

# East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes



An asylum-seeker from the Democratic Republic of the Congo sits with her children after undergoing a health screening near a border crossing in Zombo, Uganda.

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## WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### Strengthening protection and access to quality services for persons at heightened risk

With the region hosting the largest number of refugees on the African continent, UNHCR will work to ensure that the right to seek asylum is upheld and that refugees are protected. Continued engagement with the African Union, the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the

International Conference on the Great Lakes Region will strengthen refugee policy. Individual biometric registration, delayed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be prioritized in eight countries. The Office will support governments to resume and strengthen fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures, incorporating modalities that meet COVID-19 prevention measures and aim to reduce backlogs.

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### Consequences of COVID-19 on planning, preparedness and response

With over 80% of refugees living in camps or settlements and 20% in urban settings, the COVID-19 pandemic poses significant challenges in the region due to the population density in refugee camps and the severe impact of the economic downturn on urban livelihoods. The poor health and nutritional status of displaced families, coupled with inadequate health, water and sanitation facilities and an underfunded humanitarian response, has required the prioritization of preparedness and activities relating to basic needs and assistance over support for self-reliance. Access to asylum was also impacted by border closures across the region. Uganda temporarily opened its border to allow refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to enter, and other countries put in place various exceptions for asylum-seekers.

COVID-19 planning for 2021 has sought to ensure that all sectors incorporate prevention measures, allowing for good hygiene practices and physical distancing. There will be an increased need for nutritional support, prevention of and response to gender-based violence, child protection, access to education (notably for girls) and mental health and psychosocial support.

The economic impact of COVID-19 will continue to heavily affect refugees and IDPs across the region, particularly in urban areas. Job losses and business closures have left many struggling to pay for rent, food and other essentials. Self-reliance and economic inclusion programmes therefore need to be strengthened and expanded, along with income-generating activities.

Most countries in the region included refugees in national COVID-19 prevention and response plans. This may support efforts to advance broader pledges on refugee inclusion in national systems and services made at the Global Refugee Forum, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

# MAJOR SITUATIONS IN THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA AND THE GREAT LAKES IN 2021



## BURUNDI

Despite heightened tensions during the May 2020 elections in Burundi, there was no increase in forced displacement. However, the human rights situation in Burundi remains concerning and in 2021, UNHCR will advocate to preserve the asylum space for Burundians displaced in the region. Assistance to, and services for, Burundian refugees will need to be increased to ensure that minimum basic needs are met, with COVID-19 exacerbating their already precarious living conditions. The Regional Refugee Response Plan for Burundi has been updated to incorporate COVID-19 response measures. It includes 35 partners in the four main countries of asylum and takes a comprehensive and solutions-oriented approach, emphasizing the need to include refugees in national systems, integrate service delivery with host communities wherever possible and prioritize self-reliance.

Although the prevailing situation in Burundi is not conducive to actively promoting voluntary repatriation, the Office will facilitate returns for Burundians who make an informed voluntary choice to do so. In 2021, returnees are expected from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, with smaller numbers from other countries. All will receive a standardized return package that includes a cash grant and food assistance. The Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan is an integrated, inter-agency response plan aimed at ensuring the sustainable return and reintegration of Burundian refugees, and at supporting community-based protection in areas of return. It brings together 19 partners within Burundi, including government ministries, UN agencies and NGOs.

Working closely with other UN agencies, UNHCR will also provide protection, assistance and core relief items to support some 46,000 targeted Burundian IDPs.

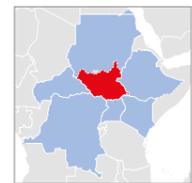
**325,000**  
BURUNDIAN REFUGEES IN  
NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

**131,000\***  
IDPs

**135,000**  
REFUGEE RETURNÉES

**75%**  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
REFUGEES AND  
ASYLUM-SEEKERS

\* Source: IOM



## SOUTH SUDAN

As the South Sudanese refugee response entered its seventh year, there were some advances in the peace process, but continued outbreaks of violence may lead to new refugee outflows into neighbouring countries in 2021. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda continued to host over 2.2 million South Sudanese—the largest refugee population on the continent—and there were a further 1.6 million IDPs. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges for South Sudanese refugees due to the high population density in refugee camps and inadequate sanitary facilities. Only 43% of refugee households have a latrine for instance. Although UNHCR is neither promoting nor facilitating returns, the Office anticipates an increase in spontaneous IDP and refugee returns in 2021. UNHCR plans to continue protection profiling and analysis to support protection-centred returns, peacebuilding, reconciliation and social cohesion.

The South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan has been updated to reflect COVID-19 prevention and response measures. It brings together 95 partners working across five countries and aims to meet the assistance and resilience needs of South Sudanese refugees in the region.

As part of UNHCR's IDP Initiative, the Office will continue to strengthen its support to the IDP response as a partner in the inter-agency humanitarian response plan.

**2.2 million**  
SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES IN  
NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

**1.6 million**  
IDPs

**445,000**  
REFUGEE RETURNÉES

**14,000**  
STATELESS PERSONS

**83%**  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
REFUGEES AND  
ASYLUM-SEEKERS



## SOMALIA

The Somalia situation is one of the world's longest-running displacement crises. Despite political developments, the overall security situation in Somalia remains unpredictable, with continued high levels of displacement within and outside the country. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related socioeconomic impact, severe drought and floods will likely continue to displace thousands of families and reduce their access to regular humanitarian assistance. UNHCR will continue to focus on protection monitoring, community engagement and risk communication, as well as the provision of health and hygiene supplies. Where possible, settlements will be decongested, and shelter and household supplies will be distributed to those affected by flooding.

In countries of asylum, continued investment is needed to support inclusion and livelihood activities. This is in line with the regional application of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Nairobi Declaration of 2017, where Member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development agreed to collectively pursue a comprehensive regional approach to durable solutions for Somali refugees, while maintaining protection and promoting self-reliance in countries of asylum. Voluntary refugee return to Somalia will continue to be facilitated for those requesting it, and where possible.

**805,000**  
SOMALI REFUGEES IN  
NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

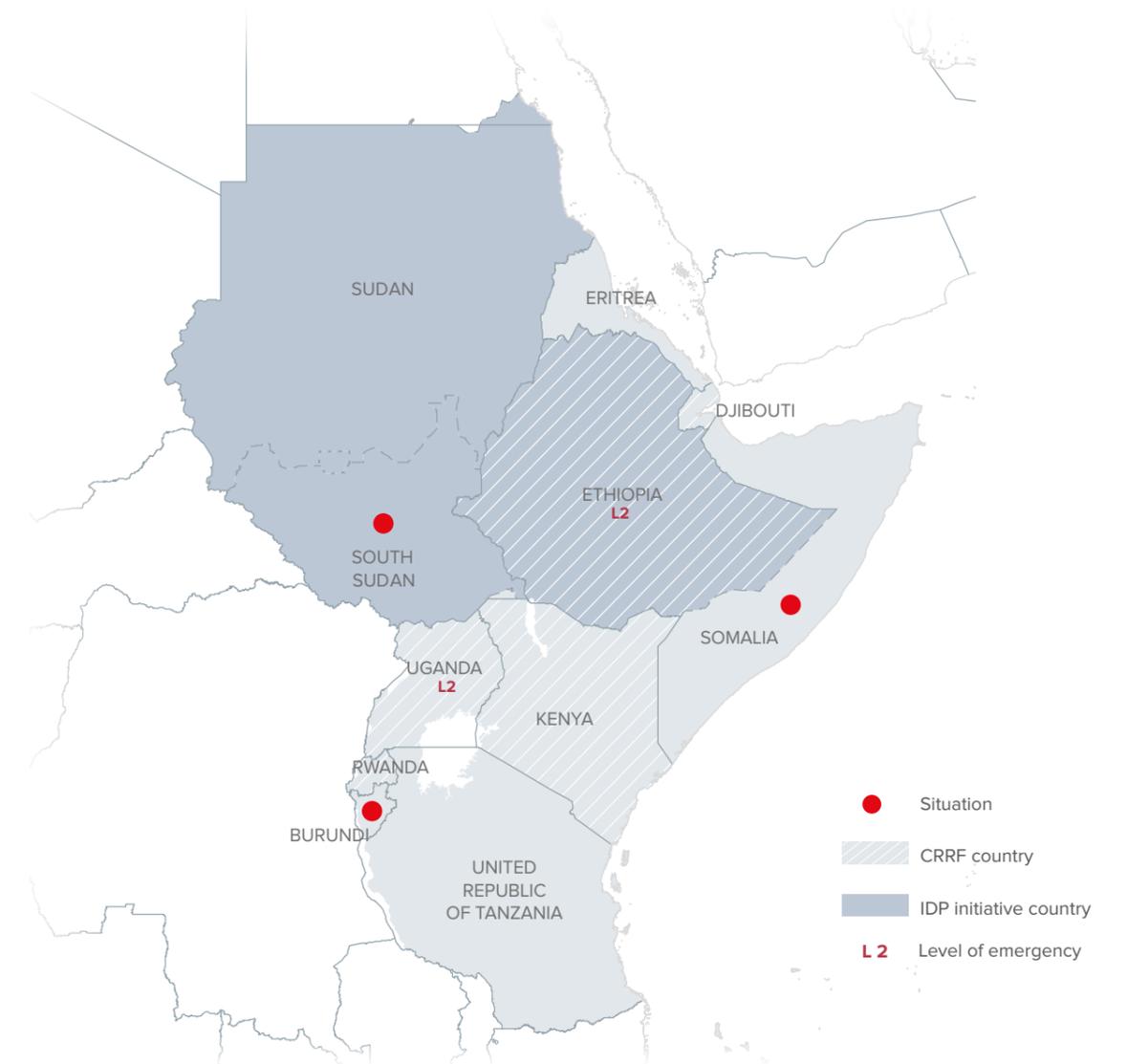
**2.5 million**  
IDPs

**18,600**  
REFUGEE RETURNÉES

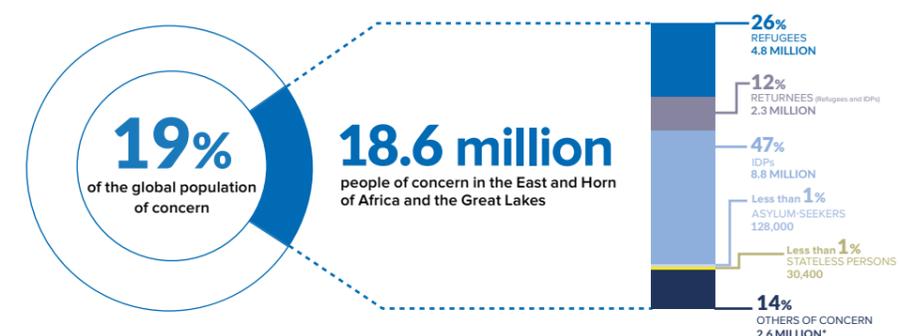
**81%**  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
REFUGEES AND  
ASYLUM-SEEKERS

**82%**  
IDP WOMEN  
AND CHILDREN

*Limited progress made in various peace processes, combined with sporadic outbreaks of violence, will likely result in sustained levels of displacement and may lead to new population movements in 2021. In addition to the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the region is also highly vulnerable to worsening flooding and droughts due to climate change, all of which directly affects displaced populations and increases dependence on humanitarian assistance.*



2021 PLANNING FIGURES FOR PEOPLE OF CONCERN in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes



\* Figure currently includes host community population in Uganda, reflecting UNHCR's evolving approach to refugee inclusion and integrated area-based service delivery. Population category definitions are under review and will be adjusted in 2021 to introduce a separate category of host community members who may benefit directly from UNHCR assistance.

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Addressing issues relating to the quality and accessibility of asylum procedures will, in turn, contribute to addressing the causes of irregular onward movement. A strong focus on child protection, providing tailored support to survivors of gender-based violence, and expanding mental health support interventions will be critical after COVID-19 prevention measures and lockdowns. Meaningful engagement with displaced populations to address these needs, building on strengths and capacities within communities, will also be a key area of focus. UNHCR will strengthen and seek innovative approaches to risk communication and community engagement and disseminate information to people of concern accordingly.

### Providing life-saving humanitarian assistance and access to social services

In the region, more than 80% of refugees reside in camps or settlements where they receive basic assistance, including shelter, water and sanitation, health care and education. More investment is needed to ensure assistance and services meet international standards, including in terms of shelter, core relief items, sanitary kits and improved access to energy. Procurement and distribution of relief items was delayed in 2020 as resources were reprioritized for COVID-19 prevention measures in the health and water, sanitation and hygiene sectors. In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, countries in the region remain committed to applying comprehensive responses, particularly Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. UNHCR will continue to work closely with host governments and line ministries to include refugees in services and national planning, with a specific focus on education and water, sanitation and hygiene. The Office will also

continue to advocate more development investment in refugee-hosting areas, particularly critical as the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 continues to affect both host communities and refugees alike.

### Promoting self-reliance and economic inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers

Planned self-reliance programmes were delayed as prevention and response measures for COVID-19 were prioritized. Cash assistance was significantly expanded, with 615,000 refugees having received this in the region as of October 2020; 180,000 of them, mainly in urban areas, specifically because of loss of livelihoods due to COVID-19. In 2021, UNHCR will continue to invest in cash assistance through cash transfers and self-reliance programmes to meet the needs of refugees and host communities.

Despite challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, some meaningful progress occurred against the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. In 2021, UNHCR will work to ensure implementation of country-level action plans and roadmaps for inclusion that are being developed or are underway in Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Office will pursue new partnerships and strengthen existing ones, including with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the International Finance Corporation. UNHCR will assist the IGAD support platform to mobilize political, technical and financial resources to implement Forum pledges on education, health and livelihoods in refugee-hosting areas. Opportunities to expand connectivity for refugees will also be pursued to support education and entrepreneurship, whose importance was highlighted by the pandemic.

### Pursuing durable solutions

UNHCR will continue to assist voluntary repatriation to Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Somalia, with planning notably underway for some 100,000 Burundian refugees and 20,000 Somali refugees to return home in 2021. Ensuring the voluntary nature of return, along with protection monitoring in return areas and advocating increased reintegration support, will be prioritized. COVID-19 measures affected resettlement activities and delayed departures for many in 2020, but as restrictions will ease in 2021 the Office hopes to return to or expand its capacity to process cases. More than 450,000 individuals in need of resettlement have been identified across the region. In parallel, complementary pathways and opportunities for local integration will also be pursued.

### Preventing, addressing and resolving statelessness

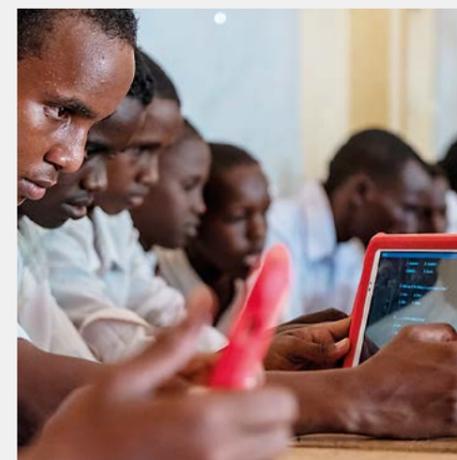
While some progress occurred in implementing pledges made at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019, many remained

unaddressed in 2020 as governments prioritized efforts to respond to COVID-19. In 2021, UNHCR will provide operational, legal and policy support to ensure national laws are consistent with international and regional standards on statelessness, including to ensure that stateless persons have access to a nationality and that those at risk of statelessness can obtain nationality documentation. As birth registration is essential for the prevention of statelessness, UNHCR will also increase support to ensure that all refugees born in exile have a birth certificate.

### Coordinating and delivering protection, assistance and solutions for IDPs

In 2021, UNHCR will continue its work with governments, UN agencies, and NGOs in coordinating and delivering protection, camp coordination and camp management activities, and shelter for IDPs in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan (target operations under UNHCR's IDP Initiative), as well as in Burundi and Somalia.

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### Microsoft and Vodafone help connect refugee children and youth to quality education

UNHCR partners with key actors, such as Microsoft and the Vodafone Foundation, to implement connected education programmes that provide thousands of refugee and host country students with quality digital education. With more than 1.5 billion children and youth impacted by school closures due to COVID-19, such private sector initiatives have helped ensure that refugees continue to access learning opportunities and build skills for the future. Such programmes are already helping refugee children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania, and will be expanded to other countries.



Key areas of focus include ensuring the centrality of protection across the humanitarian response, informed by stronger information management and analysis; delivery of protection and assistance in affected areas; and supporting conditions conducive to solutions, in partnership with humanitarian,

development and government stakeholders. In the four major IDP response operations in the region— Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan—UNHCR will implement protection and solutions strategies developed in 2020, as adapted to local conditions and the impact of COVID-19.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

### Implications of underfunding

Lack of funding has and will continue to severely affect displaced populations in the region. Populations from the largest refugee situations, including in Burundi, Somalia and South Sudan, remain most vulnerable, as do the significant number of Congolese refugees living in the region.

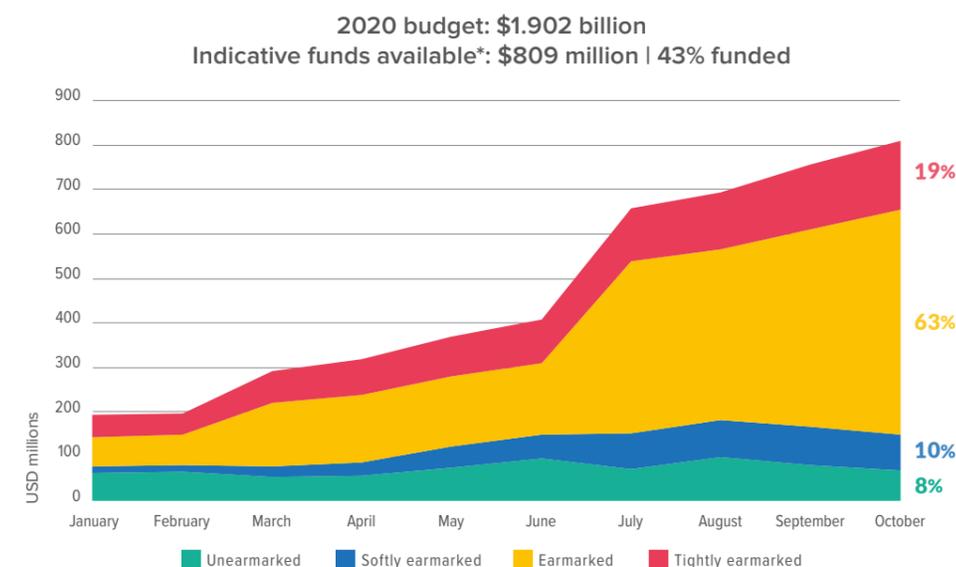
Whether in camps, settlements or urban areas, refugees are living in extremely precarious conditions. Conflict, COVID-19, locust infestations, continuous flooding and droughts are contributing to growing pressure on already overstretched services, including health, education, sanitation and housing. For example, a lack of funding has limited the nutritional supplements available for children and pregnant and breastfeeding women across the region. Stunting prevalence remains high among Burundian refugee children, at 51% in the United Republic of Tanzania

and 26% in Rwanda. Only 50% of households in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan were provided with sufficient non-food items. Livelihood support was heavily impacted by reprioritization for the COVID-19 response, resulting in only some 53,000 South Sudan refugees assisted during the first six months of 2020, a 62% drop from 2019. Lack of funding has also delayed UNHCR’s emergency response to address the needs of drought- and conflict-affected IDPs.

Persistent underfunding in recent years, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic has required UNHCR to redirect resources away from livelihood activities to ensure minimum standards of protection, and provide basic humanitarian assistance, including cash grants. With the COVID-19 pandemic ongoing, a similar pattern is expected in the coming year in the absence of adequate funding for the region.

## 2020 EARMARKING AND TIMELINESS OF FUNDING FOR THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA AND THE GREAT LAKES

As of 1 October 2020



\* Indicative funds available include carry-over from prior years and an indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds based on the prioritized budget.

## BUDGETS FOR THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA AND THE GREAT LAKES | USD

OPERATION	ALL PILLARS	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	TOTAL
	2020 Current budget (as of 30 June 2020)	Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects	
Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes <sup>1</sup>	17,276,133	16,873,879	-	-	-	16,873,879
Regional activities for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes <sup>1</sup>	2,846,200	2,500,000	-	-	-	2,500,000
Other operations in Africa	5,081,315	2,700,000	-	-	-	2,700,000
Burundi	56,760,494	42,325,981	12,017	2,000,000	2,086,597	46,424,596
Djibouti	17,674,208	16,925,482	-	-	-	16,925,482
Eritrea	9,528,287	6,165,291	-	-	-	6,165,291
Ethiopia	385,114,939	278,314,675	-	-	24,699,171	303,013,846
Kenya	164,647,589	144,927,057	524,537	-	-	145,451,594
Rwanda	108,961,965	77,349,999	-	2,650,000	-	79,999,999
Somalia	154,379,251	38,889,943	-	80,758,875	34,427,232	154,076,049
South Sudan	197,108,100	124,266,037	3,958,680	41,470,606	31,402,104	201,097,427
Sudan	274,882,262	205,824,679	2,576,600	17,116,253	69,674,709	295,192,240
Uganda	357,070,010	320,171,721	493,279	-	-	320,665,000
United Republic of Tanzania	150,661,119	111,867,709	-	3,132,291	-	115,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,901,991,872</b>	<b>1,389,102,452</b>	<b>7,565,114</b>	<b>147,128,025</b>	<b>162,289,812</b>	<b>1,706,085,402</b>

<sup>1</sup> Regional Bureau and regional activities cover the whole East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.  
\* Note: budget appropriations are those approved by the UNHCR Executive Committee at its 71<sup>st</sup> session in October 2020. They are based on a budget cut-off date of 15 June 2020. Any subsequent revisions to budgets will be reflected as they are processed. Updated budget information is made available to Member States through regular updates on budgets and funding to the UNHCR Standing Committee. Information on the 2021 budgets will also be updated online on a monthly basis on Global Focus (<https://reporting.unhcr.org>).