

‘When I was eight years old, and cold and hungry, I was given food and water and I was sheltered. After I had these things I had to ask, where did all these things come from? I wanted to see who this person was. All I wanted to do was say thank you.’

Adut Dau Atem, a refugee from Sudan who survived with help from supporters of the UN Refugee Agency

My message of hope for refugee children this Christmas:

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‘Children don’t understand why they have become refugees, and have to live in a camp. They can be resourceful and resilient, in ways that surprise and amaze me – for instance making little toys from scrap bottles and cans, playing football with balls made from rags. But they are afraid and asking when they’ll finally be able to go home. Games distract them for a while, as they do for children the world over, but the reality is that what they really need are the gifts you could provide.’

Lyndell Findlay, UN Refugee Agency Job Title

Working in refugee camps as I do, helping to organise emergency relief, I know just how hard life can be for refugees. I am also extremely aware of the enormous difference that basic help makes in their struggle to survive.

In Chad last Christmas, the camps were battered day after day by powerful sandstorms, turning the air orange with choking, blinding dust. People had nowhere to shelter until we were able to deliver the thousands of tents needed, and they were forced to huddle beneath blankets, desperately waiting for the storms to pass.

The sandstorms will return this Christmas, as they do this time every year, and the winds will tear through the camps once again. There will be thousands more people needing shelter to protect them, and other basic supplies – as there will be in most of the countries where we work.

In my experience it is children who suffer most when we are unable to offer refugees our help. Growing children are so vulnerable when there is not enough to eat, enough clean water to drink, or proper shelter from the weather. Children suffer in another way too. They don’t understand why they have become refugees, and have to live in a camp. They can be resourceful and resilient, in ways that surprise and amaze me – for instance making little toys from scrap bottles and cans, playing football with balls made from rags. But they are afraid and asking when they’ll finally be able to go home. Games distract them for a while, as they do for children the world over, but the reality is that what they really need are the gifts you could provide.

Our Christmas Star Appeal is for every child unable to go home this Christmas – in particular those who may go hungry, thirsty or without a comfortable place to sleep.

We urgently need to distribute blankets, tents and survival kits to refugees in Chad and all over the world this Christmas. Can you help us by sending your gift to us as soon as you can?

Enclosed with this letter is your sheet of Christmas Star Appeal gift vouchers. Each one represents a potentially life-saving gift for a refugee child and their family. Just choose the gift you would like to give, make a donation using the form attached for the amount of your gift, and return your gift voucher to us in the envelope enclosed.

But before you put your gift voucher in the envelope, we’d very much like you to write your own special message of hope using the space on the back. My colleagues in [name of city] will collect and display the gift vouchers on special Christmas trees in our offices as a reminder of your compassion and generosity. We look forward very much to sharing the results of the appeal with you in the New Year.

Finally, from all of us here, thank you so much for your help, whatever you’re able to give. We hope you have a very happy Christmas, and a peaceful New Year.

With best wishes,

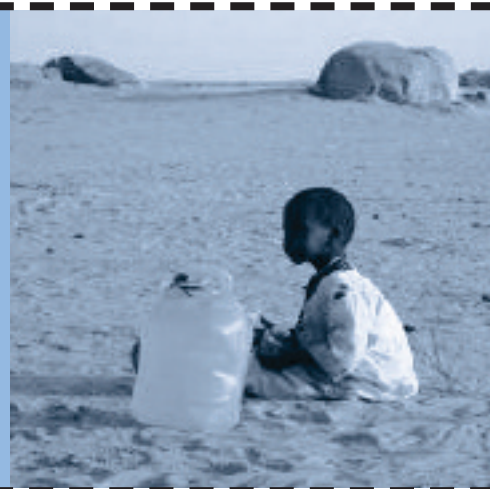
(signature to be supplied)

Lyndell Findlay, UN Refugee Agency Job Title

P.S. We enclose a very small gift to thank you for supporting our Christmas Star Appeal – a card to hang from your own Christmas tree to remind you of the gift you’ve given refugee children. We haven’t provided the piece of cotton needed to hang the card, hoping that you won’t mind attaching your own at home.

\$120

Your Christmas gift of \$120 could buy 80 water cans, helping thirsty refugees to collect and store clean, life-giving water for the whole family.



\$200

The gift of \$200 this Christmas could help to sink a well, providing vital clean water to countless refugees for months, even years, to come.

