

UNITED NATIONS PORTAL OPENS 6/20, WORLD REFUGEE DAY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE // JUNE 10, 2016



The exterior of the Portal in Zaatari, Jordan.



Participants in Zaatari speaking to San Francisco.

Shared_Studios is honored to partner with the United Nations Department of Public Information, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign, UNICEF Jordan, UNHCR, and [Bridges of Understanding](#) to bring a Portal back to the United Nations Headquarters in New York City on June 20, 2016 – World Refugee Day. Portals are gold shipping containers equipped with immersive audio-visual technology and placed in public sites around the world. When individuals enter a Portal, they come face-to-face with a stranger in a distant, identical Portal and can converse live as if in the same room.

The UN Portal will connect to the [Zaatari camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan](#), which is home to roughly 80,000 Syrians fleeing violence and war. Children make up half the camp's population. Individuals and groups in New York and Zaatari will be able to engage one another in dialogue and programmed events over the summer in the UN Visitors Lobby.

On display alongside the Portal will be the award-winning Virtual Reality film, [Clouds Over Sidra](#), which enables people to see Zaatari through the eyes of a young Syrian Refugee girl living in the camp. The immersive experiences of Portals and the VR film are part of a larger exhibition entitled *Refugees*, which draws attention to the plight of refugees and focuses on the work of the UN and member states in addressing their needs. The exhibition will be open to the public in the UN Visitors Lobby until mid September.

CONTACT: For press inquiries or to schedule group visits, please contact Portal Curator Saadia Bangash at Saadia@SharedStudios.com. Follow us at #UNPortal, #ZaatariPortal, #NoLostGeneration, #withrefugees, #UNVR and @SharedStudios.

MORE INFORMATION:

PORTALS, the global public art initiative, launched in December 2014, connecting residents in New York City and Tehran. Since then, Portals have spread around the globe and connected more than 15,000 people in intimate conversation across the U.S., Afghanistan, Cuba, Germany, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, and Rwanda. Portals has also enabled thousands more people to engage in live collaborations, classes, and performances. Prior participants include [U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power](#); journalists [CNN's Fareed Zakaria](#) and [FOX's Chris Wallace](#); Afghan prosecutor Maria Bashir; director Doug Liman; and many more. Portals has been covered by global media including the [New York Times](#), the [Washington Post](#), [ABC](#), [Newsweek](#), and [NPR](#). An overview video on Portals is available [here](#).

UN VIRTUAL REALITY (UNVR) uses high-tech headsets to immerse viewers in the everyday realities of those living through some of the world's most complex global challenges. Building upon its mandate to amplify the voices of those who are often unheard, particularly the world's most vulnerable, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Action Campaign coordinates with UNVR to highlight the human stories at the heart of the effort to achieve the SDGs and inspiring action that will make a difference. More at [UNVR.org](#) and #UNVR. *Clouds Over Sidra*, the first virtual reality film to be shot for the UN, follows a twelve-year-old girl in the Zaatari camp in Jordan. For more, please [visit the VR film online](#).



BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING

BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, nonpolitical organization established in 2007 to enhance positive relations between the United States and Arab World through one-to-one connections between thought leaders and the creation of original youth-focused education programs rooted in the art of storytelling. Bridges of Understanding is the Premier Program Partner for this Portals installation. More at [bridgesofunderstanding.org](#).

The UN SDG ACTION CAMPAIGN is a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General that seeks to create an enabling environment for Sustainable Development Goal Implementation by empowering and inspiring people across the world to take action. For the next 15 years, the SDG Action Campaign will contribute to SDG achievement by building multi-stakeholder partnerships and leveraging cutting-edge communication technologies. Some of its projects include: [MY World](#), the [Humans of MY World](#), the [World We Want](#), and [UN Virtual Reality](#). More at [sdgactioncampaign.org](#) and [@SDGAction](#).

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child. Together with its partners, UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. More on its [website](#) and [@UNICEF](#).

Shared Studios is a multidisciplinary arts, design, and technology collective. It grounds the connective potential of technology in physical spaces to create environments in which distant people can naturally converse, collaborate, and play. The collective is working to create wormholes throughout the world, carved by an Internet you can walk through. More at [www.SharedStudios.com](#), [@SharedStudios](#) on on [Facebook](#).

SHARED STUDIOS