

## UNHCR COVID-19 Response

### Highlights

- [UNHCR's mid-year results for COVID-19 multisectoral monitoring](#) show that six months into the year, UNHCR has either reached or exceeded the half-year milestone for the 2021 targets. This includes the provision of essential healthcare services to over 4.2 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons; 11.3 million people who have accessed protection services; and almost 900,000 children and youth that have been supported with connected or home-based learning.
- A recent [study by the UNHCR and World Bank Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement](#) noted evidence of COVID-19 causing a drastic reduction in movement across borders and in resettlement. Surveys from eight countries, including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Iraq and Yemen, showed a deterioration in employment, food security and access to health and education. The pandemic has fostered a rise in gender-based violence and violence against children, and triggered societal stresses that have hit people of concern to UNHCR hardest.



In 121 out of 123 host countries, persons of concern are already receiving vaccinations.



As of 11 October, 59 countries have reported that almost 544,000 persons of concern have received a vaccine.



Almost 110,000 cases of COVID-19 have been reported among forcibly displaced people.

*(numbers as of 11 October 2021)*



Syrian refugee Falak Selo (right) talks to her mother and sister in Akre camp, northern Iraq, where she provides mental health support to other refugees (26 January, 2020). © UNHCR/Seivan MSalim

Ahead of World Mental Health Day on 10 October, UNHCR called on the international community to [boost quality mental health support for refugees, internally displaced and stateless people](#) since COVID-19 has taken a devastating toll on people forced to flee. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, psychologists at refugee camps reported a sharp rise in counseling sessions. In Peru, in the first seven months of this year, there was a 100 per cent increase in calls and referrals to mental health and psychosocial support services, when compared to the same period last year.

Since the start of the pandemic, UNHCR has provided mental health and psychosocial support services to more than 850,000 people forced to flee. UNHCR has also been working to train first line responders, integrate mental health and psychosocial wellbeing into refugee education programs, and assist people with severe or complex mental health conditions.

## Call for vaccine equity

While UNHCR is encouraged by the response of states in the development of inclusive national vaccine plans that aim to reach refugees and other populations of concern, there are significant differences in the proportion of populations vaccinated per country. Due to a combination of vaccine availability, allocation and implementation capacity, several refugee-hosting countries have only reached a very small proportion of the population.

UNHCR calls on states to share excess vaccine doses with the COVAX facility, as global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines remains the most viable and effective way forward. COVAX has so far shipped over 301 million vaccines to 142 countries.

To ensure vaccine equity, UNHCR calls on vaccine manufacturers to waive the indemnity and liability requirements for humanitarian buffer applicants. Otherwise, some of the most vulnerable populations globally may not have access to the lifesaving vaccines, undermining efforts to control the pandemic.

## Middle East and North Africa

The rate of COVID-19 steadily decreased among most countries in the MENA region throughout September, though there were indications of a possible fourth wave in the Syrian Arab Republic. Access to vaccination continues to increase, with forcibly displaced and stateless persons receiving vaccine doses across the region. Despite this, some persons of concern to UNHCR reported difficulties in accessing vaccination centres and COVID-19 certificates/passes. UNHCR continues to work with authorities to remove barriers preventing vaccination, while reinforcing the response of national health authorities.

Pfizer donated 200,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses to **Jordan's** Ministry of Health to be administered to refugees. UNHCR is coordinating with both the Ministry of Health and Pfizer to facilitate the agreement and ensure effective and timely distribution.

UNHCR in **Lebanon** launched a 'vaccine awareness bus' in September, and continued to deploy mobile vaccination teams in refugee settings. Teams will continue to administer the first dose of the vaccine until late-October and then switch to complete the vaccination with a second dose for targeted groups in rural as well as densely-populated areas by mid-December.

## Asia and the Pacific

Despite declining positivity rates in some countries, the COVID-19 situation remains a significant concern in the region, particularly in Afghanistan, where the health system is on the brink of collapse according to the WHO Director-General. UNHCR continued to

advocate for vaccine donations to countries in the region so that refugees and other persons of concern are not left behind.

Although the **Islamic Republic of Iran** has been particularly affected by successive waves of COVID-19 and the global vaccine shortage has hindered the capacity to respond, good progress was made in September. On 13 September, the country set a new record in the number of daily vaccinations, with more than 1,590,000 individuals receiving the vaccine across the country over a period of 24 hours. As a result, over 230,000 refugees and undocumented Afghans have been vaccinated, in line with the inclusive approach of the government that was announced in August.

On 27 September, the Ministry of Health in **Indonesia** issued detailed instructions on COVID-19 vaccinations for refugees through a decree that allows refugees with UNHCR-issued identity documents to access the private sector vaccination scheme as well as the national COVID-19 vaccination scheme, provided that at least 70 per cent of the population in the area that refugees reside have received a first vaccination dose.

## West and Central Africa

Vaccination campaigns have commenced across all 21 countries in West and Central Africa and all countries in the region have agreed to include refugees in vaccination plans. As of end of September, the region has made modest progress in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, with just 3 countries out of 21 meeting the target to fully vaccinate 10 per cent of the population.

UNHCR's advocacy towards inclusion of displaced populations in vaccination campaigns is complemented by direct support to national health systems. In **Niger**, UNHCR is finalizing the process of signing an agreement with the Nigerien Ministry of Health for the training of health workers on epidemiological aspects of COVID-19, good practices and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) management.

### East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes

Overall, over 17,500 refugees have received at least the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in the region. Of these, some 6,400 refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda are fully vaccinated.

The vaccination of refugees in **Djibouti** started on 16 September with 16,000 doses of US donated Pfizer vaccines. UNHCR and IOM contributed USD 300,000 to support in the delivery of vaccines. The government has committed to grant more than 5 per cent of vaccine doses to refugees.

UNHCR continues to support **Ethiopia's** effort to prevent and respond to the pandemic, inter alia by successfully advocating with the government to include refugees and asylum-seekers in the national prevention and response schemes. Accordingly, refugees and asylum-seekers were granted access to government's testing and treatment centres.

### Southern Africa

The rate of infection continued to drop across the region. Despite some small, geographically-contained outbreaks following the reopening of schools, the majority of countries in the region are in lockdown level 2 or below.

As vaccination programmes continue to roll out across the region, the issue of access for undocumented people – including stateless people and undocumented migrants - poses a challenge. In **South Africa**, the authorities are exploring alternative methods to record undocumented people while reassuring them any information they provide will remain confidential, to facilitate inclusion and improve uptake. In **Angola**, UNHCR's advocacy efforts have helped escalate the issue to ministerial

level, and it is tabled for discussion at the next inter-ministerial meeting.

### Europe

Vaccinations progressed in several countries in Europe. **Austria** announced the deployment of a "vaccination bus" to offer inoculation directly at its largest reception facility, while one of Austria's reception facilities for unaccompanied and separated children screened awareness-raising video content to help children understand the implications of taking or declining the vaccine. Progress in the vaccination of persons of concern was also reported in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece and Montenegro**.

Communication with communities of concern continued on vaccination campaigns across the region, making use of different channels. In **Malta**, UNHCR produced notices in several languages on the easing of COVID-19 restrictions for in-person events, as well as a poster on how vaccines work, based on material from WHO. UNHCR partners organized awareness-raising sessions on COVID-19 restrictions and vaccination in reception centres in **Bulgaria and Serbia**, as well as in two centres in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**.

### Americas

More than a billion COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the region and 35 per cent of people in Latin America and the Caribbean have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccine coverage, however, isn't uniform. Canada, Chile, Uruguay and Puerto Rico have fully vaccinated over 70 per cent of their populations, while 10 countries in the region have yet to reach 20 per cent. In Haiti, fewer than 1 per cent of people have been protected thus far.

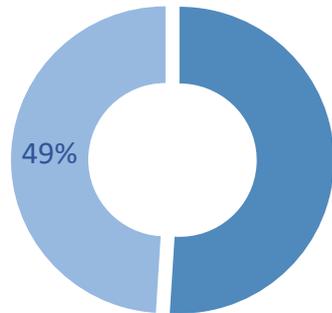
UNHCR supported the second round of vaccination against COVID-19 for non-indigenous refugees and migrants living in Boa Vista (**Brazil**). The **Costa Rican** Social Security Fund (CCSS) announced COVID-19 vaccination for migrants (regular and irregular) and asylum-seekers. **Guatemala's** Institute of Migration (IGM, in Spanish) began vaccinating returnees who have not yet received their vaccines and are interested in immunizing against COVID-19.

## Financial Information

(as of 19 October 2021)

### USD 924M

UNHCR's total financial requirements for 2021 Coronavirus Emergency



■ Financial requirements ■ Total funded

### Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2021 programme:

Norway 80M | Sweden 75.4M | Private donors Spain 62.6M | United Kingdom 40.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | Private donors Republic of Korea 31.9M | Germany 26M | Private donors Japan 23.6M | Japan 23.4M | France 20.2M | Switzerland 16.4M | Private donors Italy 15.7M | Private donors Sweden 13M | Ireland 12.5M | Belgium 11.9M | Italy 10.7M

*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.*

### Total contributions:

### USD 453M

Including:

USA	\$214.7M
Germany	\$30.1M
African Development Bank Group	\$11.9M
European Union	\$11.6M
Canada	\$7.9M
Unilever (UK)	\$4.4M
Austria	\$3.6M
Private donors	\$2.7M
China	\$2.0M
Education Cannot Wait	\$1.3M
Japan	\$1.3M
France	\$1.2M
USA for UNHCR	\$1.1M

### More information:



[UNHCR COVID-19 Supplementary Appeal 2021](#)  
(launched 18 December 2020)



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

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