

UNHCR Jordan COVID-19 response and preparedness

Country context

Since January 2020, the Government of Jordan has taken strict measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes refugee camps, which were put under restrictions of movement as of mid-March, with only essential staff given access. By July, most restrictions were lifted, while precaution measures have been enhanced. Since the beginning of the pandemic outbreak, refugees in Jordan (both in urban areas and in camps) have been included in the National Health Response Plan and are able to access national health services on par with Jordanian nationals, including referral of suspect cases to quarantine sites and requisite treatment.

COVID-19 cases among persons of concern

In urban areas, four refugees have tested positive for COVID-19 over the past months, have been treated per established protocols and have since recovered. In Azraq camp, following random PCR tests conducted by MoH epidemiological committee, five Syrian refugees tested positive for COVID-19 during the week of 6 September. In Zaatari camp, one refugee resident has tested positive. All persons were transferred to the Dead Sea Isolation Site and testing was carried out for all individuals they were in contact with and isolation procedures implemented. UNHCR is working closely with the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate and the Ministry of Health, and response procedures are fully activated.

UNHCR response and preparedness

UNHCR began scaling up its preparedness plans in January 2020, together with WHO and partners, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Health (MoH), and has been strengthening its response, including through enhanced active surveillance in refugee camps. Key actions and response measures are outlined below.

- **Health:** Preventative and response health measures have been put in place in the camps. Primary Healthcare Centres are functioning with adequate staff and backup staffing procedures, as well as adequate medication. Case identification/ management protocols are in place and training has been undertaken by UNHCR. Quarantine facilities in both Azraq and Zaatari refugee camps have been established for potential case identification. Health screening procedures, including temperature screening for all those entering the camps, are in place, while disinfection of commonly used spaces takes place on a regular basis. Frontline health staff are equipped with the needed PPE, while PPE kits are available for PoCs as well.
- **Protection:** A variety of remote refugee protection hotlines are operational, including updates to the Amaali GBV services app and the UNHCR Integrated Voice Recognition Helpline, which has managed over 200,000 monthly calls since March. An additional Help website platform has been launched to facilitate two-way communication. **Registration** teams continue to operate through remote modalities, using innovative secure procedures.
- **Cash assistance:** In addition to the monthly cash assistance, UNHCR has identified and distributed emergency cash assistance to over 43,000 vulnerable refugee families who have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and are in urgent need of assistance.
- **Education:** UNHCR has been supporting refugee students in accessing the e-learning platforms. Electricity provision was enhanced to accommodate the remote education access. Teachers in both Zaatari and Azraq were tested before the start of the school year. Since the two identified cases in Azraq, schools remain closed until further notice.
- **Communication with Communities:** Through a coordinated CwC strategy with WFP and UNICEF, UNHCR is reaching refugees in urban areas and camps, disseminating key messages on the COVID-19 preparedness, implications on services, government guidelines and announcements. The two-way communication tools being used include a variety of channels, such as SMS, WhatsApp groups and social media platforms.