

# Egypt

January - March 2020

As of 31 March 2020, **258,910 refugees and asylum-seekers from 57 countries of origin** were registered with UNHCR Egypt.

Half of the registered refugees and asylum-seekers are from Syria. **6,104 people newly registered** with UNHCR Egypt in 2020.

Most refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt live in the **urban areas** of Greater Cairo and on the North Coast.

## KEY INDICATORS

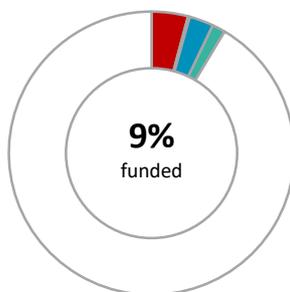
**13,391** families received monthly multi-purpose cash grants in 2020

**4,589** is the total number of unaccompanied and separated children registered with UNHCR Egypt as of end of March 2020

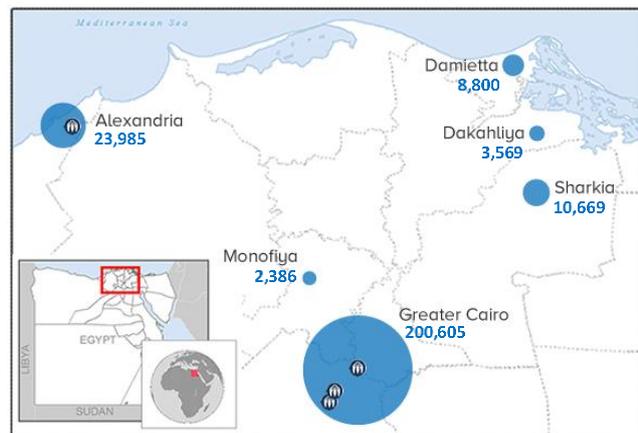
**617** refugees departed to resettlement countries in 2020

## FUNDING SITUATION (6 APRIL 2020)

**USD \$108.8 million** requested for the Egypt operation in 2020

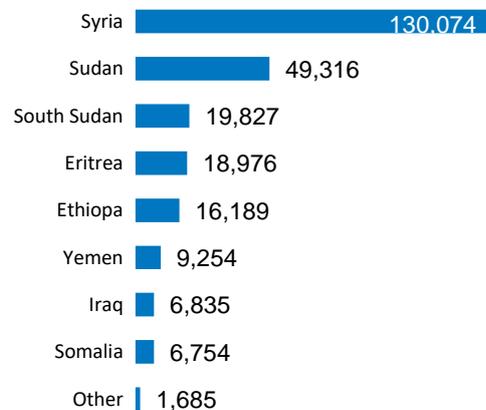


■ Tightly earmarked      ■ Earmarked  
■ Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)      ■ Unearmarked (indicative allocation)  
■ Funding gap (indicative)



## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

### Countries of Origin



## Developments during COVID-19 pandemic

### Increased vulnerabilities

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt were **already very vulnerable prior to the outbreak** of COVID-19 and they are immediately feeling the impact of the changed environment. Many have lost their sources of income and **cannot afford to buy sufficient basic supplies or pay their rent**. In the current circumstances, unaccompanied and separated children are becoming even more vulnerable. Cases of **sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)** may increase. Elderly people and people with special needs and medical conditions are among the most affected groups by the pandemic.

### Continuity of UNHCR services and assistance

UNHCR has maintained its core services, and at the same time adapted activities to the emerging needs, in compliance with the measures adopted by the Egyptian authorities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. While **UNHCR's four buildings in Greater Cairo and Alexandria have remained open** to address emergency cases, most UNHCR Egypt staff are **teleworking**. This has enabled the office to provide services and assistance, including the following:

- UNHCR Egypt has strengthened and adapted its **communication with refugees and asylum-seekers** via various channels (phone, e-mail, social media, messaging applications). The Infoline continues to operate and refugees and asylum-seekers are strongly encouraged to use this communication channel instead of going to UNHCR's premises. In addition, emergency contact lines are established with partners to ensure a 24-hour service;
- **Protection, reception and counselling activities** are taking place through telephone calls and e-mails. Follow-up and advocacy on arrest and detention-related matters also continue;
- UNHCR and partners continue to provide remote **case management support to SGBV survivors**, as well as related emergency services;
- With regards to **Child Protection**, best-interest assessments (BIAs), case management, referrals, follow-up and counselling are conducted over the phone, while emergency and essential services remain functional;
- Interviews for registration, refugee status determination, resettlement and voluntary repatriation are being rescheduled, except for emergency cases. In the meantime, the teams assess and **review cases already interviewed through remote work modalities**. Remote interview modalities for certain profiles are also being examined. Newly arrived persons are preliminarily recorded, pending formal registration after normal activities resume;
- **Financial assistance** to eligible refugees and asylum-seekers is maintained and the Office extended additional emergency cash assistance for persons facing compelling protection situation. As part of COVID-19 prevention activities, **additional support** is provided to enable refugees and asylum-seekers to **purchase hygiene items**;
- UNHCR continues to deliver health care assistance for patients with chronic diseases as well as **psychosocial and mental health support** through partners. Secondary and referral care for life-saving conditions is also maintained.

### Inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national response plan

On 18 March 2020, in a press conference on COVID-19, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that refugees and foreigners in Egypt would be treated for Coronavirus **on an equal footing with nationals and without any discrimination**. WHO referred to the Egyptian national COVID-19 response plan developed by the authorities and added that it is in accordance with international rules. Accordingly, UNHCR and its partners started guiding refugees and asylum-seekers with suspected symptoms to the same referral pathways that are in place for Egyptians.


**PROTECTION**

- From 11 to 13 February 2020, UNHCR organized a three-day **joint workshop with the Egyptian Ministry of Justice** (MOJ) on International Refugee Law and Principles of International Protection. The event was attended by a selection of 35 judges and general prosecutors and was part of UNHCR's activities to **enhance the capacity of government officials** in Egypt. The workshop was jointly inaugurated by Chancellor Susan Fahmy, Assistant Minister of Justice in the sector of Human Rights, Women and Children, and Mr. Karim Atassi, UNHCR Egypt Representative.
- In addition to the above, from January to mid-March, UNHCR provided training sessions in Egypt to a total of 122 of government officials from Egypt and other African countries including Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Morocco, Burundi, Zambia, Mozambique and Rwanda.
- As of 31 March 2020, **4,589 unaccompanied and separated children** (UASC) were registered with UNHCR Egypt. A standardized **fast-track registration** process continued to ensure an early identification and registration of UASC with a designated Child Protection focal point. Following the **COVID-related** partial suspension of registration activities on 16 March, all newly identified unaccompanied children undergo an **extensive protection screening** over the phone and, if applicable, are referred for emergency registration to address highlighted protection risks.
- In order to effectively respond to children's needs during the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR as co-chair of the Child Protection sub-working group, has initiated a mapping of child protection services and **created an open forum to share materials** and counselling messages to children to ensure **harmonization of messages sent to all children at risk**.
- Between January and March, **532 Best Interest Assessments** (BIAs) were conducted for children at risk, mainly UASC. In line with prevention measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR and Child Protection partners are mainly teleworking since 16 March. BIAs, case management, referrals and counselling are being conducted remotely by phone. **Emergency child protection cases are still handled in-person**. This includes emergency registration of high-risk cases and urgent alternative care needs for children facing abuse.



*Chancellor Susan Fahmy and Mr. Karim Atassi inaugurated the workshop for judges. ©UNHCR.*



*Fifteen lines have been made available during the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to refugee inquiries. ©UNHCR/Scott Nelson*

- During the first quarter of 2019, UNHCR Egypt responded to **55,193 phone inquiries** from refugees and asylum-seekers. Due to COVID-19, call attendants started teleworking on 23 March and using mobile phones instead of the call center equipment. The dedicated mobile phone numbers were widely shared with the refugee community. **Interpreters join conference calls** to enable refugees and asylum-seekers of different language groups to benefit from this service.

- With regards to **sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**, many SGBV survivors have been affected by COVID-19, either through losing their jobs or by becoming homeless due to their inability to afford rent. UNHCR and partners are monitoring trends related to possible heightened SGBV risks during this time, especially related to domestic violence. COVID-19-related movement restrictions, curfews, income loss, and stress may provide a fertile environment for gender-related power imbalances to be abused. UNHCR is working closely with CARE International and other partners to **ensure that the needs of survivors, including emergency medical and safety/relocation, are met**. SGBV case management services are now mainly offered remotely. UNHCR and partners are working closely with refugee communities on remote outreach and prevention activities, also to **ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers are aware of how to access support**.
- From January to March 2020, 481 SGBV incidents were responded to by both UNHCR and its SGBV partner, CARE International. With regards to **SGBV-prevention**, 19 sessions were conducted in the first quarter of 2020, including basic psychosocial sessions, early marriage trainings, sexual and reproductive health sessions, gender training for children and legal counselling sessions. In Cairo, CARE International also held life-skills and handicrafts activities at the 'women friendly spaces'.
- As of February 2020, **UNHCR and UNFPA formalized a co-chairing arrangement**, and UNFPA hosted its first SGBV sub-working group meeting the same month.

- UNHCR continues to **facilitate birth registration for refugees and asylum-seekers**. The cases include, among others, children born out of wedlock or SGBV incidents, and children whose birth registration was delayed and is therefore more complicated. Between January and March, **39 birth certificates** were issued, through legal service providers contracted by UNHCR. Assistance in securing birth registration plays a crucial role in preventing statelessness and facilitating individuals' access to governmental services.



*A Sudanese refugee in Cairo. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*

- Up to mid-March, UNHCR conducted **two mobile missions to remote governorates** in order to reach refugees and asylum-seekers who were unable to approach the office in Alexandria. During these missions, a total of 268 families (672 individuals), were served, and 230 individuals were newly registered. In addition, **UNHCR visited 13 families at their homes** in the north coast to facilitate continuous registration-related activities, such as renewal of UNHCR identification documents.



## HEALTH

- As part of its preparedness and response plan to COVID-19, UNHCR has taken actions to **ensure continued access to essential health services** such as life-saving emergencies, regular supply of medicines for patients with chronic conditions, management of complicated pregnancies as well as mental health services. Also, various communication measures have been taken to inform the refugee and asylum-seeker community on preventative measures. **Community health workers** share information with the community through text messages, mobile messaging applications and phone calls. Awareness messages have also been posted on social media.

- During the month of February 2020, UNHCR's partner Save the Children provided **health awareness sessions** to 157 refugees and asylum-seekers. One of the sessions was directed to children at a nursery in Greater Cairo and used child-friendly learning methods. In parallel to the sessions for children, the parents received **guidance on child health, nutrition, and information on the psychological and social development of the children**. At the end of the sessions, each child was provided with a simple hygiene kit.



*Awareness session at Mubarak Primary Health Care Unit in Greater Cairo @Save the Children*

Other sessions were conducted in medical centers and targeted adults. This included two **sessions on infectious diseases**, through which refugees and asylum-seekers were informed about different types of infectious diseases, modes of transmission, possible preventive measures and how to manage different conditions.



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- In February 2020, UNHCR Egypt conducted its annual **Participatory Assessment** in Greater Cairo and Egypt's north coast. In 36 focus group discussions, UNHCR staff listened to the views of more than 300 women, men, girls and boys of different nationalities. During the focus group discussions, refugees and asylum-seekers talked about the difficulties they face, explained how they cope with challenges, and **suggested solutions to improve their living conditions**.
- With the on-set of the COVID-19 emergency, UNHCR also initiated a light situation monitoring exercise by having **daily phone conversations with community members**. In addition, a community survey was conducted with randomly selected refugees and asylum-seekers to **monitor the impact of COVID-19 on their protection conditions and everyday life**.



*Eritrean women joined by an interpreter taking part in a focus group discussion during the 2020 Participatory Assessment @UNHCR/Radwa Sharaf*

- During the first quarter of the year, UNHCR and specialized partners organized **outreach meetings** with the participation of 211 refugees of five nationalities. The meetings served as a forum for **sharing informational updates and receiving feedback** from the refugees and asylum-seekers on the services provided.
- From mid-March onwards, in light of physical distancing measures and the resulting impossibility of convening community meetings, UNHCR invited more than 100 community focal persons to a newly established **mobile messaging group** to maintain contact with the communities in Greater Cairo. This was complemented by communication with 40 community representatives and volunteers from different nationalities residing along Egypt's North Coast. In addition, UNHCR joined **44 other social media forums with over 7,000 members** to maintain direct communications with the communities beyond the selected focal persons.

- During the first quarter of 2020, 361 refugees and asylum-seekers with **specific needs** were supported through individual case management including **needs assessments, counselling, referrals to service providers,** and close monitoring and follow-up.

In addition, 706 people with specific needs participated in individual and group-based support activities, social and recreational events, and were provided with **assistive devices**. Refugee volunteer workers also reached 1,649 distressed refugees and asylum-seekers in their communities and provided them with **psychosocial support to help them cope with the challenges of living in displacement**.



*Refugees and asylum-seekers with disabilities being briefed on targeted services and support during an outreach meeting.*  
 ©UNHCR/Nour Abdulhak



## BASIC NEEDS AND SELF RELIANCE

- UNHCR delivers **monthly unconditional cash grants** to extremely vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers in order to provide protection and assistance, and to avoid reliance on negative coping mechanisms. Between January and March 2020, UNHCR assisted a total of **10,391 families** (comprising **39,608 refugees and asylum-seekers**) with monthly cash grants.
- Feedback and grievance management** continues in 2020. This service enables refugees and asylum-seekers to enquire about different aspects of the cash program. In the first quarter of 2020, a total of **12,055 families** received information about UNHCR's cash assistance through UNHCR's Infoline and the dedicated team at UNHCR's partner Caritas Egypt.
- The 2019/2020 **winter assistance** concluded on 29 February 2020. In total, **52,665 families** (119,303 individuals) benefitted from this one-off cash assistance, which is meant to support the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers in **meeting their additional needs during the winter**.
- UNHCR's new livelihood partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS) commenced its activities and followed-up with the refugees and asylum-seekers who participated in UNHCR's livelihood activities in 2019. CRS **assessed their business situation** and analyzed the driving factors for business expansion and growth to be attained.
- From January to mid-March, 86 refugees and asylum-seekers were provided with diverse trainings for livelihood purposes. Also, 66 people were placed in jobs and 650 individuals received guidance on labor market opportunities.
- In light of the COVID-19 situation, livelihood partners conducted **quick assessments of the changes in the economic situation of refugees and asylum-seekers**. This is in addition to the regular follow-up with previous participants of the livelihood program and interviewing, screening and profiling of new participants, mainly through the phone. As of end of March, livelihood partners temporarily suspended group activities such as outreach, trainings, and committee meetings, and assessed implementation modalities for prolonged physical distancing measures.


**EDUCATION**


On 25 February 2020, footballer Mohamed Salah was announced as the First Ambassador of Instant Network Schools. ©UNHCR/ Vodafone Foundation/ Mike Dodd

▪ Footballer **Mohamed Salah** has become the first Ambassador for **Instant Network Schools**, a joint initiative by UNHCR and the Vodafone Foundation. This was announced as the programme prepared to expand to Mr. Salah's home country Egypt. Once launched in Egypt, the Instant Network Schools **will connect refugees and asylum-seekers as well as Egyptian students to quality digital education.**

▪ In the first quarter of 2020, UNHCR in partnership with the Ministry of Education's departments for theatre, music and cultural relation, designed a programme for **intercultural dialogue**. Activities included a **musical and cultural dialogue activities**, which aimed to foster social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between refugee and host community children in public schools. Rehearsals started in January with the performance scheduled to take place 26 March 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final performance was postponed until related exceptional measures are lifted.

▪ As schools remained closed as of the second half of March, approximately **1,600 phone calls were made to refugee families with school children**. The survey served as a means of monitoring the situation of the refugee students and families, as well as to adjust support to refugee students in the changed circumstances.



A Sudanese refugee girl in Cairo. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes


**DURABLE SOLUTIONS**

- From January until March 2020, 547 refugees were submitted for resettlement to eight countries and **617 refugees departed to resettlement countries**. The main nationalities included Syrians, Sudanese, Eritreans, South Sudanese, Ethiopians, Somalis and Iraqis.
- Voluntary Repatriation was facilitated for one individual who chose to voluntarily return to Sudan.

On 17 March 2020, UNHCR and IOM announced a **temporary hold on resettlement travel** for refugees owing to the COVID-19 situation. While UNHCR in Egypt temporarily suspended resettlement interviews except for emergency cases, the processing of cases already interviewed for resettlement continues through remote work modalities.

## Working in partnership

- **UNHCR works closely with the Government of Egypt, UN and NGO partners to provide protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees.** The Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG), chaired by UNHCR, is the main interagency coordination mechanism overseeing six sectorial working groups gathering representatives from UN agencies, as well as international and national NGOs. The protection sector includes three sub-working groups which consist of Child Protection, Response to SGBV, and Durable Solutions. The other working groups are for Education, Health, Basic Needs and Cash, Livelihoods, and Communication with Communities. In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR works very closely with partners to ensure a coordinated response to the emerging needs. Meetings currently take place via videoconferencing.
- In 2020, UNHCR Egypt works through the following partners: All Saints' Cathedral • CARE International • Caritas Egypt • Catholic Relief Services (CRS) • Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights (EFRR) • Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) • Save the Children International (SCI) • Terre des Hommes (TdH) • United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) • United Nations Volunteers (UNV). UNHCR has weekly virtual meetings with its implementing partners during the COVID-19 crisis.

## Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 9.3 million** as of 6 April 2020.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided to this operation by **Italy, the Netherlands, the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United Nations Population Fund** and **private donors**.

### Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions

**Sweden | Norway | Netherlands | Denmark | United Kingdom | Germany | Private donors Spain | Switzerland | Private donors Republic of Korea**



*Samuel, a refugee pianist from Sudan performs at an art exhibition organized by UNHCR in Maadi, Cairo. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*

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## LINKS

Syria Regional Refugee Response: [data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria)

UNHCR Refugees & Migration Emergency Mediterranean Response: [data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/Mediterranean](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/Mediterranean)