



Every Action Counts

The year of 2020 will forever remain engraved in our collective memory as the year that humanity faced an unprecedented health crisis, a pandemic. Most countries took measures to protect public health, measures that inevitably restricted for a certain period of time other basic human rights such as the right to freedom of movement, outside our homes and within and across borders. This restriction was also unprecedented for many of us – but not for all.

For the 26 million refugees globally, the deprivation or violation of basic human rights is a familiar reality. It is quite often the reason they were forced to leave everything behind in search of safety and protection for themselves and their families. This experience has taught them what it means to live with uncertainty and to see one's life turned upside down from one moment to the next.

In the face of the coronavirus crisis though, we all felt vulnerable. The virus has shown that it knows no borders and does not discriminate, although vulnerable populations, including refugees and other displaced persons, are at greater risk. This global crisis has tested our strength and endurance and has highlighted systematic inequalities in our societies. It has also made us realise how interconnected we all are, and how much we depend on each other. We can only defeat this virus when each and every one of us is protected.



During this pandemic, we have witnessed and heard about acts of support, collaboration and solidarity around the world with the common goal of responding to this crisis. Refugee volunteers have organised teams to keep those living in refugee camps informed about the novel coronavirus. People have rushed to help the elderly or people in need, regardless of their nationality, status or ethnicity. Doctors, nurses and caregivers, among them refugees and migrants, have found themselves on the frontlines in the fight against COVID-19, caring for patients and saving lives while risking their own.

Through the lens of the crisis, we have seen once again what compassion and humanity mean in practice. We have acknowledged our fundamental need to communicate, to co-exist and to work together to shape those elements necessary to go on with our lives despite the obstacles in our way. Young and old, we have felt that every single action can count. And it was primarily the youngest, the children, who knew this already. In the unprecedented lockdown we experienced, children and adolescents found a way to make the difficulties seem somewhat less serious. They found a way to communicate their thoughts and feelings. They talked about restrictions, about freedom and the future, enabling us to find hope among their words that we have collected in this book.

“The Quarantine Monologues” was a project that faced many difficulties brought on by physical distancing and a continuously changing reality, all to be overcome in a very short period of time. These difficulties were faced by both the coordinators of the “It could be me – it could be you” educational programme as well as by its regular protagonists – the school teachers and children. With the exceptional support and guidance of the project’s authors, a team of educators, interpreters, humanitarians, facilitators, and technical support staff worked for weeks with enthusiasm and dedication to ensure the project’s success. Through the screens of computers, smartphones and tablets, the team “met” 24 teenage refugees, both boys and girls. They affirmed that our need to communicate with each other and to truly “come together” enables us to overcome difficulties, a lesson for us all in times of uncertainty such as this one. Fulfilling this need can even create something beautiful, such as the 24 testimonies that follow. We hope you enjoy them!

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