



'Passionate to Save Lives'

Conversations with CARE Humanitarians



Vénus Jean-Vil, a CARE community development agent, holds a health awareness session for the students of École Nationale de Bardon Marchand, Gros-Morne, Haiti. (Photo: Evelyn Hockstein/CARE)

Dear reader,

It is with great pride and humility that I share with you this extraordinary publication. It gives an intimate insight into the daily work and lives of our colleagues who come from many different countries such as Benin, Jordan, South Sudan, Yemen or others and who fulfil a variety of roles. Yet they are united in the devotion of their time, energy and passion to a cause to which they are fully committed.

For many, working as a humanitarian professional is more than just a job. It's a mission. As you can read in the following pages, seeing refugees becoming empowered, transforming lives and evoking smiles on the faces of children through our assistance are recurring themes which motivates most of our colleagues.

However rewarding, being a humanitarian is extremely challenging. Many colleagues live under harsh conditions; they work in refugee camps or in areas destroyed by natural disasters. Often, if not on a daily basis, humanitarians are witness to people's suffering, they listen to the traumatic stories of those who have been affected, they empathize with those they assist. Many have to leave families and friends behind, working far away from their homes. They have to rely on technology to keep in touch with their loved ones. As one colleague says, due to his work he has become an 'internet parent'.

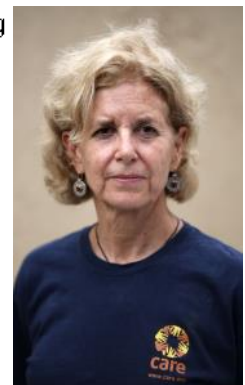
Quite often humanitarians themselves are in the cross-

fire. The year 2013 was a dangerous one: an estimated 152 aid workers were killed and more were attacked than ever before. Many of our colleagues express the inability to reach affected people due to instability and insecurity is one of the greatest challenges they face. This, combined with the lack of funds particularly to crises that evolve beyond the focus of global media, are what keep our colleagues awake at night.

Compassion. Initiative. Empathy. Optimism. Equality. Selflessness. These are some of the words with which our colleagues describe what humanitarianism means to them. I would also like to add two more: respect and humility. This is what I feel towards each and every one of them. I am humbled by their dedicated efforts and commitments working under often dreadful circumstances with great impact.

This publication is dedicated to all humanitarians who work or have worked for CARE; for those who have made a difference in people's lives around the world. For CARE colleagues who put their own well-being and sometimes that of their families on the back burner while instead prioritizing helping people in need.

Barbara Jackson,
Humanitarian Director,
CARE International



Helping people most in need, especially women and girls, is the most emotional experience. Changing lives is my dream.

– Warda Hassan Ali, Yemen

Being a humanitarian aid worker is a lifestyle; to me it is a calling — not just a job. There is often no sharp distinction between work and the rest of your life, between your interests and passions and your job description.

– Dorothy Akinyi Muchaki, South Sudan

I feel that I can finally do something for my people. They are part of me and I am part of them.

– Dania Ghanayem, Lebanon

I want to be at the service of humanity and assist in bringing hope and defend human dignity among the refugees. My work satisfies me through my service to humanity, especially the poor.

– Agatha Muthoni Mugo, Kenya

98%

of CARE staff come from the country in which they work.

Motivation

My life was blessed and positively impacted by the tireless efforts of many humanitarians. **Having been a beneficiary of special schools for the blind, which were run by missionaries, I always desired to care for others just as the missionaries cared for me.**

I harbour profound love and unquenchable passion for the proper and full empowerment of mankind. I firmly believe that no man is a reject and thus, every individual is immensely endowed with potentials that often go untapped.

— *Samuel Ochieng' Odawo, Teacher at Dadaab refugee camp, CARE Kenya*



When I was eleven years old, **I was forced to become a refugee in my own country, Rwanda.** I could see how innocent children and mothers suffered from a conflict they have never started. We spent two days without food, water or medication. I remember how I started selling bread in the camp to help my mother getting money for food. People died including my own brother. Innocent children were massacred. From then on, I developed a spirit of giving justice to those who are helpless, giving a voice to voiceless, giving protection to the most vulnerable. After that tragedy, I decided to do something better: to become a humanitarian worker.

— *Joseph Ngamije, Area Manager Rubkhona, South Sudan*

I'm a nutritionist and I like children. When I started to work with CARE Benin in 2008, Benin experienced its first emergency crisis due to floods. At that period, no NGO had intervened. Considering its humanitarian mandate, CARE Benin started to assist. I was a team leader for this response. It was the first time where I worked in the humanitarian sector. **I was passionate to save lives, to help others improve their life conditions.**

Thus, I became a humanitarian worker.

— *Huguette Sekpe, Emergency Response Team Leader Benin*



I was born and brought up in Dadaab, a town that hosts refugees who have fled various conflicts in the larger East African region, most of whom have come as a consequence of the civil war in southern Somalia. I used to see a lot of humanitarian workers from different corners of the world arriving in Dadaab to provide services to the refugees.

So I grew up dreaming to be a social worker to help as many people as possible by contributing to eradicate their poverty and uplift the lives of young girls and women to ensure existence of a society living in dignity.

— *Mohamed Mahat Nur, Community Mobilization Officer at Dadaab refugee camp, CARE Kenya*



I live in San Miguelay in the province of Leyte, one of the worst-hit areas by Typhoon Haiyan. CARE Philippines staff always came here for their emergency assistance and that is how I got to know them. One time, their driver informed me that he was leaving and they needed a replacement for him. I was unemployed at that time, and I wanted to work and be productive. **I have also seen how CARE has been helping my village. I was thankful for that, and wanted to be part of such work.**

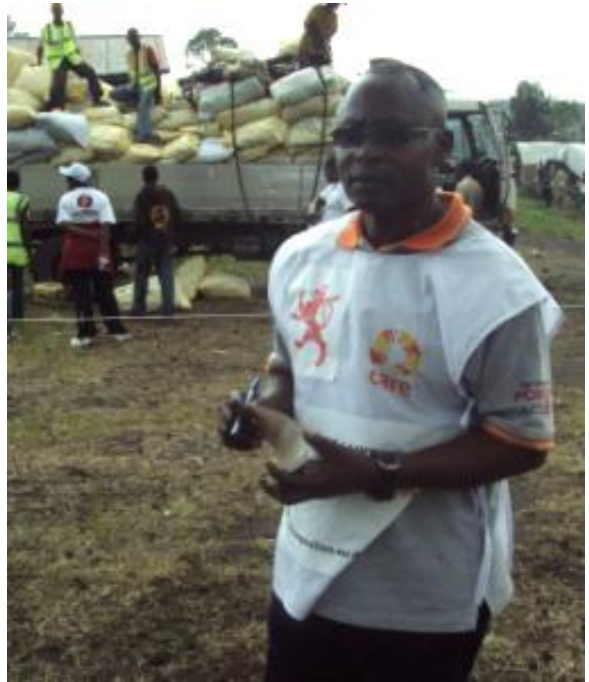
— *Arnel Roca Murillo, Driver, CARE Philippines*



Challenges

One day, my colleagues and I were attacked by an armed group while we went to a field mission in a rebel-controlled area. We were robbed of our phone and money and terrorized. For almost two months, I had nightmares when I pictured the scene. Another memorable moment is something really different I would like to share. Once I conducted a needs assessment in a new health area. On the road, an armed group stopped us and suddenly, one of the assailants recognized me because I took care of him once when he was in a refugee camp. They left us free passage after he recognized me. **It was an unexpected encounter that may have saved my life.**

— Jean Louis, Governance Advisor, CARE Democratic Republic of Congo



One of the most trying aspects of being a humanitarian worker is the **hardship of being away from my family**

for long periods of time. It is because I am mostly assigned in remote areas, and even outside my country, that I have embraced the idea of “Internet parenting.” I am into social media because that’s the only way I can have a sense of what my family is doing, for me to be updated with their lives. In the same manner, that is also the reason why, while on the ground, I take delight in taking many photographs of myself at

work. Some younger colleagues would tease me about it, but it is not because I am vain, or due to this “selfie” syndrome, but it is only through photographs I send and share with them that my family, especially my children, can see and appreciate what my work is, what I’m doing.

— Efren Mariano, Shelter Advisor, CARE Philippines

The most challenging part for me is that whatever we do to help the refugees, it is not enough.

People here in Azraq Refugee Camp have lost everything, their home, their houses, their jobs, their belongings. A lot of them have lost loved ones. I remember when I was a little refugee boy, how much I envied when people were eating sandwiches around

me. We did not have enough to eat. The refugees at the Azraq Camp need everything as well. Their lives are very hard and the aid organizations are doing their best. But often it's just not enough.

— *Yousef AL Filali, Community Development Officer, CARE Jordan*



As a volunteer, I am assessing people's needs – their most pressing needs are to have something to eat and a place to stay. **But a lot of**

times refugees also have wounds one cannot see.

One of the families I visited in the past weeks had a daughter who lost all of her hair, because she cannot process what she witnessed in Syria. This sorrow, the trauma of war, it does not translate to any assessment form on this planet.

— *Zeina Rawass, Volunteer, CARE Lebanon*





‘The Most Rewarding Part’

The most rewarding part is when you meet Syrians in Egypt and **they tell you sentences such as: “It’s great to finally have someone truly listening to us and caring about our well-being.”** Or a mother tells you, after enrolling in a program using art as a tool for therapy, “Thank you, I was able to finally hug my kids again and use words such as ‘darling,’ which I haven’t done for the last two years.” Or when you help a survivor of gender-based violence and know that she or he is finally safe.

— Sandra Azmy, Initiatives Manager, Women’s Rights program, CARE Egypt

Whenever I see children in newly-constructed facilities, I feel happiness and contentment because I compare their current situation and the previous one where they were learning under trees.

Those moments are unforgettable.

— *Fadumo Dahir Dualeh, Education Manager, CARE Somalia*



Memorable moments happen every time I see my former students developing from an early age to graduate from secondary school and then joining me in the teaching fraternity as colleagues.

This makes me a proud teacher, knowing that my efforts in providing education services to the refugee community have borne fruits.

— *Hassan Ahmed Mohamed, Head Teacher at Dadaab refugee camp, CARE Kenya*

I know what it is like to survive Typhoon Haiyan and **it makes me deeply happy that I am somehow helping the other survivors' recovery as well,** that I could find something positive from this disaster, instead of just dwelling on the tragic part and traumatic effects of the storm.

— *Rona Jean Casil, Administration and Finance Assistant, CARE Philippines*





I get a lot of satisfaction whenever I work on a project in which I have to engage the young schoolchildren. A recent example is from May and June, when I engaged the children in a project towards the commemoration of World Refugee Day. The Dadaab Refugee Community had chosen to focus on the theme "Peace". **I was so proud when the children from the schools where CARE manages**

primary education came up with amazing and passionate messages, which I gladly shared widely.

— Mary Muia, Program Assistant, CARE Kenya

The most rewarding part for me is working with unreachable woman and children in the context where women's mobilization is restricted and

culturally limited. I am able to reach out to them, I understand their needs and try my best to support with dignity. I help displaced women who are normally unable to share their concerns and challenges, even within their own family, but I am able to hear their thoughts and share their feelings. I know what it means to be a woman in such a culture.

— Bushra Abdu Aldukhainah, Humanitarian Program Manager, CARE Yemen





A memorable moment for me is when in 2005, a man aged about 80 who received rice began to cry. He said he was moved to receive aid from people he had never seen and who did not ask anything of him in return.

— Ibrahim Boukari, Project Manager, CARE Niger



When I see the community that I am helping have met minimum life standards and a positive change in their life, **I feel rewarded that my contribution has had a positive effect** towards the community.

— Abdallah Michael Charles, Finance and Administration Officer, CARE South Sudan

There were several instances in the past where I have seen fellow aid workers or colleagues get saddened or even depressed every time a project is about to close, thinking they will lose their jobs. But for me, I look at it in a different perspective: it is not about losing a job. The moment I close a particular project, or my job “ends”, it is also the time the people we served start recovering their life back. And I consider that the biggest success — for the communities, for all of us.

— Efren Mariano, Shelter Advisor, CARE Philippines



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