

PLACE

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WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2020

Joint Press Release from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in Ghana and the Ghana Refugee Board: Everyone Can Make a Difference, Every Action Counts

World Refugee Day each year is commemorated to honor the courage and resilience of millions of families who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of conflict, war and persecution. It is the time of the year where we remind the world that each day, people are forced to flee their homes in search of safety and protection.

Two decades ago, the numbers of refugees and internally displaced people seemed to be declining. Today the opposite is true. At the end of 2019, **79.5 million** people were displaced from their homes. Around the world, the number of conflicts has only increased. UNHCR estimates that **1 out of every 100 people** in the world has fled their homes

These numbers are overwhelming - and it is important to remember that these represent real people whose lives have been torn apart, leaving their homes, family, jobs and schools behind.

In 2020, we mark World Refugee Day against a backdrop of dramatic social change. Not only have record numbers of people fled their homes to find safety - but the entire world is grappling with the devastation of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This global health crisis is evolving into an economic crisis, and in turn, has exposed social inequalities in our societies which are begging for solutions. This is what has informed the theme for this year "Everyone can make a difference; Every action counts".

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing anti-racism protests in several countries have shown us how desperately we need to have a more inclusive and equal world where no one is left behind. It has never been clearer that all of us have a role to play in order to bring about change. The aim of the World Refugee Day campaign this year is to remind the world that everyone, including refugees, can contribute to society and Every Action Counts in the effort to create a more just, inclusive, and equal world.

In Ghana, despite the critical socio-economic impact the pandemic has had on their livelihoods, refugees have risen to the challenge and are contributing in various ways. Some refugees have taken the initiative to sew face masks for their community; some are into soap making. Others, like the DAFI graduates have dedicated their time to teach young children at home who are not in school due to the pandemic. We have refugees working in the medical field helping take care of people during this time.



“Unfolding events in the past few months have shown us that no one is safe until everyone is safe” said the UNHCR Country Representative to Ghana, Ms. Esther Kiragu. “This clearly demonstrates the value of our interdependence and interconnectedness. It should not take another crisis of this nature to remind us of this golden truth. We should be able to say that at the end of the day when faced with adversity, our humanity prevailed, and we were able to come together, both locally and across borders” she added.

The coronavirus pandemic has underscored the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind in this century. The virus doesn’t discriminate; and is not a respecter of persons. It is imperative therefore that everyone can play their role to fight it. This underlines the necessity to ensure that all interventions are inclusive and do reach out to all vulnerable segments of society, including refugees.

“The socio-economic impact of the pandemic has been especially severe on refugees whose meagre livelihoods have almost grounded to a halt. On this World Refugee Day we make an appeal for support to all well-wishers to enable them, and the communities that host them, fight the pandemic. Everyone can make a difference – every action counts” Ms Kiragu noted

In December 2019, hundreds of partners, governments and individuals converged in Geneva and made a commitment to stand behind the UN Global Compact on Refugees. This Compact recognizes that forced displacement is a development issue. That there is a need to support host governments by easing the pressure of hosting refugees, to support the base for self-reliance and livelihoods so that they can contribute effectively in the economies where they find themselves, and to support the search for durable solutions including peace and reconciliation in countries of origin. The new challenges facing the world this year further highlight the relevance of this commitment and the need for international solidarity.

According to the Board Chairman of the Ghana Refugee Board, Professor Kenneth Attafuah, “Ghana has been exemplary as a host country, by offering protection to, solidarizing with, and including refugees in the provision of access to the necessities of life, at the same levels available to our nationals. We will continue to live up to our responsibilities towards refugees and asylum seekers”

So, while COVID-19 makes us all feel vulnerable, we have come to realize that our strength as a human community lies in our ability to pull together and help those in need. We are only as strong as the weakest member of our societies.

This World Refugee Day, UNHCR is appealing to everyone to help continue this global movement of solidarity and action.

Everyone can make a difference, and every action counts



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Statistics

Ghana currently hosts **13,366** refugees and asylum seekers from **38 different countries**, Ivorians being in the majority. Almost half of the population live in camps located in the Central, Western and Bono Regions of the country, with the other half residing in various urban areas.

Notes to the Editor:

Unlike migrants, refugees are defined by the 1992 Refugee Law of Ghana, and indeed by the Refugee International Conventions dating back to 1951 as people who have been forced to flee their countries across international borders in search of refuge, because of well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion. Refugees therefore are people- men, women, boys and girls who have witnessed gross violations of human rights before and during flight, which makes them inherently vulnerable, and therefore requiring proactive and concerted support to stand on their own again. This however does not take away from their strengths and capacities to contribute to nation-building where there is an enabling environment. They are not a burden but a resource, and agents of development when they are included in programs.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Patience Folley, Communication and Public Information Associate for UNHCR
Ghana: folley@unhcr.org, 0244 313448
Follow us on **Twitter** (@unhcrghana) or **Facebook** (UNHCR Ghana)

Tetteh Padi, Programme Coordinator, Ghana Refugee Board. Tel 024 284 5096
www.grb.gov.gh