

UNHCR Refugee Programme in Sana'a | Amanat al-Asimah | Year 2020



Somali refugee Mariam comforts her four-year-old daughter after she received treatment at a UNHCR-supported health centre in Yemen. ©UNHCR/Heba Kanso

At the end of 2020, the number of registered refugees and asylum seekers targeted by UNHCR for assistance stood at some 136,700 individuals. Of those, some 47,300 (35%) were registered in Sanaa / Amanat al-Asimah, while some 65% are registered in southern Governorates, largely Aden, Hadramouth, Lahj, Shabwah. Most of the refugees and asylum seekers are of a Somali nationality, followed by Ethiopians. Countrywide, 40.3% of refugees and asylum seekers are female and 18.7% are children (under 18).

During 2020, refugees and asylum seekers have been heavily affected by the deteriorating socio-economic situation in Yemen, further aggravated by the impact of COVID-19. As a result, their vulnerability and need for humanitarian support increased, as self-reliance opportunities shrank. Key findings of needs assessments continued to reveal a high presence of persons with specific needs, including households headed by single mothers, unaccompanied and separated children, older persons and persons with chronic medical conditions or disabilities.

Response Overview

Between January and December 2020, through its seven partners operating in Sanaa / Amanat al-Asimah UNHCR provided a range of protection services and assistance activities to refugees and asylum seekers.

UNHCR supported partners to manage a series of **community centers** providing a safe communal space and a platform for services and activities for refugee communities, households and individuals, including vulnerable women and children. Those include recreational activities for children and youth, also with the direct participation of the refugee communities; case management for extremely vulnerable individuals, including psychosocial support for women and children; support to best-interest determination and community-based caregiving arrangements for unaccompanied children; legal counselling and advice including on civil documentation and registration of vital events.



Young Ethiopian refugees exhibit their artwork at a UNHCR-supported family centre in Sana'a. @UNHCR/Shadi Abusneida



Refugee family at UNHCR supported community centre in Sana'a. Photo © UNHCR

Overall, more than 4,981 refugees and asylum seekers received psychosocial support; some 1,200 refugees and asylum seekers benefitted from basic legal counselling services; 484 were directly facilitated in obtaining civil documentation and 403 refugee children received specific support to obtain their birth certificates through the Civil Registration Authority (CRA). Awareness sessions on the importance of civil status documentation – particularly birth registration – were also conducted.



Based on vulnerability assessment conducted by its partners, UNHCR provided **multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA)** to refugees and asylum-seekers households in dire socio-economic conditions and with specific needs, reaching a total of 5,913 HHs. As Post Distribution Monitoring exercises revealed, MPCA was utilized to address the families' immediate basic needs, such as food and health care and was intended to help the families improve their living conditions, reduce, their financial burden, deter harmful coping strategies that increase protection risks, and eventually enhance their self-reliance. The post-distribution exercise also revealed the positive impact of cash assistance on the local economy as expenditures occurred in the local market.



UNHCR aims to assist some 44,500 refugees will through its cash assistance programme in Yemen. Photo © UNHCR/Yemen.

An ad-hoc cash distribution of three instalments for some 6,000 particularly vulnerable household was undertaken from July onwards to provide an extra support to refugees and asylum seekers affected by the socio-economic and health consequences of the COVID-19 (e.g. loss of source of income in the informal sector; increasing difficulties in payment of rent, leading to threats of eviction and sub-standard living conditions; additional health expenses).



Awareness raising session at UNHCR community centre. Photo © UNHCR/Yemen



Through its specialised health partner, UNHCR continued to support refugees and asylum seekers, but also Yemeni citizens, to receive primary **health care** services. On a case-by-case basis, based on cost-effectiveness and prognosis criteria, a certain number of refugees and asylum seekers were also referred to secondary and tertiary health services in public and private health institutions. Aside covering the cost of health treatments for the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers, UNHCR has supported health care structures with equipment and material. This includes the provision of medication, equipment, and support to expand the capacity to respond to

COVID-19. In 2019 a contract has been also signed with the Blood Bank in Sana'a considering the government requirements for asylum seekers to undergo various tests prior to the registration or the renewal of documentation of a refugee or asylum seeker.



Through its **education** partner in Sana'a, UNHCR supported almost 3,200 refugee children in primary and secondary schools, including with education material and on information/counselling for the families on the procedures for enrolment. As part of its education support, through its education partner, UNHCR offered literacy and numeracy courses to school-age children also to facilitate their future enrolment. In order to improve the learning environment for all children, refugees and Yemenis, UNHCR provided equipment and material support to 26 selected public schools hosting refugees as well as Yemeni children.



UNHCR and partner provide scholastic supplies to the refugee children in primary and secondary schools. Photo © UNHCR/Yemen



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Through an expert partner, UNHCR started some initiatives to increase the **self-reliance of refugees**. These micro-initiatives aimed at reducing dependence from aid, support dignified living conditions, and equip refugees with skills useful upon return in their country of origin. 521 refugee entrepreneurs were provided with micro-loans to support their newly established or ongoing micro income generating activities such as door-to-door selling, tailoring, beauty salons, etc. So far, the repayment rate has been encouraging, despite the effects of COVID 19. In addition, 3-6 months vocational training courses in qualified Yemeni Institutes and on-the-job training was offered by the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021, to 280 refugees in Sana'a.



Refugee entrepreneur in Sana'a. Photo © UNHCR/Yemen



Refugees in Sana'a attending awareness session on COVID-19 preventive measures. Photo © UNHCR/Yemen



As part of the measures to mitigate the **risks of COVID-19** on refugees and asylum seekers, UNHCR increased its awareness-raising sessions and organised dedicated sensitisation activities with general information and preventive measures via multiple channels in refugee-hosting areas. Additionally, over 45,000 COVID-19 brochures and almost 3,900 hygiene kits were distributed to refugees and asylum-seekers in Sana'a.

Furthermore, a pilot project engaging some 20 refugees, and IDPs produced some 41,000 face masks for protection against COVID-19. This pilot project provided the selected refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs with tailoring skills and source of income while responding to the shortage of COVID

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