

UNHCR Jordan COVID-19 response

Restrictions remain through Ramadan, while Jordan's COVID-19 curve stabilises

Through the end of March and early April 2021, Jordan's COVID-19 curve has stabilised, recording a downward trend. Nonetheless, the daily number of cases remains high, and many hospitals and ICUs treating COVID-19 patients are reaching capacity. The total case count currently stands at 683,466 with 8,178 deaths. Additional measures introduced by the Government of Jordan to respond to the increase of cases in early March remain in place through the month of Ramadan. Through its vaccination programme, the government has inoculated over 500,000 people, with over 1 million registered on the government platform.

In refugee camps, COVID-19 cases currently stand at a total of 3,543 of which 3,171 (90%) have recovered, while 41 persons of concern (PoCs), most of whom had underlying conditions, have passed away due to COVID-19. The number of PoC cases remains below the national average, with 3% of the refugee camp population having tested positive since the onset of the pandemic, compared to 6.7% of the total Jordanian population. It is worth noting that over 10% of the camps population have registered to receive the vaccine, while close to 3,500 refugees have already received it.

UNHCR response: stay, deliver, adapt

In parallel to supporting the COVID-19 vaccination of refugees, UNHCR continues to respond to limit the spread in **camp**s, working closely with the Ministry of Health and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate to carry out surveillance and contact tracing exercises, while confirmed cases follow the established quarantine or isolation protocols. In **urban areas**, UNHCR community-based protection teams are following-up on individual cases through phone counselling, to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on urban refugee populations and assess the needs and existing gaps in assistance. In addition to a number of health preventative measures, UNHCR continues its key activities through remote modalities:

- remote **services**, protection hotlines and newly launched **Help website** platform
- support refugee access to **e-learning** platforms
- **awareness raising** on the COVID-19 vaccination program
- regular **communications** via SMS text, social media and WhatsApp to refugee populations
- upgrade of **quarantine facilities** in camps
- health screening **procedures**
- PPE provision for frontline workers/refugees

In focus: COVID-19 devastating impact on refugee livelihood opportunities continues

A year since the onset of COVID-19, perhaps its most significant impact is the socioeconomic ramifications for refugees and Jordanians alike. Livelihood opportunities have significantly diminished due to market interruptions, opportunity loss and movement restrictions. A [2020 joint World Bank-UNHCR report](#) indicated that refugees were 73% less likely to be employed during lockdown, while poverty since March 2020 increased by 18 percentage points. Refugees who are able to find work as daily workers have had their daily income reduced to almost half due to early curfew, facing increased hardship as a result. In camps, employment centres that normally support refugees in looking for work and getting work permits have been mostly closed, and work/leave permits are only issued for emergency cases, hindering refugee access to work opportunities outside the camps, and thus risking a further drop in household incomes.



Nazir, 25, a Syrian refugee searches for work on building sites near his home in Amman, Jordan.

UNHCR is working with partners to enhance access to the labour market for refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. Key activities include linking them with work and vocational training **opportunities**; supporting the establishing of home-based businesses (HBBs), from the registration process, to providing seed grants, to linking them to various established platforms to access larger markets; advocating for more flexibility in the issuing of work permits by the Ministry of Labour. In March 2021, UNHCR Jordan also organised a **#WithRefugees Mother's Day "pop-up" shop** in Galleria Mall, where 30 refugees sold their handmade items (home décor, paintings, clothes, accessories) and made approximately JOD 4,000 in revenue, an important opportunity for refugees who rely on the income from their products, but have been unable to do so due to pandemic restrictions. Lastly, UNHCR is working with the MoH on the potential inclusion of a number of qualified refugee medical professionals who have been selected to support the national COVID-19 response.