

A photograph of a woman and two children standing in a narrow alleyway between bamboo shacks. The woman in the center is wearing a purple hijab and a purple top, smiling. To her left is a young girl in a floral dress, and to her right is a young boy in a red shirt. The background shows other people and the structure of the shacks.

# 2019 IMPACT REPORT

A look at what you,  
our valued supporters,  
helped achieve

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### VISION

A world where every person forced to flee can build a better future.

### MISSION

UNHCR is dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

### FOCUS

Everything we do helps protect people forced to flee their homes.

# INTRODUCTION

Thousands of people are forced to flee their homes each day, to escape war, persecution and conflict.

Each one of them has their own, unique story. And in this report, you'll find some of these stories – stories of people your support has helped last year.

Confronted with the suffering of children, women and men, you acted with **empathy, kindness and understanding**. By generously giving to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, you helped save lives, protect fundamental human rights and build a better future for refugees, displaced and stateless people around the world.

They might not have a chance to thank you, but we'd like to take this opportunity to do so. **Thank you** for your compassion and most of all, for choosing to help people forced to flee.

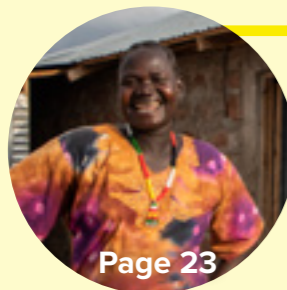
In the face of rising fear, xenophobia and negative stereotyping, your action – every action – counts. **We all have a part to play. And together, we are showing that things can change.**

## Meet some of the people whose lives were transformed last year – thanks to donors like you.



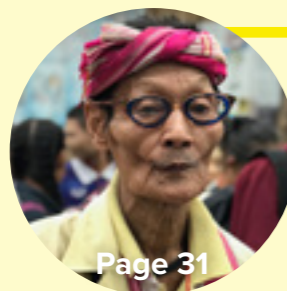
***“Here I am not afraid of falling asleep at night.”***

After fleeing Venezuela, Darlys and her children found safety in a UNHCR shelter in Colombia.



***“I feel happy.”***

Florence, a mother of five, built a house for her family thanks to cash assistance received from UNHCR.



***“I will have peace of mind.”***

With help from UNHCR, Dee Noe, 96, finally returned home – after 30 years as a refugee in Thailand.

***“I want to thank you for your support because it makes a concrete difference in the lives of people who have had to leave everything behind – homes, family, jobs, and places that are known to them, in order to go into the unknown as they seek refuge and safety. Your support brings some relief to the suffering of these people, and sends an important message to them: that they are not alone. I thank you very much for your generosity and your solidarity with the millions of refugees and displaced people around the world.”***

Filippo Grandi,  
UN High Commissioner for Refugees



# 365 DAYS TOGETHER

By donating to UNHCR, you help protect some of the world's most vulnerable people. Thanks to your support, our teams are on the ground in 134 countries worldwide, 365 days a year. We look back at some of 2019's biggest moments and crises, and how we responded, together.



© UNHCR/Alissa Everett

## January The deadliest sea crossing

In 2018, six refugees and migrants died each day, on average, trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean. This route remains the world's deadliest sea crossing. And this continues in January 2019, as two shipwrecks claim an estimated 170 lives. "We can put an end to these tragedies by having the courage and vision to look beyond the next boat, and adopt a long-term approach based on regional cooperation, that places human life and dignity at its core," says Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

## February Resettlement falls short

Although forced displacement is at a record high, only a small percentage of refugee resettlement needs are being met. New data released by UNHCR highlights that, of the estimated 1.2 million refugees in need of resettlement in 2018, only 55,692 were actually relocated, despite more than half of the requests being for children and vulnerable people. UNHCR is working with States and partners to help increase the pool of resettlement places, encourage more countries to take part, and improve access to complementary pathways for refugees, like special humanitarian visas, family reunification or academic scholarships.

## March Cyclone Idai strikes

Cyclone Idai hits the east coast of southern Africa. In Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, the devastating cyclone destroys towns and villages, claims hundreds of lives and leaves hundreds of thousands in need of life-saving assistance and protection – including many refugees hosted in Zimbabwe. Thanks to your support, UNHCR deploys emergency teams and airlifts basic aid items (such as family tents, sleeping mats, cooking sets, and jerry cans), to assist 80,000 survivors in the hardest hit locations.



© UNHCR/Vincent Teneau

## April Refugees evacuated from Libya

Amid rising tensions and heavy clashes in Libya, UNHCR works quickly to relocate hundreds of refugees and migrants being held in detention centres to safer areas. We also evacuate over 300 of the most vulnerable refugees out of Libya. Yet, more than 3,000 refugees and migrants remain trapped in detention centres dangerously close to the fighting, as of late April. Besides trying to protect refugees and migrants, UNHCR also moves life-saving aid to support Libyan civilians in the worst affected areas.

## May Death threats and disease drive more Venezuelans to flee

As the security and humanitarian situation in Venezuela worsens, UNHCR urges countries to continue to allow Venezuelans safe access to their territory – as most of those fleeing are now considered to be in need of refugee protection. Many arrive in neighbouring countries dehydrated, sick and exhausted. With your help, UNHCR works with partners to protect Venezuelan refugees and migrants, help meet their basic needs and prevent them from being deported or forcibly sent home. By the end of 2019, over 4.8 million people had left their homes to escape the crisis in Venezuela.

## June Tragedy and record displacement

Days after marking World Refugee Day, we are confronted with a heartbreaking image. The photo of the drowned bodies of Oscar, from El Salvador, and his little daughter Valeria, washed up on the banks of the Rio Grande, shocks us all. It's a powerful reminder of how far people in desperate situations will go to reach safety – at a time of record global displacement. The number of people fleeing conflict and persecution exceeded 70 million in 2018 – the highest level seen by UNHCR in its almost 70 years. With your support, we continue to work hard to find solutions and protect the millions under our mandate.



**August**  
Rohingya crisis  
two years on

August marks two years since the latest outburst of violence forced an estimated 740,000 Rohingya refugees to flee their homes in Myanmar. As desperate families crossed into Bangladesh, UNHCR teams were there to help. And we have been working hard to provide vital support ever since – all thanks to donors like you. Together, we have done so much, from providing immediate life-saving aid to shifting to a wider response and working with Bangladeshi authorities to register all refugees. By August 2019, over half a million Rohingya refugees had received identity documents, most for the first time ever.

**July**  
Keeping millions  
healthy

A new report shows that some 10.5 million refugees in 51 countries received public health services, such as vaccinations and maternal care, through UNHCR and partners in 2018. But much still needs to be done. UNHCR continues to work harder than ever to reach our goal of ensuring that all refugees are able to access essential public health services.

**September**  
Drought and violence  
force Somalis to flee

As a global Climate Action Summit kicks off in New York, UNHCR calls for urgent action to prevent and mitigate climate-induced displacement. In countries like Somalia, the effects of climate change are increasingly forcing people to flee their homes. Suffering from an already fragile security situation, Somalia is now facing its worst harvest since the 2011 famine. From January to September 2019, insecurity and worsening drought forced over 5,000 Somalis to seek safety in neighbouring Ethiopia – about four times the number that crossed the border in 2018. With your support, UNHCR and partners are providing shelter and life-saving assistance to people forced to flee.

**October**  
Conflict in north-east  
Syria escalates

The conflict in Syria takes a turn for the worse. The escalation of violence in northern Syria forces over 200,000 people to flee their homes this month. Most are displaced inside Syria – but thousands of families also cross into neighbouring Iraq, desperate to escape the fighting. UNHCR is on the ground in both countries, protecting and delivering life-saving aid to those in need. Thanks to generous donors, we have been able to provide shelter, food, blankets and other critical supplies and support to people forced to flee.

**November**  
Silent crises – Somalia  
and South Sudan

Unprecedented flooding devastates vast areas of South Sudan and Somalia, affecting over 700,000 people and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee. Many families from both refugee and host communities are displaced, forcing them to live in makeshift shelters and unsafe living conditions. The two countries, long affected by conflict and increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, struggle to provide assistance to those in need. With support from donors like you, UNHCR flies in relief items such as blankets, mosquito nets and kitchen sets to refugees and displaced people in both countries.

Aya Mohammed Abdullah, a former Iraqi refugee, addresses delegates at the Global Refugee Forum.

*“Believe in us. Invest in us and you will see – we will all be stronger for it.”*



**December**  
Global Refugee  
Forum – finding  
new solutions

Co-hosted by UNHCR, the first-ever Global Refugee Forum brings together global leaders, refugee representatives, civil society and business leaders, to boost support for refugees and the communities they live in. Attended by some 3,000 participants, the Forum wraps up with over 770 pledges promising job and education opportunities for refugees, new government policies, access to clean energy, and better infrastructure and support for host communities. This includes more than \$250 million pledged by the private sector and initiatives to make at least 15,000 jobs available to refugees.

# THE SYRIA CRISIS, EXPLAINED

Here's what you need to know about the latest developments in the world's largest refugee crisis – and how your support is helping people affected by it.

## WHEN DID THE CRISIS IN SYRIA BEGIN?

The crisis began in 2011. After nine years of conflict, Syria is still the largest refugee crisis in the world. **More than 5.5 million** Syrian refugees are living in the region's major host countries - Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Over six million people remain displaced inside Syria. Most live in extreme poverty, struggling to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table.

Thanks to donors like you, UNHCR has been on the ground since the start of the conflict – assisting the millions who have fled to other countries or been displaced inside Syria. Despite difficult and often dangerous conditions, our teams continue to work tirelessly to provide life-saving supplies, shelter, healthcare, protection services and secure cash transfers to help families buy exactly what they need, when they need it. None of this would be possible without the generosity of our donors.

## WHY HAVE MORE PEOPLE RECENTLY BEEN FORCED TO FLEE?

A new escalation of violence hit **north-east Syria** in October 2019, forcing thousands of families from their homes. Many fled with only the clothes on their backs, desperate to escape intense fighting and shelling. Meanwhile, in **north-west Syria's Idlib and Aleppo Governorates**, the humanitarian crisis is becoming increasingly desperate, with massive numbers of people on the move. Your support helps show them they are not forgotten.

## WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THESE LATEST WAVES OF VIOLENCE?

**Close to a million** people have been displaced in **north-west Syria** since last December. The majority are women and children. They urgently

need shelter and essential aid items. Harsh winter weather and rising fuel prices have added to the difficulties and suffering. In **north-east Syria**, the situation remains extremely uncertain and displaced people need our help. Across the border in Iraq, over **20,000** refugees from **north-east Syria** are still wondering if or when they will be able to go home.

## HOW HAVE YOUR DONATIONS HELPED UNHCR RESPOND?


Thanks to caring people like you, UNHCR has been able to give safe shelter, clean water, hot meals, medical care and other assistance to families forced to flee their homes, leaving everything behind. We've also delivered warm clothes, thermal blankets, stoves and other winter essentials to protect children, women and men from the cold, as temperatures dropped during the winter.


Figures as of 10 March 2020.

## NORTH-EAST SYRIA RESPONSE

When families were forced to flee escalating violence in northern Syria last October, UNHCR was there.

Thanks to generous donors like you, we've provided:

 Basic aid and vital winter supplies to over **234,000** displaced people and locals hosting them in north-east Syria

 Core relief and essential winter items to over **20,000** newly arrived Syrian refugees in Iraq

 Over **3,000** new tents to shelter refugees in two sites in Iraq.

## DID YOU KNOW?

More than half of Syria's estimated pre-war population has been forced to flee their homes.

*"It was at night around 8 PM. I was at home with my children and suddenly we heard an explosion. A rocket had landed."*

Nadira, a single mother who found safety in Iraq, where UNHCR and partners are supporting families like hers.

# PROTECTING PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE HOME

**Being forced to flee often means losing everything. Your home. Your belongings. Your job or your school. Sometimes even your loved ones.**

Every year, millions of people are forced to go through this. At UNHCR, we work hard to safeguard their rights and well-being – and have been doing so since 1950. **Your support makes it possible** for us to continue to provide life-saving support to refugees, displaced and stateless people. Together, we also protect their basic rights and help them build a better future for themselves and their communities.

**Thank you for choosing to help – we simply couldn't do it without you.**

When Vanis first left Venezuela because of insecurity, food shortages and lack of health services, she didn't know she was pregnant. After a long journey, she reached Brazil, where her baby, Luanna, was eventually born. Thanks to donors like you, UNHCR was there to provide Vanis with shelter when she first arrived. Later on, we helped relocate Vanis and her family to Brasilia, where there are more job opportunities.

## RESPONDING WITH LIFE-SAVING SUPPORT

When an emergency strikes, people can be forced to flee their homes in a matter of minutes or even seconds. All around the world, UNHCR emergency teams are on standby, ready to help. Our first priority in an emergency is saving lives. We do this by providing life-saving assistance such as safe shelter, clean water, nutritious food and health care.

In 2019, your generous support allowed us to continue this critical work. Thanks to your kindness, we were able to provide life-saving supplies to mothers like **Hadeel (p. 15)**, give safe shelter to families like **Darlys' (p. 16)**, and make sure children like **Nurul's (p. 18)** have access to clean drinking water.



*“Since we’ve gotten these nets, no one has gotten malaria.”*

John, Congolese refugee

© UNHCR/Hannah Maule-finch

John and his daughter were forced to flee fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Once they reached safety at Kenya’s Kakuma refugee camp, they immediately received life-saving assistance from UNHCR, including mosquito nets to help protect them from malaria. Thanks to your support, thousands of families in Kakuma – families like John’s – have received mosquito nets, allowing them to sleep more safely at night.



*“Thank God, we are safe and my kids are safe.”*

Hadeel, Syrian refugee

© UNHCR/Firas Al-Khateeb

## GIVING LIFE-SAVING SUPPLIES TO HADEEL’S FAMILY

**Like any mother, Hadeel just wants to keep her children safe and happy. When they feel sad and miss the home they had to flee, Hadeel tries to comfort them by telling them that they are on a camping trip and will go home soon.**

But the reality is very different – the Syrian family was forced to flee their hometown in north-east Syria in October last year, because of fresh fighting. After walking for hours in the cold, they reached the Iraqi border and were safely taken to Bardarash refugee camp.

In the camp, UNHCR and partners are providing life-saving protection and assistance to families

like Hadeel’s. With your donations, we are registering new arrivals, providing all refugees with a tent, essential items and winter supplies, and offering health care and protection services.

“They gave us mattresses and blankets and plastic sheets,” explains Hadeel, visibly relieved. Although living conditions in the camp are very basic, Hadeel couldn’t be more grateful that her family has made it there in one piece: “Thank God, we are safe and my kids are safe.”

While they wait for their ‘camping trip’ to be over, Hadeel’s children have a safe place to sleep tonight. **Because of generous donors like you.**





## HELPING DARLYS AND HER FAMILY FEEL SAFE

Can you imagine having to choose between paying rent or feeding your children? That's the heartbreaking choice Darlys\* faced, after she and her two sons, Luis\* and Adolfo\*, had to flee Venezuela looking for safety. At first, Darlys tried renting a small flat in Maicao, a Colombian city near the border. But her money quickly ran out and she was forced to sleep on the streets.

*"Here I am not afraid of falling asleep at night. Here we feel safe."*

Darlys\*, Venezuelan asylum-seeker

Leaving Venezuela was the only option for Darlys. The life of her son Luis was at risk: he has a kidney disease and couldn't get treatment in the country. But she never imagined that they'd end up living in the streets. Every night, Darlys was afraid of falling asleep. She wanted to stay awake to be able to protect her children.

But that all changed when UNHCR helped setup a temporary reception centre, just outside Maicao. Due to their vulnerability, Darlys' family was among those selected to be sheltered at the centre, which opened last year. When Darlys' sons peeked into their new tent, the boys could not believe what they saw. A proper mattress with real pillows. They had finally found some safety and comfort. And that's when they knew they were safe, at last.

"They are so relaxed now, and me too," says Darlys, clearly relieved. "Here I am not afraid of falling asleep at night. Here we feel safe."

Her son Luis is feeling better now too; he is finally receiving treatment for his disease and has made new friends at the centre.

\*Names changed for protection reasons.

## GIVING NURUL'S FAMILY ACCESS TO SAFE WATER

For months, Nurul and his family were forced to drink water that often made them sick.

“My wife had diarrhoea and sometimes she had fever. Now, things are very different,” explains Nurul, a refugee from Myanmar. Why? Because of a new solar-powered water system, set up by UNHCR and partners in a new area of Bangladesh’s Kutupalong refugee settlement, where Nurul’s family now lives.



*“Water was a curse then. Now, water is a blessing. The children aren’t sick anymore.”*

With the help of caring donors like you, an initial eight new water networks were installed in Kutupalong by early 2019, supplying 40,000 people—people like Nurul and his family—with safe, clean drinking water. The collective water points are dotted throughout the site, making it easier for families to fetch water. And what’s more, the innovative systems run entirely on solar power, reducing fuel emissions and energy costs.

Most importantly, water is no longer something Nurul and his wife Lalu fear.

“Where we lived before, if there was a heavy storm, the drain water levels rose and entered our shelter,” Nurul recalls. “Water was a curse then. Now, water is a blessing. The children aren’t sick anymore.”



## SAFEGUARDING FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

All too often, people who are forced to flee find their basic rights and security to be in danger. Our job at UNHCR is to protect and safeguard their rights. Together with governments, we work to improve laws and national systems so refugees can stay safe, get documents, go to school, work and exercise other rights.

With your support, we work to make sure that children like [Gift \(p. 21\)](#) can get an education and that mothers like [Sahera \(p. 22\)](#) and [Florence \(p. 23\)](#) can support their families.



Venezuelan refugees Yonielys and José with their newborn son Enmanuel at Bogota's main maternity hospital. Thanks to a new government measure supported by UNHCR, Enmanuel is one of thousands of Venezuelan children born in Colombia who were granted Colombian nationality in 2019. UNHCR teams across the world work hard to make sure every refugee child is properly registered at birth, so no child is born stateless – and we couldn't do this without your support.

## HELPING GIFT PURSUE HIS DREAM OF BECOMING A TEACHER

It's not often you meet someone as determined as Gift. Top of his class for three years in a row, the 14-year-old is committed to finishing his studies. But getting this far hasn't been easy.

On the run from civil war in South Sudan, Gift was forced to quit school and flee to the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). When he got the chance to go back to school, thanks to a cash grant from UNHCR, he couldn't wait.

"When I found out I was going back to school, it made me happy," he recalls with a smile. In the beginning, things were difficult: Gift didn't speak French, the language of instruction. And without electricity at home, he couldn't study at night. But

Gift didn't let that stop him. Determined to succeed, he learned French from scratch, through language courses provided by UNHCR, and built his own solar lamp, to allow him to study after dark.

Now Gift dreams of becoming a teacher and is working hard to reach this goal, despite the odds. Until recently, there were no secondary education opportunities for South Sudanese refugees in DRC – although a new UNHCR initiative is hoping to give more of them a chance to go to secondary school.

"My wish is for every child to go to school like me", says Gift. "There should be a way for everyone to study."

*"My wish is for every child to go to school like me."*

Gift, South Sudanese refugee





© UNHCR/Kamrul Hasan

## IMPROVING LIFE FOR SAHERA'S FAMILY

Back home in Myanmar, Sahera was a farmer. But she had to leave all that behind when violence erupted in the country in 2017. Forced to flee their home, Sahera and her three children found safety in neighbouring Bangladesh, in Kutupalong – now the world's largest refugee settlement.

UNHCR has been on the ground helping Rohingya refugees like Sahera ever since they arrived. At first, we focused on providing immediate life-saving aid and basic services, but gradually we shifted towards a wider response, focused on empowering refugees to respond to challenges on their own.

And that's exactly what Sahera has been doing. Through a unique project created by UNHCR

and partners, she has received farming support and can now grow fresh food for her family again – something that's really made a difference in their lives.

"My children get excited to see the vegetables. It reminds us of our farm back home," explains Sahera, whose garden includes spinach, gourd and pumpkin. "Not only do we have vegetables for ourselves, we often share them with our neighbours. If we have leftover produce, we sell it to nearby shops."

**None of this would be possible without the generous support of donors like you.**

*"It reminds us of our farm back home."*

## EMPOWERING FLORENCE TO BUILD A NEW HOME

Standing in front of her family's new house in Kenya's Kalobeyei settlement, Florence glows with pride. And it's no wonder – she built this house herself, thanks to cash assistance from UNHCR.

"I feel happy," she says with a smile. "You see your house is different and you're just comfortable inside."

For Florence, a mother of five, having her own house means she and her family can finally live in dignity. After being forced to flee conflict in South Sudan, Florence had to live in a plastic tent with 12 other relatives for two years.

But thanks to your support, Florence's family is one of over 1,800 refugee families in Kalobeyei that have been able to build safer and more durable houses, through a UNHCR cash for shelter project.

*"I feel happy."*

Florence, South Sudanese refugee

Refugees receive cash through special debit cards and use it to buy cement, sand, stone blocks and other building supplies. They can then design and build their houses according to their own needs. Locals benefit too, because refugees buy the materials from them – contributing to the local economy.


For Florence, cash assistance has meant freedom to make her own decisions. Because she has a large family, Florence is eligible to receive enough cash to build two houses. And she's determined to do so.

"I want the future of my children to go onward. I will manage this money and build another house," Florence says firmly.




© UNHCR/Will Swanson

## UNHCR CASH ASSISTANCE: KEY FACTS

 **+100 countries** with UNHCR cash assistance programmes (for protection, basic needs, education, shelter and other purposes)

 **+20 million** people receiving UNHCR cash assistance

 **\$2.4 billion** total cash assistance delivered since 2015

 **35%** via mobile phone

## “I know how hard it is to leave your life behind” – Interview with Elba Rocio Sanchez, a UNHCR aid worker in Colombia

Elba Rocio Sanchez has been involved in humanitarian work for nearly three decades. She started as a volunteer, then became a community advocate, and now works as a Senior Protection Associate with UNHCR in her native Colombia.

Much of her work today focuses on assisting Venezuelans who have fled their country to escape violence, insecurity and food and medicines shortages. Elba knows what it’s like to leave everything behind: she was forced to flee her own home after being threatened because of her human rights work. Elba tells us about the challenges she faces every day and the impact working with UNHCR has had on her life.



### YOU WERE FORCED TO FLEE YOUR OWN HOME NEARLY 20 YEARS AGO. HOW HAS THIS INFLUENCED THE WORK YOU DO?

I’ve been interested in human rights since I was young, because of the situation in my country, Colombia. I began volunteering with the Red Cross when I was 13, helping vulnerable communities and natural disaster survivors. So I think the concept of justice is ingrained in my DNA! When I was about 35, the town I lived in was attacked by organized armed groups. At the time, I was working with the Ombudsman’s Office in Colombia’s Ariari region. I started to receive threats from these groups – they wanted me gone because I was speaking out against injustices. It was risky to leave, but I had to.

A couple of years later I was displaced again. This time, I was working as a legal consultant with UNHCR and teaching humanitarian law at a university in my hometown. Out of nowhere, strange men began pressuring me to join

*“The work we do allows us to restore the dignity and hope of people who have been displaced.”*

armed groups. I was a target because I always defended the rights of displaced people. I told the men: “I am a free woman and nothing will limit my thoughts and actions, what I want is to help people.” But the threats continued. So I fled, because I was afraid they would take me by force. I then came to Arauca and joined the UNHCR team here, which made me feel protected.

### WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE FOR YOU, ON THE JOB WITH UNHCR IN COLOMBIA?

I’m involved with many projects, so my days vary a lot! One of my key projects focuses on supporting a network of Colombian border protection workers and community monitors. My UNHCR colleagues and I help train border staff, to make sure they are well-equipped to receive and refer people arriving from Venezuela. We are in touch with the border teams on a daily basis.

We also identify and send support lawyers to the border areas, to help Venezuelans understand and access their rights. These lawyers deal directly with the refugees, returnees and stateless people arriving every day.

Most of what I do is from the office, but I try to go to the field at least twice a month, to meet with border staff and follow up on any issues we can’t discuss by phone or email, for security reasons. I always take time to speak with refugees and with members of the community, to listen to them and help solve any issues they might have.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES PEOPLE FLEEING FROM VENEZUELA ARE FACING?

One of the main challenges that affect Venezuelans arriving in Colombia is their status. Many people arrive at the border without identification documents or just with the card that authorizes them to stay for seven days, so they encounter issues when they stay any longer. Asylum requests can take a long time to process, so many Venezuelans find themselves in a state of limbo. And while they wait, they can’t work, because they don’t have permanent residency or a work visa. This makes them vulnerable. Unless Venezuelan asylum seekers in Colombia can obtain the paperwork they need to live in the country legally, they won’t be able to access their human rights and live in dignity here.

Another challenge is accessing vital services in areas where the authorities are stretched and cannot meet increasing demands. Many pregnant women, for example, aren’t able to get the prenatal care they need. At UNHCR, we



Elba and fellow aid workers making the journey back from a meeting with remote communities in the Arauca region, in northeastern Colombia.



© UNHCR/Richard Alejandro Rodriguez

work to ensure these women can access essential services, by providing training, technical advice and financial support to border authorities. This year, in Arauca alone, we have helped hundreds of pregnant Venezuelan women receive vital prenatal care.

**WHAT IS UNHCR DOING IN COLOMBIA TO HELP PROTECT PEOPLE FLEEING VENEZUELA?**

UNHCR helps Venezuelans understand and access their rights as asylum-seekers. We work with national, state and local governments, as well as with private actors and communities, to respond to the needs of this population. Through our work with border staff, legal offices and others, we build capacity to offer Venezuelan refugees legal support, which is essential to guarantee their rights. Our teams also work to find durable solutions. For example, we are cooperating with governmental agencies and companies so people fleeing from Venezuela can study and get jobs in Colombia. We've also been working very hard to combat xenophobia, so that Colombians feel that refugees are their neighbours, their friends.

The work we are doing here has allowed us to transform lives. For me, protection represents the possibility of life. I would say that UNHCR's mandate to protect is the most important mandate in the humanitarian world.

**YOU'VE SEEN THE IMPACT OF PROTECTION ACTIVITIES FIRST-HAND, HAVING WORKED WITH UNHCR AND BEEN DISPLACED YOURSELF. CAN YOU TELL US WHY THESE ACTIVITIES ARE SO IMPORTANT?**

Fleeing and leaving everything behind is very hard. The work we do allows us to restore the dignity and hope of people who have been displaced. Refugees and other persons of concern are multifaceted human beings, with complex and interconnected needs. UNHCR provides a response based on

*“The work we are doing here has allowed us to transform lives.”*

that. When we receive and respond to the needs of people arriving from Venezuela, we have a major impact on them. We hear them say “thank you, we are finally being treated well, we have access to food and education...” – this is life-changing. It's wonderful to see people rebuilding their lives and to be able to be a part of this. Through our work, we help refugees realize that their experiences don't have to be limiting, but can, in fact, be empowering.

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB IN JUST THREE WORDS?**

Passion, commitment and responsibility. I try to do everything with the highest level of commitment and responsibility, keeping in mind that when I deal with a refugee, I have a human being in front of me. This line of work is my passion. I've witnessed many difficult situations but when you give yourself fully to what you do, you can do more for the people you're helping.

*“Being part of UNHCR allows me to use my experiences to help others. I am finally in a position that allows me to speak out and support people's rights, and ultimately, transform lives.”*

**WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR JOB?**

The best part of my job, without a doubt, is using our presence and resources to change people's lives. Through our work, we get to dream with people and help them make those dreams come true. We help displaced Venezuelans not only by listening to them and protecting their rights, but also by building community centres, schools and other tangible resources for them.

Working with UNHCR, I can help people going through the same thing I did. I know how hard it is to leave your life behind. Being part of UNHCR allows me to use my experiences to help others. I am finally in a position that allows me to speak out and support people's rights, and ultimately, transform lives.

**THE VENEZUELA SITUATION AT A GLANCE**

Over 4.8 million Venezuelans have left their country since 2014, fleeing food and medicine shortages, inflation, rolling blackouts and spiraling violence. This has become the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history. As more and more families arrive to neighbouring countries scared, tired and with few resources, they need protection, shelter, nutritious meals and medical care. Many of those arriving are children, pregnant women, elderly people and people with disabilities, who have specific needs and are often especially vulnerable.

Countries across Latin America and the Caribbean have generously welcomed many Venezuelans, but they are increasingly overstretched. Thanks to our generous donors, UNHCR teams are on the ground in 17 countries, protecting those arriving from Venezuela and helping them access the support and services they need, so they can start rebuilding their lives.

## BUILDING BETTER FUTURES

At UNHCR, we try to find solutions so that no one remains a refugee forever.

For some, like 96-year-old **Dee Noe (p. 31)**, that may mean finally going home. Others, such as **Zainab (p. 30)**, may have the chance to find a home in another country. And for some refugees, like **Deilys and her children (p. 29)**, integration in the community that hosts them may be the best alternative.

Your support helps us find durable solutions that allow refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

*“We are not a burden.  
We are here to give back.”*

Bassem, Syrian refugee



© UNHCR/Houssam Hairri

After being forced to flee the war in Syria, theatre director Bassem wanted to make a difference in his new community, in Egypt. With support from UNHCR, he started to organize free acting classes, to offer a safe space for young refugees and locals alike.

## A FRESH START FOR DEILYS AND HER FAMILY IN ECUADOR

Back home in Venezuela, Deilys\* used to work in logistics. But after she and her husband started receiving threats because of their political opinions, they were forced to flee to Ecuador. Adapting to a new place is never easy but Deilys has managed to start over and make a successful career change, with support from UNHCR. Today, the 36-year-old mother of two is an entrepreneur in Ecuador’s emerging health food sector.

She got there by participating in an integration and poverty prevention programme known as the Graduation Model, which aims to give vulnerable refugees the tools they need to make a living. More than 3,150 refugee families in Ecuador have benefited from this innovative programme since 2015.

Thanks to the training, seed money and mentoring she received, Deilys was able to start her own vegan dessert business. To get started, she bought an oven, a fridge, a mixer and other basic equipment. She now makes vegan desserts at home and sells them at street fairs and other events. And she hopes to open her own shop soon.

The goal of UNHCR’s Graduation Model is to help refugees become financially independent. And that’s just what Deilys has achieved.

*“This process has given us the tools to subsist, survive, and make headway. We have no debts and we’re never behind on the rent.”*

Deilys\*, Venezuelan asylum-seeker

\*Name changed for protection reasons.



© UNHCR/Jaime Giménez Sánchez de la Blanca

## BRINGING ZAINAB'S FAMILY TO SAFETY

**For Zainab, her partner Abdulbasit and their newborn daughter, an evacuation flight to Rwanda meant the start of a new life – and an end to their suffering in Libya.**

Becoming a mother was a scary experience for Zainab, a refugee from Somalia. Her daughter was born in a detention centre in Libya, and Zainab was always afraid that the baby would be taken away from her. Due to their vulnerability, the family was among the first group of refugees evacuated from Libya to Rwanda last year, with support from UNHCR. Many suffered human rights abuses including beatings, extortion and rape during their time in detention centres. They benefit from a new agreement between the Rwandan government, UNHCR and the African Union to move refugees most at risk in Libya to safety.

Once Zainab and the others reached the transit centre in Rwanda, UNHCR was there to provide accommodation, food, water, psychosocial support and everyday necessities such as clothes – **thanks to caring donors like you.** In the long term, some families will be resettled to other countries, while others will stay in Rwanda or be helped with alternative solutions.

But for Zainab, the most important thing is being safe at last. “I am very happy,” she says, smiling down at her two-month-old baby. “We had a dream of getting out of Libya and now we are finally able to live in peace.”

It's clear that the chance to give her daughter a better future means everything to her.

*“Now we are finally able to live in peace.”*



## HELPING DEE NOE RETURN HOME, AT LAST

**For 96-year-old Dee Noe, 2019 was an unforgettable year. Because it's when his family finally got the chance to go home. After decades living as Karen refugees in Thailand, it was a moment they had long been waiting for.**

Dee Noe, his wife Pree and their daughter were forced to flee to Thailand 30 years ago, to escape conflict between armed ethnic groups and the Myanmar military. Since then, the family has grown by two generations: Dee Noe now has five grandchildren and a great-granddaughter. The family appreciates all the care they've been given in Thailand – but home is always home. So when they heard from relatives that the situation in their home region was improving, the family decided to return.

*“I will have peace of mind.”*

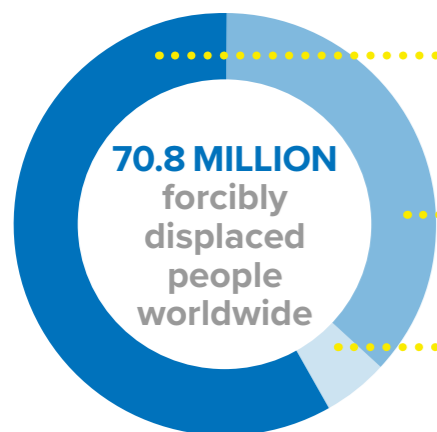
Hundreds of refugees have gone back to Myanmar since 2016, when a programme for facilitating voluntary repatriation was agreed by the Thai and Myanmar governments. The facilitated returns are led by the two governments with the support of UNHCR and partners. Before a return takes place, UNHCR checks the situation in the areas of return and makes sure that refugees receive accurate information to help them decide whether or not to head home.

At this late stage in his life, Dee Noe decided it was right for him. “I want to spend the rest of my days in Myanmar,” he says. “I will have peace of mind,”



# KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE

## THE CHALLENGE



**41.3 MILLION** people displaced within their own countries

**25.9 MILLION** refugees

**3.5 MILLION** asylum-seekers



### 80% OF REFUGEES

live in countries bordering their homelands – including some of the world's poorest countries, which host a **third of all refugees**



### 2/3 OF ALL REFUGEES

come from just five countries (Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia)



**OVER 50% OF WORLD'S REFUGEES ARE CHILDREN**

### DID YOU KNOW?

Over 60% of the world's refugees live in urban areas, not camps.

## OUR RESPONSE



### 134 COUNTRIES

in which UNHCR works worldwide, from bustling cities to remote areas



### NEARLY 90%

of our staff are based in the field, in direct contact with people in need



### 269 TRAINED AID WORKERS

deployed by UNHCR to emergencies in 2019, with many more specialist short-term staff also sent in to assist.



### WITHIN 72 HOURS

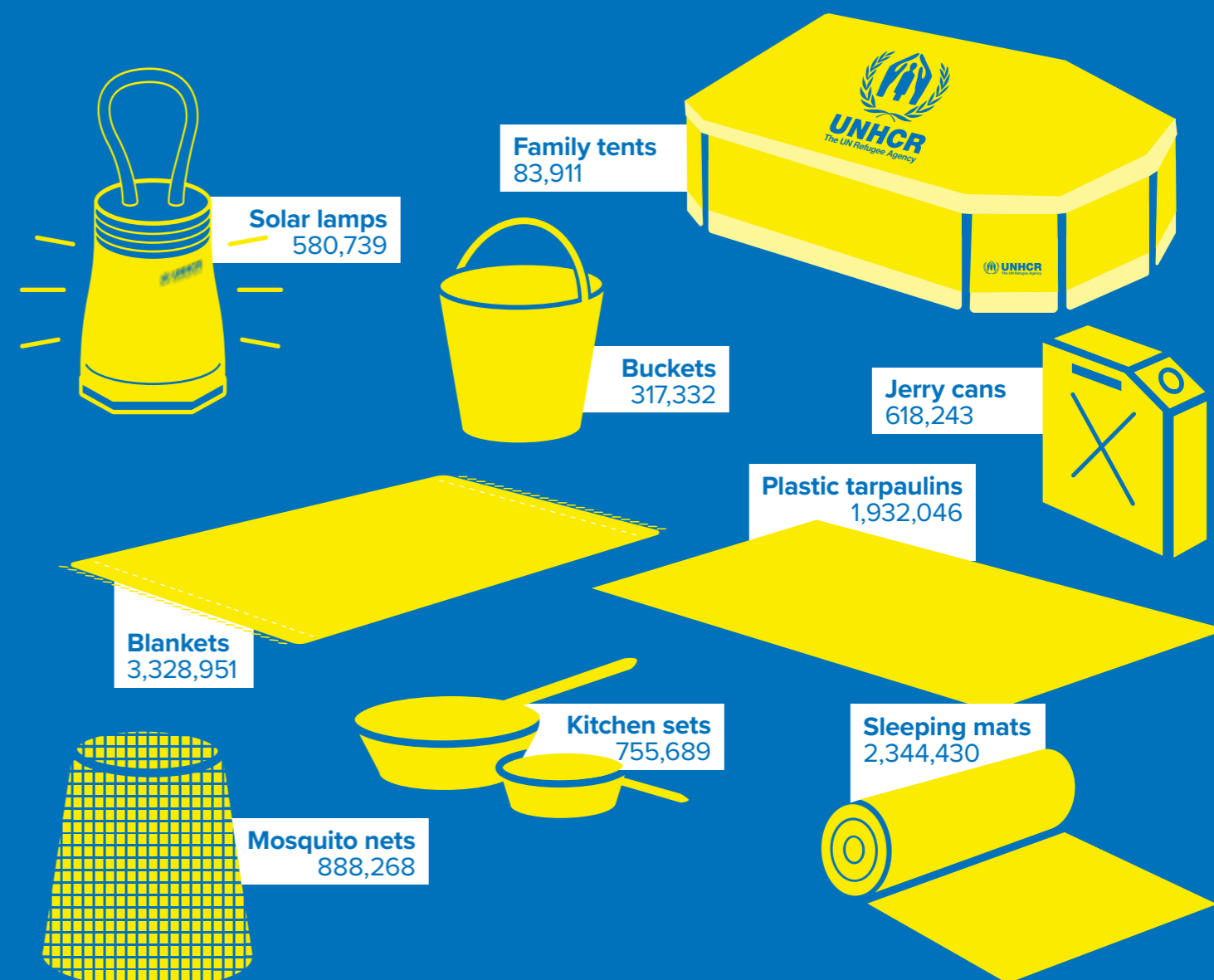
UNHCR can deploy emergency staff and deliver basic aid – by air, land or sea – for up to 600,000 displaced people.

## DELIVERING VITAL SUPPLIES AROUND THE WORLD

### If you had to leave your house in a matter of minutes, what would you take with you?

People who are forced to flee their homes often have little to no time to grab their belongings. That means that when they finally reach safety, they need basic supplies like blankets to keep their children warm or jerry cans to store water in. And that's where UNHCR comes in. With caring donors like you by our side, we are able to act fast and rush in life-saving assistance including shelter, food, water and medical care.

In 2019, our teams shipped millions of vital supplies from our global warehouses or through our suppliers to new emergencies and on-going operations around the world. Items such as:



## KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE



## YOUR FUNDS IN ACTION

UNHCR was created 70 years ago, in 1950, to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes during World War II. Today, with your support, we continue to work tirelessly to assist refugees, displaced and stateless people all around the world.

In 2019, generous donors like you helped make a difference in the lives of people who've been forced to flee conflict or persecution. **By joining our global community of supporters and donors**, you have helped save lives, protect rights and build better futures for displaced families across the world.

UNHCR is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions. As we continue to face record levels of displacement, your support is more important than ever before. And it **means the world to people forced to flee their homes.**

**On behalf of our staff worldwide and those we serve, thank you for choosing to help. Your kindness and enduring support never cease to amaze us.**

In 2019, some \$422 million was raised from individual donors, foundations, corporate and philanthropist partners in more than 75 countries worldwide.

## AN UPDATE ON OUR CAMPAIGNS

### THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING SHELTER FOR REFUGEES

2019 marked the final year of UNHCR's global fundraising campaign to provide shelter – a basic human right – to people forced to flee their homes. Thanks to your support, **we have raised over \$25 million** since May 2016.

**Donations from people like you have given tens of thousands of refugee families in 14 countries a safe place to live.** But shelter is so much more than that. Shelter means comfort and privacy. It means dignity and security. Shelter is a place where refugees can start building better futures for their families. Your support means the world to displaced families – **and for this, we want to thank you.**

**Our global shelter campaign may have come to an end – but with your support, we will keep providing shelter and safety to people forced to flee their homes.**



## TAKE A STEP WITH REFUGEES

Every year, refugees endure long, dangerous and difficult journeys to reach safety. In January 2019, UNHCR launched the 1 Billion Miles/ 2 Billion Kilometers to Safety campaign to encourage people to show their support for refugees. The goal is to achieve a global total of two billion kilometers, by running, walking or cycling – the same distance refugees cover each year to reach safety.

And people around the world have accepted the challenge! Since the launch of the campaign, over 110,000 people in 188 countries have signed up.

Together, they've covered over 30 million kilometers in solidarity with refugees.

Campaign supporters have also taken the extra step of raising funds for refugees through

sponsorships or special contributions. Goodwill Ambassadors such as Ben Stiller, Yusra Mardini and Khaled Hosseini have also donated their time and effort, helping us reach even more people.

If you haven't already, you can join in too. Sign up today on [stepwithrefugees.org](https://stepwithrefugees.org) and add your kilometers to the global total!



**"Thank you for choosing to step with refugees." Ben Stiller, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador**

unhcr.org

