

UNHCR COVID-19 Response

Highlights

- In 121 countries, refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in high-risk categories have started receiving their first vaccination shot. However, the overall number of refugees and IDPs who are vaccinated is still very low and in many hosting countries vaccine scarcity continues to present a significant barrier for refugees and IDPs, while vaccine hesitancy adds a second layer of complication. UNHCR stands ready to support states to overcome some of these barriers.
- 30 August marked the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the [1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness](#). Stateless people can fall between the cracks in conflict and displacement situations because they lack the protection of any government, they don't have proof of their legal identity, or both. They also risk being excluded from accessing COVID-19 vaccinations as countries implement plans to tackle the pandemic.
- UNHCR has expressed its concern over [U.S. expulsion flights under COVID-19 asylum restrictions](#) to southern Mexico. These expulsion flights of non-Mexicans to the deep interior of Mexico constitute a troubling new dimension in the enforcement of the COVID-related public health order known as Title 42. UNHCR recently issued a global warning against initiatives which shift asylum responsibilities elsewhere or result in denial of the right to seek asylum altogether.



As of 10 September, **58** countries have reported that almost **350,000** persons of concern have received a vaccine.



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



Iran. Afghan Refugees during COVID19 times © UNHCR/Zahra Nazari

UNHCR launched its 2021 Education Report “[Staying the Course: The Challenges Facing Refugee Education](#)” that highlights the stories of young refugees around the world who try to keep learning in an era of unprecedented disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report shows that progress, and all other educational advances for refugees is under grave threat due to COVID-19, and while it remains too early to know its full impact, the damage is likely to be terrible. Estimates from UNHCR offices in 37 countries indicate that refugee learners lost an average of 142 days of school up to March 2021 because of closures of schools, universities and other institutions – an enormous deficit to recover.

COVID-19 update



95 countries have reported that persons of concern have contracted COVID-19.



Over **106,000** cases of COVID-19 have been reported among forcibly displaced people.

(as of 10 September 2021)

Middle East and North Africa

Although the majority of countries in the region witnessed a downward trend in COVID-19 cases in August; Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Yemen recorded high infection rates, raising concerns of a possible new wave. Meanwhile, all countries in the region have now started vaccinating refugees hosted in their territory, after having included them in their national vaccination plans.

In **Iraq**, the Erbil Directorate of Health in the Kurdistan region has taken a decision to allocate a number of COVID-19 vaccines to refugees and IDPs in camps in Erbil, and will undertake mobile missions without the requirement of pre-registration online. Meanwhile, since the end of June, UNHCR rolled out a second round of COVID-19 cash assistance for eligible refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and returnees aimed at mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and reliance on negative coping mechanisms. To date, nearly 12,000 refugee families and more than 4,000 IDP families have been assisted.

In **Jordan** on 15 August, UNHCR reached nearly 40,000 refugee families including non-Syrians with a new round of emergency COVID-19 assistance. Meanwhile in Azraq and Zaatari refugee camps, the number of vaccinated refugees continued to increase, reaching over 27,300 refugees in total (40 per cent of the eligible population).

Asia and the Pacific

While immunization campaigns in some countries are making significant progress and include persons of concern, in others UNHCR is still advocating for their inclusion. In addition, even in countries where persons of concern are afforded the same access to healthcare as nationals, such as Myanmar and Bangladesh

the health situation has deteriorated even further.

The total number of recorded COVID-19 cases in **Myanmar** is now over 396,000 – around 32 per cent more cases since the end of July. This significantly affects IDPs. In **Bangladesh** the number of COVID-19 cases has now crossed the 1.5 million mark. In the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, as of 31 August, almost 2,900 positive cases have been recorded since the start of COVID-19 in March 2020.

In **Iran**, UNHCR is coordinating with the WHO and the Ministry of Health to address potential COVID-19 related health needs linked to new arrivals from Afghanistan. UNHCR is also advocating for COVID-19 vaccines through the humanitarian buffer and working with the authorities to identify support that could be offered to strengthen health services in the poorer eastern provinces.

West and Central Africa

The progress of vaccination campaigns in the region remains slow as the virus continues to spread. At the peak point in August, the overall number of active cases in the region doubled in just a month. Meanwhile, vaccination programmes in several countries were suspended or reduced during the reporting period due to lack of vaccines. Vaccine hesitancy, low observance of preventative measures and misinformation continue to undermine COVID-19 response efforts across the region, putting communities at high risk for more transmissible variants.

To respond to vaccine hesitancy, UNHCR has a series of initiatives for communication with communities to encourage behaviour change related to COVID-19. For example, in **Cameroon**, UNHCR trained community mobilizers safely engaged with more than 1,500

individuals and motivated more than 320 refugees to get vaccinated.

East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes

Apart from Eritrea, all other countries in the region have ongoing vaccination campaigns, although vaccine shortages continue to pose a challenge.

Tanzania received 1 million vaccines through the COVAX scheme and have launched a national vaccination campaign supported by the president. Refugees have been included in the national roll-out plan and have been targeted for phase two of the vaccination campaign. However, the vaccine uptake has been low in rural areas and among health care workers. Testing is currently centralized in Dar es Salaam which presents a challenge in tracking the pandemic among persons of concern. UNHCR is seeking approval to import rapid antigen tests for use in the refugee camps.

In **Ethiopia**, UNHCR supports the inter-agency COVID-19 response to the internal displacement situation in the country through distribution of non-food items, equipment of isolation and quarantine centers and promotion of critical health measures.

Southern Africa

The rate of infection slowed across the region during the month of August, despite the presence of both the Delta variant and the currently unnamed variant first detected in South Africa in May. Restrictions are lessening in the majority of countries in the region. Schools have also reopened in some countries, at least for students in examination grades.

UNHCR's main focus is on community mobilization, as people's willingness to be vaccinated is markedly compromised by the spread of misinformation. A sensitization campaign to reduce vaccine hesitancy was carried out in Maratane settlement in **Mozambique**, and community health workers were trained in preparation for the vaccine rollout. To encourage willingness to get vaccinated and tackle questions in **Malawi**,

UNHCR and the Ministry of Health appeared on a weekly vaccination talk show on the Dzaleka camp radio station reaching over 200,000 refugees and members of the host community.

Europe

In several countries, efforts were made to ensure inclusion of people at risk of facing obstacles in accessing vaccinations. In a welcome step, **Italian** authorities have issued a circular calling on regions and prefectures competent for the administration of vaccines to ensure administrative flexibility for the full inclusion of temporary documentation holders in the vaccination campaign.

In **Ukraine**, due to the proliferation of the Delta variant, border crossing rules at the contact line and the administrative boundary with Crimea were tightened as of 5 August through the reintroduction of requirements to self-isolate for ten days upon arrival to the government-controlled areas. To mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, UNHCR continued delivering COVID-19 related cash and in-kind support to vulnerable internally displaced households in Ukraine.

Americas

Latin America still leads in the number of infections globally. Seven out of the top 20 countries and territories with the highest mortality rates in the world are in the Americas, according to WHO. The COVID-19 vaccines are available for the population of concern in 17 countries of the region regardless of their migratory status. Other positive steps are also being taken – for example **Colombia** is planning to conduct a census for people with irregular migratory status to speed up their vaccination.

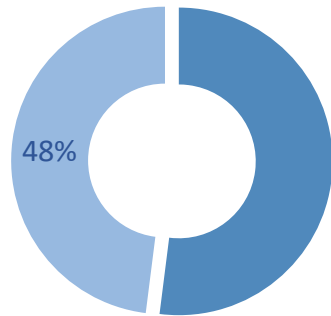
In **Curaçao**, UNHCR is supporting an information campaign to promote the vaccination of children who hold an irregular status. In **Peru**, UNHCR installed five Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) in Lima to support local authorities in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

Financial Information

(as of 04 October 2021)

USD 924M

UNHCR's total financial requirements for 2021 Coronavirus Emergency



■ Financial requirements ■ Total funded

Total contributions:

USD 445M

Including:

USA	\$214.7M
Germany	\$30.1M
African Development Bank Group	\$11.9M
European Union	\$9.9M
Canada	\$7.9M
Unilever (UK)	\$4.4M
Austria	\$3.6M
Private donors	\$2.6M
China	\$2.0M
Education Cannot Wait	\$1.3M
Japan	\$1.3M
France	\$1.2M
USA for UNHCR	\$1.1M

Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2021 programme:

Norway 80M | Sweden 66.9M | Private donors Spain 55.7M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | Private donors Republic of Korea 28.5M | United Kingdom 28.4M | Germany 26M | Private donors Japan 23.6M | Japan 23.4M | France 20.2M | Switzerland 16.4M | Private donors Italy 14M | 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.

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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