



NGOs call for more support for refugees on World Refugee Day

19 June 2018 (World Refugee Day is Wednesday June 20)

There are more people displaced by conflict, hunger or persecution than ever before, and New Zealanders want to help.

“By the time you’ve read this press release, 20 people will have been forced from their home because of conflict or persecution. Every minute, there are 20 more added to that list,” says Josie Pagani, Director of the Council for International Development.

An unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have now been forced from home. Among them are nearly 23 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18 and up to three million of whom live with a disability, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

New Zealand’s international NGOs work closely with refugee communities overseas, and also when they arrive in New Zealand.

The Council for International Development is calling on the government to increase the percentage of aid that goes to the worst humanitarian crises.

“Our members are very supportive of the focus on the Pacific for the bulk of our aid budget, but it’s also important that New Zealand does its bit in places like Syrian, Yemen and South Sudan where we see some of the worst cases of suffering.

“New Zealand spends only about 7% on humanitarian crises. We would like to see that increase to at least 11.5% which is the OECD average. That also means doing more to support the countries that are shouldering most of the refugee burden.”

Just a handful of nations are delivering the greatest refugee support. Uganda now ranks among the top three refugee-hosting nations in the world and is home to more refugees than any other country in Africa. In Lebanon 1 million Syrian refugees make up over a quarter of the country’s population. In just a few months in 2017, the community of Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh was overwhelmed by an unprecedented influx of over 670,000 refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring Myanmar.

“These countries are struggling to cope. New Zealand governments have made periodic financial contributions to these efforts, including most recently \$1.5 million contribution to humanitarian efforts in Syria. However there is a \$4.8 billion shortfall for Syria’s humanitarian needs in 2018 alone, and bolder action from donor governments, including New Zealand, is urgently needed.”

“New Zealand’s humanitarian agencies (CID members) continue to scale up their work with refugee and host communities on the ground. As well as providing life-saving necessities such as clean water, shelter, food, and sanitation, these agencies are giving psychological support and access to essential social services.

The Council for International Development would also like to see the community pilot programme that allows individuals or groups of New Zealanders to sponsor a refugee, extended when it is reviewed in December.



“It needs to be a permanent annual programme, in addition to the existing refugee quota.”

The pilot Community Sponsorship Programme is currently running in New Zealand, with four community based organisations welcoming and supporting 25 additional refugees on top of the quota.

“Local communities see the images of devastation in places like Syria and Yemen. It’s a very Kiwi response, to want to do our bit and stand up for what is right. The scheme has been a big success in Canada, with sports clubs and local groups helping to integrate around 300 thousand refugees since the 1970s. We know it works. Why not extend it here, in addition to the government’s refugee quota?”

The refugee quota was increased from 750 per year to 1000 in 2017 after the ‘Double the Quota’ campaign and significant public pressure. It will rise to 1500 by 2020.

The Council for International Development (CID) is the peak body for New Zealand’s international development and humanitarian aid sector. The NGO Disaster Relief Forum is the humanitarian network within CID

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