

UNHCR Pledging Conference: UK statement

We are experiencing a year of unprecedented challenges. As the impacts of COVID-19 are felt far and wide, humanitarian need has more than doubled. Nearly 80 million people have been forced to flee their homes as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations, and more than one per cent of the population is forcibly displaced.

These shocking figures are a stark reminder of the human cost in lives interrupted, hopes and aspirations derailed – and the impact is greatly magnified by COVID-19.

Throughout all this UNHCR have stayed the course, continuing to deliver life-saving support in some of the most challenging environments. This is a testament to your commitment and bravery, and for this we thank you. The UK has a proud tradition of supporting refugees and we have ensured their needs are addressed in the COVID-19 response and more widely.

In 2019 the UK contributed \$122 million. This year we again provided un-earmarked, flexible funding, including over \$25 million for the COVID-19 response, and making an early payment, giving UNHCR increased flexibility early in the year.

We have already committed \$18.7 million for 2021 and this figure will grow as more programmes are designed and agreed.

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy means there is uncertainty about 2021. We will have to make difficult choices with our aid budget. However, our commitment to UNHCR and to supporting the world's forcibly displaced remains steadfast.

Looking forward, the UK is deeply concerned that we are facing the very real risk of a 'crisis within a crisis', with some 30 million people in emergency levels of food insecurity.

The causes are complex, but we know that it will again be the most vulnerable who will bear the brunt of this crisis, including refugees.

The UK is leading a global call to action to protect the world's poorest people from coronavirus and the increasing threat of famine.

The UK has been a long-standing champion of a more sustainable approach to refugee crises – one that benefits refugees and hosts alike.

We are wholly committed not only to saving lives in responding to the immediate crisis, but to ensuring forcibly displaced people can begin to build a better future for themselves and their families.