

The Kids' Desk Drive

FAQs - UNHCR

A SchoolAid & Australia for UNHCR Joint Initiative



What does UNHCR stand for?

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency.

Who is the current High Commissioner?

Mr. António Guterres joined the UN High Commission for Refugees on June 15, 2015, succeeding Mr. Ruud Lubbers of the Netherlands. A former Portuguese prime minister, Mr. Guterres was elected by the UN General Assembly to a five-year term and is the UN refugee agency's 10th High Commissioner.

When was UNHCR created?

December 14th, 1950

Who was UNHCR created by?

The United Nations General Assembly

Why was UNHCR created?

To protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. It was initially given a three-year mandate to resettle 1.2 million refugees made homeless by the Second World War. However ongoing conflict meant that the role was dramatically expanded and it is now the world's principal humanitarian agency.

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...."

The 1951 Convention relating to the state of refugees.



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How many refugees are there?

There are currently 37.4 million 'people of concern' to UNHCR. 11.4 million of these are refugees. 26 million are internally displaced people (IDP's).

How are internally displaced people different from refugees?

IDP's have all the same fears that refugees have but for a variety of reasons are unable to cross an international border and therefore seek refuge in another part of their own country.

What is UNHCR? What does it do?

UNHCR works in more than 120 countries, assisting all refugees regardless of race, religion and political beliefs.

UNHCR is the only agency with the specific mandate to protect refugees and help resolve refugee problems worldwide.

When people are forced to flee because of war or persecution, they turn to UNHCR for immediate assistance.

What does UNHCR provide for refugees?

Food, shelter, water, sanitation and security, while working to find lasting solutions to their plight.

When possible, we help refugees and other displaced people return home voluntarily and safely.

If necessary, we help them settle in another country where they can start a new life.

How many people work for UNHCR?

Globally more than 6,300 staff are employed by UNHCR and 85% of those work in the field.

Where does UNHCR operate?

UNHCR works in more than 120 countries, assisting all refugees regardless of race, religion or political beliefs.

Where did the logo come from?

There are three elements to the UNHCR logo: the laurel wreath, the hands and the person. The laurel wreath, consisting of crossed branches of the olive tree, is a sign of peace and as such is the signature of the United Nations. Its presence on our logo demonstrates that UNHCR belongs under the umbrella of the United Nations. It also symbolizes the hope of the agency, that peaceful shielding gesture, representing the goal of the UNHCR; to care for refugees and protect their rights. The person is the most important element of the three. The figure represents the many millions of refugees who are living in fear in a foreign land and whom we help to sustain.

Does UNHCR receive any funding from the UN?

UNHCR receives a limited subsidy of three percent of its budget from the United Nations. 97% of UNHCR funding comes from voluntary donations from governments and the private sector – these have to be negotiated every year.



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Does UNHCR work with any partners?

UNHCR's role in many situations is to make sure that refugees' needs are being met overall. This means that we often work with local or international partners to get things done. We are currently working with 650 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and with many intergovernmental and UN agencies to deliver services directly to refugees. We also work closely with governments to support safe and respectful asylum policies, to negotiate refugee camp locations and security, and to guarantee safety for refugees upon their return home.

How are UNHCR different from CARE/Oxfam/World Vision?

These agencies are non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They each have their own board of directors and many of these NGOs do excellent work. In fact, UNHCR will often hire NGOs to provide services to refugees, especially if the NGO has proven experience in doing this work effectively. The UN Refugee Agency, by comparison, is an inter-governmental organization. Simply, this means that we have a mandate from the governments of the world to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. We are responsible for all refugees until they find a permanent place to call home – no matter where they are on the planet.

What does UNHCR do in Australia?

The regional office of UNHCR in Canberra, covering UNHCR's activities in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific, provides legal, resettlement and information services.

The **Legal Protection Unit** liaises with governments in the region on refugee and asylum policy. It provides training for officials working with refugees and advises authorities on best international standards in respect to legislation, policy and procedures. UNHCR also monitors the application of the Refugee Convention in the region and intervenes in individual cases when they raise important issues of principle, which set standards for the wider protection of refugees.

The **Resettlement** section works closely with the Australian and New Zealand immigration authorities on the composition of their quotas for resettled refugees and assists in the submission of individual cases.

The **Public Information Unit** raises awareness about UNHCR's work and refugee issues amongst parliamentarians, schools, the media and the general public. It is the first point of contact for media in the region and can provide the latest information on UNHCR's work world-wide. The Regional Office Canberra also has a wide range of educational resources and display materials for teachers, community groups and the general public.



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Some misconceptions about refugees:-

“Refugees are line jumpers! Tell me why I should help!”

Refugees are the victims of persecution and violence, not to be confused with economic migrants. Refugees are seeking asylum: a freedom from persecution, violence or death. They are seeking a better life for themselves and their families; they seek a place to be safe. There is no such thing as a ‘bogus refugee’. There are refugees as defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention, and there are failed asylum seekers, who are people who do not meet the Convention definition.

Why should we care about refugees when we have our own problems here?”

Most of us have not had to run from our home because we feared for our lives. A donation to UNHCR does not remove our efforts to fund improvements needed in our own country. A donation to UNHCR recognizes that in relative terms, each of us can make a significant difference to the life of a person caught in a nightmare somewhere else in the world.

One thing to remember about refugees:” Whether in remote camps or in nearby neighbourhoods, there are always ways with which we can help refugees. It begins by remembering that they did not leave home by choice.”

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres on World Refugee Day, 20 June 2007.

THE UNITED NATIONS

“The UN has failed! Look at Rwanda and Iraq! Why should I support the UN?”

The United Nations is a diverse institution. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the World Food Program (WFP) are all examples of humanitarian agencies within the UN system, each working together to improve the human condition. It is important to recognize that the humanitarian work of these UN organizations and others has saved countless thousands of lives – quietly, without media coverage or debate – through immunization campaigns, provision of shelter, clean water, food and other basic aid in emergencies and through countless projects to build sustainable communities worldwide.

Australia for UNHCR

How does Australia for UNHCR fit in?

Australia for UNHCR was established by UNHCR in 2000 and raises funds to support the humanitarian programs of the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR.



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Our People

Australia for UNHCR is an Australian company governed by a board of directors,

- The Chairman of our board is John W H Denton, CEO of Corrs Chambers Westgarth.
- Our National Director is Naomi Steer.
- Our Patron is the Governor-General, Her Excellency Ms. Quentin Bryce AC.
- Our Special Representatives are: Ian Chappell (Australian Test Cricket Captain 1970 – 75, broadcaster and businessman), Jane Turner (Comedian and star of Kath & Kim), Mark Schwarzer (Socceroo and Fulham Goalkeeper) and Mr. Jack Gray (Prominent Financial Strategist).

Our Supporters

Since 2000, Australia for UNHCR has involved thousands of Australians in special events and emergency appeals. We have run high profile public awareness campaigns on refugee issues, and developed a wide range of educational and media resources.

With support from community groups, local councils, schools, corporations, foundations and individuals, Australia for UNHCR has just in 2008 provided:

- Shelter to returning refugees in Afghanistan
- Clean Delivery Kits to refugee women in Chad
- Education to children in Chad
- Support for returning refugees to South Sudan
- Assistance to Nakivale Refugee Settlement for education, health and water
- Emergency assistance to Kenya, Myanmar, Georgia and South Ossetia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

How will my money be used to help refugees?

Funds raised in Australia will be used to help refugees internationally. These UNHCR programs provide support to refugees from the time they are forced to flee their homes, while their living in a camp, on their journey home and as they rebuild their lives.

Can I sponsor a child through Australia for UNHCR?

Over 80% of all refugees are women and children so UNHCR programs in general benefit children and the mothers who care for them. Individual sponsorship is not possible under the circumstances. It is far more equitable in these situations to fund programs that benefit communities rather than only one individual. So while you can't sponsor a child, you can support a specific project like buying a \$2.70 Clean Delivery Kit, a simple tool in conjunction with increased observation, midwife training, pregnancy nutrition and education have had a dramatic impact on birth-related illness, injury and death in refugee populations.



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Can I donate things like clothes and blankets to help people in emergencies?

Transportation costs are often high from Australia so in general UNHCR cannot coordinate small movements of support materials over large distances. Whilst bulk arrangements can be made from a business to UNHCR, individual donations of clothes and blankets cannot be accepted.

Where can I find out more about UNHCR and Australia for UNHCR?

Please visit our global website at www.unhcr.org or Australia for UNHCR at www.unrefugees.org.au

How can I donate and is my donation tax-deductible?

Donations made through Australia for UNHCR of \$2 or more are tax-deductible to Australian taxpayers. You can make a donation on-line at www.unrefugees.org.au or call us on our Toll Free number 1300 361 288 during business hours.

Thank you for your interest in Australia for UNHCR and the humanitarian work of UNHCR globally making a difference to the lives of refugees

