



Bhutan Refugees

From the latter half of the 19th century into the 20th century, many people moved from Nepal to Bhutan for economic reasons and received Bhutanese citizenship. Being mostly Hindu, these people had a different ethnic and religious background than the nation's Buddhist majority.

As a result of ethnocentric policies introduced during the 1980s, a large number of ethnic Nepalese living in Bhutan were forced to leave the country beginning in the 1990s. Over 80 thousand of them are currently living among harsh conditions at seven refugee camps in south-eastern Nepal.



Special Contents 1 All-Product Recycling Initiative

Objective of the All-Product Recycling Initiative

UNIQLO collects products our customers wish to pass on and delivers them to refugee camps around the world under our All-Product Recycling Initiative, an effort that began eight years ago in 2001 with the Fleece Recycling Program. Learning from our visits to the locations where our donations have been sent and listening to the concerns of the people, we continue to think about what we are capable of doing and what future actions we can take.

Report from Nepal on our second visit to this final destination of the clothes

September 2009—revisiting Nepal, where UNIQLO first donated clothes in 2007. Reunited with a young girl named Gita who told us about the role of clothing as she sees it, what has changed over two years where she lives and what remains the same.

That little girl in the same clothing

A girl is smiling. Her name is Gita. From the ten articles of clothing given to her family, she selects the ones that are white. In two days there will be a Nepalese festival at which she wishes to wear what she has been given. With the clothing, I give Gita a picture of her taken two years earlier. She sees the picture of herself and looks slightly bashful. The clothes have brought back memories...

Gita's father suffered a spine injury when he was whipped on the back while fleeing from Bhutan and has been unable to work. Her brother is mentally disabled. Even among refugees, these circumstances are exceptionally difficult to live with. Eiko Sherba of the Corporate Social Responsibility Department, who delivered the clothes on this visit and the previous one, has a strong memory of the girl.

"Gita remembered the events of two years ago quite well. She somehow also had a faint memory of me. The little girl I remembered is now fourteen and looks somewhat like an adult. I felt moved when I saw her. Her mother keeps the clothes UNIQLO donated two years ago for special occasions. Although there is

not enough for her to wear every day, she takes good care of what she does have so that Gita can wear the clothes on special occasions. She picked out her favorite item from the clothes we brought and put it on right away to show us."

Clothing is not just functional; clothing doesn't simply protect us from the heat or cold. I learned this from the preciousness of Gita's bright smile, which appears when she wears clean white clothes.

Wearing UNIQLO clothes until they wear out

On her second visit to the Nepalese refugee camp since first visiting in 2007, Eiko Sherba saw familiar faces and familiar clothes. The extent to which everyone had valued the clothing was apparent, as it was worn out from plenty of use.

At the camp, Ms. Sherba decided to employ a Nepalese interpreter so she could better understand the voices of the refugees. She said, "The clothes we have are still far from sufficient. We have already supplied 400 thousand items of clothing, but because each person only has three or four outfits, the need to repeatedly wash one's clothing at night so that it can be worn the next day continues."

Because the clothing is limited, it

is impossible for everyone to receive it, and some are unavoidably left out. The socially disadvantaged are our priority, which can result in feelings of envy or disappointment. Looking outside the camps, there are local people who are also not living easily and have a similar need for clothing. Although there is great satisfaction in bringing joy to others, in reality the situation is more serious and with so many issues that still need to be addressed. The answers can be found only through taking concrete action with what we can do best, one step at a time.



Eiko Sherba, CSR Department, UNIQLO CO., LTD. (center) and Gita (right)

What is UNIQLO's All-Product Recycling Initiative?

The All-Product Recycling Initiative began in 2001 with the Fleece Recycling Program, which was expanded to include all collected UNIQLO items beginning in 2006. Through this initiative, we reuse and recycle products received from our customers with the objective of ensuring the products serve beneficial purposes across their lifecycle with nothing wasted. Our initial intention was to recycle the clothes as fuel, but with the cooperation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), we started donating the clothes to refugee camps. After recognizing once more the great need for clothing and the critical role it plays, our focus has shifted from recycling to reuse. To that end, approximately 90% of the clothing we collect is donated to refugee camps the world over, including those in Nepal, Ethiopia and Georgia. To facilitate our decision-making process, we not only check shortages of clothing but also conduct research on levels of demand, taking into consideration season and size, religiously appropriate colors, and details concerning differences in local culture. In addition, to avoid theft and reselling during transit to the refugees, we go to the sites ourselves and distribute the items with the cooperation of the UNHCR.



UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

A UN organization established in 1950 for support of refugees. Works on solutions for refugee problems through protection and support of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Received Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the UNHCR develops its activities worldwide.

Issues on the horizon: Self-sufficiency and resettlement abroad

Two years later and a new situation: Resettling abroad

Through the All-Product Recycling Initiatives, various issues have started becoming clearer to us, and we have come to understand that simply delivering products does not address the underlying issues.

The Nepalese refugee camp we visited for the second time was also entering a new phase. Refugees are now seeking residency in the United States and other countries. Of the 100 thousand refugees, 80 thousand have requested foreign residency, and as of mid-September 2009, approximately 20 thousand had left for foreign countries. As a result, the refugee camps have now started assisting refugees in becoming self-sufficient for their new lives by providing English education, teaching them how to make traditional textiles,

and training women to speak in public since culturally they are not used to speaking with those outside their families. These efforts are moving forward steadily with the hard work of affiliated organizations. As the resettlement progresses, the people in the refugee camps, whose lives had remained stagnant until now, have started to clearly see change.

Not everyone wants to live in another country, as there are those who want to remain in the refugee camps if they cannot return to Bhutan. For people who hope to settle in Nepal, the UNHCR and its partner NGOs are playing a central role and have begun to examine ways they can coexist within Nepalese society by building industries together with the local residents.

These events may not be directly related to the All-Product Recycling

Initiative, but they do help us understand the true situation and the real voices of the refugees, and correctly grasp the issues at hand. We believe it is important for us to take part in the process; for example, if they are seeking foreign residency, we will assist them until they reach their destination.

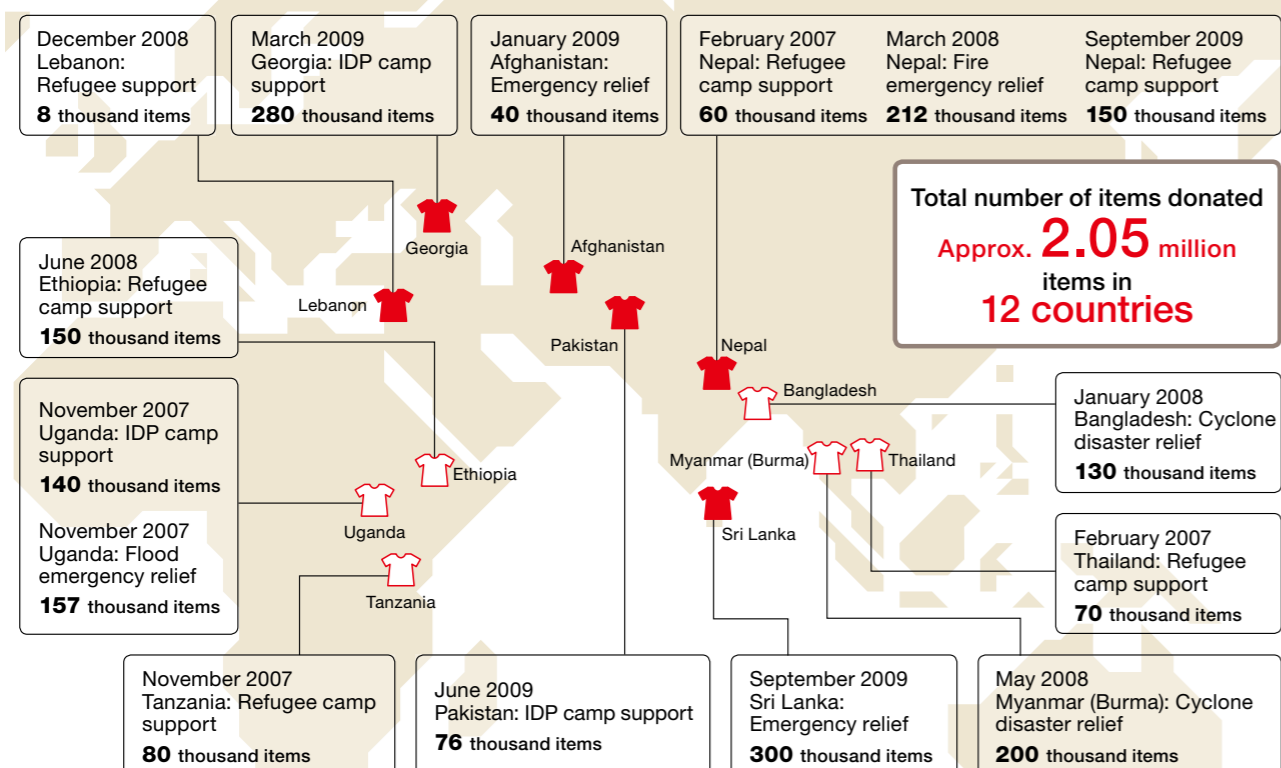


Skill-building in traditional textile production is one of the support activities for gaining self-sufficiency.



Recipients of our support

👕 2009 🧥 2007-2008



A: Woman we met at the International Organization for Migration Transit Center, where persons stay whose foreign residency has been approved. She was wearing an orange fleece from UNIQLO and had dignified eyes. Despite the many hardships, but with hope, she told me in a few words that above all, she is grateful for the opportunity to go to the United States with her family.

B/F/K: UNIQLO employees directly distribute the clothing, allowing us to hear the true voices and needs of the people.

C/D/E/G/I/J/L: Smiling faces when receiving new clothes is a reminder of the important role that clothes play.

H: Hope for a fresh start in life after moving to a new country of residence empowers people even further in their efforts to become self-sufficient.

Reaching out to schools and local areas

High school version of the All-Product Recycling Initiative for Tokyo Metropolitan High Schools

The All-Product Recycling Initiative is expanding to other areas besides making donations to refugee camps, including collaborations with Tokyo Metropolitan high schools and other educational organizations. This year, we had the cooperation of the Tokyo Education Committee to engage in activities with three high schools. At Mihara High School, we conducted a high school version of the All-Product Recycling Initiative with volunteer students as part of their classes. After producing posters and distributing flyers, we separated the collected items for refugee camps, in accordance with their needs, into 13 categories such as Men's-Women's, summer-winter and tops-bottoms.

"Working proactively on the initiative while learning about refugee camps and gaining an understanding of the initiative's value as well as having opportunities to communicate were very significant experiences for our students."



Hiroshi Kuwahara
Vice-principal of Mihara High School

In addition, at Musashi High School, the student council took on a leadership role and used summer recess and school festivals as opportunities for collecting items.

"At first, I was concerned whether



A hefty 5,300 items achieved through the collective enthusiasm of each student at Mihara High School.

we would get enough donations. But to my pleasant surprise, the collection box in the entrance area filled quickly. We all cooperated together by taking trips to carry the full boxes of items to the storage room. We look forward to people at the refugee camps wearing the clothes we collected."



Shunta Tsukada
President of the student council at Musashi High School

Overall, 5,300 and 1,721 items were collected at the Mihara and Musashi high schools, respectively. Apart from the numbers of items collected, through interaction with locals and next generation citizens, we found another direction toward which UNIQLO can proceed into the future.

Goal of 30 million items —One for each of the world's refugees

The objective of our ongoing All-Product Recycling Initiative is 30 million items within five years so that one item can be delivered annually to every refugee the world over (31.7 million persons). The current figure is approximately 2.6 million items collected. We need to develop new ways for reaching our goal. With that in mind, in addition to collection at the stores, we reached out to the public in 2009 at the UNHCR World Refugee Day event held in front of the United Nations University building. In addition, we set up a special booth at the Tokyo Girls Collection and at a venue in the Mina Machida and Mina Tenjin shopping

PHOTO REPORT

The website (in Japanese, URL below) shows scenes of distributing the clothing collected from customers by UNIQLO staff who actually visited the refugee camp. The local life and issues of refugees are reported mainly through photographs.

<http://www.uniqlo.com/jp/csr/recycle/special/index.html>



Posters and activity reports are hand-made by students.



UNIQLO staff members of the CSR Department explained to students about who receives the clothes and how clothes are useful to them.



Students are more serious in sorting collected clothing after learning about the lives of the receivers.



Donations were asked for of many people during the clothing collection event held on World Refugee Day.

centers, which was operated by FAST RETAILING.

In the future, we would like to raise more awareness about the All-Product Recycling Initiative. To increase participation, we will educate each and every employee so they truly understand the essence of our activities and take action to further enhance the developments that ensue.

COLUMN 01 UTxUNHCR Charity T-shirt Project

At UNIQLO, so that more people gain an understanding about refugee issues, along with support from the UNHCR, we created charity T-shirts in June 2009 in collaboration with various celebrities and artists. All proceeds from the sale of the items were donated to UNHCR and refugee assistance programs. These are messages of peace from Yayoi Kusama and Kazumasa Oda, project participants.

A colorful and bright future

Avant-garde artist, and novelist
Yayoi Kusama



Your favorite words of love. Signs of ever-expanding freedom where there is no war.

A message of dreams, peace and freedom printed on a T-shirt patterned with pink polka dots. May this shirt bring the bright future as vividly-colored as it is, and shining happiness.



For children to be born

Singer-songwriter
Kazumasa Oda



The relationship between the UNHCR and me has continued for a decade. Since 1999, my song "Umarekuru Kodomotachi no Tameni (For children to be born)" released in 1979 has been used as a cheering song for the UNHCR in line with the UNHCR's wish for the next generation to focus on the refugee problem and solutions for it. I am happy if this song has contributed even a little to the activities of the UNHCR. Although what I can do for the next generation is limited, I would like to continue to address the task.

COLUMN 02 Clothes in a variety of colors like flowers in a refugee camp

Photographer LIO captures the people and places of Asia. What he happened to come across in Nepal was UNIQLO's colorful fleece on the eaves of a house.

The hidden country—that was my image of Bhutan. I headed for Eastern Nepal near the Indian boarder after having learned that refugees were moving from Bhutan to Nepal.

As I walked toward the simply structured houses made of bamboo and listened about the lives of people at the camp from the refugees, I saw a familiar orange fleece being dried on the eaves of a house. I checked the tag and it read "UNIQLO" as I had expected. This must be a UNIQLO All-Product Recycling item, I thought. The owner told me the clothes had been widely distributed to many families. They were aware that the clothing is a form of aid supplied from other countries through the UNHCR. I showed them the tag on my vest and explained, "This fleece was made by a Japanese company called UNIQLO, and many Japanese people wear it, including myself." The man smiled and let me take a picture. I wanted to capture not only their friendly

facial expressions but create a portrait of how the clothes coordinated well with the living environment and their regular clothes, so I took pictures in front of and inside their homes. During the shoot there was a boy wearing a T-shirt inside-out. He told me laughing, "I got paint on the front, so now I wear it inside-out." The clothes that have finished being used in Japan are again treated with care here while covering life to once again provide warmth. This teaches us the fundamental role of clothing; it also sends the message that someone living in Japan considers the hardships and cares about the lives of those in despair. Not only do the clothes bring warmth to the bodies of those they now belong to, they also deliver warmheartedness.



LIO, photographer
Born in 1980, LIO has been taking pictures mainly in Asia since 1999. While shooting, he has felt enchanted by the strength of the people he has come across, particularly those facing hardship.
www.liograph.com

