

# Egypt

September 2020

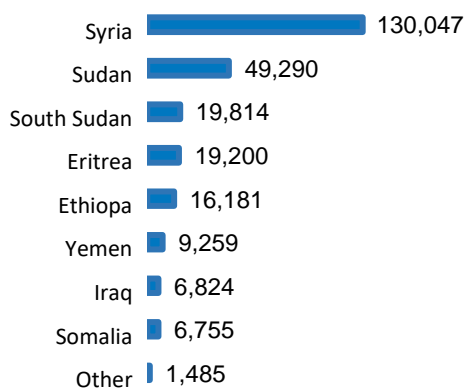
Egypt hosts refugees and asylum-seekers from **57 countries of origin**. The majority live in **urban areas** alongside host communities.

Currently, **258,855 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 changing circumstances, continuing to provide critical assistance and protection support.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

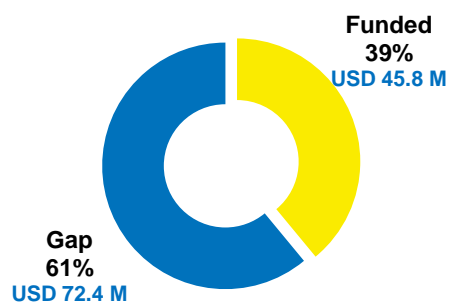
### Countries of Origin



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

**USD 118.3 M**

requested for UNHCR's Egypt Operation

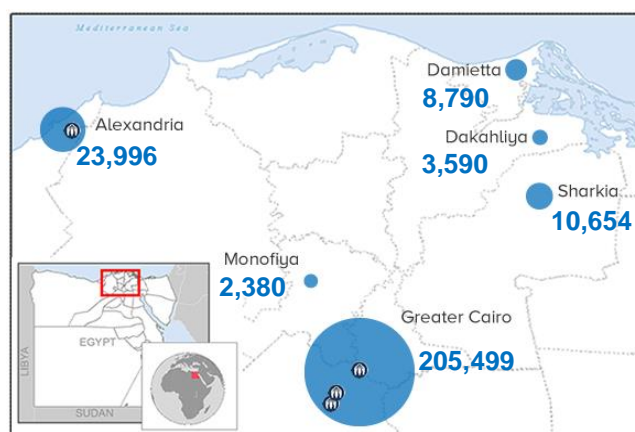


## COVID-19 in Egypt

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt were already highly vulnerable prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, and have been further impacted by the evolving circumstances. Many have **lost their source of income and reportedly cannot afford sufficient basic supplies or pay their rent**. Unaccompanied and separated children are becoming increasingly vulnerable, and cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) continue to be reported. **Elderly people and persons with special needs and medical conditions are among the most affected groups during the pandemic.**

UNHCR Egypt maintained its essential services since the beginning of the pandemic. By the end of August, all activities have resumed with adapted modalities and precautionary measures in place.

UNHCR Egypt has **strengthened and adapted its communication with refugees and asylum-seekers**



Location of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt

**through various channels**, including phone, e-mail, social media, and messaging services. UNHCR's info-line continues to operate, and emergency contact lines have been established with partners to ensure 24-hour service.

From mid-March and end of August, UNHCR **responded to over 73,300 calls** to its info-line and registration hotline.

## Working with Partners

**UNHCR works closely with the Government of Egypt, UN agencies, and 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 an Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG) and six sectorial working groups: Protection, Education, Health, Basic Needs and Cash, Livelihoods, and Communication with Communities (CwC). 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 closely with partners to ensure a coordinated response** to emerging needs, with coordination meetings currently taking place through videoconferencing.

## Main Activities

### Protection

- 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. At present, UNHCR Egypt continues to implement registration activities through phone interviews followed by in-person verification to ensure integrity of the process. In this context, UNHCR is now receiving a limited number of refugees and asylum-seekers at its premises for registration activities. UNHCR Egypt 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. The office is now exploring ways increase its processing capacity.
- **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. In June 2020, UNHCR initiated a pilot project for remote RSD interviews.
- 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 assistance. UNHCR intervenes with local authorities for their release. The office continues to advocate for access to persons in detention who may be in need of international protection.
- UNHCR and partners provide **special assistance and psychosocial support** to children at risk, survivors of SGBV, and those who have experienced or witnessed conflict, violence or trauma. With modified working modalities in light of the pandemic, UNHCR and partners continue to provide case management support to SGBV survivors through remote means, as well as emergency services.
- Around 38 per cent of all refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt are children (97,427). Out of this figure, **4,178 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 partial suspension of activities due to the pandemic, BIAs, case management, referrals, follow-up and counselling are conducted by phone, while emergency and essential services remain functional.
- 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 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 emergency cases being prioritized.
- 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 remains among the largest resettlement programmes: 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, UNHCR Egypt is conducting a pilot project for remote Resettlement interviews, with the necessary procedural and integrity safeguards in place. With the reopening of Cairo Airport to international commercial flights as of 1 July, resettlement departures from Egypt have resumed on a small scale.

### Cash-Based Interventions

- In Egypt, UNHCR has one of its 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 resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as incurring debt or reducing expenditures on food and other essential items. In 2020, UNHCR assists an average of 10,400 families per month (comprising approximately 41,600 refugees and asylum-seekers) with cash grants. As part of its COVID-19 response, UNHCR provided 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 persons with chronic illnesses and elderly people.

### Education

- **More than half of all refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR are children and youths of school age.** Syrian, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Yemeni refugees and asylum-seekers have been granted access to public education on the level as nationals. UNHCR continues to advocate for the inclusion in public education of refugees and asylum-seekers of all nationalities.
- Since mid-March, all schools and universities across the country remain closed. Public schools are scheduled to re-open on 17 October. Parents with school-aged children who hold an expired UNHCR card and/or residence permit are raising their **concerns and anxiety on the issue of lack of valid documentation that prevent from enrolling their children in public schools**. UNHCR is liaising closely with the concerned ministries on this issue.
- For the academic year 2020/2021, UNHCR is providing **education grants to students in public, community and private schools**. Additionally, enhanced education grants are provided to unaccompanied and separated children and children with special needs, who are supported with enrolment in specialized schools catering to their individual educational needs.
- UNHCR also supports access of refugees and asylum-seekers to **tertiary education**. Currently, **448 students receive scholarships through UNHCR** from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) to continue their university studies. Approximately 110 scholars will graduate before the end of 2020. In addition, four students receive scholarships to attend the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology in Alexandria. Most of the scholarship holders are continuing their education through distance learning due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

## 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 within the population (i.e. locals 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 personal protective equipment, including 15,000 N95 masks, 160,000 surgical masks and 380,000 pairs of gloves.
- 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 treatments 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 and other support lines to assist them in sustainable livelihood activities. In light of the COVID-19 crisis, livelihood partners carried out quick assessments to measure changes in the economic situation of refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Community Empowerment

- UNHCR maintains an active outreach programme for Communication with Communities (CwC). The team provides refugees and asylum-seekers with information about services provided by UNHCR and partners and encourages feedback. **Participatory assessments, focus group discussions, and awareness sessions** conducted with refugees and asylum-seekers throughout the year enables 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. Weekly meetings between UNHCR technical experts of different sectors and refugee and asylum-seeker communities continue to take place via videoconferencing.

## Donors

Total recorded contributions for the Egypt operation in 2020 amount to **USD 46.3 million**.

**UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided to the Egypt Operation by:** the United States of America, the European Union, the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDDP NA), Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (SFSD), the United Kingdom, the United Nations Population Fund, Omnia Abdullah Taha Bakhsh, and miscellaneous private donors.

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