



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

2020 Impact Report



Looking back at what you,
our valued supporters,
helped to make possible

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
2020 – A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER	4
COVID-19 – YOUR QUESTIONS, ANSWERED	8
KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE	10
AFTERWORD	12

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Who we are	What we do	Why we matter
UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, protects people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.	We are in the field in over 130 countries, saving lives, protecting rights and helping build better futures.	Every year, millions of children, women and men are forced to flee their homes. We are the world's leading organisation dedicated to supporting them.



Introduction

2020 was an extraordinary – and extraordinarily challenging – year.

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic turned our lives upside down. This crisis changed everything, for all of us. Our daily routines had to change. Many could no longer work, children could no longer go to school, we had to stay isolated. We found ourselves in a state of the unknown, living with unprecedented uncertainty.

This pandemic has affected everyone. But few have been more affected than the 79.5 million individuals worldwide who have been driven from their homes by conflict and persecution.

Confronted with their suffering, you responded with compassion.

Every gift you gave helped to save lives, protect human rights and build a better future for refugees, the displaced, and the stateless. Your support meant that UNHCR could reach more children, women and men in need, at a time when the world's forcibly displaced population is at a record high.

Our work would not be possible without the generosity and compassion of people like you.

This report showcases the **lasting impact that we made, together**, in the lives of the world's most vulnerable people at their hour of greatest need.

From all of us at UNHCR, thank you.

2020 – a year like no other



January

Violence in Sudan's West Darfur displaces tens of thousands

In Sudan's West Darfur State, clashes displace 46,000 people inside the country, and another 11,000 people flee as refugees into neighbouring Chad. With you by our side, UNHCR starts the year by responding to the needs of tens of thousands of Sudanese people forced from their homes by violence.



February

Conflict escalates in northwest Syria

Fighting escalates in Syria's Idlib province, leaving close to a million people displaced and in critical need of shelter during the coldest months of the year. As settlements of internally displaced people become overcrowded and space in houses, mosques and schools grows scarce, we help shelter families – but as the conflict in Syria is about to enter its tenth year, many families have already had to flee several times.



March

COVID-19 – a threat that does not discriminate

A new coronavirus spreads around the world, prompting the World Health Organization to declare a pandemic. During the course of the year, COVID-19 changes life for us all. The virus can affect anyone, but the global crisis has an especially severe impact on people forced to flee their homes. They mostly live in developing countries with weak health and water and sanitation systems. Furthermore, restrictions on travel, work and school threaten their most basic survival. For most of them, COVID-19 is an emergency on top of other emergencies. With your support, UNHCR jumps into action, scaling up health, water, sanitation and hygiene services to keep vulnerable people safe.

By donating to UNHCR, you have helped to protect people forced to flee their homes. Our teams are on the ground in 130 countries and territories, 365 days a year, caring for millions of people in the emergencies you've heard about – and the ones you haven't. Your support makes it all possible. Last year was full of unprecedented challenges, conflicts and crises – the COVID-19 emergency being the biggest of them all. But together, we responded.



April

Sahel – the world's fastest growing displacement crisis

UNHCR warns chronic lack of resources is contributing to new crisis in Burkina Faso. The wider Sahel region is facing the fastest growing displacement crisis in the world – and yet one of the most underreported. Indiscriminate attacks on homes, schools and health centres had forced 2.8 million people to flee within their country or across borders in the region by the end of 2020. COVID-19 is further compounding this emergency, combined with climate change, food insecurity and chronic underfunding. UNHCR scaled up protection and assistance to displaced families, including shelter and counselling to survivors of sexual violence, but humanitarian access is limited by widespread armed conflict.



May

Rohingya refugees face double threat

Cyclone Amphan, the strongest storm ever recorded in the Bay of Bengal, hits as the monsoon season arrives in Bangladesh. The cyclone is the latest emergency for more than 860,000 Rohingya refugees who fled from violence in Myanmar, but have been threatened by landslides, flooding, storms – and now the spread of COVID-19. UNHCR works to strengthen shelters and pre-positions supplies, while refugee volunteers who are trained by UNHCR and partners are at the forefront of emergency response to support families affected by the extreme weather.



June

Winter intensifies hardship for displaced Venezuelans

Winter begins in the southern hemisphere. As temperatures plummet, shelter, blankets, food, and cash assistance are critically needed for many vulnerable Venezuelan refugees and migrants at risk of becoming homeless or living on the streets. UNHCR is stepping up its response to face this double challenge in South America, where Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay together host more than 1.5 million displaced Venezuelans – but national capacities are stretched to breaking point by COVID-19, particularly healthcare systems.



July

Aid funding gap spells disaster for Yemenis on the brink

Already the world's worst humanitarian crisis after over five years of conflict and mass displacement, aid cuts due to lack of funds and arrival of COVID-19 put millions of lives at risk in Yemen. Some 24 million people rely on aid to survive and more than 3.6 million were forced to flee their homes. Most displaced people live in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions, making both physical distancing and regular handwashing impossible. Only half of the country's health facilities are operational. With your help, UNHCR was able to stay and deliver in Yemen, making a difference in the lives of millions of Yemenis through our cash assistance, shelter and protection services.



August

Devastation in Lebanon

An explosion in the port of Beirut leaves swathes of the city in ruins. The tragedy kills hundreds, injures thousands and destroys or damages 300,000 homes in the Lebanese capital. With support from donors like you, UNHCR is immediately on the ground to provide shelter, cash assistance and psychosocial support to those in need. But the blast adds to the already severe economic crisis that has pushed many Lebanese and refugee families deeper into poverty, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.



September

Fires destroy Moria camp in Lesbos, Greece

Almost 12,000 refugees and asylum seekers, including 4,000 children, are made homeless overnight on the Greek island of Lesbos as a series of fires destroy the Moria Registration and Identification Centre. For many families, the fires mark the second time they have lost everything. The local authorities quickly set up an emergency temporary site and UNHCR is on hand to provide life-saving support and family tents for those sleeping in the streets.



October

Underfunding threatens refugees

Millions of displaced people and their host communities are feeling the pinch of massive underfunding, as the COVID-19 crisis continues to increase humanitarian needs globally. A shortage of resources is putting women and children at heightened risk, and disrupting vital services including, health, shelter, water and sanitation. Flexible funding from donors like you helps turn the tide and make sure vital protection and assistance is maintained.



November

Thousands flee Tigray, Ethiopia to seek safety

A full-scale humanitarian crisis is unfolding as thousands of refugees flee fresh fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region to seek safety in eastern Sudan. Since the violence began in early November 2020, refugees have been arriving at remote border points with barely any belongings and exhausted from walking long distances over harsh terrain. With no end in sight to the conflict, the steady stream of daily arrivals is overwhelming the current capacity to provide aid. Your support allowed UNHCR to provide lifesaving assistance to the thousands of women, children and men arriving in search of refuge.



December

Climate change multiplying risks for displacement

UNHCR warns that climate change is raising tensions around the world and compounding threats for people already living with conflict and insecurity. Without ambitious climate action and disaster risk reduction, climate-related disasters could as much as double the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance by 2050. The threats posed by climate change – including food and water shortages, increased outbreaks of diseases and loss of livelihoods – particularly impact the world's displaced. UNHCR is stepping up climate action, including advocating for measures to protect forcibly displaced from these threats, identifying at risk populations and mitigating the effects of climate change.

COVID-19

Your questions, answered

We have all been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: the virus respects no boundaries or borders. But the millions of people that have been forced to flee their homes have been especially vulnerable. Here's what you need to know about the biggest global crisis of 2020, and how your support is helping to keep the refugees safe and healthy.

What is the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a pandemic. There have been over 113 million cases reported worldwide, with people affected directly or indirectly in almost every country in the world. Sadly, over 2.5 million people have died as of the end of February 2021.

How does the coronavirus outbreak affect refugees?

While COVID-19 has affected us all, refugees already living

with uncertainty have been disproportionately impacted. Refugees and other displaced people usually belong to the most marginalized and vulnerable members of society. They are particularly at risk during this outbreak because they often have limited access to water, sanitation systems and health facilities.

85 per cent of the world's refugees and nearly all the world's internally displaced people are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, many of which have fragile health systems. They often live in overcrowded camps, makeshift settlements or urban centres, where social distancing is virtually

impossible. The pandemic has also compounded existing challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, discrimination, border closures, protection risks such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, and access to livelihoods and education. COVID-19 is a new emergency on top of existing ones.

UNHCR monitoring indicates that 74% of refugees can only meet half or less of their basic needs. With the World Bank predicting the deepest global recession since WWII, these needs will deepen, further compounding vulnerabilities.

Have there been outbreaks in refugee camps?

While no major outbreaks in refugee and internally displaced camps and settlements have so far been reported, it is very hard to have a full picture of the situation. COVID-19 statistics depend on different approaches of testing, data segregation and reporting by national authorities. As of 8 February 2021, over 49,000 cases have been reported among UNHCR’s persons of concern across 105 countries. Countless others are suffering from the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, none more so than the millions of forcibly displaced whose lives often depend on employment in the informal sector.

In the fight against the coronavirus, how is UNHCR helping people forced to flee?

Since the start of the pandemic, UNHCR teams worldwide have been working around the clock to prepare, prevent and respond to possible outbreaks among refugee and displaced populations, and to alleviate the socioeconomic and protection impacts of the crisis.

We help monitor the spread of the outbreak and act to limit infections. We have boosted public health and hygiene in areas hosting displaced people, including airlifting emergency supplies and establishing isolation units.


We’ve been stockpiling essential medicines and medical equipment, including oxygen concentrators. We’ve distributed soap for the general community, combined with hygiene promotion and hand sanitiser for health workers. We’ve stepped up training of staff in early identification, notification, case management and contact tracing, data collection and analysis and interpretation. UNHCR also has early warning systems in place to monitor and alert in the event of a surge in acute respiratory illnesses.

“If ever we needed reminding that we live in an interconnected world, the novel coronavirus has brought that home.”

– UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi

We’ve scaled up our work to keep refugees and internally displaced people safe by responding to the coronavirus with life-saving support, including water, medical care and hygiene materials.

Thanks to support from our generous donors, in 2020:

 Over **39 million** forcibly displaced people received COVID-19 assistance

 **15M** refugees and internally displaced people accessed protection services, including prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence

 **9M** people were assisted with health care

 **33M** masks were distributed

 **8.5M** individuals received cash assistance

Key figures at a glance

Delivering vital supplies around the world

People forced to flee their homes often have little time to pack. Vital items – medication, diplomas, birth certificates – may be left behind along with precious possessions like photo albums, wedding rings and favourite toys.

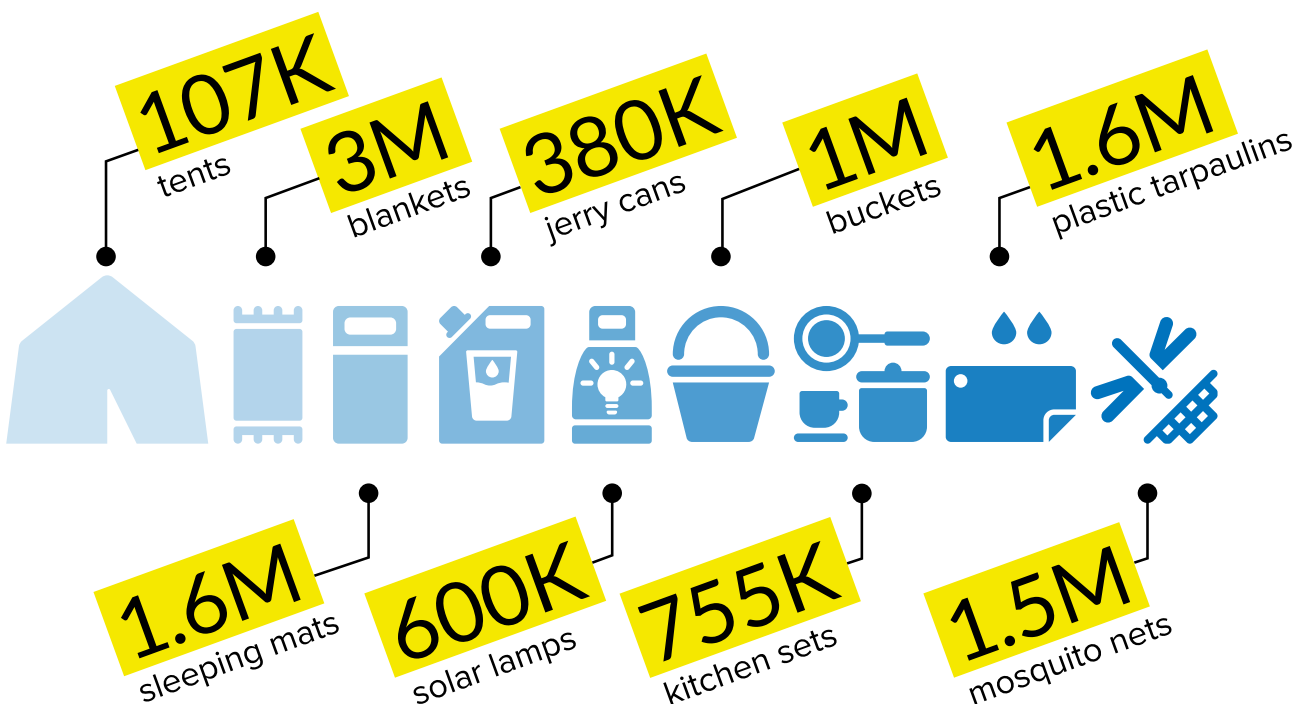
Most leave with a few belongings carried in bags or pockets. Others, carrying children or elderly relatives to safety, are unable to take anything at all. Some arrive

at their destinations after long and dangerous journeys with nothing more than the clothes on their backs.

That means that when people forced to flee finally reach safety, they need basic supplies: tents to protect them from the elements. Blankets to keep their children warm at night. Cooking utensils, so they can prepare food and eat. Jerry cans to store clean water.

That’s where UNHCR steps in. With caring donors like you by our side, we are able to act fast and rush in life-saving assistance.

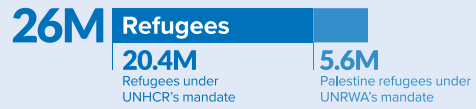
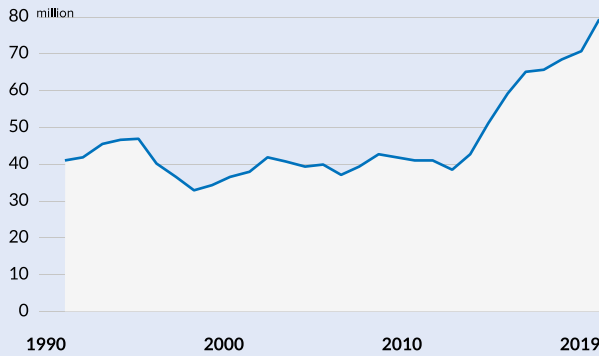
In 2020, our teams shipped millions of vital supplies from our global warehouses or through our suppliers to new emergencies and on-going operations around the world, to serve up to 26 million people:



The challenge in numbers

79.5 MILLION forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2019

Source: UNHCR / 18 June 2020



45.7M Internally displaced people

Source: IDMC

4.2M Asylum-seekers

3.6M Venezuelans displaced abroad



1% of the world's population is displaced



80% of the world's displaced people are in countries or territories affected by acute food insecurity and malnutrition



73% Hosted in neighbouring countries *



68% Came from just 5 countries *

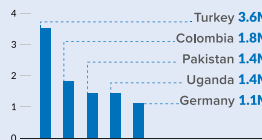


40% of the world's displaced people are children

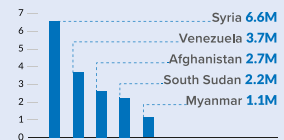


85% Hosted in developing countries *

TOP HOSTING COUNTRIES



TOP SOURCE COUNTRIES



* Data includes UNHCR refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad



4.2M Stateless people



2M Asylum applications (in 2019)



107,800 Resettled to 26 countries (in 2019)



5.6M Returnees (in 2019)

UNHCR in action



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

employs **17,324** personnel (as of 31 May 2020)

We are funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, with 86% from governments and the European Union and 10% from private donors.



Within **72 hours** of an emergency, UNHCR can launch an emergency operation, thanks to our global network of suppliers, specialist agencies and partners.



212 trained aid workers were deployed by UNHCR to emergencies in 2020.



Nearly **90%** of our over 17,000 staff are based in the field – often in hazardous locations – in direct contact with people in need.



Over **130 countries** worldwide have a UNHCR presence in more than 530 locations, from urban hubs to remote villages.



Afterword

By Astrid van Genderen Stort
Head of UNHCR's Emergencies and Marketing team

2020 was a year, I am sure, that we will not easily forget and one of the toughest I have seen in my 26 years with UNHCR. Yes, it was a year full of many crises, emergencies and challenges. But more than that: it was the year when the COVID-19 pandemic spread around the world, affecting us all, and turning our lives – and those of the most vulnerable around the world – upside down.

More than ever before, we needed to adjust our ways of working. In many of the over 130 countries where UNHCR works, COVID-19 was yet another emergency within an emergency, making life even more difficult for millions of displaced people, many of them on the brink of poverty and destitution. At the same time, it became increasingly difficult for many of our staff – worried about their own health and loved ones – to reach, talk to and support the people we serve.

It was tough, challenging and sad, but – as I hope this report has illustrated – it was also a year filled with kindness, global solidarity, compassion and impact. Our colleagues in some of the world's most remote and challenging places – far from home and loved ones – went above and beyond their normal duties to keep protecting refugees and mitigating the effects of the pandemic. Refugees responded in often-heroic ways, keeping their families, communities and also their host communities safe. They worked as doctors and nurses in hospitals around the world. They served as community workers in places like Bangladesh's Rohingya settlements, making sure some 900,000 refugees are kept informed, and know what to do if and when COVID-19 hits. In countries including Niger, displaced people made masks and soap, helping each other to stay healthy and survive.





And like those many individuals around the world, they agreed that we can only overcome this challenge if we unite as one and help each other – including the most vulnerable.

This, and much more, is what gave and continues to give me hope.

You – our dedicated supporters – make all this possible. Because of you, we've been able to stay and deliver during one of the most difficult and unpredictable years in memory. Thanks to your support, we have been able to continue to fulfill our mission to save lives, protect rights, and build better futures for people who have been forced to flee their homes.

This year has shown us more than ever that it takes all of us – individuals, companies, foundations, governments and organizations – working together to address the world's pressing challenges. This is how we should go forward.

Despite all the challenges, I am proud of what we collectively managed to achieve and your contributions made a tremendous impact.

I thank you so much for being there for refugees and displaced people around the world.





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