

# CRITICAL FUNDING NEEDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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## INTRODUCTION

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is facing a series of compounding crises that are severely impacting its populations. The far-reaching socioeconomic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic is being further exacerbated by the ongoing war in Ukraine, leading to a significant increase in poverty and heightened reliance on humanitarian aid among vulnerable displaced and host communities.


In 2023 to date, two new emergencies have intensified existing hardships. Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria severely affected both countries; a record 15.3 million Syrians, including 6.8 million internally displaced, urgently require humanitarian assistance and protection inside Syria, in addition to more than 1.8 million Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in Sudan that started in mid-April has resulted in a substantial influx into Egypt, straining Egypt's resources and infrastructure. Furthermore, refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in Tunisia are being relocated from urban centres, with hundreds stranded in dire conditions following their removal to remote and desolate areas near the country's borders, or pushed across the borders with Libya and Algeria.

In protracted situations like Jordan and Lebanon, the impact of the Syria crisis and recent socio-economic challenges have been devastating. In Lebanon, 90% of Syrian refugees now find themselves living in conditions of extreme poverty. Food prices have surged by 332% since June 2021, pushing 94% of

refugee households to incur debt just to meet their essential needs. In Jordan, two-thirds of refugees have reported that their financial situation has worsened in the last 12 months and recent analysis conducted by UNHCR suggests that household debt can be as high as JOD 1,250 (USD 1,766). In Iraq, relative stability has created a unique opportunity for displaced Iraqis, returnees, and refugees to be more included in public services and social protection schemes provided by the Government. Nevertheless, years of conflict have reduced the capacity and resilience of national institutions, making the country susceptible to internal and external shocks.

Despite the generosity of donors, UNHCR operations in the Middle East and North Africa continue to face significant funding gaps. Already operating with \$110 million less in the region than in 2022, UNHCR is currently confronting additional needs amidst funding shortfalls. These funding gaps put vulnerable populations at risk, hindering their access to vital assistance and services essential for their survival.











This document presents an overview of the most critical funding gaps in the region and the potential consequences for vulnerable populations if additional funds are not secured in 2023. The UNHCR activities outlined here are part of the comprehensive needs presented in the Global Appeal and can be implemented by the end of 2023 with additional funding support.



*Jordan. Basel (left) and Adana, Syrian refugees, enjoying the sun after heavy rain, which causes flooding in some parts of Zaatari refugee Camp. This year UNHCR has provided cash assistance to all refugees living in the camp to help them stay warm through winter. Photo: © UNHCR/Shawkat AlHarfoush*



## Total critical needs for MENA: **\$339 million**

Country	Critical funding gap (US\$)	Overview of needs and estimated # of impacted people
 <b>Algeria</b>	<b>\$6.1 million</b>	Health (103,330 refugees and asylum-seekers); nutrition (13,000 refugees); WASH (90,000 refugees); education (37,000 refugees); basic assistance (2,500 refugee families)
 <b>Egypt</b>	<b>\$13.1 million</b>	Cash assistance (16,000 refugee families); education (66,000 refugee); health (8,000 refugees)
 <b>Iraq</b>	<b>\$57.7 million</b>	Cash assistance (21,600 refugees); education (46,000 refugees); legal assistance and civil documentation (44,000 IDPs and IDP returnees); Area-Based Programming for Protection and Solutions approach and infrastructure projects (292,000 refugees, IDPs and IDP returnees)
 <b>Jordan</b>	<b>\$82 million</b>	Cash assistance (115,000 refugees); health (17,200 refugees); sustainable housing and settlement (32,700 refugees); protection (54,100 refugees)
 <b>Lebanon</b>	<b>\$76.1 million</b>	Cash assistance (639,000 refugees); health (30,100 refugees); shelter (38,600 refugees and host community members); winterization (600,000 refugees assisted with winter cash, 58,000 refugees and 9,500 Lebanese with CRIs and biomass fuel; 35 hosting communities will benefit from support projects)
 <b>Libya</b>	<b>\$3.7 million</b>	Cash assistance (600 refugees and asylum-seekers); health (300,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and host community members); core relief items (10,000 refugees and asylum-seekers and 1,000 IDP families); Quick Impact Projects (20,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, IDPs and host community members); emergency assistance (3,000 refugees and migrants); capacity building
 <b>Mauritania</b>	<b>\$5.4 million</b>	Cash assistance (89,200 refugees); health (108,000 refugees); shelter (84,400); WASH (84,400); education (7,500 refugee children enrolled in primary and secondary education)
 <b>Morocco</b>	<b>\$2.2 million</b>	Cash assistance (1,000 refugee families); health (2,500 refugees); education (2,500 refugees); livelihoods (300 refugees)
 <b>Syria</b>	<b>\$52.3 million</b>	Winterization (849,000 refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs)
 <b>Yemen</b>	<b>\$39 million</b>	Cash assistance (12,000 refugees and 260,000 IDPs); shelter (10,000 IDP families); camp management and coordination (1 million IDPs); protection (1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers and 100,000 IDPs); education (2,000 refugees and asylum-seekers); health (1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers); livelihoods (500 refugees and asylum-seekers)



## ALGERIA

**Critical funding need: \$6.1 million**

Urgent intervention is required to address declining healthcare access for more than 103,000 refugees and asylum-seekers across Algeria. UNHCR's support to the health system in the Sahrawi camps in Tindouf is crucial to prevent increased mortality and morbidity rates among the vulnerable population. In urban areas, access to essential healthcare is challenging, particularly for children, the elderly, and those with chronic illnesses; inadequate funding will severely impact their well-being. UNHCR's efforts to combat critical nutrition concerns, such as providing therapeutic feeding for 13,000 children with severe acute malnutrition and preventing anaemia in girls and women, also require additional funds.

Over 90,000 vulnerable refugees in the Sahrawi camps depend on UNHCR's assistance to meet some of their basic needs, such as access to clean water. Thus, enhancing water supply and production capacity in the camps is essential, through drilling and equipping additional boreholes, replacing old metal reservoirs, or extending the water network in certain municipalities.

Funding is also required to improve education quality and student retention in the Sahrawi refugee camps through supporting more than 1,200 teachers and non-teaching staff, capacitating and training teachers, maintaining infrastructure in 37 schools, and providing books and uniforms for students.

UNHCR is also planning to provide tents capable of withstanding windstorms and flooding for 1,005 families, cooking stoves to promote the food security of the most in-need households, and cash assistance to support the protection and well-being of vulnerable populations and reduce susceptibility to gender-based violence, child labour and other risks. Without sufficient support, refugees and asylum-seekers will face increased hardships, protection risks and harmful coping mechanisms, further limiting their capacity to rebuild their lives in dignity while enhancing self-sufficiency.



Algeria. Refugee women in the camps support UNHCR in distribution of winter clothes donated by UNIQLO. Photo: © UNHCR/Eunice Ohanusi

## EGYPT

**Critical funding need: \$13.1 million**

By the end of August, the crisis in Sudan has displaced more than 280,000 people to Egypt. This influx is intensifying the strain on resources and public services. Most new arrivals have experienced trauma due to the conflict and violence. Family separation has resulted in a significant number of unaccompanied and separated children, as well as an increased number of female-headed households, all of whom require protection and assistance.



Securing additional funding is crucial for UNHCR to provide critical and timely support to refugees and asylum-seekers. This includes assistance to around 16,000 vulnerable families through bi-monthly multi-purpose cash assistance. Additionally, the education of 66,000 refugee children is under threat, leading to an increased number of out-of-school children and limited opportunities for their future. Furthermore, some 8,000 refugees suffering from chronic diseases may not receive vital medication, putting their lives at risk.



Egypt. Mohamed (4), Mariam (8), Nussaiba (6), Ibrahim (3) in the UNHCR Registration Centre in Cairo while waiting to be registered as asylum-seekers. They arrived in Egypt after fleeing Sudan together with their single mother and three more siblings. Photo: © UNHCR/Jaime Giménez

## IRAQ



Critical funding need: **\$57.7 million**



Iraq. Atheer, 26 years, from the city of Heet, Al-Muhamed district in Anbar, returned to the area after the end of the military operations, and started his life again despite the difficult financial situation. Photo: © UNHCR/Karlo Jeelo

Thousands of vulnerable refugee families depend on multi-purpose cash assistance to be able to afford basic necessities such as food, healthcare and rent. Regrettably, due to underfunding, 21,600 refugees are at risk of not receiving this vital aid, leading to detrimental outcomes like reduced food intake, debt burden, child labour, and early marriage.

Moreover, 30,000 out of 70,000 school-aged refugee children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where more than 90% of refugees in Iraq reside, are currently out of school. Securing funding is crucial to create more spaces in schools and provide students with transportation assistance, catch-up classes and learning materials. Ensuring the implementation of the Refugee Education Integration Policy will facilitate education access for 46,000 refugee children and the hiring of qualified refugee teachers.

In Iraq, lack of civil documentation is a significant protection issue. One of UNHCR's priorities is to facilitate access to core civil documents for IDPs and returnees, including through the provision of legal assistance. Funding is vital to provide legal support for IDPs and help them obtain civil documentation such as birth certificates and national identity cards. Without this funding, over 44,000 IDPs and returnees are at risk of arrest, restricted movement, and becoming stateless. Moreover, lack of documents can lead to exclusion from assistance programmes and inability to access basic services and social benefits.



Funding is also needed to support infrastructure projects benefiting over 292,000 IDPs, refugees, and vulnerable Iraqis, fostering their integration into public services and enabling sustainable solutions. Without funding, living conditions will remain inadequate, and health and community centres servicing refugees and Iraqis will lack the capacity to provide quality services to all.

## JORDAN



Critical funding need: **\$82 million**

In 2023, UNHCR reduced basic needs cash assistance for urban households, leading to a 66% increase in families at risk of eviction; a third of affected households had to move, and emergency coping strategies like child labour rose, as monitored by UNHCR's Vulnerability Radar. Due to retargeting with WFP, UNHCR will assist fewer families (28,500), but reach more vulnerable individuals. Vulnerable refugee families in Jordan experience increased basic needs during the cold season, requiring fuel, medicines, and warm clothes for children when livelihood opportunities are scarce. Therefore, sustained donor support for cash assistance is crucial to address these heightened basic needs until the end of the year.

In 2023, UNHCR has already reduced the number of supported health clinics in Amman from five to two while capacity issues in the health system remain. The clinics in urban and peri-urban areas were key entry points to services as well as for monitoring the nutritional status of children under five and childbearing age women. As a result of this shift, large groups of patients with non-communicable diseases in need of medication can no longer be assisted by UNHCR.

Funding is also critically needed to repair 1,150 shelters in the camps. Moreover, UNHCR can no longer preposition containers for unforeseen displacement or construct private latrines for the most vulnerable families. These de-prioritized activities have resulted in limited access to proper shelter, increased risks of gender-based violence, and a higher transmission of diseases and infections in the camps.

As a result of the reduced budget, in 2023 UNHCR has reduced protection services available to refugees and asylum-seekers in Jordan. Funding is critical to the continued provision of assistance such as psychological support, legal counselling, gender-based violence prevention as well as maintain community-based protection mechanisms, particularly for the most vulnerable.



*Jordan. Rawan and her little sister Razan, a refugee girls, plays after heavy rain, which causes flooding in some parts of Zaatari refugee Camp. Photo: © UNHCR/Shawkat Alharfoush*

## LEBANON



Critical funding need: **\$76.1 million**

The protracted nature of the refugee situation, coupled in recent years with the impact of the socio-economic crisis, has led to an exponential rise in extreme poverty and increased protection risks. Currently, 127,800 refugee families (639,000 individuals) rely on UNHCR's multi-purpose cash assistance for survival. Urgent funding is required to assist these families throughout the last three months of 2023.

With health services mostly privatized and strained by the economic situation, accessing basic and lifesaving care has become extremely challenging for refugees. UNHCR's latest Protection Monitoring results reveal that 35% of refugees have reduced their healthcare access and 33% cannot afford essential medicine. Additionally, 13% avoid seeking healthcare due to affordability concerns. Addressing financial barriers to primary and secondary healthcare is critical, including covering medical costs and transportation. Urgent additional funding is needed to ensure refugees' access to secondary healthcare throughout 2023.

Due to limited funding, UNHCR has had to reduce the rehabilitation of substandard buildings in urban/peri-urban areas, leaving many refugees in overcrowded and vulnerable neighbourhoods. Cash-for-rent activities addressing eviction and protection threats were also compromised due to lack of resources. Urgent funding is needed to provide safe and dignified shelter for 7,700 refugee and Lebanese families in the last three months of 2023.

During winter, refugees having difficulties in meeting their needs require support to cover additional expenses like heaters, fuel, electricity, and warm clothing. UNHCR plans to provide winter cash assistance for up to four months in 2023-2024 to help vulnerable refugees with winter-related necessities. To support vulnerable refugees and Lebanese families, UNHCR also plans to distribute core relief items, shelter kits for weatherproofing, and biomass fuel briquettes/pellets for heating to help address protection and health hazards related to winter and floods.

Funding is also needed to continue UNHCR's community support projects (CSPs), which aim to alleviate socio-economic pressures in municipalities, enhance social cohesion, and meet the needs of both refugee and Lebanese communities. By installing solar panels and renovating communal spaces, CSPs also support local services like health facilities with sustainable power during the high energy demand period throughout winter.



*Lebanon. Syrian refugee and widow Khadra, 50, inside her tent in El-Mina, northern Lebanon, where she has lived in an informal refugee settlement for the past 12 years since the Syria crisis began, faces dire poverty.*  
Photo: © UNHCR/Joelle Abou Chabke



## LIBYA



Critical funding need: **\$3.7 million**

Additional funding would allow UNHCR to provide urgent aid and lifesaving assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers at heightened risk due to newly developing situations around Libya (notably in Sudan, at the Tunisia-Libya border, and in Niger). Some 3,000 urban refugees and migrants would be targeted with core relief items and hygiene kits.

Needs for emergency cash assistance remain unmet and additional funding would allow UNHCR to assist an additional 600 refugees and asylum-seekers in need. Moreover, funding would also enable UNHCR to support an additional 10,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in detention centres and urban settings through the provision of mattresses, blankets, hygiene kits and other core relief items.



Libya. Asylum-seekers and refugees are departing from Libya to the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Rwanda.  
 Photo: © UNHCR/Ziyad Alhamadi

With further funding, UNHCR plans to improve health services in primary healthcare centres hosting refugees, asylum-seekers, and IDPs by donating essential equipment and cover medication needs at the Community Day Centre, clinics, and some primary healthcare centres. This is crucial as the lack of medication has been identified as a major health need in Libya, leading to simple medical cases becoming life-threatening.

UNHCR plans to expand quick impact projects (QIPs<sup>1</sup>) in Libya to address identified needs in collaboration with national and local authorities and communities. The projects focus on education, health, community empowerment, sports, and infrastructure, and up to 20,000 additional individuals will directly benefit. Additionally, UNHCR would be able to establish a capacity development programme for personnel from various agencies, including the Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration and Libyan Coast Guards.

## MAURITANIA



Critical funding need: **\$5.4 million**

Additional funding will be vital to prevent the reduction of cash-based interventions for close to 85,200 refugees and 4,000 individuals in host communities. In Mbera refugee camp, the food ration reduction by WFP in 2022 impacted over 50% of the most vulnerable households in the camp, hindering their ability to meet even basic needs. A similar scenario is anticipated this year. Funding is also crucial to support health assistance to 108,000 refugees in both camp and urban areas. Without adequate funding, healthcare access will decrease and protection risks grow as refugees may resort to harmful coping mechanisms.

In 2022, around 12,000 new refugees were registered by UNHCR in Mbera camp and some 5,000 arrived between January and August 2023. In the remainder of 2023, new arrivals are expected to continue, creating unforeseen strain on existing services. Adequate shelter is essential for the protection and survival of these newcomers, many of whom arrive in poor conditions after lengthy journeys. It also helps prevent ill health and the spread of contagious diseases, such as the waves of measles previously witnessed in the camp. With this influx and no large-scale returns to Mali, the refugee population in Mbera has exceeded 85,000, the highest since the camp's establishment in 2012. Access to water and proper maintenance of WASH services are vital to ensure decent living conditions and peaceful coexistence in this semi-desertic area. Funding is also needed to ensure newly-arrived refugee children's access to education upon arrival and avoid school dropouts while contributing to child protection. Increasing needs in terms of infrastructure (construction and rehabilitation), school kits and teacher salaries are expected, particularly for secondary education.

<sup>1</sup> QIPs are quick, small-scale projects aimed at improving access to basic services and fostering resilience and coexistence between displaced and host communities.

## MOROCCO

**Critical funding need: \$2.2 million**

Underfunding poses significant challenges for UNHCR in Morocco, impeding its ability to deliver cash assistance to 1,000 refugee families, which consequently deepens their vulnerabilities. In terms of health, UNHCR is the main actor supporting refugees' access to secondary and tertiary healthcare in the absence of their inclusion in the ongoing national social protection reform. Lack of funding will impact UNHCR's ability to cover critical medical expenses and specialized interventions for 2,500 refugees.

Underfunding will also hinder UNHCR's efforts to provide conditional cash assistance for education to around 1,200 refugee children enrolled in Moroccan public schools, increasing the risks of school dropouts and harmful coping mechanisms like child labour or early marriage. The shortage of funds will also limit UNHCR's capacity to offer support classes such as Arabic and French, which are essential for helping refugee children integrate into public schools. The lack of funding for UNHCR's livelihood programme will also directly impact 300 refugees' self-reliance, leading to reduced income-generating activities, vocational training enrolments, and job placements, ultimately resulting in more refugees relying on cash assistance to meet their basic needs.

## SYRIA

**Critical funding need: \$52.3 million**

The earthquakes in February have exacerbated the already dire situations of displaced populations and host communities in Syria, who are enduring a 12-year-long crisis. The earthquakes resulted in the loss of adequate shelters and livelihoods for many, further deepening their hardships. Additionally, refugees and asylum-seekers, who are already marginalized and do not have the right to work, face even greater challenges.

With limited financial resources, UNHCR's ability to provide essential cash and in-kind assistance to 849,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, and IDPs during the approaching winter season, when their needs for fuel and winter clothes will increase, will be hampered. This lack of assistance will lead to heightened protection risks for these vulnerable populations.



*Syria. A Syrian returnee man carrying winterization items that he received from UNHCR in Leramoun town, northern rural Aleppo. Photo: © UNHCR/Hameed Marouf*

## YEMEN

**Critical funding need: \$39 million**

*Yemen. Abdul Qadeer is the head of his household. His wife passed away, so he is responsible for six sons who are living in the same house. He was affected by the war as his house was damaged partly from the arm clashes in the neighborhood. Photo: © UNHCR/NMO*

The protection space in Yemen continues to shrink, with violations of international humanitarian and human rights law affecting forcibly displaced persons in particular. Some 21.6 million Yemenis (two-thirds of the population) are dependent on humanitarian assistance to survive, including 4.5 million IDPs and 71,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. Women and children, who represent an estimated 74% of the displaced population, often have limited access to services and face specific risks linked to prevailing traditional social norms and customs, such as gender-based violence and child labour.

The protection risks for refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and IDP returnees are exacerbated by insecurity, economic collapse, and the limited availability of basic services. UNHCR's cash assistance has proved critical for mitigating socioeconomic vulnerabilities, deterring people from harmful coping mechanisms that trigger protection risks while ensuring self-reliance. The funding gap facing the multi-purpose cash and emergency cash assistance programmes, including cash for protection, would leave 272,000 of the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs unassisted.