

# Morocco

September 2021

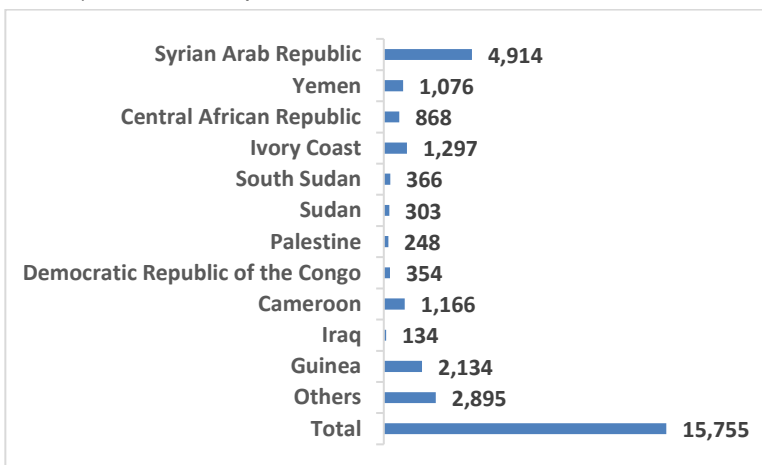
Morocco is both a transit and a host country, with **15,755 refugees and asylum seekers** registered with UNHCR from more than 48 countries.

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).

Due to the COVID-19 situation, UNHCR and partners have worked actively to ensure **continuation of services**, both physically and remotely for refugees in Morocco.

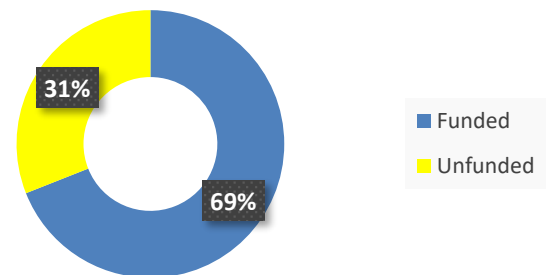
## UNHCR's Persons of Concern:

8,853 refugees et 6,902 asylum seekers (as of September 2021) 15,755 total persons of concern



## Funding needs in 2021 (As of 28 September 2021):

**USD 8.9 million** Requested for UNHCR's Operation in Morocco in 2021



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### 53 Total Staff:

- 21 national staff
- 8 international staff members
- 7 UNV
- 16 UNOPS
- 1 VIM

### Office:

1 Branch Office in Rabat



*Mokhtar and Alâa are two Syrian refugees working in a pasty shop in Rabat.*

## Working with Partners

- Morocco's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is UNHCR's main government counterpart (MoFAIC). 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.
- 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, the 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 United Nations 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 situation, the Government of Morocco has taken decisive and wide-ranging public health measures since the onset of the crisis. These measures were accompanied by a **national health response plan** covering all individuals living in Morocco.

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. Despite progressive easing of movement restrictions as of June 2020, the socio-economic impact of the crisis continued to be felt by refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco.

In line with public health measures that continue to evolve during 2021, UNHCR and its partners have worked actively to ensure refugees' and asylum seekers' continuous 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 759 calls handled from January to September 2021. Registration and Refugee Status Determination (RSD)

procedures were maintained throughout the pandemic, both in-person with prior appointment as well as remotely.

## 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 successful cases are referred for verification to the Bureau des Réfugiés et des Apatrides (BRA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Inter-Ministerial Commission in charge of the regularization process in Rabat. UNHCR takes part in the Commission hearings and introduces the cases. Hearings by the Commission were paused at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, later resuming in July 2021; the renewal of BRA cards also resumed in December 2020. In 2021, UNHCR continued adapting its registration and RSD procedures to ensure continuous access to asylum procedures, while fully respecting preventive measures against COVID-19. **As of 1 September 2021, UNHCR registered 3,279 new asylum applications.**
- **Legal assistance:** UNHCR works with a private law firm (Cabinet Lemseguem) to provide legal aid services to refugees and asylum-seekers (e.g. for issuance of birth certificates, for filling complaints against physical assault and for representation before Moroccan courts). **In 2021, 75 individuals were able to benefit from such legal assistance.**
- **Emergency housing:** Through its partner Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO), UNHCR supports an emergency **shelter and protection programme**. Emergency housing works meet the immediate housing needs of persons 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, 58 refugees and asylum seekers with specific needs were accommodated by UNHCR's housing program and FOO.
- **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, as well as 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; two community activities were organized for the benefit of refugee women in addition to one workshop to empower women. As a response to the accumulated risk of violence during the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR established a dedicated phone number for women as part of its Protection Hotline. **In 2021, protection hotlines received over 181 calls from refugee and asylum-seeking women.** Requests included housing support and financial assistance. The Operation also observed a significant rise in the number of domestic violence cases reported by callers.
- **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, a new PWG was created in Fes/Meknes under UNHCR's leadership with the participation of the Regional Council for Human rights.
- **22 refugee community agents** of different nationalities share information among refugee communities across seven localities in the Kingdom, relaying their needs and concerns to UNHCR and its partners. These activities were reinforced during the COVID-19 crisis in coordination with UNHCR.

- 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 persons of concern, with more than 250 requests received across multiple platforms so far in 2021.
- Management of protection cases: UNHCR is conducting **monthly coordination meetings with partners** in order 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.
- UNHCR has reinforced its engagement towards key protection principles, with specific attention directed towards participatory assessments and data collection through KOBO Power BI, complaint mechanisms, communication with communities and accountability to affected people (AAP).

### Financial assistance for the most vulnerable

- UNHCR contributes to the cost of housing and food for the 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 2021, more than 1,085 individuals benefited from financial assistance for the most vulnerable.**
- Exceptionally and in a spirit of solidarity in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, every refugee registered with UNHCR—along with most vulnerable asylum seeker—benefited from COVID-19 cash assistance, with a universal distribution completed in May for over 4,753 families.

### 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 in 2021.**
- 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. For the first semester of 2020/2021, the success rate of refugee children in primary school stood at 90 per cent, while for secondary school it was recorded at 95 per cent.
- During the first semester of 2021, 850 refugee children were enrolled in primary education, 220 in secondary education and 400 in kindergarten. Over 1,000 families received **monthly cash assistance to support education.** In addition, 63 refugees are beneficiaries of the **DAFI scholarship programme.**
- On 24 March 2021, UNHCR and the Embassy of France in Morocco renewed their partnership agreement. This partnership will specifically offer facilitated access to language classes in French Institutes.
- On 29 April 2021 in Rabat, UNHCR and the *Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research* signed a partnership agreement. This will be accompanied by joint actions to make it easier for refugees to enrol in pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education establishments, as well as vocational training.

### Health

- Through 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

care services, including expenses related to medication, laboratory tests and specialized medical treatments.

- As of June 2021, **the health program has assisted over 3,351 refugees**. During the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR and its medical partner adapted services to ensure continuous access to healthcare. This included the launch of medical hotlines for remote consultations. Refugees with chronic illnesses were supplied with medicines in AMFP's centres or directly at their homes. **In total, 1,608 primary consultations were carried out, as well as 2,980 specialized medical consultations.**
- On 28 January 2021, Morocco launched its national vaccination campaign. As of 24 September 2021, over 40.3 million vaccine doses had been administered. The Government of Morocco has confirmed the **inclusion of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in the vaccination campaign** during a GTMA's session, co-chaired by UNHCR and IOM. UNHCR is working with National institutions and civil society to ensure the effective inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. **So far, 547 refugees have been vaccinated.**
- In 2021, 186 refugees received psychological counselling with more than 615 consultations.
- To ensure an integrated response on Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS), 30 PWGs' participants were trained on psychological first aid. UNHCR initiated a platform to bring together psychologists in the field of migration and asylum, aiming at coordinating MHPSS response in Morocco for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- UNHCR signed a partnership agreement on 20 May 2020 with the National Council of Doctors (CNOM) to facilitate **access to specialized healthcare**, including mental health support, for refugees and asylum-seekers in Morocco.

#### Livelihood and self-reliance

- With the *Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise (AMAPPE)*, UNHCR supports refugees' enrolment in **vocational trainings**, the creation of **income generating activities** through **microfinancing** and **job placement**. The creation of micro-enterprises for the benefit of refugees continues with the involvement of two state partners, namely *l'Agence Nationale de la Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences (ANAPEC)* and *l'Office de Développement de la Coopération (ODCO)*.
- As of September 2021, 400 refugees were received for **orientation and counselling sessions**. Some 50 new income-generating activities were created during this time and 36 were reinforced. Currently, 179 refugees are enrolled in **vocational training programs** with OFPPT, Entraide Nationale and partner NGOs. In total, 899 micro-projects have been created since 2007.

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