

UNHCR MENA COVID-19 Response

January 2022

Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, 19 out of 19 countries have included refugees in their national **COVID-19 vaccination programmes** or plans.

UNHCR works with national and local authorities to **improve access to basic and social services** for those forcibly displaced and encourage their **socio-economic inclusion**.

UNHCR also continues to provide **targeted protection services assistance** to people of concern across MENA to address the health and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

KEY FIGURES



16.1 million people of concern in MENA (2022 planning figure), including:

12.4 million internally displaced people (IDPs)

2.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers

712,000 IDP and refugee returnees

209,000 stateless individuals



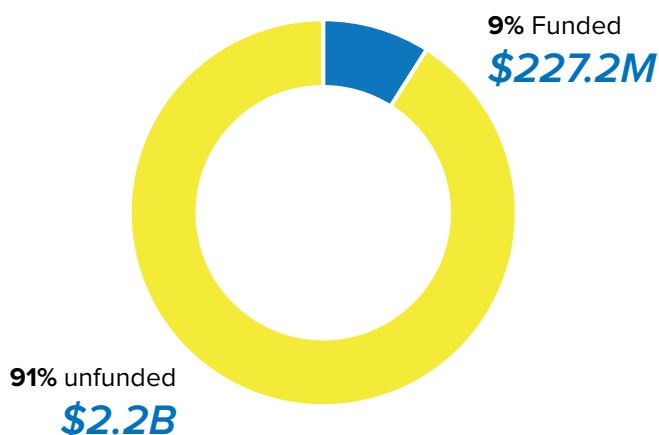
19 out of 19 countries in MENA are including people of concern in national COVID-19 health response.

FUNDING

(AS OF 15 FEBRUARY 2022)

\$2.433 billion

requested for activities across MENA in 2022



Sixty-year-old Somali refugee Amina receives her first COVID-19 vaccination at a UNHCR-supported clinic in Aden, Yemen. Photo by ©UNHCR/ Marie-Joëlle Jean-Charles

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Overview

- In 2022, UNHCR's COVID-19 response continues its focus on advocating for the **inclusion of people of concern to UNHCR in national public health systems** and other national responses. To mitigate the socioeconomic and protection impacts of COVID-19, UNHCR will keep adapting its assistance, particularly cash programming which has demonstrated positive immediate mitigating effects, thereby helping to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic for forcibly displaced people and their host communities.
- From 2022, UNHCR's ongoing COVID-19 programming—such as in the health, WASH, shelter, camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), and protection sectors—have been fully 'mainstreamed' into activities as part of the [Global Appeal](#).
- UNHCR works closely with government authorities, partners, forcibly displaced people and host communities at the Inter-Agency Coordination Forum to ensure a harmonized response to emerging needs, including through communication with communities to ensure refugees and asylum-seekers remain informed on the COVID-19 situation and its impact, and ensuring their access to critical protection services.

Protection

- UNHCR and partners continue to provide protection services to people of concern and host communities across MENA, including through the provision of legal assistance, psychosocial counselling services, outreach, communication with communities and awareness-raising activities.
- Registration, Refugee Status Determination and resettlement processing are continuing. Additionally, UNHCR is working to reduce the backlog of cases following the resumption of in-person activities across all operations, which is expected to be cleared in early 2022.
- Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) has been scaled up by UNHCR operations across the region to help individuals and families struggling with the effects of the pandemic, many of whom have seen their livelihood opportunities diminished.
- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has reinforced communication with communities, strengthening and adapting outreach through various channels including phone, e-mail, social media, and messaging services. UNHCR launched emergency hotlines and call centres across operations to provide 24-hour emergency support and advice to people of concern on COVID-19 prevention, hygiene measures and vaccination. While in-person protection activities resumed fully across all operations by early-2021, additional hotlines remain operational to respond to the needs of people of concern through remote modality. UNHCR also maintains communication through WhatsApp/SMS, dedicated outreach webpages, as well as Facebook and other social media platforms, providing up-to-date information on available services, including testing and vaccination.
- Following continued periods of school closures, UNHCR supports remote learning through the provision of school supplies and laptops/tablets, as well as supporting people of concern with access to internet services.

Cash assistance

- In addition to regular cash assistance, UNHCR continues to deliver additional cash support to operations in MENA to address the economic impacts of COVID-19 and help meet the ongoing and urgent needs of people of concern whose livelihoods are impacted by the ongoing effects of the pandemic.

Supporting local health responses

- UNHCR works to reinforce local COVID-19 health responses, including access for refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs to emergency COVID-19 healthcare and testing services.
- UNHCR provides material support to health authorities, including through in-kind donations of ventilators, ambulances, generators, medicine, rapid tests, PPE equipment, hygiene kits and refugee housing units for screening patients at hospitals, among other medical supplies.
- UNHCR is also contributing to capacity-building efforts for local health authorities, including providing incentives for health workers as part of local COVID-19 response, along with general logistical support.

Vaccination campaigns

- Since the launch of national COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in early 2021, UNHCR has worked to include refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless individuals and others of concern into national vaccination response plans. UNHCR support includes issuance/renewal of documentation, assistance with registration on national COVID-19 vaccine platforms, deployment of mobile vaccination units in camps and areas hosting refugees, and financial support towards costs associated with travel to vaccination centres.
- UNHCR also supports the rollout of vaccination campaigns for camp-based refugees including through sensitization activities to strengthen awareness and counter vaccine hesitancy.
- All 19 countries in MENA have confirmed the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national COVID-19 vaccination programmes. While many countries also recognize refugees and asylum-seekers in the registration of national COVID-19 health passes—which allow vaccinated individuals to access public venues, including government offices and UNHCR and partner premises—UNHCR continues to advocate with local authorities towards the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers, in particular those without valid identification and/or documentation.



Mahmoud, 85-year-old Syrian refugee from Zaatari Camp, receives his COVID-19 vaccine at the Department of Chest Infection Health Clinic in Mafraq, Jordan. Photo by ©UNHCR/ Lilly Carlisle

COVID-19 sensitization and awareness-raising

- With the threat of COVID-19 remaining comparably high globally, UNHCR is continuing sensitization and awareness-raising activities for PoCs and host communities, informing on the threat posed by the emerging Omicron variant, preventative measures, testing and vaccination. Across operations in MENA, UNHCR conducts awareness campaigns including through in-person sessions, on social media, through TV spots and fliers, as well as through outreach and engagement with local community leaders.
- UNHCR also works closely with Risk Communication Community Engagement (RCCE) working group, an inter-agency coordination platform established to provide technical support on risk communication and community engagement in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community empowerment and self-reliance

- UNHCR carries out regular online participatory assessments with different groups and communities to both assess the immediate needs in relation to the pandemic and create a broad network for disseminating relevant and updated information about COVID-19.
- UNHCR also works to strengthen community-based organizations to support initiatives aimed at assisting refugees and asylum-seekers, while encouraging further involvement in participatory needs assessment and programme design, as well as referrals for counselling services, cash assistance and resettlement, among other activities.

External / Donors Relations

Funding/Donors:

UNHCR is grateful for the support of donors to its operations in MENA, including major donors of unearmarked and other flexible funding:



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