

Building better futures



Displaced Afghan schoolgirls leave their classes during a break at Kahdistan Secondary School, built with UNHCR support, in Injil district of Herat province, Afghanistan.

© UNHCR/Aref Karimi

Finding durable solutions so that refugees can rebuild their lives and live in peace is fundamental to UNHCR's work.

The traditional durable solutions include voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration, as well as other local solutions and complementary pathways for admission to third countries, which may provide additional opportunities. Enabling refugees' resilience goes hand-in-hand with achieving durable solutions. Enhancing the self-reliance of refugees and other people of concern is a crucial component of the Global Compact on Refugees. Better self-reliance means refugees and host communities are better able to meet their essential needs, enjoy their human rights and live with dignity. Ensuring they have quality education, livelihoods opportunities and access to safe and sustainable energy benefits both host communities and people of concern to UNHCR.

In 2020, the resilience of refugees and their host communities was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic. Education, a lifeline for refugee children, was all but shut down by COVID-19: 95% of refugee children were affected by school closures, and online learning and virtual classrooms remained little more than a dream for most. The economic downturn damaged incomes and employment opportunities, leaving displaced populations struggling to meet their basic needs.

Solutions were significantly scarcer, mostly due to the closure of borders, and resilience was more vital, highlighting the need for innovative approaches. UNHCR worked with States and partners, including IOM, to adapt to the risks and restrictions brought by the pandemic, modifying processing and departure modalities to mitigate to the extent possible the serious impact of COVID-19 on those in the resettlement or complementary pathways process, and finding ways to support voluntary repatriation for those wishing to return home, while respecting COVID-19

measures. The pandemic also reinforced the importance of refugee inclusion in national public health responses and national and local preparedness plans, education systems, labour markets and social services.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's call of "leave no one behind" and the Global Compact on Refugees' goal of predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing cannot be achieved without international cooperation.

In 2020, UNHCR continued to foster its relationships with development actors. It strengthened its relationship with the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, building the collaboration on data with the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement and deepening collaboration with bilateral development partnerships.

This chapter covers UNHCR's response at global and operational level, including innovative practices, progress made, and challenges that must be overcome to achieve comprehensive solutions for people of concern.

In this chapter

- Delivering through partnerships
- Access to quality education
- Livelihoods and economic inclusion
- Supporting the urban displaced
- Energy and environmental protection
- Voluntary repatriation
- Resettlement and complementary pathways
- Local integration and other local solutions



© UNHCR/Samuel Otiemo

Delivering through partnerships

Global Strategic Priorities
Protection and solutions
See p. 15 for GSP results



Engagement with development actors and processes

In line with the call in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) for responsibility and burden-sharing (particularly paragraph 35), UNHCR redoubled efforts to expand its collaboration with multilateral development banks and strengthen systematic engagement with bilateral development agencies and institutions. The value of these partnerships was particularly evident in the context of COVID-19, which prompted many development agencies to focus on the importance of including refugees in national responses. The World Bank showed strong leadership and support to low- and middle-income countries in fighting COVID-19, taking dedicated measures to ensure refugees and other people of concern were included in national response efforts. This included making up to \$1 billion available in grants under the IDA19 Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR) in the fiscal year from 1 July 2020 and systematically including refugees in all COVID-19 vaccination campaigns supported by the World Bank. The UNHCR-World Bank partnership thrived, with close cooperation on policy and programme development, data and analytics, and knowledge management. Collaboration on data was led by the [Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement](#) launched in late 2019. Operational collaboration focused on projects in 14 low-income countries in Africa and Asia under the bank's IDA18 Refugee Sub-Window (RSW), under its new WHR, and within the Global Concessional Financing Facility for middle-income countries. UNHCR and the World Bank worked on developing a Refugee Policy Review Framework, a tool for assessing refugee policy and institutional environments in countries eligible for the WHR.

Collaboration with other regional development banks increased. Partnership with the African Development Bank bore fruit in particular with multi-year projects including \$20.5 million for the COVID-19 response in the Sahel. Such dedicated investments for refugees and host communities are a concrete manifestation of the burden-sharing promised by the international community in the Global Compact on Refugees. In 2020, UNHCR also advocated for forced displacement to be integrated in policies, programmes and planning carried out by bilateral development actors such as the French Development Agency (AFD), the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the European Union's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The collaboration with BMZ gained momentum with commitments to systematically extend the partnership at country level and in flagship technical sectors including energy and vocational training. Cooperation on BMZ's dedicated financial instrument for forced displacement advanced. This reflected a key tenet of the GCR: using dedicated tools for funding to share burdens and responsibilities, thereby enhancing the predictability and consistency of development funding in refugee-hosting areas. In 2020, UNHCR worked on establishing country and regional-level channels of communication between UNHCR and the European Commission, with the specific aim of informing 2021-2027 development programming by the EU in forced displacement contexts. UNHCR collaborated with other UN agencies to promote long-term solutions for refugees. It supported the ILO's drive to create sustainable decent work opportunities for refugees and host communities and strengthened partnerships with UNICEF to streamline country-level collaboration, as well as working with UNDP on ways to integrate displacement into development initiatives. Two new projects in Chad and Sudan were added to UNHCR's portfolio with the UN Peacebuilding Fund, confirming the GCR's commitment towards supporting returns to countries and communities of origin in safety and dignity.

Informing solutions through data and evidence

A World Bank-UNHCR initiative launched at the end of 2019, the [Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement](#) (JDC), leverages partnerships and innovation in its focus on the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of primary socioeconomic microdata and population data to inform policymaking and programming. The JDC work programme is structured around four strategic objectives:

- i. strengthen systems and standards;
- ii. produce data and analysis;
- iii. enhance safe and responsible data access; and
- iv. build evidence and share knowledge.

It supports country- and regional-level engagement to increase the coverage of socioeconomic data on populations affected by forced displacement, as well as global systemic efforts to strengthen norms and standards on statistics that will improve the quality of data collected. The 2020 work programme included around 40 activities, with the largest share of the budget invested in primary data collection.

The pandemic raised the demand for comparable socioeconomic data to understand the impact of the crisis on both national populations and people of concern. The JDC publication "[Highly vulnerable yet largely invisible](#)" (December 2020), provided a stock-take of available evidence and highlighted a significant absence of data. To this end, UNHCR has contributed to the inclusion of forcibly displaced people into national high frequency phone surveys in more than a dozen countries, in some cases working in collaboration with the JDC. This data—made easily available to partners, governments and researchers—measures changes in employment, access to service, and behaviours, helping to inform evidence-based programming, policy and advocacy efforts. The findings from surveys are highlighted in a series of country specific briefs.



SPOTLIGHT: Monitoring and mitigating the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19

Timely socioeconomic data on forcibly displaced populations is essential to understanding the conditions of people of concern and informing an evidence-based programmatic response. Newly collected data in a growing number of countries—available in UNHCR's [microdata library](#)—provides insight on how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting what are already highly vulnerable forcibly displaced populations.

Periodic polling by Kenya's [rapid response phone survey](#) showed that in contrast to national households refugees had greater and growing anxiety about the pandemic, reflecting concerns about money, food shortages, school closures and access to health facilities (Figure 1). Moreover, the wide gap in the employment rates of nationals and camp-based refugees was sustained during the pandemic as a result of widespread job losses (Figure 2).

Figure 1

FEELINGS OF ANXIETY DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

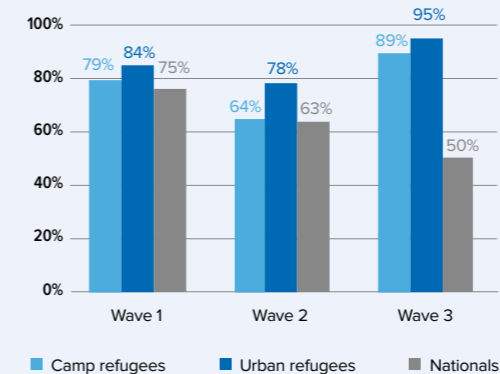
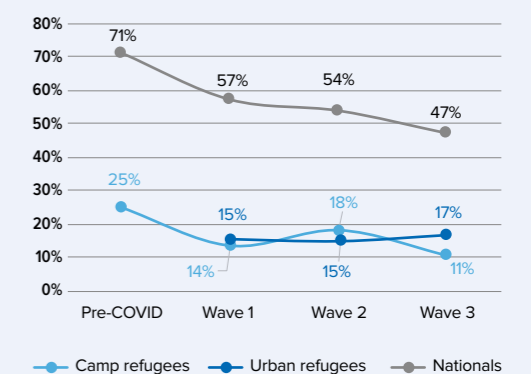


Figure 2

EMPLOYMENT RATE AMONG WORKING AGE ADULTS





Access to quality education

© UNHCR/Roland Schönbauer

Cameroonian refugee children at a pre-school created by a community-based initiative in Ogoja, Nigeria.

Global Strategic Priorities
Education
See p. 14 for GSP result



Results and achievements

Of the approximately 10 million refugee children and youth under UNHCR care in 2020, 7.1 million were of school age. Their access to education was limited, with 3.4 million unable to attend school. At primary level, 77% of refugee children were enrolled. More displaced children were enrolled in secondary school than ever before, with enrolment up 2%, but still low at 31%. However, the gains favoured boys, and 36% of refugee boys were in secondary education, but only 27% of girls. Just 3% of refugee students were in higher education. In 2020, all those enrolled in school were negatively affected by school closures, and the number out of school may rise in coming years as students struggle to make up for the pandemic disruption.

UNHCR strove to increase access to education and the quality of education, despite the disruption of COVID-19. With the support of [Educate A Child](#), a programme of the Education Above All Foundation, 15 country operations strengthened primary education programming. UNHCR led the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) and set up the Secondary Education Working Group, joining with 11 international NGOs, States and donors to promote strategic partnerships, evidence-based solutions

and equitable access to education. UNHCR's tertiary scholarship programme (DAFI) helped 7,087 refugees study in 54 countries of asylum in 2020, with a new scholarship programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 30 students. Only 230 new students were enrolled in 2020 due to funding constraints and COVID-19. Connected education came to the fore in 2020, and the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium grew to 33 members, supporting 55,000 learners with tertiary bridging or professional development programmes and 3,000 degree-based learners.

UNHCR helped 934,000 students in 74 countries to learn during school closures, with allowances for online classes and support for new teaching approaches—remote learning, audio and video lessons, and notes and feedback sent via WhatsApp. At tertiary level, many DAFI programme partners continued student support through remote check-ins, counselling and informational updates.

As schools prepared to reopen, UNHCR surveyed school water and sanitation facilities globally, issued guidelines on safe reopening, provided health and hygiene training for teachers, and—through its AEWG leadership—developed and disseminated resources to help learners

catch up on their return. Classrooms were constructed or rehabilitated, WASH facilities in schools improved and expanded, and schools equipped with ICT. “Back to school” campaigns aimed to inform and reassure children, families and communities about the safety of returning to school.

Operational highlights

UNHCR procured and distributed 5,500 radios and school kits to enable children to participate in interactive radio programming in Mali. The Office also re-purposed cash grants for education to fund access to data and connectivity in Egypt and distributed printed materials and exercises for children along with food rations in Indonesia. Furthermore, UNHCR ensured that teachers' salaries were paid even when schools were closed in Chad, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen.

Parent-teacher collaboration in Chad ensured 4,000 Sudanese and Chadian secondary school pupils could prepare for national exams. In September, 1,209 refugees (57% girls) sat for the national baccalaureate exam: a major success in a challenging year. Whilst COVID-19 highlighted the digital divide, Connected Education initiatives such as expansion of the Kolibri learning platform in Uganda supported learning at home for exam-grade pupils.



UNHCR/Keyoung Boungas

With COVID-19 disrupting education around the globe, the EAC partnership proved instrumental in ensuring continuity and preparing for the safe reopening of schools. Initiatives such as lessons on TV and radio, self-study packs and the construction or rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure enabled displaced children and education personnel to keep learning and teaching amidst the pandemic.

Challenges and unmet needs

COVID-19 had a profound impact. Closure of schools, non-formal learning programmes, after-school centres and universities disrupted education at all levels. While most governments and institutions introduced programmes to support the continuity of learning, many refugee learners lacked the required connectivity or hardware (textbooks, laptops, smartphones, tablets, radios or televisions), or lived too far from broadcast signals. Specific needs of children with disabilities were often not (or inadequately) accommodated in home-based learning. Many refugee girls faced increased protection risks and domestic responsibilities during school closures, jeopardizing home-based learning and future educational prospects. University closures meant many refugee students lost student housing or were sent back to refugee camps.

UNHCR worked at all stages of the COVID-19 response to address emerging challenges, advocating for the inclusion of refugees in national response plans and providing guidance on connected education for no-, low- and high-tech environments. There was an urgent need to upgrade WASH infrastructure in schools in refugee camps and settlements as facilities do not meet UNHCR standards. In some locations over 400 children used a single handwashing point.

Educate A Child and UNHCR expand efforts to give out-of-school children a chance to learn

In 2020, thanks to [Educate A Child \(EAC\)](#), a programme of the Education Above All Foundation supported by the Qatar Fund for Development, UNHCR continued to strengthen primary education programming for displaced out-of-school children in 15 operations across the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.



1,718,955 children enrolled in primary education. Target: 1.9 million. 2019 result: 1,476,716*.



170,048 students enrolled in lower and upper secondary education. Target: 182,900. 2019 result: 63,888.



7,087 people of concern received tertiary education scholarships. Target: 12,800. 2019 result: 8,362.



851 educational facilities constructed or improved. Target: 960. 2019 result: 381.



15 operations supported in strengthening educational programming for out-of-school children. 2019 result: 10.



14 operations supported in increasing access and enrolment to secondary education. 2019 result: 10.

* 1,136,002 reported in the Global Report 2019. 2019 figure has been revised to reflect the cut-off date.



Livelihoods and economic inclusion

© UNHCR/Emrah Gurel

Rania, a 30-year-old refugee from Aleppo, Syria, has lived in Istanbul for seven years and handmakes toys at Bebemoss, a start-up supported by MADE51.

Global Strategic Priorities
Self-reliance
See p. 14 for GSP result



Results and achievements

In 2020, UNHCR stepped up livelihoods support and mobilized resources and partnerships to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. Advocacy was reinforced for refugees' inclusion in national social protection, socioeconomic statistics and economic development plans. National statistics offices and the World Bank included refugees in high frequency phone surveys on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco and Uganda. Governments included people of concern to UNHCR in COVID-19 social assistance programmes in Brazil, Colombia, the Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Mauritania, Mexico, Panama, South Africa and Uruguay.

UNHCR allocated over \$113 million towards implementing livelihoods activities in 2020. UNHCR and partners supported 1,259,477 individuals with protection of productive assets, training, finances to facilitate business creation

and recovery, wage employment and agricultural work. 43% of people of concern aged 15 or older had a basic financial account—a mobile money account or an account with a financial institution.

The [Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#) provided self-reliance support to 13,711 households in 2020 using the “graduation approach”, significantly more than in previous years, but far from the 50,000 households expected, mainly due to the 88% underfunding of the Coalition’s programmes.

UNHCR significantly increased collaboration with development partners to improve digital skills, advocating for more women entrepreneurs and supporting women and girls with training and computers to increase labour market opportunities. COVID-related restrictions made digital technology crucial. 8,115 refugees in over 70 countries enrolled in UNHCR learning on the Coursera for Refugees platform, up from 1,400 in 2019.

UNHCR and ILO promoted refugees' access to national employment services, together with the World Association of Public Employment Services. Mauritania's National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment was supported to increase absorption capacity and include refugees in its services—a pilot that will inform similar moves elsewhere in the future.

In 13 of the 19 countries where UNHCR implements MADE51, a flagship brand of refugee-made products, refugees and local enterprise partners made essential personal protective equipment, including hundreds of thousands of face masks. Refugee-made products reached local and international markets, boosting income-earning opportunities and positive sentiment towards refugees, particularly following the launch of [the MADE51 online shop](#) on World Refugee Day 2020. UNHCR's MADE51 project enabled 2,700 refugees and host-country artisans to maintain an income in 2020.

Operational highlights

In Uganda, UNHCR's partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation helped two microfinance institutions extend their services to over 5,000 refugees and host communities. Mexican bank BanCoppel opened up its services to refugees, while South Africa included refugees in its financial inclusion policy.

Agricultural activities were supported in several countries in Africa. In Zambia, 1,054 refugee and host farmers were included in the national agriculture input support programme. In Cameroon,

advocacy and partnering with national and local authorities and actors led to a 10% increase in the number of refugee-hosted households with access to agricultural land.

Since 2017, UNHCR's partnership with Kiva, a non-profit microfinance crowdfunding platform, has unlocked over \$20 million in small business loans for over 20,000 refugees and IDPs in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Palestine, Rwanda, Uganda and the United States of America.

Challenges and unmet needs

COVID-19 had a disproportionate socioeconomic impact on the forcibly displaced. Refugees endured disruptions in livelihoods and income, faced challenges in covering basic needs, and were often forced into premature returns or negative coping mechanisms. Food and cash cuts foreseen by WFP will further weaken the protection and socioeconomic situation of the people of concern to UNHCR.

Monitoring showed that more than 60% of refugees could not meet even half of their basic needs in 2020. Displaced women and girls were particularly impacted. In the Middle East and North Africa, 84% of surveyed people of concern reported a loss of livelihoods and income. In Jordan, 35% of Syrian refugees employed before COVID-19 lost their jobs, compared to 17% of Jordanian citizens. In Costa Rica, 59% of refugee families reported steady work-related income streams at the end of July 2020, a staggering decrease from 93% before the pandemic hit.



12 countries allowed refugees access to microcredit loans from **19** financial service providers (FSP). Target: 40. 2019 result: 17 FSPs in 12 countries.



13,711 refugees and host community households supported through the “graduation approach” to poverty alleviation. Target: 50,000.



19 countries enabled refugee and host community artisans to access market opportunities. Target: 20. 2019 result: 15.



30% of refugees lived in countries where they had the right to work. 2019 result: 30%.



34% of refugees lived in countries where they had an unrestricted right to freedom of movement. 2019 result: 34%.



53% of refugees lived in countries where they had an unrestricted right to access bank accounts. 2019 result: 53%.

Supporting the urban displaced

© UNHCR/Ramiro Aguilar Villamarín

Alejandrina Leon is a 37-year-old Venezuelan refugee and a delivery rider with Cambalache Go – a local enterprise supported by UNHCR in Quito, Ecuador.

Results and achievements

Seven in 10 people of concern to UNHCR live in urban settings, and the pandemic sharpened the challenge of supporting them. Refugees in urban areas were around 60% more likely than host populations to work in sectors that were hardest hit by COVID-19, such as accommodation, food services, manufacturing and retail.

UNHCR advocated for refugees to be included in national responses. Governments answered the call: among people of concern to UNHCR living in cities, 92% had access to primary health care on the same basis as nationals by the end of 2020, surpassing UNHCR's 80% target a year ahead of schedule. A successful example was Lebanon, which hosts the highest number of refugees per capita, mainly Syrians living in extreme poverty in residential buildings. Refugees in Lebanon could get primary care, including for HIV and tuberculosis, at centres run by the Ministry of Public Health, and secondary and tertiary care in several contracted hospitals. Equitable access for the displaced population and the vulnerable host community was coordinated under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, which UNHCR helped guide on the basis of evidence from health surveys and assessments such as the Vulnerability

Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), Health Access & Utilization Surveys (HAUS) and participatory assessments. While governments stepped up to shield refugees from COVID-19, UNHCR bolstered their defences by distributing PPE, extending hospitals, setting up triage and isolation areas, and building up the capacity of health workers and communities to fight the disease.

UNHCR's cash assistance and shelter support worked in parallel with its health interventions. Cash assistance helped refugees weather the financial impact of COVID-19, which often spelled loss of jobs and income, rent arrears and food insecurity. When the pandemic reached Mauritania, UNHCR immediately made a cash grant available for refugees living in urban centres, prioritizing 1,028 households without savings or social networks, at risk of eviction and far from able to meet their most urgent needs. The one-off payment approximated 40% of the minimum expenditure basket for three months.

Shelter support ranged from establishing triage and isolation areas to providing cash for rent and materials to build or extend shelters. Many cities witnessed a sharp increase in evictions as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns. To mitigate such

a risk, UNHCR supported 1.3 million households with cash assistance for rent and increased its support for collective shelters hosting vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers. In Tapachula, Mexico, UNHCR and Hospitalidad y Solidaridad A.C. inaugurated a 300-space shelter, the country's first exclusively for refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR financed construction of the shelter, which has solar panels, a rainwater collection system, natural ventilation and a garden producing food for residents.

physical and legal safety, and inclusion in education, livelihood and self-reliance programmes.

In Cameroon, UNHCR launched one-time unrestricted cash assistance in four urban locations for over 11,000 refugees reliant on wages from the informal sector, and facing immense challenges to pay for rent, food and other basic needs because of COVID-19. The cash assistance, which also helped them comply with COVID-19 mitigation rules, was distributed as mobile money in collaboration with financial service provider MTN.

Operational highlights

In Brazil, UNHCR and the city of São Paulo launched a joint protocol to guide the assistance to transgender migrant and refugee communities, aiming to prevent discrimination in social assistance and food distribution, fulfilling a pledge submitted in the 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) to address xenophobia and include people of concern in national systems.

The Government of the Philippines issued local government units with [a legal instruction](#) to promote an inclusive approach towards refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons in the pandemic, aiming for equal treatment,

Challenges and unmet needs

Refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, returnees and stateless persons often find themselves living in poor shelters where health, WASH, and education services are overstretched or inaccessible and national social safety nets, including cash transfers, are not fully accessible. Overall, refugees in urban areas—even where the legal framework is enabling—often face numerous obstacles to access national services. The needs remain vast and UNHCR will continue to work with governments and partners to support and facilitate the inclusion of refugees whenever possible in national systems.



SPOTLIGHT: Cities stand with refugees against COVID-19

There were many excellent examples of cities supporting refugees as part of their COVID-19 response, actions recognized by UNHCR on 31 October on [World Cities Day](#) and through the [Cities #WithRefugees Campaign](#), signed by over 260 cities in over 50 countries. Cities will continue to be encouraged to communicate about initiatives they and their partners are undertaking to support refugees. Participating cities in 2020 included Bergen (Norway), Durban (South Africa), Ioannina (Greece), Quito (Ecuador), São Paulo (Brazil) and Victoria (Canada). UNHCR partnered with the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) on the Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Pandemic Response, a \$1,000,000 initiative to respond to cities' needs as they support migrants, refugees and IDPs during COVID-19. The 2021 Fund was granted to Barranquilla (Colombia), Beirut (Lebanon), Freetown (Sierra Leone), Lima (Peru) and Mexico City (Mexico).



92% of people of concern living in cities had access to primary health care through the national system on the same basis as nationals. Target: 80%.



75% of people of concern living in cities had access to secondary and tertiary health care through the national system on the same basis as nationals. Target: 70%.



76% of households in urban areas paid rent with cash assistance received from UNHCR. Target: 80%.



Energy and environmental protection

© UNHCR/Vanessa Zola

In Sudan's White Nile State, Alisa, 35, cooks on her family's new ethanol stove, received in a project piloted by UNHCR in partnership with the largest local sugar producing company, Kenana.



1,624,789 people of concern had access to a sustainable source of cooking fuel. Target: 1.6 million. 2019 result: 1.0 million.



1,724,199 people of concern had access to a sustainable source of electricity. Target: 2.5 million.

Results and achievements

Access to clean, affordable, and reliable energy services is integral to humanitarian response and essential for sustainable economic development. Sustainable energy services enable people of concern to UNHCR to meet their energy needs in a safe, sustainable and affordable way.

In 2020 UNHCR started applying its [“Global strategy for sustainable energy 2019-2024”](#), aiming to ensure that energy needs for cooking, lighting and heating are safely and sustainably met, supporting both refugees and host communities. Cleaner energy sources meant UNHCR’s operations cut their CO₂ emissions by an estimated 500,000 tons, according to a revised methodology, far above the 6,000-ton target.

COVID-19 prevention required reliable and adequate water supplies and thus increased energy demand. That was a challenge in many operations since only 43% of people of concern had access to at least 20 litres of safe water per day. To this end, UNHCR expanded the use of solarized boreholes and water pumps which are cost-efficient in the long run and require less maintenance. 25 boreholes switched

from diesel to hybrid or full solar power. To the extent possible, health centres and isolation areas, including six in Bangladesh and 17 in Uganda, were connected to photovoltaic systems. COVID-19 also spurred distance learning, and children required power and light to study. UNHCR mobilized funds and resources to provide sustainable and renewable energy to health centres and schools in priority countries.

The [Clean Energy Challenge](#), led by UNHCR and UNITAR, increased its membership from 30 to 250 stakeholders in 2020. Partners and private donors enabled the first phase of the Energy Solutions for Displacement Settings programme to go ahead, improving access to renewable energy in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda for refugees and host communities. Initiatives in these countries included connecting health facilities to photovoltaic systems, techno-economic feasibility studies, and mobilization of local actors to roll out more sustainable energy programmes. The [Renewable Energy for Refugees](#) (RE4R) programme enabled the delivery of modern energy services in Jordan and Rwanda.

UNHCR is striving to shrink its environmental footprint, including by improving waste management and reducing field operations’ CO₂ emissions. Improvements in the packaging of kitchen sets in 2020 reduced annual plastic and cardboard waste by 47 and 43 tons per year respectively. It established a \$4 million “green fund” to shift the energy source of field operations including Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda from diesel to renewables. UNHCR also initiated partnerships with several international organizations and implementing partners to address deforestation and land degradation in refugee settings. For instance, Land Life implemented a reforestation project around Minawao camp in Cameroon, achieving an 85% tree survival rate, above the country’s 55% average. In Bangladesh, the Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) worked with UNHCR to enhance environmental protection and natural hazard risk mitigation around the Rohingya camps.

Operational highlights

As of December 2020, the RE4R project had installed solar water heater systems in 571 shelters and energy efficiency upgrades in 117 shelters in Jordan. It upgraded energy efficiency and solar power systems in 14 schools in Irbid governorate, and 5,778 students attended awareness-raising sessions on renewable energy and energy efficiency principles.

Training sessions were carried out for 50 engineers from the Ministry of Education and 115 youth were given 400 hours of vocational training on renewable energy. Training topics included design software packages (SketchUp, PVSyst and AutoCAD) and technical knowledge about the components and installation of solar power and heating systems.

Challenges and unmet needs

COVID-19 highlighted the urgency of increased access to sustainable energy for displaced populations and host communities. Nevertheless, sustainable energy sources such as solar are costly at their inception. Given limited funding, operations understandably prioritize immediate life-saving needs over technology. Conscious of the substantial return on investment from reduced costs over an asset life of 25 years or more, UNHCR is working to leverage private sector partnerships to expand the use of sustainable energy. This is particularly important in protracted situations where funding is diminishing and continued dependency on fuel is no longer affordable.

The COVID-19 situation and budget reallocation to other priority activities hampered environmental protection programmes, with unmet needs in land restoration and reforestation activities.



500,000 tons of CO₂ emissions reduced by using cleaner sources of energy. Target: 6,000. 2019 result: 838,220.



3,000 hectares of degraded land rehabilitated through reforestation activities in refugee-hosting areas. Target: 5,000.



100 (out of 550) UNHCR country offices participated in the annual inventory for the UN’s “Greening the blue” initiative. 2019 result: 100.



102 UNHCR field offices participated in the UN-wide environmental inventory. 2019 result: 100.



Refugee families get clean water thanks to Swedish innovation

In 2020, the Swedish social enterprise [Solvatten](#) made an in-kind donation of 3,600 portable water treatment and water heating systems to refugee families in Uganda. Using solar energy, their innovative product cleans and heats water within a few hours, making it safe to drink and use. To address the water challenges and increase the use of renewable solar energy in off-grid regions of Uganda, UNHCR works actively to use Solvatten technology and educate communities on its benefits in their field operations.



Voluntary repatriation

© UNHCR/Claris Neh Mokom Achu

Eve, 26, crosses the Ubangi river with her husband Jonathan and their children to return home to the Central African Republic after living as refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Global Strategic Priorities
 Voluntary return and reintegration
 See p. 14 for GSP result



Results and achievements

In 2020, 250,951 refugees returned to their country of origin—a decrease of 21% from 2019 (317,291). Despite situations of complex security and fragile peace, UNHCR observed self-organized returns by refugees and IDPs in South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), Yemen and elsewhere. 38,000 Syrian refugees returned home, 60% fewer than in 2019, a slowdown after 250,000 returned between 2016 and 2020. They were assisted by a network of community centres in Syria, safe public places where women, men, boys and girls can meet for social activities and obtain protection services—ranging from legal aid, education and livelihood support to psychosocial support, gender-based violence prevention and response, and child protection interventions.

In the Horn of Africa, UNHCR worked with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and members of the Nairobi Process core group on the activation of the [IGAD Support Platform](#). Launched at the Global Refugee Forum, the platform

aims to mobilize political, technical and financial support for refugees, returnees and host communities.

In 2020, UNHCR strengthened its collaboration with the [UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund](#) (PBF), bolstering its contribution to the Sustaining Peace and 2030 Agendas. UNHCR collaborated with the PBF in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan in Africa, and El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in Central America. In Sudan, UNHCR implemented the PBF supported programme [Durable solutions for forced displacement in West Darfur](#), focusing on local action plans, long-term development and conflict resolution in target localities. Together with UNDP, UNHCR provided support to the Sudan Peace Commission and to the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement pertaining to millions of Sudanese affected by displacement.

In Colombia, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the [Victims Unit](#), which was set up by a 2011 law to support

IDPs and other people affected by conflict, and developed a work plan, including a component on returns from abroad, for implementation in 2021. Thanks to a project supporting mobile registration units of the National Civil Registry Office, 19,570 identity documents were issued in the departments of Arauca, La Guajira, Norte de Santander and Atlántico.

Operational highlights

Despite the pandemic, 40,774 Burundian refugees were assisted to return from Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, bringing the total number of Burundian returnees to 120,500 since voluntary repatriation started in September 2017. Protection monitoring activities in return areas in Burundi showed some progress in returnees' ability to access services and reintegrate. More than 90% of interviewed returnees reported returning to their place of origin, 79% reported having access to primary health care in their return areas, 82% of returnee households reported having access to land and 72% had civil status documents.

There were 2,311 returns to Afghanistan, a 73% decline largely due to a suspension of voluntary repatriation caused by the pandemic, coupled with the worsening security situation and a lack of basic services and economic opportunities.

The Government of Afghanistan committed to double the number of priority areas for return and reintegration from 20 to 40. In 2020, more than 900,000 returnees, IDPs and community members were assisted by UNHCR and its partners with cash assistance and in-kind support, improved access to shelter, expansion of education and skills training, implementation of quick-impact livelihoods projects, and the development of public infrastructure including schools and health care facilities.

Challenges and unmet needs

Returns and reintegration efforts were hampered by the pandemic, with border closures and public health concerns preventing voluntary repatriations but also triggering some premature returns and onward movements. Returns were also limited by persistent problems in many countries of origin, including fragile or faltering peace processes, continuing insecurity, exclusion of refugees from peace processes and repatriation plans, and a failure to address the original drivers of displacement.

Other deterrents to voluntary repatriation included destruction and confiscation of housing, land and property, severely overstretched services, and a lack of employment opportunities in the home country.



8 countries were supported on housing, land and property and documentation rights for refugees and IDPs. Target: 10. 2019 result: 10.



7 intention surveys completed. Target: 9. 2019 result: 9.

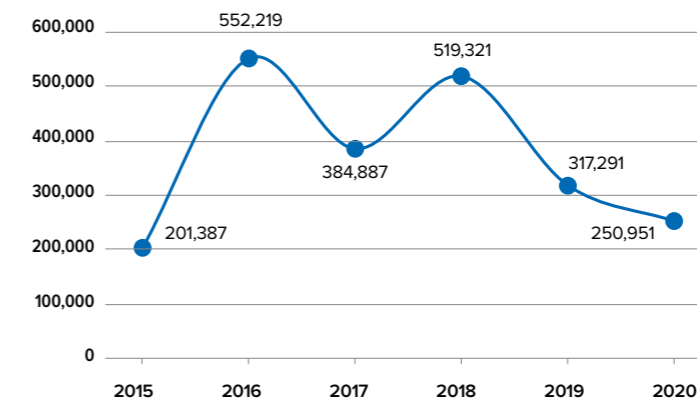


250,951 refugees returned to their country of origin. 2019 result: 317,291.



41 situations where refugees were supported to return voluntarily in safety and in dignity, where conditions permitted. 2019 result: 41.

REFUGEE RETURNEES | 2015-2020



For more information on solutions, see Chapter 6 of the [2020 Global Trends report](#)





Resettlement and complementary pathways

© UNHCR/Mohamed Alosem

The family of a seven-year-old Syrian girl suffering from a brain tumour await resettlement from Libya to Canada, which could save her life.

Global Strategic Priorities
Resettlement
Protection and solutions
See p. 14 for GSP result



Results and achievements

The pandemic heightened the importance of resettlement and complementary pathways as protection and solution mechanisms and as a solid demonstration of responsibility-sharing. In 2020, the availability of such solutions decreased and implementation of the [“Three-year strategy \(2019-2021\) on resettlement and complementary pathways”](#) (3YS), which anticipated resettlement of 70,000 people and the admission of 140,000 refugees under complementary pathways in 2020, suffered a considerable setback. Despite COVID-19, UNHCR submitted over 39,500 refugees to 25 countries for resettlement, the majority originating from the Syrian Arab Republic (18,220), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5,944), Eritrea (2,147), Somalia (2,071) and Sudan (1,805). 22,800 refugees departed on resettlement to 22 countries, 64% fewer than in 2019. UNHCR-facilitated departures were mainly from Lebanon (4,645), Turkey (4,098), Jordan (1,557), Egypt (1,353) and the United Republic of Tanzania (1,341). Half of refugee applicants were women and girls, and half were children. Submissions made on an emergency or urgent basis rose by 38% from 2019, accounting for a quarter of global submissions.

To help States and key stakeholders meet their commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees and in line with the 3YS, UNHCR and IOM collaborated under the [“Sustainable resettlement and](#)

[complementary pathways initiative 2020-2022”](#), known as the CRISP. The initiative aims to help States and other key actors establish or expand third-country solutions through capacity-building activities. To advocate for improved access to third-country solutions, UNHCR commissioned research supported by the CRISP on the benefits of resettlement and a mapping of global opportunities to advance resettlement and complementary pathways.

UNHCR led the creation of the CRISP-supported Global Task Force on Education Complementary Pathways, launched the Global Family Reunification Network, and worked on the creation of the Global Refugee Labour Mobility Task Force: three milestones towards achieving the 3YS goals. All three will be key platforms for sharing good practice and advocating for refugees’ increased access to these solutions. The UNHCR Opportunities Platform, launched in September 2020 with the support of the CRISP, is a tool to help refugees find higher education scholarships, and will expand to include third-country employment opportunities.

In 2020, the OECD-UNHCR study [“Safe pathways for refugees”](#) was updated with 2019 data. It showed 155,775 first-time residency permits were issued that year for study, work and family purposes in OECD countries and Brazil to nationals of Afghanistan, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Refugee Steering Group was convened in January 2020 with representatives from national, regional and global refugee-led networks that contributed to the Global Refugee Forum. It plays an important advisory role in planning the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, coordinating refugee participation and creating spaces for discussions on matters of concern.

As a result of the pandemic, admissions under complementary pathways in 2020 were limited. The economic slowdown in many parts of the world affected labour mobility opportunities and many scholarship programmes for refugees have been temporarily halted. While data in these areas will be provided by the States later in 2021, the evidence from partners already suggested that the goal of 140,000 complementary pathways admissions in 2020 was not achieved.

Operational highlights

To address COVID-related challenges, many operations reconfigured their resettlement processing, using remote interviews and adapting the working environment.

In Italy, 2020 saw an expansion of the University Corridors for Refugees (UNICORE) project, which brings refugees residing in Ethiopia to study in Italy. UNICORE was set up in 2019 by Italian universities with the support of UNHCR, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation,

and key partners. The project now includes 24 universities and has welcomed around 70 students in three years.

Emergency Transit Mechanisms (ETMs) provided a life-saving solution, with 533 people of concern in Libya departing for Niger, Romania and Rwanda. A persistent challenge was the slow processing and lack of departures from the ETMs in Niger and Rwanda to the main resettlement countries, preventing additional evacuation flights from Libya taking place.

Challenges and unmet needs

The 2020 target of 70,000 refugees resettled in 31 countries was not met due to a shortfall in resettlement quotas, exacerbated by COVID-19, which led to the suspension of most departures from March to June 2020 with only slow and partial re-openings subsequently. Travel restrictions also significantly affected complementary pathways. The pandemic prompted embassies to suspend visa services, appointments and new applications, which particularly affected refugees with family reunification applications, while UNHCR strove to coordinate with its partners to keep the resettlement programme running and ensure protection for those most at risk. UNHCR also encouraged States to be flexible and innovative with interviews and visa processing in resettlement and complementary pathways, including family reunification.



22,800 UNHCR-facilitated resettlement departures. Target: 70,000. 2019 result: 63,726.



39,534 refugees were submitted for resettlement. 2019 result: 81,671.

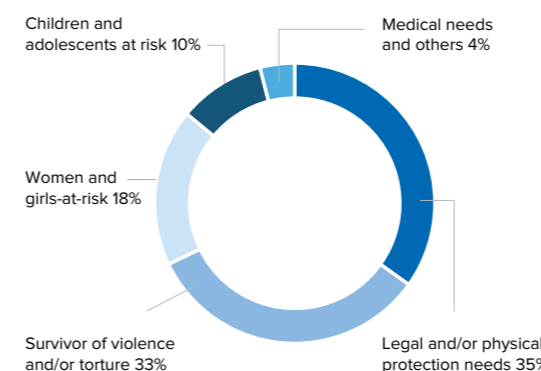


25 countries received UNHCR submissions. Target: 31. 2019 result: 29.

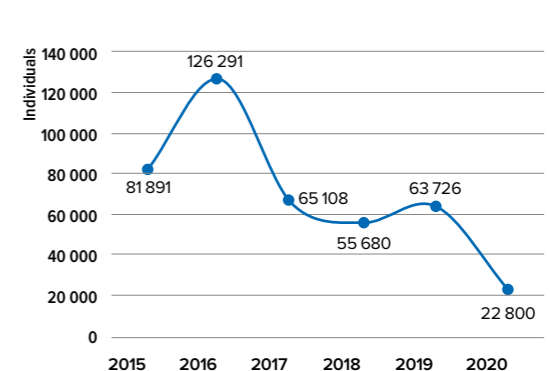


75 country operations submitted refugees for resettlement. 2019 result: 81.

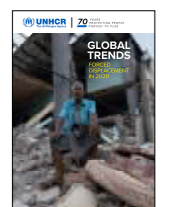
GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT SUBMISSIONS BY CATEGORY | 2020



GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT DEPARTURES | 2015-2020



For more information on solutions, see Chapter 6 of the [2020 Global Trends report](#)





Local integration and other local solutions

© UNHCR/Studio COSMO

Young Iraqi refugee Ali exchanges cultural and culinary experiences with his Belgian "buddy" Ignace, in Ghent, Belgium.

Global Strategic Priorities
Local integration
See p. 14 for GSP result



42 situations where refugees were supported to integrate. Target: 42. 2019 result: 42.

Results and achievements

Local integration of refugees is a complex and gradual process that involves refugees establishing themselves and integrating into the community in a country of asylum. During the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), several countries and other entities pledged to advance and promote local integration and other local solutions, such as permitting long-term legal stay and naturalization, including refugees in labour markets and education programmes, and promoting social cohesion. However, in 2020 the pandemic became the overriding priority.

Civil registration, documentation and legal stay options for refugees and asylum-seekers supported by legal services were a focus in several countries. UNHCR's advocacy, facilitation and support for local

integration as a durable solution resulted in the naturalization of 622 refugees in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Guinea-Bissau, and the issuance and renewal of residence permits to 2,051 refugees in Albania, Azerbaijan, Ghana and Namibia which will enable holders to legally work in the respective countries and facilitate access to other rights. Sociocultural and economic integration of refugees following naturalization and granting of long-term stay in these countries was supported by counselling; awareness-raising about rights; cultural education; engaging youth in community-based activities; legislative analysis and advice in the context of employment-related cases; coexistence projects with development actors, government, private sector and other stakeholders; engaging consultants to

compile legal instruments and draft advice on housing, land and property (HLP) rights; and participatory assessment of the post-naturalization process to understand challenges encountered.

Regional platforms such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) support platform under the Nairobi process; the European Commission; the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (known as MIRPS by its Spanish acronym) were instrumental in advancing the integration agenda and promoting durable solutions including local integration, leading to the development of the Sudan and South Sudan durable solutions initiative, the European Union's Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, as well as the San Salvador city Declaration to advocate the inclusion of displaced people and returnees.

A dedicated UNHCR expert on HLP rights supported operations in Ethiopia, Iraq and the Philippines, enhancing prospects for the socioeconomic integration of refugees through out-of-camp HLP studies, scoping studies on camp transformation and HLP training.

Operational highlights

The World Bank IDA18 sub-window supported the improvement of livelihoods and basic public services for refugees and host communities in Niger. This four-year plan aims to reach a total of 160,000 refugees through socioeconomic intervention.

In Chad, the out-of-camp approach was maintained and strengthened, namely by integrating all potential newly arriving refugees into host villages, with the ultimate goal of transforming 30% of refugee camps into villages by 2024 to allow for more inclusive socioeconomic integration.

Advances in the legal integration of refugees included the Democratic Republic of the Congo's commitment at the GRF to offer 10-year residence permits to the 200,000 Rwandan refugees who have opted to stay there after the termination of their status clause. In preparation, 75,000 Rwandans were verified.

As a result of UNHCR's advocacy, Liberia committed to provide land for agriculture and permanent housing to 5,000 locally integrated Ivorian refugees, in line with its local integration strategy.

Challenges and unmet needs

The COVID-19 pandemic hampered plans and initiatives as priorities shifted. With stretched resources, further advancement of socioeconomic inclusion and legal local integration was challenging.

In some situations, policy and legal restrictions prevented legal local integration from going ahead. The pandemic significantly affected the number of advocacy events. More investment was required to enable UNHCR to advocate with governments and popularize the arguments in favour of the local integration of refugees.



16 refugee situations where local integration was advanced, including as part of the implementation of pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum. Target: 15.



GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Global Strategic Priorities
Mobilization of support
See p. 17 for GSP result



UNHCR generates public support for refugees, IDPs and stateless people and provides them with opportunities to speak out. It counters xenophobia and divisive rhetoric about refugees, displaced people, and asylum seekers, in line with the [UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#). UNHCR engages in campaigns and events that are endorsed by a diverse corps of Goodwill Ambassadors and high-profile supporters, amplifying its messaging around the world.



The WRD 2020 emoji was created by O'Plérour, a designer and refugee advocate from Côte d'Ivoire, in partnership with Twitter.

Inspired by the battle against COVID-19 and worldwide demonstrations for racial justice, UNHCR's World Refugee Day (WRD) theme, "Every action counts, everyone can make a difference", served as a call for equality. Videos and stories featured refugees fighting the pandemic and the organization's determination to stay the course despite the added burden of COVID-19. Most events were held virtually and many were highlighted, including those held by partners, on UNHCR's Global Website.



55.2 million combined followers of the #WithRefugee Coalition were reached by social media posts on WRD celebrations.

On WRD, the [#WithRefugees coalition](#)—backed by faith-based organizations, businesses, universities, NGOs, private sector partners and over 200 cities—sent a message of inclusion with a positive narrative about refugees in communities, helping UNHCR mobilize new audiences. Faith-based members acknowledged their special responsibility to tackle xenophobia. More than 800 people registered for a joint UNHCR-Council of Europe webinar marking WRD, "Creating inclusive cities: everyone can make a difference".

The #IBelong campaign to end statelessness highlighted legislative breakthroughs by Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, North Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and other States. Goodwill Ambassador [Cate Blanchett's video](#) proved one of the campaign's most successful products ever. The campaign highlighted how people without a legal identity were at extra risk in the pandemic and needed to be included in national COVID-19 responses.

UNHCR's highly committed group of Goodwill Ambassadors, high profile supporters and digital influencers, with extensive audience reach despite COVID-19, created opportunities for advocacy and fundraising partnerships and brought authentic refugee voices and emergency appeals directly to the public. Their support for key UNHCR priorities included COVID-19 messages, emergency appeals and virtual participation in World Refugee Day, the #IBelong campaign and the first ever online Nansen ceremony. Goodwill Ambassadors led virtual discussions, e-gaming tournaments, poetry crowdsourcing, art contests, online concerts, music videos, comedy events and more. Some of UNHCR's most in-demand Goodwill Ambassadors include refugees whose lived experience brings power and authenticity to their advocacy. Together with high profile supporters, they helped raise millions of dollars and generated thousands of news items. Their reach of more than 177 million followers brought UNHCR record social media engagement.



500,000 engagements (likes, comments, shares and video views) were generated by UNHCR's statelessness social media posts.



Goodwill Ambassadors and high profile supporters generated **5.6 million** engagements—likes, comments, retweets and shares—on UNHCR and external channels and over 6,000 pieces of media coverage.

© UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramila



SPOTLIGHT:
The Nansen
Refugee Award
2020



The Nansen Refugee Award has a rich legacy. Since 1954, more than 60 individuals and organizations have been recognized for improving the lives and communities of forcibly displaced people. The award ceremony is a UNHCR signature event. In 2020, UNHCR honoured Mayerlín Vergara Pérez, a human rights activist and the regional coordinator for Fundación Renacer in Colombia. Ms. Pérez has worked to end the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, many of whom are refugees in Colombia. The prize of \$150,000 awarded to Ms. Pérez was jointly donated by the Swiss and Norwegian Governments.

Four regional winners received a Nansen certificate:

- Ms. Sabuni Francoise Chikunda, a refugee teacher and founder of The Women's Centre, which helps victims of sexual and gender-based violence in Uganda.
- Ms. Rozma Ghafouri, an Afghan refugee in the Islamic Republic of Iran who taught sports to help refugee children get off the streets and into school.
- Ms. Tetiana Barantsova, human rights activist and co-founder of AMI-Skhid, an NGO advocating for the protection of IDPs with disabilities in Ukraine.
- Dr. Rana Dajani, a scientist and founder of the "We love reading" project, which makes reading and learning accessible to refugee children.