UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | Yemen

Refugee Population in Kharaz, Lahj

The site in Kharaz opened in 2001 and is the only refugee camp in Yemen. It is located in an arid part of Lahj governorate.

The camp hosts almost 10,000 refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia. Services available to refugees are extended to the Yemeni host community.

Efforts are ongoing to improve sustainability of services for host and refugee communities and self-reliance of residents, while also seeking durable solutions for those living there.

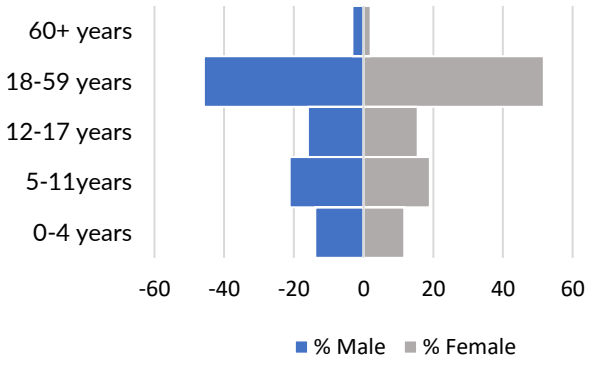
Key Figures

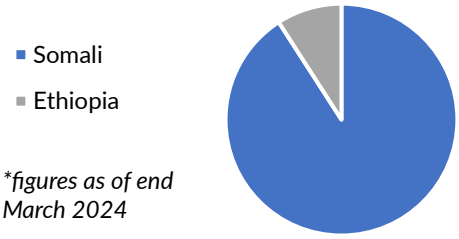
9,490
Number of **refugees and asylum-seekers** living in Kharaz Refugee Camp, up from 8,165 in 2018.

2,241
Number of **households** living in the Camp as of February 2025

1,340
Number of **persons with specific needs** living in the camp, including serious medical conditions, unaccompanied children, and persons living with disabilities.

Demographics*





figures as of end March 2024

Presence

UNHCR and partners support multi-sector humanitarian and protection assistance to refugees and host community members in the camp and surrounding areas, including water and sanitation, healthcare, education, and protection services.

Efforts are being made to gradually integrate services into the national system and to build the resilience and self-reliance of those who live there. This includes, for example, installation of solar power systems.

A view of Kharaz camp. ©UNHCR/Doane

Conditions

Life in Kharaz camp is challenging. Many have lived there for over 20 years and many for their entire lives – over 2,600 of those registered in Kharaz were born in Yemen - and experience frustration with the limited opportunities available for livelihoods and solutions. UNHCR is working to support self-reliance.

Service and assistance provision

Administration of the site is with the Government of Yemen. The camp administrator represents the Government and acts as the focal point for all Government authorities and services in the camp, including policing and the Immigration, Passport, and Naturalization Authority (IPNA).

Protection services are available, including case management, legal assistance, psychosocial support, child and woman protection, and support to those with specific needs.

Increasingly, a community-based approach is applied, relying on the skills and capacities of the refugees and host community, built over many years with the support of UNHCR and its partners.

Registration and documentation is provided by the Immigration, Passport, and Naturalization Authority.

Since 2015, in an effort to promote alternatives to camps, only the newborn children of refugees already resident are newly registered in Kharaz – all other arrivals are referred to Aden. Over time, this policy has contributed to a steady decline in the camp's population from its peak of around 18,000.

Education is provided by UNHCR and partners, with over 3,000 students enrolled across primary and secondary level, following the Yemeni curriculum. School supplies are also provided.

Health is provided at a primary health clinic on-site. Emergency and primary services, including psychosocial care, reproductive care, and physiotherapy are available. The host community can access this health clinic free of charge.

The clinic also provides information and awareness raising on nutrition, infant and child feeding practices, and hygiene.

The health personnel are qualified and acknowledged by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). The MoPH and UNHCR have provided regular training to ensure up-to-date knowledge of national health programmes and UNHCR standards. Around 90 per cent of the personnel are members of the refugee or host community.

Water and sanitation services such as safe and clean water are provided in the camp and in surrounding communities. Garbage collection and sanitation services are also available.

Food security and nutrition are supported through collaboration with the World Food Programme, with refugees receiving in-kind food baskets.

Prevention of and treatment for acute malnutrition for infants and children between six months and five years of age and pregnant and lactating women is available.

Shelter and Non-Food Items: including blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets, solar lamps, and mattresses are provided on an ad hoc basis. Shelter maintenance support is available for vulnerable families.

Cash-based interventions target only the most vulnerable refugees in Kharaz. Specifically, case management cash (cash provided as part of a case management process) is provided to highly vulnerable individuals to address identified protection concerns, complemented by other protection activities.

Faaduma and her children were living in Kharaz. Late in 2023 they returned to Somalia through the ASR programme. ©UNHCR/Doane

Increasing sustainability

Kharaz has hosted refugees since 2001. The remote location of the site, in combination with the broader context in Yemen, provides few opportunities for those living there. Many are reliant on humanitarian assistance year after year.

Together with partners, UNHCR is working to enhance self-reliance and seek solutions, while improving conditions on site.

→ **Solarization.** The solarization of the water system in 2023, which is now managed by the community, saves close to USD 1 million per year and ensures continued water and sanitation for all.

Solarization of homes and streets in Kharaz is ongoing: in 2024, 741 systems were installed in the homes of refugees and asylum seekers, providing a sustainable source of light.

→ **Promoting livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion.** Livelihoods training and start-up packages seek to support refugees earn incomes and to support themselves and their families.

→ **Working with authorities.** UNHCR is working with the authorities to expand services to Kharaz and for the gradual inclusion of refugees into national systems. For example, efforts are being made to have the schools and health clinic in Kharaz mainstreamed into the national system, registering them with the appropriate authorities.

→ **Assisted Spontaneous Return (ASR).** The ASR program allows Somali refugees to make informed decisions and ensures a safe and dignified return for those who choose to go back home.

For refugees and asylum seekers from Ethiopia, Voluntary Humanitarian Repatriation is available.

Refugee children attend school in Kharaz. ©UNHCR/Doane

BCHR together with UNHCR is working to solarize the homes of refugees and asylum seekers in Kharaz as well as the streets. Through doing so, refugees and asylum seekers living there have access to a sustainable source of light and enhanced safety. ©BCHR

Nadifa works as a midwife at Kharaz camp. The clinic in the camp serves both the refugee population in the camp and the host community. ©UNHCR/Doane

Coordination

UNHCR works in partnership with the Lahj Governorate authorities, the Immigration, Passport, and Nationality Authority, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the World Food Programme, and NGO Human Access in Kharaz.

Camp residents are actively engaged through community-led committees which represent diverse groups, including the Al-Ghaith refugee committee, the Somali Grand Council Committee, the Ethiopian Grand Council Committee, committees for women, youth groups, teachers, tribal leaders, and persons living with disabilities.

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