assistance, and legal aid. We are also providing essential items such as mattresses, sleeping mats, cooking utensils and core household necessities.

Thank you for remembering our people and keeping them in your hearts and thoughts. Knowing supporters like you are with us empowers us immensely.

I hope you find inspiration in this newsletter and gain deeper insights into UNHCR's impactful work across the world.

Warm regards,

Hesham

Hesham Al-Akhali
UNHCR Senior Field Assistant, Yemen

Lives on hold: an update from Ukraine

As the third year of the full-scale war in Ukraine continues, the situation is expected to become increasingly protracted, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the country, where shelling and targeted attacks on infrastructure have become a part of daily life.

14.6 million people inside Ukraine need humanitarian assistance, including some 3.7 million people internally displaced by the war. The number of refugees seeking protection across Europe is

expected to remain stable at around 5.9 million, with continuing movements back and forth between Ukraine and host countries. According to a survey for UNHCR on Ukrainian refugees' intentions, nearly 80 per cent of refugees hope to return to Ukraine one day, however just 14 per cent plan to do so in the near future. Security concerns remain paramount, along with access to basic services, housing and livelihoods, when deciding whether to return.

Five ways your support has made a difference to people in Ukraine:



Housing: Two million Ukrainian homes have been damaged or destroyed since the full-scale invasion began. UNHCR has repaired close to 28,000 homes so far, and more than 287,000 people have received emergency shelter kits allowing them to fix damage to their homes.



Healthcare: Ukrainian medical facilities have been repeatedly attacked during the conflict. Millions of Ukrainians are suffering mental health issues as a result of the war. Children are particularly affected, with over 1.5 million in urgent need of support to cope with stress and anxiety. UNHCR and its local partners are offering psychological support services, including counselling for evacuees and internally displaced people around the country.



Education: More than 360 educational facilities have been destroyed since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Only one third of Ukraine's school children are studying in person amid deadly missile and drone attacks. UNHCR is supporting the repair and refurbishment of schools across Ukraine and have helped establish underground 'Metro Schools' to enable students to stay safe while learning.



© OCHA



Cash assistance: Families displaced by the war face many financial burdens. So far this year, UNHCR has provided cash assistance to over 224,400 war-affected people to help cover the costs of basic items like food, medicines, clothes, accommodation and utilities.



Small business and employment support: UNHCR is working hard to ensure Ukrainians receive the help they need in host countries. This includes their access to housing, healthcare, education and even business opportunities.

UNHCR's mental health support brings hope to Ukraine's children and families

Ukrainian families and children are now in dire need of psychosocial support. The traumatic experiences of war weigh most heavily on children who face multiple acute and potential long-term traumatic consequences of being victims of war. **Zi De Bine** is one of **UNHCR's** psychosocial support services.



Young Ukrainian refugees draw at Zi de Bine, a community centre set up to assist the Ukrainian community. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

Zi De Bine, or “good day” in Romanian, is providing essential psychosocial support services to Ukrainian families and children in Bucharest. When the war in Ukraine began, the team at Zi De Bine community centre immediately opened its doors to help refugees in need.

“When we told them ‘Welcome’, their faces suddenly lit up. I will see people who are laughing together and who, for a few moments, have taken their minds off the pain and trauma they’re going through,” said Melania, Founder of Zi De Bine.

UNHCR has partnered with Zi De Bine to support refugees with language classes, dance lessons, yoga, counselling and art therapy for children. The community centre is a safe space for Ukrainian refugees to process their emotions with each other and attend activities together.



New clothes are distributed to Ukrainian mothers at Zi de Bine. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

Many Ukrainian children have benefited from art therapy sessions at Zi De Bine. They're old enough to understand why they had to flee Ukraine but want nothing more than for the war to end and to return home. Until that is possible, art therapy is allowing them to socialise with children their age and providing them with much needed stress relief.



Young Ukrainian refugees play at Zi de Bine, a community centre set up to assist the Ukrainian community. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

Ukraine needs our support more than ever

This war has forced 10 million people to flee. It has destroyed homes and torn families apart. UNHCR has been working non-stop since the full-scale invasion began. But attacks are continuing to devastate communities, forcing people to flee. They urgently need your help. UNHCR's response in Ukraine is just 18% funded, as of 31 May 2024.

From schools to apartment blocks, hospitals to cafés – nowhere in Ukraine is safe. Your financial support can provide emergency cash and supplies for traumatised families, repair war-damaged homes and give psychological care. For more information, please contact Sara Whitehead, Philanthropy Manager, on swhitehead@unrefugees.org.uk

Opening the door to untapped talent: the Refugee Employment Project



The UK currently hosts over 500,000 refugees. While they have the legal right to work, refugees are over 20% less likely to be employed than Brits, with this gap widening to 30% for refugee women.

At the same time the UK is experiencing severe labour shortages, with almost one million job vacancies across key industries such as hospitality, food services, manufacturing and health care.

This situation presents a unique opportunity for individuals with corporate connections and vast networks to make a significant impact. By promoting inclusive recruitment practices, we can help bridge this employment gap and support refugees in building sustainable lives in their new communities.

Introducing the Refugee Employment Project

In recognition of this, UK for UNHCR has launched the Refugee Employment Project, which aims to address these challenges by fostering a more inclusive job market for refugees living in the UK. The initiative will offer targeted support in the form of job training, language classes and direct employment opportunities.

By collaborating with businesses and leveraging our extensive network, we hope to create a pathway to meaningful employment for refugees.

Corporate case study: IKEA's success in refugee integration

IKEA provides a compelling example of how large corporations can successfully integrate refugees into their workforce. Since 2019, IKEA's Skills for Employment programme has supported nearly 3,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, with 54% finding jobs either within IKEA or other companies.

IKEA's approach includes comprehensive support such as job training, local language support, and creating a welcoming work environment that values diversity and the unique perspectives refugees bring. This not only helps refugees secure employment but enriches the company's culture and enhances its business operations.

How you can help

UK for UNHCR is reaching out to our supporters and donors who may be able to play a role in this transformational initiative. Here are some ways to get involved:

1. Advocate for inclusive hiring practices: encourage your workplace to adopt inclusive recruitment policies that prioritise refugee employment.
2. Leverage your network: use your connections to promote refugee employment initiatives and connect refugees with potential job opportunities.
3. Support training programmes: invest in or support livelihood-related programmes that help to prepare refugees for the job market.

By taking action, you can be a catalyst for positive change, transforming not only the lives of refugees but also enriching your own community and business environment.

Together we can change the narrative, ensuring that every refugee has the chance to contribute meaningfully, and build a secure, hopeful future.

Contact Avena Davis, Senior Corporate Partnerships Officer, adavis@unrefugees.org.uk



© International Olympic Committee

2024 Refugee Olympic Team announced for Paris

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) recently announced the 36 athletes who are heading to Paris as part of the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. The 2024 team includes athletes from 11 different countries.

Through incredible resilience, strength and talent, the athletes have qualified to compete in 12 different sports at the Games, including boxing, athletics, cycling, swimming and weightlifting.

While most members of the team have resettled in countries around the world, two of the athletes are still living in refugee camps:

Perina Lokure Nakang fled South Sudan with her aunt aged seven, settling in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. In Kakuma, she found solace in playing sports, including basketball and football, before discovering running, which became her passion.

Running helped Perina navigate the challenges of camp life and gave her an Olympic dream to work towards. She will compete in middle distance events in athletics.

Yahya Al Ghotany will compete in Taekwondo. He started practising the martial art when he arrived in Azraq Refugee Camp in Jordan, after fleeing the war in Syria with his family. After only five years of training, he reached black belt second dan level.

Yahya now trains twice a day at the Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation’s Azraq Academy.

The 2024 team will be led by the Chef de Mission, **Masomah Ali Zada**, who competed at the Tokyo Olympics as a member of the Refugee Olympic Team. Masomah celebrated the athletes at the team announcement:

“All of you had a dream, and today your dream to compete at the Olympic Games is closer than ever,” she said. “With all the challenges that you have faced, you now have a chance to inspire a new generation, represent something bigger than yourselves and show the world what refugees are capable of.”

The IOC Refugee Olympic Team represents more than 100 million displaced people worldwide. The selection process for the team is based on sporting performances and the athlete’s refugee status, as confirmed by UNHCR.

The Refugee Olympic Team’s participation in the Olympic Games sends a powerful message of hope, belonging, and inclusion. We look forward to cheering on all the refugee athletes as they compete on the world stage!

World Economic Forum 2024

Davos, Switzerland,
January 2024



© UNHCR/Jose Cendon

The 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), themed Rebuilding Trust, welcomed over 100 governments, as well as civil society leaders, experts, youth representatives, social entrepreneurs and news outlets.

UNHCR's engagement was led by Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who warned that without humanitarian and political intervention, the number of refugees could double in the next decade.

Grandi used the platform to call on global leaders to increase humanitarian assistance, particularly for the world's silent emergencies:

“Think of Sudan: 7 million people forced from their homes in the last year by this war between military groups. Think of the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. They've been seven years now in Bangladesh, almost a million of them. And we're losing world attention, which means that we are losing support for humanitarian assistance and for trying to solve this problem in the political domain.”

Other members of UNHCR's delegation included Kelly Clements (Deputy High Commissioner), Carmen Hett (Head of Treasury Cash Service) and Shirin Pakfar (Chief of Private Partnerships and Philanthropy), who attended several bilateral meetings over the course of the Forum.

Photo: UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi addresses the final plenary of the 2024 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways.
© UNHCR/Jose Cendon



UK for UNHCR's inaugural Iftar in Bradford

During Ramadan this year, UK for UNHCR was delighted to host our inaugural Bradford Iftar with Founding Member of the Advisory Board, Nyra Mahmood.

Recognised as a 'City of Sanctuary', Bradford embodies a culture of safety, kindness and generosity, aligning with our own aims to build a better future for the millions of people forced to flee their homes.

We were honoured to be joined by Razan Alsous, Syrian refugee and founder and owner of Yorkshire Dama Cheese, who shared her story of fleeing Syria and building a new life for her family in Yorkshire.

We were also joined by Khaled Khalifa, Senior Advisor and UNHCR Representative to Gulf



Guests of UK for UNHCR's inaugural Iftar in Bradford, along with our speaker, Razan Alsous (far right). © UK for UNHCR/ Shazia Hassam

Cooperation Council countries, who spoke about how UNHCR's cash assistance programme provides a lifeline for millions of displaced families in Yemen, many of whom have been forced to break their fast away from home and loved ones.

It was truly heart-warming to see Bradford come together to exemplify the values of Ramadan - of community, compassion, reflection and generosity, donating their Zakat to help displaced families in Yemen meet their basic needs, find safety and rebuild their lives.



Women on the frontline: Breakfast roundtable



Our speakers and host (L-R) Lydia Piddock, Shirin Pakfar and Zarlisht Halaimzai, speaking about UK for UNHCR's Emergency Fund and how women are disproportionately affected by humanitarian emergencies.
© UK for UNHCR

To mark International Women's Day, UK for UNHCR hosted a panel discussion, 'Women on the Frontline,' to talk about our Emergency Fund, a critical initiative to support UNHCR's emergency response, and pay tribute to the courage, strength and resilience of women and girls forced to flee.

With new humanitarian catastrophes occurring at an alarming rate, and more dragging on for decades, women and girls are often on the frontline.

We were honoured to have been joined by Zarlisht Halaimzai, Founder of Amna - a charity providing wellbeing support for refugees, and Shirin Pakfar, Chief of Private Partnerships & Philanthropy at UNHCR. Zarlisht and Shirin openly shared their personal stories of women who have been disproportionately affected by humanitarian emergencies, and the ways that we can come together as a community to ensure the rights of women and girls are at the centre of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response.



Attendees coming together after an inspiring discussion.
© UK for UNHCR Shazia Hassam

To learn more about how you can join a community of passionate supporters to help UNHCR to protect and empower women and girls before, during and after an emergency strikes.

Please visit **Emergency Fund**
unrefugees.org.uk/emergencyfund or get in touch with us directly at:
emergencyfund@unrefugees.org.uk.



The EA Foundation:

Supporting the most underserved communities through UK for UNHCR's Emergency Fund

The EA Foundation generously stepped up to support UK for UNHCR's recently established Emergency Fund in 2023, becoming one of its founding members.

The Emergency Fund is a funding circle of like-minded donors aimed at helping UNHCR to prepare for the unpredictable, kick-start an emergency response and bolster forgotten crises. We sat down with Richard Bronze to learn more about the EA Foundation's journey in philanthropy and their support for UK for UNHCR.

Could you tell us a bit about yourself and the EA Foundation?

I am Richard Bronze, one of the co-founders of the EA Foundation. I started out working in the civil service and in 2012 I left to co-found the company Energy Aspects, a research organisation focused on energy markets.

Myself and the other co-founders of Energy Aspects have always been passionate about supporting charitable projects. Initially, we supported charities as individuals, with overlap in the areas we were supporting, and as our business grew, we saw an opportunity to coordinate that giving. We wanted to do it in a way that could be more impactful and purposeful over time. We were also keen to find a way for our team in the company to have more visibility and understanding of the projects being supported. This led to us starting the EA Foundation in 2020.

What inspired you to take the step into philanthropy?

I have had a longstanding interest in charity work, starting from my school days. My volunteering experiences and internship with Peace Direct, a conflict resolution charity, left a lasting impression. I appreciate how charities step in to address gaps that public services may not always cover.

When I transitioned into the civil service, my focus shifted to education policy. This provided me with a fresh perspective. While recognising the system's strengths, I also acknowledged that some families' and children's needs might remain unmet. Over time, I discovered remarkable organisations making a significant impact in this field. Supporting these organisations and facilitating their greater influence is my primary motivation.

What made you choose to support UK for UNHCR so generously and in particular, what was it about the Emergency Fund that drew your attention?

Our organisation has been operational for several years, disbursing grants. Over time, our strategies and priorities have evolved, becoming more targeted. We focus on four thematic funding areas: Education, Basic Services, Poverty Relief and Environmental Sustainability. Additionally, we established a fifth pillar for Emergency Relief. This flexibility allows us to respond swiftly to crises and provide immediate support.

Our five broad pillars have gradually become more focused as we refine our impact areas. One key criteria is underserved communities, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups within those communities. Unfortunately, refugees and internally displaced people often fall into these categories. Their needs intersect with other challenges related to their displacement and the reasons behind it.

The Emergency Fund resonated with us because it provides rapid responses during emergencies and

enables us to support underserved groups. It aligns with the EA Foundation's goals and complements our existing portfolio of projects. Contributing to this innovative giving model brings us great satisfaction.

Do you have any advice for those looking to start their own philanthropic journey and what sort of trends are you seeing in philanthropy space at the moment?

The best advice is to deliberately define your goals and choose the appropriate structure to achieve them. Open communication is crucial – letting organisations that align with us know we exist, while also preventing those we wouldn't support from investing time in applications we won't pursue. As funders, we bear the responsibility of being transparent about our funding criteria to streamline the matching process and avoid unnecessary time and effort.

As a young organisation, we recognize the immense financial pressure faced by charitable entities globally. Our focus spans both international and UK-based charities, and we're actively involved in grant-making discussions. Striking a balance between positive impact and effective navigation is an ongoing learning process. We engage in debates about where grant-making power should reside and how to avoid exerting undue influence as a funding organisation without necessarily possessing the expertise. This introspective journey helps us determine how best to navigate and organize ourselves. Our goal is to contribute positively while ensuring efficiency in our approach.



EA Foundation



Richard Bronze, Trustee
EA Foundation

UK for UNHCR is enormously grateful for the EA Foundation's extraordinary support for UNHCR's emergency work and for their continued support for displaced and marginalised communities across the globe.

If you want to learn more about the **Emergency Fund** and how you can get involved, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at [**emergencyfund@unrefugees.org.uk**](mailto:emergencyfund@unrefugees.org.uk)

Introducing one of our new Trustees

Sohail Ali is a Partner at DLA Piper, an international law firm specialising in litigation and arbitration disputes. He also leads the firm's global Islamic finance disputes practice.

Sohail advises a range of clients including states, state-owned enterprises and corporate organisations operating across a range of different sectors.

Sohail has worked in a number of jurisdictions including in the Middle East and Asia, as well as working in-house for a number of the firm's key clients such as Goldman Sachs, Barclays Capital and Lloyds Banking Group.

Sohail is a second-generation immigrant who was raised in Bradford. He is passionate about Diversity & Inclusion and is one of the founding members of DLA Piper's race and ethnicity network. He works with a number of organisations including General Counsel for Diversity & Inclusion and 'Stronger Together' to foster greater diversity and inclusion within the professional services sector and has won numerous accolades for his work in this space. Sohail has also been a strong supporter of UNHCR through his firm and through his work in his local community, assisting



with raising awareness of the work of UNHCR and fundraising activities particularly within the Muslim community.

Sohail graduated with an MA in Jurisprudence (Oxon) from Oxford University in 2004 and from the Harvard Business School in 2021.

We are grateful to all our Trustees who generously offer their time and expertise voluntarily.

Thank you for standing with refugees.





We cannot thank you enough for your show of solidarity with displaced people during 2024. 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 below.

You can also find out more about our philanthropy programme via unrefugees.org.uk/philanthropy



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