Working with refugees, a life-changing experience

New Delhi, India: Working as a UN Volunteer in an organisation like UNHCR is a life changing experience. It takes you out of your bubble and gives you the opportunity to understand real issues faced by people—people like you and me, people who have similar dreams and ambitions. As life forced them to become refugees in a land that is not their own, challenging their life skills and adaptation capabilities, they somehow find the resilience, the courage and determination to rebuild their lives.

As a UNV Protection Assistant with UNHCR in New Delhi, I work with people like this—people who are called refugees. People who were forced to leave their country and to rebuild their lives in India. UNHCR in India works closely with the Government to support over 30,000 refugees and asylum seekers, providing protection and assistance to ensure they live in safety and dignity in urban areas around India.
So where do I fit in the refugee protection and assistance framework? As part of the UNHCR Protection team, I am at the front-line on a daily basis with refugees who require assistance and support from UNHCR and partners, and I ensure that appropriate measures are taken to support them.

The issues they face vary from not being able to find a job in a foreign land to medical concerns, documentation issues or children requiring admission. Sometimes, all they really want is a listening ear and for someone to shed hope and light.

Of late, I have been exposed to UNHCR's Biometrics Enrolment System (BIMS), where I support the protection team in capturing biometric photos of refugees and asylum seekers in remote village locations outside Delhi. This is to ensure that refugees are adequately protected through effective documentation. Bringing my additional educational skills with me to my job, I also support UNHCR India in conducting geographical-mapping (GIS) of refugee areas outside Delhi, so as to provide for better population mapping and management.

I also work to support refugees with disabilities—to ensure their equitable inclusion in programmatic interventions. Children with learning disabilities have also been enrolled in special schools. Nothing makes one happier than to see their little faces lit up with hope for a better future. I am glad to be able to make a difference.

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