

Quarterly Regional Cash Assistance Update

January - March 2021 (Q1)

This update covers sixteen operations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in which cash-based interventions (CBIs) are currently implemented.

Key Highlights



1,059,544
unique individuals¹

reached with all modalities of cash assistance from January to March 2021.



94,761
unique individuals

were reached with emergency cash assistance as part of the COVID-19 response, for a total of USD 4,204,224 million.



The majority, or equal to
976,481
unique individuals

were reached with multi-purpose cash assistance, and the remaining 83,063 unique individuals with other types of sectoral CBIs including grants towards Health, Education, etc.



USD 48,764,546 million*

million distributed via all modes of cash assistance from January to March 2021, out of which USD 34,945,202 million was to Syrians and USD 13,819,344 million to persons of other nationalities.



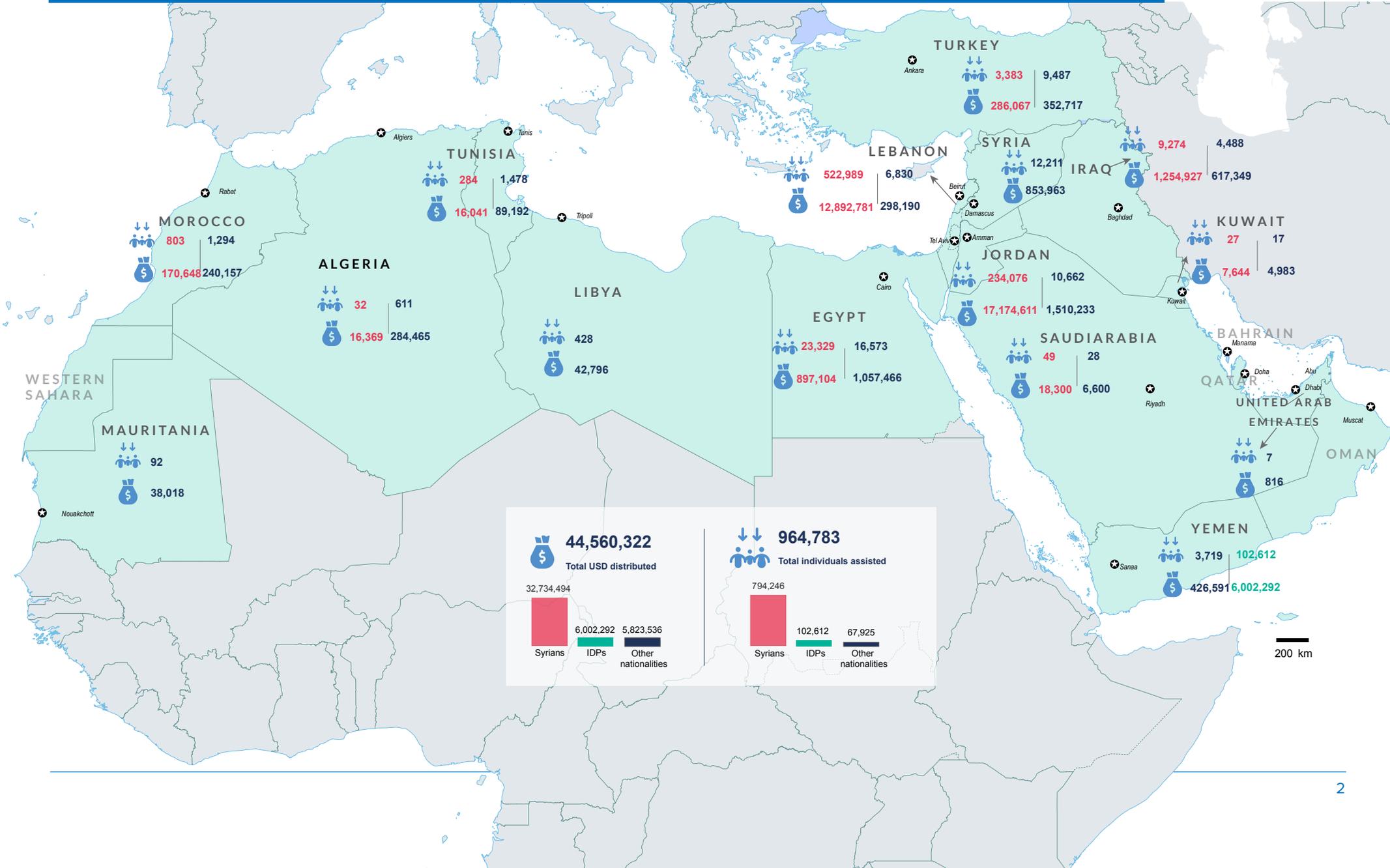
Khaled, a Syrian refugee from Aleppo, shows a UNHCR staff member his wife's medical file. Since arriving to Jordan they have had to undergo various medical procedures which UNHCR has supported.

Khaled's family relies on UNHCR's cash assistance to meet their basic needs.

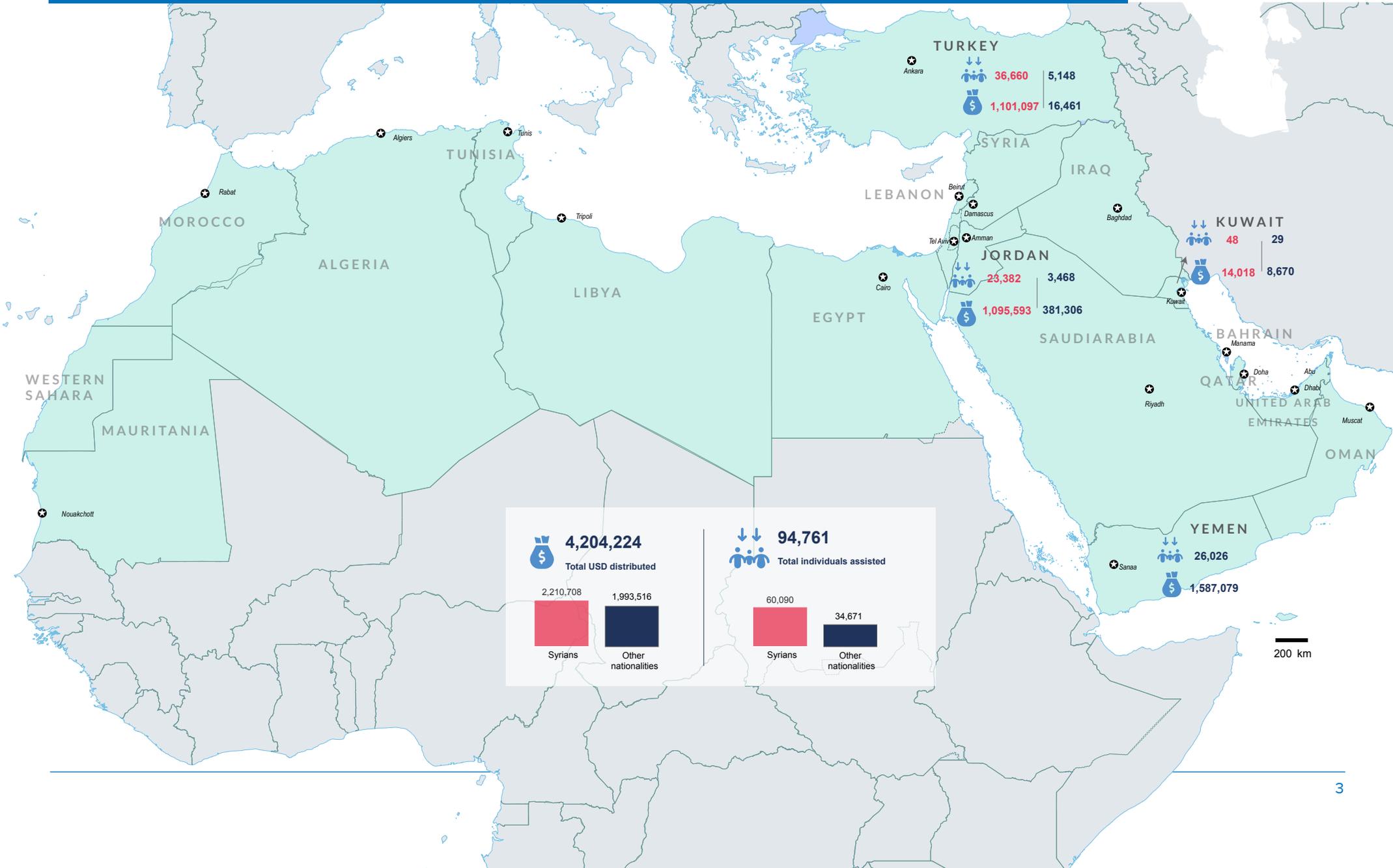
Photo by UNHCR /Mohammad Hawari

¹ The term unique individual applies to the calendar year. UNHCR counts unique individual as those that were added after Q1. When reporting the figures for a given Quarter, individuals assisted in earlier quarter(s) of a given year will therefore not be counted.

* An additional 600,474 individuals received cash assistance in the first quarter of 2021, with **USD 35,333,209 million** in winterization cash grants. UNHCR's CBI activities for winterization are reported separately; for further information see the [Final Report](#) for UNHCR's 2020-2021 Regional Winterization Assistance Programme.

UNHCR cash operations in MENA in Q1 2021 – budget and number of individuals reached by country, non-COVID-19 response only


UNHCR cash operations in MENA in Q1 2021 – budget and number of individuals reached by country, COVID-19 response only



Background and operational highlights

The year 2020 saw the expansion of UNHCR CBI activities across the MENA region due to increased emergency response, with cash assistance deployed in 16 out of 20 operations in MENA². In total, some 4.5 million individuals were reached with cash assistance, including 1.2 million for winter assistance.

In the first quarter of 2021, CBIs were implemented in 15 out of 20 MENA operations³. In 2021, the MENA Bureau began tracking additional information regarding assistance targeting camps as opposed to non-camp populations (cash support in camp locations is currently limited to Jordan and Iraq only). Tracking was also initiated for CBIs implemented through indirect implementation⁴, which in 2020 was limited to direct implementation only.

During Q1, 15 operations delivered multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) for basic needs, both as regular / repeated grants and as one-off emergency support. In addition, livelihood grants were delivered in Morocco and Turkey, health grants in Jordan, and education grants in Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco and Turkey, in

addition to other sectoral support such as cash for youth, adolescents and GBV survivors in Turkey.

Additional COVID-19 support continued throughout Q1, scaled down to four operations (Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey and Yemen) against the fourteen reached at the end of 2020, mostly due to the mainstreaming of COVID-19 into regular CBI activities.

Regarding systems, during Q1 the deployment of UNHCR's Cash Management System 'Cash Assist' was undertaken. This integrated software solution allows for all steps of cash delivery—from attribution of selection criteria, to preparation of beneficiary lists, to automatic reconciliation of cash deliveries—to be managed through a single software platform. Cash Assist is being rolled out globally in all UNHCR operations with direct implementation of CBIs. In MENA, Cash Assist is currently deployed in Jordan and Mauritania, and will be progressively deployed in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen by end-2021. Deployment across the remaining operations (Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Turkey and GCC countries) will follow in 2022.

2021 strategic priorities

In the first Quarter of 2021, a regional strategy for CBI operations in MENA for the years 2021 and 2022 was developed in line with UNHCR's global strategy. For 2021, it will broadly centre on the following elements:

- **Further harmonization** across all operations and compliance of basic elements for the standardization of CBI operations, including the expanded use of standard CBI post-distribution monitoring (PDM) tools and a transition towards harmonized and predictable targeting approaches.
- **Actively advocating** for the financial inclusion of UNHCR's persons of concern in social safety nets and social protection schemes.
- **Continued documentation and alignment** of UNHCR's cash assistance with policies and good practices from national social safety nets and social protection schemes, in close collaboration with partners.
- **Continued investment in sectoral studies** to enhance analysis and evidence based programming regarding CBIs, e.g. on UNHCR's use of cash to support protection outcomes through shelter interventions, and on how to better measure protection outcomes of CBIs.
- **Further promoting the systematic and expanded combination of case management and cash delivery**, where applicable, as well as expanding diversified cash modalities to better support protection outcomes.

² UNHCR operations in Turkey related to the Syria and Iraq situations are included in this MENA update

³ Compared to 16 at the end of 2020, due to Israel's temporary suspension of CBIs in Q1 to allow for the review of their current CBI programming, which will resume in Q2

⁴ Under direct implementation modalities, UNHCR holds a contract with the financial service provide (FSP) delivering the assistance. Under indirect implementation, cash assistance is delivered by UNHCR Partners, either directly or through a FSP.

Needs

Protection needs

UNHCR's CBI activities help to protect persons of concern by reducing the risks they face while supporting their capacity to meet their essential needs. The flexible nature of CBIs allows for a more dignified form of assistance, giving persons of concern the ability to immediately prioritize and meet their most pressing needs.

In 2021, UNHCR will continue streamlining protection considerations into CBI activities across the region by building on the outcomes of a regional study of UNHCR operations in MENA on CBI and protection outcomes across the 16 operations in MENA which implemented CBIs in 2020. The study—which also took stock of earlier MENA child protection and CBI interventions—mapped how protection indicators are included into UNHCR vulnerability and targeting models for CBIs; explored the degree to which referral of CBI assistance to/from protection services is performed; and assessed the use of cash in stand-alone protection programmes for specific needs. It has been observed that CBIs complemented by proper case management resulted in a positive impact towards the achievement of intended protection outcomes.

While a more detailed summary of the study's findings will be provided in Q2, preliminary results indicated the following:

- CBIs remained a central modality of assistance in support of protection and solutions objectives. In countries where data was available, at least 50 per cent of CBI recipients also received protection services. In some countries (e.g. Turkey), the majority (75 per cent) of regular CBIs were deployed to address protection risks, and the majority of persons of concern who received CBIs also received protection services including case management, legal assistance, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and child protection.
- The study confirmed that CBIs covered⁵ a wide range of sectoral and multi-sectoral needs. In line with UNHCR's mandate and previous organisational investments,⁶ the bulk of CBIs in MENA consisted of MPCA, with **all countries using multipurpose cash**. Over 60 per cent of operations used multipurpose cash for emergencies (one-off assistance), such as assistance to GBV survivors or cash for food and shelter intended for persons released from detention.
- Cash is regularly used as a means to respond to imminent protection risks. In such instances, either one-off or regular cash support was provided. For one-off cash support, UNHCR operations use the terms "Emergency Protection Cash Assistance (EPCA)" or "Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA)". EPCA consists of tailored, ad hoc, unrestricted, and unconditional grants, mainly distributed as direct cash in envelopes by UNHCR case workers or implementing partners. UNHCR Libya has made provision to distribute cash assistance for persons *"with acute or immediate protection needs and for the purpose of mitigating acute or immediate protection risks with a focus on the situation of persons recently released from captivity or detention, at risk of eviction or homelessness, survivors of critical incidents or with specific needs relating to age, ability or gender."*⁷ UNHCR Turkey opted for a longer-term cash for protection approach targeting people with specific needs, transgender and intersex individuals, GBV survivors, and adolescents leaving state institutions for an initial duration of 18 months.⁸ As for ECA, this longer-term grant aims at preventing, mitigating and responding to protection risks.
- The primary targeting criteria for CBIs adopted by UNHCR in the region are related to vulnerability. Most countries have formalised vulnerability criteria as part of their CBI standard operating procedures (SOPs). Particular attention is given to people with specific needs as a result of their socio-economic vulnerability or

⁵ Tracking of CBIs can be done through a 'design lens' where the intended use of the grant is the assessed parameter, or through a 'use of assistance lens'. As cash grants are flexible and can be used as per the recipient choice, the use of assistance lens tends to provide a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of CBI. Considering here the purpose of the mapping, UNHCR adopted a design lens.

⁶ Between 2014 - 2015, UNHCR led an Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC) Project focusing on multipurpose cash grants. Among other achievements, during this project UNHCR developed its protection risks and benefits analysis tool. For further information, please see [here](#).

⁷ Libya CBI SOP, March 2021

⁸ With the exceptional continuation of assistance if vulnerabilities continued.

lack of access to services. Persons with specific needs represent a particular category to be targeted and prioritised by UNHCR based on their socio-economic vulnerability and limited access to services, and based on the assumption that increased access to financial

resources will mitigate protection risks. Under the MENA Country Operation Plans for 2021, 11 out of 16 operation⁹ included the strengthening of their services for persons with specific needs. Of these, eight intend to do so through CBI activities.

Response

Response in 2021 (Q1)¹⁰

# of unique individuals assisted with cash	1,059,544
# of referrals of CBIs to/from case management	8,601
# of inquiries related to cash assistance	2,439,093
# of elderly persons (>65 or >60) assisted with cash	31,241
# of children and youth (<18) assisted with cash	663,101
# of transactions	420,767
USD disbursed¹¹	48,764,546

Assistance gap

# of eligible individuals not reached by UNHCR due to lack of funding	708,459
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A refugee man receives his UNHCR cash assistance from a post office in 6th of October City, Giza governorate, Cairo.

Photo by UNHCR /Pedro Costa Gomes

⁹ Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen.

¹⁰ All figures related to number of individuals assisted with cash, number of transactions and amount of USD disbursed are based on uploaded lists with the names of payees/eligible beneficiaries, which are sent to the Financial Service Provider(s) for that specific quarter, prior to any reconciliation or confirmation of withdrawal and/or reception of funds.

¹¹ This figure corresponds to the implementation of a wide variety of CBIs (see Table 1 for details) which includes MPCA for Basic Needs, Cash for Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), Education grants, Livelihood Grants, Shelter grants, Health and Hygiene grants.

Table 1 “Type of cash assistance in MENA countries”

Country Operation	Type of response	Type of cash-based assistance				
	COVID-19	Multi-purpose cash assistance for basic needs	Education grants	Livelihood Grants	Health Grants	Other
Algeria						
Egypt						
Iraq						
Jordan						
Kuwait						
Lebanon						
Libya						
Mauritania						
Morocco						
Saudi Arabia						
Syria						
Tunisia						
Turkey						
UAE						
Yemen						

In 2021, **the largest share of cash-based assistance was allocated for basic needs**, delivered through MPCA by way of regular payments but also through one-off emergency payments. Sectoral CBI programmes include cash to support both primary and secondary education, grants for unaccompanied and separated

children (UASC), as well as grants to support livelihood opportunities — though on a smaller scale. Cash for health programmes also continue to be implemented in several operations, as well as grants specifically aimed at shelter support.

Partnerships

Beyond its role in inter-agency coordination for CBIs in several operations, UNHCR continues to place a strong emphasis on common delivery systems and partnerships in the provision of financial assistance, in line with the [December 2018 statement on cash by OCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP](#). This vision is fully implemented in Jordan through its Common Cash Facility (CCF), and in Lebanon through the Lebanon One Unified System for E-cards (LOUISE) platform.

Contributions from the private sector towards UNHCR’s growing [Refugee Zakat Fund](#) also continued throughout the first quarter of 2021, providing ongoing support to persons of concern in **Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania** and **Yemen**.



DAFI student Fatima withdraws her monthly scholarship payment at Bank El Amana ATM point in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

*Photo by
UNHCR Mauritania*

Donors:

UNHCR is grateful for the support of donors who contributed to the cash assistance programme for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in MENA with unearmarked and earmarked funds, as well as those who have contributed directly to the operations.

African Development Bank Group | Australia | Austria | Belgium | Canada | CERF | Country-Based Pooled Funds | Czechia | Denmark | Estonia | European Union | Finland | France | Germany | Holy See | Iceland | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Japan Association for UNHCR | Kuwait | Latvia | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Netherlands | Norway | Private Donors Canada | Private Donors Lebanon | Private Donors Republic of Korea | Private Donors Kuwait | Private Donors United Arab Emirates | Private Donors United Kingdom | Private Donors Worldwide | Qatar | Qatar Charity | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al-Thani Humanitarian Fund | Slovenia | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Arab Emirates | United Kingdom | United States of America | UNO-Fluechtlingshilfe | UN Peacebuilding Fund

For more details, please contact UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau in Amman (Jordan) at: MENAreporting@unhcr.org

For MENA regional and country reports, please visit – [UNHCR Global Focus](#); [UNHCR Operational Portal \(Syria Regional Refugee Response\)](#); and [The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan website](#)