

HEALTH

NOVEMBER 2022

Overview

Ensuring access to healthcare is a critical component of UNHCR's protection activities and programming. UNHCR promotes an integration model, enabling refugees and asylum-seekers to access national healthcare.

In Egypt, UNHCR's public health programme emphasizes primary healthcare and support for secondary, tertiary and life-saving healthcare. In 2016, the Ministry of Health and Population and UNHCR jointly signed two Memoranda of Understanding granting refugees and asylum-seekers of all nationalities equal access to public primary, secondary and emergency healthcare as Egyptian citizens.

UNHCR focuses its support on primary public facilities in areas hosting high numbers of refugees. Through implementing partners, UNHCR also provides healthcare for patients with chronic diseases, offers psychosocial and mental health support, and secondary and referral care for life-saving conditions for all refugees.

Other UNHCR health programmes include:

- Cash distribution programme run by Caritas for refugee women who are about to or have already delivered in public hospitals.
- UNHCR's implementing partner, Refuge-Egypt, provides HIV and TB diagnosis and treatment. The programme is open to all but utilized mainly by refugees from Sub-Saharan African countries with a higher prevalence of these diseases.

Challenges

Despite providing public healthcare to refugees in the same conditions as citizens, many refugees struggle to access these services because they are excluded from other national social protection schemes. Therefore, they cannot mitigate the impact of out-of-pocket expenditure, often resulting from chronic disorders and conditions requiring in-patient hospital care. In such conditions, UNHCR focuses on the following:

- Offering consultations, diagnostic services and subsidized medication through six clinics in Cairo and Alexandria run by UNHCR's implementing partner, Caritas.
- Covering the cost of hospital care for eligible patients through UNHCR's implementing partner, Save the Children.

Mainstreaming Healthcare in National Systems

A key feature of UNHCR's global health strategy is to work on refugee inclusion in national healthcare systems. In areas with high concentrations of refugees and asylum-seekers, UNHCR supports national efforts to improve the quality of services to meet the needs of refugees and those of the host population. Improving the quality entails strengthening the existing national health systems through capacity-building and the provision of equipment. UNHCR has supported 20 public primary care facilities through its partner Save the Children. In parallel, UNHCR's partner, Caritas, transfers stable chronic patients to continued follow-up in these facilities. UNHCR has also financed renovation works and donated medical equipment to three public mental health hospitals to increase their capacity to receive patients.

KEY FIGURES



8,800 refugees enrolled in chronic care programme



63,000 consultations provided



6,730 refugees provided with secondary/tertiary care



10,202 consultations/admissions supported

The long-term strategy for UNHCR is to see refugees included in the national Universal Health Insurance Scheme (UHIS) that is currently being rolled out. The scheme is planned to be fully implemented by 2032 and includes a thorough reform of public primary, secondary and tertiary health care delivery and financing.