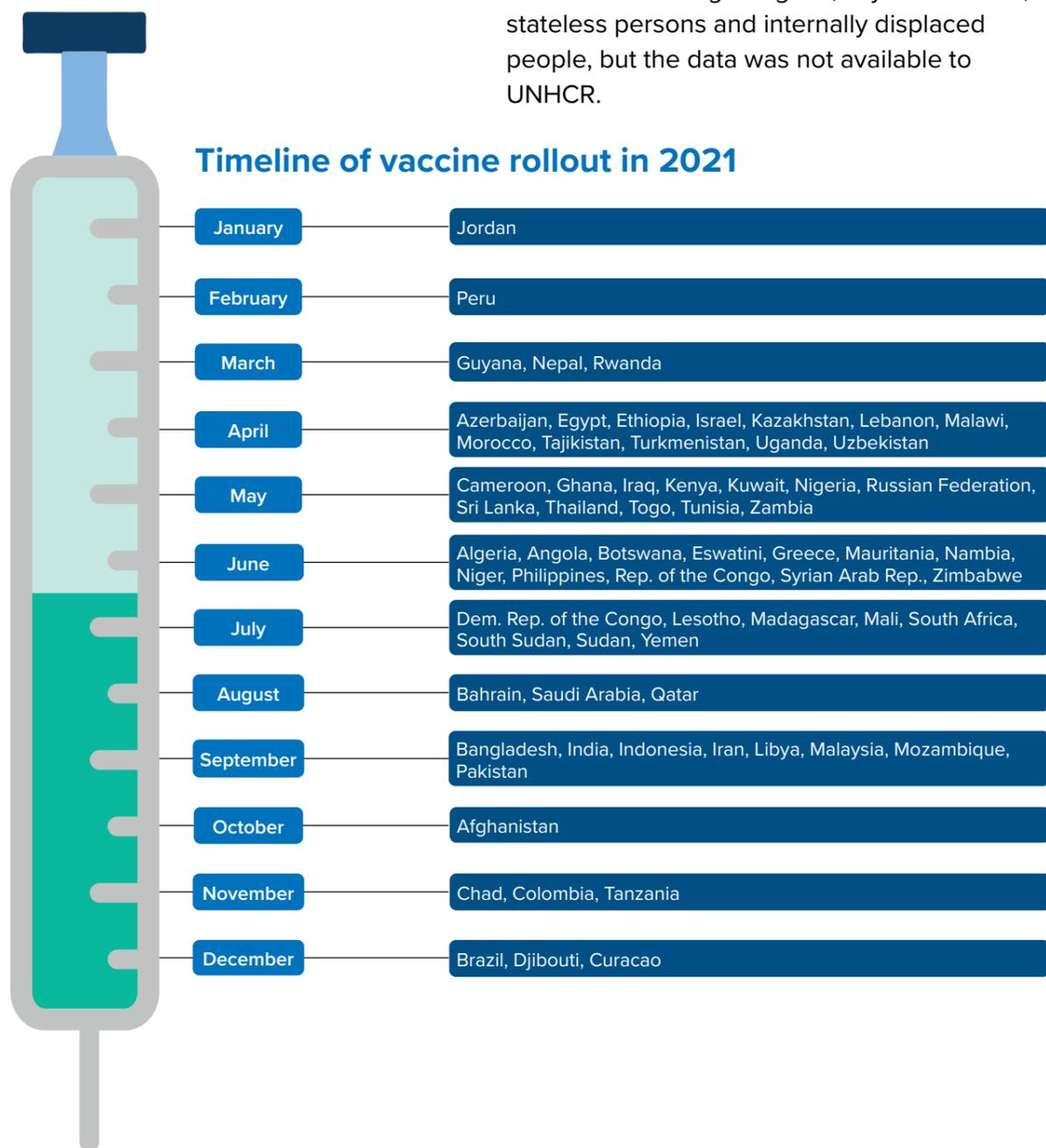




UNHCR COVID-19 VACCINE ACCESS REPORT 2021

In 2021, 162 countries included refugees in their national COVID-19 vaccine plans. However, roll-out is a challenge due to the unequal availability of vaccines. Many of the countries hosting the most refugees have made only very slow progress towards the global goal of vaccinating 40% of people by the end of 2021 and 70% by mid-2022.

At the same time, 2021 saw encouraging progress in the number of countries not only planning vaccine roll-outs but actually providing access to vaccines. By the end of 2021, 4.79 million vaccine doses were distributed to some 3.25 million refugees and other forcibly displaced people in 66 countries. An additional 72 countries confirmed they had started vaccinating refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced people, but the data was not available to UNHCR.



Vaccine inequity has led to major delays in vaccine roll-out in middle- and low-income countries. Refugees and IDPs face additional barriers due to a lack of proper documentation, complex vaccine registration systems and language barriers.

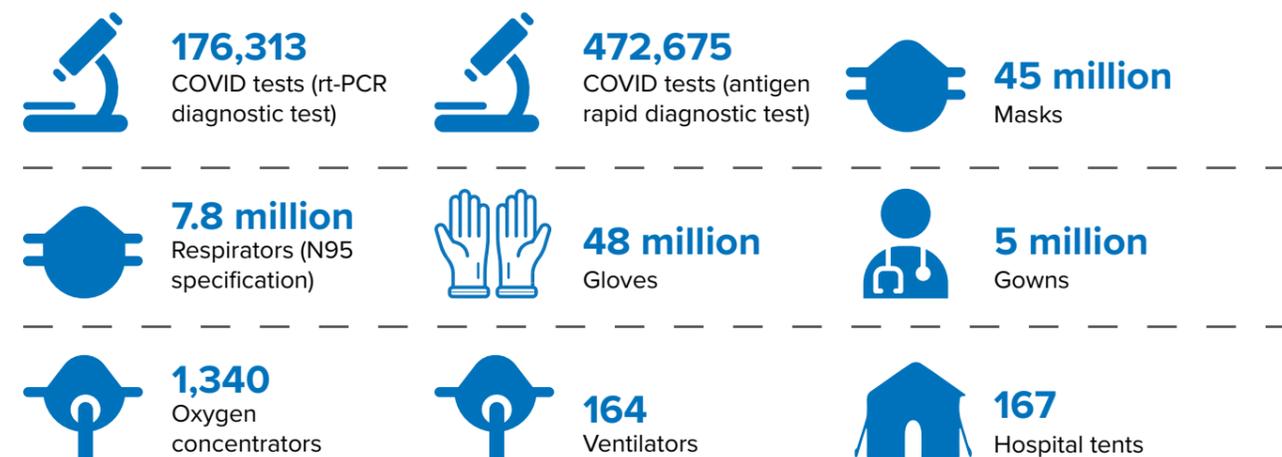
The key pillars of the pandemic response are raising awareness, preventing transmission, providing access to protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19 testing, and strengthening health systems by setting up quarantine and treatment centres and increasing intensive

care capacity in support of the national health systems. Since February 2020, global procurement and stockpiles of personal protective equipment and other essential commodities have been provided to support public health measures carried out by governments and partners.

Access to diagnostic testing for COVID-19 remains challenging in many refugee settings. UNHCR has scaled up laboratory testing, especially with the supply of WHO-approved antigen rapid diagnostic tests (Ag-RDTs).

UNHCR's response to date

Among the key items procured to date by UNHCR



IDPs in Chad, Colombia, Iraq and the Republic of the Congo

Efforts to prioritize actions that contribute to sustainable solutions were rewarded as UNHCR and WHO successfully advocated with the Ministries of Health to have refugees and IDPs included in the countries National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19. Progress has been made in Chad, Colombia Iraq and the Republic of Congo with the inclusion of IDPs into the national vaccination campaigns.

Stateless persons - Jordan

Many stateless persons do not have access to health insurance due to lack of legal identity and legal status. Vaccination plans need to be as inclusive as possible of all persons residing in a country to sustainably slow the transmission of the virus. As of January 2021, Jordan announced that all persons living on Jordanian soil are eligible to receive a vaccine free of charge, including refugees and stateless persons who can register for a vaccine using their UNHCR registration certificate.

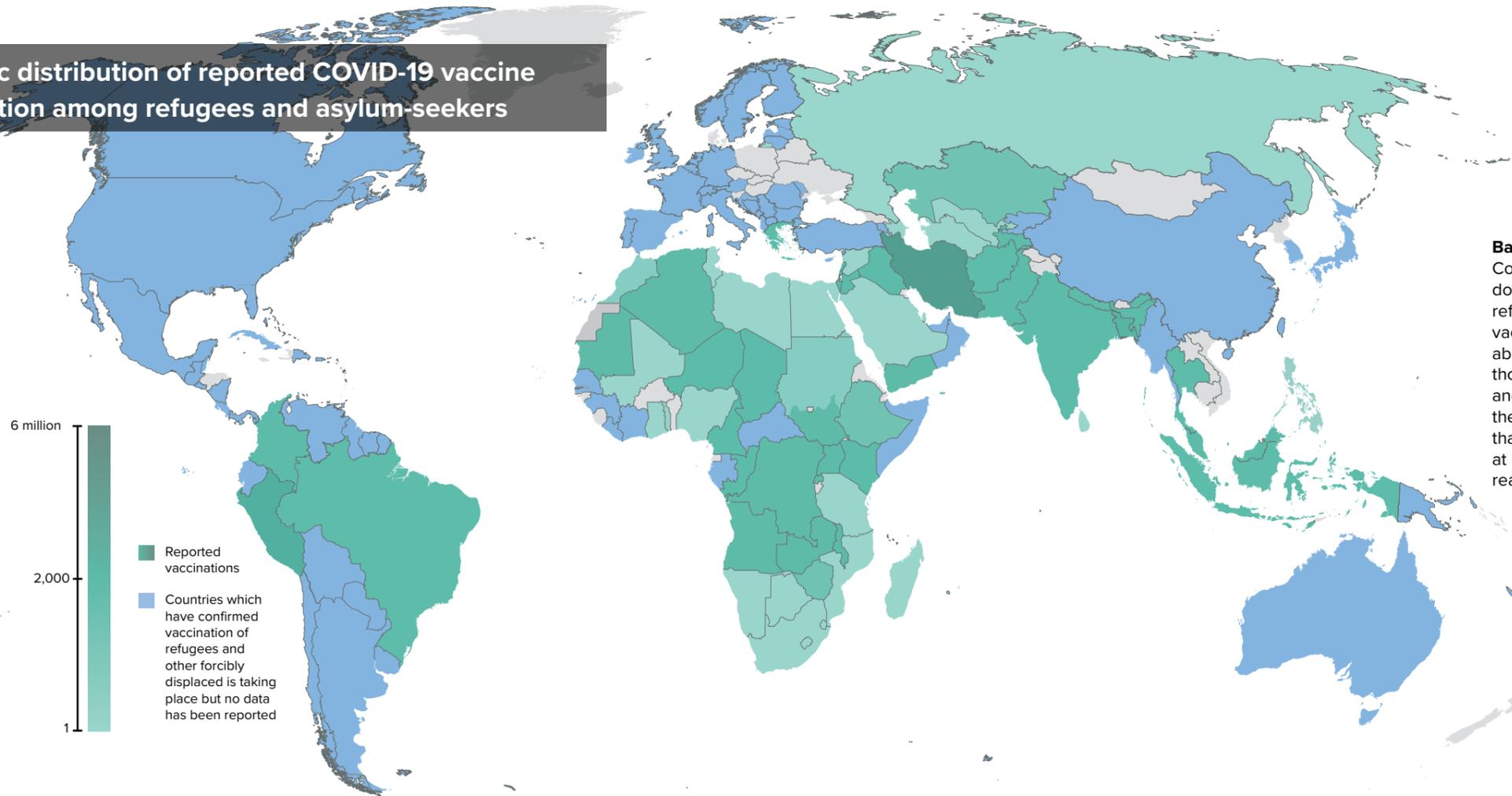
Morocco

A September 2021 survey of 1,473 refugees 35% had been fully vaccinated, compared to 60% of nationals, mainly due to a lack of residence permits. UNHCR Morocco and partners advocated successfully with the Ministry of Health and other authorities to ease the documentation requirements for refugees. UNHCR Morocco continues outreach campaigns on the procedures and to address vaccine hesitancy.

Turkey

Surveys in July and September 2021, sampling 1,200 refugees in 49 provinces, showed 99% were aware of the vaccine roll-out campaign, and by September 72% had received at least one dose and 52% two or more doses, a vaccination rate close to that of the general population (75%). Only 2% of respondents were unwilling to be vaccinated, with 20% undecided. Targeted community outreach and information campaigns continue.

Geographic distribution of reported COVID-19 vaccine administration among refugees and asylum-seekers



Egypt

A survey in November 2021 showed 10.3% of refugees had been vaccinated, compared to a 20% national rate. More Arabic-speaking refugees were vaccinated (15.6%) than others (5.9%). Main reasons for the low vaccination uptake are registration barriers, and concerns about safety and side effects of the vaccine. UNHCR Egypt has increased its outreach and support to refugees with the registration process and is arranging vaccination campaigns in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Population to help improve vaccination coverage amongst refugees.

Bangladesh

Community health workers conducted door-to-door awareness campaigns for refugees in Bangladesh, distributing vaccination cards, discussing concerns about the vaccine, organizing transport for those unable to reach a vaccination site, and conducting home visits to advise on the benefits of vaccination. To date, more than 343,000 refugees have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, reaching 79.5% of those eligible.

Europe

In general refugees and asylum-seekers in Europe are included in national vaccination campaigns on par with the general population. Vaccination has progressed in reception centres in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Romania and Serbia, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where uptake increased as more vaccine types became available. In Greece, authorities confirmed 5,100 adults living in emergency support accommodation were vaccinated by the end of November 2021, out of the total 16,800 residents.

Angola

In Angola, refugees play a key role in counselling and providing information to fellow refugees, helping them overcome vaccine hesitancy and manage any symptoms after getting the vaccine. Following advocacy efforts by UNHCR and partners in the capital Luanda and at the provincial level, the government included refugees and asylum-seekers in its national vaccination campaign. By November 2021, more than 5,000 refugees (9%) had received at least one dose and 3% were fully vaccinated, compared to 11.9% in the host community. UNHCR, the Ministry of Health and refugees continue to enhance access to vaccination for everyone.

South Africa

Preliminary results of participatory assessments involving 209 refugees in November showed only 10% were vaccinated, below the national rate of 26%. Uptake was hampered by concerns over side effects, mistrust, and lack of registration documents or information. UNHCR, the Ministry of Health and refugee community leaders held virtual sessions on risk communication and community engagement to build trust in the vaccine. UNHCR is piloting a chatbot to reinforce vaccine safety messaging and partnering with the University of Pretoria and MSF to enhance outreach to undocumented and unvaccinated refugees and refer them to mobile vaccine sites led by MSF.

Malaysia

Refugees and asylum-seekers have the same access to COVID-19 vaccines as nationals in Malaysia, which has fully vaccinated 77% of its population, and over 90% of adults. UNHCR has given asylum-seekers and refugees additional support to register and works with community focal points to inform people via hotlines in various languages. Questionnaires and protection interviews suggest 60% of adult asylum-seekers and refugees and 50% of 12-17-year-olds have been vaccinated. UNHCR is planning additional outreach and working closely with the Ministry of Health to target pockets of unvaccinated people.

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