

Morocco

April 2021

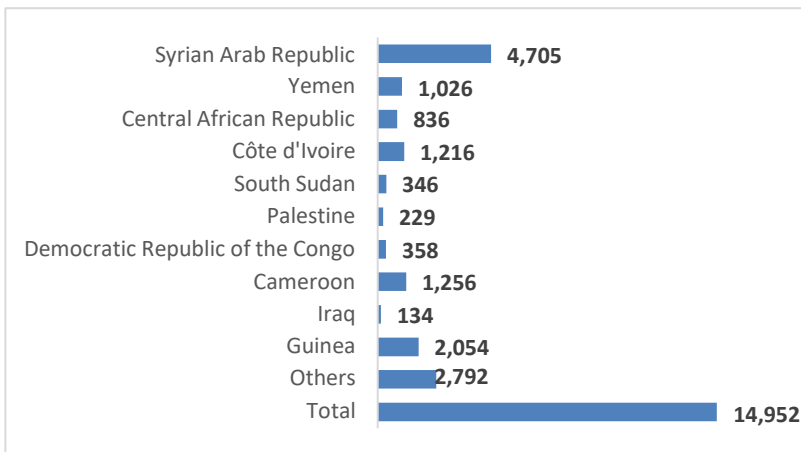
Morocco is both a transit and a host country with 14,952 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR from more than 45 countries.

UNHCR ensures access to asylum procedures and protection of refugees in Morocco while working closely with Moroccan authorities under the framework of the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum (SNIA).

Due to the COVID-19 situation, UNHCR and its partners have worked actively to make sure that their services continue to be accessible both physically and remotely for refugees in Morocco

UNHCR's people of concern

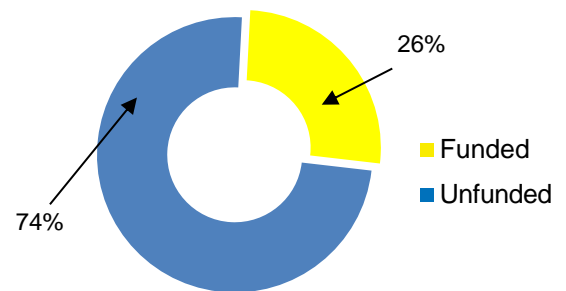
As of 31 March 2021: 8,491 refugees et 6,461 asylum seekers, a total of 14,952 people of concern



Funding needs in 2021 (As of 31 March)

8.9 million USD

Requested for UNHCR's Operation in Morocco



Refugees are located in **75 localities** across the kingdom.

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 37 National Staff
- 7 International Staff
- 3 UNV
- 1 IV (Monaco)

Bureau :

- 1 Branch Office in Rabat



Mokhtar et Alâa, Syrian refugees in Rabat's medina.

Working with Partners

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is UNHCR's main government counterpart (MoFAIC). UNHCR also collaborates with key ministries, academic partners and other institutions.
- UNHCR is actively engaged with its partners : Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO), Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF), Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH), Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise (AMAPPE) and Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme (CNDH).
- In Oujda, Tangier, Casablanca and Fes, UNHCR has established Protection Working Groups (PWG) to better identify and protect refugees and asylum seekers. These groups are composed of civil society actors, institutional partners, regional human rights commissions and UN agencies.
- In a context of mixed movements, UNHCR co-chairs with IOM a joint Thematic Working Group on Migration and Asylum in support to the implementation of the two Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees; and in full support to the National Policy on Migration and Asylum.
- In application of the whole-of-society and multi-partner approach called for by the Global Refugee Compact (2018) and subsequent Global Refugee Forum (2019), UNHCR is actively engaged and collaborating with a wide range of partners including refugees themselves, the media, regional and municipal authorities, civil society organization and members in the economic, social, cultural, religious and sport fields, the private sector, to improve the protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Alongside UN agencies, UNHCR is involved in the UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) process as well as in the thematic groups on migration, gender, AIDS, youth, communication (UNCG) and monitoring and evaluation.

COVID-19 Context

In response to the COVID-19 situation and to limit its spread, the Government of Morocco has taken early and decisive public health measures since the onset of the crisis. These measures were accompanied by a national health response plan which included all individuals living in Morocco.

In support of, and in complement to, the measures taken by the Government of Morocco, **UNHCR rapidly adapted its operational posture to respond to the increasing specific protection and assistance needs of refugees and asylum seekers.** These populations, working mainly in the informal sector, were particularly affected by the crisis with little to no income sources, an exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities and an increasing number of them in need of humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. Despite progressive loosening of movement restriction measures as of June 2020, socio-economic impacts of the crisis continue to be felt deeply by refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco.

In line with public health measures that continue to evolve during 2021, UNHCR and its partners have worked actively to ensure refugees' and asylum seekers' continuous access to services both physically and remotely. Protection hotlines continue to be active and are an important point of contact for refugees and asylum seekers (some 420 counselling sessions conducted in 2021). Regarding the registration and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, these were maintained throughout the crisis, directly in UNHCR's office with prior appointment or remotely when conditions were suitable.

Main Activities

Protection

- **Registration & RSD:** Pending the establishment of a national asylum system, UNHCR continues to register new asylum-seekers and conduct refugee status determination (RSD). All positive cases are referred for verification to the *Bureau des Réfugiés et des Apatrides (BRA)* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Inter-Ministerial Commission in charge of the regularization process in Rabat. UNHCR is present at Commission hearings and introduces the cases. Auditions by the Commission stopped at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. The renewal of BRA cards has resumed in December 2020. **In 2021, UNHCR continued adapting its registration and RSD procedures to ensure continuous access to asylum procedures while respecting preventive measures against COVID-19. In 2021, UNHCR has registered 1,379 new asylum requests.**
- **Legal assistance:** UNHCR works with a private law firm (Cabinet Lemseguem) to provide legal aid services to refugees and asylum-seekers (e.g. for issuance of birth certificates, for filling complaints against physical assault and for representation before the Moroccan court). **In 2021, 24 people were able to benefit from such legal assistance.**
- **Emergency housing:** Through FOO, UNHCR has an emergency shelter and protection programme. Emergency housing is meant to meet immediate needs, while protection houses respond to longer-term needs. This programme benefits refugees and asylum-seekers with extreme vulnerabilities: unaccompanied minors, at-risk women, single mothers, victims of trafficking, SGBV survivors. In 2021, 35 refugees and asylum seekers with specific needs were accommodated by UNHCR's housing program and the FOO.
- **Protection of victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) :** A referral and support system is in place for survivors and people at increased risk of SGBV to ensure their access to healthcare, psycho-social support, legal assistance, as well as livelihoods through the services of UNHCR's partners, civil society and public services. Prevention is also carried out through awareness raising campaigns and community activities. As a response to the accumulated risk of violence during the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR has a specifically dedicated phone number for women on its Protection Hotline. **In 2021, hotlines received some 130 calls from female refugees and asylum seekers, representing 30% of calls.** Their requests included housing assistance and financial assistance. There was an increase in the number of domestic violence cases.
- **Outreach and community-based activities:** UNHCR works in close collaboration with Protection Working Groups in Oujda, Tangier and Casablanca to identify and refer people with specific needs to adequate services. In 2021, a new PWG was created in Fes/Meknes under UNHCR's leadership with the participation of the Regional Council for Human rights.
- **22 refugee community agents** of different nationalities share information among refugee communities across 7 localities in the Kingdom, relaying their needs and concerns to UNHCR and its partners. All these actions were strengthened during the crisis in coordination with UNHCR.
- Refugee Protection Hotlines, with its 3 numbers for protection, RSD and registration continue to be fully operational and a key point of contact for refugees and asylum seekers. One additional phone number is dedicated to emergencies (particularly arrests). Social medias are also an important point of contact for persons of concern with some 140 requests during the first quarter of 2021.
- Management of protection cases: UNHCR is conducting monthly coordination meetings with its partners in order to reinforce vulnerability assessment and ensure timely and adequate referrals

and responses. In line with confidentiality guidelines and following refugees' consent, complicated cases are discussed to identify durable solutions.

- UNHCR has reinforced its engagement towards key protection principles: specific attention has been given towards participatory assessments and data collection through KOBO Power BI, complaint mechanisms, communication with communities and accountability to affected people (AAP).

Financial assistance for the most vulnerable

- UNHCR contributes to the cost of housing and food for the most vulnerable refugees (unaccompanied minors, single women, victims of gender-based violence and people with medical needs) through financial assistance based on assessments carried out with FOO. **In 2021, more than 830 individuals benefited from the financial assistance for the most vulnerable.**
- Exceptionally and in a spirit of solidarity, every refugee registered with UNHCR, along with most vulnerable asylum seekers will benefit from financial assistance. A first global distribution will be conducted in May for **over 4750 families.**

Education

- With the support of UNHCR's education programme and close collaboration with FOO, 86% of refugee children are enrolled in school at the primary level in 2021.
- Ensuring equitable schooling from a gender perspective remains one of UNHCR's priorities. **In Morocco, 48% of refugee children enrolled in schools are girls.**
- More than half of refugee children are following remedial classes. For the first semester of the school year 2020/2021, the success rate of refugee children in primary and secondary education was beyond 90%.
- During the first quarter of 2021, 900 children were enrolled in primary education, 220 in secondary education and 400 in kindergarten. Over 1,000 families received monthly cash assistance to support their children's education. In addition, 63 refugees are beneficiaries from the DAFI programme.
- On 24th of March 2021, UNHCR and the French Embassy in Morocco renewed their partnership agreement. This partnership will specifically offer facilitated access to language classes in French Institutes.

Health

- Through its partner *Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF)*, UNHCR facilitates the referral of refugees to public primary health care centers in which services are delivered free of charge. Pending the extension of the national medical insurance system (RAMED) to refugees, UNHCR assists with refugees' access to specialized health care services, including expenses related to medication, laboratory tests and specialized medical treatments.
- In 2021, the health program assisted **over 3,351 refugees**. During the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR and its medical partner adapted their services to ensure continuous access to healthcare services. This included the set-up of medical hotlines for remote consultations. Refugees with chronic illnesses were supplied with medicines in AMFP's centers or directly at their homes. **In total, 1,417 primary consultations were carried out, as well as 2,266 specialized medical consultations.**
- On 28th of January 2021, Morocco officially launched its vaccination campaign. As of 31 March, over 4,3 million people had received at least one dose. The Government of Morocco has confirmed the inclusion of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in the vaccination campaign during a GTMA's session, co-chaired by UNHCR and IOM. UNHCR is working with National

institutions and civil society to ensure the effective inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. So far, 36 refugees have been vaccinated.

- To respond to the emergency and psychological assistance requests that increased rapidly from the onset of the pandemic, FOO created a remote psychological support cell. The team was able to record over 200 calls from refugees and asylum seekers in 2021.
- TO ensure an integrated response on Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS), 30 PWGs' participants were trained on psychological first aid. UNHCR initiated a platform bringing together psychologists in the field of migration and asylum, aiming at coordinating MHPSS response in Morocco for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- UNHCR signed a partnership agreement on the 20th of May 2020 with **the National Council of Doctors (CNOM)** to facilitate access to specialized healthcare, including mental health, for refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco. In 2021, 11 refugees were able to benefit from specialized consultations, medical and surgical interventions.

Livelihood and self-reliance

- With the *Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise (AMAPPE)*, UNHCR supports refugees' enrolment in vocational trainings, the creation of income generating activities through microfinancing and job placement. The creation of micro-enterprises for the benefit of refugees continues with the involvement of two state partners, namely *l'Agence Nationale de la Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences (ANAPEC)* and *l'Office de Développement de la Coopération (ODCO)*.
- In 2021, **345** refugees were received for orientation and counseling sessions in-person and remotely. During the reporting period, 40 new project ideas were submitted, and 6 income-generating activities were created. 179 refugees are enrolled in vocational training programs with OFPPT, Entraide Nationale and partner NGOs.
- **Private sector:** since 2016, **213 refugees have been placed in enterprises by UNHCR and AMAPPE** across the country, including **5** in 2021's first quarter. Since the launch of this RABA, 51 different companies have hired refugees.

Capacity building and sensitization

- Capacity building is a key element of UNHCR's strategy to support the Moroccan authorities and civil society in the implementation of a fair and efficient asylum policy. UNHCR organizes on a regular basis workshops on the protection of refugees in a context of mixed migration flows and collaborates with the National Council on Human Rights (CNDH) to strengthen civil society's asylum-related capacities. **Several training courses were held by UNHCR** in various locations in Morocco for judges (Higher Institute of the Judiciary), lawyers, legal clinics, university students, Royal Gendarmerie, National Police as well as civil society organizations and the Protection Working Groups in Oujda, Tangier, Fes and Casablanca.

Durable Solutions

- UNHCR implements a resettlement programme for refugees with specific protection needs. Due to the COVID-19 situation, 5 refugees were resettled to Canada in 2021

Donors

UNHCR is grateful for the generous contributions received in 2020 by the European Union, the United States of America, Italy, Japan, JICA, Monaco, United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, Germany and France

Thanks to other donors of unearmarked and regional funds

Sweden | Netherlands | Norway | Denmark | United Kingdom | Germany | Private donors Spain | Switzerland | Private donors Republic of Korea | Canada | United States | Finland | Ireland | Private donors Australia | Private donors Germany | Private donors Japan

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