

# Andrew Harper AM

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Don't aim for mediocrity; aim for excellence. If you continue to try to make a difference in the areas you're interested in, a difference will be made; you have just got to keep plugging ahead.

## 2018 International Alumnus of the Year

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Andrew Harper has dedicated his career to helping refugees and those suffering in the face of natural disasters.

Andrew has worked with the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, for over two decades. He began his professional life with the Australian Embassy in Turkey, working with refugees in the aftermath of the first Gulf War.

"From that point I saw what a wonderful experience it is to try and make a difference for people. If you can make a difference, everything else pales into insignificance."

Andrew then joined the UNHCR and was posted to West Timor, Ukraine, Albania, Central Asia and Iran. He served with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as Head of Office in Sumatra following the 2004 Tsunami, and as Chief of Staff for the UN Recovery Coordinator for Aceh in Indonesia.

"I've never really looked back. Every mission has been more interesting than the last - both more rewarding and more challenging."

In 2006, Andrew moved to the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva as Head of Desk for the Iraq Situation for six years as well as being the Emergency Focal Point for the MENA region during the Libyan Crisis of 2011.

Andrew's most recent field posting was as UNHCR Country Representative in Jordan, where he was responsible for more than half a million Syrian refugees who fled the war in their country. Andrew worked in collaboration with the Government of Jordan to lead and coordinate the international response to the Syrian Crisis, which included establishing the Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps, introducing biometric registration of refugees, and providing assistance and protection to refugees.

"The biggest challenge facing UNHCR is that there seems to be no end to the crises facing the world. Refugee numbers are continuing to climb and at the same time we're seeing governments increasingly disinterested in the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers. We're in a desperate situation where we are receiving less funds in order to help people, but we're seeing more wars not being resolved. We're also seeing more people on the move and governments putting up more restrictions."

Andrew is currently Director of Programs at UNHCR in Geneva, which includes the technical delivery of services, registration of refugees, and making sure that refugees have shelter, healthcare and water.

"We don't do what we do for recognition, we do it to make a difference."