

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa

COVID-19 Emergency Response Update #5

17 May 2020

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, Yemen, and Turkey¹

Key Figures



20

out of 20 UNHCR countries / operations are reporting COVID-19 cases in the region



16 million

2020 planning figure for people of concern in the Middle East and North Africa



4

COVID-19 cases reported among POCs in MENA²

Regional Developments

The United Nations launched an [updated Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) on 7 May 2020, expanding the global plan to fight COVID-19 in fragile countries and increasing funding requirements from USD 2 billion to **USD 6.7 billion**. On 11 May, UNHCR issued its own [revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal](#), **highlighting additional immediate and prioritized needs of USD 745 million worldwide.**

In **Iraq**, the Permanent Committee of the Ministry of Interior resumed renewals of refugee registration documents in its Baghdad office at the end of April, which for now, are benefitting small numbers of Syrian and Palestinian refugees. In **Egypt**, due to the suspension of registration interviews, an increasing number of refugees and asylum-seekers have not been able to renew their UNHCR documents, with some consequently facing difficulties receiving UNHCR cash assistance through the Egypt Post Office. After advocating with the authorities to demonstrate tolerance to people of concern with expired documentation during the COVID-19 crisis, the Egypt Post Office confirmed payments would be processed for those with expired documentation provided they are on UNHCR's payment list.

In **Yemen**, the number of COVID-19 cases rose this week, with over sixty cases recorded in Aden. In response, curfew measures have been tightened and enforced. At a time when funding requirements for Yemen are at a critically low level, the coronavirus pandemic is an overlapping threat for a country already considered to be the world's worst humanitarian crisis. While the health system in Yemen is clearly in a fragile state, UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of everyone, without distinction of origin or status, in health response plans.

Across MENA, national response efforts are still ramping up to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and to mitigate the impacts. In **Algeria**, the Government opened a field hospital in Rabouni on 9 May, to provide health support to Sahrawi refugees living in the camps near Tindouf. The hospital is run by a team of Algerian medical specialists, and in addition to a dedicated COVID-19 service, is fitted out to take on medical emergencies, and offers gynaecological, internal medicine, and radiology services. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, stricter preventive measures are being applied in the **camps near Tindouf**, including the systematic disinfection of all vehicles returning to camps, distribution of masks and hand sanitizer to traders who supply food and non-food products, and reducing the number of medical transfers made to Tindouf – made possible by the opening of the Rabouni hospital.

Main Lines of Response



Continuing, adapting and delivering protection and assistance to the most vulnerable



Strengthening communication with communities



Prioritizing immediate interventions to prevent infections and supporting access to services and materials



Advocating for the inclusion of refugees, IDPs and other marginalized groups into national public health and other responses, and supporting national systems to deliver assistance



Empowering individuals and families to make the best decisions for themselves, through cash-based assistance

¹ UNHCR Turkey reports to the UNHCR Europe Bureau, although operations in Turkey related to the Syria and Iraq Situations are included in the MENA update.

² Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen

Highlights from the field

In **Jordan**, the distribution of a one-off emergency cash assistance to approximately 18,000 vulnerable refugee families living in urban areas, is starting to help households cope with the economic impact of coronavirus. In a [recent survey carried out by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP](#), it was revealed that over 90 per cent of refugees living in the Kingdom have less than 50 Jordanian Dinar (USD 70) of savings left. In addition, many refugees who previously relied on the informal labour market for work – around 40 percent of refugees in Jordan – have been left without an income.

32 per cent of respondents did not have enough to eat in the previous seven days due to lack of money, food stocks and travel restrictions limiting their access to markets. Levels of poor and borderline food consumption scores increased among non-Syrian refugee households, when compared to September, with findings also showing a deterioration in food consumption across the Syrian refugee population.

Only 35 per cent of refugees reported a secure job to return to once curfew restrictions lifted. Current loss of access to livelihoods and limited savings will lend itself to greater dependence on humanitarian cash assistance, as the number of vulnerable households increases.

In **Lebanon**, follow up by UNHCR and partners on beneficiaries of cash assistance in April indicated that 99 per cent were satisfied with having received their assistance through an ATM. Refugees continue to emphasize their need for tangible assistance, with food insecurity and struggling to pay rent as the top concerns. Temporary cash assistance will be implemented to target 11,500 families for an initial period of three months from May, to help mitigate the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Following consultations with donors, the application of the humanitarian exchange rate to cash programmes will allow UNHCR and WFP to increase the amount of monthly assistance, enabling UNHCR specifically to assist an additional 3,200 families.

In **Iraq**, UNHCR has distributed over 26,500 dignity kits for women and girls of reproductive age living in IDP and refugee camps. Dignity kits contain hygiene and sanitary items including soap, along with other items explicitly tailored towards the local needs of women and girls such as sanitary pads and underwear. The kits are designed in partnership with affected communities to ensure the most appropriate items are included. The distributions have also been conducted door-to-door and tent-to-tent in line with COVID-19 safety measures and will continue during the coming weeks to cover all governorates in Iraq.

In **Libya**, during the month of Ramadan and as part of assistance to refugees living in urban areas, UNHCR started a series of on-site distributions, with the aim of reaching 4,000 individuals. On 3 May, food parcels as well as hygiene kits, NFIs and water purification tablets from a sister agency were distributed to more than 100 refugees in the Gargaresh district of Tripoli, where many persons of concern reside.

In **Mauritania**, UNHCR has identified over 1,000 refugee households (some 2,500 individuals) living in the urban areas of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, to receive [cash for social protection](#) starting in early May. Through refugee community mobilisers, hard-to-reach and marginalized refugee families were identified and prioritized to receive this cash assistance. These most vulnerable households have no savings, no extended family or community solidarity mechanisms on which they can rely, are facing risk of eviction and are unable to meet their most basic needs including water, food and hygiene products. Approximately three-quarters of all heads of households do not have ATM cards and so will present themselves at one of six distributions centres on designated days to ensure large gatherings are avoided.

In **Morocco**, nearly 3,000 most vulnerable families were provided with cash assistance in 50 locations during the month of April. This covered a modest part of unforeseen needs that some of the most vulnerable refugees in Morocco are facing since the COVID-19 pandemic took effect in March.

In **Tunisia**, to ensure proper planning for its cash for social protection programme, UNHCR and its partner CTR launched a country-wide assessment exercise using Kobo Toolbox software to confirm the presence

of all registered refugees and asylum-seekers on Tunisian territory and collect information on the state of their socio-economic and protection welfare. Based on this exercise, UNHCR will proceed with targeted cash assistance to increase social protection for those negatively affected by the current situation – which refugees and asylum-seekers consistently report back to UNHCR.

In **Syria**, despite the closure of some 130 community centres, nearly 3,000 outreach volunteers (ORVs), including 250 health volunteers, have been active in COVID-19 awareness raising campaigns, reaching more than 200,000 persons across the country. Some 3,000 vulnerable persons received hygiene kits, food baskets and hot meals through community-led initiatives, while another 40 community-led initiatives are in progress and will be benefitting 20,000 people across Syria. In addition, nearly 12,000 vulnerable refugees received multi-purpose cash grants.

In **north-west Syria**, as part of the UN Whole of Syria response, UNHCR has been putting in place mitigation measures and has increased, prioritized and expedited trans-shipments and distributions of hygiene kits. UNHCR partners have reviewed all their activities to align with the recommendations and guidelines issued by WHO, the clusters and the relevant coordination fora.

In **Turkey**, in collaboration with the Directorate General of Migration Management, UNHCR is providing one-off emergency cash assistance to vulnerable registered Syrians under temporary protection and international protection applicants and status holders. If fully funded, the programme aims to assist up to 100,000 households.

Safiya is a 45-year-old Somali refugee in Yemen helping to protect her fellow refugees, and Yemenis against coronavirus, as well as supporting her family.

In 2017, in order to hone her skills, Safiya enrolled in a six-month tailoring course funded by UNHCR and taught by a formal vocational training institution. Based on her outstanding performance, UNHCR awarded Safiya two sewing machines to support and expand her existing business. In addition, Safiya received two microloans to purchase the fabrics, textiles, and other sewing materials. In 2018 and 2019, Safiya was chosen to carry out on-the-job training for eight refugees in tailoring. Now, Safiya has five sewing machines.

Since COVID-19 safety measures have halted large social gatherings, her work was dramatically impacted. But she found a way to not only keep providing for her family, but also help those around her. Safiya said in the beginning, Yemenis and refugees were very worried about the global outbreak of COVID-19, thus, the demand for the masks was high. She sells around 60 masks per day. Safiya's home based tailoring business is the only source of income for the family. She uses this income to pay the rent and cost of utilities.

"The best thing I can do is tailoring. I decided to sew and sell masks as a contribution from me to refugees and host communities," Safiya said.



Photo by UNHCR

Global Financial Requirements

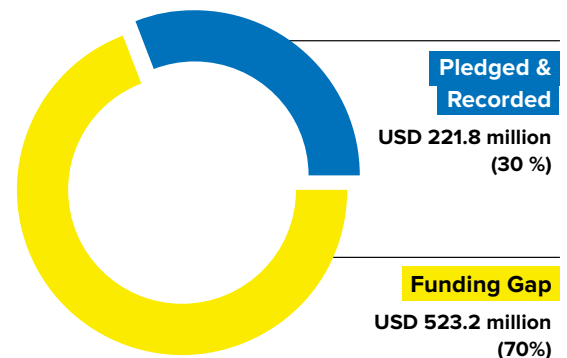
UNHCR's revised prioritized requirements to support the COVID-19 preparedness and response in situation of forced displacement, including those for UNHCR MENA, has increased from USD 255 million to USD 745 million.

UNHCR is grateful to donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Coronavirus Emergency globally and to MENA. **So far, a total of USD 221.8 million (30 per cent) has been contributed or pledged to the UNHCR Global Appeal.**

Total contributed or pledged for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally

USD 221.8 million

United States 64M | Germany 38M | European Union 31.8M | United Kingdom 24.8M | Japan 23.9M | Denmark 14.6M | CERF 6.9M | Canada 6.4M | Ireland 3.3M | Sweden 3M | Sony Corporation 3M | Finland 2.4M | Education Cannot Wait 1.8M | Qatar Charity 1.5M | Norway 1.4M | Australia 0.8M | España con ACNUR 0.6M | Australia for UNHCR 0.4M | Ahmed Abdelkoudous Ehsan 0.3M | Miscellaneous donors in Canada 0.2M | Monaco 0.2M | Estonia 0.16M | Iceland 0.13M | UNHCR Insamlingsstiftelse 0.1M | Portugal 0.1M | Liechtenstein 0.1M | Liechtenstein Flüchtlingshilfe 0.1M | Slovakia 0.05M | Other private donors 0.26M



Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2020 programme:

Sweden 76.4M | Norway 41.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | United Kingdom 31.7M | España con Acnur 26.6M | Germany 25.9M | Switzerland 16.4 M | Private donors in Republic of Korea 13.9M

Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.

Resources:

- [UNHCR's Coronavirus Emergency Appeal \(Revision\)](#)
- [UNHCR's COVID-19 Appeal – Key facts and figures \(Revision\)](#)
- [UNHCR's COVID-19 Appeal – Operational Highlights](#)
- UNHCR Press Release (11 May 2020) [UNHCR urges sustained support to protect world's forcibly displaced from "devastating" impact of coronavirus](#)
- For MENA regional and country reports on COVID-19 response, please visit – [UNHCR Global Focus](#); [UNHCR Operational Portal \(Syria Regional Refugee Response\)](#); and [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan website](#)
- Support UNHCR's COVID-19 preparedness and response plans: <https://giving.unhcr.org/en/coronavirus/>

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