AALBORG UNIVERSITY

Portraying Refugees

-A Critical Discourse Analysis of UNHCR's Mediation of Refugee Stories

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Abstract

This thesis investigated how refugees were portrayed in stories mediated and published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on its global website. The study was particularly interested in critically examining the organisation's use of language, the underlying social power structures, and the ways in which UNHCR's refugee discourse, in theory, aligned with the one in practice. The organisation's mission statement and twenty mediated refugee stories were analysed, and the study made use of Norman Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) both as its primary methodological and theoretical frameworks, supplemented by a general discourse analysis and the theoretical concept of academic ventriloquism.

The study found that UNHCR, on the linguistic surface, employed two contrasting narratives: one of hardship, framing refugees as suffering victims, and one of hope, focusing on resilience and agency. It found that these two refugee portrayals differed on a textual level, but that they coincided on a social practice level, as they served similar organisational agendas and reflected the same underlying power structures operating to obscure and maintain UNHCR's superior position. In addition, the study found that UNHCR strategically utilised language, among other purposes, to create an illusion of inclusion of refugee voices, which simultaneously backgrounded the organisation's narrative control. It further found that UNHCR occupied both the role of story mediator as well as the role of (metaphorical) academic ventriloquist, which enabled its power to decide who should and shouldn't be allowed to speak. Roles that the organisation frequently utilised strategically to speak 'through' the refugees instead of amplifying their own voices, thus making refugees appear as the primary storytellers, and consequently masking the organisation's dominant authorship and representational powers.

Consequently, the study identified a continuity of traditional humanitarian approaches and thus a noticeable gap between UNHCR's refugee discourse in theory and practice. The thesis aimed to build on existing literature by investigating previously unexplored material and to situate the findings within an academic discussion concerning paradigm shifts in UNHCR's refugee discourse.

Keywords: Refugees; UNHCR; portrayal; CDA; social power structures

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGO	International Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

1.0 Introduction

Forced migration remains one of the world's most pressing issues. 'At the end of 2023, an estimated 117.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing the public order. Based on operational data, UNHCR estimates that forced displacement has continued to increase in the first four months of 2024 and by the end of April 2024 is likely to have exceeded 120 million' (UNHCR, 2025a, n.p.).

The multifaceted functions of international refugee organisations, including both advocacy work, data provision, emergency response, and guideline development, highlight their role as central players within the global refugee situation. Furthermore, studies show that 'international organisations are known to play a role in shaping the ways in which global issues are framed and discussed' (Green and Pécoud, 2023, p. 3). Scholars argue that when international organisations portray refugees, they are constructing a particular understanding of who refugees are, what needs they have, and how the world should act and respond to them. This influential status that international refugee organisations hold thus makes them key figures when it comes to creating narratives and thus shaping the global discourses around forcibly displaced people (Green and Pécoud, 2023; Johnson, 2011; Smith and Waite, 2018).

Focus has particularly been centred on the communication by UNHCR, as it is the biggest international refugee organisation. Literature shows that its refugee discourse over time, from the aftermath of the Second World War and up until recent times, has undergone several paradigmatic shifts (Betts et al., 2012; Chouliaraki, 2010; Hammerstad, 2014). Humanitarian communication strategies were previously the dominant ways in which UNHCR used to frame refugees. This discourse mainly portrayed forcibly displaced people as passive and powerless victims needing help, whereas recent strategies reflect more post-humanitarian tendencies, focusing on refugees as resilient actors with agency and empowerment. However, several scholars are in recent studies critically investigating the current communication strategies by UNHCR and identifying contradictions between what is said and what is done. This group of scholars are therefore critically questioning the assumed shift in the discursive

paradigm (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert et al., 2023). According to these scholars, although a paradigm shift in refugee discourse is recognised in theory, an inconsistency remains in its application within the organisation's communicative practices. This group of scholars therefore finds that UNHCR's digital communication only to a limited degree aligns with such paradigm shift and that it instead reflects a tendency to still use traditional humanitarian approaches focusing on victimhood and lack of agency in its refugee discourse.

Whilst press releases, policy texts, interviews with UNHCR officials, and social media visuals have been the focus of scholars' investigations of UNHCR's communication strategies so far, knowledge about how the refugee discourse is constructed within the organisation's own written mediation of individual refugee stories is missing from the literature. How UNHCR linguistically mediates these stories, as well as which and how social power structures operate within this mediation, remains understudied. This thesis therefore takes its point of departure in twenty of the refugee stories published on the organisation's global website from January 1st to December 31st, 2024, and the topic is approached through a text-focused CDA of this communicative practices by UNHCR.

2.0 Aim and Research Question

The aim of the thesis is therefore to explore and analyse UNHCR's portrayal of forcibly displaced people in the organisation's mediation of refugee stories from a critical discourse perspective. The study wishes to investigate what parallels that can be drawn between social power structures and UNHCR's story mediation, as well as examine whether, and in what ways, UNHCR's refugee portrayal differs from scholars' recent critical discussion of a discursive paradigm shift. Additionally, the study intends to investigate if, and in what ways, the organisation's mission statement corresponds with the discursive constructions of the mediated stories. The purpose of the thesis is therefore to contribute to current literature by examining unexplored material by UNHCR, to emphasise the role of language in its narrative construction and communication strategies, and to situate the findings within the academic discussion concerning paradigm shifts in the organisation's refugee discourse.

Hence, the research question for this study is:

- How are forcibly displaced people portrayed in UNHCR's written mediation of refugee stories online, and in what ways does the mediation align with the values expressed in the organisation's mission statement?

In order to examine the subject of investigation, the thesis's main research question is supplemented by the following three sub-questions:

- How do power structures operate as underlying mechanisms in UNHCR's discourse?
- In what respect does the organisation's mediation relate to the academic discussion around a discursive paradigm shift in UNHCR's refugee discourse?
- To what extent does UNHCR's portrayals of refugees exhibit academic ventriloquistic tendencies?

3.0 Thesis Outline

The thesis will first provide a brief clarification of key terminologies used throughout the text. Following this will be a literature review of previous studies in order to understand and clarify the current knowledge in the research field and to situate the contributions of this thesis within the context of existing research. It will then give a historical overview of paradigm shifts in refugee discourse, focusing on UNHCR and its developments over time. The thesis will then proceed to present its theoretical framework as well as the chosen methodology, methods, and material. Thereafter will be the findings and analysis section, and lastly, the thesis will provide the conclusion and suggestions for further research.

4.0 Clarifying Terminology

4.1 'Refugees' and 'Forcibly Displaced People'

The terms 'refugees' and 'forcibly displaced people' are utilised interchangeably throughout the thesis in accordance with the legal definition in the 1951 Refugee Convention (OHCHR, 2025). Both terms denote people who, due to various circumstances, have been forced to migrate and whose stories UNHCR mediates and publishes on its global website.

5.0 Literature Review

The main theme of the following literature review is international refugee organisations' portrayal of forcibly displaced people. The review aims to explore what previous studies have investigated within this research field and to encapsulate how scholars address the

complexities of this topic, as well as to situate this thesis within the existing literature. The review utilises a thematic structure to address the following recurring topics found in previous studies: the impact of refugee narratives, characteristics of recent refugee discourses, and ethical dilemmas in representation.

5.1 The Impact of Refugee Narratives

A large part of previous studies emphasises the impact of international organisations' refugee narratives. Several scholars highlight how these narratives have a central influence on policies as well as public perceptions of forcibly displaced people (Green and Pécoud, 2023; Johnson, 2011; Smith and Waite, 2018). In the study by Green and Pécoud (2023), it is argued that the 'ways in which UN agencies talk about people on the move matters in terms of the political treatment of migrants and refugees worldwide' (Green and Pécoud, 2023, p. 3). By scrutinising media releases by UNHCR and IOM from 2006 to 2020, their CDA leads the scholars to conclude that since there, on a global scale, is no extensive and legally binding system of how to govern migration, the narratives of these agencies have a significant status in terms of guiding the policies of states, thus impacting the lived realities of refugees.

Similar arguments are made by Scheel and Ratfisch (2014) in their ethnographic case study of Morocco and Turkey, which, from a governmentality perspective, critically examines UNHCR's refugee protection discourse in policy papers, reports, and guidelines. The study finds that UNHCR, in their suggestion, has strong focus on migration regulation as well as on the categorisation of people, which, according to the authors, creates certain 'figures of migration' (Scheel and Ratfisch, 2014, p. 924) that influence national legislation and rationalise developments and expansions of border control. Based on these findings, the authors claim that the organisation's refugee discourse functions as an authoritarian driving force in proclaiming certain practices of migration management.

Scholars furthermore argue that public perceptions of refugees are heavily influenced by the way international organisations construct certain narratives. From analysing UNHCR's archive of visual representations of refugees, Johnson (2011) finds that it provides the audience with a specific interpretation of the world, which, in the end, can

influence the way they perceive forcibly displaced people. Her study suggests that these portrayals create certain understandings of who forcibly displaced people are and that 'how we imagine particular categories of people determines how we engage with them, who we accept as legitimate political actors, and who is able to participate in our world' (Johnson, 2011, p. 1017).

Similarly, Smith and Waite (2018) state that 'dominant narratives not only shape the stories people tell, they also situate public opinion, sanctioning, constraining or enabling certain stories to be told and heard' (Smith and Waite, 2018, p. 2290). From focusing on vulnerability and this concept's operationalisation within international instruments and policy documents, the study argues that refugee representations by international organisations come with a risk of shaping public opinion in a way that categorises and ultimately divides and excludes people. The authors therefore highlight that it's 'crucial that we rethink stories about the figure of the refugee because narratives produce borders that are not only physical walls and fences, they are spaces of non-rights, reduced citizenship and degrading and dehumanising stories' (Smith and Waite, 2018, p. 2303).

5.2 Characteristics of Recent Refugee Discourses

Another central focus in recent studies is to investigate the characteristics of international organisations' contemporary portrayal of refugees (Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Ongenaert et al., 2023; Piga, 2022). A commonality within this aspect of the literature is to have UNHCR as the focal point for investigation. However, despite having the same research site, these studies got divergent results and thus suggest various states of the art in terms of UNHCR's recent discursive features. On one hand, scholars emphasise and problematise traditional humanitarian communication discourses, where refugees are framed as vulnerable victims without agency.

Ongenaert and Joye (2019) investigate how three international refugee organisations communicated about Syrian refugees in 2016. Their discourse analysis of 122 press releases and semi-structured interviews with six organisational officers finds that 'all three organisations represent displaced people mainly as passive beneficiaries who depend on international aid' (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019, p. 492). As an example, the analysis

finds, among others, the following recurring adjectives when referring to refugees: 'vulnerable', 'desperate', 'traumatised', 'needy', and 'dependent'. The study furthermore finds that the organisations' communication represents refugees as a collective rather than emphasising their individualities and concludes that this use of discourses reflects dehumanising features (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019).

Similar arguments are made by Johnson (2011) in her investigation of the historical trends in UNHCR's visual representation of forcibly displaced people. Based on analyses of photos and images, her study argues that the organisation focuses on victimhood in its use of discourse, which has depoliticising effects and frames the refugee as 'an undifferentiated victim, voiceless and without political agency' (Johnson, 2011, p. 1016), which typically foregrounds women and children as the key vulnerable, exposed, and dependent victims.

A second group of scholars argues that the characteristics of international organisations' contemporary portrayals of refugees reflect both traditional humanitarian and more post-humanitarian discourses. The case study by Piga (2022) examines the 'discursive construction of the refugee situation in Ethiopia's Tigray region in images' (Piga, 2022, p. 450) on UNHCR's UK website and finds a visual narrative that emphasises refugees' individualism and various experiences that, contrary to collective framings, provides a more humanising portrayal. The study specifically stresses the importance of certain communicational strategies in the visual material, such as 'close-up proxemics' (Piga, 2022, p. 454), 'images of highly contextualised environments' (Piga, 2022, p. 461), and 'the choice of angles and perspectives' (Piga, 2022, p. 458), which together foreground empowerment and subjectivity.

Scholars also find that contemporary refugee portrayals, reflecting both traditional humanitarian as well as post-humanitarian discourses, deviate based on different factors and circumstances. In a recent study by Ongenaert and Soler (2024), the Ukrainian and Syrian crises are compared in a multimodal CDA of UNHCR's communication on Instagram between 2022 and 2023. The study finds a clear difference between the two demographics in the organisation's communication strategies, and the results show that it 'mainly represents forcibly displaced Ukrainians and, to

lesser extents, Syrians, as victimised, voiceless masses, which can have dehumanising effects. Contrastingly, the results indicate that UNHCR mainly portrays forcibly displaced Syrians and, to far lesser extents, Ukrainians, as talented, empowered, unique individuals' (Ongenaert and Soler, 2024, p. 302). The authors suggest that the discursive difference may 'be partially explained by context-specific differences, including the phase of the crisis, the represented people's geographical location, and UNHCR's related objectives' (Ongenaert and Soler, 2024, p. 302).

In relation to this, the study by Ongenaert et al. (2023) adds another perspective with their comparative research of UNHCR's different media genres, focusing on the content and narratives in relation to the Syrian and Central African crises in 2015. The comparison of photos, videos, news stories, and press releases shows that the organisation's refugee discourse differs depending on the type of media used for communication. The authors find that refugees are framed mostly as collective masses of muted victims in UNHCR's news and press releases, which is 'reproducing humanitarian savior and deservingness logics' (Ongenaert et al., 2023, p. 164), whilst the framing within photos and videos emphasises empowerment. The results lead the authors to conclude that these variations 'often reflect and respond to political and private-sector discourses, facilitating agenda-building opportunities' (Ongenaert et al., 2023, p. 185).

5.3 Ethical Dilemmas in Representation

Existing literature also reflects a tendency among scholars to explore the link between forcibly displaced people being portrayed and the organisation portraying them. Scholars problematise the relation and identify the presence of various ethical dilemmas within the representation (Etem, 2020; García, 2021; Sigona, 2014). The study by Etem (2020) utilises 'representation, critical race, authorship, and documentary studies' (Etem, 2020, p. 1) as a theoretical approach in order to explore how Syrian refugees are represented in three animation movies in a campaign by UNICEF from 2016 called Unfairy Tales. The campaign's aim was to raise public awareness about the situation of displaced Syrian children and to advocate for their rights through media projects, which were based on documentary interviews with children. On one hand, the study identifies

certain productional choices that include the children in the authorship, such as 'the choice of preserving the children's original voices in Arabic' (Etem, 2020, p. 6). On the other hand, the results of their discourse analysis lead the authors to argue that the 'institutional agents have control over Syrian refugee children's narrated memories. And second, Syrian refugees' representations became racially coded reflecting social constructs of whiteness' (Etem, 2020, p. 6). Based on their findings, the authors therefore conclude that 'UNICEF's multimedia projects are examples of how good intentions can be contorted by the power asymmetries between media makers, audiences, and their subjects' (Etem, 2020, p. 13).

Similarly, the qualitative research by García (2021) gets conflicting results from her interview with Melissa Fleming, former Chief Communications Officer at UNHCR, about the central role international agencies play in portraying refugees and their stories. On one hand, the study emphasises how international organisations, via their refugee representations, hold the potential to influence policies towards more inclusivity and positive changes. However, based on the interview, García (2021) also emphasises the ethical dimensions of the representations and problematises the risk of a marketisation of refugee narratives where human stories 'become products, commodities that gain currency in the public sphere' (García, 2021, p. 218).

Moreover, the study by Sigona (2014) adds another perspective to the ethical dilemmas of representation. From a 'case-study of Sudanese refugees' three-month-long sit-in in front of the UNHCR headquarters in Cairo in 2005' (Sigona, 2014, p. 2), he investigates how the forcibly displaced people attempted to challenge the organisation's portrayal of them as an 'agency-less object of humanitarian intervention' (Sigona, 2014, p. 2) and their attempt to shift the narratives towards being acknowledged as political and agentive subjects. However, according to Sigona, N. (2014), the refugees produced an 'interruption of the UNHCR's monopoly over the language of protection' (Sigona, 2014, p. 5) by refusing to stay muted and not complying with the organisation's discourse of victimhood. The study thus illuminates unequal power dynamics of narrative constructions and stresses the importance of more refugee-centred narrative approaches.

5.4 Contributions of the Thesis

The review reflects how the current literature within this research field provides vast information about certain patterns within international refugee organisations' portrayals of forcibly displaced people and their recently identified main characteristics. The review also demonstrates a broad literature in regard to the impacts of and ethical dilemmas in these narratives. Nevertheless, the review also illuminates limitations of this research field and gaps in the existing studies.

Firstly, the literature review illuminates a gap in the type of material from which previous studies of UNHCR's communication practices derive. Press releases, official reports, policy texts, Instagram images and captions, and interviews with organisational officers are the primary sources of scholarly investigation so far. However, mediated refugee stories issued on UNHCR's global website are missing from the current dataset. This online 'story feature', which takes its point of departure from what, in theory, are displaced people's own voices, is unexamined, and there is thus a need for a critical analysis of the content of these stories, to which the thesis will contribute.

Secondly, knowledge about whether or not there is a resemblance between what UNHCR says it does (its written mission statement and inherent values) and what it actually does (its refugee discourse in specific online communication material) is missing from the current studies. Comparing a discourse analysis of the organisation's mission statement with a CDA of the so-far unexplored material of refugee stories (both textual materials issued on its global website) provides a different entryway to the topic. The thesis will use this to gain new knowledge about UNHCR's portrayal of forcibly displaced people, as well as generate new insights into how it mediates individuals' stories and the social power structures operating within this mediation.

Lastly, the review also identifies a gap in the literature regarding the link between UNHCR's portrayals of forcibly displaced people and the broader academic discussion concerning paradigm shifts of its refugee discourse. Previous studies have yet to explicitly contextualise their in-depth examinations and findings of UNHCR's refugee discourse in relation to this broader discussion, and the thesis will therefore include this perspective.

6.0 Historical Overview - Paradigm Shifts in Refugee Discourse

'UNHCR has gone through a constant process of change and evolution throughout its history' (Betts et al., 2012, p. 81). Based on existing literature, the following sections will provide a broad overview of some of the key periods in the history of UNHCR and central moments of development in its refugee discourse. Apprehending that the organisation's rhetorical practices can be placed within a much broader context relating to paradigms of humanitarian communication, this overview will solely focus on the case of UNHCR. Moreover, in order to cover a long and complex history with multiple changes and overlapping practices, the organisation's trajectory is significantly condensed for this overview.

6.1 The 1950s-1980s

Due to the unprecedented numbers of displaced people caused by The second World War and with the outbreak of the Cold War, the UNHCR was created in 1950 'as a 'non-political' agency devoted to protecting and assisting the world's refugees' (Cunliffe, 1995, pp. 280-281). This new UN organisation was originally established with two primary purposes: 'to protect refugees and to find permanent solutions to their plight, either through voluntary repatriation or through their assimilation within new national communities' (Betts et al., 2012, p. 14). In 1951, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, specifying who, under international law, should be defined as a refugee and thus who, with this legal status, was entitled to certain rights and protection by the signatory states (Betts et al., 2012).

'During the 1960s and 1970s, the Cold War extended beyond Europe. Violent decolonization, as well as post-independence civil strife and warfare generated vast numbers of refugees' (Loescher, 2001, p. 38). Due to the increase of refugees worldwide, the mandate of UNHCR expanded, and the 1967 protocol was added to the refugee convention, which removed the original temporal and geographical requirements for refugee status. This meant that the refugee definition no longer was limited to solely covering those people who, by legal definition, got recognised as refugees due to circumstances taking place before January 1st, 1951, and no longer limited to events occurring within Europe only (Betts et al., 2012). In its early years, UNHCR was focused on

crisis response, urgent protection, and alleviating immediate suffering of displaced people, with a great focus on states and their legal obligations and responsibilities towards one another. Additionally, a regime of pity characterised the organisation's discourse surrounding refugees within the first two decades of its existence, thus being particularly victim-oriented with a great emphasis on suffering, helplessness, and passiveness when communicating about displaced people (Hammerstad, 2014). In the organisation's communication at that time, refugees were, through the lens of pity, portrayed as agentless masses and dependent upon external actors to help them in their great needs of protection (Chouliaraki, 2010).

However, emerging in the late 1970s and characterising the 1980s' discourse was a more human rights-focused language, which previously only vaguely existed in the organisation's communicational practices. Although still predominantly using a victim-orientated rhetoric, in this period UNHCR also began to stress the importance of its role in terms of protecting the rights of forcibly displaced people, 'emphasising root causes, holistic approaches and the security of refugees' (Hammerstad, 2014, p. 121), reflecting the start of a moderate shift in UNHCR's discourse.

6.2 The 1990s and 2000s

The 1990s was a decade in which UNHCR's emphasis was on responding to the immense number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) caused by the increase in conflicts around the world, primarily the situations in the Balkans, Iraq, Rwanda, and Somalia. 'In the course of these experiences, the organisation transformed from a protection agency to an institution providing material assistances and, by the end of the decade, was seen by many as the lead UN agency in coordinating large-scale humanitarian operations' (Krever, 2011, p. 592).

UNHCR's refugee discourse was, in the first half of the 1990s, deeply related to these international conflicts, and one of the organisation's discursive tendencies in this period was a focus on the concept of security. In this period, UNHCR's communication did not express obvious securitisation, but gradually incorporated security-aware approaches, thus reflecting a state-centric rather than a human-centric focus in the organisation's communication and refugee discourse at that time. However, the security-focused discourse

went through a change in the second half of the 1990s as 'the agency sought to abandon a state-centric and short-term understanding of security and substitute it with the refugee-friendly concept of human security' (Hammerstad, 2014, p. 143) -'a means by which to establish harmony between the security concern of states and the protection need of refugees' (Hammerstad, 2000, p. 398).

At this point, the refugee narrative still reflected the traditional humanitarian focus of UNHCR, portraying refugees as victims, but at the same time the narrative also reflected a broadening of the conceptualisation of security, placing greater emphasis on refugees' well-being, human rights, and dignity. This change was part of the emergence of a broader discursive shift taking place in the 1900s and 2000s, slowly moving away from the victimisation discourse towards one of refugee agency (Muggah, 2005).

Exemplifying this emerging transition in UNHCR's discourse was its establishment of the Community Development Approach in the mid-1990s, which included guidelines aiming to emphasise and support forcibly displaced people's self-reliance. This represented a 'shift from top-down to more participatory approaches to achieving durable solutions and a transition from a service-delivery culture to one that engages capacities of refugees in their own development and treats them as agents rather than subjects' (Muggah, 2005, p. 153).

Another indicator of the broader discursive shift in this period was the organisation's increasing emphasis on a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in the mid-2000s. After the 9/11 attacks, UNHCR moved away from its previous human-security discourse and reacted against the dominant focus on securitisation in the political and public sphere (Hammerstad, 2014). The organisation accentuated a human rights-focused discourse, moving human rights from the periphery to the centre of its refugee narrative. This discursive practice framed refugees as rights-holders and less as helpless victims. Moreover, with this more bottom-up approach, forcibly displaced people were recognised as agentive people important to include in decision-making processes (Griek, 2009).

6.3 The 2010s - Now

In this decade, UNHCR's work focused on responding to the various situations around the globe, among others, the crisis in the Central African Republic, the South Sudanese conflict, and the

civil war in Syria, causing the displacement of millions of people worldwide. Moreover, this decade also reflected UNHCR's discursive transition 'from top-down to more participatory approaches, seeking to treat refugees as agents rather than subjects' (Janmyr, 2022, p. 1295).

After gaining momentum in the past decade, an emphasis on refugees' participation characterised the discursive practice of UNHCR during the 2010s. The organisation's various policies, its initiatives, and campaigns within this period implied a shift from traditional humanitarian to a post-humanitarian discourse (Hansen, 2018; Milner et al., 2022; Ongenaert et al., 2023). The adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 was a central step towards the inclusiveness of refugees in decision-making processes. The declaration included 'a wide range of commitments by Member States to strengthen and enhance mechanisms to protect people on the move' (UNHCR, 2025b, n.p.), and it addressed an emergent norm of meaningful refugee participation, encouraging that 'refugees from diverse backgrounds should have substantive and sustained influence in processes where decisions are made that affect their lives' (Milner et al., 2022, p. 581).

The declaration furthermore provided the foundation for the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), advocating for self-reliance and highlighting the empowerment of forcibly displaced people. The compact indicated a focus shift of viewing refugees as active agents rather than as passive recipients of help by arguing that 'responses are most effective when they actively and meaningfully engage those they are intended to protect and assist' (Milner et al., 2022, p. 566). The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the Global Compact on Refugees, the establishment of advisory groups consisting of refugees, its funding of refugee-led organisations, and the adoption of empowerment strategies were some of the advocacy actions in which a post-humanitarian refugee discourse was visible in this decade.

6.4 State of the Art - A Critical Lens

From this broad timeline, it is clear that UNHCR's discourse surrounding refugees has undergone several shifts and changes since its inception up until recent times. The broad patterns of language utilised throughout history to portray refugees in UNHCR's policies, campaigns, and guidelines etc., indicate an

an overall paradigm shift of its approaches and refugee discourse – a shift from traditional humanitarianism to post-humanitarianism. A shift that has moved its portrayal from one of victimisation to a narrative that reflects a recognition of empowerment and the importance of refugee agency and participation.

However, as introduced in the literature review, several scholars have in recent studies critically investigated the characteristics of the organisation's more contemporary portrayals of refugees and, from this, identified and problematised certain contradictions between what is said and what is done. According to these scholars, although a paradigm shift in the refugee discourse is recognised in theory, an inconsistency remains in its actual applications in communicative practices. The studies thus challenge the assumption that UNHCR's recent communication strategies represent a genuine discursive shift from traditional humanitarianism to post-humanitarianism (Janmyr, 2022; Ongenaert and Soler, 2024; Ongenaert et al., 2023).

Acknowledging that some rhetoric and selected practices of UNHCR indicate a move toward promoting empowerment and agency, scholars identify and criticise a continuity of structures and narratives related to the traditional humanitarian approach, portraying refugees primarily as voiceless, vulnerable victims. From their examinations of UNHCR's press releases, policy texts, social media visuals, and interviews with officials, scholars argue that the recent discourse reflects clear reminiscences of the previous regime of pity and negative framings, thus reducing forcibly displaced people 'to a 'problem' requiring a 'humanitarian' solution' (Scheel and Ratfisch, 2013, p. 937). Furthermore, these scholars argue that the organisation's current communicational practices comprise several paradoxes related to the discursive recognition of refugees' agency, empowerment, and meaningful participation. Among other findings, they identify the use of buzzwords and symbolic actions and consequently 'raise the question of whether this is simply a way to preserve old ideas with a new name' (Krause and Schmidt, 2019, p. 37).

6.5 Situating the Thesis

The thesis takes its point of departure in this academic discussion around the discursive paradigm shift and in the highlighted discrepancy between theory and practice in UNHCR's communication, addressed by

the group of critical scholars. The thesis wishes to build upon their work by utilising a similar critical lens to investigate the so-far unexplored material of mediated refugee stories on UN-HCR's global website.

7.0 Theoretical and Methodological Framework, Methods, and Material

7.1 Relevance of the Theoretical and Methodological Framework

To answer its research question, 'How are forcibly displaced people portrayed in UN-HCR's written mediation of refugee stories online, and in what ways does the mediation align with the values expressed in the organisation's mission statement?', the thesis utilises the CDA framework by Fairclough (1995), described in Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), as its primary theoretical approach, complemented by the theoretical concept of 'academic ventriloquism' introduced by Silverio et al. (2022). In addition, the thesis applies two sets of analytical tools, as presented in the work by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002): first, the discourse analysis framework by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and second and more predominantly, the analytical steps and tools provided within Fairclough's (1995) methodological approach for conducting a CDA. The theories and methods facilitate a critical investigation of how language functions to construct reality, relations, and identities, as well as uncover which structures of power are working beneath the linguistic surface. Together, these theoretical and methodological choices thus provide a highly beneficial gateway for a text-oriented exploration of UN-HCR's discursive refugee portrayals, both in theory and in practice.

7.2 Theoretical Framework - CDA
7.2.1 A Dialectical Relationship and Three-Dimensional Model

Central to Fairclough's (1995) theoretical framework is 'the understanding of discourse as both constitutive and constituted' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 66). Discourse is understood as a social practice that both establishes and modifies knowledge, relations, and structures within society and is simultaneously influenced and shaped by other such practices. Discursive practice also reflects a complex dual role, as it encompasses the reproduction of existing social structures as well as a confrontation with these (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). In order to comprehend how discourse is interconnected with social structures, the framework by Fairclough (1995) provides a three-dimensional model that

proposes three ways of understanding the discourse concept: as a text, as a discursive practice, and as a social practice. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), the model and its focus on the concept's different dimensions enable an extensive and critical understanding of how discourse functions in society. Fairclough (1995) furthermore emphasises how discourse plays a key role in the ways 'social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and meaning' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 67) are shaped. His framework thus suggests that discursive practices serve three primary functions relating to identity, relations, and ideology (Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). The three-dimensional model will be applied to the mediated refugee stories to unravel the different levels of UNHCR's use of language. It will help illuminate how the organisation's communicational practices are not just informational but function as central social practices too, underscoring its relevancy for this study's objectives.

7.2.2 Ideology, Hegemony, and Relations of Power

Fairclough's (1995) framework suggests a strong connection between discourse and power relations in society. 'Ideology, for Fairclough (1995), is meaning in the service of power' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 75), and language is therefore not a neutral process, but instead 'constructions of meaning that contribute to the production, reproduction and transformation of relations of domination' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 75), also referred to as 'ideological effects' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 63). A central part of Fairclough's (1995) CDA is thus to investigate language in order to illuminate any unequal power relations created and/or maintained by these discursive practices.

Drawing on theoretical perspectives of Gramsci, and particularly his thoughts on hegemony, Fairclough's (1995) approach utilises the concept of hegemony to understand and reveal the constant discursive struggles over dominance and power as well as the 'process of negotiations out of which emerges a consensus concerning meaning' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 76). Fairclough (1995), moreover, stresses the importance of 'how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 63). These theoretical perspectives facilitate an

inquiry into any underlying mechanisms of power in the mediated and published refugee stories on UNHCR's global website. By analysing the language used to tell these stories through an ideological and hegemonic lens, parallels can be drawn between social power structures and discourses. This lens will further help identify relations of domination between refugees and UNHCR that may stay strategically hidden on the textual surface and uncover how language is used to maintain such relations.

7.2.3 Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity

An important part of Fairclough's (1995) theoretical focus is the use of the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, which contribute to the investigation and understanding of how discourse, knowledge, power, social relations, and meaning-making are intertwined in society (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Intertextuality is, in this approach, understood as the way a text does not exist in isolation in the sense that it refers to other previous texts as well.

Interdiscursivity, in the context of Fairclough's (1995) theory, refers to the way in which different discourses interact with one another, which thus is a type of intertextuality 'that occurs when different discourses and genres are articulated together in a communicative event' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 73). Identifying intertextual references and the use of interdiscursivity within the mediated refugee stories will be used to elucidate the complexities of language. In doing so, it will help to uncover its discursive effect on UNHCR's narrative construction of refugees and of the organisation itself. Additionally, this approach will be utilised to provide insights into how and why some narratives are prioritised and others are not.

7.3 Theoretical Concept of 'Academic Ventriloquism'

In combination with the primary theoretical lens of CDA, the thesis also applies the theoretical concept of 'academic ventriloquism' as introduced by Silverio et al. (2022). These scholars' framework critically investigates the relationship between researcher and research participants in published academic work, emphasising the problems and ethical dilemmas in the relation between authorship and the voice of participants in storytelling processes. The scholars are metaphorically employing the stagecraft of ventriloquism to highlight the power and control that the researcher holds.

They 'use this concept to critically consider the ways in which academic authors can "throw" their voices, thus creating the illusion that participants' are being heard, when really the voice on display is that of the researcher interpreting the participant's voice' (Silverio et al., 2022, p. 644). Referring to the academic author as the ventriloquist, the framework focuses on the processes of inclusion, representation, and anonymity, which, according to the scholars, 'undoubtedly effects the ability for participants' voices to be heard' (Silverio et al., 2022, p. 647).

Firstly, in relation to inclusion, the theoretical framework argues that despite efforts to include participants in multiple stages of the research, in the end 'academic researchers maintain authority and power when analysing data, interpreting meaning, and writing up' (Silverio et al., 2022, pp. 655-656), which can lead to the obscurity of the origin of the data as well as to tokenistic tendencies relating to the audience and the author's intended outcome.

Secondly, the framework stresses the importance and also the difficulty of accurately representing participants' voices, arguing that 'the author has complete control over the representation of his own voice (…) while participants are not afforded this same control' (Silverio et al., 2022, p. 652). The academic ventriloquist thus has the power to speak 'through' the participants instead of amplifying their own voices and enhancing the authenticity, thus potentially making it unclear for the reader whose voice is actually represented in the text.

Thirdly, in regard to the question of the anonymity of research participants, the framework highlights the complexities of both using as well as not using anonymisation, which includes a complicated balance between respect, ethics, and agency. The scholars then argue that 'for the academic ventriloquist, these confrontations offer both an opportunity and a threat' (Silverio et al., 2022, p. 654) in the sense that anonymous participants, on one hand, make the action of ventriloquism easier, whereas the opposite is the case when participants are identifiable.

The thesis will transfer the primary thoughts of the concept of academic ventriloquism and the framework's key theoretical arguments to the context of UNHCR and the relation between the organisation's story mediation and the refugees' own voices.

The theoretical concept will be adding central perspectives on authorship, mediated representation, voice control, and ethical tensions of UNHCR's refugee portrayal. Together with the theoretical framework of CDA, it will be used as a critical lens through which the multifaceted purposes of particular discourses will be scrutinised.

7.4 Philosophical Orientation

This qualitative study reflects the philosophical orientation of social constructionism. The thesis aims to investigate and understand the specific case of UNHCR's refugee portrayal from an ontological and epistemological understanding that 'language is more than just a way of connecting people. People 'exist' in language, (…) realities are socially constructed; realities are constituted through language; and knowledge is sustained by social processes' (Galbin, 2014, p. 84).

Wishing to analyse how UNHCR portrays forcibly displaced people through written story mediation online, the operating power structures, and the relation between discourse tendencies in theory and practice, the thesis's research question and sub-questions facilitate the exploration of both the linguistic and social as well as the power element of a social constructionist approach (Galbin, 2014).

7.5 Research Design

The thesis utilises a case-oriented research design, as this aligns with the context and objective of the research question. The case-oriented framework is suitable for understanding the chosen topic of UNHCR's portrayal of refugees and facilitates an investigation of a so-far unexplored material within this specific research field (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The chosen case for the thesis is a selection of twenty written refugee stories mediated and published by UNHCR on the organisation's global website. Additionally, as the study utilises Fairclough's (1995) CDA as both its theoretical and methodological framework, it reflects an abductive research approach. According to Timmermans and Tavory (2012), 'abductive analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach aimed at generating creative and novel theoretical insights through a dialectic of cultivated theoretical sensitivity and methodological heuristics' (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p. 180).

By using abductive reasoning and thus combining elements from both deduction and induction, it allows the study to shift between Fairclough's (1995) theoretical framework and

the actual textual data of refugee stories in order to interpret the discourse/s of the chosen material.

This study therefore starts both from theory and from data, and it continues to overlap like this throughout the analysis, allowing for an investigation of the complexities of the language use and the underlying power structures, and it hence carries the potential for providing new insights about UNHCR's refugee portrayals. The flexible investigation enabled by abductive reasoning therefore aligns with the study's objectives and is, for this reason, a relevant research approach for the thesis.

7.6 Methods

To answer the research question, 'How are forcibly displaced people portrayed in UN-HCR's written mediation of refugee stories online, and in what ways does the mediation align with the values expressed in the organisation's mission statement?', the thesis applies two sets of analytical tools, both in accordance with the methodological descriptions in the work by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). It first utilises the discourse analysis framework by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) to explore UNHCR's self-representation as well as how, through the use of language, the organisation constructs meaning in its own mission statement online. Secondly, the thesis applies the method of Fairclough's (1995) CDA for the research's main analysis of mediated refugee stories. This facilitates the investigation of how UNHCR uses language to construct social realities, relations, and identities and the power structures operating as underlying mechanisms, thus highlighting the benefit of applying these particular methods for the study.

7.6.1 Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Analysis

In the methodological framework by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), discourse 'can be understood as a type of structure (…) that is constituted and changed' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, pp. 29-30), and thus makes meaning non-fixed. Within this framework, central interrelated concepts are used for analysing discourses. Firstly, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) define the concept of nodal point as 'a privileged sign around which the other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal point' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 26). This relation between words is therefore central, as their meaning can differ greatly depending on which nodal point the particular word is linked to.

Alone, the nodal point has no specific meaning, but this is acquired as soon as it is embedded within a discourse. Related to the concept of nodal point is the concept of floating signifiers, which, in the term by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), are 'elements which are particularly open to different ascriptions of meaning' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 28). This exemplifies the approach's line of argumentation that meaning is not fixed, as a floating signifier can mean different things within different discourses.

According to this framework, the multiple interpretations that can be linked to floating signifiers facilitate the examination of discursive competitions of meaning. In relation to this, the struggle between discourses is defined as antagonism, which is central, as different interpretations of reality can be contrasting. 'No discourse can be fully established, it is always in conflict with other discourses that define reality differently and set other guidelines for social action' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 47). Hegemony, on the other hand, is in this framework 'the dissolution of conflict through a displacement of the boundaries between the discourses' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 56). The accomplishment of hegemonic interference is thus evident when a single discourse prevails over others and replaces prior conflicts.

Finally, central to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), is the concept of the chain of equivalence, which emphasises the centrality of relationality for meaning-making processes. This concept refers to how interlinked terms gain their 'contingent meaning' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 48) exactly through their interlinked relationship to other terms in that particular chain. 'By investigating the chains of meaning that discourses bring together in this way, one can gradually identify discourses (and identities and social spaces)' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 59).

7.6.2 Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

The thesis also utilises the methodological tools provided in Fairclough's (1995) text-oriented CDA, which suggests that 'the analysis should focus on (1) the linguistic features of the text (text)¸ (2) processes relating to the production and consumption of the text (discursive practice); and (3) the wider social practice to which the communicative event belongs (social practice)' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 68).

Firstly, the analytical investigation includes identifying textual features as keywords, metaphors, grammar, and so forth. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) highlight, 'all of these give insight into the ways in which texts treat events and social relations and thereby construct particular versions of reality, social identities and social relations' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 83). Examining linguistic features additionally helps illuminate interactional control between different actors and who decides the agenda and authorises the overall conversation (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Furthermore, the method also highlights modality and transitivity as relevant elements of the linguistically focused part of the analysis. The linguistic concept of transitivity provides an entryway for exploring the representation of different actors within a given text as well as its ideology, how responsibility is distributed, and how agency is constructed or reduced. On the other hand, modality focuses 'on the speaker's degree of affinity with or affiliation to her or his statement' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 83). With this, Fairclough (1995) argues that 'the chosen modality has consequences for the discursive construction of both social relations and knowledge and meaning systems' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 84).

Secondly, the part of Fairclough's (1995) method that analyses the discursive practice 'focuses on how the text is produced and how it is consumed' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 81) and can include examinations of the processes through intertextual and interdiscursive lenses, as described in the thesis's theoretical section. The third level of analysis focuses on which broader context of social practice the linguistic-focused and the discourse-focused analyses can be situated. These two analytical processes become the foundation from which an analysis and interpretation of wider social practices can derive (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

7.7 Material, Sampling, and Processing of Data

The purpose statement and twofold research question of the study call for the need of two research sites. It indicates that the material under inquiry should consist of refugee stories, mediated and published by UNHCR, as well as the organisation's mission statement, in order to explore in what ways the mediation aligns with values expressed within the statement.

The global website of UNHCR is chosen as the primary research site for the study, as it is a central digital space containing elements that are missing from the current literature's investigations. The organisation's mediated refugee stories are unexamined materials, which in turn emphasise their relevancy as primary data for this research. The global website is furthermore selected as it provides the largest number of published refugee stories compared to UNHCR's regional and national websites, which primarily display stories solely relating to the specific region or country.

In addition, the global website also displays vast organisational information, including UNHCR's missions and values, thus making it a relevant research site for the mission statement analysis. Since the study intends to investigate if and in what ways the organisation's mission statement and the discursive refugee portrayal correspond, gathering both the stories and the mission statement from the same website enables a direct comparison between what is said and what is done, as the relation between discursive constructions in theory and in practice is only a few clicks away from each other.

Moreover, the study used purposive sampling in order to find and select cases that aligned with the objective of the study before conducting the mission statement analysis and the CDA of published stories. Going back to the thesis's research question, 'How are forcibly displaced people portrayed in UNHCR's written mediation of refugee stories online, and in what ways does the mediation align with the values expressed in the organisation's mission statement?', it indicates 'a rather clear-cut research interest' (Barglowski, 2018, p. 162), thus making purposive sampling a beneficial strategy to use for the study, though keeping potential limitations of the sampling strategy in mind throughout the process, like the risk of 'reproducing groupism' (Barglowski, 2018, p. 164).

Firstly, UNHCR's global website does not provide one specific section nor one single document explicitly labelled 'mission statement'. For this reason, textual parts from the global website's various sections were gathered, combined, and analysed, constituting the basis of UNHCR's mission statement. In order to comprehensively cover and represent the organisation's missions and values, the key criterion for selecting these parts was

that they clearly displayed information about UNHCR's purpose, values, goals, or strategies and only in relation to the legal definition of 'refugee', as that is the main focus of the research. Based on this criterion, the following four sections from the website were chosen, as they together provided substantial data on who UNHCR is and what it does: 'About UNHCR' (Appendix B), 'Who We Protect' (Appendix C), 'How does UNHCR Help Refugees' (Appendix D), and 'What We Do' (Appendix E).

In addition to these texts, parts of the 'UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2022-2026' document on the website were also included, as it reflects the newest edition and information about how UNHCR in practice intends to fulfil its goals, missions, and values. The following two sections of the document were chosen given their relevance in accordance with the focus of the thesis: 'UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026' (Appendix F), and 'Call to Action' (Appendix G). Together, these six texts from the website represent UNHCR's stated missions, and this collection are for simplicity referred to as the 'mission statement' throughout the thesis.

Secondly, for the thesis's main analysis, refugee stories mediated and published by UNHCR were then purposively sampled. The specific timeline of January 1st to December 31st, 2024, was set as a search criterion on the website, given the thesis's interest in the state of the art and due to the scope of this project. 2024 was furthermore chosen since this year was missing from current studies about the topic and therefore remained to be explored. The search for 2024 gave 86 stories. For each of the 86 stories, keywords within the main title were highlighted and categorised within a table of sentiment, either under 'positive-laden keywords' or 'negative-laden keywords', to identify thematic patterns across the large number of stories (Appendix A).

From this categorisation of titles, two contrasting key themes were evident: a theme focused on empowerment, opportunities, and hope, and a theme focused on victimhood, struggle, and suffering. These two main focuses surrounding refugees were then labelled as the 'hope-narrative' and the 'hardship-narrative', as they aligned with similar refugee narratives identified in previous studies – post-humanitarian discourse vs. traditional humanitarian discourse (Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Piga, 2022).

To narrow the number while still ensuring as much variation as possible, it was decided that four stories from each of the five represented regions on the website should constitute the final data set of twenty stories in total. Two stories representing the hope-narrative and two stories representing the hardship-narrative to ensure an equal regional representation of Africa, Americas, Asia and Pacific, Europe, and Middle East and North Africa. To further reduce selection bias, all stories within each regional and thematic category were assigned a number, and final selections were made using an online random number generator. These stories were thus chosen as the final material for the CDA.

The initial phase of processing the data included coding of UNHCR's mission statement, as this was the first of the two-part qualitative analysis. Using the methodological tools in the framework by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), the text analysis software NVivo was used to code the following: key nodal points, chains of equivalence, floating signifiers, antagonism, and hegemonic implications (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). The coded material thus created the foundation for the analytical interpretation.

Following this was the data processing of refugee stories. Using the steps of Fairclough's (1995) CDA, as outlined in the method section, NVivo was used to code the stories, first through a textual focus by identifying keywords, metaphors, pronouns, labels, modality, passive-active tone, and object-subject (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). After this was a second coding process with a discursive focus on identifying narrative structures and the use of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, enabling the following interpretation and social practice analysis, as well as a comparison between the collection of stories.

7.8 Positionality of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations

The study wishes to build upon previous scholarly work by utilising a similar critical analytical lens to study UNHCR's refugee discourse, which consequently is likely to influence the interpretation of the findings. In addition, the choice to utilise Fairclough's (1995) CDA as both a primary theoretical and methodological framework reflects a particular positionality of the researcher that inevitably will inform and shape the analytical processing of the study's findings, thus challenging complete objectivity.

Furthermore, a key ethical consideration is the study's own representation of forcibly displaced people. As the thesis itself is explicitly linguistics-focused, its own use of language was critically assessed throughout the entire writing process. This included an ongoing examination of the thesis's use of keywords, phrases, labels, etc. It also included careful selections of quotes to display in the analysis section to ensure an accurate and respectful representation of the individuals and their experiences. It is important to clarify that the thesis's critical examination of refugee stories is solely aimed at UNHCR and its mediation and framing, not at the individuals who shared their experiences. It should further be noted that the stories are publicly accessible content, which, in consequence, prevented any direct consent from the individuals whose personal stories are featured on UNHCR's global website.

7.9 Validity, Reliability, and Generalisability

As the thesis is a qualitative case study, generalisability was not the aim, but its purpose was to generate new knowledge about a specific context and topic (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In order to strengthen the qualitative validity of the findings, the thesis utilised different approaches, like the integration of multiple refugee stories, which were purposely chosen to represent the different regions and to allow for as much diversity as possible. Moreover, to enhance the accuracy of the results, the analysis provided a large number of textual examples, like direct quotes from the mediated refugee stories. This both reflected transparency of the analytical process and also offered 'rich, thick descriptions' (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 315), which, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), is one of the primary validity strategies of qualitative research. Finally, to increase the thesis's reliability, the study emphasised consistency within the research processes of data collection and use of coding, as well as analytical processes that intentionally followed the key methodological tools and steps as provided by the chosen frameworks.

7.10 Delimitations of the Study

Due to the scope and time of this thesis, certain boundaries were intentionally set for the investigation. Firstly, some of the refugee stories mediated and published by UNHCR included photos and/or videos along with textual content.

However, given the thesis's linguistic focus and since the use of visual material was not a consistent trend across all stories, the study chose to focus solely on the written texts. Secondly, the sample size was chosen to include no more than twenty stories, and it should therefore be noted that the findings of the CDA derived from a relatively limited number of cases compared to the 86 stories published in 2024 and the total number of 5315 stories currently available on the global website. Additionally, a specific time frame for the publication dates was chosen in order to narrow the focus. The study chose only to include and analyse content published from January 1st to December 31st, 2024, and thus covered a narrow duration of time. For this reason, the content of the stories may be influenced and reflect the given geopolitical circumstances occurring during that specific year.

8.0 Findings and Analysis

The analysis is divided into two parts. First, a shorter and more overall discourse analysis of UNHCR's mission statement, followed by the main analytical section: a comprehensive CDA of the mediated refugee stories, which subsequently will be interrelated.

8.1 Analysis Part 1 – UNHCR's Mission Statement – Discourse Analysis

In order to answer the second part of the research question: 'How are forcibly displaced people portrayed in UNHCR's written mediation of refugee stories online, and in what ways does the mediation align with the values expressed in the organisation's mission statement?', the following discourse analysis aims to uncover UNHCR's self-representation, which values it emphasises, and what it says it does. This analysis is guided by the framework of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), as presented in Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). By identifying and interpreting the key nodal points and chain of equivalence, as well as floating signifiers, antagonism, and hegemonic implications, the analysis intends to examine how UNHCR constructs meaning through the use of language within its mission statement on its global website.

8.1.1 Key Nodal Point - UNHCR as a Facilitator

Firstly, UNHCR as a 'facilitator' of support functions as a key nodal point throughout the text and serves as one of the anchors of the discourse in the organisation's mission statement, connecting a series of actions and roles that together construct its identity and self-representation.

From the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) framework, the nodal point of facilitator is reinforced through a chain of equivalence that links the terms 'protection', 'rights', 'corporation', and 'responsibility', which together work to build a comprehensive understanding of what UNHCR's facilitating role, within the context of global refugee protection, entails. The terms interlinked in the chain of equivalence gain their fixed meaning in relation to UNHCR's facilitating role and support the discursive positioning of UNHCR as a central organising figure (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). This discourse creates a coherent narrative of UNHCR as a relational actor. Sentences like 'UNHCR (…) works *with* governments and partners to find long-term solutions' (Appendix D) and 'Our response is *strengthened* by *collaboration with* a broad range of stakeholders' (Appendix F) imply that cooperation and inclusion are central elements of UNHCR's goals and values.

At the same time, the discourse also ascribes leadership status to UNHCR and thus positions itself as an authority in this field. This, however, is not done by stating an explicit 'constitutive outside' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 59), but instead by emphasising the organisation's expertise and responsibility.

The quotes: 'Today, UNHCR works in 136 countries' (Appendix B) and 'Safeguarding the rights and well-being of people forced to flee for over 70 years' (Appendix B) present its experience and global presence in a way that establishes credibility for its authoritative role. 'UNHCR is mandated by the United Nations to protect and safeguard the rights of refugees' (Appendix B) and 'We are guided by and act as the guardian of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol' (Appendix B) are other key quotes, showing that the discourse is constructed in ways that suggest the organisation's leadership status also arises from the responsibility it is mandated and the legal framework it guards. This discursively enhances its status as a trusted authority, and the chain of equivalence hereby constructs UNHCR's authority as self-evident and legitimises its leading role.

8.1.2 Key Nodal Point - Refugee Agency

'Refugee agency' is another key nodal point in UNHCR's mission statement. Through the methodological lens of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), agency functions as an overarching nodal point throughout the text.

This key nodal point organises the overall discourse through the two sub-nodal points of 'empowerment' and 'representation', which together build a coherent narrative of refugees as agentic actors and partners to UNHCR (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Firstly, the nodal point of empowerment supports the organisation's message that refugees are capable actors who should be treated and recognised accordingly. With signs like: 'self-determination', 'participation', and 'contribution', the text constructs a chain of equivalence that reinforces the ideological message that refugees play an active and central role in the mission and goals of UNHCR.

The text stresses the importance of supporting the autonomy of refugees through their involvement in decision-making processes and participatory approaches. 'People are at the centre of what we do. Being forced to flee or statelessness does not mean losing one's rights, nor should it mean losing one's agency – the ability to make decisions and choices. Our programmes and interventions will be based on upholding the rights of the people we serve, and we will seek to involve them in decisions about their own future and the development of their communities' (Appendix F). This quote illustrates how the organisational discourse constructs the identity of refugees as significant collaborators in solution-making processes and not passive recipients of humanitarian aid, but instead focuses on self-determination. This is furthermore supported through the text's focus on refugees' contributions to host societies as well as the inherent values they bring with them.

With quotes like: 'Forcibly displaced and stateless people bring substantial benefits to the communities they live in' (Appendix G) and 'People forced to flee arrive with their resilience, courage and talent' (Appendix G), UNHCR uses language to centralise refugees' capacities for actions in order to promote the agency and empowerment narratives around refugees.

Like 'empowerment', the nodal point of 'representation' additionally contributes to the meaning-making process within UNHCR's mission statement and supports the overall identity construction of refugees centring around agency. Linking the terms: 'inclusion', 'amplification', and 'accountability' in a chain of equivalence, the discourse emphasises the centrality of refugees' voices (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Closely linked to participation and self-determination, the discourse highlights how UNHCR's mission focuses on refugee-centred approaches in which refugees' voices should be heard, acknowledged, and included as well as amplified. The text states that UNHCR 'will draw on their (refugees) own resilience, knowledge and capacity for action, and hold ourselves accountable to them for our actions' (Appendix F), which reflects the ideas that efforts towards the amplification of voices within the larger humanitarian and political sphere are central to UNHCR's mission.

8.1.3 Floating Signifier, Antagonism, and Hegemony

From the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), 'partnership' should be understood as a central floating signifier within UNHCR's discourse, as the concept is not fixed to one particular meaning throughout the mission statement, but instead occupies several potential interpretations depending on the utilised context (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). As an example, UNHCR states that 'In everything we do UNHCR considers refugees and those forced to flee as partners, putting those most affected at the centre of planning and decision-making (and) at UNHCR, we aim to work with them as partners, not people for whom we make decisions. We place their needs at the heart of every action' (Appendix D).

This illustrates the flexibility of the term 'partner', since it is closely linked to the key nodal points: 'facilitator', 'agency', 'empowerment', and 'representation, but the term's specifications are still unclear and have no fixed meaning. Through the lens of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), this could therefore be considered a discursive strategy applied to create a representation of a collaborative relationship between UNHCR and refugees, thus shaping a positive narrative around the role and work of the organisation.

The utilisation of 'partnership' as a floating signifier enables a dual positioning of UNHCR within its mission statement as both an authority and as a partner. By indicating a post-humanitarian and refugee-centred focus, the discourse can be considered counter-antagonistic, as it, through the floating signifier of 'partnership', does not create an opposition between UNHCR and refugees. Instead, it helps create a hegemonic understanding of UNHCR's framework: one that foregrounds refugees' agency, voice, and collaboration (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

8.2 Analysis Part 2 - Refugee Stories - Critical Discourse Analysis

As described in section 7.7, to identify dominant themes in UNHCR's mediated stories, keywords from the titles of all stories published in 2024 were categorised based on sentiment. This revealed two dominant thematic focuses: a negative-centred and a positive-centred, which this study accordingly labelled the 'hardship-narrative' and the 'hope-narrative'. For this reason, the CDA examines a selection of twenty stories representing these two narratives, and the analysis is thus structured by the two interrelated themes.

8.2.1 Hardship-Narrative

The first set of stories uses language that foregrounds a focus on hardship, within which a dual and interlinked refugee narrative is evident: a narrative of pain and loss and a narrative of powerlessness and dependency, which together construct a portrayal of refugees as suffering victims.

8.2.1.1 Keywords and Metaphors

Firstly, keywords such as: 'killed', 'died', 'violence', 'abuse', and 'injuries' emphasise the physical pain and loss of displaced people, whereas the recurring use of the words: 'tragedy', 'grief', and 'trauma' emphasises psychological pain and loss. Together, the utilisation of these strong and emotionally charged keywords highlights their bodily harm and emotional distress, thus presenting refugees as victims of suffering on multiple levels (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Additionally, the use of metaphors contributes to this victim-narrative construction. Examples like: 'Her worst nightmare had become reality' (Appendix J), 'She will carry the physical and psychological scars of the conflict for the rest of her life' (Appendix J), and 'The war ripped them from their homes' (Appendix K) function as linguistic reinforcements of the suffering-identity constructed around the refugees. Secondly, the narrative of powerlessness and dependency is created through the use of keywords like: 'vulnerable', 'hungry', 'threatened', 'afraid', 'forced', and 'displaced'. These portray refugees as objects of external forces, who have been stripped of their agency, and with no power or capability to change their situation. In relation to these keywords, the recurring use of the terms: 'women' and 'children' mirrors previous scholarly findings, which illuminated the strategic placement of women and children in the foreground of humanitarian narratives.

The portrayal of them as the key vulnerable, exposed, and dependent victims evoked the viewer's emotions and was likely to increase donations (Johnson, 2011). Moreover, the frequent use of the words 'risk', 'acute', 'immediate', 'desperate', 'emergency', and 'need' strongly creates a sense of crisis and urgency, emphasising the necessity of help and immediate action.

In addition, this use of language depicts refugees as weak and dependent. Metaphorical use of words as: 'Their headline is suffering day in and day out' (Appendix K), likewise adds to the construction of a refugee identity characterised by helplessness and dependency. Used in this way, the included metaphors provide an additional entryway to the readers' emotions and sympathy. By combining the chosen keywords with the use of figurative language, UNHCR's message of refugees' vulnerability and the urgent necessity for support comes across even more emotionally strong, which, at a discursive level, can affect the perceptions and actions of the audience (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Thirdly, throughout the stories, UNHCR is linguistically linked to keywords like 'support', 'aid', 'help', 'protection', 'assistance', 'care', and 'humanitarian', which frame the organisation as an essential actor in ensuring the protection of this group of people. The language creates an image of the organisation that reflects responsibility, compassion, and moral actions, which legitimises and naturalises its occupation of this position (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). However, what may initially appear as a positive portrayal also reflects the unequal power relations between UNHCR, on one hand, portrayed as the rescuer and solver of human suffering and needs, and refugees, on the other hand, portrayed as the passive, helpless, and dependent recipients of this help.

From the ideological perspective of Fairclough (1995), where language is not considered a neutral process but instead 'constructions of meaning that contribute to the production, reproduction and transformation of relations of domination' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 75), the particular keywords linked to refugees on one hand and UNHCR on the other are placing refugees in a subordinate position to the organisation. According to the theoretical concept of academic ventriloquism, this further reflects the inequality within the process of representation.

The author of the text (UNHCR) has complete control over exactly how the voice of the organisation is being presented in the stories, whilst the participants (the people who have been forcibly displaced) on the other hand, 'are not afforded this same control' (Silverio et al., 2022, p. 652). Furthermore, the audience appeal, implied within the chosen keywords and selected metaphors, additionally places the readers in a superior position to the refugees, as the readers are being implicitly framed as an extra enabler of UNHCR's work. In this way, the chosen keywords ascribe certain characteristics to their respective identities that represent a reality in which UNHCR is the natural saviour, the readers are UNHCR's helpers, and the refugees are the victims who, in the end, are being saved (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Concurring with previous studies of the characteristics of UNHCR's contemporary refugee portrayals (Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019), the published refugee stories hence also reflect traditional humanitarian communicational practices, where refugees are being framed as vulnerable victims without agency and depending on institutional help. In line with Fairclough's (1995) 'understanding of discourse as both constitutive and constituted' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 66), a critical discursive lens illuminates how UNHCR's lexical choices are both shaped by and continue to maintain and reproduce unequal social structures.

8.2.1.2 Pronouns and Labels

At a textual level, there is a clear pattern in the use of pronouns in the published refugee stories focusing on hardship. All of the stories shift between the use of first-person pronouns and third-person pronouns throughout the texts. Firstly, when refugees are quoted directly, the first-person pronoun 'I' is predominantly used. From a discourse perspective, this gives a sense of individuality and a feeling of closeness to a real person with real experiences, who is not just a number or part of a mass of people, but the person is humanised and thus evokes empathy and emotional effects in the reader (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

The use of 'I' furthermore reflects the agency of the refugee, as it gives a sense of personal authority and control over their own experiences and how they are being framed, which resonates with the post-humanitarian rhetorical tendencies that some scholars have

identified in their investigations of UNHCR's contemporary portrayal of refugees (Piga, 2022). The use of first-person pronouns also gives the impression that it is the voice of that particular person which is the centre of the text and the key priority of UNHCR's narrative construction. Related to this is the use of personal names throughout the stories. When not being directly quoted, the person is often referred to by their personal name, which, like the pronoun 'I', also has a humanising effect, emphasising the person's individuality and reflecting recognition of their agency as well as creating a sense of closeness between the person and the reader of that person's story.

However, the humanising effect and impression of agency and individuality the use of personal names and first-person pronouns provides are undermined by UNHCR's use of third-person pronouns as well as its focus on generic roles. In all the published stories, when not directly cited, the persons who are telling their story are referred to as either 'he', 'she', 'they', and 'them' or as 'refugees', 'displaced', or simply as 'people'. At a discursive level, choosing to use the third-person pronouns 'he' and 'she' directly challenges the closeness between storyteller and reader otherwise enabled and instead creates a sense of distance between the two (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). The individualism of the speaker decreases, which makes the narrative seem less personal, and the person being referred to seems less empowered.

Moreover, referring to the persons sharing their stories as 'they' and 'them' adds to the distancing between speaker and reader and creates a sense of othering. Despite not explicitly utilising the pronoun 'us', UNHCR's texts still implicitly create a contrasting 'us', who are separated from 'they' and 'them' and thus emphasise and uphold the respective and distinct positions of the organisation, the refugees, and the reader.

Additionally, from Fairclough's (1995) social practice perspective, the choice not to include the pronoun 'us' throughout the stories can be considered an effective linguistic strategy of diminishing any immediate sense of power imbalances within the discourse. When intentionally leaving out any direct 'us vs. them' dynamics in the texts, the power relations become less obvious, hence obscuring the actual possession of power and dominance embedded

within the institutional role of UNHCR and the influence of its language use in shaping the 'systems of knowledge and meaning' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 67).

Furthermore, the use of pronouns is frequently replaced by the use of the generic roles of 'refugees', 'displaced', and 'people' throughout the stories. Referring to the humans who are sharing their stories by utilising these labels positions them as outsiders and as a distant group instead of agentive individuals with separate personalities and various experiences. This aligns with what previous studies have also found: that UNHCR tends to portray forcibly displaced people as a collective rather than emphasising their individualities (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019).

From the perspective of academic ventriloquism, this can be considered a strategic move in order to create a sense of anonymisation, as identifiable participants, according to this theoretical framework, complicate the action of ventriloquism (Silverio et al., 2022). From this perspective, using third-person pronouns and generic roles and labels makes it easier for UNHCR to tell the stories the way it wants and to disguise the control and power that the organisation holds over these narratives. Linguistically combined with keywords like 'suffering' and 'needs', UNHCR hereby constructs a generalising portrayal of refugees as victims and objects of help, which can then lead to a dehumanised perception in the eyes of the readers and to a normalisation of this particular refugee identity, which feeds into traditional humanitarian logics (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019).

8.2.1.3 Modality

The language in the published stories by UNHCR also illustrates patterns at a textual level in the use of both high and low modality (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Whereas the construction of the refugee identity reflects the use of low, the UNHCR identity, on the other hand, reflects the use of high.

Firstly, examples like: 'I hope for my children to live in a safe environment' (Appendix K) and 'She eventually hopes to find a safer place to call home' (Appendix J) indicate that the refugees have desires and aspirations, which, at a discursive level, can give the readers a sense of positivity and sound uplifting, as it seems to emphasise refugees' agency and thus points in the direction of post-humanitarian communicational tendencies.

However, this type of modality is predominantly used within linguistic contexts where hoping and dreaming are not presented as coming from empowerment or agency but from being the people's last resort, thus shifting the model verb of 'hope' from high to low. It implies that this is all these people have left of control over their own futures - they can only hope and dream but are not capable of acting upon nor influencing their own destinies, thus reflecting a weak modality.

From a social practice perspective, the choice by UNHCR to include quotes from refugees, in which the majority consist of this type of utilisation of modality, shapes an identity of refugees as passive beings who are just waiting for someone else to take action for them and their lives. This is then insinuating that refugees' hopes and dreams are dependent and also reliant upon the help from UNHCR, which, through a Faircloughian lens, can be considered an exemplification of hegemonic practices (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Moreover, quotes by refugees like: 'I am just looking for a safe place; it doesn't matter where' (Appendix J) exemplify how refugees are portrayed as vulnerable and without any visible agency. The use of the word 'just' within this sentence shows low modality, as it expresses uncertainty and fragility. It implies that the person is not in a position to have or express any demands but that they instead should be thankful for anything and whatever help they might receive. Since this quote, and every other quote throughout the stories, are chosen by UNHCR as the mediator, it can be considered a linguistic strategy to discreetly control the refugee narratives by downplaying the refugee's self-determination. This process of representation illuminates UNHCR's strong authorship control, which, according to the conceptual framework of academic ventriloquism, 'undoubtedly effects the ability for participants' voices to be heard' (Silverio et al., 2022, p. 647). It further places the organisation in a justified authoritative position, which is feeding into a broader humanitarian saviour and deservingness logic, like it was found in recent studies of UNHCR's press releases and news (Ongenaert et al., 2023).

Contrastingly, the choice of modality characterising the narrative construction around UNHCR predominantly expresses knowledge, certainty, strength, commitment, and necessity.

The phrases: 'Information saves lives' (Appendix N), 'More funding is urgently needed to respond' (Appendix S), and 'We need of course to provide people that are stranded in locations like this school with the basics: food, cash, water and sanitation, and items for everyday survival' (Appendix V) convey a sense of urgency and authority. They are definitive claims, which indicate strong commitment by UNHCR as well as its responsibility and obligation to save refugees' lives. The use of high modality thus positions UNHCR as the dominant part within the social relationship between forcibly displaced people and the organisation itself, exemplifying how language, according to Fairclough's (1995) theoretical perspective, can have 'ideological effects' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 63) and, in this case, reproduce an unequal balance of authority and autonomy.

8.2.1.4 Object-Subject and Passive-Active

Another evident pattern in the language choices within the hardship-focused stories is the construction of forcibly displaced people as helpless and passive objects and UNHCR as the active subject. Utilising the linguistic feature of active voice when describing the role and actions of UNHCR presents the organisation as the key subject in terms of providing and facilitating essential assistance for refugees. The forcibly displaced people are, on the other hand, oppositely portrayed as the passive objects who are depending upon external support (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

The following two quotes exemplify the organisation's contrasting linguistic positionings: 'UNHCR provides emergency cash assistance to some of the most vulnerable refugees' (Appendix J) and 'UNHCR and partners work directly with communities and schools across the country to assist families most in need' (Appendix N). UNHCR is the subject that is doing things in both quotes. The organisation 'provides', 'works directly', and 'assists', whereas refugees are not framed as active agents nor participants in the solutions, but instead as the vulnerable, waiting beneficiaries. From a discourse perspective, the constructed contrast between activity and passiveness is intended to invite the readers to get involved, be they private or public actors, in order for UNHCR to continue their active work as a key subject in assisting refugees, thus serving a persuasive function (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Another example is: 'UNHCR is requesting $426 million to respond this year' (Appendix K). In this example, the organisation is the explicit and active subject of the action of requesting funding, whereas the refugees, the objects of this organisational action, are left entirely out of the actual sentence. The phrase implies that the reason for requesting funding is to respond to refugees' needs, thus making their explicit presence in the sentence redundant. This linguistic choice of keeping refugees, the object, discursively invisible, thus positions UNHCR at the centre and leaves forcibly displaced people out in the periphery. With this, the organisation is hereby framing itself as having full control, whilst the refugees are being placed as voiceless recipients in the background, which resonates with and preserves a narrative of provider-recipient binary with embedded power imbalances (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Moreover, some stories do, by way of exception, use active voice when referring to forcibly displaced people's decision-making processes and actions like: 'We decided to leave' (Appendix S), which reflects persons with agency and capabilities who themselves are the acting and capable subjects. However, this agency and the use of active voice in relation to refugees only take up a very limited space throughout the stories, and is overruled by the dominant linguistic tendency of positioning them primarily as the passive objects.

It can further be argued that the linguistic use of passive and active voices throughout the hardship-focused stories places refugees in a double object position. Besides the constructed identities of provider-recipient between UNHCR and refugees, they are additionally linguistically framed as the objects of disasters, which is the reason for their need of help in the first place. Examples like: 'Catastrophic flash flooding in Afghanistan left thousands of families displaced and their homes and livelihoods in ruins' (Appendix R) and 'The war ripped them from their homes' (Appendix K) highlight how forcibly displaced people are objects of wars and natural disasters, etc. The linguistic choices then make refugees seem doubly vulnerable, passive, and agentless, as they are framed firstly as acted upon by disasters and then afterwards being acted upon as victims of those disasters who therefore are dependent on external help.

From a broader social practice perspective, the continuous passive-object discourse contributes to the process of sustaining an unequal hierarchy of identities and social relations (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), one that places and legitimises international organisations like UNHCR at the top and refugees at the bottom.

8.2.1.5 Narrative Structure, Quotes, and Intertextuality

The way the hardship-focused refugee stories are organised reflects a similar narrative structure. At a textual level, the majority of each story is explicitly written by UNHCR, and then direct quotes from one or several displaced individuals are included in the texts. The personal experiences and stories of refugees are therefore mediated by UNHCR, thus positioning the organisation as the key narrator. A narrator that chooses which stories to share and which parts of those stories to include, as well as how they should be told, thus reflecting a significant discursive power imbalance and hierarchy between the organisation and the forcibly displaced people (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Looking at this through a discursive practice lens, the use of linguistic tools in the chosen quotes, like first-person pronouns, can give the impression that the refugee is the key storyteller directly sharing their experiences with the reader. However, from Fairclough's (1995) theoretical perspective, the fact that refugees' voices are only included through selected quotes shows how UNHCR holds the 'interactional control' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.83) and is the actual primary storyteller who gets to manage the flow of the discourse. At a textual level, this quotation structure therefore gives the impression that the stories represent a refugee-centred perspective and thus a post-humanitarian approach, whilst looking at it through a discursive practice lens, it contrastingly signals a top-down approach, illuminating a traditional humanitarian approach (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). The refugee quotes make the discourse seem inclusive but still privilege the voice of the organisation, as the refugees don't have full autonomy over which part of their own story is being told.

From the perspective of academic ventriloquism, this exemplifies the problems and ethical dilemmas embedded in the relation between authorship and the voices of participants in storytelling processes (Silverio et al., 2022).

The quotes are intentionally chosen by UNHCR, and they only provide fragments of the people's experiences, which raises questions of what is being intentionally included or left out and which people are intentionally kept muted. As UNHCR has the selective power to decide who should and shouldn't be allowed to speak, it can be argued that the organisation occupies a gatekeeping role. A role that it strategically utilises through its ventriloquistic actions of making refugee quotes sound like they are coming solely from the people themselves, whilst the full autonomy and control of their voices lies with UNHCR, which in this way is speaking 'through' the refugees (Silverio et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the published stories reflect a consistency in the content of the refugee quotes that UNHCR has chosen to include. The quotes tend to follow a particular narrative pattern. Firstly, quotes depicting people's flights are included, emphasising the dangers of their journey and the trauma it caused, like: 'We were in a really, really bad situation. Many fainted because we hadn't been able to drink. In that moment I thought, me too, I will die here' (Appendix J) and 'There was no time to take any decisions. As soon as the strike started, we fled. My granddaughters are 9, 7 and 3 years old. They started crying and screaming. The eldest said: Get us out of the war. There's war here and we don't want to stay' (Appendix Z). Secondly, quotes describing peoples' current hardship are included, primarily focusing on their daily struggle to survive, like: 'We try to eat twice a day but when we don't get enough, I try to fill the space with tea as a meal' (Appendix K) and 'We don't have anything: no fuel for cooking, no food, nothing. We are deep in debt. We're living in great difficulty; without everything we had' (Appendix R). Lastly, quotes focusing on appeals for help are included, particularly emphasising urgency like: 'We need everything. We are hungry and need help to return to our normal lives again' (Appendix R).

This structural thematic pattern aligns with the interlinked refugee narrative of pain and loss and of powerlessness and dependency that UNHCR constructs through their use of language. At a discourse level, this indicates an intentional framing of refugees as helpless victims to achieve fundraising, awareness, or advocacy agendas (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

For this reason, it can be argued that the published texts include two simultaneous but different and unequal narratives: refugees' personal experiences on one hand and then a broader overarching narrative by UNHCR in which these personal experiences are implemented as effective tools for getting the organisation's message and agenda across. As seven out of the ten analysed stories feature an active donate-button at the top of the page, it can be assumed that the intention behind the texts has a strong fundraising focus.

At a discourse level, it can therefore be argued that the personal stories of refugees are simplified and reduced to concise quotes in order to fit and supplement UNHCR's own broader narrative. From a social practice lens, this further reflects a discursive hierarchy where refugees' voices are subordinated to the organisation's motives, which coincides with the emotional and urgency-centred quotes (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Similar to previous studies' line of argumentation, this analysis also illuminates ethical dilemmas in representation, as the quotational choices, similar to the study by García (2021), can be linked to 'marketisation and commodification of refugee narratives' (García, 2021, p. 218).

Moreover, through Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework, the inclusion of quotes exemplifies the use of intertextuality. The quotes from refugees are not the only other texts, as other voices are included as well. 'Serhii Petrovskyi, who heads up UNHCR partner, Proliska's office in Dnipropetrovsk region, said that most evacuees from Donetsk arrive in a state of shock. "They've lost their homes, many are separated from family, and don't know what's coming next. The stress is overwhelming, and many are struggling to cope," he said. "Our aim is to provide immediate psychological support just to help them start thinking about what to do next" (Appendix W).

This example shows how UNHCR chooses to include the voice of a cooperative partner, which, with a similar crisis discourse, helps shape the overall hardship-narrative of the stories. With a strong emotional and urgency focus, this intertextual reference contributes to the refugee quotes by adding a local 'proof' of the hardship, adding credibility to the narrative and, from a Faircloughian perspective, legitimatising the powerful position of UNHCR (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Another example is: '"Ethiopia's continued generosity to the displaced, including those who have recently arrived from Sudan, is commendable and should be matched with even greater support from the international community," said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, who completed a three-day visit to Ethiopia this week' (Appendix K). By bringing in the voice of such a key representative of UNHCR, the organisation makes strategic use of a strong, authoritative element that supports its powerful position and legitimises its social practices. It is furthermore an example of the use of interdiscursivity, as it, besides its humanitarian discourse, also reflects discourses of policy and global responsibility (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Making additional intertextual references to other powerful external institutional voices like the World Bank and to international refugee legislation, this blend of discourses increases UNHCR's credibility and legitimacy. It furthermore helps conceal the existing power dynamics as well as reinforces the global hierarchy where refugees' subordinate position is naturalised through the organisation's linguistic portrayal of them. From Fairclough's (1995) theoretical perspectives, the chosen narrative structure and the utilisation of intertextuality and interdiscursivity thereby reveal UNHCR's hegemonic power, reproduce the ideological status quo, and normalise the marginalisation of refugees' own voices in a way that is only vaguely visible at first glance (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

8.2.2 Hope-Narrative

In contrast to the refugee narrative of hardship, another set of stories foregrounds a focus on hope, within which another dual and interlinked refugee narrative is noticeable: a narrative of resilience and survival and a narrative of agency and capability. Together they present a different portrayal of forcibly displaced people – one that, at least on the linguistic surface, seems to emphasise agency and empowerment over helplessness and victimhood.

8.2.2.1 Keywords and Metaphors

On a textual level, keywords like: 'violence', 'war', 'disasters', 'pain', 'traumas', 'fleeing', 'dangerous', and 'escape' highlight the harshness and horrors of the external circumstances that caused the forced displacement of the people whose stories are being told, as well as the struggles of their journeys towards seeking refuge.

However, unlike the hardship-narrative, which uses similar keywords in specific keyword combinations in order to present refugees as vulnerable and suffering victims, the hope-narrative instead utilises different keyword combinations to centre refugees' endurance and strengths. By primarily using keywords such as: 'hopeful', 'aspirations', 'mental wellbeing', 'proud', 'happy', 'courage', 'new life', 'new story', and 'new purpose', the language foregrounds the processes of overcoming hardship and hence emphasises refugees' ability to survive, recover, and thrive. Choosing to include the keywords focusing on adversity together with the positive-laden keywords functions as an effective tool to situate the seriousness of the stories and then to create a clear contrast between what was and what is. The struggle *was*, and their strength *is*.

Through Fairclough's (1995) theoretical perspective, this linguistic choice thus further contributes to the construction of a refugee identity of resilience. Secondly, the narrative of agency and capability is constructed through the utilisation of keywords like: 'skills', 'participation', 'independence', 'confidence', 'job', 'income', and 'entrepreneurship', which together portray refugees as agentive actors in their own lives with resources and knowledge who take skilful actions for themselves and their families. Combined with keywords such as: 'support themselves', supporting other refugees', 'giving', and 'self-reliant', at a discursive level, the language choice constructs a narrative around refugees as proactive people with power, autonomy, and independence (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Moreover, unlike the hardship-narrative, the hope-narrative utilises less urgency-centred and emotional keywords in the construction of UNHCR's social identity. From a discourse practice perspective, the more subtle keywords like: 'accountability', 'scaling up', 'support', and 'promote' are intentionally selected to frame UNHCR less as the key actor in protecting this group of people and more as the helper in the background that supports the work of refugees instead of leading and controlling the process. Similar to the findings of some groups of scholars (Ongenaert and Soler, 2024; Piga, 2022), UNHCR's language thus seems to reflect post-humanitarian tendencies, as the agency of refugees is centralised and their empowerment highlighted.

Nevertheless, through a Faircloughian lens, these lexical choices can be considered strategic tools in order to conceal the power imbalances between the organisation and the people sharing their personal experiences (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Whilst discursively placing itself more in the background, UNHCR's use of keywords still implies that refugees are not capable alone. Refugees are still portrayed as dependent to some degree upon the support of UNHCR, as the texts emphasise the importance of the organisation's actions like 'scaling up', 'supporting', and 'promoting'.

In addition, the vast majority of the hope-focused stories do not make use of metaphors, as is the case in the hardship-narrative, where figurative language is used to create emotional appeals, a sense of urgency, and evoke feelings of sympathy. Not using metaphors can make the stories, and thus UNHCR, come across as more objective and neutral within the hope-narrative. On a discursive level, the chosen absence of metaphorical language strategically works to avoid leading the readers' attention towards UNHCR, thus keeping the focus on the refugees. Through a social practice lens, the choice of excluding figurative language can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to neutralise the power imbalances and a linguistic move to disguise the organisation's control over the refugee representation (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

8.2.2.2 Pronouns and Labels

At a textual level, the stories foregrounding hope reflect a similar pattern in the use of pronouns as in the hardship-narrative, as these texts are also shifting between the use of first-person and third-person pronouns. The use of the first-person pronoun 'I', within the refugee quotes, likewise creates a sense of individuality which, at a discursive level, provides a sense of direct contact and closeness to the readers. It furthermore frames refugees as people with agency and control. Similar to the hardship-narrative, these stories also utilise refugees' personal names throughout the texts, which sustains the impression of agency and highlights their personal authority, which then has humanising effects (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Noticeably, similar to the hardship-narrative, the stories foregrounding hope also make use of the third-person pronouns 'he', 'she', 'they', and 'them', but they function differently within these stories.

Whilst the use of third-person pronouns undermines the impression of agency and individuality in the hardship-focused stories, in the hope-focused stories, this linguistic choice contrastingly does not have a distancing or dehumanising effect. The broader hope-narrative, in which the use of third-person pronouns is embedded, combined with the use of positive and empowering keywords, makes the pronouns appear neutral and natural, as in the following quotes: 'After founding Ehtasab, she enrolled at Columbia University in New York City to study data science and urban studies. Now 28-years-old, she continues to lead Ehtesab as a full-time student' (Appendix M) and 'He spends his afternoons running a charity supporting refugees and migrants and giving high school talks about his experiences as a refugee, and in the evening he studies law' (Appendix L). Both quotes exemplify how the use of third-person pronouns, when embedded in a different framing and different keyword choices, can contribute to a different meaning-making (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), in these cases, a refugee portrayal highlighting agency and capability.

Moreover, the stories foregrounding hope also frequently replace the use of pronouns with generic roles, but also here, the effect differs between the two main narratives. From a discursive perspective, the use of labelling in the hardship-stories portrays refugees as victims and outsiders, whilst the labelling in the hope-stories constructs a different refugee identity (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). In the following examples the use of labels helps frame refugees as resilient, agentive change-makers: 'Social entrepreneur Jin Davod developed an innovative online platform' (Appendix Y), 'Hadia, a young mother-of-three (…)' (Appendix P), and 'Arezo is a passionate student motivated by her faith and desires to help other people' (Appendix Q).

The people are linked to more than a stereotypical 'refugee label'. Through a social practice lens, these lexical choices are shifting how the power dynamic between UNHCR and refugees is perceived (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). UNHCR comes across as an organisation that centres the individual refugee, emphasises their agency, and amplifies their voices. This makes the power imbalance seem less visible as well as obscures UNHCR's control over the storytelling, hence reproducing the dominant power structures.

8.2.2.3 Modality

Opposite the stories focusing on hardship, the stories foregrounding the hope-narrative almost entirely leave out any use of strong modal verbs when constructing the narrative around UNHCR. As previously discussed, the hardship-narrative uses strong modal verbs and definitive claims to convey a sense of authority and urgency that positions UNHCR as the dominant part in the social relation between refugees and the organisation. Contrarily, the hope stories link UNHCR to modal expressions that reflect uncertainty and conditionality (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). An example like: 'The programme's success means it is this month being expanded to reach a further 200 women, with the hope that additional funding might make it accessible to men, girls and boys in the future' (Appendix Q) shows how UNHCR's statements, in this case by using the verb 'might', are constructed through weak certainty.

At a discursive level, using weak modal verbs like 'might', 'may', and 'could' softens the sense of urgency for the readers, which makes refugees seem less dependent upon the help from the organisation. In this way, UNHCR places itself in the background, which in turn helps shift the focus towards the forcibly displaced people and their autonomy instead. Although the linguistic choice to use weak modal verbs in the construction of UNHCR's identity can seem to highlight the empowerment of refugees, from a social practice lens, this can be considered a strategic linguistic move to downplay the unequal power relations (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Despite the shift in modality choices, the weak modal verbs are predominantly embedded within linguistic contexts focusing on the need for financial support for UNHCR's work. This reveals the underlying power structures between refugees and UNHCR and reproduces a portrayal of forcibly displaced people as still being reliant and dependent upon the support from the organisation. The unequal power dynamics are still there, although they are less visible due to the chosen language of the stories.

8.2.2.4 Object-Subject and Passive-Active

At a textual level, there is a pattern in the stories foregrounding hope to use language that represents refugees as active subjects, which hence differs from the hardship-narrative that constructs forcibly displaced people as helpless and passive objects (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Utilising the linguistic feature of active voice when describing refugees, they are presented as agentive and independent subjects. The following quotes exemplify this positioning: 'Nada Fadol runs a youth-led community centre' (Appendix X) and 'She developed a detailed business plan and began working with software developers and psychologists to build the platform' (Appendix Y). In both quotes, the refugee is the subject actively doing things. In these two cases, the community centre and the digital platform wouldn't have become a reality if it weren't for the actions of these individuals and their work and skills. At a discourse level, these linguistic choices thus construct a refugee identity around empowerment and agency and not one of helplessness and victimhood. At a social practice level, this aligns with a post-humanitarian approach similar to what scholars in previous studies of recent characteristics of refugee discourse have also identified (Piga, 2022; Ongenaert and Soler, 2024).

However, whilst on the textual surface this may appear to reposition refugees as self-reliant actors, it is undermined by the simultaneous use of active voice and subject-positioning of UNHCR within the same stories. Examples like: 'UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and other partners, helped Raphael to establish a shop in the Kakuma Incubation Centre – a UNHCR-funded economic development initiative that supports start-up businesses' (Appendix H) illuminates how the refugees are not discursively allowed to stand alone as UNHCR continues to linguistically construct itself as the key facilitator of the hope and accomplishments of refugees. With this, UNHCR's language implies that there would not have been any refugee success-stories at all if it weren't for the support from the organisation, which in turn portrays refugees as unable to be fully autonomous agents without external assistance.

Another example is: 'Refugees – when given the chance – can make important contributions to the communities that welcome them' (Appendix L). This quote seems to emphasise the agency of refugees by grammatically placing them in the position of the subject (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). But the quote also implies that the agency of refugees is conditional, as they have to be given the chances in order to exercise their full autonomy and capabilities, which then indirectly re-objectifies them.

From a Faircloughian perspective, choosing to additionally leave the enabling subject unnamed in this quote further helps to keep UNHCR invisible in the background, thus masking the unequal power relations and the underlying hegemonic power hierarchies (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). At a social practice level, despite the active tone in the framings of refugees throughout the stories, the positioning of UNHCR as the dominant active subject both explicitly and implicitly reinforces traditional humanitarian communication, which corresponds with the findings of previous critical studies of current discursive tendencies by UNHCR (Krause and Schmidt, 2019; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Scheel and Ratfisch, 2013). Finally, it reproduces a dependency ideology and hegemonic power structures, maintains provider-recipient identities, and naturalises unequal relations (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

8.2.2.5 Narrative Structure, Quotes, and Intertextuality

Similar to the hardship-narrative, the hope-focused stories also reflect a consistency in the content of the refugee quotes that UNHCR has chosen to include, which likewise follow a particular narrative pattern. Firstly, the chosen titles for the texts introduce and situate the content by emphasising the key success element of the storyline, like: 'Former Syrian refugee brings healing and recovery to trauma survivors' (Appendix Y), 'Refugee advocate develops app to help protect people in Afghanistan' (Appendix M), and 'Congolese refugee turns plastic waste into a profitable business' (Appendix H).

Secondly, quotes describing the hardship which the persons have endured are included, primarily focusing on the trauma, loss, and crisis that they have resiliently overcome, like: 'My father was trying to open the door, but it was shaking so much that he couldn't turn the key. It was seconds, but it felt like hours. Finally, when he opened the door, we ran as fast as we could' (Appendix Y). Lastly, quotes focusing on life improvements and optimism about the future are included, like: 'This type of financial assistance is crucial for individuals, and it contributes significantly to the country's economy (…) We've also become useful to Georgia' (Appendix U), 'My family are so proud and happy that their mother has a job and soon, an income' (Appendix P), and 'I have become very hopeful. I see my life in a better way' (Appendix Q).

This structural thematic pattern aligns with the interlinked refugee narrative of resilience and survival and of agency and capability that UNHCR constructs through their use of language. At a discourse level, this indicates an intentional framing of refugees as empowered individuals in order to achieve fundraising, awareness, or advocacy agendas. But unlike the hardship-narrative, that urges acute financial support, the agenda of the hope-focused stories seems to be the showcasing of UNHCR's efficiency and successful outcomes of its work. At a social practice level, the use of direct quotes from refugees can thus be seen as serving a broader ideological purpose (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). It becomes a linguistic pathway for UNHCR to display the importance of donations and thus a linguistic tool for sustaining the economic support in the future, whilst legitimising its own position. At the same time, it gives the impression that amplifying refugee voices is central for the organisation, which in turn reflects another institutional goal: promoting a good organisational image by linking itself to post-humanitarian tendencies.

The quotes by refugees and the narrative structure thus give an appearance of inclusivity in the storytelling. However, according to the theoretical framework by Silverio et al. (2022), UNHCR can be considered an academic ventriloquist who 'throws' its voice, 'thus creating the illusion that participants are being heard, when really the voice on display is that of the researcher (UNHCR) interpreting the participant's voice' (Silverio et al., 2022, p. 644). The use of direct quotes makes it seem like refugees are included and in control of the representation, but by occupying the (metaphorical) role as an academic ventriloquist, UNHCR has the power to speak 'through' the participants instead of amplifying their own voices.

The illusionary effect of making UNHCR's voice sound like it is coming from somewhere else than from the organisation itself draws the audience's focus to the refugees, making them appear as the primary storytellers rather than UNHCR, consequently masking the organisation's storytelling and representational power. Additionally, including refugee quotes in order to link the organisation to post-humanitarian tendencies aligns with the framework's argument that the process of inclusion can be used as a tokenistic tool.

On the linguistic surface, UNHCR thus seems to use post-humanitarian practices. However, through the lens of the framework by Silverio et al. (2022), the refugees are not the key narrators of their own stories, but their stories are used as rhetorical tools for UNHCR, which raises questions and concerns of dignity and ethics.

Additionally, the stories foregrounding hope also utilise intertextuality to shape structure and meaning of the refugee stories (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). The majority of the texts make intertextual references to either international legislation, powerful institutions, and/or national funds and policies, as the following quotes reflect: 'When the Government of Kenya signed the Refugee Act in November 2021, which included significant new policies on refugee economic inclusion and integration, Raphael was able to reach out to larger companies that now collect plastic from him for recycling' (Appendix H), 'With the project also being run in central and eastern regions of Afghanistan, a total of 200 people are receiving training under the programme, with support from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund, the Islamic Development Bank and the Saudi Fund for Development' (Appendix O), and 'UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, partnered with the World Bank and Chinhoyi University of Technology, about 120 kilometres away from Zimbabwe's capital Harare, to promote insect farming at Tongogara as an innovative and sustainable livelihood activity' (Appendix I).

At a textual level, the quotes exemplify Fairclough's (1995) point that 'all communicative events draw on earlier events' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 73) and do not exist in isolation. At a discursive level, the examples reveal how UNHCR includes intertextual references as a method to increase its own credibility in the eyes of the readers. By positioning itself within a larger collaborative network of recognised authorities, the organisation linguistically validates its own place and reinforces its legitimacy. In addition, all three quotes reflect interdiscursivity, as they blend environmental, legal, economic, development, and humanitarian discourses throughout the texts. From a social practice perspective, this chosen interaction of different discourses, furthermore, works as a tool to disguise the structural dominance that UNHCR holds over the refugee representations in the stories.

The multiplicity of discourses in the intertextual references hereby makes this hierarchy less visible (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). As the examples also illuminate, the intertextual references are predominantly included within contexts that inform the readers how refugees became empowered hope- and success stories exactly because of the support, programmes, and initiatives of UNHCR and its external partners. These actors are linguistically created as key enablers, which, from a social practice perspective, becomes a strategic way to naturalise top-down instead of bottom-up approaches. It can further be argued that the institutional success, highlighted through the use of intertextual references, reinforces the silencing of refugees' own voices and consolidates the organisation's hegemonic power in constructing a specific refugee identity, hence reflecting UNHCR's 'interactional control' (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 83).

8.3 Story Mediation, Mission Statement, and Paradigm Shift

In line with critical scholars, a juxtaposition of the thesis's two analyses similarly reveals discrepancies between UNHCR's refugee discourse in theory and practice. Firstly, a key focus in the organisation's mission statement is foregrounding refugees' agency. The language in the mission statement underscores the importance for UNHCR to acknowledge and accordingly represent refugees as empowered agentive actors, like in the following quote: 'Being forced to flee (…) does not mean losing one's rights, nor should it mean losing one's agency – the ability to make decisions and choices' (Appendix F). However, despite the linguistic commitments to centre agency, the analysis of the hardship-focused stories reflects a contrasting discursive focus. Linguistic tools are used to portray refugees through the narratives of pain, loss, and powerlessness (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), which instead remove signs of agency and oppose the values and strategies expressed in the stated mission.

On the other hand, the stories under the hope-narrative do mirror some alignments with the mission statement's focus on agency, although only on the surface. At a textual level, these stories use linguistic features that bring focus to the resilience, strength, and capability of refugees, which on the surface seems to emphasise a portrayal of agency and empowerment over helplessness and victimhood.

If the CDA hadn't examined all levels of the discourse, a large part of these stories might have given the impression that UNHCR's communication strategies, to some degree, align with its declared values. Nevertheless, the theoretical lenses employed within this study illuminate that the foregrounding of refugee agency is being used as a strategic tool to disguise the power of the organisation. It is further utilised to promote its public image, and to achieve its own organisational objectives (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), thus revealing a dissonance between what UNHCR says it does and what it actually does regarding its refugee portrayal.

Moreover, the mission statement analysis finds that UNHCR proclaims to be placing a significant focus on supporting the empowerment of forcibly displaced people by prioritising their involvement as partners and by amplifying their voices through the organisation's authoritative position in this field. The CDA shows that quotes by refugees, which are included in all of the texts, on a superficial level, may give the appearance of inclusion and amplification. However, the theoretical frameworks reveal underlying mechanisms of dominance and power inequalities, as well as institutional promoting agendas behind the linguistic inclusion of direct quotes (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Appearing to be sharing an online platform on which refugees tell their personal stories, UNHCR is fully controlling exactly which voices to include, how to include them, and in which contexts they should be embedded in order to fit UNHCR's intended narrative constructions of refugees. Unlike the values expressed in the mission statement, the published stories do not reflect a partnership type of relationship between UNHCR and forcibly displaced people. Instead, UNHCR is occupying both the roles of a mediator and academic ventriloquist, which places the organisation in a superior position and refugees as the subordinates. Accordingly, the thesis's linguistic investigations indicate that even though refugee voices are seemingly being shared through an illusion of inclusion, although only in the hope-focused stories, UNHCR appears to use these voices for organisational purposes rather than to truly empower and amplify them (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), thus illustrating a clear discrepancy between UNHCR's refugee portrayals in theory and practice.

From this, the findings of the thesis correspond with critical studies that challenge the notion that UNHCR's recent communication strategies represent a genuine discursive paradigmatic shift (Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Ongenaert et al., 2023). In its mission statement, UNHCR situates itself in accordance with an implemented organisational paradigmatic shift from traditional humanitarian to post-humanitarian approaches through its agency- and empowerment-centred as well as partnership-orientated focus. But as illustrated in the comparison of analyses, such a shift is only to a very limited degree and only on a superficial and strategic level, applied in its actual communicative portrayals of refugees, displayed only a few clicks away (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Together, the hardship-focused and hope-focused stories echo reminiscences of past discursive paradigms, as the portrayals of refugees predominantly remain in line with UNHCR's traditional humanitarian strategies.

9.0 Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

The question that guided this thesis was: 'How are forcibly displaced people portrayed in UNHCR's written mediation of refugee stories online, and in what ways does the mediation align with the values expressed in the organisation's mission statement?'. With this, the study overall wished to critically investigate the role of language in UNHCR's narrative construction of refugees.

First, it found that UNHCR portrayed refugees by using two main contrasting storylines. On one hand, the organisation constructed a hardship-narrative that portrayed refugees as suffering victims, objects of disasters, struggling for daily survival and in acute need of help from UNHCR. On the other hand, the organisation created a hope-narrative that framed refugees as success stories, focusing on resilience, agency, capabilities, and empowerment. At the textual level, these two narratives seemed to represent contrasting discursive approaches, with the hardship stories explicitly reflecting traditional humanitarian approaches and the hope stories reflecting more post-humanitarian tendencies.

However, the CDA revealed that the linguistic tools in the hope stories were used strategically to give a superficial impression that UNHCR emphasised refugees' agency, inclusion, and empowerment, thus aligning with their refugee discourse in theory, whilst

the discourse in practice contrastingly served and obscured organisational purposes and reflected the same underlying power structures as were present in the hardship-narrative. Through Fairclough's (1995) theorisation of discursive functions, the study found that UNHCR's ways of mediating refugee stories worked through the utilisation of effective linguistic strategies of diminishing any immediate senses of power imbalances between refugees and the organisation by using particular language, thus legitimising its position and maintaining the unequal power relations. The specific linguistic choices employed within all twenty analysed stories placed UNHCR in a superior position, though predominantly keeping this self-positioning hidden, which decreased its visibility on the textual surface.

The study furthermore found that the unequal power structures also operated as underlying mechanisms within the published refugee stories through the authorship itself. Besides the superior self-positioning within the content of the texts, UNHCR also occupied a superior position 'outside' the texts, given its monopoly over the mediation process and thus its full control over how the stories were told and, consequently, how the social identities of forcibly displaced people and the organisation itself were constructed.

In line with this, the study found extensive academic ventriloquistic tendencies in UNHCR's refugee portrayals. The selected quotes from refugees were particularly used to create an illusion of inclusion that seemingly aligned with UNHCR's stated missions to amplify refugee voices and treat them as organisational partners. Nonetheless, by occupying the metaphorical role as an academic ventriloquist, the organisation used the power to speak 'through' the participants instead of amplifying their own voices, thus making refugees appear as the primary storytellers, whilst simultaneously and contrastingly utilising their stories as linguistic tools for the broader narrative that UNHCR wished to construct around itself and its organisational work. Essentially, UNHCR's story mediation only to a limited degree aligned with the values expressed in the organisation's mission statement. Given its victim-centred narrative construction, the language in the hardship-focused stories contradicted the stated missions to emphasise refugees' agency, empowerment, and partnerships.

Noticeably, the language used in the hope-focused stories gave the opposite impression at first glance but solely aligned with the mission statement on a superficial level, which consequently disclosed a clear discrepancy between UNHCR's refugee discourse in theory and in practice. From this, it is apparent that the mediated refugee stories reflect a complex continuity of structures and narratives related to the traditional humanitarian approaches, similar to what previous critical studies have found. For this reason, the thesis follows the same argumentative lines as these scholars in the debate around a discursive paradigm shift. UNHCR's use of language to portray refugees in the mediated stories demonstrates that the organisation still has changes to make in order to achieve a fundamental and fully implemented discursive paradigm shift.

Moreover, one of the thesis's main contributions is its exploration of so-far unexplored material and thus its additional insights to the current field of studies. However, due to the scope of the thesis, more research is needed and would be beneficial, particularly with a focus on the perspectives of refugees themselves. Future research could significantly contribute to this study by investigating UNHCR's mediation of stories from the refugees' point of view. Exploring how these individuals both experienced the process of telling their stories and which perceptions they have around the portrayals would provide an essential perspective to the thesis's findings. Finally, future research could additionally add relevant knowledge by scrutinising the actual production process of the mediated stories. More transparency about who exactly produces the texts and how, as well as which institutional requirements, guidelines, and/or constraints are set for this process, would be of great significance for examining dilemmas and complexities of organisational communication processes and the crucial role of language in portraying refugees.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Keyword Sentiment Categorisation of Refugee Story Titles

Positive-Laden Keywords	Negative-Laden Keywords
Finds a way, Inspires, Heal, Welcome, Thrive, Helping, Hope, Discover, Defies odds, Opportunities, Inclusion, Open doors, Profitable business, Dreams, Relief, Love, Brighter future, Belonging, New life, Feel at home, Passion, Advocate, Develops, Protect, Turns dream into reality, Honoured, Healing, Recovery, Survivors, Safety, Refusing to give up, Selfless work, Supporting	Struggle to survive, Hunger, Deadly, Conflict, Tragedy, Robs, Dangers, Grief, Perilous, War, Catastrophic, Crisis, Sexual violence, Fleeing, New attacks, Violence, Fight, Treacherous, Xenophobia, Threaten, Needs grow, Risk, Danger, Escape, Bombings, Airstrikes, Yearn for peace, Loss, Displacement, Turmoil, Floods, Deadly, Misinformation

Appendix B -'About UNHCR'- Section on Global Website

About UNHCR

UNHCR leads international action to protect people forced to flee conflict and persecution and those denied a nationality.

Safeguarding the rights and well-being of people forced to flee for over 70 years.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.

We lead international action to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

Our vision is a world where every person forced to flee can build a better future.

Formally known as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR was established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1950 in the aftermath of the Second World War to help the millions of people who had lost their homes.

Today, UNHCR works in 136 countries. We provide life-saving assistance, including shelter, food, water and medical care for people forced to flee conflict and persecution, many of whom have nobody left to turn to. We defend their right to reach safety and help them find a place to call home so they can rebuild their lives. Long term, we work with countries to improve and monitor refugee and asylum laws and policies, ensuring human rights are upheld. In everything we do UNHCR considers refugees and those forced to flee as partners, putting those most affected at the centre of planning and decision-making.

74 years -For 74 years UNHCR has been safeguarding the rights of refugees.

136 countries -We are the world's leading organization protecting those forced to flee, present in 136 countries.

122.6 million- At least 122.6 million people around the world are forcibly displaced.

UNHCR mandate and governing charters

UNHCR is mandated by the United Nations to protect and safeguard the rights of refugees. We also support former refugees who have returned to their home country, people displaced within their own country, and people who are stateless or whose nationality is disputed.

We are guided by and act as the guardian of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Appendix C - 'Who We Protect'- Section on Global Website

Who we protect

UNHCR protects people forced to flee conflict and persecution as well as those denied a nationality.

We are there for refugees, asylum-seekers, people displaced within their own country and stateless persons.

Protecting all people forced to flee and those denied a nationality.

Seeking asylum is a human right. Anyone fleeing persecution, conflict, or human rights abuses has a right to seek protection in another country.

UNHCR works to ensure that this right is upheld.

We provide life-saving support and safeguard the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees and people displaced within their own country due to conflict or persecution. We also work to protect, support and advocate for people denied a nationality and refugees who have chosen to return to their own country.

With 122.6 million people forcibly displaced from their homes globally, there are more people under our protection today than at any point since the Second World War.

Appendix D - 'How does UNHCR Help Refugees'- Section on Global Website

How does UNHCR help refugees?

UNHCR protects refugees, advocates for their rights and works with governments and partners to find long-term solutions so they can find a safe place to call home.

- **Respond in emergencies:** In an emergency, we ensure refugees can reach safety and are not pushed back across a border into danger. Together with partners, we help provide the basics for survival, including shelter, water and medical care, and advocate for their protection and right to seek safety.

- **Safeguard their rights while displaced:** While most people who become refugees want to return home, it is often unsafe to do so for years if not decades. We help host countries ensure refugees can access their rights to education and health care. We also help them access livelihoods so they can live with greater independence and contribute to their communities, which is what they want.

- **Find long-term solutions:** At the same time, we convene and work with the international community to find long-term solutions. This can include support to voluntarily return to their home country once safe to do so, integration into the host community, or resettlement and integration in a third country.

Refugees as partners

Refugees have made extraordinary efforts to survive, and they bring with them skills, knowledge and insights. At UNHCR, we aim to work with them as partners, not people for whom we make decisions. We place their needs at the heart of every action and work to ensure they hold a meaningful role in decision-making processes.

Appendix E - 'What We Do'- Section on Global Website

What we do

UNHCR protects people forced to flee their homes as well as stateless persons. We deliver life-saving assistance in emergencies, safeguard fundamental human rights, and help find long-term solutions so they can find a safe place to call home.

Protecting people forced to flee.

Every year, millions of people are forced to flee their homes to escape conflict and persecution and cannot return without risking their lives, safety or freedom. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is there for them at every stage of the refugee and displacement journey, from the beginning of a crisis, through the months and often years that they are displaced from their homes. We deliver life-saving aid and protection in emergencies, advocate for improved asylum laws and systems so displaced people can access their rights, and help find long-term solutions so they can return home once safe to do so or build a future in a new country. We also work to ensure that stateless people are granted a nationality so they can access basic rights, such as education and health care.

Respond to emergencies

Within 72 hours, UNHCR can mobilize supplies for 1 million people and deploy expert staff to protect people forced to flee.

Protect human rights

UNHCR has worked with more than 100 countries to interpret and apply legal standards to ensure refugees can exercise their rights.

Build better futures

Over the last decade, UNHCR has helped almost 1 million refugees rebuild their lives in new countries, as part of our work to find long-term solutions.

Respond to emergencies

When people are forced to flee, speed is critical. Refugees often arrive across a border traumatized, hungry and exhausted, with little more than the clothes on their backs. UNHCR works to ensure they can reach safety and are not returned to situations where their lives or freedom would be in danger. This is the core principle of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which forms the legal basis of our work. We help people displaced from their homes settle in a safe place, far from conflict or those trying to harm them, rapidly deliver life-saving supplies and mobilize expert staff to protect them. We ensure they have shelter, food, water, access to medical care and help to find missing family members.

Protect human rights

Governments normally guarantee the basic human rights and security of their citizens, but when people are forced to flee and become refugees they can no longer rely on this safety net. UNHCR works to protect refugees, displaced and stateless people by advocating for their rights. We work with governments and partners to advise on and strengthen laws and national systems and help provide services. Through this we help ensure displaced people can access documentation, education, work and health care. We also work to ensure stateless people achieve their right to a nationality. Bringing about positive changes on national, regional and global levels can take years, but we accomplish it with the help of lawyers, judges, civil society organizations, politicians and students.

Build better futures

Employment, education and a safe place to call home mean refugees can begin to rebuild their lives. UNHCR helps refugees find employment so they can support themselves and their families with dignity and contribute their skills to host communities. We also help children and young people access education, giving them a sense of normalcy and safeguarding their future. Through this, we try to ensure the talents and potential of displaced people do not go to waste. Seeking long-term solutions for refugees is central to our mandate. Once it is safe to do so, we help families and individuals return to their homeland. For those who cannot return because of continued conflict, war or persecution, UNHCR helps them to settle and make a positive contribution in a third country or integrate into a host country.

Appendix F - UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026- Section

UNHCR STATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2022-2026

In the past five years, our Strategic Directions helped guide us on a course of progress, enabling us to look hard at what we do and to push through reforms and improvements in the performance of our mandate. We laid the foundations for further progress, and although much remains to be done, we are on the right path. The five Strategic Directions remain: PROTECT, RESPOND, INCLUDE, EMPOWER, SOLVE.

PROTECT

Wherever people are forcibly displaced or stateless, we will seek to uphold their basic human rights and ensure they are not returned to a country where they may face danger or persecution. We will galvanize others to build favourable protection environments and will advocate strongly in favour of safeguarding the principles of protection, access to territory and asylum, and the rights and dignity of affected communities. We will be proactive and vocal in our efforts to ensure that forcibly displaced and stateless people are able to exercise and enjoy their rights, irrespective of age, gender and diversity considerations. The specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, female-headed households, and unaccompanied minors, do not lessen their rights, and they must receive the protection and assistance they need to ensure they can enjoy their rights on an equal footing. We will promote burden-sharing and responsibility-sharing, in line with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. In collaboration with States, partners, and the diverse women, men, boys and girls whom we serve, we will work to develop principled and innovative approaches to protection. Ultimately, the best form of protection is a sustainable solution to situations of displacement and statelessness.

RESPOND

As a leading humanitarian actor, we will work to anticipate emergencies, and when they occur, we will respond rapidly and stay the course to ensure that people are safe from harm, their fundamental rights are respected, and that they can meet their needs. Our response is strengthened by collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, and all of us have an interest in successful outcomes to emergency responses. We will work jointly to prepare for and respond to emergencies, to ensure that we anticipate risks, mobilize resources, and mount responses and scale up with agility. We will bolster preparedness processes and capacities. We will pre-position and deliver life-saving assistance, protection and solutions across the globe rapidly and reliably, and transition from short-term to longer-term focused approaches.

INCLUDE

We will advocate for the inclusion of refugees, displaced and stateless people in economic growth and poverty reduction efforts and in national and local services. We will help connect affected people to their local communities and support them to engage in economic opportunities. The extent of support for such inclusion efforts was brought to light most clearly by the

Global Compact on Refugees. We will leverage this goodwill to promote burden-sharing and support the strengthening of national systems or capacity to include displaced or stateless people. By forging closer alliances, we will also bolster the inclusion of affected people in development programmes and national development frameworks, building on the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda. We will also support forcibly displaced and stateless people to contribute to the communities where they live and promote the use of modalities to support their inclusion and benefit local communities.

EMPOWER

People are at the centre of what we do. Being forced to flee or stateless does not mean losing one's rights, nor should it mean losing one's agency – the ability to make decisions and choices. Our programmes and interventions will be based on upholding the rights of the people we serve, and we will seek to involve them in decisions about their own future and the development of their communities. We will draw on their own resilience, knowledge and capacity for action, and hold ourselves accountable to them for our actions. Empowerment cannot coexist with discrimination. We will be forthright in demanding that all members of society have an equal opportunity to enjoy their rights. Invariably, women and girls constitute the biggest group at risk of being disadvantaged. Gender equality is an indivisible facet of empowerment, and it must remain central to the work we and our partners do. Empowerment also runs in opposition to marginalization and stigmatization. Displaced and stateless people will never be able to enjoy their rights if they face a constant barrage of prejudice and xenophobia. We will combat hate speech against them, speak out on their behalf and amplify their voices through our global presence and our networks of supporters.

SOLVE

It is plain, from the relentless growth of populations of concern to UNHCR, that solutions have not kept pace with the number of people being displaced and becoming stateless. It is equally plain that the burden of responsibility for hosting these populations and meeting their needs has fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of a few. We will strive for progress, diversifying beyond the currently available options, encouraging the creation of new avenues out of displacement and statelessness, and doing all we can to ensure that responsibility is equitably shared. We will reinforce cooperation and strengthen partnerships among humanitarian, political, development and peace actors to move beyond short-term approaches, which often limit planning for solutions, to longer-term ones. We recognize that solutions to problems of forced displacement and statelessness require addressing causes as well as consequences, and we will engage in comprehensive analysis and advocacy to guide early efforts to address drivers and triggers.

Appendix G - 'Call to Action'-Section in Strategic Directions 2022-2026

CALL TO ACTION

In renewing these Strategic Directions, we recommit to our promise to forcibly displaced and stateless people across the world. UNHCR and our dedicated workforce will not tire of ensuring the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced and stateless people are upheld. In the spirit of the GCR, a whole-of-society approach is critical; a wide range of stakeholders have important contributions to make. We will work with and mobilize others to help achieve our collective ambition so that affected communities can thrive. Specifically, we ask:

• **States** – Respect and uphold international refugee, humanitarian and human rights law. Keep your borders open for people forced to f lee their countries. Include the forcibly displaced and stateless persons in your national plans. Share responsibility with other governments that are hosting large numbers of refugees and internally displaced people. Step up your efforts in support of forcibly displaced and stateless people.

• **Partners** – The challenges of forced displacement and statelessness necessitate that we step up our collective efforts to protect, assist and find solutions for affected people. Situations of displacement are only growing, with the average length of protracted situations reaching 26 years. Accelerate the transition to sustainable solutions by partnering with us and including the forcibly displaced and stateless in your programmes and plans. When humanitarian, peace, development and government actors work together, lasting impacts in the lives of forcibly displaced communities and their hosts are possible.

• **Private sector** – People forced to flee arrive with their resilience, courage and talent. They have much to offer. Boost your efforts and create decent opportunities for them and for hosting communities. Champion evidence on the benefits of economic inclusion.

• **Communities** – Forcibly displaced and stateless people bring substantial benefits to the communities they live in. UNHCR recognizes that you are among the first to welcome them and counts on your sustained generosity. We will continue to advocate for support and promote stability and resilience.

• **People everywhere** – Support us in our commitment to save lives and protect the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people. Bring attention to and amplify their voices.

Appendix H - Africa Hope-Narrative Example 1

Congolese refugee turns plastic waste into a profitable business

Raphael Basemi's recycling business is providing jobs for other refugees and the host community and helping preserve the environment in Kenya's Kakuma camp.

By Pauline Omagwa and Charity Nzomo in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya, 22 April 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

Raphael Basemi has come a long way since arriving in Kenya's Kakuma camp in 2009 with just a bag of clothes and his education certificates.

The Congolese refugee now runs the largest community-led recycling enterprise in the camp, providing hundreds of jobs for other refugees and local community members. "When I look at this plastic, I see a precious material, an employment opportunity for my community, a source of wealth, and a chance to support my family," he says. Raphael spent his first six years in the camp working as a teacher. Later, in 2013, he founded FRADI (Fraternity for Development Integrated), a community-based social enterprise that promotes environmental protection and livelihoods for refugees and the host community in Kakuma. "We realized that there was a language barrier among refugees," said the 31-year-old father of two. "We started teaching Swahili to the Somali community and English to the French-speaking community. And then we started providing technical skills such as hairdressing, carpentry, and welding." It was while studying for a Business Management degree in the capital, Nairobi, that he struck on the idea for a recycling project that would allow him to generate income to support his family and preserve the environment. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, he returned to the camp and started the project as a pilot. He did extensive research on policies governing waste management and how they affect refugees wanting to venture into it.

Community comes together

"When I had the idea for this [recycling] project, I sat with my neighbours and told them about my plan," he says. "Some embraced the idea and supported me. Some did not understand why I wanted to collect garbage and pile it in our community, but they willingly lent a hand." Local community leaders were ready to support the initiative and when he called for volunteers, he received an overwhelming response, with over 2,000 applicants. "The first month [in early 2020] was a trial-and-error period. We didn't have money to pay the collectors. After one month, some dropped out, but that did not stop me." Support from the County Government and the Department of Refugee Service in Kenya (DRS) came just in time – Raphael was allocated three plastic collection centres to run in Kakuma refugee camp and one in the nearby Kalobeyei settlement. "It was a long and challenging journey to train volunteers on recycling, set up structures, and find a vendor for the crushed plastic," says Raphael. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and other partners, helped Raphael to establish a shop in the Kakuma Incubation Centre – a UNHCR-funded economic development initiative that supports start-up businesses. There he sells items made from the plastic he recycles such as pegs, buttons, rulers, plates, and cups. When the Government of Kenya signed the Refugee Act in November 2021, which included significant new policies on refugee economic inclusion and integration, Raphael was able to reach out to larger companies that now collect plastic from him for recycling. In addition to supporting refugee entrepreneurs like Raphael, UNHCR is working to reduce the environmental impacts of its assistance, including by reducing the use of virgin plastics in the

production and packaging of relief items it distributes. Blankets and other items are now made with 100 per cent recycled plastic.

A world without plastic

In the last three years, Raphael has created over 500 jobs for refugees and the local community, allowing them to earn an income and support their families. He has also expanded his operations into solid waste management, dealing with all types of waste, including bones, glass, metal, and organic waste. "People know me as 'Raphael Plastic' or the 'Plastic Man'," he laughs. "When I see the volunteers bringing in the plastic they have collected, I see a community that is coming together for a greater cause." Despite the challenges that come with being a refugee entrepreneur, such as not being able to access financial services, Rapahel remains optimistic about the future of his business and its potential to help create a circular economy in Kakuma and the Kalobeyei settlement. Part of his motivation comes from imagining the consequences for the environment if there was no plastic recycling. "I cannot sit and imagine a world like that."

Appendix I - Africa Hope-Narrative Example 2

Refugees discover benefits of insect farming in Zimbabwe

Refugees at Tongogara settlement have learned how to breed black soldier flies for a greener animal feed and fertilizer that is helping them earn an income.

By Hélène Caux in Tongogara refugee settlement, Zimbabwe, 31 July 2024 - Also available in: Español

When Francine Mashimango fled violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with her nine children in 2018, she never imagined that a few years later, she would be supporting her family by raising flies and their maggots in a refugee camp in Zimbabwe.

Every day now, Francine, 49, walks 15 minutes from her home in Tongogara refugee settlement in south-eastern Zimbabwe to a centre for insect farming that houses black soldier flies in cages made of wooden sticks and mosquito nets. She checks the temperature, cleans the cages and feeds the fly larvae organic waste such as vegetable scraps. The maggots are used to make a cheaper, protein-rich alternative to traditional animal feed that Francine feeds to her chickens. The benefits, both for them and for her family, have been transformative. "The chickens gain weight faster when they eat maggots as they contain a lot of proteins," she explains. "So, I can raise more chickens and sell more of them, and with the money, I can buy clothes and shoes for my children." Francine had around 50 chickens but has 24 left after she sold half of them to other refugees and local families a few weeks ago. "I am happy I am self-reliant," she says proudly. "When you are involved in a project like this, it really encourages you to work harder because you don't want to depend on assistance and you know what to do during the day, you have a purpose."

A sustainable livelihood

In early 2022, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, partnered with the World Bank and Chinhoyi University of Technology, about 120 kilometres away from Zimbabwe's capital Harare, to promote insect farming at Tongogara as an innovative and sustainable livelihood activity. The settlement hosts some 16,000 refugees mainly from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Rwanda and is increasingly exposed to extreme weather linked to climate change such as cyclones and scorching temperatures. Insect farming was chosen because it requires little land, water, machinery or agrochemicals. The black soldier fly maggots are used as a substitute for soya beans in animal feed, in combination with locally-grown crops such as maize, wheat bran and duckweed. The World Bank estimates that the global market for insects as food for both animals and humans will be worth up to $8 billion by 2030 and that insect farming can create green jobs, diversify livelihoods, improve food security and strengthen local economies. The environmental benefits could also be significant as the insects feed on organic waste and require few other natural resources compared to conventional farming, resulting in far lower carbon emissions. In addition to the project in Tongogara, UNHCR and the World Bank are running insect farming projects involving refugees in other climate-vulnerable settings in Malawi, Kenya and South Sudan and plan to start similar initiatives in Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda and Mexico. Francine was among 17 refugees – seven of them women – and 30 locals from the host community who have been trained to breed the flies and maggots. Mozambican Peter Chakamba, the refugee leader for the insect farming project, says

collaborating on the project has reinforced bonds between the host community and the refugees. "We've been trained together, and we work together as a group. None of us is sitting doing nothing, we all contribute to the project." Francine concedes that she was suffering from anxiety and depression before getting involved in insect farming. "I had too much time on my hands to think about my husband. He was kidnapped in eastern DRC by armed men. That's when I decided to run away with the children because I thought they would come back to take us. I have not heard of my husband since, I don't know if he is still alive."

Scaling up

Funding limitations mean that the insect breeding project in Tongogara is still operating on a small scale with the fly larvae mainly used to feed chickens. But over the next three years, the aim is to train 1,000 refugees from Tongogara and another 300 people from the local community to produce enough flies and maggots to replace soya bean in feed for other livestock, such as pigs and goats, as well as biofertilizer for wider markets. In the meantime, the project has faced some challenges, including keeping the black soldier flies alive in an environment where temperatures often reach 45°C in the summer. The refugees are trained to spread sand and water in the room where the flies are bred to lower the temperature and maintain humidity levels, but this is not always enough to combat the heat explains Lovemore Dumba, a livelihood officer with UNHCR. "Last year, one morning we woke up and went to check on the flies and most of them had died because of the high temperature of some 46°C," he says. Additional funds from donors would allow for the installation of a hybrid temperature control system at the insect farming centre that would use biogas in the winter and an air-conditioned container for the warmer seasons. The construction of a storeroom to maintain breeding stock in good conditions and breeding boxes for the flies are also urgently needed. "Despite the challenges, I see a lot of potential in this project," says Dumba. "We already have large companies in Harare buying maggots from established farmers. For a ton of maggots, they pay between $800 and $1,000. If refugee farmers get to that level, we know we will be providing them with more self-reliance and economic inclusion without major additional costs." Francine and her fellow refugees share Dumba's ambition and hope to one day sell their maggots to farmers in the region. "You have to dream big," she says. "We can do it together."

Appendix J - Africa Hardship-Narrative Example 1

Sudanese mother suffers tragedy before perilous escape to Libya

After her family's life in Darfur was ripped apart by conflict, Tahani Hamid took a dangerous route to Libya, where nearly 100,000 Sudanese refugees have sought safety from the war.

donate

By Sanne Biesmans in Tripoli, Libya, 6 September 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

Tahani Hamid, 35, remembers her former life as a housewife in Sudan's Darfur region as peaceful and happy, caring for her three young children and preparing meals for them and her husband, a local policeman. But as rivalry between two Sudanese military factions erupted into full-blown conflict in April last year, a series of calamities shattered that tranquil life, changing it forever.

In the weeks before the start of the conflict, armed skirmishes broke out in their neighborhood in Neyala and a stray bullet pierced the metal roof of their mud-brick house, hitting Hamid just above the left elbow. She was rushed to hospital and underwent surgery on the wound. Thinking the worst was over, the family returned home, but any optimism proved tragically misplaced. In July, armed militia fighters entered their home to detain Hamid's husband. When Hamid tried to defend him, she was struck with the butt of an automatic rifle, leaving her with serious injuries. Her husband was tied up and taken away and Hamid has not seen him since. She is unsure if he is even alive. A month later in August, the unthinkable happened. While Hamid was shopping at the local market, an explosion ripped through the morning air. Minutes later a neighbour rushed towards her and said her house had been hit. Her twin daughters and their grandmother who had been looking after them had all been killed. She collapsed, waking up the next day in hospital with the realization that her worst nightmare had become reality. Despite her grief, Hamid still had her 18-month-old son Emad to protect. She decided to flee to Libya with him and a cousin. Libya has a historic connection to Sudan and prior to the start of the conflict was home to over 130,000 Sudanese. Nevertheless, the long journey through the desert would be fraught with danger. "I had no choice," said Hamid. "I was too scared that they would come after me too."

Perilous journey

After paying a hefty fee for transport to Alkufra, the first major town across the border in Libya, a puncture on the way – ordinarily a minor inconvenience – nearly cost the mother and son their lives. Leaving the pick-up truck and his passengers stranded in the middle of the desert, the driver took another vehicle back across the border to Sudan to find a spare tire. "It took him three full days to get back to us. By the time he returned, we had already finished our water and food," Hamid said. "We were in a really, really bad situation. Many fainted because we hadn't been able to drink. In that moment I thought, me too, I will die here." The journey from Sudan to Libya is well known for its dangers. Pick-up trucks make the three-day passage through the remote desert, often in ferocious heat with passengers piled into the rear. Corpses along the route are a stark reminder that any who fall out are left behind. "Despite it all, this journey was better than staying in Sudan," Hamid stressed.

- **See also: Death in the Desert**

Nearly 100,000 Sudanese refugees have reached Libya since the start of the war, according to estimates by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. The majority have taken the same route as Hamid to Alkufra from the Darfur region or the capital, Khartoum.

A precarious safety

After arriving in Alkufra, Hamid and her cousin secured money for the onward journey to Tripoli. Homeless for several weeks upon arrival, they were taken in by a Sudanese family who had lived in the capital for over 20 years. "They helped me find a job, a home, and put food on the table," Hamid said. Just as she was finally getting back on her feet, Emad fell sick and had to be hospitalized. While his treatment was free of charge, Hamid did not have the means to pay for his medication. The family advanced her the money, but they too were struggling financially. She promised to repay her debt despite not knowing where she would find the money. Financial support provided by UNHCR eventually enabled her to pay them back. UNHCR provides emergency cash assistance to some of the most vulnerable refugees in Libya. Hamid saved the rest of the cash to help pay rent for the apartment she now shares with two other refugee families. Like many refugees in Libya, she eventually hopes to find a safer place to call home. UNHCR is working to provide refugees with long-term solutions such as resettlement, family reunification or evacuations from Libya. So far this year, 650 refugees have departed the country through such avenues but with 65,000 registered refugees, the needs far outweigh the opportunities. While Hamid has managed to escape Sudan and reach relative safety, she will carry the physical and psychological scars of the conflict for the rest of her life. Her only dream now is to protect her son – the only member of her family she has left – and give him the chance of a better future. "I am just looking for a safe place; it doesn't matter where."

Appendix K - Africa Hardship-Narrative Example 2

Thousands of Sudanese fleeing violence cross into Ethiopia

As the conflict in Sudan escalates, Ethiopia continues to absorb refugees, with limited resources.

<u>Donate</u>

By Moulid Hujale in Asossa, Ethiopia, 31 January 2024 - Also available in: Français Español

Hawa Ahmed Yassin, 40, was preparing breakfast on a cold, rainy morning in June last year when deadly fighting broke out in her hometown of Kurmuk, in Sudan's Blue Nile State. Intense gunfire and heavy shelling were so close to her home that she and her family had to drop everything and run.

"We had to leave," she said. "We did not have time to pack our clothes or even drink tea." Together with her 10 children and 80-year-old mother, she embarked on an arduous three-hour journey to reach the border with Ethiopia and seek asylum. "It was raining, and the road was muddy," she said. "There were gunshots coming from the side of the mountains; it was too scary. My mother was sick and could not walk. At one point she decided to go back, but it was dangerous, so we had to push her." Since April last year, when conflict erupted in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, and spread to other parts of the country, close to 8 million people have been displaced both inside Sudan and across borders, mainly into Chad, South Sudan and Egypt, but also into Ethiopia which has received over 47,000 refugees and asylum seekers. In recent months, the fighting has escalated with the seizure of Sudan's second city of Wad Madani in Al Jazirah State by the Rapid Support Forces. The city had been hosting hundreds of thousands of people displaced from Khartoum and elsewhere who were forced to flee for a second time. Hawa is among more than 20,000 people, including some returning refugees, who have fled into Ethiopia via its western Kurmuk border over the last nine months. Most came from Blue Nile State, fleeing fighting between the Sudanese Army and the Rapid Support Forces but in the last five weeks, more than 2,700 have arrived from Wad Madani. The new arrivals have put pressure on an emergency transit centre set up at the start of the crisis by the Ethiopian Government's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, together with its partners. Basic assistance such as food, water, tents, blankets, utensils, and emergency medical services are provided there but the centre's capacity is limited and the nearest refugee camp, Sherkole, which hosts over 15,000 refugees, is full. Most of the new arrivals are women and children, struggling to cope with the trauma they experienced as the war ripped them from their homes. They live in makeshift shelters cobbled together using plastic, sticks, grass, and scraps of cloth. Others are sheltering in crowded communal hangars, cooped up in squalid conditions with minimal privacy and limited sanitation and hygiene services.

Surviving on tea

With the help of her children, Hawa has set up a small tent and a kitchen under a tree that provides some shade. She, her elderly mother and all 10 children must share the tent, which barely protects them from the heat of the sun or the cold at night. She says her most pressing need is for proper housing and more food. "We try to eat twice a day but when we don't get enough, I try to fill the space with tea as a meal," she said. As part of the Ethiopian government's policy of integrating refugees from the onset of emergencies, regional authorities have allocated new land for a refugee settlement about 88 kilometres away from the border. Those

currently sheltering at the transit centre will soon be relocated there and have access to improved shelter and national health and education services. Ethiopia is already one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in Africa, with nearly 1 million refugees in addition to 3.5 million internally displaced people (IDPs), yet it is one of the most underfunded UNHCR operations globally. At the end of 2023, its programmes in Ethiopia were only 36 per cent funded. UNHCR is requesting $426 million to respond this year.

- **See also: In Ethiopia, UNHCR's Grandi urges more support for people fleeing Sudan**

"Ethiopia's continued generosity to the displaced, including those who have recently arrived from Sudan, is commendable and should be matched with even greater support from the international community," said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, who completed a three-day visit to Ethiopia this week. "I know that there are many other crisis around the world. Some are acute. Some make the headlines. We should not forget that. The people that I have just spoken to who have fled from war in Sudan, their headline is suffering day in and day out," he added.

Hope for peace of mind

Outside the transit centre in Kurmuk, refugees' entrepreneurial skills and spirit of self-reliance are evident as they set up makeshift shops by the roadside selling fruits, vegetables, and a variety of groceries. Sitting on a short wooden stool inside a thatched kitchen opposite her tent, Hawa and her daughter fry crispy Sudanese falafel in a large frying pan balanced on a triangular-shaped traditional stove. "As you can see, I generate my income from making falafel and selling it and if I get money, I buy soap for them [my children] in addition to food, but it is insufficient to buy clothes, shoes and medicine," she said. Hawa does not think she will be able to return to Sudan anytime soon because of the ongoing violence and traumatic memories of what she and her family experienced while fleeing to Ethiopia. They will soon be relocated to the new site. "I hope the war ends because it has no benefit," she said. "I hope for my children to get quality education and live in a safe environment where they can access health[care] so that me and my mother can have peace of mind."

Appendix L - Americas Hope-Narrative Example 1

In Brazil, a Syrian refugee seizes every opportunity to thrive in his new life

Brazil is a model for how refugees – when given the chance – can make important contributions to the communities that welcome them.

By Luiz Fernando Godinho, in São Paulo, Brazil, 3 July 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

Abdul has come a long way from the conflict in Syria to his new life in Brazil, a journey facilitated by the South American country's welcoming policy towards refugees and turbocharged by his own determination and joyous embrace of opportunities.

"When I first arrived here, I felt peace and tranquility," recalled Abdul, a decade on from fleeing his native Syria, which was then in the throes of crisis. Abdul now feels so at home that he declares himself to be "BrazSyrian: Brazilian Syrian!" Abdul is among more than 4,000 Syrian refugees welcomed by Brazil since it became the first country in the Americas to offer special humanitarian visas to those fleeing Syria in 2013. A simplified asylum process means swift recognition and integration of refugees, who currently number around 140,000 from countries including Venezuela, Syria, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. During a visit to Brazil last month, Raouf Mazou, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations at UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, praised the country's "commitment to inclusive refugee policies". Brazil, he said, is evidence that, "documentation, asylum and other forms of protection, combined with access to jobs, livelihoods, education and health, are the best way to arrive at solutions."

Work, football, fun and service

Abdul is the embodiment of what those solutions can look like. After fleeing Syria for neighboring Lebanon, he heard about Brazil's humanitarian visa and quickly applied. "When they put the visa in my passport, I started looking at it and thinking about Brazil. This visa guaranteed me a new life. It saved my life," Abdul said. Just six months later he was a recognized refugee with official documentation that allowed him to begin building a new life on the other side of the world. Living in the cosmopolitan megacity of São Paulo, Abdul has learnt to speak fluent Portuguese – albeit retaining a trace of his Arabic accent – and works a day job as a legal assistant in the State Public Prosecutor's Office helping foreigners access documentation and public services. He spends his afternoons running a charity supporting refugees and migrants and giving high school talks about his experiences as a refugee, and in the evening he studies law. In 2022, having become a naturalized Brazilian citizen, Abdul even ran for political office, although he was unsuccessful. Amid all the work, he makes sure to find time to play and watch his beloved sport, football, including organizing a city-wide refugee soccer tournament. Abdul works hard, plays hard and dresses sharp. His home in São Paulo is decorated with memorabilia from his two favourite teams – Flamengo and Corinthians – including signed football shirts, and he has fallen in love with Brazilian music, both samba and rap, to which he dances and sings along.

Paying it back

"With the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide at a record high and the right to seek asylum under threat in many parts of the world, Abdul's journey from war-torn Syria to Brazil

demonstrates that granting people access to asylum and international protection is a clear and tangible example of solidarity that, translated into action, saves lives," said UNHCR Representative in Brazil, Davide Torzilli. Having been offered – and having seized – so many opportunities himself, Abdul says his ambition now is not to sit back and rest, but to "give a hand to those people who need it" in whatever way he can: by supporting other refugees as well as his new community, and by educating people about refugee issues. "We need solidarity, empathy and decent public policies to meet our situation," he said. "I am grateful to this land because it opened doors for me to make a new life, a new story."

Appendix M - Americas Hope-Narrative Example 2

Refugee advocate develops app to help protect people in Afghanistan

Sara Wahedi combined her tech skills with her activism to create a digital app that warns users in Afghanistan about potential threats to their safety.

By Nicholas Feeney, 13 March 2024 - Also available in: Español

"I'll never forget the day. It was 9 May 2018, and I was just a few steps away from my home in Kabul, and there was just a rush of people in a scramble," recalls Sara Wahedi.

"Then, three back-to-back explosions, maybe 10, 20 yards away from my home." Fortunately, Sara was unharmed. But after the attack, her neighborhood was locked down, and authorities shared no information with residents. At the time, there was no real-time emergency alert system in her community. "It was like a lightbulb moment for me – that this is exactly the kind of tool that needs to exist in crisis states, in crisis regions." After the bombings, Sara launched Ehtesab, a mobile app that crowdsources information about emergency events and then verifies them before sending alerts to users in Afghanistan. Launched nearly six years ago, Ehtesab has sent a quarter million alerts to users across the country about incidents ranging from explosions and arrests, to road closures and traffic accidents, to extreme weather and earthquakes. Ehtesab — a name created from words in Dari and Pashto that mean transparency, accountability and responsibility – is rooted in the idea that freedom of information is essential to protection. "Access to information is one of those rights that many people don't know is entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," says Sara. "There should never be a politicization of urgent information." Like the inspiration to launch Ehtesab, Sara's advocacy for forcibly displaced people and marginalized communities comes from lived experience. As a child, her family was forced to flee Afghanistan. Their journey brought them first to Germany, then to the United States and finally to Canada, where they were resettled and where Sara grew up. "I always felt like I missed being in Afghanistan, and I think that's the reason why my work is so focused on Afghanistan," she says. By 2018, Sara had returned to her home country to work in the Kabul office of the former president. But the bombing in May that year fundamentally shifted her career path and advocacy work. After founding Ehtasab, she enrolled at Columbia University in New York City to study data science and urban studies. Now 28-years-old, she continues to lead Ehtesab as a full-time student. Finding safe and equitable ways to include women's voices at Ehtesab has been important to Sara from day one. Sixty percent of the company's employees are women in software engineering and data analysis roles, many of them based in Afghanistan. "Something that we've been working on [at Ehtesab] is trying to figure out how to bring women's voices across Afghanistan to the forefront," says Sara. "We're working with interesting technology and machine learning to ensure the safety of women while they're reporting incidents." Another group of Afghan voices Sara is amplifying and trying to include in decision-making spaces are those of Afghanistan's refugee youth. In December 2023, Sara spoke on a panel discussing challenges and opportunities for Afghan refugees at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, Switzerland. She shared the stories of three Afghan refugee youth living in Iran, Pakistan and Indonesia, noting their great potential and the challenges they face to realize it. "Their perspectives are vital as they are the architects of Afghanistan's future," she said. "Their desperation to continue their education and chase their dreams is palpable, yet they find themselves in a paradoxical state of refuge, one that [does not] offer the fullness of safety and strips them of their dignity." After graduating from Columbia University, Sara plans

to continue advocating for Afghans and seeking connections between technology, human rights and refugee protection. "What's important for me now is to connect the technology that I've been able to lead over the last five to six years, but bridge that with the policies of agencies like the United Nations and [other] international organizations." She would also like to be able to expand Ehtesab to reach people in other countries. "[I want to] spread the message in terms of this fundamental human right, that every human on this earth has access to information that is non-politicized, that's immediate and that can support the safety and health of our communities."

The original version of this story was published on USA for UNHCR on 8 March, 2024.

Appendix N - Americas Hardship-Narrative Example 1

Social media campaign tackles misinformation about treacherous Darién jungle

UNHCR's 'Trust the Toucan' initiative uses social media to share testimonies from refugees and migrants who have survived the crossing with others considering the journey.

By Melissa Pinel in Darién, Panama, 21 October 2024 - Also available in: Français Español

Ayaluz sits exhausted under the shade of a tent. Her feet are swollen and tender; her hands covered in scratches. She has just spent nearly eight days walking through the Darién jungle – 100 kilometres of dense rainforest between Colombia and Panama that is considered one of the most treacherous migration pathways in the world.

"At first, I didn't see it as risky … but then we started to see a lot of crazy things. Many mountains, many hills … I started to see dead people, all kinds of things," she says. "Many people lose their lives there." While she rests, her husband tries to clean the mud from her sneakers with a toothbrush. The couple fled political and economic instability in Venezuela. The rest of their family stayed behind, awaiting news of their journey before deciding whether to follow. Thousands of refugees fleeing violence and persecution and migrants seeking a better life tackle the crossing through the Darién every week. In 2023, over 520,000 people, mainly from Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti, and African and South Asian nations, undertook the journey. So far, in 2024, the number has already reached 279,000. After being promised a short and uncomplicated passage through the jungle by smugglers and information on social media, refugees and migrants typically spend between four and 10 days navigating steep mountains, thick forest, and rivers with strong currents. They must carry all their personal belongings, and often small children, in intense heat and humidity before arriving in indigenous Panamanian communities and eventually reaching the Temporary Migratory Reception Centres managed by the Panamanian Government.

Sharing real stories

Having already fled or left their countries due to difficult situations, the jungle exposes refugees and migrants to additional risks of violence and abuse. In interviews, 38 per cent of people who made the crossing reported suffering an incident of abuse in the jungle, and seven out of 10 had been victims of theft, including Ayaluz and her husband. "We were robbed," she says. "They took everything from us." Surveys carried out by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, found that some 70 per cent of people arriving in the Darién were relying on information gleaned from social media platforms that often downplays or mispresents the risks of the journey. "On Facebook there are people who make pages recommending themselves as guides. What they really do is deceive us; they trick us into doing it," says Ayaluz, explaining that based on what they read on social media, she and her husband sold all their belongings to fund the journey, without understanding the dangers. Recognizing the need to challenge misinformation about the Darién, UNHCR developed its own social media campaign, 'Trust the Toucan', in 2023. It shares crucial information and video testimonies on Facebook and TikTok in Spanish, English and Haitian Creole with the aim of reaching refugees and migrants in the region, mainly in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, before they make the decision to cross the jungle. "Information saves lives, and through 'Trust the Toucan', UNHCR not only provides an accurate portrayal of the jungle's dangers, but also actively takes up space in the same online platforms

where misinformation spreads, so refugees and migrants can make informed decisions," says Jose Egas, Representative for UNHCR in Panama, noting that the campaign has been viewed more than 26 million times.

Two-way communication

'The Toucan' posts interviews with refugees and migrants, like Orlando, who recently made the crossing with 27 kilos of food, water and clothes strapped to his back, and his 9-year-old daughter by his side. Although he had heard stories and expected the journey to be difficult, he was unprepared for the reality. "The guides told us that in a day and a half we would get out of the jungle, which is totally false… There was a moment when I felt faint because I thought I would never get out. We walked and walked, and the jungle seemed endless," he says. "People fracture their feet, ankles. After one sustains an injury in the jungle … it's fatal." During the journey, his group rescued a woman who had been abandoned with her two children as they struggled to keep up with the physical demands of a path where one wrong step could result in injury or death. Had he known the real dangers, Orlando says he would not have risked the lives of his family in his pursuit of a better life. As well as sharing testimonies like these, 'The Toucan' also allows refugees and migrants to send messages to UNHCR via TikTok, Facebook and WhatsApp. They can verify stories and information shared by friends and relatives, seek guidance on applying for asylum in Panama, or even raise the alarm about relatives who have gone missing in the jungle. In a video received through WhatsApp earlier this year, UNHCR found out about a 36-year-old woman with a broken leg who had already spent four days in a tent with her two small children. A passing group sent the message with information about a nearby natural landmark to help locate where she was stranded. UNHCR shared the recording with Panamanian authorities, and she was rescued a couple of days later. "You destroy yourself, thinking that maybe you'll be able to get ahead. That it will be better than in Ecuador, but it's not worth it; it's a lot of suffering," says Carmen*, 61, through tears. In Ecuador, she worked as a seamstress until gangs threatened her, demanding a share of her earnings. While crossing the jungle with her daughter, nieces, and nephews, she and her family spent days without food. They drank water from rivers, which left them weak with fever and stomach issues. Like Ayaluz and Rodrigo, she hopes that by sharing her story through 'Trust the Toucan', she can help others understand the risks of the crossing. "It's a pain that lasts a lifetime, and I regret that I came this way."

Name changed for protection reasons.

Appendix O - Americas Hardship-Narrative Example 2

Violence and xenophobia threaten access to education in Ecuador

For displaced young people like Gloria* and Ernesto* from Venezuela, access to school – a welcome sanctuary from their daily struggles – is threatened by a recent surge in criminal violence.

donate

By Diana Díaz and Ilaria Rapido in Guayaquil, Ecuador, 20 March 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

Gloria Fernández*, 18, jiggled her leg impatiently as she waited her turn to use the cell phone she shares with her two siblings to finish her schoolwork. It was 10 p.m. and she still had an important assignment to submit before graduation.

"We have to rotate so each of us has a turn for all our assignments. We can stay up till 11 p.m. doing our homework now," said Gloria, who was displaced from Venezuela two years ago with her family, and now lives in Guayaquil, a port city in southern Ecuador. Gloria and her siblings were studying remotely, but unlike in 2020 when COVID-19 was the reason, the recent school closure was due to increased violence and the declaration of an internal armed conflict in Ecuador earlier this year to combat rampant criminality. Gloria and her classmates were afraid they would not be able to gather for graduation in early March. "It's hard for them to stay indoors, but I am thankful they are home and safe," said Gertrudis Osorio*, Gloria's mother. She described waiting for her children to make the one-hour walk home from school before classes were suspended, and how minutes would feel like hours as she prayed nothing had happened to them. "When we came from Venezuela two years ago, we never thought things would be like this here. Now we juggle between fear of something happening to us and trying to make ends meet so we can give our children a better future," Gertrudis added.

Rampant violence

Ecuador has experienced an upsurge in violence in recent years, largely fueled by disputes between criminal groups across the country. Violence has become commonplace in many communities, including those hosting the more than half a million refugees and migrants in Ecuador. According to a 2023 assessment conducted by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency (document in Spanish), refugees and migrants are increasingly afraid, particularly of the violence affecting young girls and boys. Many have opted to stay home, stop working or avoid sending their children to school, while others are considering moving to places they consider safer. In the past year, the number of Venezuelan children enrolled in schools in Ecuador has halved (article in Spanish), mainly due to relocation within or outside the country for several reasons, including violence. The displacement of Ecuadorians has also increased sharply, with over 57,000 crossing the Darien jungle in 2023 alone and a total of 46,000 Ecuadorian asylum-seekers worldwide. Three out of four Ecuadorians interviewed by UNHCR in Panama after crossing the Darien cited violence and insecurity as their reason for leaving the country. Now, an entire generation of young people fear for their futures and mental health, while families face increasing financial and social pressures because of the violence. "There is a lot happening outside and I [was] often afraid walking to and from school, especially when we finished late," said Gloria. "But what has really made a difference for me is the support I've found here and the friendships I have been able to make in school in the past two years." For displaced young

people like Gloria, school became a place to build a network where she felt welcome and safe, despite the violence in the streets outside. "One time, my classmates asked me about our situation, how I couldn't afford bus fees or school supplies, and all of a sudden they collected money and supplies for me," she recalled with a smile.

Tackling discrimination

Although Ecuador has a generous policy enabling children of all nationalities to attend school, the lack of resources for school supplies and uniforms, as well as discrimination and xenophobia, pose additional barriers for them to integrate, flourish and finish their education. UNHCR and partners work directly with communities and schools across the country to assist families most in need. One approach - carried out in over 250 schools since 2019 - is called Breathing Inclusion (Respiramos Inclusión in Spanish). It encourages children and teachers to explore concepts of identity, diversity, justice, and social change to help combat prejudice and discrimination. It also tackles xenophobia through games and community activities. "Going to school is not just the academic part. It's a place where children interact with peers and find their place in society," explained Ismenia Íñiguez, UNHCR's Senior Education Assistant in Ecuador. "Investing in the education of refugee and local children translates to an investment in the communities where they both live. In the end, it means the protection circle around children expands further." In places like Otavalo, an Andean town in Ecuador's northern province of Imbabura, UNHCR and partners complement this methodology with Community Champions, an afterschool programme where refugee and Ecuadorian children meet to learn about sports, reinforce soft skills, and find a safe space away from the violence lurking in their neighbourhoods. For young Venezuelan boys like 11-year-old Ernesto Suárez* and his siblings, it has made a big difference. "On my first day, I was very shy, I didn't play with anyone. But now the whole classroom welcomes me and plays with me," said Ernesto, who attends one of the schools implementing UNHCR's Breathing Inclusion methodology. Fortunately for Gloria and her classmates, schools reopened in early March, allowing them to attend their graduation in person. Now she is thinking about how to turn her experiences to positive use in the future. "I dream of going to university and becoming a psychologist, to help other children like me find a safe place in school."

Names changed for protection reasons.

Appendix P - Asia and Pacific Hope-Narrative Example 1

Harvesting honey in Afghanistan raises hopes for a sweeter future

A beekeeping project is creating livelihoods for Afghan women and men and helping the environment.

donate

By Caroline Gluck in Guzara district, western Afghanistan, 20 August 2024 - Also available in: Français Español

Dressed in a white protective suit, gloves, and a hat with mesh netting covering her face, Hadia, a young mother-of-three, carefully lifts a wooden frame from a beehive. Hundreds of bees swarm around her as she gently brushes others off the comb that has formed inside and places the frame in a box, which she will take home to extract her first honey harvest. She allows herself a nervous smile.

Hadia and her husband were refugees in Iran who have been struggling to support their family in Dehzaq village, in western Herat province, since returning to Afghanistan several years ago. It is an impoverished rural area and, like most families here, they have no regular work and many debts. "We face a lot of problems," says the 25-year-old. "When your financial situation isn't good, you can't improve your life or ensure your children's future. You can't buy things for them like clothing and food or support their education." So, when the chance arose to take part in a beekeeper training programme, and with women encouraged to apply, Hadia leapt at the opportunity. Since the de facto authorities took power three years ago, women in Afghanistan have faced increasing restrictions on their right to work, travel and study, severely limiting their participation in public life and their ability to earn a living. "I have long had a dream to stand on my feet and have a job," says Hadia. "We are so happy to have this opportunity, and we are determined to use it." She lives in one of five villages in Guzara district where 50 participants – 38 of them women – are learning how to keep bees. The project is being run by the Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA), a partner of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, which brought in local beekeeping experts as trainers. Each participant received protective clothing and start-up kits including frames, a honey extractor, and five hives each containing around 70,000 honeybees. As well as learning how to care for the bees, participants are provided with the knowledge and skills to start their own businesses selling honey and byproducts such as beeswax, royal jelly and propolis (a resin-like material produced by bees which is often used to fight bacteria and viruses). Support is also provided to help them establish markets for their products. With the project also being run in central and eastern regions of Afghanistan, a total of 200 people are receiving training under the programme, with support from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund, the Islamic Development Bank and the Saudi Fund for Development. While rural villages are often regarded as conservative, the participation of women has been welcomed by communities since the work can be carried out close to home, often involves other family members and has clear economic benefits. In Kala Gerd village, 54-year-old mother of seven, Halima, another former refugee in Iran, has struggled since her husband became too sick to work and a series of devastating earthquakes that struck Herat province last October damaged their house and crops. But after taking part in the beekeeping training, her first honey harvest has yielded 26 kilograms of honey, and she is looking forward to becoming the family's main breadwinner. "My family are so proud and happy that their mother has a job and soon, an income," she smiles. She will use her profits to buy

food and clothes for the family, but she also plans to invest in more hives. Her biggest concern now is protecting her bees from pests, especially giant hornets. Clutching a broom, she demonstrates how she deals with the hornets – fearlessly beating them with the twigs. "I have to crush them, otherwise they'll kill my bees," she says. "Our bees will be our main source of income, and I'm determined to look after them." Beyond helping to sustain individual families, the project has broader benefits for these rural communities where most people make a living from farming. Bees contribute to local biodiversity and are important pollinators, points out WASSA's beekeeping project supervisor, Jalil Ahmad Frotan, who has been keeping bees for 13 years, and has around 100 hives of his own. "Research has proved that if we put hives, for example in an apple orchard, we can increase our yield by five times. So, it is very important that we extend this kind of project, and we share the benefits of pollination with our farmers. "There is no food without bees," he adds. In the same village as Halima, father-of-10, Hafizulla, also a refugee returnee, said the project has given him new purpose and drive. "I was jobless and depressed. Beekeeping is keeping me very busy; I plan to continue this and expand my bees. "Hopefully, it can help create a better life for my family –our life can become sweeter, like honey."

Appendix Q - Asia and Pacific Hope-Narrative Example 2

Visually impaired women find hope in eastern Afghanistan

With tailored support, women who are blind are gaining the education, skills, and confidence to build a brighter, more independent future.

donate

By Faramarz Barzin in Samarkhel, Afghanistan, 2 July 2024 Also available in: Français Español عربي

Inside a small, makeshift classroom in a village in Nangahar Province in eastern Afghanistan, a group of blind young women are gathered for a lesson in communications. Socially isolated and frequently physically and psychologically abused, women who are visually impaired in Afghanistan spend most of their lives behind closed doors, denied the opportunity to go to school, learn life skills, or start a family.

But in this classroom – and others like it set up by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and its partner WADAN, the Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan, in two neighbouring provinces – the women come together, socialize, listen to each other's experiences and learn new skills to help them navigate the world and thrive in it, gaining self-confidence and independence. "I have faced a lot of challenges being blind," said 22-year-old Arezo, who lives in the provincial capital Jalalabad and attends the Visually Impaired Women Support Programme in Samarkhel. "While others with sight could attend school, I was left behind." Now, at last, she is catching up. Arezo is one of 90 visually impaired students who enrolled in the programme in late 2022 and has since learned to read Braille and do basic maths, use a guide cane to walk around safely and carry out domestic chores such as cooking and washing, which enables them to contribute to family life. The programme's success means it is this month being expanded to reach a further 200 women, with the hope that additional funding might make it accessible to men, girls and boys in the future.

Practical skills, psychological support

Beyond practical day-to-day skills, the training programme also includes psychosocial counselling and sessions on gender-based violence to equip the women to manage in a society in which visually impaired women are frequently met with stigma and hostility. Some of the women, such as Arezo, are also learning communication skills, hoping it might lead to previously unattainable job opportunities. For Arezo, it has meant the rare chance to continue learning and to improve her reading and writing skills. "We have been learning essential skills for effective interaction, including how to communicate with others, report information accurately, and even deliver impactful seminars," she said. Arezo is a passionate student motivated by her faith and desire to help other people who are blind and visually impaired. She has written a portion of the Koran in Braille, using the patterns of raised dots on a page to represent characters, making the religious text accessible to those who are blind. "It was one of my biggest dreams to write books," Arezo said. Of Afghanistan's 43 million population, more than 400,000 are blind, according to the World Health Organization. A further 1.5 million are visually impaired, with 60 per cent of blindness cases caused by cataracts, a condition that can be resolved with simple eye surgery if medical facilities are available.

'I can imagine a better future'

For Arezo and her fellow participants, the programme has opened up new horizons. Helai lost her sight after a traumatic encounter with militants when she was just 14, and for years struggled with the feelings of isolation and inadequacy that followed. "I faced a lot of problems because previously I could see," recalled Helai, now 20. "I couldn't go to school anymore and lost all the hope that I had in my heart. My mental health got worse." The opportunity to get out of the house and to meet and learn with other visually impaired women has transformed Helai's outlook on life. "I used to sit at home and couldn't go anywhere. But now I can do my own tasks and go anywhere without a guide," she said. "Coming here made me hopeful again." Another young woman who is blind, Amina, 20, lives in Jalalabad with her parents and nine siblings, five of whom are also visually impaired. Before joining the UNHCR/WADAN initiative, her dream of becoming a teacher for women who are blind seemed impossible, but the skills she has learned mean it may one day be realized. "Before, I felt a sense of inferiority compared to sighted individuals, as I could not read and write. While others who were sighted could go to school and study, we were still at home and had negative thoughts all the time," Amina said. "Now I know Braille and hope to become a Braille instructor for others. I can imagine a better future," she said. "I have become very hopeful. I see my life in a better way."

Appendix R - Asia and Pacific Hardship-Narrative Example 1

Communities in Afghanistan struggle to recover after devastating floods

Last month's catastrophic flash flooding in Afghanistan left thousands of families displaced and their homes and livelihoods in ruins. Now they need support to recover and rebuild.

donate

By Caroline Gluck in Ghor province, Afghanistan, 14 June 2024 - Also available in: Français Español

"This was a disaster in which everyone suffered," said mother-of-five Said Khanim outside her damaged home in Dara-e Shaikha village in Afghanistan's western Ghor province.

Exhausted and stressed, she tries to calm her restless toddler, Enamulla, as she surveys the havoc caused by flash floods that tore through the village in mid-May. When a torrent of water smashed through the doors and windows of her house, quickly rising to more than a meter, Said Khanim and her children ran for the safety of higher ground. But in the chaos, her four-year-old daughter Atifa was separated from them. Villagers found the girl's tiny body a few hours later, washed into a culvert. Catastrophic flash flooding and heavy rains last month killed at least 347 people, leaving more than 10,000 homes destroyed or damaged, displacing thousands of families and damaging agricultural land and public infrastructure, including roads and bridges, health facilities, water and sanitation infrastructure and schools. Since then, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and other humanitarian organizations have been providing essential aid, including emergency shelter, food and medical care, to help communities such as Said Khanim's to recover. Her family is now staying with neighbours, afraid to return home and fearful that deep cracks left in the walls have weakened the structure and could trigger another tragedy. But the damage is not just physical: Said Khanim's surviving children have nightmares and often wake up shouting. Making things harder still Said Khanim is dealing with all of this alone because her husband had travelled to look for work. "We don't have anything: no fuel for cooking, no food, nothing. We get some things from the neighbours but depend on tea and bread. We are deep in debt," she said. "We're living in great difficulty, without everything we had. I'm very concerned about the future."

Floods deepen vulnerabilities

No one escaped unscathed from the floods, which residents describe as unprecedented. "I can't remember anything like this in my lifetime," said 80-year-old Abdul Raouf, attending a psychosocial counselling session organized by UNHCR partners. Abdul Raouf's house collapsed in the flash floods, his belongings washed away, and his crops were destroyed. "We are looking for humanitarian attention and support. We need a lot of help," he said. Even before the floods, residents of Ghor province faced difficulties accessing food, and basic services. Located at the southwestern end of the Hindu Kush mountains, 2,500 above sea level, with unpaved roads and poor infrastructure, the region contends with drought in the summer and heavy snowfall in winter. The flash floods have deepened people's vulnerabilities, leaving them with limited means of coping. "Many people are traumatized because of the floods and others are facing financial uncertainty," said Parigul Habibi, a psychosocial support worker with UNHCR partner WASSA (Women's Activities and Social Services Association), who has been offering counselling sessions as part of a mobile response team providing a range of protection services.

The team includes UNHCR-trained Community Outreach Volunteers (COVs) who talk to people affected by the floods and ensure their needs and concerns are known and relayed to humanitarian organizations. "The flood has affected people both mentally and physically," said Parigul. "I met several women who suffered miscarriages because of the fear and anxiety after the floods."

Children suffer too

Children are among the worst affected, with parents reporting their youngsters being unable to sleep, suffering nightmares and bedwetting, and exhibiting uncharacteristic, extreme emotions since the floods, such as shouting and crying. "My son is very traumatized and my daughter has fever and diarrhoea," said Abdul Basir, a labourer, in Jar-e-Saifor village. "My son yells and wants to stay near me all the time. He is always holding my hand." Children in Dara-e Shaikha village used to study in tents, but now attend class outdoors and exposed to the elements after they were destroyed in the floods. Nevertheless, teacher Abdul Wahid Samadi is determined to continue classes as long as he can, providing some routine and structure for pupils suffering in the aftermath of the flooding. "We can use this place for a few days, and we want to continue their education, but students are getting sick," he said. "Some have diarrhoea or sore throats. We need agencies to help us with somewhere to study." Abdul Wahid added that already several families had moved away from the area in search of a new start after losing everything. With so many households losing what little they had – their homes, but also their sources of income such as crops and fruit trees, shops, motorbikes, and other assets – rebuilding will be hard. Gulbuddin Amiri, a displaced Afghan and father of six, now living in Dahan-e-Kandiwal village, lost his small charcoal stall in the local bazaar in the floods, while his remaining stock, stored at home, was also damaged, left coated in mud and unsellable. "I have nothing now," Gulbuddin said, outside his ruined, mud-covered rented home. "We don't have enough food, and we don't have shelter," he said. In his arms, he held his four-year-old son, Sadridin, who had just come back from hospital, suffering from flu. "We need everything," he said. "We are hungry and need help to return to our normal lives again."

Appendix S -Asia and Pacific Hardship-Narrative Example 2

Rohingya refugees risk dangerous sea route to Indonesia in search of safety and freedom

Increasing insecurity and restrictions in camps in Bangladesh are driving growing numbers of stateless Rohingya refugees to board smugglers' boats.

Donate

By Mitra Salima Suryono in Aceh, Indonesia, 25 April 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

Jannatara, 18, was six months pregnant and recently widowed when she boarded a boat from Bangladesh where she had been living in one of the sprawling camps for Rohingya refugees since fleeing persecution and violence in Myanmar in 2017.

After her husband was killed by unknown people in the camp last year, her parents had convinced her to leave for Indonesia. "My parents said, 'You are sad, your life is broken, and you cannot work in Bangladesh'. So, my mother decided that I should go," she said. "We spent 45 days on the boat. It was a difficult situation for me because I was pregnant. The whole time while on the boat, I kept praying, 'Allah save me'." The boat finally arrived in Indonesia's Aceh province three months ago. Now, she and her 10-day-old baby are sheltering in the basement of a convention hall building along with some 120 other Rohingya refugees who arrived at the end of last year.

Deadly route

They are among nearly 2,000 Rohingya refugees, most of them women and children, who have arrived in Indonesia's Aceh and North Sumatra provinces on 13 boats since November 2023. Earlier this year, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, described such sea journeys as among the deadliest in the world, with estimates showing that one Rohingya died or went missing for every eight who attempted the journey in 2023. In the latest tragedy, a boat carrying 151 Rohingya refugees capsized off the coast of West Aceh on 20 March. Rescue operations were only able to save 75 of them. After witnessing the killing of her parents and siblings in Myanmar six years earlier, Sofia, a 33-year-old mother of six, said she and her husband made the decision to leave Bangladesh due to the increasing insecurity and lack of educational opportunities in the camps. "I thought my children's future could be ruined there so we decided to take the boat." Before the boat departed, the smugglers gathered hundreds of people in the woods and then loaded them onto several different boats. Sofia's boat was at sea for 16 days. "On the fifth day, we ran out of food and water," she said. "And then a women died. We all prayed for her in Islam rituals and then we threw the body to the sea. For 10 days, there was not enough clean water, so the children drank sea water that we mixed with lime." She was travelling with five of her children and each of them fell ill during the journey. They have all since recovered three months after arriving in Aceh where they are staying with 130 other Rohingya refugees at Kulam Batee site next to the beach in Pidie. Living conditions at the camp in Aceh are difficult and overcrowded with the refugees living in communal, open-sided tents that offer little protection from the elements. Recently, Sofia's youngest child fainted from the heat. "There was foam coming from her mouth; I thought she had died," said Sofia. Her greatest wish now is to be reunited with her oldest son, Shofiuddin, who came to Indonesia several years ago with a relative. Now aged 15, he is attending school in Medan, capital of North Sumatra province.

Sohidul, 24, who is also staying in the convention hall basement, had just secured a job teaching English at one of the camp learning centres in Bangladesh when a spate of kidnappings for ransom drove him to board a boat. "If they got me, they want money [and] I have no money," he explained. "If my family didn't pay, they will kill me. That's why I left; because of fear." The refugees have faced a mixed reception after arriving in Indonesia. Some boats have been prevented from landing, a response heavily influenced by an online campaign of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech against the Rohingya. Despite this, many local Acehnese continue to show them solidarity and support. At the convention hall site, local people often bring food, clothes and other donations for the refugees while their basic needs are provided for by UNHCR and its partners. "I am thankful to the people in Indonesia," said Jannatara. "When I was still pregnant, everyone helped me in the hospital. Now they also give me the mattress for the baby, the clothes and medical care." When Sofia and her family landed in Kulam Batee, local people gave them soap, shampoo, clean drinking water and clothes. "The Rohingya refugees are no stranger to us, we know that they are not acknowledged as citizens in their home country, and that is why they come here to look for a new life that is decent for them and their family," said a local villager in Kulam Batee who did not wish to be named. "Sometimes we bring fruit and fish because they obviously can't just eat rice all the time." "However, we can only accommodate and help them temporarily," he added.

UNHCR support

Working with the authorities to identify longer-term accommodation for the refugees is one of the most pressing priorities for UNHCR as it will allow the agency to maximize protection for the group. UNHCR is also processing the refugees' asylum claims on behalf of the Indonesian Government, identifying caregivers for Rohingya children who have arrived without family members, and offering counselling to refugees who have experienced sexual exploitation, abuse or other forms of mistreatment. More funding is urgently needed to respond to the likely arrival of more boats and to address the root causes that are pushing Rohingya refugees to leave Bangladesh and preventing them from returning to Myanmar. Sohidul still dreams of a better future, "because everyone wants to have success in this life, so I want [that] too. I will try to be a graphic designer." Sofia's hopes are mainly for her children. "I know that I can't stay in Indonesia permanently, but I hope there will be another country that will take us … I have no preference as long as they allow us to live in peace."

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Appendix T - Europe Hope-Narrative Example 1

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Refugees paddle for inclusion in Seville

The Crew Together project in the Spanish city of Seville uses canoeing to promote refugees' integration as well as their physical and mental well-being.

By Lurdes Calvo, in Seville, Spain, 5 August 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

Fleeing war, Anastasia crossed a continent by train to reach Seville in southern Spain. Aliou spent days at sea on a dangerous journey to the Canary Islands to escape persecution. While their countries of origin are thousands of kilometres apart and they speak different languages, in Seville they have discovered a common passion: canoeing along the Guadalquivir River which flows through the city.

Just over two years ago, Anastasia was in her first year of a journalism degree at the University in Kyiv, living with her mother and younger sister, and leading the normal life of an 18-year-old girl. But one February morning, her life, like that of millions of Ukrainians, took a dramatic turn. At the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Anastasia and her family took refuge in a metro station. But after a week of anguish and uncertainty, they decided they had to leave. A woman they had met in the metro suggested they go to Seville together, where her friend had offered them a place to stay. After days of travel, nights spent in train stations and thousands of kilometres, Anastasia recalls arriving in a city of clear, blue skies "where we could finally breathe". At the beginning, it was not easy: adjusting to a new place and an unknown language while dealing with the pain of having left their loved ones and their country behind. But Anastasia was determined to learn Spanish and move forward, and the family received support from the Spanish NGO Accem. It was through Accem that Anastasia, her mother, and her sister learned about The Crew Together, a project of Dársena Deportiva Sevilla, a non-profit association that promotes water-based sports as a tool for social inclusion.

Breaking down barriers

After bringing canoeing to vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and victims of violence, Dársena Deportiva Sevilla successfully launched its first project with refugees in the autumn of 2023, fulfilling a commitment it had made at the Spain with Refugees Forum organized by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, earlier that year. "We realized that to make an impact we could not do a one-off activity. The real impact is when people develop a relationship with this space, [and] get to know different people," explains the association's president José Viñas. The need was clear, he adds: refugees and asylum-seekers struggle to access sport, either due to economic and social factors or lack of knowledge, while water sports have enormous potential to help them integrate into the city and to improve their physical and mental health. In recent days, the whole world has witnessed the power of sports to break down barriers and shift attitudes as the Refugee Olympic Team has competed at the Paris 2024 Games. Four members of the 37-strong team are canoeists, including Amir Rezanejad Hassanjani who said the canoeing club where he has trained since arriving in Germany in 2021 has become like family. Ahead of the Olympics, UNHCR Chief Filippo Grandi described sport as vital for millions of refugees and other forcibly displaced people. "It brings people together, benefits mental and physical health, gives children positive role models, and teaches valuable life lessons," he said.

- **See also: Largest-ever Refugee Olympic Team makes its entrance as Paris Games open**

Since arriving in Seville, Anastasia had watched boats crossing the Guadalquivir, and wished she was on one of them. She admits to feeling a little nervous on the day of her first canoeing class "but also full of energy and adrenaline because I was finally going to try it". Once the paddle was in her hands and she was in the water, her anxieties fell away. "For an hour I forgot all the things I was worried about – work, studies, the war – and I was able to relax."

Paddling together

Anastasia is one of the 300 refugees and asylum-seekers who have now participated in The Crew Together. Each session of some 20 participants starts with warm-up games and exercises designed to foster connections. Volunteers and instructors, numbering between four and six per class, then lead a group of children and adults. Everyone wears the same shirt, symbolizing that in The Crew, everyone is equal. "Through looks, gestures, words, we communicate very well," says Andrés, one of the instructors. "This sport is a work of cooperation – if we don't all paddle at the same pace, the canoe doesn't move forward. It's like life: whatever happens, you must paddle." In addition to UNHCR, the initiative relies on the support of public institutions in Andalusia, NGOs, universities in Seville, as well as the Sevilla Rowing Club, and the Andalusian Canoeing Federation. Proof of its impact is that people who started as participants have ended up joining as volunteers. This was the case for Aliou, a 27-year-old graphic designer, who arrived in Seville from Senegal in October 2023, after passing through the Canary Islands. After less than a year in the city, Aliou already feels at home, partly thanks to the camaraderie he has found through the canoeing project. After enduring a journey full of risks at sea, the water now has a liberating, almost therapeutic effect. "I feel free. I don't worry about problems; I don't worry about anything, just about the paddle and doing sports," he says with a smile. Although he is passionate about the sport, he highlights teamwork and the contact with people from other cultures as the most positive aspects of the project. Perhaps the other secret to The Crew Together's success is the opportunity to discover Seville from another perspective while learning about its traditions through local instructors and volunteers. "Paddling along the Guadalquivir canal helps me fall in love with Seville over and over again," says Anastasia.

Appendix U - Europe Hope-Narrative Example 2

Microcredit helps Ukrainian refugees start businesses in Georgia

A programme that provides business mentoring and micro-finance to Ukrainian entrepreneurs is helping them support themselves and other refugees.

By Nino Kajaia in Batumi, Georgia, 27 February 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

While strolling through the city centre of Batumi, a port city on Georgia's Black Sea coast, a small Ukrainian café is sure to catch your eye. Adorned with colourful murals and filled with Ukrainian symbols and ornaments, "Like at Home" is a welcoming space that has quickly become a favourite spot for both local and refugee families.

Owner Irina Dotsenko, a 67-year-old Ukrainian from Kharkiv, describes it as the "Ukrainian soul in Georgia". The name is based on the heart-felt compliments of Ukrainian customers reminded of dishes they used to enjoy back home such as Borsch, Holubsti and Deruny. Irina believes it to be fitting, as she brought with her the cherished recipes she, her mother and her grandmother used to prepare in Ukraine before Russia's full-scale invasion of the country in 2022. Unable to cook for her family, who remain in Ukraine, she channels her care into cooking for other refugees from Ukraine, as well as for the local community. "The pain of Ukraine is my pain," she says. "But it's a nighttime pain. During the day, my mind is occupied with the people – their worries, and the hustle for work." Amidst the chaos of full-scale war and the unprecedented numbers of Ukrainian refugees arriving to Georgia, Irina initially organized food banks to support those in need. But soon she recognized the employment challenges faced by many Ukrainians, and she began hiring some of them. Now, 30 out of 44 of her employees are Ukrainian refugees, while the rest are made up of a wide range of nationalities, including Georgians.

A financial product designed for refugees

But her small café with its 12 tables needed only half that number of staff and she was soon faced with a dilemma. "I take responsibility for each person working with me – no exceptions," she says. "The simplest solution would be let people go, but that's not a viable solution." Instead, she decided to open a second café. With limited financial resources of her own, she stumbled across an advertisement for Crystal, a microfinance institution in Georgia that had recently launched a programme specially designed to assist refugees from Ukraine. Irina promptly applied for a micro-credit loan, which she received within three days following a meeting with Crystal. The additional finance transformed her aspirations into reality, enabling her to purchase the necessary kitchen appliances and equipment to open the second café in December 2023. Of some 245,000 refugees from Ukraine who have crossed the border into Georgia since February 2022, about 26,600 Ukrainians remain in Georgia today, many of them from heavily war-affected areas in the east of Ukraine. They can access healthcare and education, as well as cash assistance for the most vulnerable, but finding work and affordable housing can be challenging. Since launching in 2022, Crystal's programme for Ukrainians, which includes business mentoring services in addition to micro-finance, has helped over 30 Ukrainian entrepreneurs like Irina to support themselves and other refugees.

Tackling stereotypes

The founder and chairman of Crystal, Archil Bakuradze believes that providing job opportunities and business development is the most effective way to support refugees. An internally displaced person from Abkhazia, the breakaway region of Georgia, he understands the importance of solidarity and support in rebuilding lives. His company was established 25 years ago by a group of young people displaced from Abkhazia. It is now the largest microfinance institution in Georgia. "It is very important to tackle the stereotype that refugees may be a problem or be risky customers. We know ourselves that most refugees are talented, economically active people, and displacement helps mobilize them even more than usual," he says. "Globally, the idea of supporting the financial inclusion of refugees is a sensible policy, and we would encourage any other financial institution to think about having such programmes for refugees." Following discussions with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, his company will soon be extending its financial programmes to refugees of different nationalities living in Georgia, enabling them to start and expand their businesses. "This type of financial assistance is crucial for individuals, and it contributes significantly to the country's economy," says Irina, as she opens the doors to her second "Like at Home" café in Batumi. "We've also become useful to Georgia."

Appendix V - Europe Hardship-Narrative Example 1

In Spain, a survivor of gender-based violence finds her voice

Aminata Soucko survived gender-based violence including female genital mutilation and forced marriage, before setting up an association to help other refugee women.

By Lurdes Calvo in Valencia, Spain, 5 December 2024 Also available in: Español

When Aminata Soucko arrived in Spain from Mali she was like a prisoner. Unable to speak the language and trapped at home by a violent husband whom she had been forced to marry, Aminata was desperate and alone.

"My husband was my translator. I didn't understand anything in Spanish, and he didn't want me to learn Spanish either," she said. One day, she slipped out of their home in the eastern city of Valencia, and bumped into a woman from Mali who helped her find a language course. That chance encounter was the start of a dramatic shift in Aminata's life, one that has seen her become an inspiration and source of sanctuary for others struggling to recover from female genital mutilation (FGM) and other forms of gender-based violence. "Learning Spanish has been like a door to freedom and an escape from all the violence I was experiencing," she said.

Dreams destroyed

Born in culturally conservative Mali, Aminata was one of 30 siblings and as a newborn child endured the harmful traditional practice of FGM, whereby female genital organs are altered or injured for non-medical reasons. Growing up, Aminata worked hard to pursue her ambitious dream of becoming a doctor and was on course when, aged 17 and on the verge of completing high school, she was forced to marry. When Aminata was told she was going to her wedding instead of school, she broke down in tears. Trapped in a stifling and violent marriage, Aminata was forced to leave Mali to live with her husband who found work in Spain. "In my culture, when a woman marries, it's the man who decides your destiny," she said. It was not until she learnt to speak Spanish that freedom came within reach and Aminata felt able to take the courageous step of reporting her abusive husband to the authorities. "I was the first woman among all my fellow countrywomen here to file a complaint. It was very difficult. There was a lot of physical and sexual violence [in my marriage]," she said. The move was not without costs: Aminata has been rejected by her family and ostracized for breaking cultural norms and speaking out against gender-based violence, discrimination and FGM.

A network of support

Her association, Red Aminata (Aminata Network in Spanish), advocates for an end to FGM and gender-based violence. In partnership with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, it provides refugee women with Spanish language classes and a safe space to share their stories and build a community. "We are a network of women who support each other. If I have something to share, we share it together. If we need to cry, we cry together," Aminata said. Attending the classes is "an opportunity for women to leave their houses, learn about their rights, and understand that they also have the right to seek asylum." FGM causes extreme physical and psychological harm and is internationally recognized as a severe human rights violation, yet it persists globally, with around 600,000 survivors in Europe alone. Girls and women who fear persecution in the form of FGM – or have survived FGM – can claim refugee status, but Aminata did not discover this until she had gone through the painful birth of a child, during which she

suffered complications due to the consequences of FGM. Afterwards, doctors told her of the possibility of clitoral reconstructive surgery and other treatments to support recovery from FGM. Aminata signed up immediately and, as she learnt more about the damaging effects of FGM – which 230 million women worldwide have been subjected to, often resulting in chronic pain and psychological trauma – she was inspired to train as a community health worker to help others in her situation.

A new generation

Now, in partnership with medical non-governmental organization Farmamundi, she accompanies refugee women through the reconstructive process as interpreter and more. "I am there both in the consultation and on the day of surgery in the operating room," she said. "I am like their psychologist, their mother, their aunt, because I have lived through it." Other survivors have become an important part of Red Aminata, using their experiences to help spread information about FGM, its prevention and recovery in their communities. Aminata plans to strengthen the network still further by opening a specialist centre to support women and girls who have been victims of different forms of gender-based violence including FGM in their countries of origin. While seeking freedom for survivors like herself, Aminata is also ensuring that the harmful cultural practices she suffered are not passed on to a new generation and is committed to countering their myths: "In my culture, a single mother raising children is seen as a woman unfit to provide proper education," she said. Aminata has two children and says that when the time comes, her daughter will choose whom she wants to marry. "I will not force her into anything like what happened to me."

Appendix W - Europe Hardship-Narrative Example 2

Escaping airstrikes in Eastern Ukraine: an 82-year-old's journey to safety

With intensified hostilities in eastern regions of Ukraine, Nina Ryazantseva was among thousands of people who have fled or been evacuated from frontline communities in recent months.

By Chadi Ouanes in Dnipro, Ukraine, 7 October 2024 - Also available in: Français Español

As fighting raged around her village in the north of Ukraine's Donetsk region in August, 82-year-old Nina Ryazantseva – affectionately known as 'Baba Nina' – was hiding in the basement of her house.

She had been there for weeks, hungry and isolated, since rumours began spreading that Russian forces were advancing towards the village. In early August, the Ukrainian authorities began evacuating villagers, but Nina was reluctant to leave the house she had spent years building, brick-by-brick. She was still in the basement on 9 August when an explosion reduced her house to rubble. Shaken and deafened by the blast, she emerged from the wreckage and fled carrying only her documents, a few photos and a scrap of paper with her emergency contact number on it. She had written the same number on her hands and arms. "If I didn't survive and the paper was lost, I wanted anyone who found me to know who to call." Since August, intensified aerial attacks and hostilities by advancing Russian forces have ravaged Donetsk, a region that has been partially occupied since 2014, with further areas seized since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Nina was among more than 111,000 people who have fled or been evacuated by authorities and volunteers since August. Those who remain face severe shortages of vital resources, including water and gas. Most villagers had already evacuated by the time Nina left the ruins of her house. The streets were deserted, and the air filled with smoke. "My village, Serhiivka, was completely burned down; not a single house survived," Nina recalled, her head bowed. "It's where I planned to spend the rest of my life. It kept me connected to my past."

A nomadic life

Despite her reluctance to leave Serhiivka, much of Nina's earlier life had been defined by movement – whether for adventure or survival. Born in Zhytomyr, a region in northwest Ukraine, she grew up at a time when people roamed long distances in search of work and opportunity. At 22, she left for Kazakhstan, where she worked as a tractor driver and mechanic. "I was one of the few women working in the field back then," she said proudly. "I remember passing those tough driving tests on tractors. But for me, it wasn't just a job, it was about pushing boundaries and living on my terms." Nina's years operating tractors in Kazakhstan brought her pride and independence, but after two decades in a physically demanding job, she settled in Serhiivka, where she found work maintaining the heating system at the local school. Years later, as she left what remained of Serhiivka behind, she followed the tree line and crouched low when she had to break cover and cross through the fields. "I hunched when I walked to avoid being spotted by drones or caught in gunfire," Nina explained. "I sat down whenever I sensed a threat. There was gunfire from both sides." When she finally encountered two men, she had already put tens of kilometres behind her. "When they asked how I'd made it this far, I said, 'I know every field in this region by heart'." Seeing how exhausted she was, they offered her water, bread, and chocolate. Nina was determined to continue alone, but the men insisted on

contacting the White Angels, a state-coordinated relief group responsible for humanitarian interventions and evacuations in Ukraine's conflict zones.

Better days to come

Local responders eventually brought Nina to a transit centre for evacuees in Mezhova, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, which is supported by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. As one of the main hubs for evacuees, the centre has provided Nina and hundreds of others with much-needed relief and support. UNHCR and its partners have strengthened the centre's capacity by providing beds and bedding, psychosocial support, help accessing social services, and legal counselling for those who lost documents during their flight. UNHCR is also supporting other transit centres that are receiving thousands of evacuees from the Donetsk region, including one in Pavlohrad, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, that opened in September and has quickly become one of the busiest in Ukraine. Serhii Petrovskyi, who heads up UNHCR partner, Proliska's office in Dnipropetrovsk region, said that most evacuees from Donetsk arrive in a state of shock. "They've lost their homes, many are separated from family, and they don't know what's coming next. The stress is overwhelming, and many are struggling to cope," he said. "Our aim is to provide immediate psychological support just to help them start thinking about what to do next." For Nina, the transit centre was a place where she could finally eat a proper meal, take a shower and sleep in comfort. "For the first time in a while, I felt safe and rested," she said. She stayed for a few days while waiting for family members to pick her up and take her to her native city of Zhytomyr. There, she planned to reunite with relatives and seek medical support. Despite her ordeal, Nina's voice remains loud and vibrant, filling the room with the same energy she once brought to the fields. Even after her nomadic life, she never imagined she would one day have to flee on foot through the rubble of her beloved village. But a lifetime of hard work has given her a strength and self-belief that were more than equal to the task. "Why do you think I still wear tracksuits?" she said. "I could still outrun half these young ones. I might not stand as tall anymore, but I'm still strong!"

Appendix X – Middle East and North Africa Hope-Narrative Example 1

Young Sudanese volunteer honoured for her selfless work supporting refugees in Egypt

Nada Fadol runs a youth-led community centre in Alexandria where forcibly displaced people receive free health-care services and skills training.

By Moulid Hujale in Alexandria, Egypt, 9 October 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

On a recent Wednesday morning, a group of refugees, mainly men and women from Sudan and Syria, fill the waiting room at a centre run by the Rouh Initiative in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria in northern Egypt.

By noon, around 60 patients with various medical needs have already been attended to. It is another busy day for 31-year-old Sudanese refugee, Nada Fadol, who has been running this multi-purpose centre since the Sudan war broke out in April last year and an influx of refugees began crossing the border into Egypt. Nada and her friends transformed a three-bedroom apartment into a one-stop shop to support refugees and asylum-seekers. A medical convoy operated by the Egyptian Red Crescent visits twice a month, offering free health-care services and medical check-ups. "We donate what we can to pay for the rent and running costs," she explains. "Rouh means soul in Arabic, because we are all one soul regardless of [our origin], whether we are Syrian, Sudanese or Egyptian."

Cutting a sandwich in half to share

Nada knows first-hand what it means to be displaced, having arrived in Alexandria in late 2015, alone and with nothing but determination to rebuild her life. Adapting to life in a new country was difficult. Without a job, and unable to continue her studies, she got tired of sitting idly at home. Instead, she decided to use her skills to tutor refugee children, mainly from Syria, living in her neighbourhood. "They used to ask me: 'How do I solve this problem?', 'how do I read this?', and 'how do I do that?' So, I decided to bring them all together and give them lessons at home." She soon built a strong reputation in the community, which meant more people sought her help. She decided to team up with other young refugees to start the Rouh Initiative as a means of mobilizing more support for refugees. Nada says the ethos of giving back and caring for others is deeply rooted in Sudanese culture and was instilled in her by her parents from a young age. "We were raised to never bring one sandwich to school; we would always carry two in case someone didn't have food," she says. "We did this because we knew how difficult it was for someone to say 'I have no food'. So that no person would feel like they were different from us, we would cut our sandwiches into pieces and eat together in a group." When hundreds of thousands of fellow Sudanese refugees fleeing violence began arriving in Egypt, Nada initially engaged other young people from the refugee and host communities in Alexandria to work with her to help families stranded in the southern border town of Aswan. Two of her friends travelled to Aswan to assess the situation and establish a connection with local youth in the city, and upon returning to Alexandria the group immediately started fundraising. "We raised funds from the people here [in Alexandria], then we sent it to our friends in Aswan to buy juice, water, and meals and deliver it to people arriving at the border," she says. As first responders on the ground, Nada and her friends, as she likes to call her team, managed to assist hundreds of new arrivals. In addition to providing them with hot meals and cash assistance,

they connected the most vulnerable, including children and the sick and elderly, to local residents who provided them with temporary housing.

Families torn apart

Before last April, she never imagined that her home country would plunge into violence. Her mother and two siblings came to Egypt for medical reasons just days before the war started. The rest of her family members were caught up in the conflict and fled in different directions. Desperate to find them, she created a group chat on Facebook Messenger to connect with other people looking for their loved ones. She found her elder sister through the group who then traced their father and the rest of the family. While some of her siblings have since reunited with her and her mother in Egypt, the rest of the family remains in Sudan. The group chat attracted hundreds of other people who continue to use it to track their families who are still trapped in the country. As the Sudan war stretches into a second year with no end in sight, an estimated 500,000 Sudanese refugees have so far been registered in Egypt by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. Such a large and rapid influx can overwhelm the resources of aid agencies, making initiatives such as Rouh vital in providing critical community-level assistance and psychosocial support to those forced to flee. In recognition of her selfless work and dedication to helping her fellow refugees, Nada has been selected as the 2024 regional winner for the Middle East and North Africa of the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award. "I am very happy about winning this award," she says with a huge smile. "I can't even describe how happy I am feeling right now." She was at the centre when she was told the news, which had yet to be made public. "My mouth was wide open, I wanted to scream. So, I ran downstairs to the street and found a corner. I let out a scream 'Aaaah!' and I went back as if nothing ever happened," she laughs.

Home, peace and love

Back in the centre, as soon as the last patients and doctors have left, the rooms are rearranged to prepare for the next activities of the day, which include training for young women on how to crochet and make canvas bags, followed by an art therapy session for adults and youth. Most of the activities are run by young refugee volunteers like 24-year-old Khalida Abas, whom Nada supported when she first arrived in the city last March. "I am grateful to Nada, she welcomed me to this country," she says. "I now train young women on how to make canvas bags twice a week." "Nada is like my elder sister," she adds. "I love her with all my heart; she is my role model, and I go to her for advice." The last activity of the day is a cultural get-together. More people arrive, including Egyptians, Syrians and Sudanese refugees, carrying fruit and homemade traditional food. The aroma of freshly roasted coffee swirls through the air along with the sounds of Sudanese songs playing on a portable speaker. Older adults sit at the back of the room near the window while young people, led by Nada and Khalida – each wearing a strikingly colourful Sudanese garment called a thawb – take turns dancing together in the middle. "Everyone looks forward to this," Nada says. "We come together once every two weeks to celebrate, dance, eat together, and play songs about home, peace, and love." Eventually, she hopes to expand her work beyond Egypt and reach more people in need. "[We can help] as much as we can with simple things," she says. "Why not find volunteers in other countries that have problems? It would be a beautiful thing if we were able to help as many people in need as possible, wherever they are."

Appendix Y - Middle East and North Africa Hope-Narrative Example 2

Former Syrian refugee brings healing and recovery to trauma survivors

Social entrepreneur Jin Davod developed an innovative online platform that has provided thousands of refugees in Türkiye and elsewhere with access to free mental health services.

By Kristy Siegfried in Şanlıurfa, Türkiye, 9 October 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

Jin Davod's first thought on being jolted out of her sleep before dawn on 6 February, 2023, was that a bomb, like the ones that had narrowly missed her and her family in Syria nine years earlier, was about to fall on their apartment building in Şanlıurfa, southern Türkiye. Within seconds, she realized it was not a bomb but an earthquake and that she, her parents and three younger siblings needed to get out of the building as quickly as possible.

"My father was trying to open the door, but it was shaking so much that he couldn't turn the key," recalls Jin. "It was seconds, but it felt like hours. Finally, when he opened the door, we ran as fast as we could." Barefoot and shivering in their pyjamas, the family made it to their car, where they would spend much of the next few days waiting for the aftershocks to subside. That same day, Jin went onto social media and shared a helpline for Peace Therapist, the online platform she had designed, built and launched a year earlier to connect refugees and Turkish citizens with mental health services in multiple languages. "I wrote that it was free for anyone affected by this earthquake," she says. Within hours, she received 200 requests for support and within days, several thousand. The requests came from both refugees and Turkish people who had been traumatized by the powerful 7.8 magnitude quake and the thousands of aftershocks that followed. "I was so shocked by the number, and I also felt the responsibility to do something for these people," Jin recalls. "So, I contacted our psychologists who were working remotely, and they started to do many hundreds of hours of psychological first aid."

Terrors of war

It was the type of support that Jin herself had so desperately needed when she arrived in Şanlıurfa with her family as a traumatized 16-year-old in 2014. She had spent a happy childhood in the northern city of Raqqa, where her father, Hasan, was a well-known dentist. Jin was a hard-working student, focused on her goal of studying medicine and becoming a doctor. "My life was planned – which university I would go to, what I would study, where I would stay." The conflict changed all that, but her family did not immediately recognize the danger. "The bombing and the fighting started to come but we were still not really understanding that this was war, and we should get out. Then ISIS came and the really bad things started." Jin's home was surrounded by government buildings that were occupied by the militants, making the neighbourhood a target for air strikes. The family huddled together in their apartment in a perpetual state of terror. "The sound of bombing was constant. I couldn't eat anything, and I didn't sleep at all because the moment I went to sleep, I thought I wouldn't see my family again," recalls Jin. The day a bomb landed in the garden outside their apartment building, blowing out one wall of Jin's bedroom, the family finally understood it was time to leave, but they had to wait several months for the right moment. When that moment arrived early one morning, they fled the city by car. Moments after they reached Türkiye, they received a phone call from a neighbour telling them that their apartment building had been destroyed by a bomb. There

would be no return to the home Jin had grown up in, and she would never know the fate of many of her friends and neighbours.

From trauma survivor to entrepreneur

In Şanlıurfa, the family moved into a rented apartment that Jin did not leave for a year. "I was in a miserable state," she says. "I had post-traumatic stress and nightmares. I didn't want to do anything; I just stared at the wall." She had yet to learn Turkish and knew of no counselling services available in her native language. Eventually, with her parent's encouragement, she decided to rekindle her dreams of studying medicine. She spent the next two years learning Turkish and studying for high school and university entrance exams before being accepted to Haran University, not to study medicine but her second choice, computer engineering. It was while attending two boot camps in her second year, one on developing Android applications and the other on entrepreneurship, that she came up with the idea for Peace Therapist. "At that moment, I started working on it; it was like a hope for me," she says. "For all of the hardships and experiences I had, I was sure someone else in another place was having them." She developed a detailed business plan and began working with software developers and psychologists to build the platform. The company launched two years later and now has a roster of 100 psychologists who provide online therapy sessions in Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish and English. While those who can afford it pay for individual or group sessions, vulnerable populations such as refugees can access them free of charge.

Reducing stigma

According to Suhail Ahmed, a Syrian psychologist who has been working with Peace Therapist for the past year, delivering therapy online addresses some of the barriers preventing people from seeking help with for their mental health. "This platform ensures confidentiality and that reduces stigma," he says. "By doing it online, they feel free to speak because there is no judgement, they can talk about even taboo topics." A common issue among his Syrian clients is trauma linked to the crisis and the earthquake, but also anxiety and depression relating to their situation in Türkiye. When a friend told Mahmut El Shekh, a 63-year-old former tailor from Raqqa, about Peace Therapist, he was sceptical, but he filled out the online form and was quickly connected with Suhail. "When Mr. Suhail asked me about my problem, I told him I feel like I have been alone for 100 years," recalls Mahmut. Back in Raqqa, he had been a social person with many friends. In Şanlıurfa, unable to work due to a neck injury, and grieving for family members he had lost during the war, he sank into depression. His sessions with Suhail became something he looked forward to. "He listened to me, and he sent me links to books we would discuss. He also encouraged me to do some exercise and start playing music again with my friends." Mahmut now feels better able to manage his mental health and to understand what his family members might be going through. "As Arab people, we don't think mental problems are a sickness you can ask for help with, but that's wrong." "Without Peace Therapist, maybe my life would still be empty," he says, adding that he now feels more hopeful about the future.

Born out of war

For her dedication to providing mental health support to refugees and other survivors of trauma, Jin has been selected as the 2024 regional winner for Europe of the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award. "The feedback from our beneficiaries is the biggest reward for me, but winning this award is so meaningful," she says. "It gives me the motivation and courage to continue this work." As recovery from the earthquake continues in Türkiye amid a weak economy, the need for Peace Therapist's services is only growing. Jin plans to expand the platform's reach by recruiting more psychologists and collaborating more with humanitarian organizations. "Peace

Therapy was born because of war, so our mission is always to build peace – inner peace and peace in the world," she says. "It all starts from inside of us."

Appendix Z -Middle East and North Africa Hardship-Narrative Example 1

Displaced families in Lebanon yearn for peace and a return home

In Lebanon, UNHCR's Grandi urges increased international support and an immediate cease-fire to ease the plight of some 1.2 million people displaced by deadly airstrikes.

donate

By Dalal Harb and Houssam Hariri in Beirut, Lebanon, 6 October 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

At a school in the Burj Hammoud neighbourhood of the Lebanese capital Beirut, classrooms and corridors that once rang with the sound of schoolchildren are now filled with exhausted families fleeing two weeks of deadly airstrikes that have killed hundreds and displaced an estimated 1.2 million people across the country.

One of the classrooms is now home to Umm Hassan Baisi, a Lebanese woman from the southern city of Nabatieh who fled with her daughter and grandchildren after their home was badly damaged. Following an arduous two-day journey by car to reach the capital, she and her daughter spent several days sleeping on the streets while the children slept in the vehicle. "I left with my daughter under the bombardment. We barely made it," Umm Hassan said. "We slept outside for two or three days until they found space in this school for us … Everyone is psychologically drained, not just us here inside the school – everyone." They are sharing the classroom with another displaced family. Mattresses are arranged on the floor and their belongings are packed into plastic bags hanging from the walls on pupils' coat hooks. While Umm Hassan described conditions inside the school as uncomfortable, she said they were "a million times better" than being on the streets. What she and the other 1,200 people currently living at the school hope for more than anything is an end to the attacks and a lasting solution to the crisis that will allow them to return home. "Half of my house was destroyed," she said. "We hope that we will return home and this situation is solved, for everyone displaced to return to their home. We hope that we can … rebuild and go back to how we were living." During a visit to Lebanon on Sunday to express his solidarity and mobilize support for those affected, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi met with Umm Hassan and other families living at the school. Afterwards, he called for an urgent ceasefire and greater international support to respond to the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe. "This should be a place where children go to learn, to play, to spend time together. And yet, in the past few weeks, this has become a makeshift shelter for 1,200 people displaced from other parts of Lebanon that are currently affected by the conflict," Grandi said. "We need of course to provide people that are stranded in locations like this school with the basics: food, cash, water and sanitation, and items for everyday survival," he added. "But most of all, we need this situation to stop. What is needed in this country, first and foremost, is a ceasefire … so that all the people that are displaced and all those that are affected can resume their normal lives."

Emergency response

Since the start of intensified Israeli airstrikes on 23 September, teams from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, have been supporting the government's response efforts. Staff are delivering emergency items including blankets, mattresses and medical trauma kits, and equipping many of the 900 temporary shelters opened by the authorities in schools and other public buildings to house displaced families. In addition to the 1.2 million people estimated by the government

to have fled their homes, between 200,000 and 300,000 people have crossed the border from Lebanon into Syria to escape the airstrikes, including Syrians, Lebanese and Palestinian refugees. Just across town in the Barbir neighbourhood of the capital, Shaza Faris is a 59-year-old Syrian refugee who has lived in Lebanon since fleeing Damascus in 2013. She and her extended family are now crammed into her brother's small three-roomed apartment along with his wife and four children after fleeing their home in Beirut's southern suburbs amid heavy airstrikes two weeks ago. "There was no time to take any decisions. As soon as the strike started, we fled," Shaza said. "My granddaughters are 9, 7 and 3 years old. They started crying and screaming. The eldest said: 'Get us out of the war. There's war here and we don't want to stay'." Shaza works as a volunteer with the NGO Caritas and continues to help those she can despite her own family's displacement. "We check on the Lebanese people and colleagues who have been displaced. We try to help them as much as possible to provide accommodation and other requirements like food," she explained. "We check on all people here, be it Lebanese, Syrian or Palestinian. We're all human beings." Like everyone affected by the ongoing crisis, her main wish is a return to normality as quickly as possible. "We hope that the situation gets better and that we can go back to our home, go back to our safe life," Shaza concluded. "May God heal the injured and bring back security and safety to Lebanon."

Appendix Æ-Middle East and North Africa Hardship-Narrative Example 2

Syrian refugees face waning support and hope after 13 years

Zuhur is among more than 5 million Syrians still living as refugees 13 years into the crisis, but Lebanon's economic turmoil and decreased humanitarian support have pushed her and others to the brink.

donate

By Nadine Mazloum in Tripoli, Lebanon, 14 March 2024 - Also available in: Français Español عربي

When Zuhur, 44, fled to Lebanon with her family at the onset of the Syrian crisis in early 2011, she thought it would be only a matter of days before they returned home.

"I carried my youngest son, whom I had just given birth to, and crossed the border with my four other children. We did not even pack a bag of belongings; we truly believed we would not stay in Lebanon for too long," Zuhur recalled. But as days stretched to months and then years, Zuhur's yearning for home was increasingly eclipsed by the day-to-day struggle for survival. Thirteen years after the crisis began, she is one of more than 5 million Syrians still living as refugees in neighbouring countries in the region. "We have lost 13 years of our lives," Zuhur said. In Lebanon, which hosts the largest share of refugees per capita in the world, a dire economic crisis that began in 2019 has caused widespread misery, including for the more than 780,000 registered Syrian refugees. Food prices have more than tripled while unemployment has more than doubled, pushing an estimated 80 per cent of Lebanese into poverty. For Lebanese and Syrian refugee families who were already struggling before the economic crisis, the last five years have been ruinous. Among Syrians, levels of child labour, early and forced marriages and food insecurity are all on the rise. More than half of refugees live in substandard or unsafe accommodation, and over a third of adults report limiting their food intake to ensure their children are fed. Like many Syrian refugees, Zuhur and her family live in an informal tented settlement that offers little protection from the extremes of weather that the north of the country experiences. "In the wintertime, the rains flood the tents, and everything we have is drenched. We burn what we can in this stove to keep warm, like plastic bags, shoes, and bottles." Zuhur – who worked as a nurse back in Syria after completing her education – blames the sooty fumes released by the burning waste for her daughter's asthma. Her medical knowledge has come in handy over the past 13 years, allowing her to care for her family and many friends and neighbours. "I tend to whoever needs help around me, but there are some wounds that you can't heal," she explained. Zuhur's husband has a disability that prevents him from working, leaving the family entirely dependent on the financial assistance they receive from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the little money her children earn from menial work such as collecting recyclable materials. Even then, they face a constant struggle to cover the spiralling cost of food, fuel and rent. Such hardship has become a fact of life for many of the over 5 million Syrian refugees in the region. Their plight is compounded by the fact that, while humanitarian needs are reaching unprecedented levels due to economic shocks and prolonged displacement, international funding for the regional plan to meet the needs of the most vulnerable refugees and their host communities has decreased to below 40 per cent. This has forced UNHCR and other partners to make agonizing decisions on how best to prioritize limited resources. By far the hardest thing for Zuhur over the past 13 years, however, has been to watch her children grow up without the education she herself enjoyed. "My son picks up plastic

from the side of the road for a living. He can barely read or write," she explained. "My children encountered a lot of discrimination at school. He couldn't learn anything. It breaks my heart because I am educated. The distances are also a factor, I will not send my daughter to school if it means her having to walk an hour to get there. I fear for her safety." As a result, Zuhur has had to make difficult choices to do what she feels is best for her family. One of her sons, Khaled, was considering offers made by smugglers to attempt the dangerous sea journey to Europe in search of a better future, so his mother, desperate to save him from such a risky journey, arranged a marriage for him just shy of his 18th birthday to dissuade him. "I consider myself to be aware of matters, and I do understand that early marriage is not favourable and even wrong, but I had to arrange my son's marriage to divert his attention from the boat," she explained. "I do not want to lose him. A tent is sometimes safer than the dream of a home," she concluded. "What matters to me is keeping my family together. Even if it means marriage; I will do whatever it takes to keep us together."

Appendix Ø – NVivo Code List

CODES
Nodal point
Key nodal point
Chain of equivalence
Floating signifiers
Hegemony
Antagonism
Keywords
Metaphors
Pronouns
Labels
High modality
Low modality
Active voice
Passive voice
Subject
Object
Quotes by refugees
Quotes by others
Intertextuality
Interdiscursivity