Egypt

February 2025

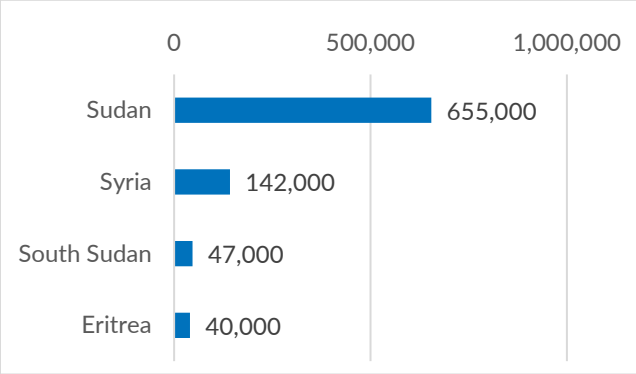
There are 925,000 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR Egypt. Sudanese are the largest group, followed by Syrians. Most refugees live in Greater Cairo and Alexandria.

UNHCR has been in Egypt since 1954. Since then, UNCHR has provided protection, including registration, documentation, refugee status determination, and resettlement to people forced to flee.

Egypt is the top recipient country of people fleeing the current conflict in Sudan. UNHCR is intensifying its protection and assistance efforts to meet the most urgent needs of newly arrived Sudanese refugees.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS REGISTERED WITH UNHCR EGYPT, AS OF 26 FEBRUARY 2025

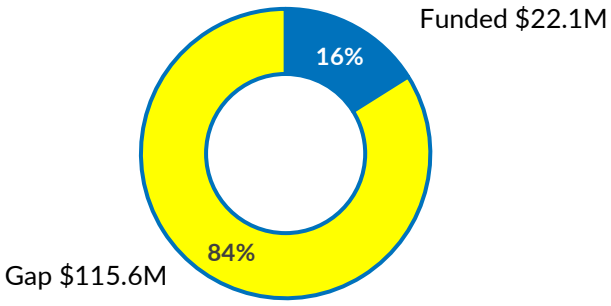
Top 4 Countries of Origin



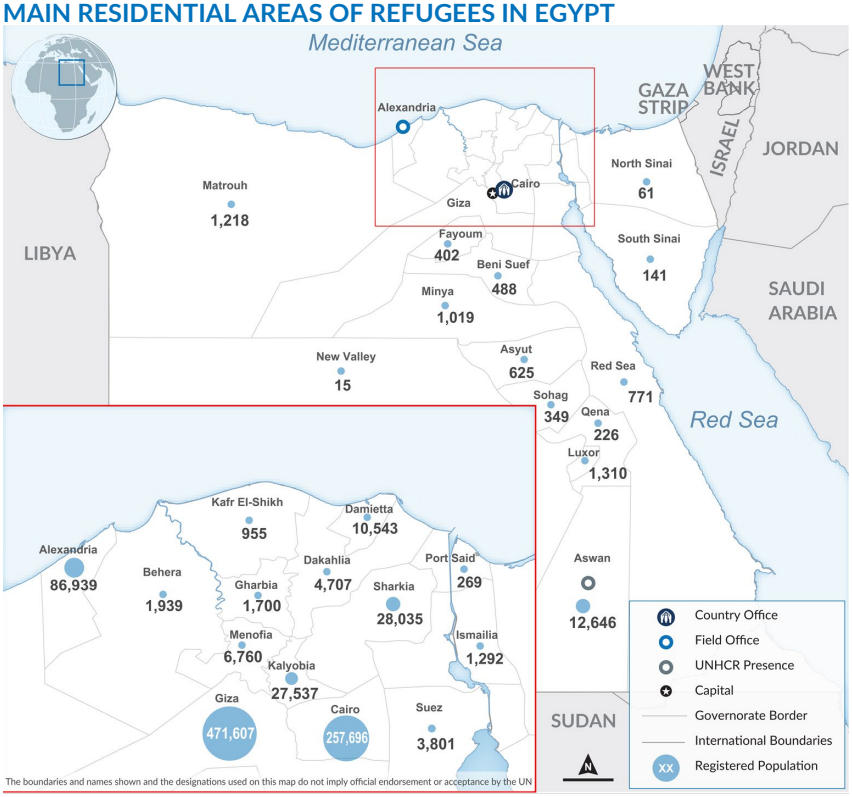
FUNDING (AS OF 31 JANUARY 2025)

USD 137.7 million

requested for UNHCR Egypt in 2025



MAIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF REFUGEES IN EGYPT



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

53 International Staff

356 National Staff

Offices:

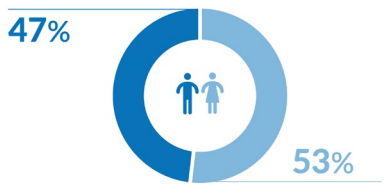
1 Country Office in Cairo

2 Reception Centres in Cairo and Giza

1 RSD/RST Building in Giza

1 Field Office in Alexandria

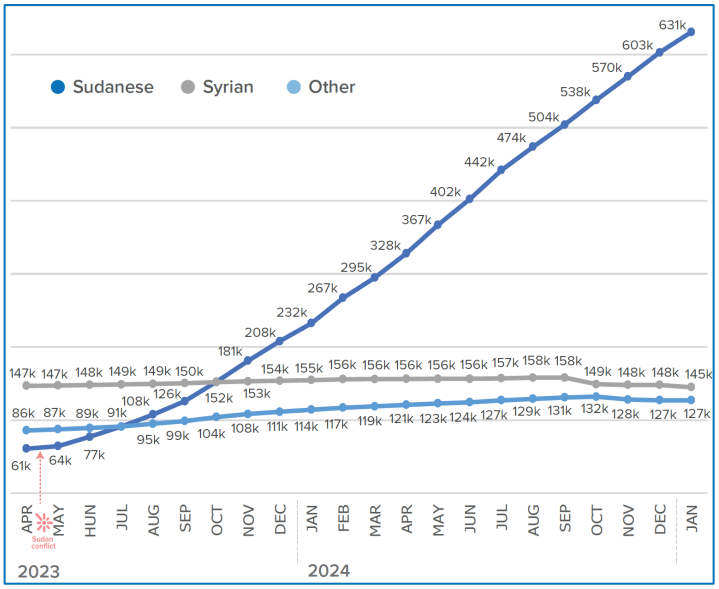
Gender breakdown of refugees registered in Egypt:



Context

Egypt is currently at a critical juncture, amid the Sudan crisis on its southern border (one of the world's fastest-growing displacement situations), the Gaza and Syria emergencies to the East, economic challenges, and significant humanitarian funding gaps. In this context, Egypt is a transit and destination country for refugees and asylum-seekers.

In December 2024, the Government of Egypt (GoE) enacted a new asylum law. UNHCR is working with the GoE on a transition plan to support establishing an asylum management system in line with international and regional norms.



Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR Egypt (April 2023-January 2025)

According to the GoE, 1.5 million Sudanese fled to Egypt since the onset of the Sudan conflict in 2023. With the escalating crisis in Sudan, the number of refugees arriving in Egypt has surged dramatically (a tenfold increase compared to pre-crisis levels), placing additional strain on existing resources. UNHCR Egypt is actively addressing the needs of refugees through a range of vital interventions.

In response to the Gaza crisis, UNHCR has delivered water, clothes, blankets, jerry cans, and sleeping mats to Gaza, and cash assistance to medical evacuees from Gaza in Egypt – both through the Egyptian Red Crescent. UNHCR also provides protection and assistance to some 142,000 Syrian refugees in Egypt, including facilitating their return to Syria for those who wish to do so in an informed and voluntary manner.

A key goal of UNHCR Egypt is ensuring refugees are included in national systems, services, and strategies from the beginning of emergencies. This approach includes working closely with national and local public institutions, development organizations, the private sector, and other partners to strengthen policies, improve government capacity to deliver inclusive services and support refugees in becoming self-reliant. This long-term vision is implemented through multi-year programs aimed at refugee inclusion, such as the Dutch-funded Prospects programme and the EU-funded Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees.

Two South Sudanese siblings, aged two and nine, arrived with their family at the UNHCR Reception Centre in Greater Cairo, seeking protection and a chance to rebuild their lives. ©UNHCR/Karim Hany

Main Activities

Protection

Diala, a Syrian mother of three who sought refuge in Egypt, turned to the UNHCR office in Alexandria in search of protection and vital support. ©UNHCR/P. Costa

- **Reception, Counselling, and Legal Assistance**
  UNHCR Egypt receives more than three thousand refugees at its offices every working day, mainly Sudanese. The first points of contact with UNHCR are the reception areas in Greater Cairo and Alexandria. There, protection staff counsel refugees and asylum-seekers entering the premises on a walk-in basis. Refugees have several other access avenues to UNHCR including its revamped helpline. Operators provide information-sharing and counselling and schedule registration appointments for asylum-seekers and refugees in Egypt in seven languages. Furthermore, refugees have access to legal remedies and representation through lawyers of NGO partners.

- **Community-Based Protection**
  UNHCR and partners provide targeted support to persons with specific needs through individual case management, psychosocial support, and emergency response. UNHCR also organizes community activities to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence among refugees and host communities.

- **Communication with Communities**
  UNHCR provides refugees and asylum-seekers with information about UNHCR and partners' services through different communication channels, including social media and UNHCR Egypt's Help website, which was the most viewed globally in 2024. Moreover, UNHCR provided information on protection, assistance and procedures for reporting fraud to some 220,000 individuals in 2024.

- **Child Protection**
  UNHCR Child Protection (CP) programming focuses on children at risk of abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation. Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) remain one of the key vulnerable groups of refugee children. UNHCR conducts best-interest assessments and prioritizes protection and assistance to UASC and other children at risk across all programmes through prevention and response activities and specialized services.

- **Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**
  UNHCR focuses on prevention, risk mitigation, and response activities to ensure that survivors of GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and trafficking for sexual exploitation receive quality, timely, and survivor-centred support services. All survivors receiving case management are guaranteed access to safe and confidential multisectoral GBV referral pathways, which include emergency shelter, psychosocial support, legal assistance, emergency cash aid, and medical care. In 2024, UNHCR Egypt provided assistance to 1,669 GBV survivors through its Safety Package programme.

- **Registration**
  Registration of the population in need of international protection is a central activity of UNHCR, as the Government of Egypt delegated this task with a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1954. The crisis in Sudan has prompted UNHCR to significantly expand its registration capabilities, aiming to protect as many individuals as possible. In addition to facilitating access to services, biometric registration allows refugees and asylum-seekers to regularize their stay in Egypt and obtain a renewable residence permit.

  As of 26 February, some 892,000 people forced to flee Sudan have approached UNHCR for registration. Of them, 67% (more than 593,000 people) have been fully registered. In response to the increasing numbers, UNHCR has scaled up its overall registration processing since the start of the Sudan crisis by increasing staffing, improving infrastructure, and expanding the Infoline as well as communication channels. In August 2024, UNHCR Egypt launched its online registration appointment tool for Sudanese individuals to expedite their access to appointments and to reduce the pressures on UNHCR's main reception centre.

UNHCR staff provides refugees and asylum-seekers in Cairo with essential information on life-saving assistance. ©UNHCR/Jaime Gimenez

- **Refugee Status Determination**
  UNHCR conducts Refugee Status Determination (RSD) on behalf of the Government and facilitates access to protection, basic needs, and essential services, such as health and education. UNHCR Egypt strategically utilizes RSD to maximize protection benefits for many asylum-seekers while maintaining the integrity of the asylum system. Before and after the Sudan crisis, UNHCR Egypt has been the largest and most productive RSD mandate operation globally. In 2024, UNHCR finalized 12,650 RSD decisions.

- **Durable Solutions**
  Due to its location, Egypt is part of the Syrian and Central Mediterranean resettlement initiatives. In 2024, some 5,250 refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration. Moreover, more than 3,000 refugees departed for resettlement countries. UNHCR Egypt continues to prioritize Complementary Pathways as a means of a long-lasting solution for refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt.

  Since December 2024, more than 12,500 Syrian refugees have requested UNHCR to close their case files in Egypt, indicating their desire to return to Syria. According to the January 2025 Refugee Perception and Intention Survey (RPIS), 42% of Syrian refugees in Egypt expressed an intention to return home in the next 12 months, up from just 1% in 2024. Based on these shifts, UNHCR plans to support the voluntary return of approximately 25,000 Syrian refugees from Egypt in 2025, subject to funds available.

- **Education**
  UNHCR advocates for enrolling refugees and asylum-seekers in public schools on the same footing as Egyptians. In 2024, UNHCR provided education cash grants to 82,000 refugee children. Furthermore, based on the needs identified by the Ministry of Education, UNHCR provided bridging classes, and teacher training, supported the refurbishment of schools, and supplied equipment, and other necessities to assist the Egyptian facilities in absorbing the refugee children.

Health

UNHCR supports national efforts to improve the quality of health services to refugees and asylum-seekers and the host population in areas with high concentrations of refugees. This entails strengthening the existing national health systems through capacity-building and provision of equipment. Through its partners, UNHCR Egypt provided some 100,000 primary care consultations to refugees and supported specialized healthcare, including hospital care, to some 5,000 individuals in 2024. UNHCR is working with the Government and other UN agencies to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers are granted access to public healthcare and is planning to pilot refugee inclusion in some of the governorates where the Universal Health Insurance System has been rolled out.

Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

UNHCR helps refugees and asylum-seekers become self-sufficient by providing training and helping them find markets for their skills and products. It also promotes their economic inclusion by advocating for their right to work and developing their livelihoods through market-based programs. UNHCR support includes guidance on the Egyptian labour market and matching employers with potential employees while ensuring minimum standards are met. Moreover, UNHCR helps entrepreneurs with cash grants and mentoring to establish businesses. UNHCR Egypt also empowers more than 100 refugees who craft handmade products within the MADE51 initiative, which aims to highlight their skills, bring them hope, and promote the sale of their creations in global markets. All these efforts helped refugees to navigate a challenging labour market.

Cash-Based Interventions

UNHCR delivers bimonthly unconditional cash grants to extremely vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to provide protection and assistance and prevent refugees from resorting to harmful coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the influx of refugees and asylum-seekers after the onset of the Sudan conflict led UNHCR to a reorientation of its cash assistance program to also include recently arrived individuals if they meet the eligibility criteria. Adapting to the new emergency context, UNHCR began delivering assistance in Aswan, the capital of the border region with Sudan. Since the onset of the conflict in the neighbouring country, UNHCR has assisted some 100,000 people with emergency cash. Meanwhile, more than 93,000 people were assisted with the bimonthly Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) in 2024. Additionally, in December 2024, UNHCR provided one-time winter cash assistance to over 220,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, helping them stay warm and afford essentials like electricity, clothing, blankets, and heaters. Cash is deemed the most efficient and dignified way to enable vulnerable refugees to cover their basic needs, while at the same time supporting and boosting local markets.

Inter-Agency Coordination

Following the onset of the crisis, in line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), UNHCR led the development of a Regional Sudan Situation Refugee Response Plan (RRP), to coordinate the interagency response as well as associated advocacy and resource mobilization in the seven countries most affected by the potential outflows of refugees from Sudan, including Egypt. As of 31 December 2024, the Egypt chapter of the 2024 Regional RRP was 31 per cent funded. UNHCR and UNDP co-lead the 2025 Refugee and Resilience Response Plan in Egypt.

Hanaa, a refugee artisan from Sudan, took part in a bazaar in Cairo, where she sold her handmade products. © UNHCR/Karim Hany

Working with Partners

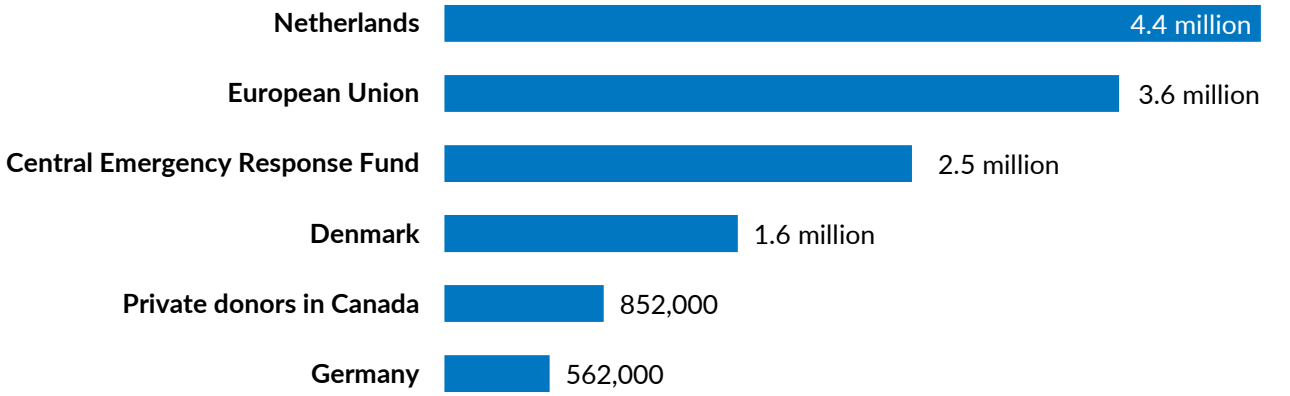
UNHCR works through twelve partners in Greater Cairo, North Coast, Aswan and North Sinai: All Saints/ Refuge Egypt, Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport, Catholic Relief Services, CARE Egypt, Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights, Egyptian Red Crescent, Etijah - Youth and Development Consultancy Institute, Life Makers Foundation, Mersal Foundation, Plan International, Save the Children, and Terre des Hommes.

To bridge the nexus to development, UNHCR works to advance the Global Refugee Forum pledges, aiming to improve refugees' socio-economic inclusion and support long-term solutions. Egypt's pledges focus on integrating refugees into national health and education systems, peacebuilding, and climate action.

Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the Egypt Operation, including the Sudan and Syria Situations, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS AS OF 31 JANUARY 2025 | USD



UNHCR Egypt is also grateful for the crucial support of private donors, including those from Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

CONTACT: UNHCR External Relations Unit – arecapi@unhcr.org
LINKS: UNHCR Global Focus | UNHCR Egypt Website | UNHCR Egypt Twitter | UNHCR Data Portal