



**\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\***

## **News Release**

### **Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee**

*Exhibition on the world's refugee children opening soon*

A traveling exhibition on the world's refugees takes school-age children and visitors of all ages on an inspiring, hands-on journey into the extraordinary lives of millions of children who were forced to flee their homes in conflict regions throughout the world.

*Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee* gives young visitors and others an opportunity to gain a firsthand look into the often challenging realities faced by refugee children and their families, and yet experience the personal triumphs of rebuilding their lives in a new land. It showcases seven exhibit areas: *Home*, *Losing Home*, *Registration*, *Refugee Camp*, *Medical Clinic* and *Going Home*.

The self-guided tour walks museum visitors through exhibit areas where they will learn about the shelter, food, medical care, schooling, and play activities of children in refugee camps. The exhibition recreates actual refugee camp settings and features interactive multimedia. Photographs, artwork and testimonials of refugee children from countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, and Afghanistan will be on display.

Visitors enter at the camp entrance, where they will be registered and processed as a refugee. From there, visitors will walk into a replica of a refugee camp where they can learn about and imagine what daily life must be like for refugee children. The exhibition allows children to touch items found in refugee camps; hear the voices and life stories of refugee children; and engage in interactive age-appropriate educational activities on human rights. It aims to bring awareness about the plight of some nine million refugee children around the globe.

As visitors exit the exhibition, they will learn about what happens to refugees after they leave the camp, including repatriation, resettlement, and other outcomes. An interactive video kiosk will encourage children to share their reflections about the exhibition. A resource center will allow visitors to access information on aid organizations working with displaced populations.

This creative and educational exhibition was developed in partnership with Lied Discovery Children's Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada, and international aid organizations including UNHCR, the UN refugee agency. Philanthropist Pam Omidyar helped conceive the exhibit and personally provided core funding.

"We hope children and other visitors will take away from the exhibition a sense of empathy and insight into the lives of refugee children around the world," said Linda Quinn, executive director of Lied Discovery Children's Museum. "This exhibition will allow them to walk in the shoes of refugee children and reflect on issues such as losing a home and human rights in a creative, educational and interactive way."

The exhibition made its debut at Lied Discovery Children's Museum in June 2008, and began a tour of other museums and venues across North America in Spring 2009. For more information, visit [www.tornfromhome.org](http://www.tornfromhome.org).



# Exhibit Overview

<b>Target Audience:</b>	8 – 12 years
<b>Square Footage:</b>	Min. 1500 s.f.
<b>Projected Opening:</b>	June 14, 2008
<b>Host Venue:</b>	Lied Discovery Children's Museum

## Mission Statement:

To develop a traveling exhibit that provides 8- to 12-year-old children with a balanced introduction to the plight of refugees, and people of all ages an inspiring learning experience about the importance of human rights. To round out the experience and drive interest in hosting it, rental fees will be waived and the exhibit will collaborate with international and local refugee aid organizations to provide creative educational resources for venues, families, and schools as well as community outreach opportunities.

## Target Market:

The target market includes cities that are host to diverse refugee populations and related aid organizations; and positioned to support and take advantage of the learning opportunities provided by the exhibit. Preference will be given to host venues dedicated to providing logistical and material support in the way of shipping, staffing, and access to community programming opportunities.

## Goals:

- Increase understanding among school-aged children, teachers, and youth leaders about human rights and the lives of refugee children and their families.
- Support parents, caregivers, and teachers in their crucial role of facilitating children's learning through programs, resource materials, and modeling.
- Encourage children of diverse backgrounds and abilities to play together while learning about the issues of conflict.
- Nurture and promote interaction among children and adults about these complex issues.
- Support community programming efforts of local exhibit venues

## Exhibit Areas:

### Entrance – Home

Three representative homes of children before they became refugees, showing a spectrum of affect populations in terms of size, location, & ethnicity (Congo, Columbia, Afghanistan).



### Leaving Home

What is a refugee? Where are we going? What will happen to me and my family? What can we take with us? Two interactive video units and a display case will address these questions. A large world map will highlight refugee crises in terms of the sheer numbers. A gallery of portraits, artwork, and written word by refugee children personalizes the story and draws attention to the approximately 9 million displaced children in the world.



## Registration

An immersive look into the registration and food distribution process in a refugee camp. What is it like to be in a new place? What are the challenges (language, separated from family, food)? An interactive video kiosk will explore the nutritional challenges faced by most refugee populations. Visitors will be invited to identify with a real refugee by donning a registration bracelet and assuming the role of a refugee via an ID card.



## Refugee Camp

Shelter, water, bathrooms, hygiene: How are these basic needs addressed in a camp? What would it be like to live in such confined spaces with so many strangers? Visitors are challenged to build their own shelter using few materials. The family tent focuses on an individual family within a camp; where and how they would live. Hand-made toys illustrate the importance of play for all children.



## Medical Clinic

One of the greatest challenges within any refugee setting is health—from nutrition to disease to dehydration. Children can see the bare bones care available, compare their weights and heights to those of refugee children, and gain insight to the dangerous health conditions experienced by many refugees.



## School

Education is of critical importance to any child, particularly refugee children. This earthen school setting reflects the limited resources available within a refugee camp. An interactive maze will help visitors understand the difficulties faced by many refugee children in attending school. The space also doubles as the primary location for public programming associated with the exhibit.



## Going Home

The average stay in a refugee camp is 9 years but what happens afterwards. Learn about the various outcomes for many refugees, including repatriation, resettlement, and many unknown endings. Two interactive video kiosks will encourage visitors to share their reflections about the exhibit. A resource center will allow visitors to learn more about the myriad aid organizations that work with displaced populations.





## Press Contacts

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## Bios

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### **LINDA QUINN**

Linda Quinn serves as executive director of Lied Discovery Children's Museum, which is hosting the exhibit, "Torn from Home: My Life as a Refugee". At Lied, Ms. Quinn oversees all operational and planning functions for the museum. Her current efforts are focused on transforming the museum into a world-class institution of creative learning through a physical relocation and expansion, and significant exhibit and programmatic enhancement.

Since her arrival in April 2006, the museum has raised more than \$2 million for new exhibits, improved its programming and strengthened its financial condition, creating rewarding learning experiences that better serve the families and children of Southern Nevada.

Quinn earned a BS in business administration from The University of Alabama and a Juris Doctorate from the Birmingham School of Law.

### **PAM OMI DYAR**

Pam Omidyar helped to conceive the exhibit, "Torn from Home: My Life as a Refugee" and personally provided core funding for the project. Ms. Omidyar is the founder and chair of Humanity United, an independent grantmaking organization committed to building a world where slavery and mass atrocities are no longer possible. She co-founded with her husband, eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, the Omidyar Network, a philanthropic investment firm that funds businesses and nonprofits to create opportunities for people around the world to improve their lives and communities. Additionally, she founded HopeLab, a nonprofit organization that combines rigorous research with innovative solutions to improve the health and quality of life of young people with chronic illness.

A mother of three and an enthusiastic surfer, Pam serves as a board member of Tufts University's Tisch College of Public Service. She earned a BS in biology from Tufts University and a MS in molecular genetics from the University of California at Santa Cruz.

### **ELAINE BOLE**

Elaine Bole is the concept originator with Pam Omidyar and exhibit curator/manager for the exhibit, "Torn from Home: My Life as a Refugee". Ms. Bole has worked with refugees since 1993 during war in the former-Yugoslavia, and later in Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Uganda, and Iraq. She previously worked on humanitarian and relief issues at UNHCR and World Vision, leading and managing a diverse array of projects, such as strategic media outreach for rapid-response disaster relief and in-field TV specials and press coverage of AIDS/HIV in Africa and the Dominican Republic for World AIDS Day and the one-year anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. Additionally, she provided in-field media support in Iraq and Jordan for relief projects during the 2003 Iraq war, and organized in Israel the first team of international journalists to enter Bethlehem during the siege of the Church of the Nativity in 2002.

In 2001, one month after September 11, Ms. Bole conceived and executed a full-scale production called "Remember the Children," held at the Lincoln Memorial. The commemoration was attended by hundreds of people, including more than 75 Ambassadors and featured celebrities, a children's chorus and dance troupes. Prior to her humanitarian work, she was executive producer of Washington, D.C.'s award-winning syndicated National Public Radio shows, The Derek McGinty Show and Public Interest with Kojo Nnamdi.

Elaine earned a MA in Journalism and Public Affairs from American University and was a Reuters Journalism Fellow at University of Oxford (Green College), England.

### **STACEY MANN**

Stacey Mann is the lead exhibit developer for the children's exhibit, "Torn from Home: My Life as a Refugee". Her dedication to the exhibit began in 2005 with a phone call from Pam Omidyar, who helped conceive the exhibit, about developing a children's exhibit focused on the lives of refugees. Ms. Mann believed that such an exhibit would present an ideal opportunity to combine her passions for geo-politics, social activism, and exhibit design.

A professional exhibit developer and informal learning specialist, Ms. Mann has worked in the exhibit and museum industries for over a decade with a focus on creating engaging, user-centered learning environments. For the past five years, she served as Manager of Exhibits for Project Exploration, a Chicago-based educational non-profit. Prior to that position, she worked in San Francisco and New York as an educational writer and editor (Inkwell Publications), information architect (Women.com), exhibit project manager (Exploratorium), and scenic artist (San Jose Repertory Theater).

Ms. Mann will complete her Masters of Learning Sciences degree at Northwestern University in summer 2009.



## Facts & Figures

### **Refugees by the Numbers:**

#### **A Snapshot of the World Refugee Crisis**

- Asia hosted around 45% of all the people of concern to UNHCR [15 million], followed by Africa with 9.7 million [30%], Latin America with 3.5 million [10%], Europe with 3.4 million [10%], North America with 1.1 million [3.5%] and Oceania with 85,500 [0.2%].

- In 2007, the number of people of concern to UNHCR was a record 32.9 million.

They included:

- 9.9 million refugees .....30%
- 12.8 million internally displaced people ..... 39%
- 5.8 million stateless people ..... 17%
- 2.6 million returned refugees and IDPs ..... 8%
- 740,000 asylum seekers .....2%
- 1,000,000 'others of concern' to UNHCR.

*\*Source: UNHCR*

### **Refugee Facts and United States**

- 1 out of every 100 persons in the US is a refugee or the child of refugee.
- Since 1975, 2.7 million refugees have been resettled in the U.S.



### Top Line Figures

- 32.9 million are 'people of concern' to UNHCR
- 80% are women, children and the elderly
- 33 refugee situations exist where the number of refugees has been 25,000 or more for at least 5 consecutive years
- 324 refugee camps currently exist worldwide

### Breakdown of People of Concern (see definitions on second page)

- Of the 32.9 million people:
- 9.9 million are **refugees**
- 12.8 million are **internally displaced persons (IDPs)**
- 5.8 million are **stateless people**
- 2.6 million **returnees**
- 740,000 are **asylum seekers**
- 1,000,000 are others of concern

### What is the 1951 Convention?

The 1951 Geneva Convention is the main international instrument of refugee law. The Convention clearly spells out who a refugee is and the kind of legal protection, other assistance and social rights he or she should receive from the countries who have signed the document. The Convention also defines a refugee's obligations to host governments and certain categories or people, such as war criminals, who do not qualify for refugee status. The Convention was limited to protecting mainly European refugees in the aftermath of World War II, but another document, the 1967 Protocol, expanded the scope of the Convention as the problem of displacement spread around the world.

### What is UNHCR?

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) was created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1951, initially helping more than one million European refugees after World War II. Today UNHCR has more than 6,200 staff in 111 countries helping nearly 32.9 million refugees and other displaced persons. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

### What is UNHCR's mandate?

Governments normally guarantee the basic human rights of their citizens. But when civilians become refugees this safety net disappears. UNHCR is the UN agency responsible for the safety and well-being of refugees and others of concern worldwide. UNHCR's most important responsibility is to ensure respect for the basic human rights of refugees, ensuring that no one is returned involuntarily to a country where he or she has reason to fear persecution. UNHCR provides lifesaving assistance to those forced to flee their homes, such as shelter, medical care, food, clean water and education. UNHCR also helps refugees find lasting solutions. Voluntary repatriation, or return to their original homes, is what most refugees hope for. But this is not always possible, and in those cases UNHCR helps people rebuild their lives elsewhere—either in the countries where they first sought asylum or in a third country willing to accept them for resettlement.

### Where does UNHCR work?

In 2006, Chad, Sudan, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Sri Lanka and Somalia are among the many refugee situations worldwide.

### Who does UNHCR help?

Today UNHCR cares for a record 32.9 million people, most of whom are women and children. People of concern to UNHCR include not only refugees, but also other groups such as asylum seekers, refugees returning home, stateless people and some, but not all, of the estimated 24.5 million people who are displaced within their own countries, often known as internally displaced persons (IDPs). The figures here illustrate the size of the problem (see Top Line Figures).

# Get Involved

## How can students help?

You can call 1-800-770-1100 or visit [www.UNrefugees.org](http://www.UNrefugees.org) for fundraising ideas to help the 32.9 million refugees and displaced around the globe. Your help will provide the basic assistance that the world's refugees need most – shelter, medical care, food, clean water and an education.

## What can teachers do?

Educators across the United States can help students learn about the plight of refugees and understand the importance of treating refugees with tolerance and respect. UNHCR offers free educational materials for teachers of grades 4-12, including lesson plans, magazines, videos, posters and games.

Please visit Teachers' Corner at [www.UNrefugees.org](http://www.UNrefugees.org) for more information and to order materials. Sign up today for UNHCR's e-newsletter for teachers.

# Definitions

## Who is a refugee?

The 1951 Refugee Convention describes a refugee as someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group; a refugee either cannot return home or is afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

## Who is an IDP?

An internally displaced person (IDP) is a person who has been forced to flee his or her home for the same reason as a refugee, but remains in his or her own country and has not crossed an international border. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid. As the nature of war has changed in the last few decades, with more and more internal conflicts replacing wars among countries, the number of IDPs has increased significantly.

## Who is a returnee?

A returnee is a refugee who has returned to his or her home country. The majority of refugees prefer to return home as soon as it is safe to do so, after a conflict and the country is being rebuilt. UNHCR encourages voluntary repatriation, or return, as the best solution for displaced people. The agency often provides transportation and other assistance, such as money, tools and seeds. Occasionally, UNHCR helps rebuild homes, schools and roads. Since 2002, UNHCR has assisted more than four million Afghans to return home.

## Who is a stateless person?

A stateless person is someone who is not a citizen of any country. Citizenship is the legal bond between a government and an individual, and allows for certain political, economic, social and other rights of the individual, as well as the responsibilities of both government and citizen. A person can become stateless due to a variety of reasons, including sovereign, legal, technical or administrative decisions or oversights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines that "Everyone has the right to a nationality."

## Who is an asylum seeker?

When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.

## What is the difference between a refugee and an economic migrant?

An economic migrant normally leaves a country voluntarily to seek a better life. Should he or she decide to return home, they would continue to receive the protection of his or her government. Refugees flee because of the threat of persecution and cannot return safely to their homes.

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