

# Airbnb hosts open their homes to those in need

By [Joe Gebbia](#)

12 Jun 2017

I'm excited to share one of the many things I've been working on for the last 12 months behind the scenes at Airbnb. One of the most uplifting parts of this journey for me has been witnessing our community's natural generosity, and never more so than when our hosts open their homes to people affected by extraordinary circumstances. Today we get to announce the hard work of many people across different teams who created something special, something to tap that communal generosity, and connect it with those who need it the most. We welcome your thoughts.



Image Source: [Airbnb blog](#) - Kyle visiting with a family in Greece

When Superstorm Sandy hit the US East Coast in 2012, there were tens of thousands of people who became homeless overnight. It was one New York host on Airbnb who had a great idea. She wanted to volunteer her spare bedrooms and she didn't want to get paid for it. We realised when she emailed us the idea, we didn't have a system in place to allow volunteering of rooms for free. That's what started a 24-hour engineering marathon to create that capability. What started as one woman's idea, within days, became a movement of compassion and hospitality. 1,000 people offered their spare bedroom. Former Mayor Bloomberg held a press conference and highlighted this effort to quickly respond to people in need.

We realised this wasn't just confined to this one event. Inspired by our hosts' generosity, we quickly developed a tool that made it easy for them to host people for free so that, anywhere in the world where we have community, we can help people in need within hours. Since then, in more than 65 emergencies around the world, our community has opened their doors, and spare bedrooms, to those in desperate need of a safe harbor.

Using our disaster relief tool, the Airbnb community has housed thousands of first responders and relief workers dispatched to disaster sites. Our hosts' altruism helps these courageous men and women do life-saving work where it is most essential, from Florida, North Carolina and Haiti after Hurricane Matthew, to Louisiana after devastating flooding, to the wildfires in Fort McMurray, Canada.

So for the last five years as great as the growth of our host community has been, we realised we could take it to a whole other level simply by shifting from being reactive to being proactive. No waiting around for the crisis to hit, but to anticipate and harness this natural generosity on a daily basis.

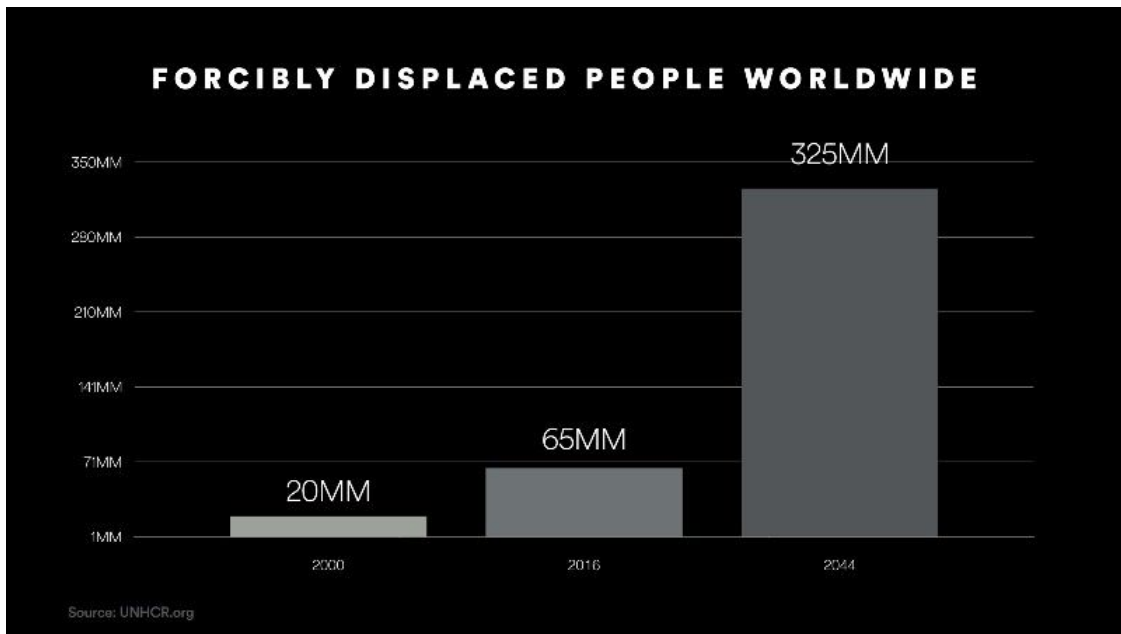


Image Source: [Airbnb blog](#)

The humanitarian crisis we are facing today is the most extensive mankind has experienced since World War II, with more than 65 million people forced to flee their homes and often their home countries. Earlier this year, we set a goal to support our hosts in opening their doors to 100,000 displaced people over the next five years. Why not give the same solution we provide to travellers to those who are displaced? Today, my team and I are launching what we hope will be the catalyst of our progress towards that goal: [airbnb.com/welcome](https://airbnb.com/welcome).

[Mousa Airbnb Story](#) from [Joe Gebbia](#) on [Vimeo](#).

In the past, Airbnb staff worked directly with relief organisations to match refugees with hosts who had volunteered their homes. This was often a painfully slow process due to the many intermediaries involved. Our new platform allows relief organisations to connect people in need directly with Airbnb volunteer hosts, which means a faster process and fewer missed opportunities.

From natural disasters to the refugee crises, the impact we can have as individuals might seem limited. But as many of our hosts know, sharing your home for even a few nights can make a tremendous difference in someone's life.

At [airbnb.com/welcome](#), you can sign up to host a person in need. Though we are currently focusing on refugees and people uprooted by natural disasters, we know there is a wide range of people who are displaced for a variety of reasons. If you have suggestions on groups that would benefit from temporary shelter, [let us know about it](#).

We realise that facilitating temporary housing for 100,000 vulnerable people within five years is an ambitious goal, but we are confident it is absolutely achievable if we work together. After all, every single time we've asked our community to open their doors and hearts to help others, they have more than exceeded our expectations: they have humbled us with the immensity of their kindness.

I'd like to invite anyone with a spare bedroom down the hall who has a desire to do something during this time in history, to consider sharing it with those who've been forced to leave their homes. To learn more, check out [airbnb.com/welcome](#). Sign up to host someone or get involved—it's simple, easy, and it can really make difference.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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