

Egypt

July - September 2020

As of 30 September 2020, **258,862 refugees and asylum-seekers from 57 countries** were registered with UNHCR Egypt, half of whom are from Syria.

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

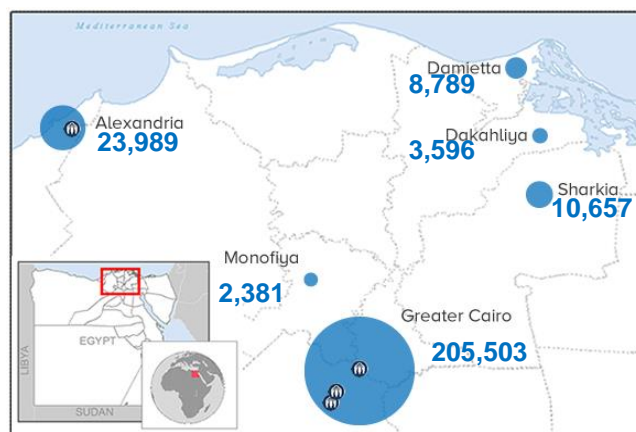
During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, UNHCR adapted its activities to the changing circumstances, continuing to provide critical assistance and protection support.

KEY INDICATORS

10,161 families received monthly multi-purpose cash grants in the second quarter of 2020

4,129 unaccompanied and separated children were registered with UNHCR Egypt as of end of September 2020

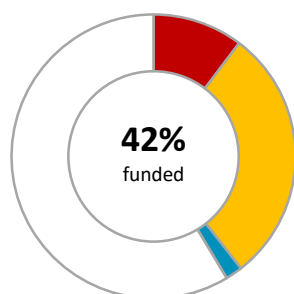
944 refugees departed to resettlement countries in 2020



FUNDING SITUATION (10 NOVEMBER 2020)

USD \$118.3 million

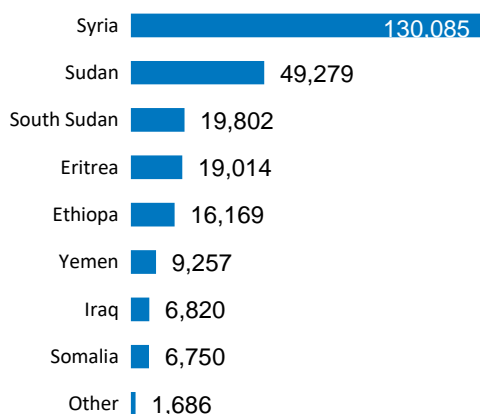
requested for the Egypt operation in 2020



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

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Countries of Origin



Challenges and advocacy measures during COVID-19 pandemic

Refugees and asylum-seekers have continued to feel the impact of the changed environment brought about by COVID-19. In the month of August alone, UNHCR Egypt received 6,689 inquiries through phone and e-mail. Out of the refugees and asylum-seekers contacting UNHCR, 53 per cent reported that they were **in need of food and cash assistance**. Other main challenges raised were **socio-economic protection needs** (40.6%), **job losses** (2.9%), **food unaffordability** (2.7%), and risk of **eviction** or **having already been evicted** (0.6%)

Another major concern raised by the refugee community were **expired UNHCR documents and residence permits**. Refugees and asylum-seekers expressed their anxiety for fear of arrest and detention.

Due to the pandemic, **UNHCR had to temporarily put on hold most registration activities between mid-March and mid-August**. In the second half of August and in September, registration activities resumed and UNHCR Egypt conducted phone interviews followed by in-person verification to ensure the integrity of the process. These modalities have proved to be efficient, with UNHCR exploring ways to increase processing capacity in an effort to accelerate the renewal of expired documentation as well as the registration of newcomers.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR **advocated with the authorities to exercise tolerance towards refugees and asylum-seekers whose identification documents have expired**.

Following UNHCR advocacy, the Egypt Post Office agreed to the disbursement of the much-needed UNHCR cash assistance to affected families even if their documents were expired. UNHCR further advocated with the Government to intervene with mobile phone companies to prevent the disconnection of



Agnis Lagu (centre) and her daughter Rita with UNHCR staff member at Catholic Relief Services (CRS) office in Cairo ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

mobile phone lines for refugees and asylum-seekers with expired ID cards or residence permits. This remains a continuing concern for refugees and asylum-seekers and UNHCR.

Many refugees and asylum-seekers expressed **concern** that their children would **miss out on education this school year**. UNHCR advocated with the Ministry of Education to authorize the **enrollment** of refugee and asylum-seeking children **in public schools** for the new school year of 2020/2021, despite the expiration of their identification cards and residence permits. **UNHCR efforts were successful**: on 4 October 2020, the Ministry of Education officially informed UNHCR that refugees and asylum-seekers with expired documents would be admitted in Egyptian schools for the academic year 2020/2021.

Moreover and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has liaised closely with the World Health organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers with COVID-19 symptoms have **access to health care** on the same level as Egyptian nationals.



PROTECTION

- In order to remain reachable and to continue serving refugees and asylum-seekers, UNHCR Egypt has strengthened and adapted its **communication with refugees and asylum-seekers** since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication channels used in times of COVID-19 include **phone, e-mail, social media, messaging applications and video calling**. Between July and September, UNHCR Egypt responded to a total of **55,671 calls** through its Infoline and registration hotline.
- UNHCR conducted protection, reception and counselling activities based on case referrals made via phone calls and e-mails. These activities enabled UNHCR to **swiftly identify the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers** and to provide them with assistance, protection and durable solutions as necessary.
- In the context of COVID-19, **individual protection interviews** were conducted through phone calls during which protection risks and social vulnerabilities experienced by the refugees or asylum-seekers were assessed in-depth. Between July and September, the counselling team conducted 357 interviews and, in accordance with their needs, referred 140 cases to specific technical units within UNHCR and to partners. The required interventions were of legal, medical and psychosocial nature, in addition to housing assistance; cash-based interventions (CBI); education-related services, gender-based violence and child protection; as well as accelerated refugee status determination (RSD) and resettlement.
- UNHCR continued 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 has therefore become more complicated. A total of 88 birth certificates were issued through legal service providers contracted by UNHCR during the reporting period. Securing birth registration is **crucial in preventing statelessness** and facilitating individuals' **access to governmental services**.



Refugee women waiting to receive medical services by UNHCR's partner Refuge Egypt.
 ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

- UNHCR continued to conduct **remote RSD interviews** with **stringent procedural and integrity standards** in place. Between July and September, a total of 1,302 remote RSD interviews were conducted. In addition, 1,971 RSD decisions were finalized, affecting a total of 3,349 individuals.
- As of 30 September, **4,129 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)** were registered with UNHCR Egypt. As registration activities remained reduced, all newly identified children at risk, including unaccompanied children, underwent a **thorough protection screening over the phone**. Children with heightened vulnerabilities or protection risks identified during the screening were referred for emergency registration. All unregistered children at risk, including unaccompanied children, remained under close and regular monitoring by UNHCR's Child Protection team.
- In August and September 2020, UNHCR launched pilot **community meetings with unaccompanied children**, which took place virtually. Three community meetings were held with Eritrean and Sudanese unaccompanied children, in facilitation with UNHCR's partner, Save the Children. During the meetings, the children noted challenges with planning and managing their financial expenditures, lack of awareness on services such as education or medical access and general harassment and discrimination in public spaces. In response, UNHCR provided **on-the-spot counselling** and followed-up individually with children along with child protection partners to ensure all available support was extended to children facing challenges or protection risks.
- In line with prevention measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR and Child Protection partners continued to telework. However, **emergency child protection cases were handled in-person**. This included emergency registration of high-risk cases and urgent alternative care needs for children facing abuse. Between July and September, 64 Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) were conducted for children at risk, mainly UASC. In 3,250 phone calls, UNHCR and partners provided individual **counselling to children at risk**, and UNHCR responded to 666 child protection related inquiries over e-mail.



*A group of Syrian, Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees attend a training session in Cairo.
 ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*

- Between July and September, UNHCR and its **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** partner, CARE International responded to 303 GBV incidents. The survivors received **multi-sectoral response services** including safety, medical, psychosocial, livelihoods and legal services as well as quality case management. Remote interviews and counselling with the survivors continued, with minimal physical contact when emergency services were required, e.g. in order to disburse emergency financial assistance to the survivors.
- Partners working in the GBV field noted the positive impact of the **UNFPA-UNHCR interim and emergency cash assistance for GBV survivors**. While the amount provided could not comprehensively fulfill the needs of the survivors, it provided some support in promoting their recovery.
- In both Cairo and Alexandria, CARE International continued to conduct **virtual GBV prevention awareness activities**. A total of 41 sessions were held on basic psychosocial support, early marriage, self-defense, basic protection matters, sexual and reproductive health and legal counselling. This quarter, CARE **began engaging men in virtual prevention activities** in the evening and weekend times, in order to accommodate their work demands. This initiative as well as the specific tailored activities were well received and appreciated by the male participants.
- Between July and September, 667 refugees and asylum-seekers living with disabilities and older people **underwent needs assessments** to identify possible areas of intervention. This was in addition to 1,164 people who participated in case management processes and received regular follow-up. Over 382 visits were undertaken to deliver incontinence pads, assistive devices, and other forms of aid to persons in need. Moreover, 326 people with specific needs received assistive devices. Furthermore, 12 support groups were organized to provide mental health and psycho-social support to refugees and asylum-seekers with special needs and 584 people with special needs received psychosocial support.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- In line with physical distancing recommendations, **meetings with the refugee community** in July, August and September took place through **virtual** modalities. UNHCR convened nine thematic meetings bringing together UNHCR staff, partners, and refugee leaders to discuss the challenges arising as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and **possible solutions to mitigate the impact** on refugee communities.
- UNHCR also maintained two-way communications and daily engagement with the communities through **mobile messaging groups** with over 130 community leaders and more than 7,000 community members. During the COVID-19 situation, refugees and asylum-seekers increasingly reported finding themselves unable to ascertain the authenticity of some information shared by different actors and circulating on various online platforms. Direct communication channels with UNHCR enabled them to inform the agency of these rumors and **receive immediate clarification**.



A scented candles and soap making workshop was attended by 38 Syrian women in Damietta community center. ©Caritas Alexandria

- UNHCR continued to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms and community empowerment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In four virtual training sessions, **70 leaders of refugee initiatives** were familiarized with protection issues, community participation, problem solving, awareness campaigns, documentation and writing reports. Participants provided positive feedback and reported that the **training helped them support their communities in challenging times**.
- UNHCR supported the ‘Bidina’ (With our Hands) mentorship program, which assisted youth groups to come up with **creative community-based solutions** for the common challenges faced by their communities. Participants were aged 18 to 24 years and were from diverse countries of origin including Syria, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Egypt.
- **Community-based refugee workers** extended **psychosocial support** to 1,408 men and 1,980 women distressed by COVID-19 related challenges.
- At the beginning of the pandemic, UNHCR’s partner Caritas shifted its activities for refugees and asylum-seekers to online platforms. In July, Caritas resumed some activities that require physical presence at Agamy and Damietta community centres, such as sports and income generating activities with small numbers of participants to ensure physical distancing.



HEALTH

- UNHCR, through its health partners, continued to **ensure sustained access to essential health services** such as life-saving emergency services, regular supply of medicines for patients with chronic conditions, the management of complicated pregnancies as well as mental health services. Health partners also gradually resumed their regular clinic activities for medical consultations while maintaining COVID-19 precautions.



*A doctor examines a refugee woman at the Cairo clinic of UNHCR’s partner Refuge Egypt.
 ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*

- Health staff and **community health workers** from partner agencies continued to disseminate COVID-19 prevention messages and **followed up with refugees and asylum-seekers showing COVID-19 symptoms** in order to facilitate their referral to health facilities, provide them with hygiene kits and remotely monitor their health condition.

- In July, UNHCR delivered **380,000 units of gloves** to the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to support national COVID-19 prevention and response activities. The items were distributed to MoHP run COVID-19 treatment facilities to be **used by front line health workers**.
- In order to strengthen skills and practice related to **Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures at primary health care facilities**, UNHCR's health partner Save the Children International (SCI) organized a virtual training for MoHP health staff from 20 primary health care units in August and September.
- In response to UNHCR's COVID-19 appeal, Reckitt Benckiser (RB) in Egypt donated 2,400 bottles of disinfectant and 9,600 bars of soap. The first batch of **hygiene kits** was distributed among the most vulnerable UASC and children with special needs through UNHCR's education partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Each kit consisted of one bottle of disinfectant and four bars of soap.



BASIC NEEDS AND SELF RELIANCE

- UNHCR delivers **monthly unconditional cash grants to extremely vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers** to provide protection and assistance, and to prevent reliance on negative coping mechanisms. Between July and September 2020, UNHCR assisted **10,161 vulnerable families** (comprising 39,142 refugees and asylum-seekers) with monthly cash grants. This included a total of 4,978 cases who successfully collected their cash assistance via iris biometric authentication.
- In response to **increasing vulnerabilities during the pandemic**, **1,495 more families** were targeted for **short-term unconditional cash** support until further inclusion in regular multipurpose cash programs. During the reporting period, 1,113 cases (1,839 individuals) received cash assistance while distribution for other targeted cases continued after September.
- Furthermore, **1,843 cases** (4,625 individuals) received **interim cash support** from UNHCR. The interim cash program seeks to sequence cash assistance with **protection interventions** for an interim basis (ranging from three to six months) for cases facing serious protection risks.
- Between July and September, 571 refugees and asylum-seekers participated in diverse **trainings for livelihood purposes**. In addition, 76 people were placed in jobs and 510 were provided with guidance on labor market opportunities. With support from UNHCR, **34 refugees and asylum-seekers started and/or expanded their businesses**. Also, 276 people whose livelihood was affected by COVID-19 benefited from **cash recovery support**.
- UNHCR's partner All Saints Cathedral (ASC) provided services at the newly established Profiling Center, and **counselled refugees and asylum-seekers on labour market opportunities**. Prior to taking up their roles at the Profiling Center, the ASC team members were trained by UNHCR on outreach, engagement with communities, protection counselling and made aware of sensitivities in relation to GBV.



Embroidery by Syrian refugees as part of a workshop that took place in July ©Caritas Alexandria



EDUCATION

- In the period July to September, parents with children of school age holding an expired UNHCR card and/or residence permit raised their concerns and anxiety, worrying that their children would miss the school year. Towards the end of the academic year 2019/2020, the Government of Egypt had informed that all students would require valid documentation in order to enroll in Egyptian schools in the academic year 2020/2021. In order to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers could enjoy their right to Education even during the times of COVID-19 and related reduced services, **UNHCR advocated with the Egyptian authorities** since early in the summer asking for enrolment of refugee and asylum-seeking students with expired documents. On 4 October 2020, the Ministry of Education officially informed UNHCR that refugees and asylum-seekers with expired documents and expired residence permits would be admitted in Egyptian schools for the academic year 2020/2021.
- Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and up to September, **UNHCR called approximately 5,000 refugee households** to assess children's educational needs and to gauge the impact of the pandemic on the students.
- In light of the new school year starting on 17 October, UNHCR's education partners CRS **registered 26,757 students** (13,186 girls and 13,571 boys) **for education grants**. These grants support refugee and asylum-seeker families in covering part of the education-related expenses. In addition, 141 students with special needs (99 male and 42 female) were interviewed. UNHCR supports students with special needs with enrolment in specialized schools catering to their individual educational needs.
- UNHCR continued to provide **scholarships** from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) **to 448 refugee and asylum-seeker students** (52% men and 48% women) studying at public and private **universities in Egypt**.



Mohamed Adam, a refugee from Ethiopia, receives counseling and guidance on labor market opportunities at Refuge Egypt's Profiling center in Cairo. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- **UNHCR continued to pilot remote resettlement interviewing**, with strict procedural and integrity standards in place. Feedback received from refugees was largely positive, with refugees expressing appreciation that UNHCR sought alternative processing modalities to support them. In early August, in-office interviews were resumed for pre-established profiles.
- Between July and September, **323 refugees departed on resettlement** to destinations such as the USA, Canada, Sweden and France. The main nationalities included Syrians, Sudanese, Eritreans, South Sudanese, Ethiopians, Somalis and Iraqis. As of end of September, a total of 944 refugees departed for resettlement this year.

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 the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR works very closely with partners to ensure a coordinated response to the emerging needs. UNHCR and partners implementing activities on its behalf meet on a bi-weekly basis to discuss the COVID-19 response. All meetings currently take place via videoconferencing.
- In 2020, UNHCR Egypt works through the following implementing 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.
- In the frameworks of the Egypt Response Plan for Refugees and Asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq and Yemen (ERP) and the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) focusing on Syrian refugees and host communities, UNHCR appeals together with the following partners in Egypt: CRS • CARE International • Caritas Egypt • Don Bosco • ERC • Fard Foundation • International Labour Organization (ILO) • International Organization for Migration (IOM) • Mostafa Mahmoud Society (MMS) • Plan International • SCI • World Food Programme (WFP) • World Health Organization (WHO) • United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) • United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) • United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) • UN Women



Sisters Ghena, Jury and Leen huddle for a photo at UNHCR's premises. Photo taken before the outbreak of COVID-19. UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 49.5 million** as of 10 November 2020.

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LINKS

Syria Regional Refugee Response: data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria

UNHCR Refugees & Migration Emergency Mediterranean Response: data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/Mediterranean

