

# Egypt

April 2021

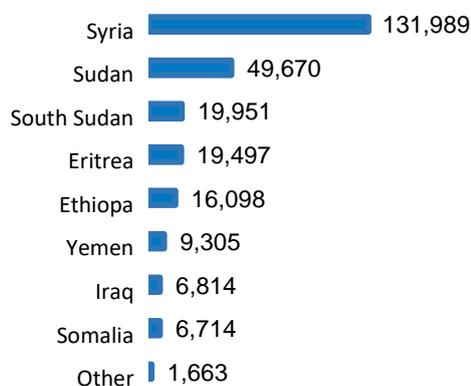
Egypt hosts **261,701 refugees and asylum-seekers** from **62 countries of origin** (half of them from Syria).

Most refugees and asylum-seekers are **located in urban areas** of Greater Cairo and on the North Coast.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, **UNHCR has adapted its activities to the changing circumstances**, continuing to provide critical assistance and protection support.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

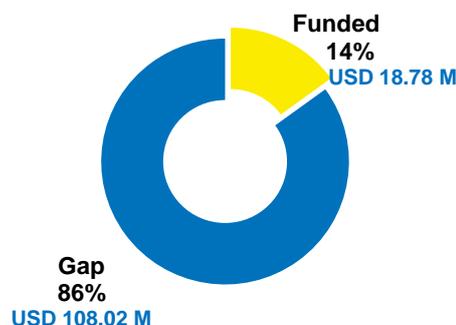
### Countries of Origin



## FUNDING IN 2021 (AS OF 20 APRIL 2021)

**USD 126.8 M**

requested for UNHCR's Egypt Operation in 2021

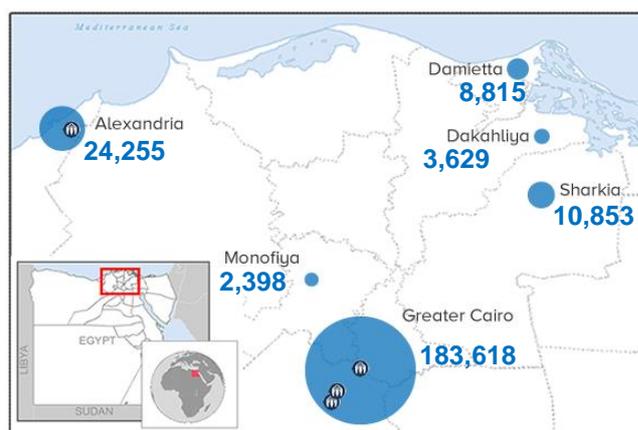


## COVID-19 in Egypt

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt were already highly vulnerable prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, and have been further impacted by the evolving circumstances. Many have **lost their source of income and reportedly cannot afford sufficient basic supplies or pay their rent and hence have been evicted from their houses**. Unaccompanied and separated children are becoming increasingly vulnerable, and cases of gender-based violence (GBV) continue to be reported. **Elderly people and persons with special needs and medical conditions are among the most affected groups during the pandemic.**

**UNHCR Egypt maintained its essential services throughout the pandemic.** By the end of August 2020, all activities resumed with adapted modalities and precautionary measures in place.

UNHCR has **strengthened and adapted outreach**



Location of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt

**activities and communication with refugees and asylum-seekers through various channels**, including phone, e-mail, social media, and messaging services. UNHCR's info-line continues to operate, and emergency contact lines have been established with partners to ensure 24-hour service.

## Working with Partners

**UNHCR works closely with the Government of Egypt, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs to provide protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees.** UNHCR leads the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG), the main refugee coordination mechanism which gathers representatives from UN agencies as well as international and national NGOs. The IAWG oversees an Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG) and six sectorial working groups: Protection, Education, Health, Basic Needs and Cash, Livelihoods, and Communication with Communities (CwC). The Protection sector includes three sub-working groups which consist of Child Protection, Prevention and Response to GBV, and Durable Solutions. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, **UNHCR works closely with partners to ensure a coordinated response** to emerging needs, with coordination meetings currently taking place through videoconferencing.

## Main Activities

### Protection

- UNHCR Egypt **registers and documents asylum-seekers and refugees** on behalf of the Government of Egypt. Registration entails the use of biometric information, iris scanning and finger printing. In January 2021, UNHCR remodelled its interview rooms and waiting areas to comply with required safety precautions during the pandemic, and to further increase the number of people provided with registration services. UNHCR Egypt has advocated among national authorities for tolerance with regards to asylum-seekers and refugees with expired UNHCR cards or residencies, and those who do not yet have UNHCR documentation. The office is exploring further ways to increase its processing capacity.
- **In February 2021, UNHCR held a one-day roundtable discussion on key elements of comparative asylum laws and RSD institutions with representatives of various governmental entities** involved in the drafting of the **asylum law**. Subsequently, UNHCR shared a note on protection concepts and mechanisms that were discussed during the roundtable.
- **UNHCR Egypt is the largest refugee status determination (RSD) operation globally** and conducts RSD on behalf of the Government for all nationalities, except Syrians and Yemenis. Since June 2020, UNHCR has been conducting remote RSD interviews. In the first quarter of 2021, **1,152 remote RSD interviews** were conducted involving 2,146 persons.
- Refugees and asylum-seekers have **access to legal remedies and representation** through lawyers of NGO partners. Those arrested for administrative and residency related charges are provided with legal assistance, while UNHCR advocates with local authorities for their release. The Office continues to advocate for access to persons in detention who may be in need of international protection.
- UNHCR and partners provide **tailored assistance and psychosocial support to survivors of GBV**, and those who have experienced or witnessed conflict, violence or trauma. With modified working modalities in light of the pandemic and increased challenges, UNHCR and partners continue to provide case management support to GBV survivors through remote means, as well as emergency services.
- Around 37 per cent of all refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt are children (96,662 individuals). Out of this figure, **3,794 are unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)**. The number of UASC pending registration has increased during the pandemic. UNHCR is currently conducting an 8-week intensive registration exercise to register them. UNHCR conducts Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) and prioritizes protection and assistance to UASC and other children at risk across all programmes through prevention and response activities and specialized services, including quality case management, strengthening of national child protection systems and internal/external capacity building. Due to the pandemic, BIAs, case management, referrals, follow-up and counselling are conducted by phone, while emergency and essential services remain functional.

- In addition to close **coordination with partners**, daily refugee **counselling and case management** are now carried out remotely and continue to be integral components of the Office's engagement with refugees and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR and partners provide **targeted support to persons with specific needs** through individual case management and community-based psychosocial support and emergency response. Extremely vulnerable persons living with disabilities and elderly people also benefit from targeted assistance that includes individual and group counselling, provision of assistive devices, and participation in social and recreational events aimed at breaking their isolation from communal activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, essential services continue to be provided to persons with specific needs, with emergency cases being prioritized.
- UNHCR has internal **integrity mechanisms** in place — including anti-fraud and complaints receipt systems — to ensure full adherence to the organisation's principles, values, and guidelines.

### Durable Solutions

- UNHCR Egypt remains among the largest resettlement programmes globally. **Resettlement is driven by the high protection needs** of the populations in the country, which is often coupled by **severe economic vulnerability**. Currently, UNHCR Egypt is conducting remote Resettlement interviews, with the necessary procedural and integrity safeguards in place. In the first quarter of 2021, the cases of 550 refugees were submitted to third countries for resettlement consideration. During the same period, 269 refugees departed from Egypt to seven resettlement countries.

### Cash-Based Interventions

- In Egypt, UNHCR has one of its largest cash operations globally. The Office **delivers monthly unconditional cash grants to extremely vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers** in order to provide protection and assistance, and to avoid resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as incurring debt or reducing expenditures on food and other essential items. In the first quarter of 2021, UNHCR assisted 8,281 families (comprising 31,010 refugees and asylum-seekers) with cash grants under its regular program. Additionally, an average per month of 2,370 UASC received cash for protection.
- UNHCR supported 97,663 refugees and asylum-seekers (46,896 families) with one-off cash grants / **winter assistance** to help them meet their needs during the winter period.

### Education

- Syrian, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Yemeni refugees and asylum-seekers have been granted **access to public education** on the same level as nationals. UNHCR continues to advocate for inclusion in public education of refugees and asylum-seekers of all nationalities.
- On 4 October 2020, the Ministry of Education informed UNHCR that **refugees and asylum-seekers with expired documents and expired residence permits would be admitted to Egyptian schools** for the academic year 2020/2021. This was in response to an official correspondence initiated by UNHCR and enhanced advocacy efforts over several months. Prior to this, many refugees and asylum-seekers had expressed concern that their children would miss out on learning during the current school year.
- Public schools, community schools and private schools re-opened as of October 2020. However, during the second wave of COVID-19 in Egypt, the cabinet ordered classes to take place virtually in January and February 2021. While students in public and private schools could access online learning, most community schools have little capacity to deliver education through remote modalities.  
For the academic year 2020/2021, UNHCR provided **education grants to 43,909 students in public, community and private schools**. Additionally, enhanced education grants were provided to 1,513 unaccompanied and separated children and 369 children with special needs, who were supported with enrolment in specialized schools catering to their individual educational needs. Due to the exceptional circumstances this school year, a top-up was added to the regular education grant to allow families to purchase internet credit for students to access online learning.
- UNHCR also supports access of refugees and asylum-seekers to **tertiary education**. In 2020, **448 students received scholarships through UNHCR** from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) to continue their university studies. In addition, four students receive scholarships to attend the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology in Alexandria.

## Health

- Refugees and asylum-seekers have **access to public primary, secondary and emergency health care** on an equal level to Egyptian citizens. However, the national health system suffers gaps in the availability and the quality of services provided.
- In February 2021, the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) launched a registration website, accessible by Egyptians and foreigners in the country, including refugees and asylum-seekers, to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine. This aligns with the Government's policy in providing refugees and asylum seekers access to COVID-19 treatment and care as similar as Egyptian nationals. The first refugee, a 57-year old Syrian, received the first COVID vaccination dose on 27 March.
- UNHCR supports national efforts to improve the quality of services to refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as the host population in areas with high concentrations of refugees. This entails **strengthening the existing national health system through capacity-building of health care staff and provision of equipment**. In relation to the national COVID-19 response, in 2020 and 2021, UNHCR supported the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) with personal protective equipment for the use of frontline MoHP health care workers dealing with the first and second wave of the pandemic. This included 50,500 respirators (FFP2 masks), 15,000 N95 masks, 560,000 surgical masks, 50,000 medical gowns, and 290,000 pairs of medical gloves. In addition, UNHCR provided 400,000 surgical masks to NGO partners.
- UNHCR continues to deliver healthcare assistance for patients with chronic diseases, as well as **psychosocial and mental health support** through partners. Moreover, the office provides secondary and referral care for life-saving treatments for all refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

- UNHCR, in cooperation with partners, provides eligible refugees and asylum-seekers with training, coaching, counselling and other support lines to assist them in sustainable livelihood activities. In the artisanal sector, UNHCR Egypt is taking part in the global initiative 'Market Access, Design & Empowerment for Refugee Artisans' (MADE51).

## Community Empowerment

- UNHCR maintains an active outreach programme for Communication with Communities (CwC). The team provides refugees and asylum-seekers with information about services provided by UNHCR and partners and encourages feedback. **Participatory assessments, focus group discussions, and awareness sessions** conducted with refugees and asylum-seekers throughout the year enables UNHCR to directly monitor their protection concerns and coping mechanisms, and to identify possible solutions aimed at improving their living conditions.
- In order to strengthen the role of communities in the delivery of protection solutions, refugee community focal persons and outreach volunteers have been trained on **identification and referral of vulnerable persons in need of assistance**. UNHCR maintains a very close communication with these community focal points and volunteers during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Weekly meetings between UNHCR technical experts from various sectors and refugee and asylum-seeker communities continue to take place via videoconferencing.

## Donors

Total recorded contributions for the Egypt operation in 2021 amount to **USD 18.78 million**.

**UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided to the Egypt Operation by:** the United States of America, the European Union, the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDDP NA), Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the Vodafone Foundation and other private donors.

**Special thanks to major donors of unearmarked contributions:** [Norway](#) | [Sweden](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [Denmark](#) | [Germany](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [Private donors Spain](#) | [Private donors Korea](#) | [Ireland](#) | [Belgium](#)

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