

Morocco

February 2022

Morocco is both a transit and a host country, with **18,765 refugees and asylum seekers** registered with UNHCR from more than 48 countries.

UNHCR works to ensure **access to asylum procedures** and **protection** of refugees in Morocco, while working closely with Moroccan authorities under the framework of the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum (SNIA).

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR's population of concern has been growing rapidly with a significant increase of **socio-economic vulnerability and protection needs**.

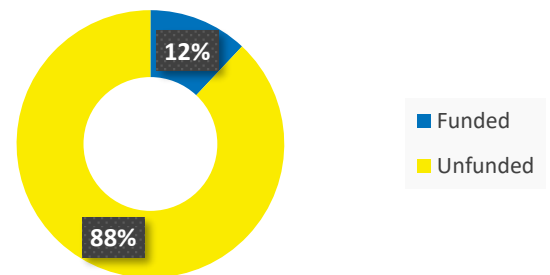
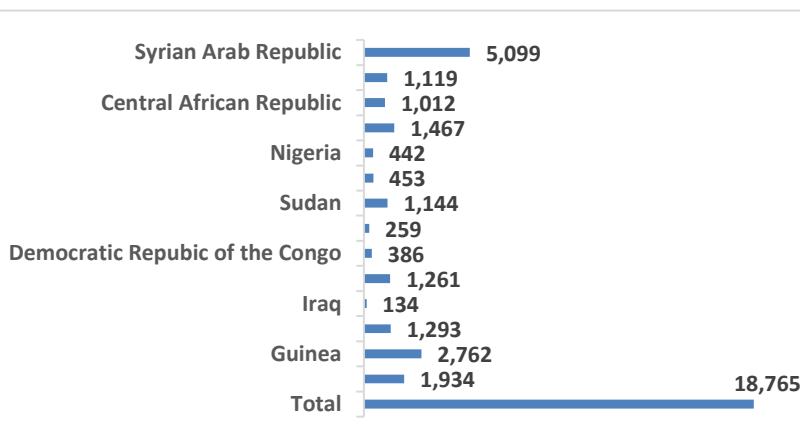
UNHCR's People of Concern:

9,379 refugees and **9,386** asylum-seekers (as of 31 January 2022); **18,765** total people of concern

Funding needs in 2022 (As of 31 January 2022):

\$9.5 million

Requested for UNHCR's Operation in Morocco in 2022



UNHCR PRESENCE

51 Total Staff:
UNHCR Staff: 21

- 16 national staff
- 5 international staff members

AWF: 30

- 6 UNV
- 19 UNOPS
- 5 interns

Office:

1 Branch Office in Rabat



13 refugee women and UNHCR partners climb mount Toubkal

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Working with Partners

- Morocco's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) is UNHCR's main government counterpart. UNHCR also collaborates with key ministries, academic partners and other institutions.
- UNHCR is actively engaged with its partners Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO), Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF), Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH), Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise (AMAPPE) and Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme (CNDH).
- In Oujda, Tangier, Casablanca and Fes, UNHCR has established **Protection Working Groups (PWGs)** to better identify and protect refugees and asylum-seekers. These groups are composed of civil society actors, institutional partners, regional human rights commissions, UN agencies, universities and legal clinics.
- On 7 October 2021, the High Commission for Planning and UNHCR signed a partnership agreement to strengthen collaboration between the two institutions. This agreement confirms a long and fruitful collaboration with respect to refugees in Morocco.
- In the context of mixed movements, UNHCR co-chairs with IOM a joint **Thematic Working Group on Migration and Asylum** in support to the implementation of the two Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees; and in full support to the National Policy on Migration and Asylum.
- In application of the whole-of-society and multi-partner approach called for by the Global Refugee Compact (2018) and subsequent Global Refugee Forum (2019), UNHCR is actively engaged and collaborating with a wide range of partners including refugees themselves, local media, regional and municipal authorities, civil society organization and members in the economic, social, cultural, religious and sport fields and the private sector to improve the protection environment for refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Alongside UN agencies, UNHCR is involved in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSCDF) as well as the thematic groups on migration, gender, AIDS, youth, communication (UNCG) and monitoring and evaluation. In September 2016, UNHCR and other UN agencies jointly signed a common programming framework with MCMREAM, to support the implementation of the **National Immigration and Asylum Policy**.

COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Morocco declared a state of national emergency beginning in March 2020. To this day, the pandemic has continued impacting the entire population in Morocco. In line with the evolution of the epidemiologic situation, Morocco has implemented a set of public health measures which continue to evolve. From the onset of the crisis, **Morocco established a national health response plan inclusive of foreign populations.**

To support and complement measures taken by the Government of Morocco, **UNHCR rapidly adapted its operational response to the increasing protection needs of refugees and asylum seekers.** The livelihoods of these populations—who work primarily in the informal sector—were particularly affected by the crisis, many with pre-existing vulnerabilities and an increasing number requesting humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs.

In line with public health measures that continued to evolve during 2021, UNHCR and its partners have worked actively to ensure refugees' and asylum seekers' continued access to services, both physically and remotely. Dedicated protection hotlines remain an important point of contact for refugees and asylum seekers, with a total of 1,100 protection counselling conducted remotely in 2021. Registration and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures were maintained throughout the pandemic, both in-person with prior appointment and remotely. Hotlines continue to remain active in 2022. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR's population of concern has been growing rapidly with a significant increase of socio-economic vulnerability and protection needs. Between January 2020 and 31 December

2021, the number of people under UNHCR's mandate in Morocco nearly doubled from 9,756 refugees and asylum-seekers to 18,248. In two years, the number of refugees increased by 40% while the overall number of asylum seekers has almost tripled.

Main Activities

Protection

- **Registration & RSD:** Pending the establishment of a national asylum system, UNHCR continues to register new asylum-seekers and conduct Refugee Status Determination (RSD). All recognized cases are referred for verification to the Bureau des Réfugiés et des Apatrides (BRA) of the MoFAIC as the Inter-Ministerial Commission in charge of regularization in Rabat. UNHCR participates in the Commission's hearings and introduces the cases. Hearings by the Commission were suspended at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis; hence, only 74 refugee cases were reviewed by the BRA in 2021. UNHCR continues adapting its registration and RSD procedures to ensure continuous access to asylum procedures, while fully respecting preventive measures against COVID-19. **In 2021, UNHCR registered 5,560 new asylum applications. In January 2022, UNHCR registered 498 asylum seekers.**
- **Legal assistance:** UNHCR works with a private law firm to provide legal aid to refugees and asylum-seekers (e.g. for issuance of birth certificates, to file complaints for physical assault and for representation before Moroccan courts). **In 2021, 247 legal consultations were conducted, 15 administrative assistances, 91 legal assistances in criminal matters and 44 legal assistances in civil matters. Services remain fully available in 2022.**
- **Emergency housing:** Through its partner Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO), UNHCR supports an emergency shelter and protection programme. Emergency housing covers immediate housing needs of people of concern, while protection houses respond to longer-term needs. This programme benefits refugees and asylum-seekers with extreme vulnerabilities, including unaccompanied minors, at-risk women, single mothers, victims of trafficking, and GBV survivors. In 2021, 75 refugees and asylum seekers as well as six infants with specific needs were hosted by UNHCR and FOO's housing programme. In January 2022, all emergency housing places remained occupied.
- **Protection of victims of gender-based violence (GBV):** A referral and support system is in place for survivors and people at increased risk of GBV to ensure access to healthcare, psycho-social support, legal assistance, and livelihoods through the services of UNHCR's partners, civil society and public services. Prevention is also achieved through the organization of awareness-raising and community activities. As a response to the accumulated risk of violence during the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR has established a dedicated phone number for women as part of its **protection hotline**. Still active in 2022, requests include housing support and financial assistance.
- **Outreach and community-based activities:** UNHCR works in close collaboration with **Protection Working Groups (PWG)** in Oujda, Tangier and Casablanca to identify and refer people with specific needs to adequate services. In 2021, two new PWGs were created in Fes/Meknes and Marrakech under UNHCR's leadership with the participation of the Regional Council for Human rights.
- **23 refugee community agents** of different nationalities share information among refugee communities across seven localities, relaying their needs and concerns to UNHCR and its partners.
- Protection hotlines, RSD, registration and other services continue to be fully operational and remain a key point of contact for refugees and asylum-seekers. One additional phone number is dedicated to emergencies, in particular arrests and detention. Social media is also an important point of contact for people of concern.
- Management of protection cases: UNHCR is conducting **monthly coordination meetings with partners** to reinforce vulnerability assessment and ensure timely and adequate referrals and responses. In line with confidentiality guidelines and following refugees' consent, complicated cases are discussed to identify durable solutions.

Financial assistance for the most vulnerable

- UNHCR contributes to the cost of housing and food for most vulnerable refugees (unaccompanied minors, single women, survivors of GBV and people with medical needs) through financial assistance based on assessments carried out with FOO. In January 2022, up to **1,700 refugees received financial assistance**, highlighting the high level of socio-economic hardship prevailing amongst refugees in Morocco. Due to lack of resources, in 2022 UNHCR Morocco will discontinue this financial support.

Education

- With the support of UNHCR's education programme and in close collaboration with FOO, **86 per cent of refugee children are currently enrolled in school at the primary level.**
- Ensuring equitable schooling from a gender perspective remains one of UNHCR's priorities. **In Morocco, 48 per cent of refugee children enrolled in schools are girls.**
- More than half of refugee children are following remedial classes. With a success rate in primary school standing at 90 per cent, and 95 per cent in secondary school in the year prior, UNHCR and partner will aim to maintain such levels throughout 2022.
- In 2022 943 refugee children are enrolled in primary education, 266 in secondary education and 417 in kindergarten. Over 1,000 families receive **monthly cash assistance to support education.** In addition, 54 refugees are beneficiaries of the **DAFI scholarship programme.** Morocco has been allocated in 2021/2022 20 new DAFI scholarships.
- On 24 March 2021, UNHCR and the French Embassy in Morocco renewed their partnership agreement. The renewal of this agreement aims at facilitating access to more than 75 refugees to **language courses** provided by the French Institute in Morocco.
- On 29 April 2021 in Rabat, UNHCR signed a partnership agreement with the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research. This will be accompanied by a joint action plan to make it easier for refugees to enrol in pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education institutions, as well as vocational training.

Health

- Through its partner *Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF)*, UNHCR facilitates the **referral of refugees to public primary health care centres** where services are provided without charge. Pending the extension of the national medical insurance system (RAMED) to refugees, UNHCR assists with refugees' access to specialized health services, including expenses related to medication, laboratory tests and specialized medical treatments.
- In 2021, the health programme assisted over **6,365 refugees with 7,684 primary consultations and 10,887 specialized medical consultations.** 197 refugees also benefitted from 257 specialized consultations and six surgical interventions in partnership with the National Council of Doctors

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_16348

