



Southern Africa


1 - 30 June 2021

Highlights

Since UNHCR's COVID-19 response began in Southern Africa in March 2020

 **2.8 million** people reached through COVID-19 risk communication

 **2.2 million** individuals received soap to promote handwashing and reduce the spread of COVID-19

 **131** government health facilities and **36** camp and settlement-based health facilities supported





An NGO social worker in the Democratic Republic of the Congo wears his COVID-19 prevention mask, made by South Sudanese refugees in Biringi, Ituri Province.
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Population Figures

7,576,742 people of concern to UNHCR in Southern Africa, including

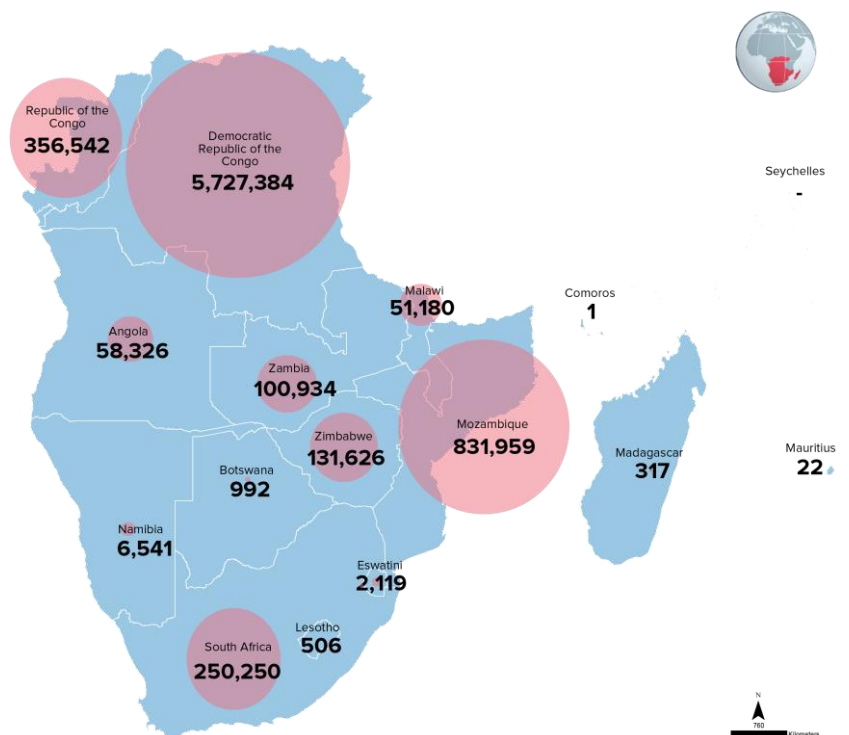
 763,119 refugees and 315,579 asylum-seekers

 6,461,380 internally displaced persons (IDPs)

 36,664 other people of concern

(as of 31 May 2021)

People of Concern to UNHCR in Southern Africa



Operational Context

As of 29 June 2021, the region reported 2,590,902 confirmed cases of COVID-19 across the 16 countries covered by UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Southern Africa. This represents an increase of 409,901 recorded cases in June, and a 204 per cent increase in the number of active cases from the previous month. Countries including Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have reported an increase in COVID-19 rates, with some governments announcing the arrival of the "third wave". To combat the rising case numbers, COVID-19 prevention measures and restrictions have been continued or tightened in many of the affected countries. Additionally, arrival of the Delta variant has been confirmed in the region, including in the DRC, South Africa, and Zambia.

UNHCR and partners have maintained protection services and other life-saving assistance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Mitigation measures are in place at registration and distribution points, and hotlines and community structures support protection case management. UNHCR continues to focus on risk communication and awareness-raising to increase understanding about COVID-19, encourage compliance with prevention measures, and inform about available services. Health systems strengthening continues to be a priority, equipping health centres, training health workers, and establishing isolation and quarantine centres. Additional handwashing facilities continue to be installed and maintained, and additional soap continues to be distributed. UNHCR is also providing cash assistance and core relief items (CRIs) to those worst impacted by COVID-19 and related restrictions. Where schools have been closed, children and youth have been supported with virtual and distance learning, and as schools re-open they have been supported to implement COVID-19 preventive measures.

UNHCR is working closely with governments, the World Health Organization and other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to secure the inclusion of persons of concern to UNHCR – refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, and stateless persons – into preparedness and response measures for COVID-19. Given the impacts on livelihoods and economic opportunities, UNHCR advocates for people of concern to UNHCR to be included into social safety nets and other social assistance programmes for COVID-19. Most countries in the region have been rolling out COVID-19 vaccination programmes. Following advocacy and engagement with governments, 11 countries have confirmed in June that refugees have access to vaccines, including Botswana, DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of the Congo (RoC), Zambia and Zimbabwe. While it is more difficult to track vaccination for persons of concern to UNHCR living in urban areas, countries such as South Africa have committed to including them in the national vaccination campaign alongside nationals.

UNHCR Response

Health and WASH



23,759 people in **Angola** received regular soap distribution since March 2020 to promote handwashing



61 health facilities supported in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** during the COVID-19 pandemic

Throughout the response to COVID-19 in Southern Africa, support to health systems and services has been a priority for UNHCR and partners, including equipping health centres, training health workers, supporting isolation and quarantine centres and establishing screening systems. Support to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems has also remained a priority in the region, as a preventive measure in the fight against the spread of COVID-19. In June, in **Angola**, 239 people in Lóvuá refugee settlement were provided with soap, with the aim of promoting handwashing and good hygiene as a way of reinforcing COVID-19 prevention. Throughout the COVID-19 response in Angola, UNHCR and partners have provided more than 23,700 people with additional soap to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Meanwhile, in the **DRC**, UNHCR and partners distributed 250 face masks to refugees during repatriation to Burundi, while 1,500 masks were provided to health facilities in Fizi and Nundu health districts. UNHCR also provided 1,000 COVID-19 rapid test kits to health authorities in Bukavu, while in Haut Uele Province, 5,323 surgical masks were distributed to refugees as part of an infection prevention and control activity at the health centres in Biringi, Bele and Meri sites. Throughout the COVID-19 response, UNHCR and

partners have supported 61 health facilities – including 5 in camps and settlements and 56 government-run health facilities – with supplies for COVID-19 prevention and response.

Protection, Communication and Community Engagement



189,874 people reached in **Zambia** through information campaigns on COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic



194,597 people reached since March 2020 with COVID-19 awareness-raising in the **Republic of the Congo**

Across the region, risk communication and awareness-raising on COVID-19 continue for refugees, IDPs and host community through community-based protection groups and community mobilizers, information sessions, flyers and leaflets, reaching nearly 2.8 million people since the beginning of the COVID-19 response in March 2020. Concerning reports of “COVID fatigue” and complacency with COVID-19 prevention measures are being addressed through renewed efforts to inform, educate and encourage adherence. In Haut Uele Province, **DRC**, 23,855 people were reached by UNHCR’s partner through an awareness campaign in the Biringi, Bele and Meri sites. The campaign focused on explaining and promoting the use of barrier gestures, social distancing, hand washing and the correct use of face masks. Throughout the pandemic, UNHCR and partners have reached nearly 1.8 million refugees, IDPs and people in host communities in the DRC through COVID-19 awareness-raising campaigns.

Similarly, in **Zambia**’s Mantapala refugee settlement, Child and Youth Care Community Workers worked to inform and educate people about COVID-19 prevention measures through home visits by. A total of 3,564 individuals were reached across the settlement with information about the need to wear facemasks, wash hands, and maintain social distancing to reduce COVID-19 transmission in the community. UNHCR and partners have reached nearly 190,000 people in Zambia with COVID-19 awareness and prevention information since March 2020. Meanwhile, in **RoC**, UNHCR and partners organized targeted educational talks about COVID-19 and other diseases, in mobile clinics in the Likouala Department, where newly arrived asylum-seekers from the Central African Republic are hosted. The initiative reached 832 people including 62 community leaders, 200 mothers, 370 pregnant and breastfeeding women, and 200 heads of household. In addition, community health workers continued door-to-door home visits in June, reaching 757 households (2,971 people) with information about COVID-19. Awareness-raising campaigns such as these in RoC have reached more than 194,000 people over the course of the pandemic.

As vaccine programmes are rolled out, awareness-raising initiatives have also focused on informing people about vaccines and the vaccination process. For example, in **Botswana**’s Dukwi refugee camp, 500 individuals targeted for vaccination have been informed about the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out through the ‘Arm Ready’ campaign which highlights the importance of taking the vaccine. Government and refugee community reached camp residents with information in English, Kiswahili, and Somali via roving vehicles with speakers. Government and community leaders were actively involved in the information campaign. Meanwhile, in Tongogara refugee camp, **Zimbabwe**, the camp administrator, UNHCR and NGO partners held a meeting with community leaders to share COVID-19 trends in the country and inform participants about the latest COVID-19 prevention measures and restrictions announced by the President. With the ongoing vaccination programme rollout, community leaders were urged to inform members of the community that COVID-19 vaccinations are available at the clinic for nationals, refugees, and asylum-seekers.

World Refugee Day in the times of COVID-19: Judo event brings children together in South Africa

Among the events to mark World Refugee Day in South Africa, children took part in a judo competition in Alexandra, a township on the outskirts of Johannesburg. The event was one of a series of mini-tournaments in refugee-hosting communities in Johannesburg and KwaZulu Natal Provinces. Each tournament included an awareness-raising session about what it means to be a refugee, run by UNHCR. COVID-19 mitigation measures were observed during the events.



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Education

Schools were closed in **Zambia** as of 16 June, following a government directive in response to the country's third wave of COVID-19 cases. In Mantapala refugee settlement, UNHCR procured 500 educational tablets and 500 radios, and is printing 2,000 self-study kits to promote remote learning. At the same time, UNHCR is collaborating with local authorities to ensure that the sanitation and wash facilities in schools in Mantapala refugee settlement are ready for eventual re-opening. The Environmental Health Technician from Mantapala health centre visited the schools and provided recommendations to further strengthen COVID-19 prevention, and UNHCR is following up ensure these recommendations are implemented.

At the same time, supporting schools to safely re-open and continue providing education to refugee and host community children is a major priority for UNHCR and partners. In **Malawi**, classes continued at all schools in Dzaleka refugee camp in June, with strict adherence to COVID-19 prevention measures, including wearing of face masks, social distancing, and frequent handwashing. Meanwhile, in **DRC's** Kasai Province, UNHCR provided five handwashing kits and 15 litres of hydroalcoholic gel to 60 students who are part of a socio-economic reintegration project at the National Institute of Professional Training in Tshikapa. Three electronic thermometers and 550 face masks were also provided to the National Institute of Professional Training to strengthen early detection of possible COVID-19 cases and help mitigate the spread of the virus.

World Refugee Day in the times of COVID-19: Refugee talent on display in Angola

From 19 to 26 June, refugee artists and artisans in the Angolan capital Luanda had their work exhibited and put up for sale in different locations and stores across the city. The exhibitions included paintings, handicrafts, clothes, and accessories made by refugees and asylum-seekers living in Angola. The event highlighted this year's World Refugee Day theme on the power of inclusion, as the artists were able to share their artistic work with the Angolan community.

In Lunda Norte, World Refugee Day events in Lóvuá refugee settlement included music, theatre and dance activities performed by refugees, as well as the final male and female football matches after a weeklong competition. The event was attended by government representatives and various partners working in the refugee operation in Angola. All the events followed COVID-19 prevention measures, including testing the football players before the matches. The use of masks was mandatory and hand sanitizers were available.



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