

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa

COVID-19 Emergency Response Update #2

21 April 2020

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, Yemen, and Turkey¹

Key Figures



20

out of 20 UNHCR countries / operations are reporting COVID-19 cases in the region



16 million

2020 planning figure for people of concern in the Middle East and North Africa



0

COVID-19 cases reported among POCs in MENA

Regional Developments

Operational Context

Across the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region**, strict curfew measures and nationwide lockdowns have been maintained or extended to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For what has been identified as more than a public health crisis, those living in the economic margins of society are being disproportionately affected. The deepening of this protection and poverty crisis across MENA has been particularly felt by refugees, asylum-seekers, the internally displaced as well as the communities hosting them. With looming serious socio-economic challenges, a number of countries across the region, including **Lebanon** and **Jordan**, have started implementing social protection programmes for their

own citizens who are struggling. In these countries, UNHCR and the other agencies also support vulnerable refugees with cash assistance, running in parallel but complementary to national social safety nets.

On 10 April, the first case of COVID-19 was reported in **Yemen** bringing fears of a possible outbreak that would result in further devastation in a country already grappling with conflict, poverty and a severely weakened medical infrastructure. The humanitarian community, including UNHCR, is doing its utmost to reduce risk of the spread of COVID, including by improving living conditions in IDP hosting sites, through access to WASH, provision of shelter, hygiene and other basic relief items as a preventive measure, as well as implementing measures, such as targeted cash assistance, to mitigate against the likely socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

Main Lines of Response



Continuing, adapting and delivering

protection and assistance to the most vulnerable



Strengthening communication with communities



Prioritizing immediate interventions

to prevent infections and supporting access to services and materials



Advocating for the inclusion of refugees, IDPs

and other marginalized groups into national public health and other responses, and supporting national systems to deliver assistance



Empowering individuals and families to make

the best decisions for themselves, through cash-based assistance

¹ UNHCR Turkey reports to the UNHCR Europe Bureau, although operations in Turkey related to the Syria and Iraq Situations are included in the MENA update.

Highlights from the Field

Lebanon

A second distribution of hygiene items, including bleach and sanitizer, reached 30,717 people living in 438 collective shelters by mid-April, with a focus on reaching older persons at risk. Both refugees and host community members have been targeted to foster peaceful coexistence.

Iraq

In Sulaymaniyah, vulnerable displaced individuals are producing an average of 2,000 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) daily through a sewing factory supported by a UNHCR Quick Impact Project. The PPEs are being sent to communities, health facilities and medical teams country-wide.

Syria

With precautionary measures in place, nine clinics in the 20 community centre health points continue to provide medical consultations to people of concern.

Turkey Cross Border

The UNHCR-led Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster has developed a guidance note on COVID-19, serving as a contextualized tool for camp and camp-like settings in north-west Syria.

Turkey

In Turkey, communication with communities is a priority. UNHCR shares information, including COVID-19 related information, using WHO and Ministry of Health advice, in their languages, on its communication platforms.

Jordan

A network of 25 Community Support Committees, run by 200 refugee and Jordanian committee members, have been pivotal in reaching refugee communities through remote communication tools as well as gathering information on needs, particularly in urban areas.

Yemen

The number of payment points in northern Yemen has nearly doubled this month to allow for 22,500 internally displaced Yemenis and impoverished hosting families. Additional payment points and hand-washing stations in larger branches ensure large gatherings are avoided and the health and safety of beneficiaries are put first.

Tunisia

Livelihood activities are being conducted remotely through UNHCR's partner via telephone to refugees and asylum-seekers, to identify risks affecting their businesses or sources of income, and to then put in place response measures.

Algeria

In support of national response plans, UNHCR is collaborating with the Government to provide a list of vulnerable refugee households in need of urgent assistance, complementary to UNHCR assistance.

Libya

Multiple cash instalments for refugees and asylum-seekers are being implemented at Tripoli's Community Day Centre and regulated through planned appointments, to minimize crowding and ensure that families can meet their basic needs for a longer duration of time without the need for frequent collections.

Mauritania

In response to the Government's request and in coordination with IOM, four Refugee Housing Units are being constructed by five trained refugees, including a female refugee, for use as quarantine/isolation spaces at two border crossing points.

Morocco

UNHCR is pursuing the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers as part of assessments into the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis by a Task-Force co-led by UNHCR and established with the ECA, World Bank and other UN Agencies.

Egypt

Egypt's Infoline has responded to more than 9,800 calls since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, reflecting the severity of the crisis on refugees and asylum-seekers.

GCC

In Kuwait, as a result of sudden unemployment across various sectors, 26 refugee and asylum-seeker families who do not normally receive monthly cash grants and assessed as vulnerable, were assisted with multi-purpose vouchers to address their critical needs. In the UAE, the needs of 80 very vulnerable families have been met through cash assistance, helping them to overcome challenges resulting from restrictions of movements.

Israel

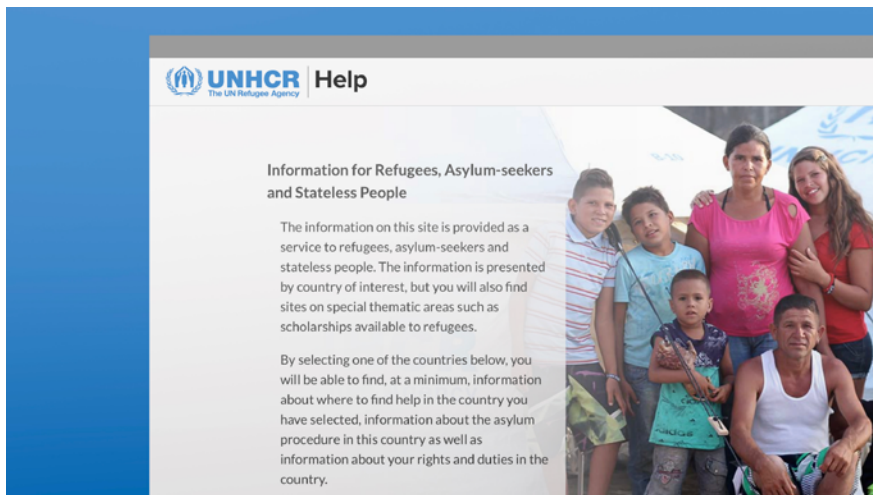
UNHCR is in close contact with a group of women leaders from the Eritrean refugee community across the country, who are helping to strengthen communication between UNHCR and those who need assistance and to help coordinate support to vulnerable single mothers.

Communication with Communities

UNHCR and partners have continued to **stay and deliver protection and assistance**, while **respecting safety requirements**. **Two-way communication** with persons of concern has been critical to ensure programmes are responsive and tailored; and to enable refugees to reach UNHCR, ask questions, and convey their concerns.

With COVID-19 imposing restrictions on movement, UNHCR has responded by building on and ramping up these well-established virtual systems across MENA. While face-to-face methods may be limited, **virtual and remote tools are being adapted and enhanced to allow UNHCR and partners to deliver protection services and information** in multiple languages, identify persons at heightened risk, developing solutions for them and the broader community.

CWC - Highlights from the Region



help.unhcr.org is an online portal designed for and with refugees. In **Turkey, Algeria, Egypt and Jordan**, help.unhcr.org has been updated to include COVID-19 related information, in Turkish, English, French and Arabic. The Help website contains information in English and Arabic on a range of UNHCR's services, includes up-to-date messaging and responses to COVID-19, as well as a call back function to answer refugees' urgent questions.

Lebanon: [Key workers are keeping the lines open at one of the region's largest and busiest call centres.](#)

Run jointly by UNHCR and the World Food Programme, it provides increasingly vital assistance now that a number of face-to-face humanitarian activities must be carried out remotely to combat the virus.

"We received the first COVID-19-related call on 2 March, but since then ... the number is increasing every day," said Jerome Seregni, a UNHCR Communication with Communities Officer who oversees the centre. The call centre has a critical role now. UNHCR has strengthened the centre's capacity to ensure it can respond to increased demand from refugees at a time of growing anxiety.



Photo © UNHCR / Elie Sarkis

Financial Requirements

To urgently support COVID-19 preparedness and response in situations of forced displacement, on 27 March 2020, UNHCR launched the [Coronavirus emergency appeal](#) (USD 255 million). UNHCR's appeal is the first phase of immediate, prioritized needs. So far, a total of USD 175 million has been contributed or pledged to the Global Appeal. It is expected that needs will expand, including in countries not presently included within the Appeal. UNHCR MENA is currently undertaking a second round of analysis to determine prioritized needs for its Operations.

While some activities may be specific to the COVID-19 response, many of UNHCR MENA's regular activities - including protection response by remote means, provision of cash assistance, shelter and basic relief items - are helping to prevent potential outbreaks and bolster the resilience of our people of concern to cope with COVID-19 and the subsequent protection and poverty crisis. The continuation of regular programmes in MENA – already under-funded – is therefore critical at this juncture in time.



Ali, an internally displaced Yemeni, listens to an information session on how to protect himself and his family from COVID-19, at a UNHCR-supported community centre in Sana'a. Ali fled to the capital from Hodaydah in 2018. Photo © UNHCR / Shadi Abusneida

USD 255 M

Requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally over the next nine months

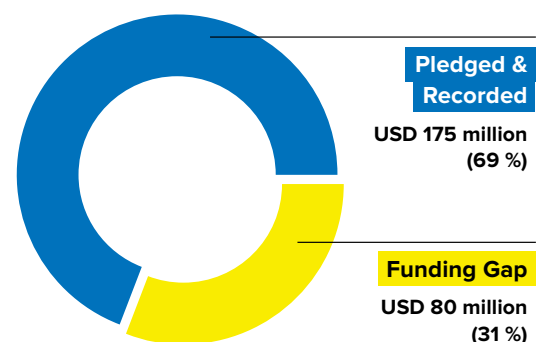
Total contributed or pledged to UNHCR's Global Coronavirus Appeal:

USD 175 million has been contributed or pledged including:

United States 64 M | United Kingdom 25 M | Japan 23.9 M | European Union 17.9 M | Denmark 14.6 M | CERF 6.9 M | Canada 6.4 M | Ireland 3.3 M | Sweden 3 M | Sony Corporation 3 M | Education Cannot Wait 1.8 M | Australia 0.8 M | Private donors 0.3 M

Unearmarked contributions:

Sweden 76.4 M | Norway 41.4 M | Netherlands 36.1 M | Denmark 34.6 M | United Kingdom 31.7 M | Germany 25.9 M | Private donors Spain 20 M | Switzerland 16.4 M | Private donors Republic of Korea 10.5 M



- Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.
- In **Mauritania**, with thanks to flexible funds, UNHCR was able to scale up the public health response for refugees and the local community by providing medicines to those who needed it in Mbera.

Resources and links: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/covid-19>

For more details, please contact UNHCR MENA Regional Office in Amman (Jordan) at: MENAreporting@unhcr.org