

UNHCR COVID-19 Preparedness and Response

Highlights

- UNHCR has released the report "[Coming Together for Refugee Education](#)" which notes that half of all refugee children are out of school and calls for immediate and bold action by the international community to beat back the catastrophic effects of the coronavirus.
- In a [press release](#), UNHCR alerted that more than three quarters of Nicaraguan refugees and asylum-seekers in Costa Rica are going hungry, eating only once or twice a day as a result of the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 80% of protection clusters (21 out of 26) report escalating conflict and/or political instability since the outbreak of COVID-19. This is undermining efforts to curb the spread of the virus, triggering new displacements, reducing safe access to vital health and sanitation services and impeding life-saving protection and humanitarian services.

COVID-19 update



Over **18,000** reported cases of COVID-19 among

UNHCR's persons of concern



across **95** countries

(numbers as of 03 September 2020)



Iran. Afghan refugee sisters in Isfahan go to school for the first time.

© UNHCR/Mohammad Hossein Dehghanian

Global Overview

The coronavirus pandemic has had dramatic effects on the lives of school age children. Schools have been closed, exams cancelled, postponed or moved online; and parents – including in forcibly displaced communities – have taken on bigger roles in their children’s learning. Based on UNHCR data, the Malala Fund has estimated that half of all refugee girls in secondary school will not return when classrooms reopen this month. For countries where refugee girls' gross secondary enrolment was already less than 10%, all girls are at risk of dropping out for good, a chilling prediction that would have an impact for generations to come.

Adapting to the limitations imposed by COVID-19 has been especially tough for the 85 per cent of the world’s refugees and internally displaced people who live in developing or least developed countries. Mobile phones, tablets, laptops, good connectivity, cheap data, even radio sets are often not readily available to displaced communities. In India, for instance, only 10% of refugee and asylum-seeker students are currently able to continue remote learning for various reasons including lack of devices and inability to afford stable internet connection.

Keeping education going in the time of a pandemic has required resourcefulness, innovation, invention and collaboration. Together with partners, [UNHCR has developed specific interventions to support continued education](#) as well as increased advocacy for continuous access to education. In Bolivia, for instance, mobile classrooms have been set up by UNHCR and partner organisations for Venezuelan refugee and migrant children who have had no access to formal educational, distance learning or recreational activities since the lockdown.

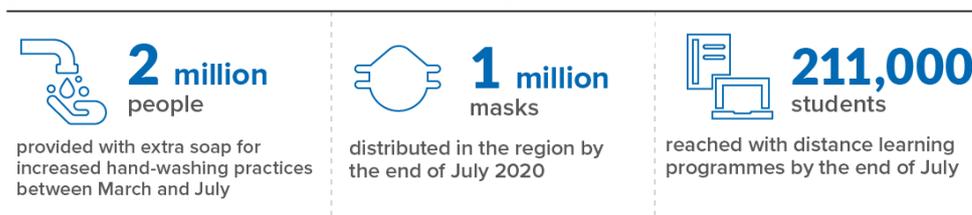
UNHCR Response

Progress to date and Impact

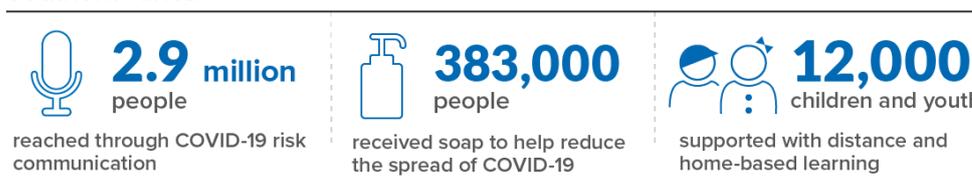
Syrian Arab Republic



East and Horn and Africa and the Great Lakes



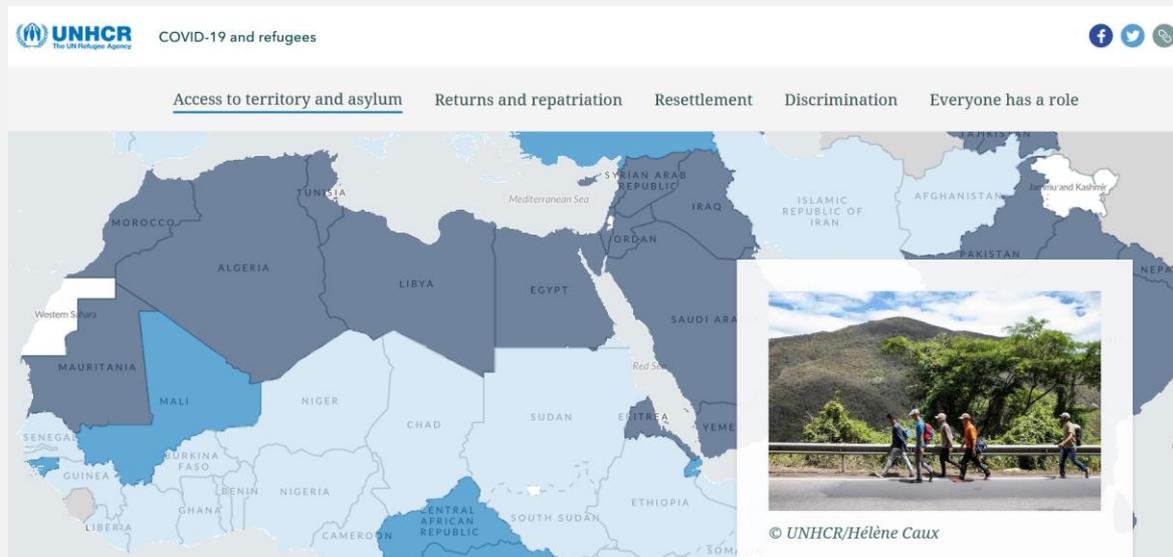
Southern Africa



Gaps and Challenges

- In all regions, spontaneous returns of refugees continue, mostly pushed by economic hardship in countries of asylum.
- An increase in number of eviction cases was observed in all regions. UNHCR is advocating for the introduction of a moratorium on evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 and refugees



UNHCR has launched a new [website](#) that provides data-driven analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on refugees' rights, focusing on access to asylum and territory, repatriation and returns, and the rise in discrimination and xenophobia. The maps, stats and facts show how the pandemic has impeded efforts to protect the forcibly displaced and affected their access to basic rights.

Middle East and North Africa

Iraq

- In recent weeks, Iraq has continued to witness a concerning increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, with a regular average of more than 3,500 new daily cases. As the number of cases continue to grow, health facilities across Iraq are facing increasing pressure to provide support to all affected individuals.
- UNHCR is supporting families' access to basic hygiene items through the distribution of cash assistance and sanitary kits in Iraq. To date, over 87,000 displaced families have cashed out their assistance (1/3 refugees and 2/3 internally displaced people).
- UNHCR has also distributed over 62,000 sanitary kits including hygiene and sanitary items for women and girls of reproductive age living in internally displaced and refugee camps.

Yemen

- UNHCR and partners are resuming regular programmes that were previously suspended due to the pandemic, while adapting their work-plan to COVID-19 prevention measures. UNHCR and partners restarted collective psychosocial support, legal awareness sessions as well as community outreach activities. In addition, the second round of cash assistance has been completed for some 4,230 refugee families in the north.

West and Central Africa

Niger

- Access to refugee and internally displaced hosting areas remains challenging due to security development

Asia and the Pacific

Bangladesh

- Testing in the camps in Bangladesh through sentinel sites has increased. Since mid-August, an average of 100 tests have been conducted daily in the camps, but overall, the percentage of positive cases in the camps is significantly lower than in the host community.

Afghanistan

- As of 25 August, almost 39,000 vulnerable Afghan refugee families have been identified as eligible to receive UNHCR's emergency cash assistance through urgent money orders issued by Pakistan Post. UNHCR aims to reach 70,000 vulnerable refugee families with this emergency support.

India

- In India, the third most affected country by COVID-19, stress caused by the current situation has resulted in an increased need for support on issues related to psychosocial well-being and mental health. Strengthened community messages on mental health are being developed to better support community members and psychological first aid training is also being organised in order to strengthen the capacity of community members and partner personnel, who are often the first responders to issues related to the emotional well-being of persons of concern.

East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes

- Protection issues in the refugee settings are being observed as result of prolonged school closure with increased incidences of

and a recent attack on humanitarians, as well as heavy rains and floods. In most hosting areas, social distancing is very difficult to maintain among the population and within the sites hosting UNHCR's persons of concern.

Côte d'Ivoire

- UNHCR conducted training sessions to support the self-employment of refugees and the management of small enterprises. Participants received the equivalent of 1,000 USD at the end of the training to initiate their business.

Central African Republic

- UNHCR is working to re-design the most crowded internally displaced sites to reduce the risk of contagion in these settings. As part of this decongestion effort, UNHCR and partners provided cash assistance, food and non-food items to over 1,700 households to support their return back to their villages of origin.

Southern Africa

- Concerning reports of rising xenophobia and stigmatization of refugees have been noted in the region, impacting on the physical safety of people of concern as well as on social cohesion and peaceful coexistence with local communities.
- UNHCR operations across the region are increasingly encountering complacency and non-compliance with COVID-19 prevention measures – for example wearing masks, handwashing, social distancing. There is a need for sustained, as well as renewed, efforts in terms of risk communication and community engagement, including adopting innovative approaches to ensure impact. This is especially important as restrictions

gender-based violence and abuse, including online/virtual sexual exploitation and violence at home and in the communities. Teenage pregnancies, sexual harassment, child labour are among some of the critical issues being reported.

- UNHCR and partners have worked to increase sensitization on the issue and make sure that reporting channels are widely publicized. Helplines have been reinforced with additional trained personnel to allow provision of remote counselling and referral to appropriate services in Kenya and Uganda especially in urban areas where reaching out to survivors had been challenging due to the movement restrictions.

Djibouti

- The construction of the COVID-19 treatment center in Nyamagabe District was completed. The center will be used to treat cases that will be identified in refugee camps as well as in the hosting community.

Europe

- In some countries, backlogs related to COVID-19 remain challenging. Offices report difficulties observed in timely assigning of lawyers and scaling up remote interviewing capacity. Where authorities use remote interviewing as an alternative to physical interviews, UNHCR is advocating to observe the new Refugee Status Determination (RSD) guidelines, including UNHCR's [COVID-19 related recommendations and best practices](#).

Spain

- [UNHCR and IOM issued a joint press release on 29 August](#) expressing concern over the alarming reception conditions in Melilla that have been worsening since the beginning of the pandemic. The centre



are being gradually lifted, and people of concern along with the host community are returning to work and school.

- UNHCR and partners continued efforts to strengthen health systems and services across the region to prevent and respond to COVID-19. Across the region, over 1,900 health workers have been trained on COVID-19 prevention and response.

currently hosts some 1,400 persons, over twice its capacity.

Italy

- Italy saw a significant number of new arrivals by sea, the majority disembarking in Lampedusa. All new arrivals have to follow the COVID-19 prevention protocol, including a 14-day quarantine either on- or offshore. Authorities have taken further measures to enhance their capacity to safely test, quarantine and receive new arrivals.

Americas

- The Americas region accounts for approximately 13% of the world’s population, but over 50% of officially reported global cases and deaths. The high daily infection rate for COVID-19 in Central America is compounded by increasing infection rates for dengue in Honduras (18,000 cases already).
- A new tropical depression has impacted Central America, affecting communities already struggling to recover from tropical storm Amanda, the consequences of COVID-19 and other issues related to violence.
- Despite the pandemic, Brazil announced in August that almost 8,000 Venezuelans have been recognized as refugees following an accelerated procedure. With this new announcement, Brazil has already recognized around 46,000 Venezuelans as refugees, representing the largest recognized Venezuelan refugee population in Latin America.
- UNHCR conducted several shelter projects in the region, such as the construction of a new shelter in Mexico and the reparation of a women’s and children’s shelter.

Working in Partnerships



Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, [many cities and mayors around the world](#) have put in place unique and inspiring measures to protect all their residents, including displaced and stateless people. As the multi-stakeholder and partnership approach is one of the main pillars of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) – cities are playing a key role in supporting people forced to flee their homes.

In the wake of COVID-19 the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) has responded in real time to create a [Live Action City Tracker & Resource Hub](#) that provides city leaders and the international community with practical tools, policy examples and resources to ensure that refugees, migrants and other vulnerable populations are included in COVID-19 responses.

Coordination and partnerships

To inform the country level rollout of the Regional Integral Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS) in the Americas, national mid-year review sessions have concluded in Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Mexico. The consultations, facilitated with the support of UNHCR, are providing an opportunity for national technical teams to consider prevailing protection needs and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of national action plans. In addition, UNHCR organized a meeting with civil society organizations to map their perception of the MIRPS process, obtain feedback on the Norwegian Refugee Council's coordination role, jointly brainstorm on how to ensure wider civil society participation and identify activities to be prioritized during the second half of 2020.

In Somalia, the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster is conducting the second round of a COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) assessment to monitor the effectiveness of the approaches the partners are using. The tools have been developed with 10 partners covering 11 districts. Nearly 2,400 individuals will be interviewed.

Innovative Practices



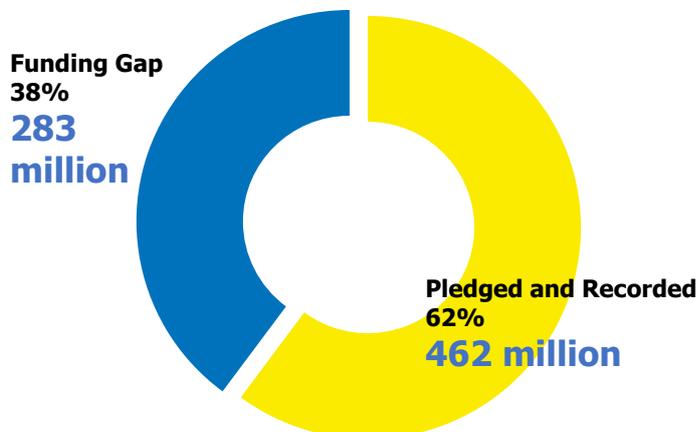
In Djibouti, on 19 August, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity (MASS) in collaboration with UNHCR and the National Office for Assistance to Refugees and Disaster Victims (ONARS) officially launched a biometric registration and social assistance initiative for urban refugees. This operation aims to improve the living conditions of urban refugees affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Djibouti city and builds on emergency assistance for urban refugees introduced in May. The most vulnerable households have been targeted and will receive vouchers to benefit from another two months of food aid.

Financial Information

On 17 July, the second revision to the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) was launched, seeking USD 10.3 billion to support global humanitarian response through December 2020. UNHCR seeks USD 745 million for all refugee and internally displaced operations worldwide. While the initial appeal focused on preparedness and prevention, the revised appeals are increasingly focused on response activities to address the immediate public health, protection and humanitarian assistance needs in countries already facing humanitarian situations. Within the GHRP, UNHCR's focus is on meeting the needs of refugees, stateless, the internally displaced and host communities. More detailed information on UNHCR requirements within the GHRP was shared in the [11 May revision to the UNHCR Coronavirus emergency appeal](#).

USD 745M

Requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally until the end of the year:



Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2020 programme:

Sweden 76.4M | Private donors Spain 52.9M | Norway 41.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | United Kingdom 31.7M | Private donors Republic of Korea 27.2M | Germany 25.9M | Private donors Japan 17.9M | Switzerland 16.4M | France 14M | Private donors Italy 12.4M | Italy 10.6M

Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees, the internally displaced, stateless persons and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.

More information:

[Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19](#)
(launched 17 July 2020)



[Global Focus COVID-19 Situation page](#)
(including UNHCR's Coronavirus emergency appeal and sitreps)



[UNHCR COVID-19 data portal](#) (including global guidance, sitreps and links to other UNHCR COVID-19 related sites)



Total contributed or pledged to the COVID-19 appeal:

USD 462M

Including:

United States	\$186.3M
Germany	\$62.7M
European Union	\$47.0M
United Kingdom	\$28.0M
Japan	\$23.9M
African Development Bank	\$18.3M
Denmark	\$14.6M
Private donors	\$14.6M
United Nations Foundation	\$10.0M
CERF	\$6.9M
Canada	\$6.4M
Education Cannot Wait	\$5.5M
Unilever	\$5.3M
Qatar Charity	\$3.5M
Spain	\$3.4M
France	\$3.4M
Ireland	\$3.3M
Sweden	\$3.0M
Sony Corporation	\$2.9M
Austria	\$2.5M
Finland	\$2.4M
Latter-day Saints Charities	\$2.0M

Contact:

Lea Moser, moserl@unhcr.org