

Egypt

January - March 2021

As of 31 March, **261,701 refugees and asylum-seekers from 62 countries** were registered with UNHCR Egypt, half of whom are from Syria.

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

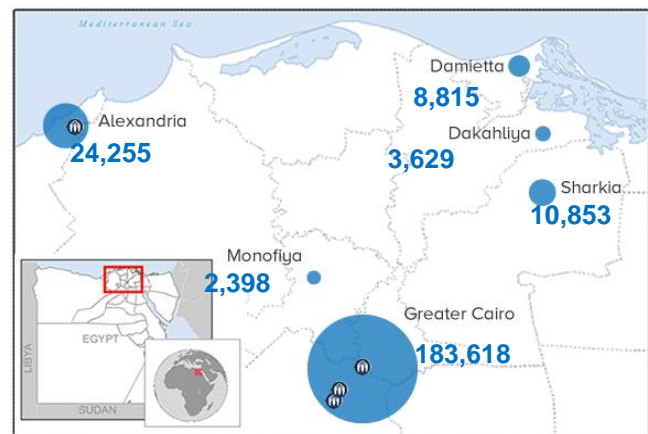
During the COVID-19 pandemic, **UNHCR adapted its activities to the changing circumstances**, maintaining critical assistance and protection support.

KEY INDICATORS

8,281 families received monthly multi-purpose cash grants in the first quarter of 2021

3,794 unaccompanied and separated children were registered with UNHCR Egypt as of end of March 2021

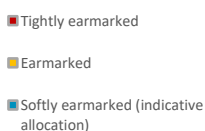
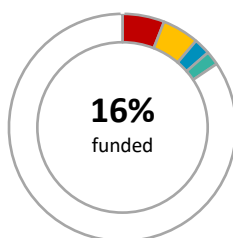
269 refugees departed to resettlement countries in 2021



FUNDING SITUATION (18 MAY 2021)

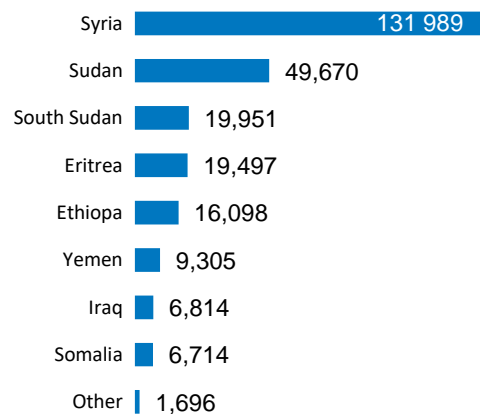
USD 126.8 million

requested for the Egypt operation in 2021



REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Countries of Origin



Highlights

- On 28 February 2021, Egypt's Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) launched a dedicated [website](#) to register for **COVID-19 vaccination**. Refugees and asylum-seekers are able to **register on the platform using the identity document issued by UNHCR**. UNHCR health partners are offering registration support, with 78 refugees and asylum-seekers assisted in March. Among them was a **Syrian 57-year old woman with a chronic medical condition who received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in a public health facility on 26 March**. This marked the first COVID-19 vaccination of a refugee in Egypt that UNHCR is aware of.
- In February, UNHCR significantly **increased its processing capacity at the registration facilities** in 6th of October City, Zamalek and Alexandria. Remodeled waiting areas and interview rooms allowed UNHCR to process registration requests for a higher number of individuals in a safe manner. In March alone, UNHCR was able to process 7,624 cases (19,300 individuals) for various registration interviews, including 1,950 individuals for new registration, 15,987 individuals for document renewal, 1,217 individuals for add-ons and 146 individuals for other registration interviews. **Prioritization continued to take place for vulnerable persons and protection cases.**




An elderly Syrian woman attends her registration appointment at a remodeled facility of UNHCR's Field Office in Alexandria. ©UNHCR/Mina Shehata

A new digital queuing

system developed by UNHCR Egypt was tested and piloted in both registration centers in Greater Cairo. The queuing system ensures proper management of process flows and contributes to social distancing measures.

In the first quarter of 2021, UNHCR's Field Office Alexandria conducted **four mobile registration missions** to Damietta and Matrouh governorates to register and renew the documents of **1,493** refugees and asylum-seekers.

- On 1 March, UNHCR Egypt participated in the second edition of the **Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development**. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, participated in a session on '*Addressing Forced Displacement in National Planning and Peace Processes: Localizing the Paradigm Shift to Prevention in Africa*'. UNHCR remains a Knowledge Partner in the Aswan Forum.
- On 15 February, UNHCR held a **one-day roundtable discussion on key elements of comparative asylum law and asylum institutions**, with representatives of key government sectors in Egypt. Discussions covered various issues including guiding principles and key provisions of asylum law in various countries, as well as guiding principles for RSD and a comparative overview of different national asylum systems and institutions. The establishment and management of RSD institutions and systems was also discussed, and an overview was provided of the current RSD system in Egypt. Meeting members further looked into suggestions and recommendations for a capacity development plan for concerned authorities.

- Between 3 - 15 March, UNHCR Egypt conducted its annual **Participatory Assessment** in Greater Cairo and Egypt's north coast. During 44 focus group discussions, UNHCR staff **listened to the views of more than 300 women, men, girls and boys of different nationalities**. During the focus group discussions, refugees and asylum-seekers talked about the difficulties they faced, **explained how they cope with challenges including those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, while proposing solutions** to improve their living conditions. The Participatory Assessment took into consideration the 'Age, Gender and Diversity' Approach which was reflected in focus group discussions for different age groups, gender balance, as well as dedicated discussions for women and children (including unaccompanied children).
 

*Sudanese Youth attending focus group discussion at UNHCR's Alexandria Office, where they shared insights and suggestions.
©UNHCR/Mina Shehata*
- UNHCR Egypt's Representative, Karim Atassi, met with the Minister of Social Solidarity on 23 February to review ongoing collaboration and explore further opportunities for cooperation in favor of the most vulnerable refugees. The Representative expressed gratitude to the Ministry, Alex Bank and Sawiris Foundation for hosting UNHCR as a guest of honor at the 61st Diarna Exhibition that took place in February (see details below).



PROTECTION

- UNHCR Egypt has strengthened and adapted its **communication with refugees and asylum-seekers** since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication channels include **phone, e-mail, social media, messaging applications and video calling**. Infolines continue to operate with a total of 13 lines in Cairo and Alexandria, responding to **69,169 calls during the first quarter of 2021**.
- UNHCR conducts **protection, reception and counselling activities** based on case referrals made via phone, e-mail, and walk-in appointments. These activities enable UNHCR to swiftly identify the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers and provide them with assistance, protection and durable solutions, as necessary.
- UNHCR continued to conduct **remote Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews** with appropriate social distancing and safety measures standards in place. Between January - March, a total of **1,152 remote RSD interviews** were conducted involving 2,146 persons. Furthermore, 20 interviews involving 49 individuals were conducted in the office for urgent and emergency cases who were unable or unwilling to have their interviews conducted remotely. In addition, 1,022 RSD decisions were finalized, involving a total of 1,878 individuals.
- As of 31 March, **3,794 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)** were registered with UNHCR Egypt. All newly identified unregistered at-risk children—including unaccompanied children—undergo a thorough protection screening via telephone. All unregistered at-risk children remain under close monitoring by UNHCR's Child Protection team. During the first quarter of 2021, Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) were conducted for 249 UASC.

- Together with the sister agencies UNICEF and IOM, UNHCR is committed to strengthening the links with the national child protection authority National Council of Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM). As part of the 'Children on the Move Taskforce', the three agencies continued to work jointly to contribute to the roll out of the national Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Protection and Assistance of Child Asylum-Seekers, Refugees and Victims of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons (SOPs for 'Children on the Move'), in line with international Child Protection standards. In particular, UNHCR's Representative and NCCM held a high-level meeting to discuss child protection standards, and capacity building on 1 April.
- In line with prevention measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR and Child Protection partners continued to **carry out most activities remotely while attending to urgent and emergency cases in person**. In person activities included the registration exercise for UASC, urgent alternative care needs for children facing abuse, and providing financial assistance. In addition, the 24/7 emergency child protection hotline run by UNHCR partner Caritas remained functional during the reporting period to rapidly respond to child protection related queries.
- During the first quarter of 2021, UNHCR and its **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** partner, CARE International in both Alexandria and Cairo responded to **GBV incidents reported by survivors, who received multi-sectoral response services** including safety, medical, psychosocial, livelihoods, legal services and quality case management. Remote interviews and counselling with survivors continued, with minimal physical contact where emergency services are required. In Cairo, increased reporting of GBV incidents is being observed in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, there were also increasing needs for emergency relocation for safe shelter for GBV survivors. Inter-agency GBV case conferences were held in both Alexandria and Cairo to discuss and respond to the needs of complex GBV cases.
- CARE International conducted **virtual GBV prevention awareness activities** in Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta. A total of **948 women, men and children attended basic psychosocial awareness, early marriage, self-defense, sexual and reproductive health and basic legal awareness sessions**. Participants in these sessions increasingly expressed satisfaction with the virtual modality as they felt more relaxed, confident and safe to express themselves and ask questions. The stress-relieving exercises provided have been positively received by participants, who said they helped them cope with challenges brought about by the pandemic. In Cairo, 283 women and children attended various activities and workshops at the **Women Friendly Space**.
- Between January - March, **two community meetings** were held by UNHCR and CARE in Cairo and Damietta to ascertain the needs of communities with regards to GBV and the COVID-19 pandemic. The communities also presented their capacity building needs and **suggestions to improve GBV-related service delivery**.
- On the occasion of **International Women's Day (IWD)** on 8 March, UNHCR's GBV team organized an all-staff virtual session to discuss gender equality and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). **Hygiene kits** were provided to CARE for distribution to participants in IWD activities, where were held at the Women Friendly Space.
- UNHCR continued to facilitate **birth registration** for refugees and asylum-seekers. The cases included children born out of wedlock or GBV incidents, as well as children whose birth registration was delayed and has therefore become more complicated. A total of 75 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**.

- On 22 March, UNHCR delivered a **session on UNHCR's mandate and its role in supporting victims of trafficking** during a four day workshop hosted by Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, **attended by 25 civilian, military and police personnel directly involved in combating human trafficking and smuggling of migrants**. Training participants were from Egypt, Burkina Faso, Gabonese Republic, Republic of Benin, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Mali, Republic of the Congo, Republic of Guinea and Republic of Seychelles.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- In coordination with UNHCR and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Terre des Hommes organized the **first sporting festival for refugees and asylum-seekers of various nationalities** on 6 March. The festival was held in 6th of October City and was attended by the Minister of Youth and Sports. Activities included various sports and entertainment activities for different age groups.



*Refugees and local Egyptians enjoy outdoor sports activities at a UNHCR event organized by Terre des Hommes.
UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes.*

- Four thematic meetings with the refugee community** took place during the first quarter of 2021 and focused on Registration, Protection, Health, RSD, Education and Cash-based Intervention. Each thematic meeting was attended by around **50 community leaders and representatives** from Cairo and Alexandria.
- In addition, six **introductory community meetings** were held as part of the 'Community Empowerment project' and attended by **227 refugee community representative and members from both Cairo and Alexandria**. These meetings focused on identifying communities' needs and priorities, and provided an opportunity for community members to meet and network. This was coupled with a capacity building training for **54 community leaders**, organized by UNHCR partner Terre des Hommes (TdH). The training covered topics such as data collection, analysis, problem solving, financial management, documentation and report writing.
- An online community forum** attended by 28 active community members and leaders was organized in **Alexandria**. The forum **aimed at identifying good practices and community response**, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis. UNHCR plans to hold this forum on a bi-monthly basis to encourage community members and leaders to work jointly and find solutions for community issues with UNHCR's guidance and support.

- UNHCR also maintained two-way communication and daily engagement with communities through **mobile messaging groups with over 140 community leaders**. In addition, the team conducted a regular round of calls to receive ground updates from community leaders and check on community needs.
- In collaboration with TdH, UNHCR celebrated the **opening of an online learning center** in Maadi, Cairo, where refugees, asylum-seekers and Egyptian youth aged 18-35 years will **acquire digital skills**. As a first cohort, 35 participants started various courses offered by Coursera for Refugees. TdH received around 1,200 applications in the first quarter of 2021 and began screening for the next cohort of students. This is the first out of at least four centers funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the PROSPECTS partnership.
- Refugee outreach volunteers** in Alexandria continued to provide support to refugee communities, where they **play a significant part in raising awareness, identifying challenges and vulnerable cases, responding to inquiries, and facilitating access to different services**. The team of volunteers maintains communication with the community through messaging groups, where they provide timely and immediate responses. Between January - March, **volunteers in Alexandria responded to more than 1,000 inquiries**. In addition, 20 awareness sessions were conducted on COVID-19 using online platforms, reaching over 200 refugees and asylum-seekers of different nationalities.
- In the first quarter of 2021, **1,188 people with specific needs (PSN) underwent assessments** to identify possible area of intervention. Field missions were conducted to support 279 people living with disabilities with personal hygiene items and 25 PSN with assistive devices. In addition, 52 cases were referred for rehabilitation services. On the North Coast, 325 individuals with specific needs were identified and supported with **rehabilitation sessions, assistive devices, medical equipment, counselling, and psychosocial support**. During the reporting period, total of 236 identified PSN cases were provided with **emergency protection cash assistance**.



Refugees and asylum-seekers attended the inauguration event of the first online training center established by UNHCR's partner, TdH.
 ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes.



HEALTH

- UNHCR through its health partners continued to ensure **sustained access to essential health services** including life-saving emergency services, regular supply of medicines for patients with chronic conditions, the management of complicated pregnancies, as well as **mental health services during the second wave of COVID-19 infections in Egypt**.
- UNHCR commissioned a **Health Access and Utilization Survey** at the end of January 2021, to assess and monitor access to and utilization of key health services among refugees and asylum-seekers living in Egypt and to identify any obstacles in accessing services. Results will be shared once the analysis is concluded.

- UNHCR donated 50,500 **respirators** (FFP2 masks), 50,000 **medical gowns**, 800,000 **surgical masks**, and 360,000 pairs of **medical gloves** to the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and its health partners **for use among frontline health workers**. In addition, UNHCR printed **36,000 posters and 1,600 banners** with COVID-19 prevention messaging in multiple languages to distribute to MoHP facilities and UNHCR partners. This activity is in line with UNHCR's commitment to support the Risk Communications and Community Engagement (RCCE) pillar of the UN Country Preparedness Response Plan for COVID-19.
- UNHCR coordinated with the MoHP over three successive **polio vaccination campaigns** conducted in 2021 targeting Egyptian and refugee children under the age of five. Vaccinations were provided free of charge. **Information materials on polio were shared with refugee communities** in multiple languages to encourage parents to inoculate their children.
- UNHCR participated in the first Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Steering Committee meeting aimed at **integrating mental health in primary health care facilities** in Egypt. The meeting was chaired by the General Secretariat of Mental Health and Addiction Treatment (GSMHAT) with the participation of the MoHP focal point for primary health care, WHO, Médecins de Monde (MdM), and Save the Children International (SCI). UNHCR's health partner SCI also conducted a **Mental Health Gap Action training** in collaboration with MdM and GSMHAT. The training targeted around 30 healthcare workers of seven public health units in Greater Cairo.



EDUCATION

- Within the framework of the partnership between UNHCR, Vodafone Foundation and Egypt Ministry of Education (MoE), UNHCR assessed several public schools in 6th of October City to implement the **Instant Network Schools (INS)** project. The initiative aims at giving young refugees, host communities and teachers access to digital learning content and the internet. The project **transforms existing classrooms into multimedia learning hubs**, and includes robust teacher training, curated digital content aligned to the local curriculum, and an enabling a connected environment. Eighteen public preparatory schools were selected to benefit from INS interventions, which included refurbishment, and the installation of appropriate cabling, security and lighting features. UNHCR, Vodafone Foundation and the MoE also organized a four-day training for teachers of the targeted schools, including **hands-on sessions in one of the targeted schools using INS equipment**.



UNHCR Egypt and Vodafone Foundation organized a four-day training for teachers and headteachers at INS schools. @Vodafone.

- In March, UNHCR continued its **phone survey of refugee students**, reaching 154 refugee families and a total of 331 school-aged children (176 girls, 155 boys), out of whom 308 confirmed they were enrolled in schools, with the remaining (11 girls, 12 boys) not enrolled due various reasons including poverty, health issues and family circumstances. UNHCR will continue to follow up with out-of-school children identified and support and encourage enrollment in appropriate education facilities according to their needs.

- During the first quarter of 2021, UNHCR continued to support **330 students** (169 women, 161 men) **enrolled in public and private universities across Egypt under** the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarship, and four students enrolled in the Egyptian Japanese University for Science and Technology. UNHCR provides students with monthly allowances, clothes, and book grants, as well as supporting tuition fees to respective universities or higher education institutes.



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. In the first quarter of 2021, a total of **8,281 vulnerable families** (comprising 31,010 refugees and asylum-seekers) were supported with multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA), 93% of whom successfully collected their grants via iris scanning from Egypt Post Office. As part of efforts to mitigate exposure to COVID-19, cash assistance will be provided on a bi-monthly basis throughout 2021.
- In addition, a total of **2,106 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) received UNHCR cash for protection**. Cash assistance provided to UASC remains central to UNHCR's holistic child protection case plan developed during the initial Best Interest Assessment (BIA) and continuously monitored through child protection case management. Cash assistance for UASC is a major component in reducing protection risks for children, including violence, abuse, exploitation, and child labor.
- In March 2021, UNHCR concluded the distribution of **winter assistance** to a total of **46,920 families, comprising 97,216 vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers**, including 3,003 unaccompanied and separated children. The one-time grant is provided to eligible refugees to support them in covering their priority needs during the winter months. Winter assistance for 2020-21 proved successful, with 97.5% of beneficiaries able to collect their cash, despite many holding expired documentation.
- Furthermore, UNHCR enhanced **communication with refugees on cash-based interventions** to improve collection rates. Cash recipients collecting via iris recognition were informed through notification messages about the exact **iris-enabled post office closest to their addresses**, and all recipients received a URL to help them find the nearest post office. In addition, **cash recipients were called** by UNHCR's partner to ensure they were aware of the assistance type, location, and deadline for collection, and to address any collection issues they encountered.
- Yadawee**, the local social enterprise managing one of UNHCR's projects under MADE 51, won the Community Impact Award offered by NY NOW. The award recognizes and celebrates brands and companies that have a **positive impact on their community and have meaningfully contributed to good causes**.



An Ethiopian refugee receives a cash grant at an Egypt Post Office branch in 6th of October City in Greater Cairo. UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes.

- UNHCR Egypt was a **guest of honor at this year's Diarna exhibition**. Held under the slogan "*Egypt Speaks Artisanally*," the 61st round of the fair was organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Solidarity and in partnership with "Ebda3 men Masr", an initiative by Alex Bank, the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, and WE Telecom Egypt. The exhibition ran from 15 - 27 February at Cairo Festival City mall. Refugees were able to **showcase their products and cultural activities** - including preparation of traditional Eritrean coffee - and to exchange skills and techniques with Egyptian artisans.



UNHCR was a guest of honor at Diarna exhibition where refugee artisans exhibited their handicrafts. ©UNHCR/Radwa Sharaf.

- Through its partnership with All Saints Cathedral, UNHCR contracted the Egyptian marketing platform, Brandloca, a company specialized in marketing handicraft products. Brandloca will **facilitate the sales and marketing of refugee-made products** under the brand "Beyond Borders".



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- UNHCR continued to conduct **remote resettlement interviews with appropriate social distancing measures in place**. Between January - March, 553 refugee cases were submitted for resettlement to Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, Belgium. Main nationalities included Syrians, Sudanese, Eritreans, South Sudanese, Ethiopians, and Somalis. Several resettlement missions took place both on the ground and virtually, interviewing refugees submitted for resettlement in previous years.
- Between January - March, 269 refugees departed for resettlement to destinations such as France, Sweden, USA, Portugal, Germany and the United Kingdom.
- UNHCR's Durable Solutions unit received 19 cases (65 individuals) of self-referrals for voluntary repatriation between January - March 2021. Among the Syrian refugee population, 58 spontaneously returned to Syria while 126 Syrians departed to third countries during the same period.

External Relations

- On 26 January, Pyramids Football Club collaborated with UNHCR by supporting the winterization campaign during a football game against Ahly Football Club by promoting the campaign digitally on the sidelines of the stadium. This is the first collaboration between UNHCR and a local football club in Egypt.
- In an effort to ensure consistent and direct communication with refugees and asylum-seekers, **UNHCR Egypt started airing biweekly live question and answer sessions on Facebook**. This format has already proven successful in other UNHCR operations and is expected to alleviate the pressure on UNHCR's info-lines and other communication channels. In the first quarter, four sessions focused on public health (COVID-19), registration, CBI and RSD. Technical UNHCR experts addressed the issues most frequently raised by the refugee community across UNHCR social media platforms and provided direct answers to live questions from viewers.

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 GBV, and Durable Solutions. The other working groups are for Education, Health, Basic Needs and Cash, Livelihoods, and Communication with Communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR is working closely with partners to ensure a coordinated response to 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 2021, UNHCR Egypt is working through the following implementing partners:** All Saints' Cathedral • CARE International • Caritas Egypt • Catholic Relief Services (CRS) • Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights (EFRR) • Save the Children International (SCI) • Terre des Hommes (TdH) • United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) • United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **USD 19.7 M** as of 18 May 2021.

UNHCR Egypt is grateful for the critical support provided by: [European Union](#) | [United States of America](#) | [Germany](#) | [Italy](#) | [Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa \(RDDP NA\)](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [United Kingdom](#) | [Vodafone Foundation](#) | [Other private donors](#).

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A refugee woman in Cairo, Egypt. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

LINKS

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

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

