

# Supporting refugees in Jordan: what we achieved in 2021

UNHCR Jordan, December 2021

With 2021 marking the tenth year of the Syria crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic in its second year, coordination in addressing the different challenges of the refugee response in Jordan has become even more important. By building on previous progress and by seizing emerging opportunities, UNHCR marked several achievements this year, not least due to the strong coordination with partners and the steadfast generosity of the Government of Jordan as a host country. UNHCR is proud to work with 36 partners, including government entities, civil society, and other UN agencies, while ensuring that the humanitarian response and development action are aligned in the continued search for sustainable solutions.

## 1 | COVID-19 and vaccination

Following the inclusion of refugees in the national response since the beginning of the pandemic, the Government of Jordan generously **included** refugees in the vaccination plan as of January 2021.



Marwan, Syrian refugee, gets his COVID-19 vaccine in the Zaatari camp vaccination centre.

Since then, UNHCR has worked closely with the Ministries of Health and Interior, as well as the National Centre for Security and Crisis Management, to raise awareness among refugee communities about the vaccination campaign and mobilise people to get vaccinated. Joint efforts have included **community outreach** and **communication materials**, as well as the establishing of vaccination stations and mobile units in **camps** and **registration centres** across the country. As a result, refugee vaccination rates continue to increase and are almost on par with Jordan's national vaccination rate.

## 2 | Refugee doctors

Successful coordination among UNHCR and the Ministry of Health led to **eight refugee medical specialists** starting to work in hospitals and clinics across Jordan as United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in June 2021. The employment of these health professionals marked a major step forward in creating additional livelihood opportunities for refugees in Jordan and highlighted the active contributions that refugees can make to their host communities. To **honour** the eight doctors from Syria, Iraq and Yemen and recognise their work and contribution to the COVID-19 response in Jordan, UNHCR awarded them the UNHCR Volunteer Service Award.



Basma, Iraqi refugee, is one of eight refugee doctors working with the Jordanian Ministry of Health as a UNV.

## 3 | Registration and access to protection services

Following the adapting of services and modalities to a **hybrid approach**, UNHCR has been able to offer refugees both in person and remote services throughout 2021. By early December, UNHCR had

processed and renewed documentation for more than 400,000 refugees and asylum seekers, twice the number processed last year, while the backlog created due to the halt in services in 2020 was nearly cleared.



*Amina, a Syrian refugee living in Amman, Jordan, waits in line to collect her renewed asylum seeker certificate.*

In addition to registration services, UNHCR worked to ensure increased access for refugees to other protection services. The UNHCR Helpline, a key tool for two-way communication with refugees, and its Interactive Voice Response system were redesigned to respond more effectively to refugee and asylum seekers' calls. In Mafraq, an office was constructed for the Family Protection Department, to ensure refugee women and children living in Mafraq would still be able to seek guidance on protection issues.

#### 4 | Cash-based interventions

UNHCR disbursed over USD 100 million to over 350,000 individuals in 2021. This support was provided to vulnerable refugees in different forms, through the monthly **basic needs** cash assistance, **COVID-19 emergency** assistance, **winterization** assistance.



*Abu Safwan worked as a driver for a phosphate company back in Syria. A refugee in Jordan since 2015, he relies on cash support.*

In order to enhance financial inclusion among refugee communities, throughout the year over 6,000 families receiving cash assistance transitioned from virtual accounts to mobile wallets, and as a result, 18% of the cash beneficiaries are now using mobile wallets.

#### 5 | Economic inclusion & Livelihoods

After increased advocacy efforts with the Government of Jordan and key development partners, the newly implemented flexible work permit scheme is a milestone for refugee access to the labour market. The scheme allows refugees to issue work permits that are not tied to an employer, but rather allow them flexibility to switch between jobs.



*Mahmoud, 20, a Syrian refugee, works at Classic Fashion Apparel in Irbid, as a trainee, after completing his fashion and textile degree at Luminus Technical University College.*

In addition to the 27,000 flexible work permits issued in 2021, over 100 Syrian refugees and Jordanians were able to register or get a licence for **home-based businesses**. To further foster economic empowerment, UNHCR hosted the **Mother's Day pop-up shop** in Galleria Mall and the **Winter #WithRefugees Bazaar** in IKEA, where over 50 refugees and refugee-supporting initiatives **sold** their products (art, food, home décor, jewellery). All proceeds amounting to a total of JOD 24,000 (USD 34,000) went directly back to the vendors.

#### 6 | Community-based protection

In 2021, UNHCR continued to rely on and strengthen its community-based approach to protection, actively engaging refugees in decisions impacting their lives and strengthening their links with Jordanian host communities. Community support committees played a key role in this community-based approach and in the smooth and peaceful coexistence between refugees and Jordanians. UNHCR's perception **surveys** further

highlight the sympathy that the vast majority of Jordanians feel towards refugees.



*Nasser, community volunteer and Syrian refugee, is determined to change the perception of what disability means.*

UNHCR's Communication with Communities strategy, which includes social media, SMS texts, focus group discussions, the Helpline and the Help website, was critical in gauging key concerns among refugees and raising awareness on important issues, such as the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, [WFP assistance cuts](#), and [onward movements](#) from Jordan to Europe.

## 7 | Education

With COVID-19 still impacting access to education for at least half of 2021, UNHCR continued to support the Ministry of Education (MoE) in implementing different programmes and modalities for remote learning. The 13 Connected Learning Hubs across Jordan provided a key resource for refugee and Jordanian students to be able to expand their educational experience and access resources and tools. In coordination with MoE, the UNHCR-supported Kolibri e-learning platform was integrated in many public schools, and teachers received training to start integrating its resources into their classroom lessons.



*Esraa, Syrian 23-year-old refugee, is a DAFI graduate and now works as freelancer, creating websites for small businesses.*

Further to primary and secondary education, UNHCR continued to support refugee access to tertiary education through the [DAFI](#) scholarship programme, which this year offered scholarships to 40 new students.

## 8 | Solutions

Despite the COVID-19 travel restrictions, some 4,000 refugees were [resettled](#) from Jordan to third countries in 2021, a 250% increase from 2020. More than 100 individuals departed on complementary pathways, including [educational opportunities](#), family reunification, [humanitarian corridor programmes](#) or [work visas](#). Resettlement and complementary pathways reduce the pressure on Jordan as a host country. UNHCR continues its efforts to expand available opportunities for the 10% of the refugee population that is in need for resettlement every year.



*Warda and her family relocated to Italy, through the Humanitarian Corridors Programme.*

A total of 43,200 refugees have returned to Syria since October 2018, including some 5,800 in 2021. While UNHCR does not facilitate or promote returns to Syria at this moment, the office is monitoring the border closely and is offering protection counselling sessions to provide information to refugees who voluntarily choose to return.

## 9 | Climate action & sustainability

[Climate action](#) and sustainability took a front seat this year. Whether through staff trainings and seminars, increased recycling and reduced waste, LED-efficient lighting, electric vehicles, or water usage monitoring, UNHCR in Jordan has made [big steps](#) towards sustainability. Even outside of its premises, UNHCR works with partners to ensure

that refugee camps are also enhancing climate action and seeking sustainable solutions.



*Nayef, Syrian, works in the "Waste to (positive) Energy" project at the Irbid Waste Sorting Plant. His job is to sort cardboard, nylon, and plastic wastes.*

Zaatari and Azraq camp are both 100% powered by their solar plants, and those plants are mostly operated by refugees. Most recently, **Hatem**, a Syrian refugee, was recruited as a United Nations Volunteer to work in the Azraq solar plant.

## 10 | Health care

2021 was a milestone for non-Syrian refugee **access** to healthcare in Jordan, who are now able to access the national health system at the non-insured Jordanian rate. UNHCR continues to support refugees in Jordan to access primary, secondary and tertiary health services and is making efforts to maximize the utilization of public health services by refugees. Through 2021, over 4,000 **refugees** were assisted through UNHCR's cash-for-health programme.



*Jameela's family fled Iraq in 2006. With two kids with increased health needs due to thalassemia, the family relies on cash support.*

Confronting the challenges of the past year head-on, UNHCR in Jordan has continued to serve the most vulnerable communities, to enable them to meet basic needs and do so with dignity. As of 15 December, UNHCR has received 59% of its total 2021 requirements of USD 405 million. We remain grateful to our donors, whose continued support to UNHCR and our partners has made the collective efforts for the refugee response in Jordan possible.

### CONTACT

Francesco Bert, Senior External Relations Officer, [bert@unhcr.org](mailto:bert@unhcr.org)