

# Egypt

April 2020

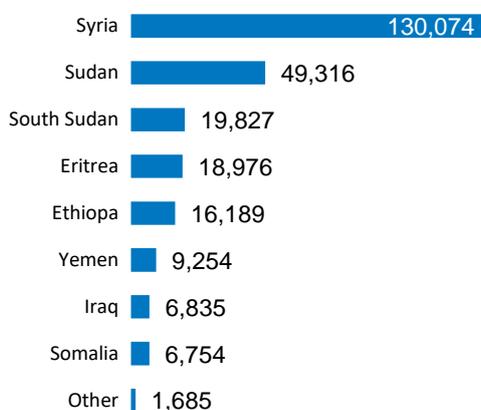
Egypt hosts refugees and asylum-seekers from 58 different countries of origin. The majority of them live in **urban areas** alongside host communities.

Currently, **258,910 refugees and asylum-seekers** are registered with UNHCR Egypt. Half of them are from Syria.

During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, UNHCR has adapted its activities to the changed circumstances, continuing to provide critical assistance and ensure protection.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

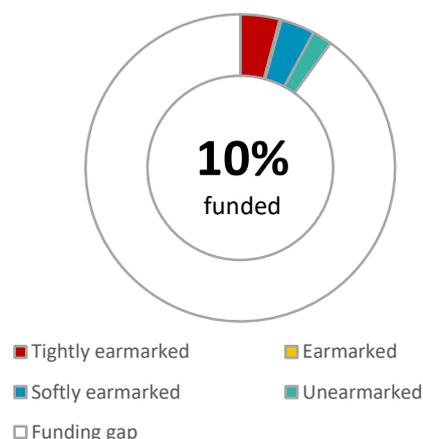
### Countries of Origin



## FUNDING IN 2020 (AS OF 29 APRIL 2020)

**USD 108.8 M**

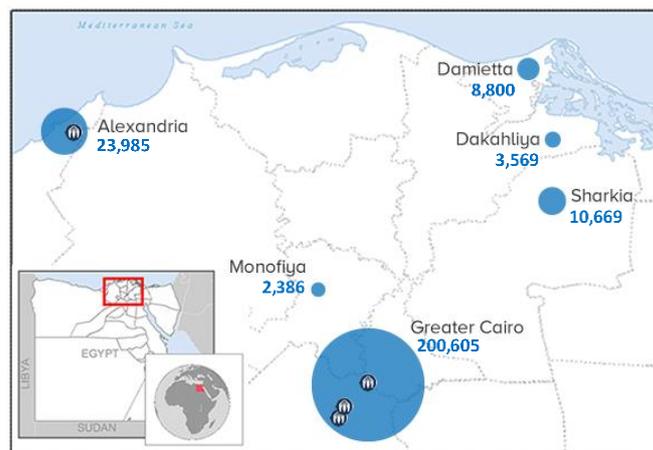
requested for the Egypt operation



## COVID-19 in Egypt

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt were **already very vulnerable prior to the outbreak** of COVID-19 and 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 susceptible, and cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other vulnerable groups may increase. **Elderly people and persons with special needs and medical conditions are among the most affected groups.**

Since the start of the pandemic, most of UNHCR's Egypt staff have been teleworking. However, UNHCR's four buildings in Greater Cairo and Alexandria have remained open, with selected staff addressing emergency cases.



Map: Location of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt

Meanwhile, UNHCR Egypt has strengthened and adapted its communication with refugees and asylum-seekers via various channels (phone, e-mail, social media, messaging applications). UNHCR's Infoline continues to operate and emergency contact lines are established with partners to ensure a 24-hour service.

## Working with Partners

UNHCR works closely with the Government of Egypt, United Nations agencies, international and national NGOs to provide protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR leads the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG), the main refugee coordination mechanism which gathers representatives from UN agencies as well as international and national NGOs. The IAWG oversees six sectorial working groups: Protection, Education, Health, Basic Needs and Cash, Livelihoods, and Communication with Communities. The Protection sector includes three sub-working groups which consist of Child Protection, Prevention and Response to SGBV, and Durable Solutions. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR works very closely with partners to ensure a coordinated response to emerging needs. Coordination meetings currently take place via videoconferencing.

## Main Activities

### Protection

- Under normal circumstances, UNHCR Egypt **registers and documents asylum-seekers and refugees** on behalf of the Government of Egypt. The registration entails the use of biometric information, iris scanning and finger printing. For the time being, these registration processes cannot be carried out to the same extent. However, for emergency cases, UNHCR conducts a simplified registration process and provides temporary documentation. Upon resumption of regular services, full formal registration of those who approached UNHCR during the COVID-19 crisis will be conducted.
- Before the outbreak of COVID-19, asylum-seekers and refugees who had finalized their registration with UNHCR were encouraged to approach the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Immigration of the Ministry of Interior to apply for a **residence permit, which legalizes their stay in Egypt**. As these services are currently suspended, UNHCR has advocated with national authorities for tolerance with regards to asylum-seekers and refugees with expired UNHCR cards or residencies, and those who do not yet have UNHCR documentation.
- **UNHCR Egypt is the largest refugee status determination (RSD) operation globally** and conducts RSD on behalf of the Government for all nationalities, except Syrians and Yemenis. While interviews are currently suspended, a significant number of remote RSD assessments and reviews have taken place.
- Refugees and asylum-seekers have **access to legal remedies and representation** through lawyers of NGO partners. Those arrested for administrative and residency related charges are provided with legal and humanitarian assistance. UNHCR also intervenes on their behalf with local authorities for their release and to ensure their claims for international protection are assessed.
- UNHCR and partners provide **special assistance and psychosocial support** to children at risk, survivors of SGBV, and to those who have experienced or witnessed conflict, violence or trauma. Within new work modalities following COVID-19, UNHCR and partners continue to provide remote case management support to SGBV survivors, as well as emergency services.
- Around 38 per cent of all refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt are children (99,285). Out of this figure, **4,589 are unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)**. UNHCR conducts Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) and prioritizes protection and assistance to UASC and other children at risk across all programmes through prevention and response activities and specialized services, including quality case management, strengthening of national child protection systems and internal/external capacity building. Following the COVID-related partial suspension of activities, BIAs, case management, referrals, follow up and counselling are conducted over the phone, while emergency and essential services remain functional.

- UNHCR and partners provide **targeted support to persons with specific needs** through individual case management and community-based psychosocial support and emergency response. Extremely vulnerable persons living with disabilities and elderly people also benefit from targeted assistance that includes individual and group counselling, provision of assistive devices, and participation in social and recreational events aimed at breaking their isolation from communal activities. During the COVID-19 crisis, essential services continue to be provided to persons with specific needs, with prioritization of emergency cases.
- In addition to close **coordination with partners**, daily refugee **counselling and case management** are now done remotely and continue to be integral components of the Office's engagement with refugees and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR has internal **integrity mechanisms** in place — including anti-fraud and complaints receipt systems — to ensure full adherence to the organisation's principles, values, and guidelines.

### Durable Solutions

- UNHCR Egypt is among the largest resettlement programmes and in 2019, 3,995 refugees departed from Egypt to ten resettlement countries. **Resettlement is driven by the high protection needs** of the populations in the country, which is often coupled with **severe economic vulnerability**. Currently, no departures are taking place, as Egypt and many receiving resettlement countries have suspended flights.

### Cash-Based Interventions

- UNHCR Egypt has one of the largest cash operations globally. The office **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, such as borrowing money or reducing expenditures on food and other essential items. In 2020, UNHCR plans to assist an average of 10,400 families (comprising approximately 41,600 refugees and asylum-seekers) per month with cash grants. As part of the COVID-19 related response, UNHCR provides additional support to enable refugees and asylum-seekers to purchase hygiene items. In addition to families who receive monthly cash assistance, **'cash for hygiene'** was extended to 15,581 cases (comprising 40,407 individuals) at heightened risk, including chronic disease patients and elderly people.
- During winter 2019/2020, UNHCR provided **winter assistance to 119,303 vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers** to help them during the cold season.

### Education

- **More than half of all refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR are children and youths of school age.** Since mid-March, all schools and universities across the country remain closed. UNHCR and partners are committed to support refugee and asylum-seeker students to finish the school year, even if modalities have changed to distance learning.
- For the academic year 2019/2020, UNHCR provided **education grants to 48,414 refugee and asylum-seeker students** in an effort to support enrolment and retention of children in school. While students from Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen can access public education on an equal level to nationals, other nationalities rely on community schools, private schools or home schooling. UNHCR and its partners support access to **education** — including primary, preparatory and secondary education — for refugee children of all nationalities. Additionally, **enhanced education grants were provided to 1,519 unaccompanied and separated children and 373 children with special needs**, who were supported to enrol in specialized schools that cater to their educational and care needs.
- UNHCR also supports access of refugees and asylum-seekers to tertiary education. During the academic year 2019/2020, **448 students received scholarships** through UNHCR, from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), to enrol in or continue their university studies. In addition, four students received scholarships to attend the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology in Alexandria. Most of the scholarship holders currently continue their education through distance learning.

## Health

- Refugees and asylum-seekers have **access to public primary, secondary and emergency health care** on an equal level to Egyptian citizens. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Egyptian national COVID-19 response plan does not differentiate among nationalities of the population (nationals and foreigners, including refugees), in accordance with international health regulations.
- UNHCR supports national efforts to improve the quality of services to refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as the host population in areas with high concentrations of refugees. This entails strengthening the existing national health system through **capacity-building of health care staff and provision of equipment**. In relation to the national COVID-19 response, UNHCR is supporting the Ministry of Health and Population with personnel protective equipment, including 15,000 N95 masks.
- UNHCR continues to deliver health care assistance for patients with chronic diseases as well as **psychosocial and mental health support** through partners. Moreover, the office provides secondary and referral care for life-saving conditions for all refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

- UNHCR, in cooperation with partners, develops community-based livelihood projects and provides eligible refugees and asylum-seekers with training, coaching, counselling among other support lines to assist them engage in sustainable livelihood activities. In light of the COVID-19 crisis, livelihood partners conducted quick assessments of the changes in the economic situation of refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Community Empowerment

- UNHCR maintains an active outreach programme for communicating with communities that, in 2019, reached more than 10,000 refugees and asylum-seekers with information about services provided by UNHCR and partners. **Participatory assessments, focus group discussions, and awareness sessions** conducted with refugees and asylum-seekers throughout the year enable UNHCR to directly monitor their protection concerns and coping mechanisms, and to identify possible solutions aimed at improving their living conditions.
- In order to strengthen the role of communities in the delivery of protection solutions, refugee community focal persons and outreach volunteers have been trained on **identification and referral of vulnerable persons in need of assistance**. UNHCR maintains a very close communication with these community focal points and volunteers during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

## Donors

Total recorded contributions for the operation in 2020 amount to **USD 10.8 million**.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided to this operation by the European Union, the Netherlands, Italy, the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDDP NA), the United Kingdom, the United Nations Population Fund and miscellaneous 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](#)

## CONTACTS

**Maura Morandi**, Reporting Officer  
[morandi@unhcr.org](mailto:morandi@unhcr.org) Tel: +20227285600 ext. 2141

**Silja Rezk**, Reporting Officer  
[rezks@unhcr.org](mailto:rezks@unhcr.org) Tel: +20227285600 ext. 2144

**Public Information and External Relations Unit**  
[arecapi@unhcr.org](mailto:arecapi@unhcr.org) Tel: +20227285600 ext. 2148

Follow UNHCR Egypt on:

