

# Communication with Communities (CwC)

April 2020

Over **850,000** SMS sent to **more than 140,000** persons of concern, covering different topics.

**83** posts made through social media with a combined reach of over **820,000** individuals, covering different topics.

**192,598** phone calls handled by UNHCR Helpline (IVR), with financial assistance (58.8% of calls) being the top reason for calling.

**17** messages sent through WhatsApp to CSCs and community members.

**0** Mobile Helpdesks held during this month due to the lockdown in response to COVID-19.

Increase in followers by **3,644** on Facebook and **722** on Twitter.

## Background

**Communication with Communities (CwC)** is a key element of UNHCR's protection and operational response. The priority of CwC activities is to ensure that refugees receive the right information in a timely manner, in order to preserve their protection, access to services, well-being, and to prevent fraud and protection risks.

UNHCR pays close attention to the occurrence of rumours by monitoring social media platforms, considering fraud and protection risks that they may generate, especially with the increase of resettlement opportunities. To prevent such risks, UNHCR shares information both proactively and reactively through various communication channels.

Using different communication tools is essential considering that the refugee population in Jordan is diverse in origin, backgrounds and locations and the fact that some messages concern either the entire refugee population or specific groups.



*UNHCRJordan/Lilly Carlisle*

# Communication Channels

**Social Media** remains the most powerful communication channel in Jordan. It allows UNHCR to publish any sort of information at no cost\* and is a key tool in communicating with refugees.

- **Facebook:** UNHCR Jordan's Facebook page currently has **118,509** followers, a significant majority of whom are refugees. In April, **28** posts were published on UNHCR Jordan's page related to CWC and other content, reaching a combined total of **511,894** individuals, and covering topics such as information and news for refugees, general news, donor highlights, among other. Our most successful social media post in April was a reminder message for POCs to update their phone numbers in UNHCR's records, which garnered over **60,000** views alone. In April, engagement dropped back to average levels after a spike in March – in terms of likes, shares and comments.

Link to page: <http://bit.ly/2HjRBn5>

Furthermore, UNHCR Jordan's Facebook page receives messages from its followers, requesting information on certain aspects of files for registered POCs. For reasons of capacity and protection concerns, UNHCR Jordan does not provide any tailored answer through its social media portals, especially because administrators cannot verify the identity of the sender. For that reason, an autoreply was enabled to the messenger tool; the script is available in **Annex I** (below).

Finally, comments on all published posts are being monitored to make sure none of them contain any details that could affect the protection status of persons of concern; comments containing file numbers, phone numbers, contact details, addresses, insults, or swear words are being removed on the spot. Simultaneously, comments that are considered harmful or containing hate speech or discriminatory/derogatory material that might seem offensive to followers or persons of concern are also being removed. Any comment that may be considered spam or an advertising attempt is also being removed and the user gets blocked; this is to avoid the possibility of exploitation or harassment of any of UNHCR's persons of concern.

*In addition to UNHCR Jordan's official social media accounts, an agreement has been set in place with two independent pages ("Syrians gathered in Jordan" and "Syrian Diaries in Jordan"), with a combined number of followers exceeding **120,000** people, to take content from UNHCR Jordan's Facebook page and share it further through their pages. The support comes in a will to spread any announcement or piece of information that could of use to persons of concern in Jordan.*

*Links: <https://goo.gl/jBc49L> and <https://goo.gl/deKPxS>*

- **Twitter:** UNHCR Jordan's account is followed by some **25,167** followers, but with the help of the "retweet" tool, certain Tweets reach a larger audience. In April, **55** Tweets were created to disseminate information of interest to refugees and general public, reaching a combined total of **311,258** individuals. Link to account: <https://twitter.com/UNHCRJordan>

*Note: in case any person contacts UNHCR's Facebook page or Twitter account by any form (comment or message) to report a claimed fraud issue, exploitation attempt, or any type of misconduct, the message gets forwarded to the concerned unit, copying the Anti-Fraud Panel.*

**COVID-19** remains the major highlight of mass communication during the month of April, with different messages and content disseminated through the varied channels. Content covered an update on the **Frequently Asked Questions**, which was first issued on 5 March, to reflect the changes in regulations, access to services, and other information relating to the situation in Jordan. Other content prepared for the response to COVID-19 included social media posts (**30** posts on Facebook and Twitter combined), WhatsApp messages (**17** messages), SMS and e-posters.

**Rumours**, especially in the current circumstances, took place more often than usual. During the month of April, UNHCR and other UN Agencies were alerted by field colleagues, POCs and community representatives about a number of rumours, most of which amount to attempts of fraud and exploitation. To counter rumours, UNHCR Jordan developed messages in a timely manner and circulated these announcements to wide audiences through all necessary channels (social media, WhatsApp, Info-Sharing Group, CSCs, JOHUD's online magazine, etc.)

**Help Site Jordan** was launched on 8 April 2020. It is a [website](#) addressing POCs in Jordan and displaying detailed information on services provided by UNHCR and partners, in addition to links to other platforms, phone numbers, and media galleries. The information is available in Arabic and English to ensure accessibility to all POCs in Jordan. Since its launching, and until 30 April, the Help Site Jordan received **15,732** users on **20,406** sessions and **59,970** pageviews. **96.12%** of users are in Jordan, while the remaining **3.88%** are in USA, Iraq, Turkey, Netherlands and 49 other countries.

**Info-Sharing Group**: in order to increase awareness of all actions taken in terms of communication among all units and offices of UNHCR Jordan, the Info-Sharing Group continued to be a key platform to disseminate information among staff ensuring that all front-line colleagues are on the same page when it comes to communication with communities and are aware of any recent announcements. This group was heavily relied on for colleagues to disseminate CwC material among counterparts, refugee groups and partners.

During the month of April, **17** announcements were shared through this group, echoing posts published on social media, in addition to many other pieces, mostly on COVID-19. Members of the group are engaging in a more active way to clarify certain matters when approached by POCs on selected topics, such as assistance and resettlement.

**Bulk SMS Messaging** facilitated by Zain Jordan has also been a powerful communication tool, allowing UNHCR Jordan to target audiences based off any set of criteria (nationality, location, education level, age, gender, marital status, etc.). During the month of April, over **850,000** messages were sent to more than **140,000** recipients to communicate information on different topics, related to education, assistance, registration, resettlement, etc.

**UNHCR Helpdesks** are one of the face-to-face communication tools that UNHCR depends on to deliver services of counselling, protection or assistance related. During the month of April, 0 Helpdesks were held countrywide. The decrease in activities this month is due to the interruption of working hours and suspension of certain services as of 15 March – in addition to the precautionary measures in place since March to limit movement and interactions *en masse*.

**UNHCR Helpline (064008000)** answered **192,598** phone calls from persons of concern through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system in April on all services provided by UNHCR (assistance, resettlement, protection, education, health). In response to the changes in working modalities due to COVID-19, pre-recorded messages were put in place to inform callers of the temporary changes, and the possibility to leave a message for particular enquiries; these messages are referred to the concerned unit for potential follow up purposes.

**Bridges of Communities** is a group that was established in April 2019 to enhance the operation's Communications with Communities (CwC) and Accountability to Affected Population (AAP). Comprising of 18 Syrian, Iraqi, Sudanese, Somali and Yemeni community leaders/representatives, the group meets on regular basis with UNHCR to discuss issues and challenges they face.

**WhatsApp Tree:** facilitated by UNHCR and the Bridges of Communities group, UNHCR has established a WhatsApp tree where information related to services available, recent announcements and addressing rumours among the community are shared alongside it acting as a two-way communication tool such as referral of vulnerable cases. In total the WhatsApp tree consists of around **85 groups** comprising of over **11,000** refugees.

**The main needs expressed by refugees captured through the different channels are as follows:**

- **A popular expression of doubt on UNHCR's response in terms of urgent cash assistance** is constantly mentioned, wondering why UNHCR has also remained silent and did not share any information on potential assistance related to the crisis;
- **Food and assistance to cover rent and essential basic needs** are the most urgently expressed by refugees, and they have been increasing over time, with more refugees running out of the little savings and going into debt; bread has been a remarkable item to be mentioned over and over, with refugees being unable to even afford that item and were seeking the support from community members;
- **A large portion of refugees** have expressed their inability to cover the rents or bills. While some have been given an extended or flexible payment deadline, others have reported being informed that they might be evacuated from their homes. A constant call has been noticed in closed groups of the community on Facebook to refugees who have been receiving monthly cash assistance to remain silent and not announce the upload to their accounts publicly for one reason: the refugee community is perceived by the host community to be receiving a lot of financial support, decreasing the chances of being exempted from rental payments;
- **Refugees with work permits and in the labour market**, which were interrupted from reporting to their duties and whose incomes were affected or interrupted have voiced their need to be included in the Government's plans to support – especially "daily labourers" who depended on a modest daily income;
- Refugees expressed their **need to renew their Asylum Seeker/Refugee Certificates** and their uncertainty of the consequences of the delay on a legal level and relating to access to services;
- A **remarkable frustration** was noticed among the community with regards to the limited accessibility to the UNHCR Helpline, despite the pre-recorded messages and timely general messaging;
- The reaction to awareness messages on COVID-19 that were published was mostly negative, as refugees have voiced the need to provide urgent assistance, which would cover – among other needs – sanitizing material (masks, soap, hygiene items, medicine). Many have also sarcastically expressed that UNHCR is expected to provide urgent assistance instead of these awareness messages.

**The aggravation of the socio-economic situation of refugees, in addition to restrictions of movement and confinement have also aggravated the protection situation of refugees:**

- **Rumours** have spread faster and wider than usual within the community, some of which amounted to the alarming levels of exploitation and fraud;
- Risk of negative coping mechanisms because of the inability to cover basic needs;
- **Rumours ranged into different topics:** resettlement opportunities, assistance, distribution of urgent cash from different UN Agencies (such as WFP, UNICEF and UNESCO), surveys and returns/repatriation;
- **One particular case of fraud/exploitation** was reported through Facebook and referred to the relevant colleagues for follow up, which included a request of payment for resettlement and resulted in protection concerns (risk of domestic violence);
- The feeling of anxiety, stress and emotional distress is increasing due to lack of food and income, fear of eviction and fear of COVID-19 infection;

## Expected projects to be completed in the coming quarter

- FAQ and How To pages on the Help.unhcr platform
- Chatbot on Facebook messenger application
- Possibility of establishing a 2-way SMS tool through Zain, with the support of DAG
- Engage one more independent Facebook group to take content from UNHCR Jordan's Facebook page and share it further (discussion currently ongoing)

## Annex I

*Message was temporarily changed to reflect the changes in working modalities in Jordan due to COVID-19.*

### Facebook autoreply in Arabic and English:

“مرحبا،  
كي تتمكن من تطبيق أعلى معايير الحماية وسرية المعلومات والشفافية، يؤسفنا إعلامكم بأنه لا يمكننا الإجابة عن أسئلتكم عبر مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي.  
نعتذر عن عدم قدرتنا للاستجابة لأي اتصالات من خلال خط المساعدة التابع للمفوضية (064008000) في الوقت الحالي، حيث أن المجيب الآلي فقط هو المتاح في الظروف الحالية.  
لطلب المساعدة بأية مسائل قانونية أو بما يخص الاحتجاز، يرجى الاتصال بقسم الاحتجاز التابع للمفوضية (0796742200)، أو أرض – العون القانوني (0777387221) والمتاحين على مدار الساعة طيلة أيام الأسبوع.  
إذا كان لديكم أسئلة حول فيروس كورونا أو الوصول إلى الخدمات المتعلقة بهذا الفيروس، يمكنك الاتصال بالخط الساخن التابع لوزارة الصحة من خلال الرقم 111 والمتاح على مدار الساعة طيلة أيام الأسبوع.  
إذا كانت لديكم أية حالة طوارئ صحية تهدد بالحياة وكنتم بحاجة إلى الحصول على خدمة أو رعاية طبية، يرجى الاتصال بخط الطوارئ الموحد 911 والمتاح على مدار الساعة طيلة أيام الأسبوع.  
شاكرين تفهمكم،  
المفوضية السامية للأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين في الأردن.”

“Dear Sender,

To maintain the highest standards of protection, confidentiality and anti-fraud measures we cannot answer your questions through our Facebook portal.

In the time being, the UNHCR Helpline (064008000) will only be operating through its interactive voice response system. We apologize for not being able to answer any calls.

For assistance in legal issues or detention, please call the UNHCR Detention Line (0796742200) or ARDD Legal Aid Emergency Line (0777387221). Both lines' working hours are 24/7.

If you have questions about corona virus or access to related services, you may get in touch with the Ministry of Health through the hotline number 111. Working hours are 24/7.

For emergency medical cases, you must call the Civil Defense through their unified emergency hotline number 911, who will provide the best advice.

Thank you.

UNHCR Jordan”

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