Goats of Hope
A Story about Liptako-Gourma and Resilience

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Commissioned by: UNDP
A Region in West Africa

Imagine your job is to distribute two juvenile goats to each household of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Which is the best combination of male and female goats to give to each family?

The best combination of two goats ...

Female, Female
Female, Male
Male, Male

Umm, let me think...

Or maybe not!?

You would think so, right.

One male and one female!

You’ll see for yourself soon.

Nozomi, a Japanese university student
Hi!

Gouyaouahi Town

This is one of the towns in the Liptako-Gourma region that takes in IDPs.

Anir Fujiura, UNDP staff

Hi!

Ne y yibeogo!

This is Nozomi.

So you're the Japanese student people have been talking about.

Bonjour!

Finally a chance to use my French!

That's “good morning” in the local Mooré language.
This is Fatimata. She manages the project on supporting IDPs.

People who have been forced to flee their homes for various reasons and who have not crossed a state border are called internally displaced persons, or IDPs.

Over there is the IDP family that will show you around. In 2021, there was a record 55 million of them worldwide.

They’re the Belem family. Welcome.
Wow! I’ve never seen food like this before.

We eat it with a sauce made from okra and other vegetables.

Here you are. This is tô, our local specialty.

They make all kinds of sauces with seasonal vegetables.

It’s a staple in West Africa and close to soba-gaki in Japan.

We make it by grinding millet into flour and then boiling it in water.

I’m glad you like it.

It has a nice texture, and tastes great with the sauce!

Dip your tô in the sauce like this and eat it.

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Zara, mother

Aissata, grandmother
So Nozomi. What brought you here?

Harouna, grandfather

Well, I happened to come across an article about Liptako-Gourma.

And that was Monsieur Fujiura, right?

Then I found out he was a senior from my university and was working for UNDP.

I became curious when I saw a picture of a Japanese staff supporting the local population.

It made me wonder why he was there, working so far away from home.

Yep.

for people from abroad like you who are concerned about our situation.

We’re also thankful.

We are supported by the host community* and aid organizations. We’re tremendously grateful for their help.

Boureima, father

*Host communities in this context refer to the local, regional and national governmental, social and economic structures within which IDPs live.
Are they males or females?

You've got two goats!

Check them out! These are our goats!

Feed goats!? Sure thing!

I'm going to feed the goats now. Want to come?

Madi, son

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Madi, son

Exactly. And then you'll have more goats.

You're thinking if you have a male and a female, they will breed.

Really? Why not a male and a female?

Both of them are males.

I get it. I'd never have guessed that.

by selling mature males at the market in town and then buying more juvenile males.

But that takes a lot of time and effort.

Because male goats mature faster, it's easier to earn an income.
Hey, Mariam. Are you going to fetch water? Do you mind if we tag along?

Fine with me.

Have you two gotten used to living here?

Yeah, sort of...

Gouyaouahi used to have a population of 120,000. But it’s grown to 400,000 with the influx of IDPs.

I see...

They can't. Not even the most ordinary things...

Displaced families rent land and houses from local residents.

IDPs who don't have relatives to rely on or money to rent a house have to live in shelters provided by aid organizations.

I wish I could see my friends though.

Me too. I want to play football with them again.

That’s more than triple. Are there really so many IDPs here!?

Mariam, daughter

Gouyaouahi used to have a population of 120,000. But it’s grown to 400,000 with the influx of IDPs.
The region is a microcosm of the problems the world is facing.
Besides the local governments, there are various UN agencies, donors including Japan, local NGOs, and other aid organizations that are also active in the region.

I see it’s all happening here ... What kind of work does UNDP do?

Common to all these problems is that state borders have no meaning.

To deal with cross-border problems, solutions must also cross borders.

The people of Liptako-Gourma need to work together across national, ethnic, and religious lines to tackle these problems.
UNDP provides holistic support that links all 17 SDGs, rather than specializing in specific areas.

It plays a “convener” role, connecting various actors, including governments and private companies.

In other words, the focus is not so much on fighting fires as it is on making sure they don’t happen in the first place.

UNDP’s role is to support nations and people in building their resilience.

In addition to dealing with problems after they occur, UNDP works to address their root causes.
The problems Liptako-Gourma is dealing with are huge, but this region is equally a land of opportunities.

I see - Liptako-Gourma has incredible potential!

It also has ample land and abundant sunlight.

And home to one of the largest sources of groundwater on the continent.
What are they doing over there?

Part of UNDP’s support is training people to make soap.

It’s a valuable skill that allows IDPs to earn a living.

I’ll show you what I learned.

I’ve never seen soap-making before.

Zara, you’re here too.

Ne y yibeogo, Nozomi.
How to make soap

(1) Dilute caustic soda with water the day before. Boil shea butter and skim off any impurities.

(2) Mix the shea butter thoroughly with coconut oil.

(3) Add the caustic soda solution a little at a time.

(4) Add sodium silicate and fragrance and mix thoroughly for about 15 minutes.

(5) Pour the mixture into moulds and leave it for 24 hours to harden.

(6) Remove the soap from the mould, emboss it with a logomark, and package it.

(7) The soap should be used within a week (because it has no preservatives).

The following items are provided as a starter kit:
- Caustic soda
- Coconut oil
- Fragrances
- Shea butter
- Sodium silicate
- Scale
- Bucket
- Protective gloves
I rent this field from the landowner. Is this your farm?

I had no idea. So we are connected to Burkina Faso through sesame!

UNDP provided seeds, fertilizer, irrigation pumps, and other farming equipment to IDPs.

Thanks to them, the sesame flowers have bloomed.

Hey, Nozomi! Oh, there’s Fujiura san!

We grow sesame here. How’s the crop doing?

I’ve heard that 20% of the sesame Japan imports come from Burkina Faso.

Did you know that?
This is Moctar, a local resident. He leases parts of his land to IDPs.

Ah, you're the student everyone's talking about.

Hi!

It's not just them who are benefitting. I know the local residents who lease out their land is helping many displaced people.

People of many religions and ethnicities have lived peacefully side by side in this region for decades.

Some locals make their living by renting land and houses to IDPs.

We must help each other to get through hard times.

People living in the same country are like brothers and sisters.
Did you have a fruitful day?

Yes, I saw a lot of things.

Yes, it’s so beautiful.

Nice evening sky, eh.

We lived in a village called Diou, about 15 km from here.

I always watched the sunset from the yard where we used to live.

What was it like there?

Have a seat there.
We didn’t have much, but it’s a place we called home.

First thing in the morning, we would feed the animals.

Then see the kids off to school.

It was nothing special, but they were happy days.

My son worked hard transporting goods.

We ran a small pharmacy in the village.
Everyone was worried about the deteriorating situation in the country.

Not again. How many has it been this year?

Did you hear about the village attacked by an armed group?

However, a few years ago, I started hearing some disturbing news.

And then...
The Liptako-Gourma region is home to many armed groups.

The one consolation is that my family escaped unharmed.

We lost everything overnight. All the things passed down to us from our ancestors.

They stole the livestock and burned all the houses.

Once the harmony of communities is broken, the fires of conflict quickly get out of hand.

Those who suffer are the most vulnerable ... people like us.

They attack over and over again for many different reasons.

One goal they have in common is to divide communities and fuel unrest through violence.
How long have you been working here, Fatimata?

It pains me to see so many people in dire straits like the Belem family.

Later, I began assisting IDPs, mostly women, because I realized improving the livelihoods of families was essential to improving the conditions for children.

I first joined a local NGO to help children who couldn’t go to school due to the worsening security situation these last few years.

Toward a more resilient society.

That motivated me to try to help build better local communities while respecting the will of the people.

UNDP has always been supporting comprehensive local development through joint dialogue with local authorities, host communities, and IDPs.
Did something happen?

Well…

Somebody stole our goats!

I can’t believe it! Both of them are gone!

Give me back our goats!

You took them!!

What about Madi?

Dad! Madi, he’s …

Next Morning

Somebody stole our goats!

Both of them are gone!

I can’t believe it!
What are you saying to our boy?

You said you were going to eat my goats the other day!

Madi, you can’t go around accusing people for no reason.

Rubbish! We’re no cattle thieves!

I was just teasing!

Livestock theft has a huge impact on residents’ livelihoods.

The town had been suffering from many similar cases recently.

You too!?

Our goats were just stolen!

The local government, village leaders or other credible actors oversee dialogue between concerned parties.

Community mediation is a means of solving such problems.

Let’s discuss what we can do about cattle theft.

We can’t let this go on any longer.

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Fujiura san, why did you join UNDP?

In elementary school, I felt like an outcast because my unusual appearance and background made me stand out from the other kids.

Your skin colour is weird.

Can your mum speak Japanese?

These experiences made me want to work for people who are suffering unjustly.

I was raised in Japan with a Japanese father and a Nepalese mother.

It really brought home the fact that I was a minority …

No one tried to understand the situation I was in.

Later in middle school, my classmates would sometimes use discriminatory language, which devastated me.
That's how I began working closely with various social minorities.

Then, after the Great East Japan Earthquake,

That's where I saw something I never imagined.

A search and rescue team from South Africa was helping with the relief efforts.

I volunteered to take part in the recovery operations.

This inspired me to pursue a career in the international cooperation field.

Do you remember what happened back then? Immediately after the earthquake, countries around the world reached out to Japan in many different ways. Sending financial support, dispatching experts, and expressing solidarity.
Our lifestyles are sustained through exchanges and cooperation with the rest of the world. People, resources, knowledge, and cultures are all connected in one way or another. Many more suffer from conflicts, famine, and disasters. But we know that while some regions and people benefit from this system, many more suffer from conflicts, famine, and disasters.

Indifference and a “me first” attitude inadvertently contribute to the misery of someone else. Being indifferent is easy. But no one is unaffected by what happens in other parts of the world. Once you do take an interest in these issues, it’s important that you take action, even if it’s just a small step.
After discussions, the representatives of the host community and the IDPs decided to provide timber and wire fencing to build enclosures for the livestock with assistance from the local government and NGOs. They also decided to take turns carrying out nightly patrols.

A few days later, The Belem family was given a male goat through a mutual aid fund set up by the IDPs.

It looks like they’ve come to some kind of agreement. The process of discussing solutions through collaborative dialogue like this is crucial for social cohesion.
Do you want to go back to your hometown someday?

No. We plan on settling down here in Gouyaouahi.

I see.

How about you two? What do you want to be when you grow up?

I want to be a teacher.

I'm definitely going to be a carpenter!

I want to join UNDP and come back here to see all of you again.

How about you, Nozomi?
Several years later in Japan

Several years later in Japan

Since then, the family steadily increased their herd and now have 10 goats.

As for the sesame grown in the Belems’ field...

Who knows, it may have found a way to our dining plates.

In my current work at UNDP, what I have learned while providing vocational training to young people in Liptako-Gourma is that

They were also able to reopen their long-awaited pharmacy.
even when all seems lost, amidst the deepest of adversities, people have the power to rebuild.

Anything is possible when this innate power is unlocked - the power of resilience.
From the People of Japan

UNDP

Based on a true story of a family from the Liptako-Gourma region, West Africa.

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