Egypt

May 2026

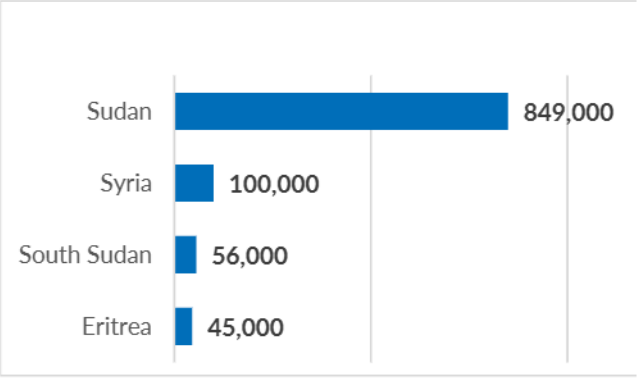
Some 1,100,600 refugees and asylum-seekers are registered with UNHCR Egypt. Sudanese are the largest group—over ¾—followed by Syrians. Most live in Greater Cairo and Alexandria.

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.

Egypt enacted its first asylum law in December 2024, creating a national framework for refugee management and rights protection, with UNHCR supporting its state-owned implementation and transition.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS REGISTERED WITH UNHCR EGYPT, AS OF 30 APRIL 2026

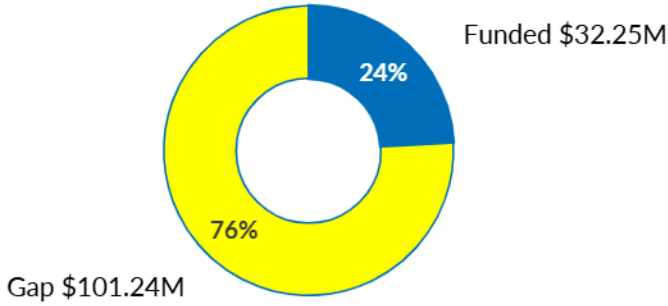
Top 4 Countries of Origin



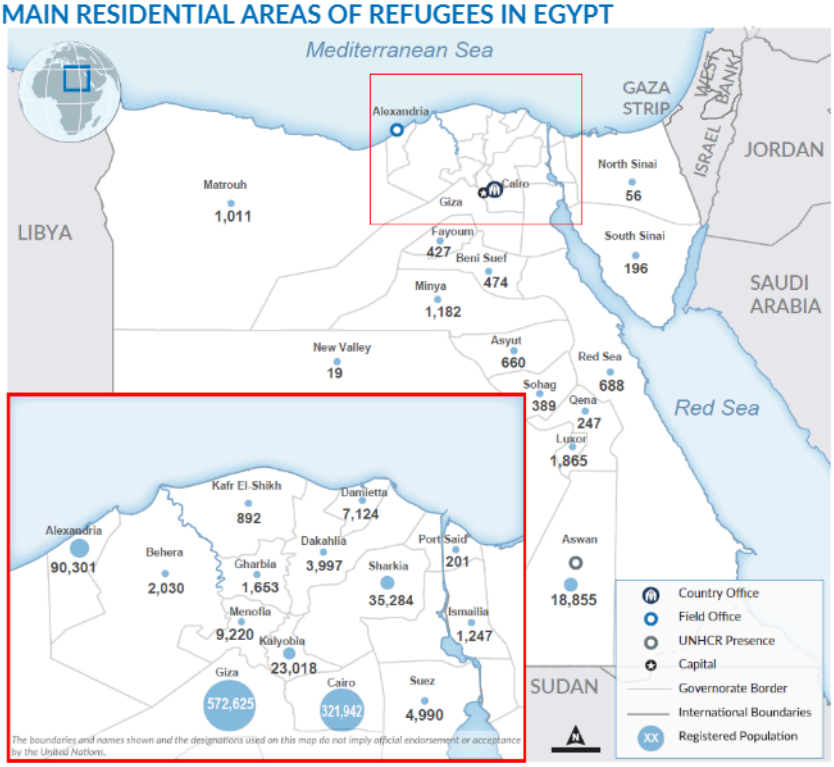
FUNDING

USD 133.5 million

requested for UNHCR Egypt in 2026



MAIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF REFUGEES IN EGYPT



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

46 International Staff

277 National Staff

Offices:

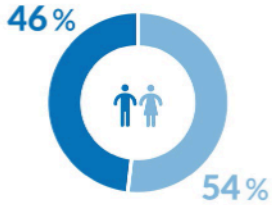
1 Country Office in Cairo

1 Reception Centre in Giza

1 RSD/RST Building in Giza

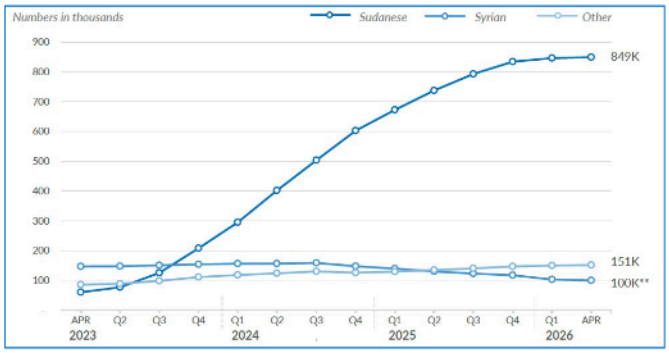
1 Field Office in Alexandria

Gender breakdown of refugees registered in Egypt:



Context

Egypt is at a critical juncture, facing the cumulative impact of multiple, overlapping regional crises. The conflict in Sudan—the world's largest displacement emergency—continues along Egypt's southern border, deepening economic pressures. Egypt has become both a major transit and destination country for refugees and asylum-seekers, assuming a central role in regional displacement dynamics.



Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR Egypt (April 2023 - April 2026)

Since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in 2023, the number of Sudanese refugees in Egypt has increased fourteen-fold, making Egypt the largest host country for those fleeing what is now the world's largest displacement crisis.

Between 2022 and May 2026, the total number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt increased by 281%, rising from 288,500 to 1.1 million. Over the same period, per capita funds available for one refugee or asylum-seeker fell by 76%, from USD 126 to USD 30, creating a severe mismatch between operational demands and available funding. In 2025, Egypt also became the country receiving the highest number of new asylum applications globally, with UNHCR Egypt running the organization's largest mandate Refugee Status Determination (RSD) operation worldwide.

The operation continues to provide protection and assistance to Syrian refugees in Egypt, including support for those who choose to return to Syria in an informed, voluntary, and dignified manner. In response to the Gaza crisis, UNHCR has also provided cash assistance to medical evacuees from Gaza in Egypt, in close coordination with the Egyptian Red Crescent.

Humanitarian needs among refugees in Egypt remain severe. According to the latest Egypt Vulnerability Assessment for Refugees (EVAR, 2025) conducted by UNHCR, WFP, and the National Statistics Office, more than half of refugees are food insecure, one in three Sudanese refugees lack access to medical care, and approximately half of refugee children are out of school. With limited legal access to the labour market and documentation constraints, refugees are highly dependent on humanitarian assistance. Recent funding reductions have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities and unaccompanied and separated children. To mitigate these risks, UNHCR prioritizes access to legal status and civil documentation, including registration and birth registration, as a foundation for protection and service access.

A central objective of UNHCR Egypt's response is to promote the inclusion of refugees in national systems and services. This approach emphasizes close collaboration with national and local authorities, development actors, the private sector, and other partners to strengthen policies, build government capacity to deliver inclusive services, and support refugees in progressing toward self-reliance. This long-term vision is operationalized through multi-year, inclusion-focused programmes, notably the Dutch-funded PROSPECTS partnership and the EU-funded Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees.

Significant policy developments underpin this shift toward greater national ownership. In December 2024, the Government of Egypt enacted its first-ever asylum law, establishing a legal and institutional framework for managing refugee affairs and safeguarding refugee rights. UNHCR is supporting the Government in developing a transition plan to operationalize this framework in line with international standards. In 2026, UNHCR Egypt is prioritizing lifesaving protection while advancing implementation of the asylum law, supporting a phased transition to national systems.

Main Activities

Protection

- **Reception, Counselling, and Legal Assistance**
  UNHCR Egypt receives between 3,000 and 4,000 refugees and asylum-seekers each working day at its office in Greater Cairo, which serves as a key walk-in entry point. Access is also provided through telephone infolines handling around 520 calls daily in seven languages. Additional two-way communication channels include home visits, refugee outreach volunteers, focus group discussions, social media, and regular meetings with community representatives. Partner NGOs support engagement through their own offices, with integrity mechanisms such as anti-fraud and complaints systems in place.

- **Community-Based Protection**
  UNHCR applies a community-based protection (CBP) approach that emphasizes consultation and meaningful participation of refugees and asylum-seekers in all stages of programmes affecting them. This includes assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation, through an age, gender and diversity lens. In Egypt, UNHCR conducts an annual participatory assessment to inform planning and works closely with communities to strengthen self-management. Ongoing engagement includes outreach meetings, focus group discussions, community dialogue, and awareness-raising activities.

Refugees from Sudan participate in a focus group discussion at the UNHCR reception center in Cairo, Egypt. UNHCR/Mahmoud Kamal

- **Communication with Communities**
  UNHCR provides refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt with information through digital platforms and in-person outreach. In 2025, UNHCR Egypt's Facebook pages recorded 12.8 million views, while the Egypt Help website received 3.4 million views, ranking second globally among UNHCR country sites. Engagement increased further in early 2026, with the site becoming the most visited worldwide in the first quarter. In parallel, UNHCR reached around 268,000 people through on-site awareness sessions in 2025 and over 54,000 in the first quarter of 2026.

- **Child Protection**
  UNHCR Child Protection activities focus on children at risk of abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation. Currently some 12,000 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. At the same time, child protection efforts emphasize family reunification, risk prevention, and the right to access education and social services, to support children's healthy development in a safe environment.

- **Prevention and Response to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**
  UNHCR works to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG), sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and trafficking for sexual exploitation, ensuring survivors receive timely, survivor-centred support. Survivors supported through case management have access to safe, confidential, multisectoral referral pathways, including emergency shelter, psychosocial and legal assistance, medical care, and emergency cash aid. In 2025, UNHCR Egypt assisted 1,730 VAWG survivors through its Safety Package programme, with a further 345 supported in the first quarter of 2026.

- **Registration***
  Registration is a core UNHCR function in Egypt, delegated by the Government of Egypt under a 1954 Memorandum of Understanding. The crisis in Sudan has required UNHCR to significantly expand its registration capacity to ensure protection for those fleeing the conflict. Beyond enabling access to services, biometric registration allows refugees and asylum-seekers to regularize their stay and obtain renewable residence permits in Egypt.

As of 30 April 2026, around 1,044,000 individuals fleeing Sudan had approached UNHCR for registration, of whom 81%—approximately 841,000 individuals—had been fully registered. To respond to rising needs, UNHCR has scaled up registration processing through increased staffing, improved infrastructure, and expanded Infoline and communication channels.

UNHCR Egypt launched an online registration appointment tool, enabling more than 78,000 Sudanese to access appointments faster and easing pressure on reception centres between its launch in August 2024 and May 2026. In addition, since the launch in January 2026 of UNHCR's online self-verification service platform MyUNHCR, over 18,300 individuals have since completed self-verification and are now scheduled for document collection.

**Note: Total Sudanese arrivals refer to individuals who have entered Egypt and registered with UNHCR since the onset of the Sudan crisis, while total registered Sudanese refer to individuals registered with UNHCR, including those present prior to the crisis.*

- **Refugee Status Determination**
  On behalf of the Government of Egypt, UNHCR conducts Refugee Status Determination (RSD) and enables access to protection, basic assistance, and essential services, including health and education. In Egypt, RSD is a critical protection tool, strategically applied to safeguard large numbers of asylum-seekers while preserving the integrity of the asylum system. As of April 2026, more than 22,000 RSD decisions had been finalized for Sudanese asylum-seekers since the outbreak of the conflict.

- **Durable Solutions**
  UNHCR Egypt provides comprehensive durable solutions for refugees, including resettlement, complementary pathways, and support for voluntary return. For refugees who cannot safely return to their countries of origin due to conflict or persecution, resettlement to a third country remains a key protection solution, prioritized for the most vulnerable, alongside expanded complementary pathways for skilled refugees.

  In 2025, UNHCR Egypt submitted 2,328 refugees for resettlement consideration to 14 countries. During the same period, more than 1,600 refugees departed through resettlement, while 2,176 departed via complementary pathways, including family reunification, education, labour mobility, and private sponsorship. In the first quarter of 2026, resettlement activity remained high, with 989 individuals submitted for resettlement and 208 refugees departing. UNHCR also supports voluntary returns to Syria and facilitates information-sharing for refugees undertaking cross-border movements.

  UNHCR considers voluntary repatriation the preferred solution when it occurs safely, voluntarily, and with dignity. While large-scale repatriation to Syria is not promoted due to ongoing instability, UNHCR provides counselling and limited assistance to support informed decision-making. Since December 2024, over 35,000 Syrian refugees in Egypt have requested case closure, reflecting increased intentions to return, with assistance continuing for those assessed as highly vulnerable, subject to available funding. According to the Enhanced Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Intentions to Return (ERPIS, Wave 2, 2026), in Egypt, 29p of Syrian refugees expressed an intention to return within the next 12 months—among the higher rates in the region—though this should be interpreted with caution due to reachability constraints, particularly among those with expired residency. While longer-term aspirations to return remain strong, actual return decisions continue to depend primarily on conditions inside Syria. Notably, 95% reported their housing, land, or property as "at risk," mainly due to destruction, uninhabitable conditions, or lack of documentation.

- **Education**
  In 2025, UNHCR provided education cash grants to 88,565 refugee children, and supported 341 refugee youth through the DAFI programme. Furthermore, UNHCR provided bridging classes to 102 refugee children, Technical and Vocational Trainings to 100 students, and remedial classes to 100 students. To strengthen the capacity of public schools to accommodate the growing number of refugees in Egypt, UNHCR supported the refurbishment of 38 classrooms and the construction of 8 new classrooms in public schools. To promote learning within a safe environment, safeguarding awareness sessions were delivered to 303 refugee parents and teachers, in addition to the distribution of 500 female dignity kits. Furthermore, UNHCR delivered community awareness sessions to 587 parents to support in raising refugee parents' awareness on the available educational services.

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 the provision of needed equipment.

In 2025, UNHCR Egypt supported the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) in strengthening national health system preparedness and response to the increased influx of people fleeing the Gaza and Sudan crises. This support included the donation of essential medicines, critical medical supplies, and diagnostic equipment with a total value of nearly USD 2.5 million, reinforcing MoHP's capacity to meet growing humanitarian health needs.

During the same year, and through implementing partners, UNHCR Egypt provided specialized health care services to refugees, amounting to 56,000 consultations, to around 17,000 individuals. The provided services ranged from support to patients with chronic & mental health illnesses, antenatal care, to the medical support for survivors of GBV, TB, and HIV patients, in addition to hospital care, and the response to lifesaving and emergency cases. However, due to a lack of funding in 2025, UNHCR has been forced to suspend most of its necessary healthcare activities, leaving thousands of refugee patients without alternate support.

Amid ongoing funding constraints, and to mitigate the associated risks, UNHCR launched a new Cash for Health programme in April 2026, with an initial allocation of USD 250K set to enable over 1,700 refugees to cover the cost of their monthly chronic medications.

Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

UNHCR supports refugees and asylum-seekers to 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.

In 2025, a total of over 3,500 refugees and asylum-seekers and host community participated in UNHCR's livelihoods programs in Egypt. 1711 businesses, among which 816 individuals supported with vocational training, and 641 individuals supported with employability skills training, were supported.

Mohamed Amin, a Sudanese refugee, attends a coil winding course in Cairo, Egypt. The vocational training is offered through Catholic Relief Services (CRS), UNHCR Egypt's implementing partner for education. UNHCR/Nerine Massoud

Cash-Based Interventions

Cash assistance is a highly efficient and dignified way to support vulnerable refugees, enabling them to prioritise their own essential needs while also stimulating local markets. UNHCR provides unconditional multipurpose cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to help cover basic expenses such as rent, food, healthcare, and education, while reducing reliance on harmful coping mechanisms. According to the 2025 EVAR, around 65% of refugee households are classified as highly or extremely vulnerable and cannot meet basic needs without support.

Beneficiaries are identified through a vulnerability scoring system based on demographic, protection, and socio-economic data collected and regularly updated by UNHCR. In 2025, more than 102,000 refugees received cash assistance Due to severe funding shortfalls, UNHCR has already been forced to reduce the number of beneficiaries by nearly 50% between January and March 2026—from more than 79,100 individuals to just 41,600 individuals. Without immediate additional support, remaining assistance will be at risk, with direct consequences for families' ability to meet basic survival needs, including food, shelter, and medicine. At least USD 10 million is urgently required to sustain assistance for 96,000 individuals per month for the remainder of the year. This represents only a fraction of those in need—but it is the minimum required to prevent a further deterioration of already critical living conditions.

Inter-Agency Coordination

Following the onset of the Sudan 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 Egypt and other affected countries. In June 2025, the GoE officially endorsed the Egypt Refugee and Resilience Response Plan (ERRRP 2025), marking its first nationally led refugee platform addressing all nationalities, with the 2026 upcoming.

Working with Partners

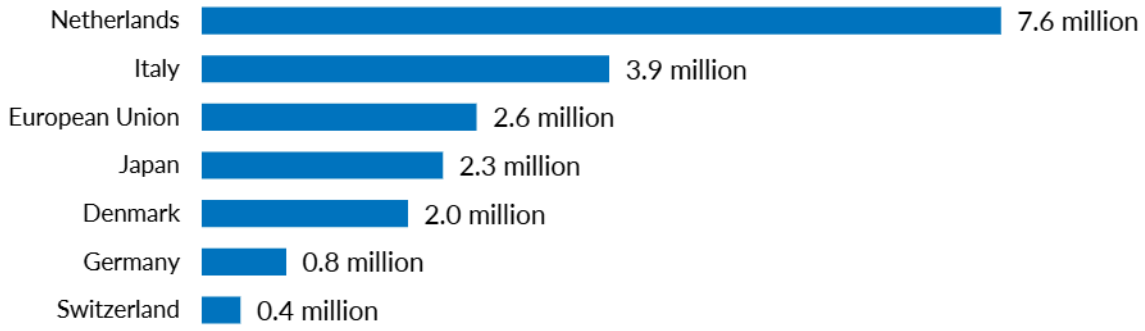
UNHCR works through twelve partners in Greater Cairo, North Coast, Aswan and North Sinai: All Saints/ Refuge Egypt, Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport, Catholic Relief Services, CARE Egypt, Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights, Egyptian Red Crescent, Etijah - Youth and Development 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 (GRF) pledges, aiming to improve refugees' socio-economic inclusion and support long-term solutions. Egypt's pledges most recently made in December 2025 at the GRF, focus on integrating refugees into national health and education systems, peacebuilding, and provision of livelihoods and socio-economic opportunities.

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 | USD



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