

Kristin Davis meets Sister Angelique Namaika, winner of the 2013 Nansen Refugee Award, in Dungu, Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Celebrity Support



UNHCR's goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters are playing an increasingly important role in bringing the refugee cause to new audiences worldwide. As messengers, advocates and fundraisers, they bring their voice and influence to bear, helping to engage communities more deeply in the refugee story. UNHCR's supporters are active across the media, including social media, as well as in person. With displacement levels at their highest ever recorded, goodwill ambassadors help draw attention to the individual human experiences behind the overwhelming statistics.

In 2016, UNHCR's goodwill ambassador programme will build on the successes of 2015 by engaging the organization's committed supporters in key campaigns and emergency appeals, and securing further celebrity support to extend the reach of UNHCR messages. ●●●

Meaningful engagement

The UNHCR goodwill ambassador programme involves high-profile individuals who represent the organization's values.

Having invited these individuals to work with UNHCR, the Office focuses on developing strong and credible relationships. This includes inviting goodwill ambassadors to travel with UNHCR on field missions to meet refugees, internally displaced and stateless people, as well as the organization's own field staff. With this in-depth experience, they can then be authentic witnesses to the plight of

individuals and communities, and to the vital role played by UNHCR and its partners.

Having goodwill ambassadors who speak from personal experience is a key tenet of UNHCR's approach to celebrity engagement. The involvement of former refugees such as Khaled Hosseini, Ger Duany and Alek Wek, brings an additional dimension of insight and advocacy.

In 2015, UNHCR warmly welcomed new goodwill ambassadors. Actor Ger Duany is regional Goodwill Ambassador for the East and Horn of Africa,

focusing on youth and education, whilst actor and presenter Jung Woo-sung serves as Goodwill Ambassador for the Republic of Korea. In 2016, UNHCR will welcome new goodwill ambassadors at a global, regional and national level. These new recruits will serve alongside existing goodwill ambassadors including Honorary Lifetime Goodwill Ambassador Barbara Hendricks, Aidos Sagat, Alek Wek, George Dalaras, Jesús Vázquez, Khaled Hosseini, Osvaldo Laport, and Sheikha Rima Al Sabah.



UNHCR/D. NAHR

Ger Duany in a school in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya.

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I am honoured that UNHCR has selected me to join the ranks of those who speak for refugees. It is my turn and my humble obligation to take up the mantle, having survived the tragic exodus that is famously called 'The Lost Boys of Sudan', having been given the opportunity to receive a world-class education and to realize my potential.

– Ger Duany, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador for the East and Horn of Africa

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Other new supporters are also helping build UNHCR's community of concerned high-profile advocates. Those who have shared powerful and engaging stories from the field include Ahmad Al Shugairi (Saudi Arabia), Alessandro Gassman (Italy), Cate Blanchett (Australia), David Morrissey, Douglas Booth and Neil Gaiman (United Kingdom), Friederike Kempfer (Germany), Helena Christensen (Denmark), Kat Graham and Kristin Davis (United States) and Rokia Traoré (Mali). Meanwhile, supporters

Claudio Amendola, Francesco Pannofino and Lorena Bianchetti (Italy), Craig Ferguson (Scotland/United States), Diego Luna (Mexico), Iskui Abalyan (Belarus), James Rodriguez and Juanes (Colombia), John Abraham (India) and Luol Deng (United States) have expressed their concern for the refugee cause via a range of activities, including events, social media support and appeal films. The Office looks forward to continued support in 2016 from these, and other, high-profile supporters.

Lending support where it is most needed

In appealing for support and funds to help refugee emergencies, UNHCR greatly welcomes having the voices of prominent personalities who care deeply for the cause, which strengthens the reach of the stories, images and testimonials of those forced to flee.

Syria crisis

The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) has resulted in more than 4 million refugees being forced to flee their homes, the vast majority to neighbouring countries. Author Khaled Hosseini has visited Jordan, a country hosting more than 600,000 Syrian refugees – 80 per cent of whom live in urban dwellings rather than camps. During his meetings with refugee families and UNHCR staff, Khaled learned and then wrote about UNHCR’s innovative cash assistance programme, which is addressing the needs of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees.

Khaled’s understanding of the situation in Jordan and his own personal experience of displacement have enabled the production of interviews, feature articles and videos related to this visit. He also wrote an op-ed that ran in several major publications.

In Lesbos, Greece, actor David Morrissey met refugees who had just survived a dangerous journey crossing the Aegean Sea in search of safety and protection. He reported on the tragic stories of many children and families, particularly connecting with a 13-year-old Syrian refugee, Muhammad, who had not seen his family in two years. Using media interviews and his own social media channels, David drew the clear distinction between refugees and economic migrants, and urged a collective response to the crisis.

From Lebanon, actor Cate Blanchett shared the moving story of Ahmad, a 14-year-old refugee boy who had dropped out of school in order to help support his family, but who was finding encouragement and new hope via a community-based project for refugee youth. The project was helping him make new friends and express his feelings through drama. Cate’s short film became the most watched World Refugee Day video, helping audiences understand that refugees are ordinary people just like themselves, but living through extraordinary times.

“The question of cash versus in-kind donation is an old debate in the humanitarian world. A donor’s impulse to send shoes or blankets is understandable, but the reality is all items are a representation of monetary value. Items have a price tag and they often get sold in order to serve a priority need. Cash gives refugees freedom of choice to make decisions that best meet their families’ specific needs. It restores a sense of dignity.

– Excerpt from Goodwill Ambassador Khaled Hosseini’s opinion piece in *The Financial Times*, 25 May 2015.

Refugee crisis in Europe

When the influx of refugees and migrants to Europe hit the headlines in 2015, the goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters amplified the call to support refugees, urging the public to donate to UNHCR's operations. For example, writer Neil Gaiman's blogs and social media posts reached millions of people across multiple countries.

“ We need to treat all human beings with respect and dignity. We need to ensure that the human rights of migrants are respected. At the same time, we also need to provide an appropriate legal response for refugees, because of their particular predicament. ”

– Excerpt from Neil Gaiman's online blog entry on the European refugee crisis, 6 September 2015.

South Sudan

High-profile supporters have highlighted not only emergency response, but also efforts to provide sustainable solutions for refugees. During her visit to northern Uganda in June 2015, actor Kristin Davis met with refugees who had fled their homes in South Sudan, many of them children. She spent time getting to know Fiona Taba, who at 15 years of age escaped violence to reach safety in Uganda. Kristin learnt about Fiona's participation in a UNHCR-funded business development scheme where she has been an apprentice tailor, enabling her to use her passion for making fashionable clothes to support her family.

“ The people I have met have shown extraordinary resilience. And it is the same with refugees all over the world. Despite losing so much, and having their lives reset to zero, they still want to achieve – for their families, their community, and their country. It seems to me that the very least each one of us can give refugees, both across the world and in our own schools, communities, countries, is to honour these words: You are welcome here. You are safe now. We are here to help you. ”

– High-Profile Supporter Kristin Davis reflecting on her mission to Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in June 2015, in a feature for Marie Claire magazine.

Colombia

For her first UNHCR mission, model and photographer Helena Christensen travelled to Colombia in April 2015, where she photographed women displaced by violence to demonstrate their courage and resilience.

More broadly in Latin America, a wide range of celebrities, including footballer James Rodriguez, musician Juanes, and actor Diego Luna, supported the "Travelling Backpack" campaign by sharing messages of support and solidarity for refugee children all around the world.

In 2016, high-profile supporters will continue to spotlight the human impact of the Syria crisis, whilst also drawing attention to crises in other regions across the globe where UNHCR's support and expertise are being deployed.



Helena and Maribeth, who was displaced from the department of Choco, in Altos de La Florida, Colombia.

UNHCR/H. PEREZ

Supporting fundraising and donor relations

Goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters play an increasingly important role in engaging new supporters and encouraging donations to UNHCR.

Ahmad Al-Shugairi dedicated an episode of his television programme *Khawatir* to highlight the needs of Syrian refugees, and generated more than USD 4.7 million in donations to support UNHCR's Lifeline appeal – delivering direct support to over 3,100 families.

As well as making a powerful case for why donors should consider supporting UNHCR's groundbreaking cash assistance campaign, Khaled Hosseini and supporter David Morrissey also spotlighted IKEA's "Brighter Lives" campaign for refugees, conveying messages of support to customers and IKEA workers.

Social media has, and will continue to be, another effective means for celebrity supporters to call for urgently needed donations.

Amplifying global campaigns

Through the **#IBelong Statelessness Campaign**, Cate Blanchett will continue to highlight the plight of stateless people, helping to drive UNHCR's goal to eradicate statelessness by 2024.

Honorary Lifetime Goodwill Ambassador Barbara Hendricks is also a passionate advocate for the campaign. In early 2015, Barbara spoke on the issue of statelessness alongside the High Commissioner at a conference of the Economic Community of West African States in Côte d'Ivoire.

On **World Refugee Day**, 20 June, the world commemorates the strength, courage, and resilience of millions of refugees. UNHCR's World Refugee Day campaign provides a prime opportunity to communicate with the public to raise awareness and empathy for the refugee cause.

World Refugee Day has become a crucial moment for celebrity support, and will continue to be so in 2016.



Cate Blanchett with Rama, who is stateless. Her mother is Lebanese and the family live in Lebanon but Rama's father is stateless, and under Lebanese law her mother cannot give her Lebanese nationality to her husband or children.

In 2015, supporters undertook field missions, recorded short films, conducted media interviews, attended events, and engaged audiences via social media.

With the theme of “ordinary people living through extraordinary times” and with the aim of building more empathy and understanding for refugees, goodwill ambassadors and high-profile supporters shared the stories of individuals they had personally met. These included Zaruhi Babayan, Cate Blanchett, Helena Christensen, Kristin Davis, Neil Gaiman, Khaled Hosseini, David Morrissey, Emma Thompson, Jung Woo-sung, and Maher Zain.

Kat Graham marked World Refugee Day with live tweets during a field visit to meet Central American families displaced by violence on the border between Mexico and Guatemala. Meanwhile, in Washington DC, Sheikha Rima Al Sabah worked with UNHCR to help organize the premier of the documentary “Salaam Neighbor” as well as a special “Champions of Change” event at the White House, recognizing the achievements of refugees. Senior foreign policy and domestic policy advisors spoke at the event.

Few humanitarian honours possess the rich legacy of the **Nansen Refugee Award**. Established in

1954, it recognizes the values and achievements of Fridtjof Nansen: the famous polar explorer, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and diplomat, who served as the first High Commissioner for Refugees for the League of Nations.

For 61 years, UNHCR’s Nansen Refugee Award has recognized those who have gone beyond the call of duty to protect the forcibly displaced and stateless. The 2015 winner of UNHCR’s Nansen Refugee Award, Aqeela Asifi, was recognized for her courageous and determined efforts to provide education to hundreds of young Afghan refugee girls.

Each year, high-profile artists join UNHCR in Geneva to honour the Nansen laureate, performing at a prestigious ceremony that garners global attention. In 2015, Barbara Hendricks performed at the ceremony, alongside musician and fellow humanitarian Angelique Kidjo. Ger Duany joined the event as guest speaker, reflecting on his personal experiences of displacement and his commitment to education for refugee youth. ■

Telling the refugee story

Extracts from an op-ed by UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, Khaled Hosseini

30 SEPTEMBER 2015



UNHCR/J. MATAS

UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Khaled Hosseini meeting newly-arrived Syrian refugees in Azraq camp, Jordan.

Like millions around the world, I have been moved by the recent public outcry and spontaneous acts of solidarity towards refugees in Europe. It has been riveting to watch, as well as greatly encouraging. As an Ambassador for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, I have been overwhelmed by the support for the organization's efforts in Europe, where UNHCR has delivered tents, blankets, food and other essential items that refugee families so desperately need in this period of emergency.

But what next? What happens when the dramatic images fade from our TV screens?

They must not fade as well from our collective consciousness. As incredibly trying as this initial emergency has been for all involved parties, this is when the hard work truly begins. It is vital to remember that the average length of time a refugee lives in exile is over 15 years, be it in a camp in Jordan or Uganda, an informal settlement in Lebanon or Thailand, or resettled in the US or Europe. That is a long time, and thus the difficult work ahead lies in making sure the refugees remain contributing, productive members of society...

... Far too often, refugees are viewed as burdens. In reality, refugees often become some of the most dynamic members of society. It is well known that Einstein was a refugee, as was Marlene Dietrich, and Madeleine Albright, George Soros, Sigmund Freud, Isabelle Allende, to name just a few. But there are millions of other names, less celebrated but no less heroic refugees, working quietly, anonymously, often under difficult and dangerous circumstances. Aqeela Asifi, whom UNHCR has announced as this year's Nansen Refugee Award laureate in recognition of her extraordinary commitment and exceptional service to refugees, is one such name.

In 1992, at the age of 26 years, Asifi fled the Mujahedeen siege of Kabul, Afghanistan, with her husband and two small children, and arrived in the remote Kot Chandana refugee village in Pakistan. When she first fled her native country, she thought it would be a matter of months before she was home once more.

But she soon realized what all refugees know: in the midst of the noise and chaos and

trauma of fleeing your country, your focus is on the immediate. You want to protect your children and seek sanctuary. You want to simply survive. It takes time to process fully that going home anytime soon is an improbable dream; that your life has been re-set at zero; that you have to build it back up from nothing. When this acceptance does eventually set in, a shift happens, from survival to resilience, and with it a determination to be strong, move forward, and create anew.

Asifi's children had seen their education interrupted by war and displacement. As a former teacher, she could not watch them languish in a state of arrested development. She was struck by the lack of schools in Kot Chandana and a total absence of learning opportunities for girls. Having won the backing of the village elders, Asifi went door-to-door convincing reluctant parents to let her tutor their girls. With 20 pupils, a tent, hand written worksheets, and above all, fierce determination, she started a school.

Asifi's tiny school blossomed and she received funding from the Pakistani government. Asifi expanded the school to six tents and began including local Pakistani girls as well. Today, the school is a permanent building. Asifi has transformed the lives of over 1,000 girls, and her efforts have encouraged another six schools to open with a further 1,500 girls and boys enrolled...

... I hope, when the media spotlight inevitably moves away from the current crisis in Europe, that the awareness and goodwill of the public towards refugees across the world remains strong, that we remember that refugees need more than just emergency support. They need the hope of a future, as we all do. I hope we remember that refugees make lasting contributions to their host nations. Above all, we must remember that, in our increasingly inter-connected world, an investment in their future is an investment in ours too. ◻