

Media Release

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REFUGEE CRISIS NOT OVER – FIVE THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT REFUGEES

On World Refugee Day Save the Children NZ would like to highlight the fact that the refugee crisis is not over.

Save the Children NZ CEO Heidi Coetzee said, “While the refugee crisis rarely makes news, it hasn’t gone away. There are more displaced people in the world today than ever before. Millions of people, just like you and me, who have nowhere to call home.”

UNHCR statistics show that an unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced by persecution and war to flee their home countries. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.

“Refugee children are the most vulnerable and are missing out on vital things like education, stability, nutritious food and sanitation.

“Unfortunately there are many more children affected by conflicts around the world. On World Refugee Day, we would like to draw attention to **five things you might not know about refugees:**

1. While the word refugee is generally spoken in the context of Syria or the Middle East, you would be surprised to know that the world’s largest refugee settlement is now in Uganda. Before this year, Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya was the largest, home to over 245,000 people. In the last year, unimaginable violence in South Sudan has caused close to one million people to flee the country, who often walk hundreds of miles to find safety. More than 800,000 people have fled into Uganda, with most settling in Bidibidi refugee settlement.

2. Half of refugees are under 18 and half of refugee children aren’t in school. Parents tell us that education for their kids is one of the main reasons they flee conflict, yet it can take months or even years to get children back into the classroom. Going to school provides children with a sense of normalcy and a place to process the various traumas that they may have experienced and it also provides them with the best chance for a fulfilling future.

3. Most refugees don’t live in camps. One of the images that might come to mind when thinking about refugees is a vast field filled with rows of tents or trailers. For most refugees, however, this is not the reality. As many as 76 percent of refugees live in non-camp settings, sometimes giving greater autonomy but also making it harder to reach essential services. Lebanon, for example, hosts more than a million refugees—the largest number of refugees as a proportion of its national population, and there is no formal camp system.

4. Some refugee families have been “twice displaced.” For example, some Somali people fled their country’s civil war in the 1980s and found a home in Syria. But the war in Syria forced them to flee to Turkey and other neighbouring countries. Similar stories can be found among Palestinians, Iraqis, and many other nationalities.

5. More than 4,500 children have arrived in Italy through the Mediterranean this year—many of them unaccompanied minors. When people do make it to shore, the asylum process is often confusing and lengthy.

Ms Coetzee said, “We believe every child deserves a future. Children should have a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, Save the Children are always among the first to respond and the last to leave.”

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Caption: Save the Children NZ are supporting Rohingya children like one and half year old Rahmott who live in makeshift shelters in Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh. Rahmmot’s home was burned to the ground and his village destroyed. He and his mother were shot at as they fled into the night. To find out more about Rahmmot go to <https://www.savethechildren.org.nz/stories/rohingya/>

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children’s unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

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