



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# 2021 Donor Impact Report



Looking back at what you,  
our valued supporters,  
helped make possible

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Who we are	What we do	Why we matter
UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, protects people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.	We are in the field in over 130 countries, saving lives, protecting rights, and helping build better futures.	Every year, millions of children, women, and men are forced to flee their homes. We are the world's leading organization dedicated to supporting them.

# Introduction

## 2021 was another difficult year.

Economic crisis, conflict, climate change, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have demanded that we adapt to new challenges every day.

But the trials and tribulations of 2021 especially impacted some of the world's most vulnerable people: the over 84 million forced to flee their homes to escape war, persecution, and other life-threatening situations.

## Even in a year compounded by crisis, when confronted with their suffering, you stepped up.

And more than ever, your kindness, empathy, and compassion were essential to face the uncertainty that affected us all.

You helped UNHCR save lives, protect fundamental human rights, and build a better future for refugees and displaced and stateless people around the world.

This report showcases the lasting impact we made, together, at the hour of greatest need for millions of men, women, and children. Here, you will find stories of people your support helped last year. And you will gain insight into why UNHCR must remain prepared – every day – and how we can do so through the generosity of people like you.

At a time when the world's forcibly displaced population is at a record high, you helped transform the lives of the world's most vulnerable people.

**From all of us at UNHCR, thank you.**





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*“It’s a light amid the darkness that one is plunged into as a refugee.”*

- Katiana, Panama (p. 24)

Meet some of the people whose lives were transformed last year – **thanks to support from people like you.**



© UNHCR/Mark Henley

*“This is the place I’m going to make my life.”*

- Orlando, Mexico (p. 30)

*“I’m truly happy to see  
this birth certificate [...] I’m really thankful.”*

- Kinsilina, Philippines (p. 27)



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# 2021 – a challenging year



## January

200,000 flee renewed violence in the Central African Republic

In the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, rising insecurity from the recent general election forces tens of thousands to flee their homes in search of safety. By the end of the month, [over 200,000 people had been displaced](#) by the violence – while many remained within CAR, more than 100,000 fled to neighboring countries, with as many as one thousand crossing the borders each day. Due to remote locations and poor road conditions, logistics are challenging and access to displaced people is difficult. However, with your support, UNHCR starts the year by registering arrivals, scaling up the delivery of food, shelter, and basic household items, and prepositioning supplies ahead of the rainy season.



## February

Conflict escalates in Yemen, aggravating a severe humanitarian crisis

[Renewed clashes in Yemen's Marib region](#) add to the suffering of thousands who are already displaced and in dire need. The situation in Yemen quickly became the world's most severe humanitarian crisis after the start of the conflict in 2015, with protracted and new displacement, poverty, and famine now [threatening the lives of over 20 million people](#), including four million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Despite challenges on the ground, UNHCR stays and delivers: we provide shelter, blankets, kitchen sets, and cash assistance, help ensure protection, and work to revitalize essential infrastructure to assist those in need, thanks to you.



## March

Fire brings destruction to Rohingya's Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh

A devastating fire ravages through **Bangladesh's Kutupalong settlement**, the world's largest refugee camp, [claiming the lives of 15 refugees, injuring over 500 people](#), and causing widespread destruction. With you by our side, UNHCR works hard to provide critical support and protection to some 48,000 refugees who lost their belongings and shelters in the blaze. In the days following the fire, we offer psychosocial services to those affected and help reunite over 600 children with their families. We also distribute blankets, solar lamps, and medical supplies and rebuild emergency sanitation facilities.

By donating to UNHCR, you have helped protect people forced to flee their homes. Our teams are on the ground in over 130 countries and territories, 365 days a year, caring for millions of people in the emergencies you've heard about – and the ones you haven't. Your support makes it all possible.

Last year was full of unprecedented challenges, conflicts, and crises. But together, we stayed ready. Together, we changed lives.



## April

### Armed attacks in Mozambique call attention to a silent crisis

[Tens of thousands flee their homes](#) to escape escalating violence by armed groups in **Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique**, after insurgents attack the coastal town of Palma, killing dozens. Access to health services, water, shelter, and food is severely impacted by the violence. Newly displaced people – mostly women and children – arrive traumatized and without any belongings, bringing the number of those who have been forced to flee since the start of the crisis three years ago to [over 700,000](#). Responding quickly, UNHCR distributes blankets and sleeping mats, provides shelter, offers psychosocial support, and reunites families.



## May

### Volcano eruption uproots thousands in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo

The sudden and devastating eruption of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano in **Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, on 22 May [forces thousands people to flee the area](#) in an attempt to keep safe and escape the destruction. This latest disaster comes on top of an already dire situation in the North Kivu province, which has seen brutal violence displace over 2 million people in the past few years. With you by our side, UNHCR rushes to provide life-saving aid, distributing emergency shelter and relief items, such as blankets and solar lamps, and providing a range of services, such as psychosocial support, to those affected.



## June

### Forced displacement reaches record levels

The number of people fleeing violence and persecution reached the unprecedented figure of [82.4 million in 2020](#) – the highest in recorded history – according to UNHCR's Global Trends Report. By the second half of 2021, that number had already risen to [84 million](#). Nearly half of those displaced are under 18 years old, and most have remained within their own countries. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, reinforces UNHCR's commitment: "Behind each number is a person forced from their home and a story of displacement, dispossession, and suffering. They merit our attention and support not just with humanitarian aid, but in finding solutions to their plight."



## July

### Escalating violence in Tigray worsens the humanitarian situation in northern Ethiopia

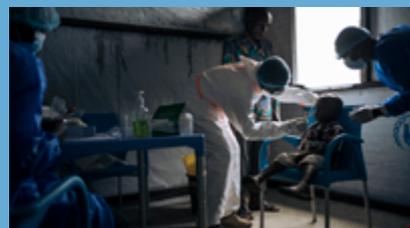
Intensifying violence from armed groups in **Ethiopia's Tigray region** aggravates the suffering of communities still reeling from the airstrikes that killed or wounded hundreds in June. With the [latest escalation of the conflict](#), the humanitarian situation throughout northern Ethiopia becomes increasingly desperate, as the risk of famine, displacement, and human rights violations, including gender-based violence and the forcible return of refugees to persecution or danger, threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. UNHCR scales up its humanitarian response to address the growing needs, quickly deploying technical experts and providing emergency shelter, psychosocial services, and relief items.



## August

### Crisis in Afghanistan pushes hundreds of thousands into severe need

In **Afghanistan**, a conflict-hastened humanitarian emergency, after a period of deteriorating crisis, brings further insecurity and destitution to a country already on the brink. Widespread fighting, culminating with the takeover of power by the Taliban, [forces people to flee their homes](#) across the country to escape violence, hunger, and human rights abuses. Most of the newly displaced are [women and children](#). Thanks to your generous support, UNHCR can quickly scale up activities to respond to the new developments, providing cash, shelter, emergency supplies, sanitation services, and other life-saving assistance to those in need.



## September

### The pandemic continues to threaten the lives of refugees amid under-funding

Despite advances in the fight against COVID-19, UNHCR warns that the pandemic continues to represent a significant threat to the lives and wellbeing of people forced to flee their homes, most of whom live in developing countries. [Restrictions on travel, work, and school](#) – as well as the threat of weakened health and sanitation systems – challenge the basic survival of refugees, especially those most vulnerable, like the elderly. We continue providing health, water, sanitation, and hygiene services to displaced populations and keep ensuring asylum pathways are accessible to those who need them, all thanks to you. And with the [COVID-19 emergency topping UNHCR's list of underfunded crises](#), your help is more



## October

Thousands stranded in Belarus-Poland border living in life-threatening conditions

[Thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers](#), many with specific protection needs, struggle to survive after having been left stranded in the **border areas between Belarus and Poland** since mid-August. Living in makeshift camps without proper shelter and secure sources of food and water, women, children, and men are forced to sleep in the open and with empty stomachs. Amid the quickly worsening conditions and facing the approaching winter, [lives hang in the balance](#). UNHCR delivers urgently needed support to the most affected, including hygiene items, blankets, and food, and works to assess the situation and find humane solutions to the crisis.



## November

The climate crisis has dire consequences for those displaced

The climate crisis is a human crisis. Globally, [90% of refugees and 70% of internally displaced persons](#) come from areas on the frontlines of the climate emergency. Extreme weather events are particularly threatening to those in developing countries – which host most displaced people worldwide –, as they compound the already devastating consequences of conflict and poverty and drive further displacement. This is the case of “climate hotspots” like [Honduras, in Central America](#), where natural disasters are becoming more frequent and destructive, making life harder for hundreds of thousands displaced by gang violence. Taking part in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), UNHCR calls for urgent assistance for those who are most vulnerable.



## December

Tens of thousands flee clashes over scarce water resources in Cameroon

Fighting breaks out in **Cameroon’s Far North Region** between groups competing for dwindling water resources, as the climate crisis exacerbates existing tensions – in the past 60 years, the surface of Lake Chad has decreased by as much as 95%. [Amidst violence, at least 100,000 people](#), mostly women and children, are forced to flee their homes. While some remain in Cameroon, most cross the border into Chad, where they face harsh conditions. Thanks to your help, UNHCR rushes to deliver assistance to what had quickly become a dire situation, providing emergency shelter, health services, protection, and other life-saving assistance to those displaced. We also work, together with our partners, to foster inter-communal reconciliation.

# The Afghanistan emergency, explained

# 2021 was another intense and difficult year. Conflict, displacement, the climate crisis, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have posed great challenges to us all.

However, among this year's many crises, one stands out: Afghanistan. Here's what you need to know about the biggest emergency of 2021 – and how your support is helping protect and assist millions of displaced people.

## How did the emergency in Afghanistan develop?

The situation in Afghanistan – a country that has been immersed in conflict for over 40 years – started to deteriorate dramatically in January 2021, when clashes between armed groups escalated. As fighting raged on, large parts of the country were gripped by high levels of insecurity, posing a threat to the basic survival of Afghans and resulting in an all-time-high number of casualties.

The continuous and widespread violence reached a peak in the second half of 2021, culminating in the takeover of power by the Taliban in August. Although fighting has now largely stopped, new challenges are threatening the rights and lives of Afghans.

The recent rise in insecurity has thrown Afghanistan into a new and severe humanitarian crisis, aggravated by decades of conflict, increasing climate-related disasters, chronic poverty, and food insecurity. Throughout last year, the country also struggled with the health and socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19

pandemic, at the same time as many of its provinces were hit with devastating drought.

Facing such a dire situation, hundreds of thousands of Afghans were forced to flee their homes to escape violence and destitution. From January 2021 to mid-January 2022, while some 699,000 became displaced inside Afghanistan – joining the nearly three million who were displaced before 2021 –, around 141,200 sought refuge in neighboring countries.

Thanks to donors like you, UNHCR could stay and deliver in Afghanistan, expanding humanitarian aid and long-term support to meet the needs on the ground. Despite the often-dangerous conditions and the many difficulties in obtaining access to displaced persons, our teams are working around the clock to provide life-saving assistance and access to basic services for communities in need.

## What are the biggest challenges facing people affected by the latest crisis?

2021 has stretched the resilience of Afghans to the limit. Violence and insecurity

have prompted hundreds of thousands to flee, traumatized and with nothing but the clothes on their backs. On top of violence and displacement, the coronavirus pandemic and severe droughts have further pushed Afghanistan to the brink. And the harsh winter weather, which can reach temperatures as low as -12 degrees centigrade, has added to the difficulties and suffering of Afghan families.

As a result, hunger, poverty, and needs are at unprecedented levels: more than half of the people in Afghanistan require humanitarian assistance; one in three Afghans already struggles with high food insecurity; and 97% of the population could plunge into poverty in 2022.

Those forced to flee are in desperate need of shelter, water, food, household items, protection, and psychosocial support. The situation remains extremely uncertain and displaced people still need our help.

# How have your donations helped UNHCR respond?

Thanks to the support of caring donors like you, in 2021 UNHCR raised over US\$40 million to quickly scale up its response to the new emergency in Afghanistan.

We have been working in Afghanistan and neighboring countries for four decades, and despite the challenging situation, we were committed to stay and deliver for the Afghan people in their moment of highest need and uncertainty. By keeping our global warehouses stocked, our staff trained, and the funds available, we've been able to remain on the ground, providing safe shelter, sanitation, cash assistance, clean energy, medical and psychosocial support, protection services, and core relief items, such as mats and jerrycans, to those in need. We've also delivered thermal blankets, insulation kits, solar lamps, and other winter essentials to protect families from the cold temperatures.

**UNHCR supported more than 1.1 million internally displaced Afghans with life-saving assistance in 2021, including more than 926,000 from mid-August to the year's end.**

When families struggled with renewed violence, growing displacement, hunger, poverty, and the harsh winter in Afghanistan, UNHCR was there, by their side.

**We were ready for this emergency and will be ready for the next, thanks to you.**

# Emergency assistance provided between August and December 2021, with your support:



**926,900**  
persons supported



**34 out of 34**  
provinces reached



**263,200**  
persons benefited from cash for winterization



**74,300**  
persons benefited from cash assistance for protection needs



**88,900**  
persons benefited from cash for rent, shelter & shelter repair



**199,900**  
persons benefited from core relief items



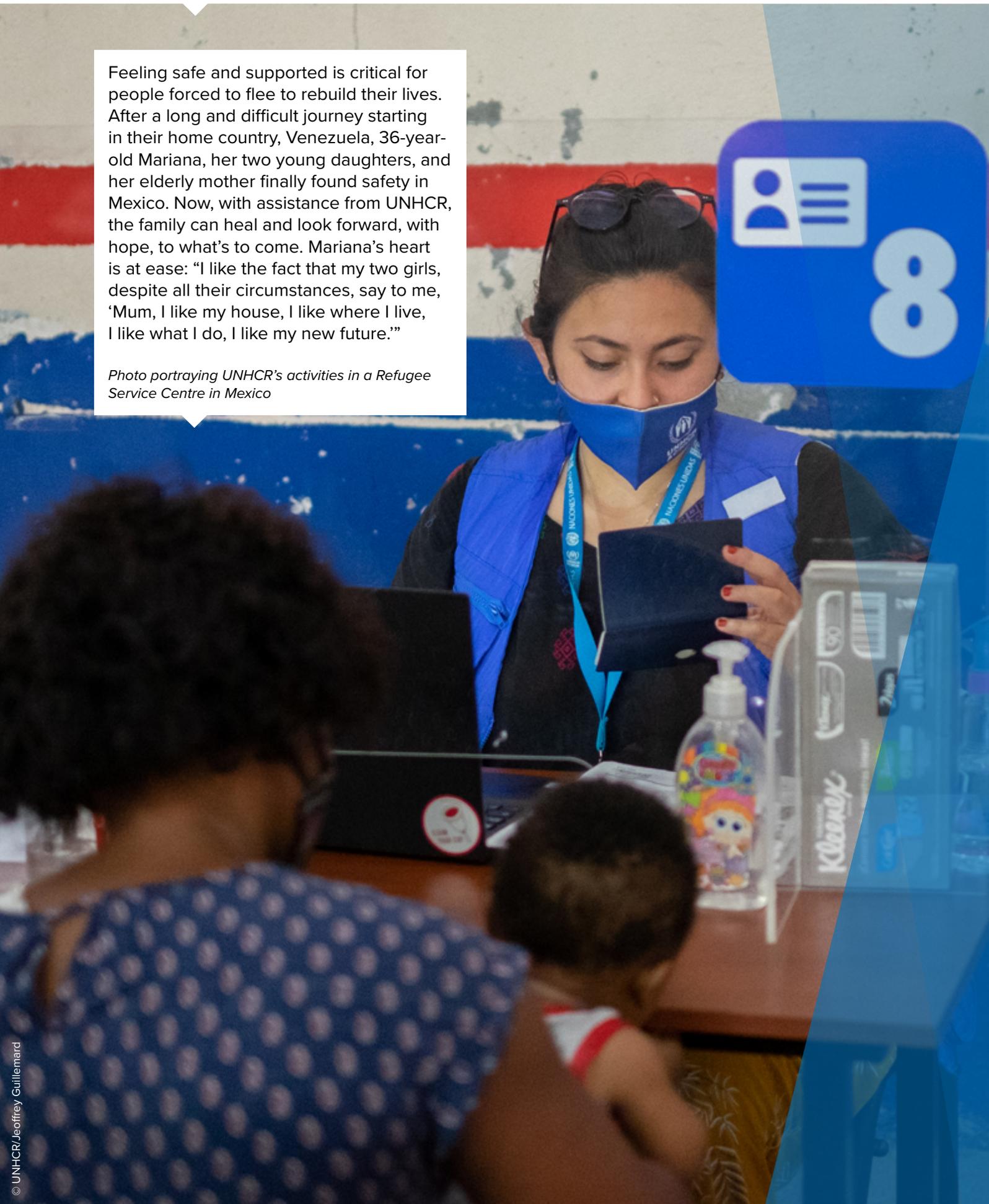
**54,700**  
persons benefited from cash for reintegration (CARE)



**64,400**  
persons benefited from hygiene kits

Feeling safe and supported is critical for people forced to flee to rebuild their lives. After a long and difficult journey starting in their home country, Venezuela, 36-year-old Mariana, her two young daughters, and her elderly mother finally found safety in Mexico. Now, with assistance from UNHCR, the family can heal and look forward, with hope, to what's to come. Mariana's heart is at ease: "I like the fact that my two girls, despite all their circumstances, say to me, 'Mum, I like my house, I like where I live, I like what I do, I like my new future.'"

*Photo portraying UNHCR's activities in a Refugee Service Centre in Mexico*





# Protecting people forced to flee their homes

Every year, millions of people are forced to flee violence and persecution at a moment's notice. Uprooted from their homes, they have to leave their jobs, their cherished belongings, and sometimes even their loved ones behind, embarking on harrowing journeys in search of safety.

This reality is what moves UNHCR. Since 1950, when the UN Refugee Agency was created, everything we do has had one goal: to protect and assist people forced to flee their homes. Today, over 70 years later, we are still hard at work to save lives, protect rights, and help build better futures for those who have been displaced, anytime and anywhere.

UNHCR is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions. As new emergencies arise and older ones persist, your donations makes it possible for us to keep doing this work. And as we continue to face record levels of displacement, your support is now more important than ever before.

**Thank you for choosing to help. We couldn't do this without you.**

In 2021, a record of over US\$616 million was raised from our global community of individual donors, foundations, and corporate and philanthropic partners.

Four years ago, Abraham was forced to flee Eritrea with his four children. The family found safety in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, where UNHCR services renewed their hope. “Back then, we knew that we were not forgotten. UNHCR tried to give us a future,” he says.

But in November 2020, as conflict escalated in Tigray, UNHCR lost access to hundreds of people in desperate need. After weeks of negotiations, we were able to return to the area in January 2021, fully prepared – thanks to donors like you – to provide life-saving assistance for refugees and newly displaced persons.

For Abraham and many others like him, our return was a relief: “We waited for you. Now, not everything is good, but it is looking better.”

*Photo portraying UNHCR's distributions in Tigray*





## Responding with life-saving support

When an emergency hits, people often lose everything – their belongings, their homes, their safety nets, their communities. But all around the world, UNHCR is on standby, prepared to help within 72 hours. In any crisis, our first priority is saving lives. We do this by providing refugees and internally displaced persons with safe shelter, clean water, food, and medical care.

Thanks to your generous support, last year we were able to assist families like Mullah's\* through the hard winter months, offer mothers like Benitia essential relief items, and give parents like Mariam the opportunity to provide for their families amid dire conditions.



# Supporting Mullah\* and his family through the cold

**Mullah’s\* children gaze at the flames licking up the inside of the family’s small stove. The fire provides much-welcomed warmth to their mud-brick house, keeping, although for a short time, the cold of the Kabul winter from entering through the curtain door.**

The space is small and the fumes from the fire hang thick, but there is no heat in the other room in the house, so most of the 14-member family crowd in close. Under the glow of the flames, Mullah’s 3-year-old daughter, Aseela, barefoot and wearing thin, tattered clothes, chews a small scrap of bread. Much of the time, bread is all the family has to eat.

Five months ago, they all had to flee their home in eastern Afghanistan to seek safety in Kabul. Since then, Mullah has been struggling to provide for his family amidst the country’s destruction and economic collapse. And with the arrival of the bitter winter weather – which can go as low as -25 degrees Celsius – the situation has become even more dire. “I’m very worried about the rest of the winter,” he says.

Unfortunately, Mullah’s story is shared by hundreds of thousands of Afghans. For families like his, humanitarian aid is the only hope of avoiding a downward spiral of crippling debt and continuous hunger.

From the start of the emergency in mid-2021 – as well as during decades of ongoing conflict and crisis in the country – UNHCR has been helping Afghan families survive. Through your generosity, we have distributed blankets, shelter items, cooking stoves, buckets, hygiene kits, and kitchen sets to thousands of displaced persons in Kabul.

We have also provided those who are most vulnerable with cash assistance. For Mullah and his family, the help has come just in time: this money will help them cover the costs of firewood, extra blankets, and proper clothes to keep warm during the long winter.

*\*Name changed for protection reasons*



# Giving Benitia access to life-saving assistance

© UNHCR/Fabien Faivre

## Benitia has gone through far more in life than most 23-year-olds.

When violence broke out in the Central African Republic – her home country – in December 2020, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to leave everything behind in search of safety. Benitia was one of them.

Heavily pregnant, she endured a harrowing journey alongside her husband and their two-year-old daughter. Like thousands of refugees, the family traveled to Ndu, a remote village just across the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Exhausted and with nothing but the clothes on their backs, they arrived in desperate need of water, food, medical assistance, and shelter.

It was there, in a run-down dwelling, that Benitia soon gave birth. But the happiness of welcoming her newborn was troubled by the challenges of their new context.

“Our life has changed overnight. We are now refugees,” she says. “There is so much I need to think about that I haven’t even named my baby girl.”

In Ndu, hundreds of makeshift tents offer little protection from rain, wind, and the scorching sun for the refugees that occupy them. Under such conditions, diseases like malaria, respiratory tract infections, and diarrhea have become common, especially among children.

For Benitia, with two little ones to care for, this situation is particularly stressful. But thanks to caring donors like you,

UNHCR was able to cover the vast distances and extremely poor road conditions to provide life-saving assistance to families like hers.

UNHCR has registered thousands of Central African refugees and provided them with emergency supplies such as sleeping mats, soap, kitchen sets, buckets, and mosquito nets to meet their basic needs. We have also worked to relocate refugee families to newly-built, safer, and better-equipped locations, with the help of our partners and local governments.

Finally, with your help, we have pre-positioned supplies in key locations ahead of the rainy season, when vast areas become inaccessible by road, to ensure assistance will still reach those who need it.

# Helping Mariam feed her children

© UNHCR/Marie-Joelle Jean-Charles

*Photo portraying a UNHCR cash assistance recipient in Yemen*

**For months, Mariam and her children endured empty stomachs. With no food to cook, the unused firepit in the corner of their tent was an unwelcome reminder that they went days without eating.**

“Most of the time, we only eat once a day. I don’t have fuel or firewood, so we burn plastic bottles and rubbish when we have something to cook,” the 50-year-old says.

Mariam and her family were forced to flee their village in northwestern Yemen in 2015, when bombings destroyed their house and took the lives of several relatives. This was only the beginning of their struggles: although they have found some safety near the capital Sana’a, they now face a daily battle

for survival. Since losing her husband, Mariam is the sole responsible for feeding and taking care of her six children, as well as her seven nieces and nephews – a nearly impossible task without regular income.

This is a too-common story for thousands of people in Yemen. The looming threat of famine-like conditions is a reality in many parts of the country, but displaced families are subject to a particularly high risk of hunger – especially female-headed households like Mariam’s. The COVID-19 pandemic has only made things worse, shrinking already-meager incomes and disrupting food supplies. The need for humanitarian assistance has reached record levels.

But thanks to UNHCR’s cash assistance program, Mariam and her family – and 1.4 million internally displaced persons like them – can afford to buy food and pay for other priorities such as medicines, rent, or shelter repairs. With the help of donors like you, our cash assistance program in Yemen has become one of the largest in the world, surpassing a total of US\$72 million in 2021.

To further help improve lives, we have also provided displaced families with essential items, including mattresses, kitchen sets, and shelter building materials. This was all made possible with your support.

# UNHCR cash assistance overview (2015 to 2021):



more than  
**33 million**  
persons receiving  
cash assistance



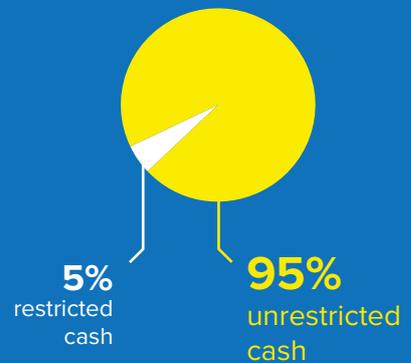
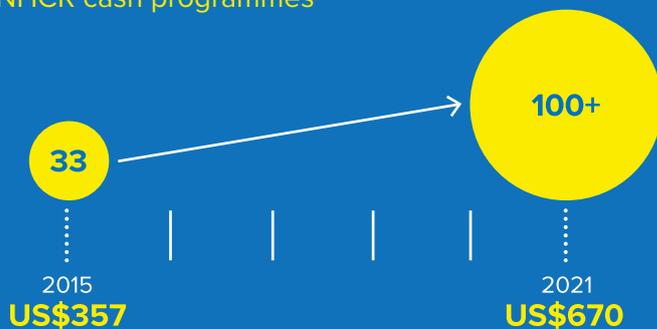
**US\$3.7 Billion**  
cash assistance  
reaching people



**80%**  
Bank account/  
mobile money

## Countries

with UNHCR cash programmes



When the first cases of COVID-19 emerged in Bangladesh in March 2020, there was widespread concern about the potential for the virus to spread through the densely populated refugee settlements in the country that are home to nearly a million Rohingya. Quickly, UNHCR put in place a response aimed at protecting both refugees and local Bangladeshi communities from the coronavirus.

Since 2020, UNHCR and partners have helped establish isolation and treatment centers inside the refugee camps and in the surrounding areas in Cox's Bazar. We have also promoted community outreach campaigns, many of which were led by refugee health workers. And more recently, after discussions with the government, UNHCR teams were able to ensure the inclusion of Rohingya refugees in the national COVID vaccination rollout.

Shokiba, a Rohingya refugee who spent 20 days with her seven-year-old daughter, Jainak Bibi, in a UNHCR COVID-19 treatment facility, feels happy with the services provided. "The doctors were very good, and they treated all the patients well. There were also Bangladeshi patients with us, [and] nobody was treated differently," she recounts with a smile.

*Photo portraying a UNHCR COVID-19 center in Cox's Bazar*

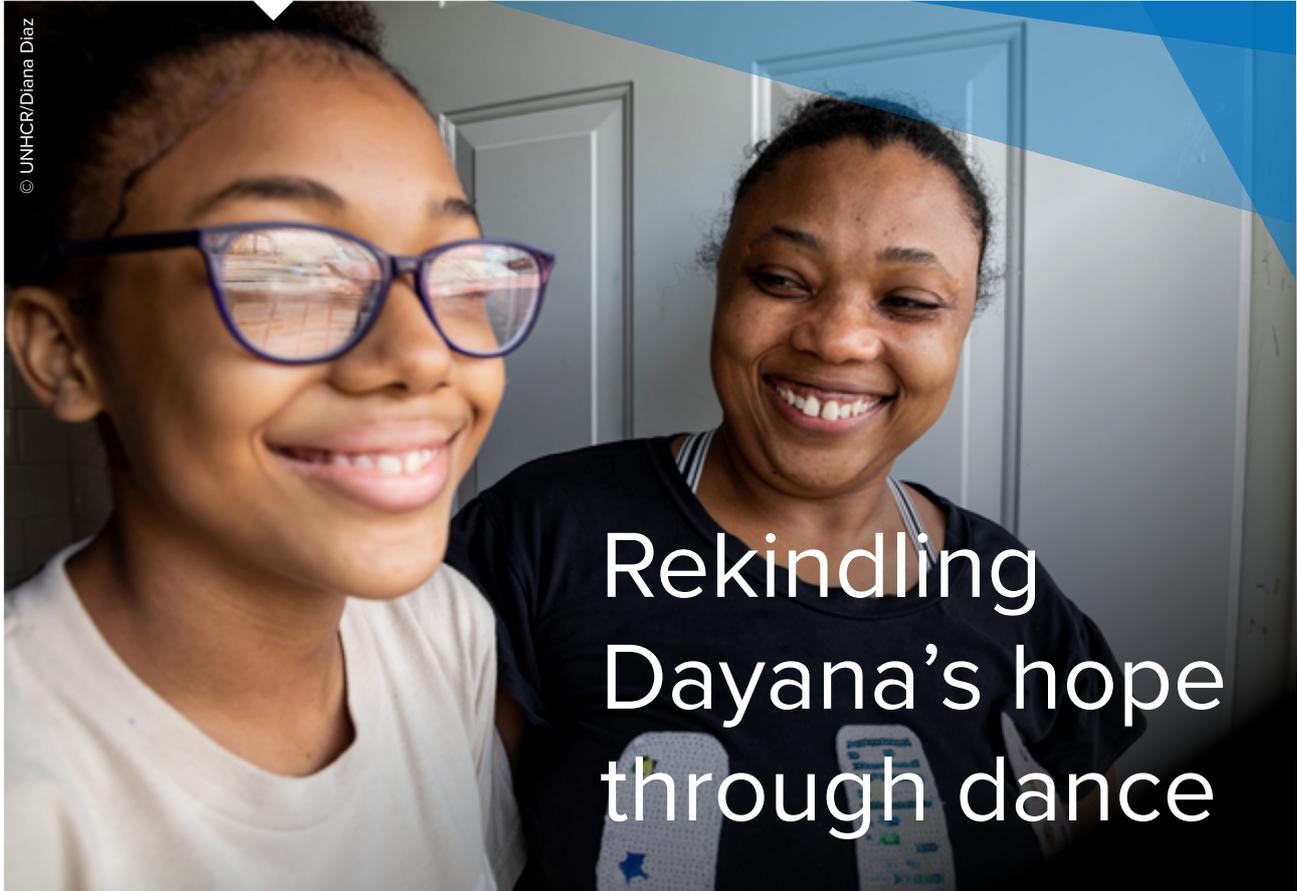




## Safeguarding fundamental human rights

When people are forced to flee, their basic human rights are often in danger. In their struggle to find safety and survive, they can lose access to essential services and become vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. But with your support, UNHCR is on the ground to protect and safeguard their rights and wellbeing. Together with governments, we work to ensure those who have been displaced are safe and can get documents, go to school, earn a living, and access healthcare. We also work towards ensuring the stateless achieve their right to a nationality.

We are doing all we can to make sure that children like Dayana can recover from their trauma and make friends, that unaccompanied kids like Arsalan\* are empowered and can advocate for themselves, and that members of communities like the Sama Bajau are registered and can access services.



**Fourteen-year-old Dayana loves to dance. In her home in Caracas, Venezuela, any gathering with friends was an excuse to play music and practice their fancy footwork, turning regular days into parties.**

But when insecurity and widespread food and medicine shortages forced Dayana's family to flee in 2018, she thought carefree dancing was a thing of the past. Together with her mother, father, and brother, Dayana headed northwest, taking a dangerous path from Venezuela through the dense jungle that separates Colombia from Panama.

Their journey was traumatic. The family was robbed after entering the jungle and spent seven days wandering the vast

wilderness without food or water. "I thought I was going to die," recalls Dayana with a shudder.

When they finally managed to emerge from the jungle and reach a populated area, the family applied for asylum in Panama. But despite her relief at having survived the terrible ordeal and returning to school, Dayana still struggled to adapt to life in her new host country. "I didn't fit in at first."

An afterschool program called Enlaces, which is Spanish for "links," changed all that. The program, which receives support from UNHCR, is transforming the lives of hundreds of young Panamanians and refugees through music and dance.

"The Enlaces Program is the best thing that's happened to us," says Dayana's mother, Katiana. "It's a light amid the darkness that one is plunged into as a refugee."

While Dayana still faces hurdles to fully integrating into Panamanian society, sharing time with her peers and practicing dance, her passion, have helped her feel more at ease. She is now planning her future in Panama, already thinking about which university she would like to attend to realize her dream of becoming a lawyer.

"I would like to stay in Panama," she says. "I feel that my life is here."



## Helping Arsalan\* empower other children

**Arsalan\* knows about the risks of violence and exploitation firsthand. Armed groups used to barge into the shop where he worked in Kabul, Afghanistan, and threaten to kill him.**

When he was suddenly forced to leave his home behind to seek safety at just 16 years old, he saw smugglers beat and mistreat other children who, like him, were fleeing alone. Now an asylum seeker in Serbia, he draws on his experiences to teach a UNHCR-sponsored course for refugees like himself.

"I try to convey this knowledge to my peers in the asylum center here... I am certain they will find it useful," he says.

UNHCR, together with partners, piloted the project in 2018 in response to the increasing number of unaccompanied children arriving in Serbia. Through 16 sessions over three months, participants from several different countries are taught about their rights, how to recognize abuse and how to get help.

The course includes sessions on trafficking, exploitation, and discrimination, as well as modules on sexual and gender-based violence and LGBTQI+ rights. Young refugees like Arsalan are trained to educate their peers on these topics, facilitating exchanges and connections among young people going through the same experiences. As a result, the course helps foster a sense of community between refugee children and integrate them into local society.

The number of unaccompanied children arriving in Serbia was on the rise before the coronavirus-related restrictions imposed new obstacles to those forced to flee. Still, thousands of young people continue to make the dangerous journey to safety through the country, coming from distant places like Afghanistan and Syria – while by late 2019 an average of 340 unaccompanied refugee children were entering Serbia each month, by the end of 2021 that number had fallen to some 110.

Despite their lower numbers, children traveling alone are increasingly vulnerable to trafficking, especially due to the higher economic insecurity caused by the pandemic.

Through the peer educators project, UNHCR is helping young people process the experiences they have endured so far and is informing them of the risks associated with their journeys, which include exploitation and abuse at the hands of smugglers.

Arsalan is happy with his work. “The course was useful, the examples easy to understand, and our discussions [were] lively,” he says, with a big smile.

With the support of caring donors like you, we are empowering unaccompanied children to advocate for themselves and make the best decisions to safeguard their physical and mental wellbeing.

*\*Name changed for protection reasons.*

## Did you know?

- Millions of people are trafficked every year. Women and girls, especially those unaccompanied by other family members, account for the largest number of detected victims.
- Forcibly displaced children traveling alone are at a heightened risk of trafficking.
- The socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have made displaced youths even more vulnerable. Deepening poverty and disruptions in education have left many children exposed to sexual exploitation, child labor, and child marriage.



© UNHCR/Martin San Diego

# Ensuring the Sama Bajau can access their rights

**At 7:30 on a sunny Saturday, Almalyn stands beside a van with a list of her Sama Bajau neighbors in hand. One by one, the people around her file into the vehicle as their names are called out. They are headed for the Civil Registrar's Office of Zamboanga City to be interviewed in a birth registration drive.**

The Sama Bajau are an indigenous group mostly found in the southern areas of the Philippines. Traditionally seafarers, they have a nomadic culture, frequently crossing borders; but because of their itinerant way of living, generations of Sama Bajaus have not been registered at birth, and, as a result, the population is at risk of statelessness.

On interview day, Almalyn serves as the Sama Bajaus' guide and interpreter.

She's been a community volunteer assisting with registration efforts since 2019, when UNHCR and partners launched the birth registration drive in Zamboanga City as part of a strategy to end childhood statelessness. A Sama Bajau herself, Almalyn went through a similar process to obtain a birth certificate and knows it can be challenging.

"Before, when they would be interviewed, they would hide out of fear. Now, they approach us to register, they ask us for advice on how to do it," she says, cheerful. "Being able to help is a great feeling."

The satisfaction Almalyn feels as a community volunteer is matched by that of the people she has helped, including Kinsilina, who at 40 years old is finally able to hold her birth certificate in her hands for the first time.

"I'm truly happy to see this birth certificate because I really need it. I've been wanting to have one for a long time, but I did not know how to get one," she says. "I'm really thankful."

Life can be very difficult for the millions of stateless people around the world. Without proof of citizenship, they are unable to get an education, obtain medical treatment, access social services, seek a job, or even buy a SIM card. They may also become limited in movement, which makes them especially vulnerable when natural disasters or violence force them to flee their homes.

Thanks to your generous support, UNHCR is working to change the lives of communities like the Sama Bajau. With something as simple as registration documents in hand, they are empowered to access their rights and live their lives to their full potential.



The Minawao settlement, in Cameroon, hosts nearly 70,000 refugees who have fled violence linked to the Boko Haram insurgency in neighboring Nigeria. In an arid region already badly affected by climate change, the refugees' arrival has accelerated the desertification process as they cut down the few surrounding trees for firewood.

As a result, the price of wood has risen considerably, causing conflicts with host communities. Women have been forced to walk far into the bush to fetch wood, exposing themselves to potential attacks. Animals have found it increasingly difficult to feed themselves.

Faced with this ecological and human disaster, UNHCR, together with partners, launched a unique program aimed at reversing deforestation in Minawao and surrounding villages. This approach includes scaling-up tree planting and clean cooking programs, investing in solar energy systems, and reducing plastic waste.

“The trees bring us a lot,” says Lydia, a Nigerian refugee who manages a tree nursery. “First, they provide the shade necessary to grow food. Then, the dead leaves and branches can be turned into a fertilizer for cultivating. Finally, the forest attracts and retains water,” she explains, with a sparkle in her eyes.

*Photo portraying UNHCR's environmental programs in Cameroon*



## Building better futures

People forced to flee need support to restart their lives and build a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities. With you by our side, UNHCR works hard to find durable solutions that allow refugees to take back control of their stories in safety and dignity.

We help people like Alberto\* and Orlando settle and integrate; we train refugees like Therese so they can earn a living; and we support those who, like Mohammed, want to make a contribution within the community that hosts them.



# Supporting Alberto\* and Orlando in building a new life

## What does thriving mean to you?

For Alberto\*, it means having the opportunity to work and create a new beginning for himself and his family.

He had to leave his trucking business behind when he fled El Salvador to save his life. After a harrowing journey, he arrived in Saltillo, Mexico, where he worked hard as a taxi driver until he had enough money to buy two more cars. Now, joined by his wife and three kids, he wants to expand his business and is even thinking of venturing into different activities.

“There are great opportunities here if you are hard-working, enterprising, and want to do things the right way,” he says.

Through its innovative local integration program, made possible with your support, UNHCR is relocating refugees to regions in Mexico that have a higher demand for workers, as well as better capacity to include newcomers in their education and health systems. In their new home, refugees learn about their rights and are walked through housing and work options, all so they can best engage with their entrepreneurial spirit and find an activity that suits their skills.

It’s a win-win for everyone: refugees are living safely and Mexican businesses are growing.

Orlando, a 28-year-old refugee from Nicaragua, is working with quality control at auto-part maker Matro. “I love it here,” he says of the company and of his

new home. “This is the place I’m going to make my life.”

Matro’s director, Alberto Valdes, has only words of praise for his refugee colleagues. “They have a real will to work.”

So far, over 10,000 refugees have been able to start new jobs and businesses in Mexico, thanks to your donations.

For Alberto, this is a welcomed chance to find prosperity for himself, his family, and his community. “[In Mexico] there’s peace, work, and respite that we don’t have in our countries. It’s like I’ve woken up from a nightmare.”

*\*Name changed for protection reasons.*



© UNHCR/Vittoria Moretti

## Improving Therese's\* self-reliance

**Therese\* draws a small crowd as she kneels before the broken-down engine of a truck parked near her house in the outskirts of Kananga, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her neighbors listen in amazement as she carefully assesses the extent of the damage, explaining what repairs are needed.**

While the 47-year-old may appear out of place in the traditionally male-dominated field of auto mechanics, it was in a mechanic's garage that she first found hope again after surviving a brutal sexual assault.

In 2017, violent clashes between armed groups engulfed Therese's hometown of Luebo. After her husband was killed and her house set ablaze, she escaped into the forest with her 10 children.

But her nightmare was just beginning. In the jungle, she and her daughter were violently attacked by armed men, and her two youngest children died of starvation.

When the family finally made it out of the bush and into Kananga three weeks later, Therese was so heavily traumatized and isolated by stigma that she was unable to support herself and her remaining children.

But hope finally came in the form of vocational training activities sponsored by UNHCR, made possible by your support. The program, implemented with the help of our partners, provides survivors like Therese with psychosocial care and training in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as auto mechanics, electronics, and information technology.

After completing their coursework, women leave with the necessary skills to support their families while also challenging gender stereotypes. Their communities, in turn, benefit from their new skillsets and expertise.

After almost eight months of training, Therese is now able to drive a car, and knows how to dismantle and repair engines, tires, and brakes. Today, she has renewed self-confidence and can look to the future with hope again. She is waiting to start working at a new garage, which will open in the coming months with support from UNHCR.

"I learned a profession which I really love. It will allow me to be independent and take care of my family."

*\*Name changed for protection reasons*



# Helping Mohammed green his community

© UNHCR/Saikhat Mojumder

**Mohammed has an unusual job: the 28-year-old Rohingya refugee is a plantation guardian, helping green the world's biggest refugee camp. His tasks include watering and caring for seedlings, replanting trees toppled by landslides, and raising awareness in his community about protecting forests in this lush corner of southern Bangladesh.**

The sprawling, densely populated Kutupalong camp is home to nearly a million Rohingya, the majority of whom arrived in 2017 after fleeing violence in Myanmar. In response to the massive influx, the Bangladeshi government allocated a 2,500-hectare sweep of protected forest to host the newly arrived refugees.

Vegetation was cleared to make way for shelters and infrastructure, and what was left was soon cut for firewood by refugees, who lacked alternative cooking fuels. What had been a sanctuary for wildlife – including endangered Asian elephants – became a bare, hilly tract of bamboo and plastic-roofed shelters that was prone to flooding and landslides in the monsoon season.

Mohammed recalls: “this place was like a desert; there were no trees. We had to tolerate overheating in the daytime, which also caused skin damage.”

To reduce the risks associated with deforestation, UNHCR and its partners set out to restore the forest ecosystem

and stabilize hillsides through a project to plant fast-growing indigenous species of trees, shrubs, and grasses. More than 3,000 Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees like Mohammed have received training on how to manage tree nurseries, plant and care for seedlings, and protect the young trees.

The re-greening activities, together with work on clearing and restoring waterways and improving drainage systems, have helped reduce the effects of flooding in the camps and bring much-needed shade, changing the lives of those living in the area. This was all made possible by your support.

*“Because I take care of these trees, I am at peace. One day, when I return to my country, I will look after the trees there and I will convince people to take care of them too.”*

- Mohammed

## Meet our people

From drivers, data scientists, and engineers to environmental experts, public health workers, and protection specialists – our people are our greatest strength. UNHCR depends on the dedication and expertise of every single member of our team to translate your support into action for people forced to flee.

**Samar Almarhabi** p. 36

**Senior CBI Assistant**  
Sana'a, Yemen

**Francesca Spadiliero** p. 42

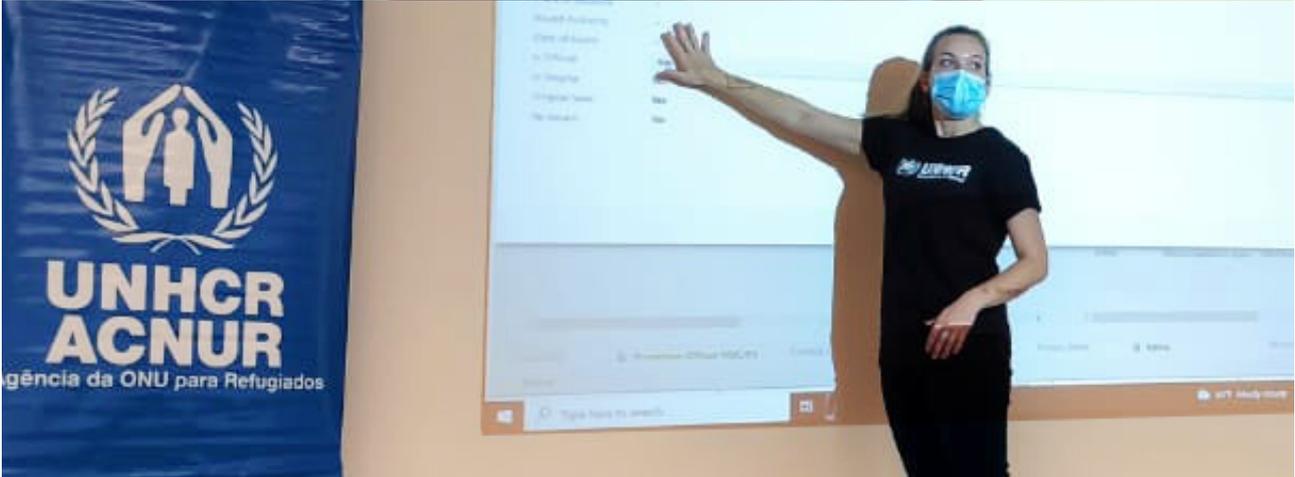
**Registration and Identity Management Officer**  
Brasília, Brazil

**Elisa Jamal** p. 48

**Community-Based Protection Assistant**  
Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

**Doctor Taimur Hasan** p. 54

**Public Health Officer**  
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh





## Q&A with Samar Almarhabi

**Job title:**

Senior CBI  
Assistant

**Location:**

Sana'a,  
Yemen

**Samar Almarhabi has been working with UNHCR for nine years, all of them in her home country, Yemen. She joined the organization in 2013 as a UN Volunteer working with protection. After four years in that position, she moved to UNHCR's Field Units for two years and later joined the Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) Unit, where she's been working since. As a Senior CBI Assistant, Samar coordinates and monitors the delivery of our cash transfers, evaluating the needs on the ground and planning activities in collaboration with partners and financial service providers.**

Yemen has been engulfed in conflict since 2015, and the situation has quickly become one of the biggest and most dire humanitarian crises in the world: over four million have become internally displaced, the country's essential services and supplies have been severely fractured, and 66% of the population has become dependent on humanitarian aid, many at risk of famine. Since the beginning of the crisis,

UNHCR has led in the provision of protection, shelter, and non-food items to Yemenis in need. We have also been providing cash assistance for displaced people to cover their most urgent needs, such as food and medicine. Our cash operation in Yemen is one of the largest in the world: just in 2021, we reached over 200,000 Yemeni families with life-saving cash assistance.

When people are forced to flee their homes, many times they have to leave their jobs and their possessions behind. UNHCR's cash-based interventions are a way to provide vulnerable persons with protection, assistance, and services in a dignified way, allowing them to prioritize and fulfill their own needs without having to resort to negative coping strategies, such as child labor and family separation. Cash assistance also directly benefits the local economy and can contribute to peaceful coexistence with host communities. In the end, everyone wins.

Between 2015 and 2021, UNHCR has provided cash assistance to more than 33 million people in over 100 countries. With their hard work, Samar and UNHCR's CBI teams help change lives, one dollar at a time.

#### **What is a typical day on the job like for you?**

A typical day for me involves a lot of coordination and planning. I start by helping our teams verify the assessments of people who are in need of assistance, which are usually done by our partners. Then, we prepare assistance plans, according to the funds we have available, and we check our database to understand how many people are in need and how many we can support, prioritizing those who are most vulnerable. I then coordinate with field offices and with our financial service providers for the distribution of cash assistance and I closely monitor the process in the field. Lastly, I also follow up on complaints we receive.

### **What are the biggest needs of displaced people in Yemen?**

The needs in Yemen are great. Most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) here don't have money to buy food, pay their rent, go to the hospital or buy medicine. There are people who are sleeping in the open, with no way of replacing the mattresses and blankets they received from UNHCR when these items get soaked by the rain. Some families are under such financial strain that they are forced to take their children out of school and send them to work.

Not long ago, my niece came back from school feeling very hungry, even though we had given her food to eat during the day. When we asked her about it, she told us some of her classmates had not eaten for two days, so she gave them her food. These are the types of heartbreaking stories we hear every day from people here in Yemen.

And during the winter, these needs become even more intense. Many people have trouble affording winter clothes,

blankets, heating, and other things they need to keep warm. We received reports from our partners that some children in IDP sites have passed away due to the cold. Sadly, in 2021 we did not have enough funding to help the same number of people we assisted in 2020, but with the hard work of our teams, we managed to support those who were extremely vulnerable with a cash transfer and tent kits so they could face the low temperatures. Finally, I will add that another big need in Yemen is improving the economic situation of IDP families, helping them be more self-reliant and find more sustainable sources of income. This is especially important because our funding fluctuates, which means we can't always continuously help all the people in need.

### **Why are UNHCR's CBI teams integral to our operations?**

Being in the field, and especially being in the field as part of a CBI team, means you are on the ground, seeing all the suffering up close and getting first-hand contact with

vulnerable people. This means you are better equipped to assess their needs, to collect, verify and update their data, to select those who are really vulnerable, and to figure out how to support people, to understand what kind of cash assistance they need and how we can implement the best intervention.

In Yemen, UNHCR has provided lots of non-food items, such as tents and blankets, as well as cash to internally displaced persons. And I find cash assistance to be the most suitable intervention.

When we give out cash, we leave it up to those in need to assess their needs, wants, and vulnerabilities. In our last winterization response effort, we provided cash and blankets to families. Two days ago, when I went to the market, I found some of the blankets for sale. I was not surprised – although people need the blankets, they also need other things that might take priority: they need food and medicine, they have to pay rent.

So cash assistance is, in my perspective, the best way to support IDPs in addressing their needs.

**What makes UNHCR the best at what we do in Yemen?**

UNHCR has more than 10 community centers around Yemen, so our teams can easily reach IDPs, closely assess their needs and use this in-depth information to best support them and help alleviate their suffering. UNHCR also has great coordination and communication with the government and with partners, which increases our reach and what we are able to do. Even though we cannot support everyone because of funding constraints, we have assisted and will continue to assist the most vulnerable people in need.

**What attracted you to this kind of work? Why did you decide to get involved and work with UNHCR?**

Throughout my career, from my work in protection to my work in the field and now in CBI, I have always been on the

ground, and this is what attracts me to this type of work. When I'm on the ground I get to meet people, witness their suffering, and help improve their lives.

I can see how our assistance, referrals, and support help them move away from negative coping mechanisms and live better lives, where their children can go to school and where their families can sleep with full stomachs. Being in the field, in close contact with vulnerable people, is the thing I like the most about my job.

**Can you share a story about a time you were inspired by the work you do or by somebody that you helped?**

One day my colleagues and I went to the Amran governorate, which is located in the northern area of Yemen. There, in an IDP site, we met a mother of three children whose husband had been unable to find work in the past month. With no income, they were struggling – the children were begging on the streets, and on some days the family didn't eat anything.

She received cash assistance right before Ramadan, and that was life-changing: it meant the children could return to school and she could buy food, milk, and even some clothes for Eid.

Another person we met was a man who used part of the cash assistance money to find treatment for his very sick wife, and, with what was left, he bought potatoes to boil and sell, ensuring the family had a source of income.

These stories inspire me. I was happy to see these families thriving thanks to the work we do.

**What is the hardest part of your job? And what is the most rewarding?**

The hardest part of my job is being unable to support everyone who needs it. Sometimes when I am in the field I meet people who are suffering, who are living in a dire situation, and who really deserve to receive assistance, but, because of limited funds, we cannot support them. When I think about the millions of people that are left without



assistance my heart breaks. And it is very difficult to justify to those families why we can't give them any support.

On the other hand, the best part of my job is being able to alleviate the suffering of people in need. I feel that my work with UNHCR is really rewarding. In 2021, for example, UNHCR provided cash assistance to more than 200,000 families in Yemen – that's over US\$72 million going to people in need. I'm really happy to have taken part in such an accomplishment. This makes me feel inspired to do more and more to support and improve the lives of IDPs here.

**What keeps you motivated?**

Lots of things keep me motivated. The people who are suffering, who are living in the streets, who are affected by the conflict motivate me.

The stories we hear and get to share with the world motivate me. The support we give people and how much this helps improve their lives motivate me. And the results, at the end of the year, showing us how fruitful our work was, how productive, how well we did, motivate me to keep going.

Two weeks ago, my supervisor thanked the team for our amazing work in 2021, telling us that despite understaffing and limited time and funds we reached over 200,000 families with cash assistance. After all the difficulties we faced last year, this was the best thing I could hear.

This and every other part of my job, whether it's challenging or routine, motivates me to go to the office, to work well, to reach more people, to press on. I'm looking forward to the work we will do in 2022.

**Why is it important for people to support UNHCR's work?**

Millions of people in Yemen are in desperate need of support. Because of the conflict, many families rely on cash assistance as their only source of income. Without cash assistance, mothers cannot feed their children, kids are forced to work, sick people cannot find treatment.

But to reach everyone in need, we need funding, and our operation is still underfunded. Every dollar we receive from donors is life-changing for poor and vulnerable families.

*“Every dollar we receive from donors is life-changing for poor and vulnerable families.”*

- Samar



# Q&A

with Francesca Spadiliero

**Job title:**

Registration and Identity Management Officer

**Location:**

Brasília, Brazil

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**Francesca Spadiliero first joined UNHCR in 2013, working as an intern with the Refugee Status Determination Unit in Cairo, Egypt. Her internship lasted six months, and after that she went on to work with two NGOs, one in Egypt and one in South Sudan, rejoining UNHCR in 2015, this time as an Associate Child Protection Officer in Chad. She has been with the organization ever since, having worked with the Child Protection, Community-Based Protection, and Legal Protection teams in Uganda and with the Registration teams in Panama, Guatemala, and now in Brazil, as part of our Venezuelan operation. As a Registration and Identity Management Officer, Francesca helps ensure that hundreds of thousands of people forced to flee have documentation and that their information is kept updated in our systems, providing UNHCR teams with this essential data so we can best respond to the needs on the ground.**

For the six million Venezuelans who have left the country since 2014, this is life-changing. The exodus of families trying to escape violence, insecurity, and threats, as well as lack of food, medicine, and essential services, has become one of the largest displacement crises in the world. The vast majority of Venezuelan refugees and migrants are families with children, pregnant women, elderly people, and people with disabilities, and most

have remained within Latin America and the Caribbean. Arriving with few resources, they are in immediate need of documentation, protection, shelter, food, and medicine. From day one, UNHCR was on the ground helping new arrivals with essential items and services.

UNHCR's registration, identity management, and operational data management activities are an essential first step in our response. They consist of recording, verifying, and updating information on people forced to flee with the aim of protecting, assisting, and documenting them and implementing durable solutions to their plight. This is key for displaced persons to be able to access their rights and for UNHCR teams to plan and coordinate the delivery of services for those who are most vulnerable.

Thanks to Francesca and UNHCR's registration teams, we can quickly and effectively protect and assist people forced to flee.

### **What is a typical day on the job like for you?**

My current position is a step away from fieldwork and into more of a coordination role. I'm based in Brasília, at the branch office, and my unit provides technical and procedural support to field offices. I also supervise and coordinate the broader DIMA, which is the Data, Identity

Management, and Analysis Unit, comprised of registration, identity management, and operational data management teams. So, in general, I divide my days between coordination meetings, ad-hoc meetings, field visits, and sometimes trainings and capacity-building sessions.

But I don't usually have a typical day – the demands change frequently, and I perform quite a few different tasks in the operation. My work requires a lot of flexibility and adaptability: on the same day I might have to deal with a registration issue in one office in the north of the country, have to draft a data protection document for another office two hours later, and in the afternoon have to attend a coordination meeting with the different units that I supervise across the country.

### **Why are UNHCR's registration teams integral to our operations?**

Registration is a very technical area, so I like to explain its importance in a practical way.

Can you imagine what would happen if you didn't have any documents, any proof of identity, any papers with your name? You would not be able to access health services, enroll in school, apply for jobs, open a bank account... you wouldn't be able to enjoy your basic rights.

This is why registration activities are so important: they ensure that we record accurate and specific information about each person forced to flee so that we can provide them with documents and identify their individual needs. This is even more important when we deal with vulnerable populations, like the elderly, pregnant women, children, survivors of gender-based violence, etc.

To put it differently, registration is key because it's a way of safeguarding the identity of the individual and because, through documentation, we can provide them with the assistance and services they need in the country of asylum and make sure they can enjoy their basic rights to health, education, and access to food and nutrition. Registration is also key to our operations because it is usually the first time a person forced to flee has contact with UNHCR and our partners in the host country.

So, this is an essential moment for us to identify the specific needs of the population so we can work together with the different partner organizations, with the government, and with different UNHCR units to make sure that we respond effectively and promptly to the needs of the individuals who have just arrived.

Additionally, registration is also important because one of our main responsibilities is maintaining updated data about Persons of Concern (POCs). By making sure that every situation that changes in the life of the displaced person is recorded properly, we can respond better, coordinate, make referrals, etc. And this is linked with data management – we register and process a huge amount of data, and it's imperative that we not only make use of this data for better programming but also safekeep this information.

We have a responsibility to ensure the data of people forced to flee is secure so we can protect their privacy and keep these vulnerable people safe from danger, fraud, and exploitation. We have a very strong data protection policy within UNHCR, one which we continue to strengthen; we're very careful when it comes to sharing data with our partners, we have trainings with our staff on data protection.

UNHCR is extremely committed to having a strong system to protect the data we gather and to make sure that we avoid at all costs a data breach that exposes POCs.

### **What are the biggest needs in the registration sector today?**

Needs change from context to context, but, in general, the biggest needs in the registration sector are related to resources. Registration requires trained people, infrastructure, technology, tools. It's really important that we keep investing in those, to find ways to make the registration process faster, more accurate, and safer.

We've become an increasingly digitalized world, and our registration activities must also adapt to the context. So, we are in constant need of new systems and of people who are trained and have strong know-how on how to use such systems. We also need human resources, logistics, and infrastructure because registration involves wide-reaching activities that need to accommodate hundreds of people at a time.

Another important need of the registration sector is building strong relationships with governments, partners, and even with other UNHCR units. We couldn't do our work alone – we work hand-in-hand with the governments that host refugees, with different UN agencies, with civil society, and with other stakeholders that are

key for establishing a structure that allows us to conduct our registration activities.

Coordination and collaboration are imperative. Here in Brazil, for example, registration in the north of the country is coordinated by a governmental task force in charge of the Venezuelan response. So, in the same physical space, we interact with the federal police, with other UN agencies, with NGOs. If UNHCR didn't have visibility, if we hadn't built trust with other stakeholders, we wouldn't even have space to implement our activities.

And, finally, registration also needs to adapt and improve its communication with POCs. At first look, registration is a simple activity, in the sense that mostly everybody understands that it involves writing down a person's name, date of birth, and other personal information. But, in reality, registration is much, much broader than that. So, it's really important that we continue strengthening our messages and our communication with communities about this sector.

**What makes UNHCR the best at what we do in our registration activities?**

I think that my answer applies both to registration, but

also to our work in general. UNHCR's biggest strengths are adaptability and flexibility. The organization has, through the years, maintained its core values and principles, all while knowing exactly how to adapt and change not only to different eras but also geographical contexts. We have continuously looked for innovative ways to respond to the needs on the ground in a changing world. And this has allowed us to accumulate experience and know-how on refugee and displacement issues that are unparalleled.

That's what makes UNHCR the best at what we do.

The power of our adaptability and experience is really evident when we think of registration. Registration is such a complex area, and with time, we have developed very advanced systems, procedures, and guidance for data collection, case management, and distribution of assistance, we have built and maintained strong links with other units, and we have expanded to new areas of work.

For example, back in the 1970s, UNHCR was not working with cash-based interventions, but now they are a big part of our activities – registration was essential for this because it

is in our databases that we identify people in need of assistance, that we record the assistance delivered, and that we keep information about POCs updated. It's because of our extensive experience with registration that we can innovate in our programming and be more effective in our case management.

Additionally, UNHCR has developed a very strong Data Protection Policy which ensures the safety of data of Persons of Concern. We have the responsibility to protect the data that we collect and we have strong mechanisms in place to avoid data breaches as well as strong procedures to follow in case of data sharing.

I will also add that UNHCR is the best at what it does because it has developed very strong ties with stakeholders and has established itself as a trustworthy organization, again because of our extensive experience. This is key for how effective we are because this allows us to reach farther and to work in synchrony with governments, partners, and other stakeholders.

**What attracted you to this kind of work? Why did you decide to get involved and work with UNHCR?**

I knew since I was a teenager that I wanted to be a humanitarian. In high school, during our history classes, we learned about the UN System and international politics, and that was when I decided to get a degree in international relations and diplomacy. Later, while at university, I took a course on humanitarian emergencies and interventions, to understand a little bit more about how the humanitarian world works, what its principles are, etc.

And with that, I became even more passionate about this line of work. I knew that being a humanitarian is a career that requires compromises and sacrifices, from a personal point of view, but my commitment outweighed it all.

After I finished my master's degree, I decided to pursue hands-on experience. For me, it was extremely valuable to have started in the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Unit, because it gave me a really strong base to understand UNHCR – what UNHCR does, why the organization was

created, what its mandate is. This knowledge even allowed me to later move into different areas of work. It was also in the RSD Unit that I could strengthen my interest in data and could start delving into registration. When I got the chance to join the registration team, after years working in areas like child protection, community-based protection, and gender-based violence, I jumped at it. My previous experiences had taught me to look at data and registration more holistically, and they showed me how integral good registration practices are for all the aspects of a response.

And I think that after many years working in the field and accumulating experience within UNHCR, I can do registration work much better than I would have years ago. Knowing that I can contribute to this sector is what attracted me to this kind of work and what motivates me to keep doing my best.

**What is the hardest part of your job? And what is the most rewarding?**

The hardest part of my job is witnessing suffering and dealing with difficult situations every day. This affects me personally. On the other hand,

the most rewarding part of my job is and has always been seeing the impact of the work that we do.

When I was working with child protection in Chad, my team had the opportunity to implement a project called the Youth Initiative Fund for two years. Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world, and young refugees there are especially vulnerable. So, together with the refugee youth and the broader community, we designed this project as a way of strengthening the community's capacity to respond to issues and, in that way, improve lives.

This was an extremely rewarding experience for me: seeing the young refugees enthusiastically take the lead on the project, seeing the impact that our activities had on the community, seeing the support from other stakeholders, and seeing refugees motivated to create and implement their own projects really meant a lot to me.

The challenges fade away when we see that every project, every activity we do has an impact that goes well beyond the funds invested. And I think this is the reality throughout UNHCR.

### Why is it important for people to support UNHCR's work?

UNHCR works in so many situations, from the biggest emergencies in the world to enduring crises, conducting so many activities. We provide life-saving assistance, we make sure the rights of displaced persons are respected at all times, and we also provide POCs with opportunities, with durable and sustainable solutions for their future. This means that in a typical response, UNHCR and our partners provide people forced

to flee with shelter, health, education, food and nutrition, registration. And to do all that, we need infrastructure, technology, tools, trained staff, and many other types of resources.

If UNHCR is to continue being the leading organization for displacement issues, if we want to continue to adapt to new challenges and expand to new areas, and if we really want to continue having a strong positive impact on the ground, we need resources to develop and implement new strategies.

Registration can illustrate this well: back in the day, we used to record registration data on paper; now, we have an extremely sophisticated system that requires trained staff and infrastructure.

We are a trustworthy organization, and we have built our reputation by working hard and proving just how much we can do – I'm not saying that because I work for UNHCR; I work for UNHCR because I believe in what I'm saying.

*“We are a trustworthy organization, and we have built our reputation by working hard and proving just how much we can do – I'm not saying that because I work for UNHCR; I work for UNHCR because I believe in what I'm saying.”*

- Francesca

# Q&A

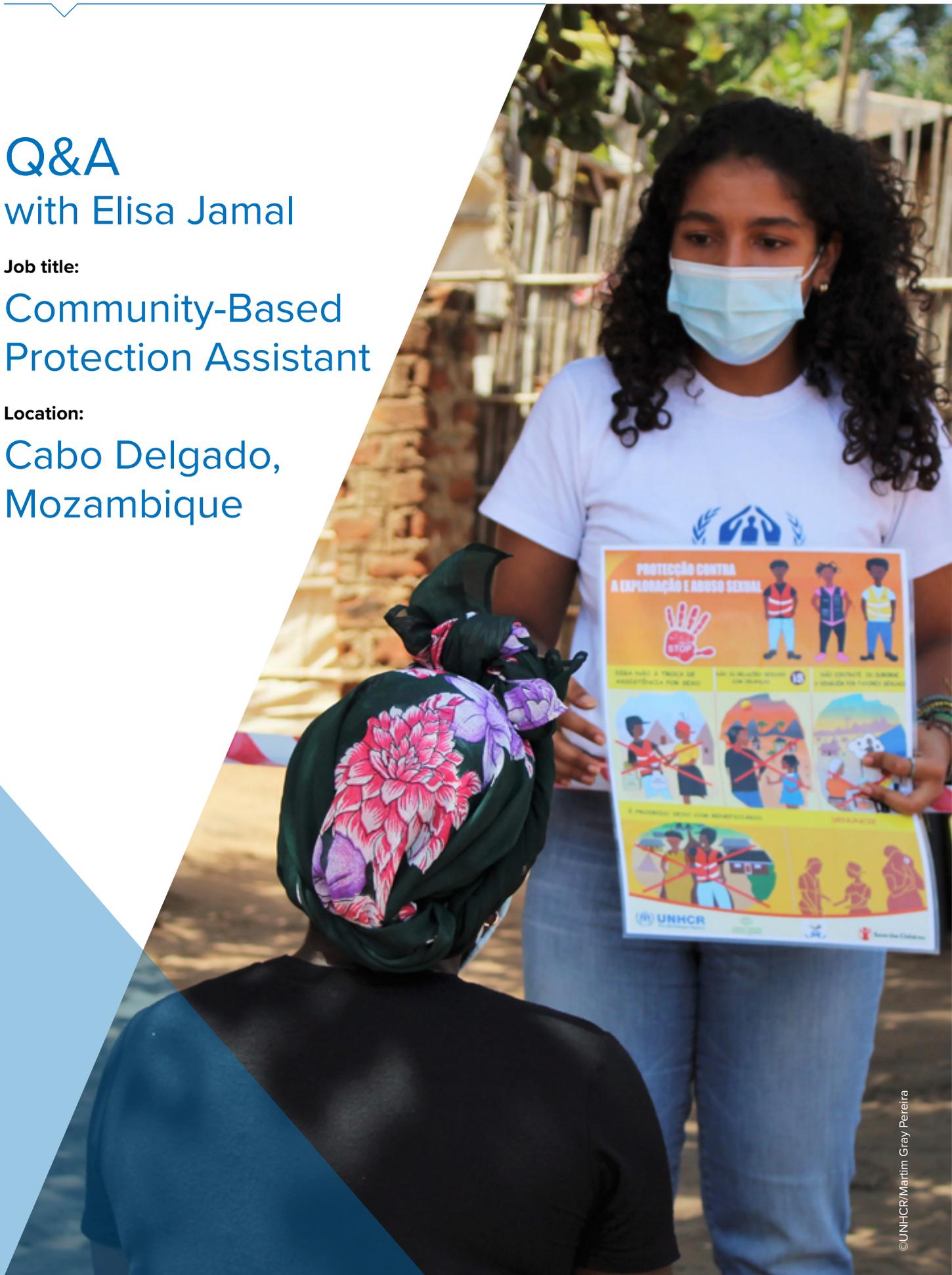
with Elisa Jamal

**Job title:**

**Community-Based  
Protection Assistant**

**Location:**

**Cabo Delgado,  
Mozambique**



**Elisa Jamal has been working with UNHCR in her home country of Mozambique since October 2020, joining the organization right at the beginning of the emergency response to assist people fleeing attacks in Cabo Delgado. As a Community-Based Protection Assistant working in the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Protection Department, Elisa engages with people on the ground to identify their needs and collaborates with partners and other UNHCR teams to offer support to and empower survivors of gender-based violence.**

In 2020, an outbreak of violence in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes in search of safety. This region has been ravaged by armed conflict since 2017, with over 700,000 people having been displaced by clashes by December 2021. Their situation is concerning – besides needing shelter, food, protection, and essential items, displaced persons also require protection from the frequent climate-induced disasters that affect the area; moreover, gender-based violence is an issue of particular concern in Cabo Delgado. From day one UNHCR has responded to the situation on the ground by offering

Mozambicans emergency shelter and core relief items and by implementing protection activities, such as youth engagement projects and GBV-focused services.

Gender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It can include threats of violence, coercion, and manipulation or sexual, physical, mental, and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. GBV is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening health and protection issue. Its consequences are devastating and can have life-long repercussions for survivors. It is estimated that one in three women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime – and during displacement and times of crisis, the threat of GBV significantly increases for women and girls.

UNHCR's GBV activities have the goal of reducing the overall risk of GBV for people forced to flee and ensuring all survivors have adequate and timely access to quality services that meet their needs. With their hard work, Elisa and UNHCR's GBV teams help promote gender equality in our operations and safeguard the rights and well-being of people forced to flee their homes.

### **What is a typical day on the job like for you?**

What I usually do on a normal day is conduct protection activities linked to GBV, supporting survivors of gender-based violence and responding to any needs they may have. That's my main role. Some of that involves office work and some involves fieldwork.

The fieldwork involves talking to people and engaging with the community so we can identify the health needs, safety needs, and other needs of the GBV survivors and refer them for further support. For instance, if someone comes to us and shares an incident or tells us about a specific thing that is afflicting the community, such as lack of food or even issues with a perpetrator of violence, we try to respond to the problem alongside the local services.

The office work involves reporting on the information we've gathered in the field, planning and implementing the guidance needed to conduct quality protection activities, such as establishing referral pathways<sup>1</sup>, mapping services, and coordinating with other UN agencies to see who's in the field and who can support the people in need.

<sup>1</sup> Referral pathways are a series of actions or steps taken after identifying a person in need of assistance – in this particular case, a survivor of gender-based violence. These steps lay out services and available support that can be provided to a survivor, according to their needs.

I should also mention that a big part of my job is capacity building around GBV: besides training our own protection focal points in the field, we also help build the capacity of our partners on case management and survivor-centered approaches, such as consent and confidentiality, and we coordinate with other humanitarian actors for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

### **What are the biggest needs related to GBV in Mozambique?**

The biggest problem for our sector is the lack of funds. There are a lot of barriers to working with survivors of GBV – for example, there are many gender inequalities that limit access to services. And survivors need ongoing support and follow-up: we need to help them escape the cycle of abuse and help them find a place where they feel safe, where they feel like they can talk to people, where they can go when they need help; we need to be there to support them at all times, to empower them and their communities. So working in this sector, in an environment like the one we have in Mozambique, is very complex – it requires a lot of attention to detail and it requires that we offer survivors a lot of support, and that depends on sufficient funds.

Last year, there were few GBV-specialized services or organizations working in Cabo Delgado. UNHCR was working with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the government to assist. In such a context, with a lack of funds and lack of staff to provide support, it was very difficult for us to do our job and for survivors to access the support they need.

But now the community knows who we are, they know what we're doing here. People come to us and tell us "this is what I need and this is what I'm struggling with." What we need are resources so that we can support them the way that we are best able to do.

### **Why are UNHCR's GBV teams integral to our operations?**

The work we do is really important, because it is very detailed. It goes well beyond just providing someone with basic assistance – it involves working with that one individual to empower them, to get them to a place where they're safe and well. It requires a lot of empathy, of active listening.

Our work also involves the broader community. When we do community engagement, we speak about forms of GBV such as physical and psychological abuse. And sometimes that means reframing issues that

people think are normal. How we think about gender-based violence is deeply cultural. There's so much associated with it. And the suffering is so intense.

So, our work is understanding the culture, engaging with the root causes of the problem to change those norms in the long term. There is a lot of gender-based violence happening here in Cabo Delgado. We talk to the people, engage with the community to explain gender differences, label abuse, and reframe what a healthy relationship could be like. And a lot of times we can see their perspective change.

The work we do is going to have a really powerful long-term impact. I was born here in Cabo Delgado, and I saw what people were going through before and what people have access to now. I can see that the capacity-building that UNHCR has already done with the government and with communities is going to be life-changing.

We are building an inclusive community-based response to needs and supporting local organizations with capacity building. We hope that in the future, communities, authorities, and service providers will use a survivor-centered approach when supporting survivors. That's why it's so important

to have UNHCR come in to respond. I can really, say that my country is growing internally in terms of support to survivors, in terms of support to everyone, because now we work more in collaboration, and we now have all this knowledge as a basis to be able to continue this work when international actors leave.

### **What does UNHCR's GBV response in Mozambique look like?**

Our response has essentially just started. It's been only a year since we began. We've now established all the bases for our activities – all the referral pathways so that survivors can access support from different services and all the coordination structures – and we're growing. We have data, we have information on the main forms of gender-based violence affecting people, and now it's our time to respond, always with the community at the center of our planning.

We have a lot of different projects here in Mozambique that have a GBV response component. The main project supporting survivors is a mobile brigade that provides case management and psychosocial support to survivors, and it has been one of the most trusted service providers for those who experience GBV in the communities where they are in place. It was very important to

establish mobile teams, as local service providers were unable to meet the demands for the most isolated communities. The Legal Caravan, for example, provides people with documentation, which is empowering for survivors. And our livelihoods project helps survivors provide for themselves and their children, making them feel safer to escape from abusive situations. A lot of the work that we do with survivors is aimed at empowering them.

Recently, we've also conducted safety audits in the field, figuring out what the main GBV and protection concerns within the community are. In a specific case, we identified the need for lighting in certain locations to reduce the risk of sexual violence at night. And we followed up on that, distributing solar lamps to that community.

Lastly, we do a lot of referrals to partner agencies. We work in many areas in Cabo Delgado, areas that are isolated and where we have limited staff. We also have many people whose protection concerns are related to different types of assistance, like food or shelter. So, we refer these cases to partners. But there's still a lot of room for growth. Much more is needed not only in terms of capacity but also in terms of GBV-focused response projects.

### **What makes UNHCR the best at what we do in Mozambique?**

When the emergency response started in Mocímboa da Praia, there was no coordination. The protection activities were just starting in the province of Cabo Delgado. We saw a lot of problems developing: we had nowhere to host people, we had problems coordinating with the government and other agencies. A few months later, when the emergency response in Palma began, we could already see much growth among the humanitarian community. Every agency was coordinating together. We each had a role. We each had a clear mandate and target groups that we were assisting. We were all engaging.

At that point, we all knew each other, so the response was much better developed. And a lot of this growth came from UNHCR, because we were the main protection agency leading the emergency response, asking for support from other partners, and creating emergency deployment teams and protocols. So, I think UNHCR is very good at coordination. We are very good at working with partners.

It was the same with the GBV team. When we first began our activities last year, there was barely anything established, not only at UNHCR but also across the response. The projects

being implemented were very basic and there was a lot of need for capacity building. My supervisor, a GBV Officer, essentially built that capacity internally and worked with the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) coordination mechanism<sup>2</sup> and with government authorities to ensure collaboration and to develop and disseminate unified messages around GBV to local communities.

She and the team established referral pathways, held a lot of coordination meetings, launched a research project to understand the main GBV needs here.

This sparked a sort of internal movement for GBV activities, helping develop the response the community needed. Seeing this kind of progress showed me the real capacity that UNHCR has to respond to emergencies and quickly answer to the needs of the community.

And this is all due to the capacity of the staff. Our internal capacity is superb. This is what allowed me to have so much professional growth in this past year. When I first started working in Cabo Delgado, I didn't know exactly what the technical terms were and what the basis of all protection activities was.

My first case was a domestic abuse survivor. Thanks to my supervisor and the team, I quickly learned about referral pathways, mapping services, and protection principles, so I could support that survivor to the greatest extent – I coordinated with partners to get her food assistance and provide her with household items and clothing; I helped her find better lodging; and I offered her access to psychosocial support services. My supervisor and my team gave me the capacity to do the work. This was something that really marked me because it shows how much internal capacity UNHCR has and how much the organization cares about the individuals we assist. In our line of work, some struggle with empathy because we are working in such harsh environments. But the UNHCR team here in Cabo Delgado has shown me what true empathy is. The growth they enable in each other makes a real difference to the people we work with.

**What is the hardest part of your job? And what is the most rewarding?**

The hardest part of my job is definitely working with survivors and hearing their heartbreaking stories. Many times, a particular story will touch me personally, either because I have gone through something similar

myself or because I know someone who has experienced the same situation. Listening to these intense stories every day is hard, and it makes me think about how violent the world can sometimes be. So, I have to actively try to not let that impact my personal growth and mindset. It is also very hard to listen to survivors and be unable to help because of the lack of resources. When I speak to survivors I want to give them everything they need, but there are limitations to that. If you're not properly equipped with the right resources to support people, it becomes very, very difficult to do your work.

At the same time, I can see that survivors are incredibly resilient. They have experienced so much and kept going even when they could not help themselves. Working alongside them as they seek to empower themselves is the best part of my work. My first case changed my life. I didn't know anything and UNHCR provided me with so much growth, and I feel like that was reflected in the field, on the way I was working with the first survivor I supported.

Seeing someone else's life change due to some of your actions, due to some calls that you made, or due to a good partnership that you created with another agency is incredibly rewarding.

<sup>2</sup> The GBV AoR mechanism is comprised of a global team that works collectively to improve the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian response for the prevention, risk mitigation, and response to all forms of gender-based violence, to ensure that the agency and capacity of survivors are recognized and reinforced and that primary prevention efforts are effectively employed to address underlying gender inequality.

The survivors I work with are the strongest people I've ever met. For me, it's beautiful to see people from my own country get themselves out of abusive situations, ask for help, get empowered, and grow in a mindset where they can support each other and their community.

**Why is it important for people to support UNHCR's work?**

UNHCR is unique in its focus on the individual. We don't just give people what we think they need – we listen to the survivor, understand their specific vulnerabilities, and target the response to their particular needs. It is more than providing basic assistance; having someone who listens to your

concerns and who makes sure that there's follow-up for the things that you need makes a big difference. That's something UNHCR's very good at. When you think about GBV, the survivor is the most important person. Whatever you do on your computer, whatever the bureaucracy is behind that, when you're in the field, when you're working with a survivor, all of your attention is with that person.

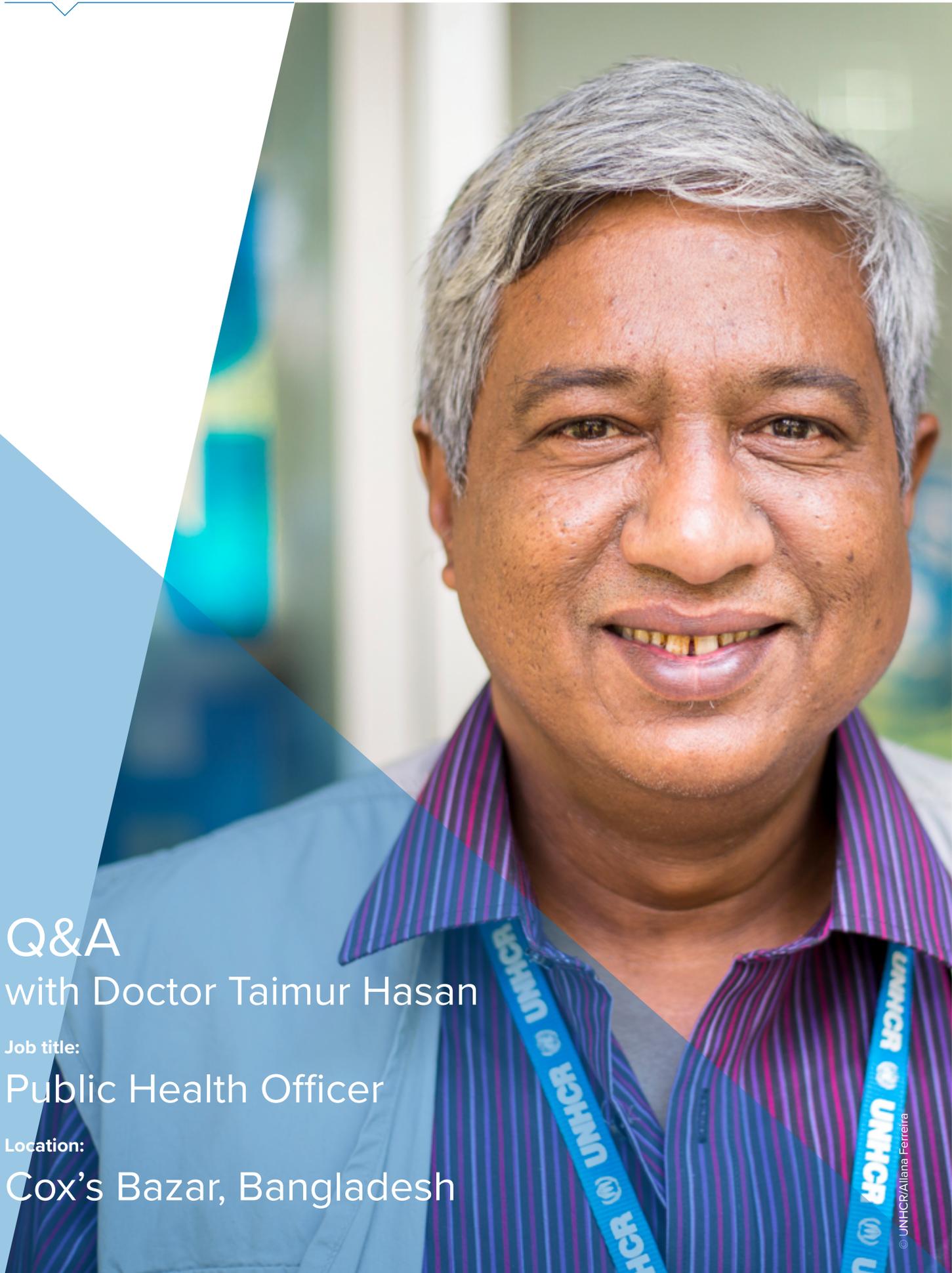
So, it's important that we have the resources to be able to support survivors with individualized care. It is also important that we have resources so we can expand our reach. With the good capacity that we have internally, it will be life-changing to people if we could expand our services,

if we could have more support for survivors, for the general community and for people with other vulnerabilities – like pregnant women, children, and people with disabilities, who are very neglected in the current context.

We want to be able to respond to a large number of survivors, because there are many, while continuing to focus on the individual, really building up that person over time and supporting them psychosocially, through service provision, or through coordination; which will encourage them to support other survivors in the community over time.

*“The work we do is going to have a really powerful long-term impact.”*

- Elisa



## Q&A with Doctor Taimur Hasan

Job title:

Public Health Officer

Location:

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

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**Dr. Taimur Hasan has been working with UNHCR for the last 18 years, and throughout his career he has been involved with public health interventions for refugees. He joined the organization in 2003 as a UN volunteer, then went on to work with UNHCR Nepal in the Bhutanese operation for around four years, and then with the emergency mission to Iraq during the Syrian refugee crisis in 2013 and 2014. Currently, he is working with the Bangladesh operation, based in Cox's Bazar. As a Public Health Officer, Dr. Hasan coordinates the delivery of health and hygiene interventions with partner organizations, government agencies, and community volunteers, staying on top of the budget, the needs, and the feedback we receive to ensure Rohingya refugees and host communities stay safe and healthy.**

In 2017, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh after being forced to flee their homes in Myanmar to escape violence. Most walked for days through jungles and mountains or braved dangerous sea voyages across the Bay of Bengal. They arrived exhausted, hungry, and sick, and nearly all sought shelter in and around the refugee settlements of Kutupalong and Nayapara in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, raising concerns

over the lack of adequate water and sanitation, access to basic services, and general protection considerations, such as safety for women and girls. The Kutupalong refugee settlement has grown to become the largest of its kind in the world, with more than 600,000 people living in an area of just 13 square kilometers, stretching infrastructure and services to their limits. To respond to the immense needs, UNHCR has delivered emergency shelter and essential items, water and sanitation services, and protection activities to Rohingya families.

Forced displacement can take a significant toll on an individual's health and wellbeing. UNHCR's public health interventions address the full spectrum of refugees' needs, from nutrition, water, and sanitation to hygiene and healthcare services. We work with governments and partners to provide emergency health services, improve local health services, and include refugees in national health systems and plans.

Through our advocacy, programming, and partnerships, many refugees and host communities can access safe, effective, equitable, and affordable health services. Thanks to Dr. Hasan and UNHCR's public health teams, people forced to flee receive the support they need to stay physically and mentally healthy.

### **What is a typical day on the job like for you?**

I have several responsibilities that I have to fulfill on a typical day. I coordinate with government authorities, including the Ministry of Health, other national and international partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and UN agencies to establish and implement appropriate responses for refugees in the settlements and in government hospitals. I provide technical support to our national and international partners, those who are delivering services in the primary health care centers, health posts, and field hospitals.

I'm part of UNHCR's multifunctional team for planning, budgeting, and evaluation of the services and activities UNHCR is implementing through our partners. I also conduct day-to-day advocacy with our counterparts and stakeholders, especially the government authorities, for the inclusion of refugees in different national response programs and activities – for example, we are currently working with the Ministry of Health and other authorities to implement COVID-19 vaccination in the refugee settlements.

Finally, I'm involved in monitoring the services that are being provided by our partners, and I interact with refugees

to hear their feedback, sharing their concerns and perspectives with the providers so they can improve their activities. I have been working here in Bangladesh for a long time, so many refugees know me personally and they usually approach me directly to talk about their health issues and concerns – such as medication, referral to secondary care, access to care...if there is a problem they come and talk with us.

They also share a lot in our monthly health meetings with refugees and community leaders, telling us things like the security concerns they have while going to a health facility at night, shelter issues, sanitation and hygiene problems, diseases they see affecting the community. We communicate these issues with our colleagues and partners, so they can adapt their interventions and support the refugees.

### **What are the biggest needs of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh?**

Rohingya refugees have many needs, so I'll speak mostly of the public health needs. First of all, mental health and psychosocial support interventions in the settlements are very limited. In the last

couple of years, UNHCR has been trying to develop the capacity of partners and of the Ministry of Health so we can establish better clinical interventions for refugees, with dedicated mental health support units consisting of qualified psychiatrists and psychologists. This is one of the major needs.

Another big need is for nutrition services. Here, many refugee children and pregnant women are anemic, and the malnutrition rate is high. UNHCR has been doing a lot in this area, but there is still much that needs to be done. In addition to that, we also have very limited secondary and tertiary medical care for refugees. Government hospitals are responsible for these types of intervention, and their capacity is limited.

Sometimes we have to refer a critical patient to a tertiary hospital that is a six-hour drive from the settlement. So accessible secondary and tertiary care is a pressing need. And lastly, there's a need to improve vaccine coverage. With the current living conditions and the fact that many Rohingya did not receive vaccines, we have been seeing outbreaks of preventable diseases like measles in the settlements.

### **Why are UNHCR's public health teams integral to our operations?**

Physical and mental well-being is essential for every person, and refugees are no exception. In refugee settlements, the living conditions are many times not ideal and even the physical space is very limited, so it's not possible to ensure adequate responses to health concerns without public health interventions. Refugees face many challenges and difficulties, and they struggle in highly vulnerable conditions. Our public health teams are integral to UNHCR's protection response, contributing to the well-being of displaced persons and helping them survive and improve their lives.

### **What does UNHCR's public health response in Bangladesh look like?**

We have six partners for the provision of general health services in Bangladesh, including our government counterparts, one partner dedicated to mental health and psychosocial support, and three partners working with nutrition. So, in total, we have 10 partners working in the refugee settlements providing public health services. We also have a partnership with the Ministry of Health for secondary

and tertiary referral care, vaccination support, and family planning support.

We work with all these partners every day. They are important for our response because UNHCR public health teams do not directly provide the services to refugees – we work closely with partners and develop their capacity instead. We do things this way for sustainability: if UNHCR ever has to leave Bangladesh, our partners will then be able to continue to provide the services and the Ministry of Health can eventually take over healthcare responsibilities. So, partners are very, very important for us.

Together with them, we currently have 29 health facilities operating in Bangladesh, including primary health care centers, which are comprehensive, 24-hour facilities; health posts for basic services; comprehensive women clinics; a specialized hospital for advanced surgical and specialized care, like dental care; a specialized physical rehabilitation center; and a drop-in center for special care. These are right outside the settlements, so that refugees can easily access the services, but the host community can also make use of these clinics.

I will add that our public health strategy does not involve only curative and facility-based services – we also conduct community activities. After a mapping of refugee settlements, we, through our partners, recruited some 2,000 refugee volunteers and provided them with a package of training materials so they could raise awareness of public health issues within the community and collect relevant information, such as mortality and morbidity. We work closely with the volunteers, using their reports to address the immediate needs and gaps within the community, and we keep them motivated by providing training and incorporating their feedback in our programming and planning.

Community volunteers are a key element of our response. The community is very appreciative of hearing information from their peers.

#### **How has UNHCR helped keep Rohingya refugees safe during the pandemic?**

From the start of the pandemic, UNHCR has implemented a lot of interventions not only for the refugees but also for the host community, in close coordination with the

government and partners. For example, with the Ministry of Health and other partners, we started quarantine facilities for close contacts of positive cases, in order to contain the spread of coronavirus in settlements that are very cramped.

As soon as we receive information that someone has tested positive, a joint response team visits the household and nearby places to identify the close contacts, and we bring them to the quarantine facility where we provide daily medical screenings. If there are suspected positive cases among the close contacts, we immediately send them to the Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) Treatment Center, where they are tested and treated. In line with that, we have supported our partners to conduct sample collection, testing, and referrals of positive cases to specific treatment facilities. And we also supported the Ministry of Health in the establishment of 40 intensive-care unit (ICU) beds dedicated to serious COVID-19 cases, resources that can be used both by nationals and refugees.

Finally, UNHCR has conducted continuous awareness-raising campaigns. We trained our

community health volunteers on preventative messages and gave them materials with information about hygiene and how to keep safe from coronavirus to distribute within the community. Public health was one of the essential services that weren't subjected to lockdown or restriction of movement. Because of that, and because adequate response and services were provided on time by our trained teams, the mortality rate among refugees for COVID-19 has stayed quite low.

**What makes UNHCR the best at what we do in Bangladesh?**

UNHCR is the agency with the mandate to support refugees. We interact with refugees daily, and they feel comfortable coming to us and sharing their views and opinions. We also have good relationships with partners and with the government, conducting advocacy with them to get additional resources, build capacity and expand the services available to refugees. So UNHCR is in a privileged position to respond to the concerns of the refugee community and to identify and address needs that remain.

**Can you share a story about a time you were inspired by the work you do or by somebody that you helped?**

I've been working in Bangladesh for quite a long time, and I have seen many ups and downs, but there's one story in particular that stayed with me.

Around August or September of 2017, Cox's Bazar received a large influx of refugees. People were arriving by the thousands every day, with no place to take shelter and with little food and water. I was in the Kutupalong settlement when I got a call from a colleague asking me to go to the reception center. There, there was a lean, thin man carrying a basket covered with a piece of cloth, and many people were around him. I asked him to remove the cloth so I could see what he had inside the basket, and, to my surprise, I saw two tiny newborn babies shivering.

Their mother was very scared and exhausted, having delivered the babies in the jungle while fleeing from Myanmar. She and her babies were sick and cold. I felt so much pity for her, knowing that she delivered her children in such horrible conditions.

So, I took the mother and the two babies to a maternity clinic nearby, where we gave them medication and treatment and put them in a supplementary feeding program. The following day, when I went to visit the family, the babies were well, and the mother and the family expressed their gratitude to UNHCR and the team. The mother, in particular, was very, very happy, and I felt really satisfied that I could contribute a bit to that.

I'm very happy and thankful to be part of an amazing team that has such a powerful impact on the lives of people in need.

**What is the hardest part of your job? And what is the most rewarding?**

We have limited resources, but the needs here are huge. So, we have to prioritize our interventions and activities.

When we see that many needs are not met because of a lack of funding, that pains me. It is frustrating knowing we could do more if we had adequate resources. We are limited in what we can do. For example, we do provide some primary healthcare services for refugees, but not the full range of services needed;

*“When I see the smiling faces of the refugee children, that motivates me to do something for them so that they can continue to smile.”*

we have to refer cases to tertiary and secondary facilities outside refugee settlements, but we have to limit the referrals to certain criteria... all because of resource limitations.

It's very difficult to explain the reality to sick refugees, to tell them that because of funding restrictions, we are unable to provide further services they desperately need. And seeing the mental health pressure that refugees are under because of the uncertainty in their lives saddens me. Those are the hardest things about my job.

On the other hand, seeing the results of our engagement with the community is extremely rewarding. Being a medical doctor, my main goal in life has always been to help people. And I saw that, in working with refugees, I got to interact and work closely with people who

have great needs and fewer means of getting support. This is what attracted me to this role.

Working in the public health field, I interact a lot with people who have many needs. And when I can do something for them, it gives me great satisfaction and motivation. As a doctor, I cannot always save a life, but I can give some kind of support or comfort to patients to reduce their suffering.

When I see the smiling face of the refugee children, that motivates me to do something for them so that they can continue to smile.

#### **Why is it important for people to support UNHCR's work?**

UNHCR is the organization mandated to protect refugees and we are playing a vital role in the operation in Cox's Bazar

in accommodating refugees' critical needs. We consult with refugees and with the community, and we interact with them daily, receiving a lot of information that helps us tailor our intervention. In other words, UNHCR has a unique understanding of the needs on the ground and can better respond to them, and we can see the impact our activities have. That's why it is so important to support UNHCR. Our public health teams are very motivated and dedicated, and we have very good coordination with all the units involved in the response, like protection, gender-based violence, water and sanitation, and many others.

We are working together to improve lives in Bangladesh. For the safeguard and wellbeing of refugees here, we need the support of our donors.

# Your support in 2021

## Our campaigns



### Aiming higher

Education is the key to a brighter future for individuals and their communities. Yet thousands of refugees and displaced and stateless people still face incredible challenges in accessing higher education and fulfilling their potential.

With the help of caring supporters like you, UNHCR is making a difference. Thanks to our wonderful donors, the Aiming Higher Campaign has raised US\$7.5 million for the UNHCR Refugee Scholarship Program, which will fund the higher education of 586 smart and dedicated young refugee scholars in all six continents.

Through your generosity, we are closer to fulfilling our vision of a future where all refugees can become self-reliant and provide positive, sustainable contributions to the communities that host them.



## Ramadan Campaign

Ramadan is a time of celebration for the Islamic world. During this holy month, Muslim families around the globe come together to observe a period of reflection, community, and charity.

In 2021, thousands of people honored this special month's spirit of solidarity and generosity by helping families forced to flee their homes. With our supporters' caring donations, this year's Ramadan campaign raised US\$10.6 million to provide life-saving assistance to 58,000 displaced persons for a full year. Families in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mauritania, Mali, Syria, Yemen, and Bangladesh have received much-needed support, thanks to the amazing contribution of donors like you.



## The Winter Campaign

The freezing temperatures and harsh weather that mark the winter months are incredibly challenging for people who have been forced to flee their homes. Without proper shelter, warm clothing, money for heating, and access to medicine, displaced families struggle to survive the cold.

During this time of the year, your support is more valuable than ever – and you have shown up for those in need. Thanks to the kindness and generosity of donors like you, in 2021 UNHCR raised over US\$17.5 million to help refugee families in Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, so they can stay warm and healthy in the cold months.

# Key figures at a glance

## Your funds in action

If you had to leave your home with no warning, faced with looming danger, what would you take with you?

People who are forced to flee their homes often have no time to grab important belongings. Vital items like medication, glasses, birth certificates or other identity documents, diplomas, and precious possessions – photo albums, favorite toys, sentimental heirlooms – may be left behind in the rush to find safety.

Most people forced to flee leave with few belongings,

carried in makeshift bags or stuffed in pockets – some, having to carry children or elderly relatives to safety, are unable to take anything at all. Many arrive at their destinations after long and dangerous journeys with nothing more than the clothes on their backs.

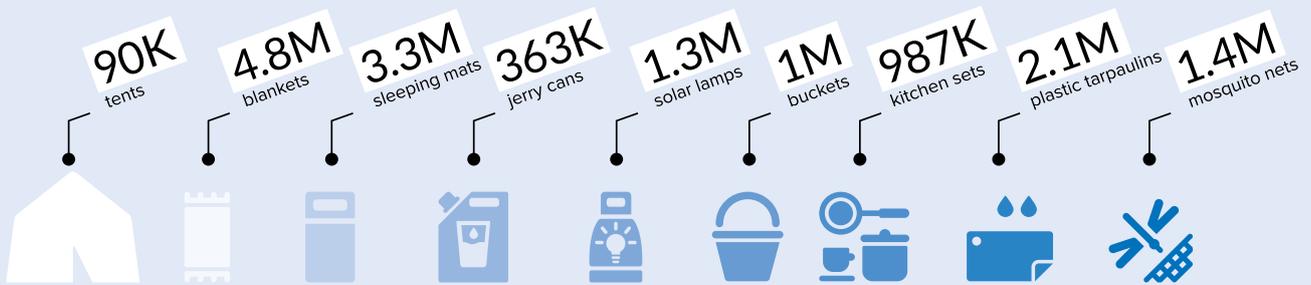
That means that when they finally reach safety, they need basic supplies, like blankets to keep warm, tents to protect their families from the elements, or jerry cans to store clean water.

And that’s where UNHCR comes in.

With caring donors like you by our side, we are able to keep warehouses fully stocked so that when an emergency hits, we can act fast and quickly deliver life-saving assistance.

In 2021, our teams shipped millions of essential supplies from our global warehouses and through our partners to new emergencies and ongoing operations around the world, to support up to 35.5 million people.

**These items include:**



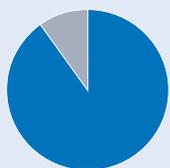
## UNHCR in action



**UNHCR is present in over 130 countries and territories worldwide,** responding to needs in hundreds of places, from bustling cities to remote villages.



**Within 72 hours of an emergency, UNHCR can launch an emergency operation,** thanks to our global network of suppliers, specialist agencies, and partners. We also keep experts ready to deploy at a moment’s notice.



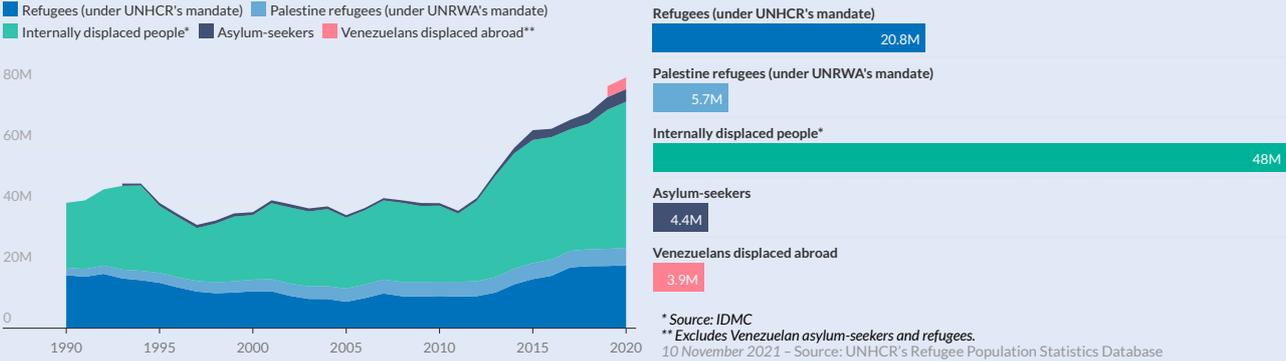
**Over 90% of our more than 18,000 staff are based in the field** – often in far-flung or hazardous locations – in direct contact with people in need.



**447 aid workers were deployed by UNHCR** to emergencies in 2021, and more than 420 new emergency roster members were enrolled throughout the year.

# The challenge in numbers

There are **84 million** forcibly displaced people worldwide

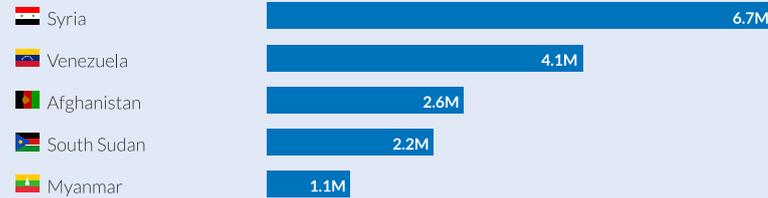


**39% are hosted in five countries\***  
 includes Venezuelans displaced abroad:



\*Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate and includes Venezuelans displaced abroad.  
 10 November 2021 – Source: UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database

**68% of people displaced across borders originate from just five countries\***



\*Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate and includes Venezuelans displaced abroad.  
 10 November 2021 – Source: UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database

**73% are hosted in neighboring countries**

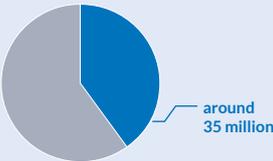
Most refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad live in countries neighboring their countries of origin.



10 November 2021  
 Source: UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database

**42% are children**

(as of Dec 2020)



**4.3 million people are stateless**

(as of mid-2021)

**85% are hosted in developing countries**

(as of mid-2021)



**90% of refugees and 70% of internally displaced persons come from areas on the frontlines of the climate emergency** (as of 2021)



