



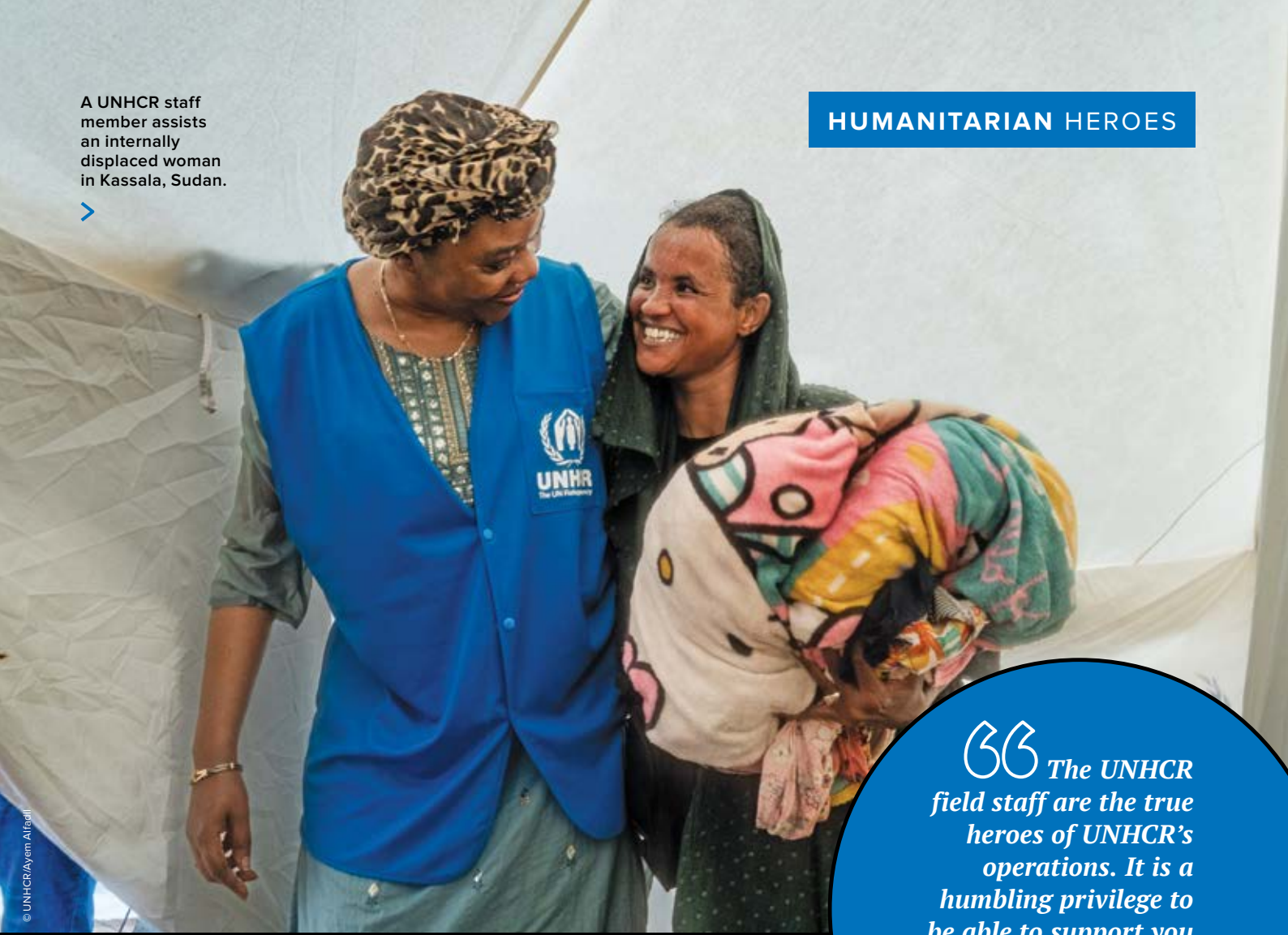
Slam poet wins the Les Murray Award for 2025

INSIDE:

- Field workers send messages of thanks
- The difference you're making in Syria
- Refugees suffer first in funding crisis
- Grumpy Bob's life-changing legacy

A UNHCR staff member assists an internally displaced woman in Kassala, Sudan.

HUMANITARIAN HEROES



“The UNHCR field staff are the true heroes of UNHCR’s operations. It is a humbling privilege to be able to support you in the field. You have my utmost respect and best wishes.”

– Peter

Field workers send their thanks

More than 90 per cent of UNHCR’s staff work in the field, often in extremely difficult circumstances.

Earlier this year, many of our generous donors chose to send a message of thanks to our hard-working staff around the world.

UNHCR field workers were delighted to receive your messages. You can read some of their responses below. ■

DONOR MESSAGES

Thank you for everything you do to make a profound difference in the lives of those who UNHCR works to support. You are at the coalface

working despite the reality of what they are facing. My prayers and small financial support are with you. – **Mohana**

You are all so brave and are my heroes. May you continue to lift people up as long as you can. Please know I will keep providing financial support and I hope this helps you do your work. All power to you all – you are angels here on this earth. – **Jill**

You do an amazing job, helping support so many displaced people. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of people that have suffered such hardships and trauma. You make the world a better place. – **Carol**

MESSAGES FROM THE FIELD

I feel so happy to receive your messages. I feel fulfilled. I am energetic to do more and more with this kind of support, and I don’t take it for granted. I am very grateful for that, on behalf of all the other field colleagues that work with refugees in this settlement. Thank you. – **Jennifer Atim, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR Uganda**

We wish to extend heartfelt thanks and gratitude for all that you do for the refugees and for the little children who have been able to go to school. Thank you so much. – **Joyce Achiro, Education Officer, UNHCR Uganda**

You're changing lives in Syria

^
Hassan Mohammad Alhassan, 80, is returning home to Syria after 13 years, thanks to your support.

Hassan Mohammad Alhassan boards a bus shortly after dawn in Amman, Jordan.

He is dressed formally in a suit, tie, and scarf bearing the Syrian flag. He sits quietly in his seat, smiling broadly.

Today, the 80-year-old father is finally returning home to Syria after living as a refugee for over a decade.

"We have lived in Jordan as if it were our own country," says Alhassan. "Thirteen years have passed. Now, as we return to our home country, it feels like being reborn. It's as if we're starting a new life."

More than 350,000 Syrian refugees have returned to their homeland from neighbouring countries since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024.

The Syria that Alhassan is returning to is devastated. Homes and communities are shattered.

Schools, hospitals, roads, energy and water systems lie in ruins.

Alhassan knows that his house in Syria has been destroyed. "It needs repairs, and it will be costly."

Your generous donations are helping Syrian families like Alhassan's face an uncertain future. Amidst a global funding crisis, your gifts are helping to provide essentials such as home repairs and emergency cash payments.

After years of conflict and fear, Syrians are desperate for stability and peace. When asked why he's willing to risk returning, Alhassan's answer is simple.

"Because we will finally experience freedom and reconnect with our lives," he says.

Syria is at a crossroads, but change is possible. Thank you for standing with Syrians in their time of need. ■

» WITH YOUR SUPPORT, UNHCR IS PROVIDING:



HOME REPAIRS
and **SHELTER KITS**



EMERGENCY CASH
payments to help cover rent, food, medicine and other essentials



PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING



HYGIENE KITS
and **MEDICAL AID**

A new home in time for winter

With your help, families in Afghanistan received life-saving support to make it through a harsh winter.

Zamir and Mahbouba (with three of their children) received a new home in time for winter.

The people of Afghanistan are experiencing extreme hardship, with around half the population in need of humanitarian aid. In winter, life gets even tougher. In high-altitude areas like Bamyan province, temperatures fall as low as -20 degrees Celsius.

Zamir, Mahbouba and their five children were forced to flee in 2019 when heavy fighting erupted close to their village in Bamyan. When they returned, they found their home destroyed. The family had no option but to move into a nearby cave. Survival was perilous, particularly in winter.

“There is a high risk of rocks falling from the cliffs during rain and snow,” said Zamir.

Once, Mahbouba slipped and broke her leg on an icy path. “I was always scared the children would fall,” she said.

This winter, the family no longer had to endure the dangerous conditions. They moved into a new two-room house provided by UNHCR, with a traditional bukhari (wood-burning stove), bathroom and solar panels for electricity.

“We will have a better life inside this new home,” said Zamir.

UNHCR also provided winter assistance to vulnerable Ukrainians like Olga who have endured more than three years of full-scale war.

Olga escaped Ukraine with her mother and young son in 2022, finding safety in neighbouring Moldova. With your support, UNHCR worked with local partners to deliver winter relief packages including blankets, solar lamps and hygiene kits.

“This assistance is very important for us, particularly because we urgently needed hygiene products and bedding,” said Olga. ■

» YOUR WINTER DONATIONS HELPED UNHCR PROVIDE:



904,000

people in Afghanistan with essential relief items such as blankets and stoves



521,000

people in Ukraine with winter cash assistance to help pay for heating and warm clothing



297,000

people in Lebanon with shelter and weatherproofing kits

Huda the Goddess: Combining art and activism



Huda Fadlemawla is the winner of the 2025 Australia for UNHCR – SBS Les Murray Award for Refugee Recognition. Ms Fadlemawla is an internationally renowned slam poet who goes by the stage name Huda the Goddess.

The Les Murray Award is given annually to an individual from a refugee background who shines a light on the plight of forcibly displaced people. The award is named after the late Les Murray AM, the iconic SBS sports commentator and former Hungarian refugee.

Below, Ms Fadlemawla shares her story in her own words.

I was born in Sudan, but I left when I was about four or five. A lot of my recollections from Sudan are around my family home, the streets and the ritualistic things we did, like going to the bodega around the corner to get dessert.

My mum decided to flee the dictatorship that was destroying our country so we could survive. She couldn't work properly, put me through school, help the family or even move around freely as a woman. We lived in Egypt for five years, where poverty was a norm and a part of life.

I was 10 when we came to Australia. I came with my mum, my stepfather and my younger brother. My mum had always given me the notion that this is the time when you can be what you imagined. If you want to be a doctor, you can. This was the coolest thing. I used to cry all the time about why I couldn't go to school like normal kids. No kid really cries about wanting to go to school – it's the opposite. But when your human rights are a privilege you have to earn, what you dream of is different.

I was excited to prove what I could do. I thought, I'm gonna go to school and I'm gonna be the smart kid. I'm gonna be exactly what I imagined myself to

be. I felt like I had to prove that I'm worthy of this chance, amongst all the kids that could have been picked to be in this country. But it came with a lot of challenges, because there was never a moment for me to just be a kid.

In school, I wasn't good at English at all. Writing was just not my subject. But I had a very, very good teacher in Grade 7. She was the one who motivated me to master verbal language. She also asked me to do the graduation speech. It was the first time I was properly on stage. I thought I was going to throw up. I don't even remember what I said, but I got a standing ovation from everyone.

After that, I started a nursing degree, and I also started getting involved in clubs – MCing the law society's events, doing keynotes. I was doing an event, and there was a poet by the name of Anisa Nandaula there. She performed, and it was the first time I'd seen poetry like that. I thought, this is cool. She pushed me to come to an open mic, get on stage and do a poem. People cried. I didn't know what it was, but I liked it. I started doing more open mics. Anisa got me my first show, where I was paid \$80. I was so excited to get paid to do poetry.

That was a time in my life when I didn't know who I was outside of being smart and being a good oldest daughter, a good refugee. It was the first time it wasn't about how good I was. It was about how I made people feel. I wanted to make people feel better – that was now my objective.

In 2021, I won the Australian Poetry Slam. I went into the event just to do poetry, because I love it. Then I made it to the second round. I did a poem about why I started to pick up the pen. When they said my name, I realised that you cannot run from what is meant for you.

I'm an improvised poet. I make up my poems on stage. This is not pre-written, edited work. It's deeply spiritual, it's deeply ancestral, it's deeply for me. I love that people can come on the journey, but winning a title was never a part of the plan.

A lot of the things I've done are things I've had to do, and I believe that activists are not birthed out of choice, they are birthed out of urgency. We are birthed out of care. We are birthed out of obligation. I am my people. No matter how many oceans away I am, I have an obligation to them, because without their contribution, without their prayer, without their legacy, without their matriarchy, without their culture, without Arabic, without my mum and my grandmother and her mother and her mother, there would be no Huda.

I want to be able to speak for my country, to be able to advocate for the youth. Refugees are not needing to be saved. Sometimes they just need people to get the hell out of their way so they can rebuild countries that were taken from them.

I am here for every Black girl who does not get to dream out loud. I have to stay in the room so that, when they step through the door, there is another Black face waiting for them. ■

Huda the Goddess will perform at Australia for UNHCR's World Refugee Day lunch in Sydney on Thursday 19 June 2025. Find out more and purchase tickets at unrefugees.org.au/events

In the community



© UNHCR/Can Bildik

▲ Youssef Matrewawi, 29, was rescued from under the rubble of his home in Hatay, along with his three-year-old son.

»PARTNERING WITH ROTARY TO HELP TÜRKIYE REBUILD

Australia for UNHCR and Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) have united to deliver life-changing aid in Türkiye.

Türkiye generously hosts more than three million refugees, mostly from Syria, and faces immense challenges in the aftermath of the deadly earthquakes that struck in February 2023.

By signing a three-year Memorandum of Understanding, Australia for UNHCR and RAWCS will be able to assist extremely vulnerable families still struggling to rebuild their lives.

“Through this collaboration with Australia for UNHCR, we extend our reach and impact, providing vital support to communities in need,” says Mahir Momand, CEO of RAWCS. “This partnership embodies the spirit of Rotary – uniting resources and expertise to drive meaningful change.”

Trudi Mitchell, CEO of Australia for UNHCR, echoed this sentiment: “Our partnership with RAWCS strengthens our capacity to deliver life-saving aid swiftly and effectively. By combining our expertise and resources, we can reach more refugees and displaced communities with the support they urgently need.” ■

»LYNN'S TOKYO MARATHON RUN

Lynn Dang, a Director on Australia for UNHCR's Board and former Vietnamese refugee, ran the Tokyo Marathon in March to raise funds for forcibly displaced people.

Ms Dang began running 10 years ago as a way to invest in her own physical and mental wellbeing while raising two children.

“Training for the Tokyo Marathon was a challenging but rewarding journey, balancing work, family and demanding runs,” she says. “Crossing the line brought immense joy, validating every sacrifice and revealing the strength within.”

Ms Dang encouraged others to step up and take action for refugees.

“It's important that we don't stand by silently whilst others are suffering. We all want a more compassionate and peaceful world. It starts with how we treat and protect the most vulnerable people when they ask us for our help.

“Feel the power of purpose: run for charity and strengthen your heart in every way. Your actions will help UNHCR to continue their critical ongoing protection and advocacy for refugees.”

Find out how you can fundraise for refugees: teamunhcr.org.au ■



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© Australia for UNHCR

» CELEBRATING RAMADAN

Australia for UNHCR hosted its fourth annual Iftar event in March. Around 150 guests broke their fast together on this special evening of reflection, generosity and connection at the Art Gallery of NSW.

This year's event focused on the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon, which has long been a place of refuge but today faces its own emergency. Proceeds went towards UNHCR's humanitarian response across the country, which supports both local people and Syrian refugees.

The event was attended by Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia; hosted by Anjilla Seddeqi, Australia for UNHCR Ambassador, lawyer, fashion designer and former Afghan refugee; and supported by Peter Gould, Australia for UNHCR Ambassador, design leader and entrepreneur. Guests enjoyed live music from Three Rivers Ensemble and heard from inspiring speakers including Sunday Kitchen chefs Sivine Tabbouch and Karima Hazim, and pianist and former Syrian refugee Patil Hovagim. ■

✓ L-R: Shireen Taweel, Patil Hovagim, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Karima Hazim, Najwa Alameddine, Sivine Tabbouch.

^ L-R: Karen Gulick, UNHCR Acting Regional Representative; Trudi Mitchell, CEO of Australia for UNHCR; Dominique Hyde, UNHCR Director of External Relations.

» DOMINIQUE HYDE VISITS AUSTRALIA

Dominique Hyde, UNHCR's External Relations Director, visited Australia and New Zealand in February to meet with government officials and Australia for UNHCR donors and staff.

At events in Sydney, Ms Hyde shared stories from the field and gave important updates on the impact of global funding cuts. She also reminded donors about the strong progress made in many areas – for example, with UNHCR's support, the number of refugee children attending primary school has grown from 50 to 65 per cent.

In Canberra, Ms Hyde visited Cafe Stepping Stone, which provides training and employment for migrant and refugee women. While there, she met with three refugee women working at the cafe, including Raghida, who ran her own pastry shop in Syria before she had to flee the war. Ms Hyde also met with the cafe's founders, Hannah Costello and Vanessa Brettel, who are a fine example of how Australian business owners can empower refugees to provide for themselves. ■



© Australia for UNHCR/Ahmed Khan

» PEDALS OF HOPE

A community bike workshop in Adelaide is making a big difference – one bike at a time.

Bikes for Refugees takes old, unwanted bicycles and gives them new life, helping refugees and asylum seekers get around their new communities. The workshop began 20 years ago when Mike Brisco, a passionate cyclist, heard about a Congolese family that had just arrived and had no means of transport.

What started as a simple request for four bicycles quickly grew into something much larger. Today, Bikes for Refugees receives around 1,500 bikes each year from individual donors, businesses, police lost property departments and university dorms. Mike and his team of dedicated volunteers restore the bikes and either donate them to refugees or sell them, with profits going towards refugee charities.

Through their efforts, Bikes for Refugees has raised \$70,000 for Australia for UNHCR, helping to deliver emergency aid to families in need around the world. ■



© Bikes for Refugees

A new crisis in Ukraine

Having endured more than three years of full-scale war, the people of Ukraine are facing a new horror that threatens their survival.

Millions are struggling to keep hope alive in the face of devastating funding cuts to UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies.

Sisters Nadiia and Svitlana are both single mothers, with six children between them aged 8–15. They were left homeless and penniless after fleeing intense attacks on their village on the Psel River in north-eastern Ukraine, just five kilometres from the border with Russia.

“It was too much to bear,” says Nadiia. “We understood that we had to save the children. Staying was no longer an option.”

With support from UNHCR and local partner Proliska, the family evacuated to the city of Sumy by minibus. They fled with only their identity documents and the little they could carry.

“The evacuation was very hard for us,” says Nadiia. “We miss our home so much. We miss the feeling of being home and how we would gather in the garden for coffee and gossip.”

Nadiia, Svitlana and the children took refuge at a shelter for displaced families. UNHCR provided them with emergency cash, basic supplies such as blankets and mattresses, and psychological support.

“The most important thing is that we are together and safe,” says Svitlana.

However, Ukrainians fleeing deadly attacks will soon struggle to receive the same life-saving support. The funding crisis means they are at imminent risk of missing out on vital aid.

Without more support, UNHCR will be forced to suspend emergency shelter and assistance for 51,000 survivors of missile strikes, leaving people like Nadiia and Svitlana without anywhere to turn for help.

“Funding has long been a challenge. Now, it is more uncertain than ever,” says Philippe Leclerc, Director of UNHCR’s Europe Bureau. “And the victims will, once again, be the displaced and war-affected families at risk of losing life-saving aid when they need it most.”

UNHCR has been on the ground in Ukraine throughout the war – and will stay and deliver for as long as possible. Please step up in this time of extraordinary need to help families hold on. ■

Svitlana (left) and Nadiia (right) with five of their children at a shelter in Sumy, Ukraine.

» YOUR DONATION CAN PROVIDE:



EMERGENCY SHELTER KITS to help families repair their homes and protect themselves immediately after an attack



CASH ASSISTANCE to enable people to pay for survival essentials such as food, medicine and clothing



BASIC SUPPLIES for the most vulnerable, including older people and those with disabilities, who are often the last ones left in their neighbourhoods



Donate now: [unrefugees.org.au/saveukraine](https://www.unhcr.org/au/saveukraine)



EMERGENCY



Cameroonian refugees Kajeeta, Habiba, Ramsay and Edi Djida walk along a dyke in a flooded settlement near N'Djamena in Chad.

Funding cuts put millions of lives at risk

Millions of refugees have begun to miss out on vital humanitarian aid due to funding shortfalls. This is devastating for the people of Sudan, who are facing famine and horrific violence; for the Rohingya, whose rations have been reduced to just \$10 per month in Bangladesh; and for the people of Syria, who had begun tentatively rebuilding their lives following the fall of the Assad regime.

“Brutal funding cuts in the humanitarian sector are putting millions of lives at risk,” says Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner

for Refugees. “The consequences for people fleeing danger will be immediate and devastating.”

These consequences include less shelter and water for refugees fleeing war, less support for women and girls who have survived sexual violence, and fewer teachers for refugee children, who are at risk of child labour and trafficking if they drop out of school early.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has the expertise, experience and determination to keep protecting people forced to flee, but urgently needs donors – individuals,

businesses and governments – to step up.

“Our commitment to people forced to flee remains unwavering,” says High Commissioner Grandi. “With continued support, we can identify and assist the most vulnerable, rapidly deploy when new emergencies hit, help stabilise fragile regions and facilitate the safe return home of refugees.” ■

Your donation can help fill the funding gap and save lives:
unrefugees.org.au



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THE DIFFERENCE A DONATION CAN MAKE

» SHELTER

When Yunus, 36, returned to his village in Kunduz province, north-eastern Afghanistan, he found his home completely destroyed. With UNHCR's help, Yunus rebuilt and has also begun to grow his own vegetables.



© UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production

"Since UNHCR started helping here, people returned to this village gradually and houses got built. My children will live better here."

» BASIC SUPPLIES

Odette is from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She was forced to flee armed conflict in North Kivu with her three children. Along with thousands of other Congolese families, Odette received basic supplies including blankets, soap and cooking utensils from UNHCR.



© UNHCR/Blaise Sahyila

"You might think that a kitchen kit doesn't mean much, but as a woman and a mother, it means a lot. Thank you for your donation."

» EDUCATION

Miriam fled conflict in Sudan's Darfur region with her daughters and grandchildren. She lost seven family members in Sudan, and her grandchildren hadn't been able to attend school since fighting broke out in April 2023.



© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

"I'm very happy for my family to be safe in Chad, and for the children to go back to school."

» PROTECTION

In Mozambique, displaced women can share their trauma, receive counselling and learn how to set up their own businesses at a community centre run by UNHCR and its local partner Helpcode.



© UNHCR/Hélène Caux

"UNHCR and Helpcode volunteers are always checking in on us," says Rose, one of the participants. "They really listen to us, they really care about us."

» WHAT DO FUNDING CUTS MEAN?



1.5 MILLION SYRIANS will miss out on emergency relief items such as blankets



530,000 SUDANESE will go without clean water and sanitation, leaving them at high risk of disease



80,000 WOMEN AND GIRLS who've experienced gender-based violence will miss out on emergency medical, psychological and legal support in South Sudan



51,000 UKRAINIANS won't be able to find emergency shelter after surviving missile strikes

“

My objective is to work as a family therapist. My family has always been my primary support system. For a healthy society, we need healthy families. I have observed and experienced that first-hand.”

Syrian refugee Joud studies at a cafe in Istanbul, Türkiye.



Joud's journey from refugee to counsellor

After overcoming conflict and trauma in her own life, Joud, 21, is studying hard to help others do the same.

The ambitious young Syrian is currently in the third year of an undergraduate degree in Psychological Counselling and Guidance in Türkiye, supported by a UNHCR scholarship.

Education means everything to Joud. As a child, she studied even while the bombs were falling around her in Aleppo.

"During the war, my academic life and future was all I had," she says. "Even when bombings were happening all around us, we never stopped studying. It was actually our way to resist."

Joud fled to Türkiye with her family soon after completing Year 7. She faced many challenges in her new country, including a sense of isolation as the only Syrian in her class. But she worked hard to learn Turkish and graduated from high school ranked second in her year. While preparing for university admission exams, she soon realised what path she should follow.

"Thinking about all the people I knew who were suffering from mental health issues and trauma, I thought that psychological studies would be useful," she says.

Although she was accepted into several universities, Joud didn't know if her family could afford the fees. A UNHCR scholarship was her lifeline – covering tuition, accommodation and living expenses so she could pursue her goals.

"I applied for the scholarship, got interviewed and was praying every day that I would get it," says Joud. "Thanks to the scholarship, I don't have to work in parallel [with studying] and be a burden to my family."

"My objective is to work as a family therapist. My family has always been my primary support system. For a healthy society, we need healthy families. I have observed and experienced that first-hand."

Just seven per cent of refugee youth are able to access higher education – far below the global average of 40 per cent. Refugee women like Joud often face extra barriers, such as domestic responsibilities and social stigma.

UNHCR's Aiming Higher program provides scholarships to talented young refugees, enabling them to complete an undergraduate degree and create brighter futures – not just for themselves, but for their families and communities.

After she finishes her studies, Joud plans to work in the private sector or for a community-based organisation.

"I am due to graduate in July 2025," says Joud. "Because of the war in Syria and everything that we have been through, we usually do not think too much about the future. However, thanks to my education, I can now see myself being an expert in my field."

"What I wish for all refugees as well as for myself is to find stability." ■

You can help more refugees like Joud access higher education and reach their potential. To find out more about Aiming Higher, please contact Sindy Dupagunta on (02) 9276 6824 or email SDupagunta@unrefugees.org.au

Zhanna, 84, and her granddaughter, Milana, at a shelter in Zakarpattya, Ukraine.



GIFTS IN WILLS

How Grumpy Bob's generosity is transforming lives

Bob was a very generous donor who chose to leave a gift to refugees in his Will. David, who was the executor of the Will, tells us why his friend Bob was motivated to support displaced people around the world – even beyond his lifetime.

My name is David and I'd like to tell you about a dear friend of mine called Bob, who sadly passed away in 2023.

In life, he was known by some as 'Grumpy Bob' because he spoke his mind. But that's not how I remember him.

Bob was intelligent, kind and generous to a fault. He dedicated his career to science and worked in the field of geodesy, or measuring the shape of the Earth. He was highly educated, very widely read and blessed with an almost photographic memory.

He also had a strong social conscience and a kind heart. This kindness and generosity continue

to have an impact on refugees, even though he's gone. That's because Bob left a gift to Australia for UNHCR in his Will. As an executor of his Will, I'm able to see the difference Bob is making and the legacy he has created.

Last year, the team at Australia for UNHCR contacted me to ask if Bob's generous gift could be used to match donations to an appeal for Ukraine. This meant that, for every dollar someone donated, Bob would also give a dollar – providing twice the aid for vulnerable Ukrainians like Zhanna and Milana (pictured above).

This was a powerful incentive and encouraged many people to donate to UNHCR's life-saving work – some

for the very first time.

Bob would have been absolutely thrilled to know that he inspired other people to donate in support of refugees.

Thank you for taking the time to read Bob's story. I've loved sharing a little about my dear friend, who will be remembered for his generosity, and not for being grumpy every now and then.

If you'd like to find out more about how you can double your impact with a residual gift in your Will, please reach out to Australia for UNHCR. By leaving a gift in your Will, you can ensure your values live on. ■



How do you want to be remembered? Contact our Planned Giving Manager, Aylin Salt, on (02) 9276 6871, or email ASalt@unrefugees.org.au for a confidential discussion, or visit gatheredhere.com.au/c/unhcr to write your free Will.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS AND LOYAL SUPPORTERS FOR MAKING AUSTRALIA FOR UNHCR'S LIFE-CHANGING WORK POSSIBLE.

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