

YEMEN

URBAN REFUGEE PROGRAM UPDATE

January 2015

URBAN REFUGEES IN YEMEN

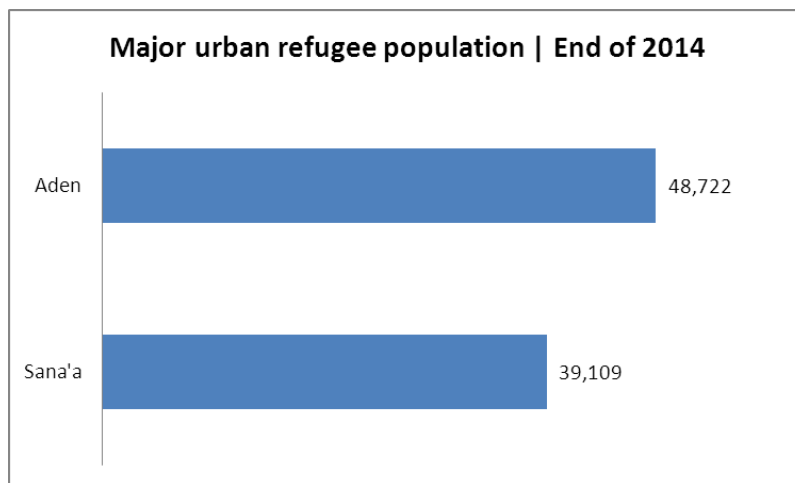
The vast majority of refugees in Yemen live in cities. Indeed, in the major urban centers of Sana'a and Aden alone nearly 88,000 refugees and over 8,000 asylum seekers have been registered by the Government of Yemen and UNHCR. UNHCR, in partnership with the Government of Yemen, local authorities, implementing partners and elected community representatives ensures the delivery of protection and assistance services to refugees in urban settings.

Unlike a closed camp, cities present obvious opportunities to stay anonymous, earn money, and build a better future in a refugee's new country. But they also present dangers: refugees may not have legal documents that are respected, they may be vulnerable to exploitation, arrest and detention, and they can be in competition with the poorest local workers for the worst jobs. Therefore UNHCR in Yemen works on specific programs and initiatives for refugees and asylum seekers in urban settings.

Much of UNHCR's work with urban refugee populations involves integrating services for refugees with those available to the general population, in particular in the areas of healthcare, education and social assistance.

SCALE OF URBAN REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

At the end of 2014, the two main cities in Yemen hosted the largest numbers of refugees with a total in Sana'a of 39,109 persons and some 7,307 asylum seekers and in Aden of 48,722 refugees and 1,369 asylum seekers.



UNHCR Yemen is observing the spontaneous movement of refugees based in the sole refugee camp in Kharaz, Lahjj governorate, to urban centers, which UNHCR accompanies by reinforcing its support for refugee self-reliance and livelihood projects in those urban areas of settlement.

Refugees in Yemen originate, in the majority, from Somalia (244,204), with smaller populations from Ethiopia (5,934), Iraq (3,391), Eritrea (1,254) and several other countries. Since 2013, Yemen has recorded a significant increase in the number of Syrians who have reached Yemen – according to Government statistics, by the end of 2013, 10,446 Syrians had entered Yemen via Sana’a international airport with a 3 months visa. Of these, only around 1,980 had Syrians registered as asylum seekers with UNHCR, a trend which continued when Syrians became aware that such status does not allow for access to services. Given the existing vulnerability of Syrians, in particular women and children, and the impossibility for UNHCR to conduct on arrival Refugee Status Determination due to the large numbers, UNHCR successfully brokered an agreement with the Government of Yemen, resulting in the granting of temporary protection for Syrians and access to basic services and livelihood opportunities. By the start of 2015, 2,217 Syrians had obtained a Temporary Protection certificate allowing them access healthcare, education, livelihoods opportunities and legal and community support.

UNHCR’S APPROACH

UNHCR recognizes that, for refugees, urban settings have been more conducive, than camp-based support, to socio-economic integration. Simply put, refugees are able to integrate more easily in urban areas because of the wider range of services, employment, resources and communities in towns and cities.

UNHCR working in partnership

UNHCR supports refugees in urban settings by working with a variety of partners, in particular: the Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Human Rights; Ministry of the Interior; the General Department for Refugee Affairs; the Immigration, Passport and Naturalisation Authority; the National Committee for Refugee Affairs (NACRA); as well as (international) NGOs and service providers such as ADRA; CARE; Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW); Danish Refugee Council (DRC); Interaction in Development Foundation (IDF); International Medical Corps (IMC); International Relief and Development (IRD); Intersos; as well as the University of Sana’a; and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

UNHCR also aims to strengthen its community-based approach underpinning its protection, assistance and livelihood support to urban refugees. Refugee community groups and community leaders elected back in December 2013 are a vital part of UNHCR’s coordination and partnership activities. The various refugee community groups are organized around nationality (Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean and Iraqi), social status (students, youth, women), vulnerabilities (disabled, single female headed households, unaccompanied minors) or sectoral themes (education, health support). Through these refugee communities groups, UNHCR and its partners are able to reach out to otherwise invisible refugees in need.

UNHCR’S WORK IN YEMEN

Protection

UNHCR and its implementing partners work to ensure that refugees in urban settings receive effective protection through registration, Refugee Status Determination (RSD), legal assistance, detention monitoring, community development, and assistance to refugees with special needs.

In Sana’a, UNHCR supports the Somali Refugee Center and the United Refugee Center (URC) for non-Somali refugees, in the mobilization of refugee communities, the provision of referral services to legal assistance, social counseling,

educational and medical facilities, as well as the organization of cultural activities. Legal services comprise primarily legal counseling and support, including accompanying individuals while visiting police stations and providing them with formal representation in courts of law. Social counseling is available for any refugee with a specific need. Refugee communities also actively participate in awareness-raising activities in areas such as child protection, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), HIV/AIDS, and support for the disabled or elderly refugees.

For the SGBV prevention and response, services are available through public health centers. UNHCR also supports Intersos' drop-in center, which includes the provision of legal and psychosocial support for SGBV victims as well as medical referral, community support and awareness-raising.

Children are provided with specific protection services by UNHCR and its partners. This includes appropriate legal support for children who are victims of violence and also physical protection for children at risk of violations of their basic rights. Specific social counseling is offered to children while counselors carry out child protection assessments to determine the support needed by children at risk. An important part of UNHCR's child protection program is to ensure that children enter the public education system and are prevented from dropping out.

UNHCR also maintains partnership agreements with the University of Sana'a and the Ministry of Human Rights, aimed at improving the protection environment for all refugees, urban and non-urban, in Yemen, by means of training and capacity building of a wide range of officials and actors, in particular those who are in daily contact with refugees, such as social counselors, employment advisers, lawyers and law enforcement officials.

Refugee Status Determination

While the Government grants *prima facie* status to Somali refugees, non-Somalis are registered and benefit from Refugee Status Determination (RSD) through UNHCR offices in Sana'a and Aden. With new arrivals mostly to coastal areas UNHCR and its partners conduct initial screening and give immediate humanitarian assistance to those in need upon arrival before they travel for registration and RSD to Sana'a and Aden, while Somali arrivals are transported to Government registration centers in Aden, Kharaz Camp or Sana'a.

UNHCR provides those seeking asylum with asylum seeker certificates, valid for one year, and conducts individual RSD. Female headed households, vulnerable women, SGBV cases, unaccompanied minors, disabled refugees and medical cases are fast-tracked with a view to providing them with early assistance commensurate to their needs.

During 2013, 16,482 individuals were registered, including 6,266 asylum seekers and 10,216 Somalis refugees granted *prima facie* status. During the year 2013, 780 individuals who had gone through Refugee Status Determination by UNHCR were recognized as refugees (including 542 Ethiopians, 142 Eritreans). Those 780 individuals were registered prior to the year 2013. The total number of recognitions in 2013 was equal to 10,996 (10,216 *prima facie* and 780 RSD recognitions).

In 2014, 23,049 individuals were registered, including 3,844 asylum seekers and 17,578 Somalis refugees granted *prima facie* status. During this period, 574 individuals who had gone through Refugee Status Determination by UNHCR were recognized as refugees (including 235 Ethiopians, 281 Eritreans), and 2,221 Syrians were issued Temporary Protection Certificates. The total number of recognitions in 2014, including Temporary Protection for Syrians, stands at 20,373 (17,578 *prima facie*, 574 RSD recognitions, 2,221 Temporary Protection Certificates for Syrians).

Durable solutions

For urban refugees in Yemen, UNHCR is working towards durable solutions through voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, self-reliance within the local community or resettlement to a third country.

UNHCR's commitment to integrating urban refugees into their host communities is shown throughout UNHCR's services offered to refugees. The continuing mainstreaming of healthcare and education services offered to refugees into the public sector services is indicative of how UNHCR's provision of basic services for refugees is guided by its objective to ensure refugees' integration in the society.

Provided the correct circumstances are met, UNHCR remains open to assist, on an individual basis, in the voluntary repatriation of refugees to their country of origin. Indeed, taking further the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees, and given the improving yet still fragile conditions in Somalia, UNHCR will run a pilot program in 2015 assisting in the voluntary repatriation of individual refugees and refugee families who have shown a keenness to return to certain designated areas in South and Central Somalia. These areas have been assessed as conducive to safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration following discussions with the Governments of Somalia and Yemen on this issue. This pilot project will proceed based on close cooperation between UNHCR in Yemen and UNHCR in Somalia allowing for monitoring of the security situation and supporting the sustainable reintegration of returnees in areas of return.

Resettlement is used as a protection tool for extremely vulnerable refugees rather than a durable solution for refugees in Yemen. For this reason, the size of the resettlement program in Yemen remains small. Given the volatile security situation in Yemen, resettlement countries cannot conduct missions to interview and select refugees. So far, successful resettlement cases have been submitted on dossier basis only. Places for dossier submissions are extremely limited and can be filled by refugees with compelling vulnerabilities only. Resettlement submissions in the pipeline for the US program benefit from processing through Emergency Transit Centers (ETCs) in Romania and Slovakia. A total of 169 individuals were submitted for resettlement in 2013 whereas 222 departed. By the beginning of December 2014, these figures amounted to 104 individual submissions and 141 departures (of which 75 for the United States via the ETCs) for the year 2014.

Health care support

One of the primary services UNHCR provides in support of urban refugees is healthcare. In cooperation with implementing partners, refugees are provided with primary, emergency, preventative, specialist and pharmacy services through the public health system or, when necessary, specialist, non-public healthcare services.

In Sana'a, International Medical Corps (IMC) supports healthcare services for refugees delivered inside public healthcare facilities. These facilities provide medical care to the Yemeni population and refugees alike, such as:

- Medical consultations, the diagnosis of chronic patients and the provision of low cost essential drugs;
- Improved quality of primary health care services by providing expert technical support;
- Emergency care including medication, lifesaving interventions and emergency trauma services;
- Gynaecological and obstetrical care, mental health support and treatment of chronic diseases;
- Clinical management of rape cases;
- Care and treatment of people living with HIV and AIDS as well as preventative reproductive health and HIV services as well as preventing of HIV mother to child transmission;
- Voluntary counseling and testing services for various medical conditions;
- Counseling on infant and young child feeding programs for pregnant and lactating mothers;

- Referral to specialist care for chronic healthcare needs or when hospitalisation is needed.

In Aden, CSSW has established a general health clinic and a Mother and Child Health Centre in Basateen. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the clinic provides primary, secondary, emergency, pharmacy and community healthcare services to refugees, asylum seekers and to the host community. The clinic also provides reproductive healthcare services, including 24-hour basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care.

Nutrition activities

Closely linked to the health assistance are the nutritional services for refugees supported by UNHCR. In 2013/14, UNHCR, WFP and the Ministry of Health carried out a nutritional and anemia survey in Aden and Sana'a. The results showed that malnutrition and anemia are a continuous public health concern among refugees and the local host population in Yemen. In Aden, the under-five global acute malnutrition (GAM) rate was 13.6% among refugees, while in Sana'a the figure was as low as 4%. The success of these nutrition activities can be seen when these rates are compared to members of the host communities: in Aden, the host community presents a GAM rate of 21.3%; while in Sana'a a rate of 9%.

UNHCR supports the provision of nutrition services at public health centers. In Aden, UNHCR works with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF to address the needs of acutely malnourished refugee children under-five. In collaboration with WFP, it maintains a supplementary feeding program for children under-five and for pregnant and lactating women presenting moderate incidences of malnutrition. In Sana'a UNHCR works with IMC, its healthcare implementing partner, providing counseling on infant and young child feeding programs for pregnant and lactating mothers. By locating this service at the public healthcare facility, UNHCR and IMC are able to ensure that nutrition counseling is an integral part of the provision of medical assistance.

Education

At central and local level, UNHCR benefits from a strong relationship with the Ministry of Education through regular operational consultations, which have resulted in the mainstreaming of the provision of education services for refugee children with those for Yemeni children.

At the start of the 2014/15 school year, UNHCR in Sana'a and Aden worked with refugee families to encourage out-of-school children to re-enter school at the start of the term. These efforts successfully led to more than 1,000 refugee children re-entering school, while benefiting from uniforms, bags, shoes, stationary and class equipment supplied by UNHCR.

Last year saw greater cooperation in higher education for refugees. Following an initiative of the University of Sana'a, UNHCR is supporting twenty scholarships for refugee students. These scholarships are allowing some of the most promising refugee students to pursue tertiary education in medicine, law, engineering and business administration, allowing those refugees to ultimately contribute to the Yemeni economy as skilled graduates.

Livelihood activities

UNHCR prioritises the creation of livelihood opportunities for refugees, in order to enhance refugee self-reliance and income generation capacities. The realization of such projects remains a major challenge in Yemen where more than half of the population lives in poverty and lacks employment opportunities, particularly among women and young people. At present, UNHCR is providing limited support to livelihood and business creation opportunities to refugees and vulnerable Yemenis alike through:

- Vocational training in *i.a.* mechanics, electricians, mobile maintenance, nursing and midwifery, pharmacy and laboratory technology,
- Arabic and English literacy and language proficiency programs,
- Refugee scholarships in cooperation with the Ministry of Vocational Training and Technical Education,
- Micro-credit loans for a total of 2,000 ongoing projects.

These livelihood activities have, for those involved, helped refugees and their families to support themselves and further settle and integrate into Yemen. Micro-credit loans have been instrumental in setting up *inter alia* restaurants, bakeries, garment production, hairdressing and beauty salons.

Community empowerment and self-reliance

UNHCR focuses on empowering refugee communities through confidence-building measures and the enhancement of skills and capacities in leadership and coordination as well as community participation and mobilization. UNHCR supports community centers as places to meet, play, study, socialize, access social services, sell products, and improve knowledge and skills through the provision of training and class programs.

In December 2013, the urban refugee population in Sana'a held its first refugee leader election since 2009, which was marked by a sizeable turnout of voters, particularly refugee women, resulting in two women on a total of eight representatives elected on behalf of their communities. In Aden, refugee committees will be supported to conduct community leader elections to select their representatives in 2015.

UNHCR supports refugee communities with drop-in sessions at the General Department for Refugee Affairs and a 24-hour emergency helpline. This allows refugees to raise any concerns or complaints with the Community Service Unit in UNHCR, which then addresses these issues with concerned authorities, relevant units within UNHCR and partners providing services.

Vulnerable refugee groups

Assistance and protection services provided by UNHCR and its partners focus in particular on the needs of vulnerable refugee groups. These include, but are not limited to, unaccompanied children, disabled people, elderly people, female headed households, survivors of SGBV and refugees mentally challenged. These refugees are given special attention in the provision of healthcare, legal services, social counselling or education. Refugee outreach workers accompany individuals to service providers and explain the various stages of assistance, carry out additional needs assessments, or arrange for community support if and when needed.

Emergency cash assistance is available for those who meet specific vulnerability criteria including serious medical needs, single women, female headed households or elderly people without relatives.

Individuals and families with severe protection vulnerabilities may be selected for resettlement provided the strict criteria of resettlement countries are met.

UNHCR'S PRIORITIES FOR URBAN REFUGEES IN YEMEN

As urban refugees represent the majority of Yemen's refugee communities and live mostly in a protracted situation, UNHCR's refugee program in Yemen primarily focuses on finding solutions for these groups. Specific attention is currently being given to:

- **Registration, Refugee Status Determination (RSD) and resettlement:** Registration, RSD, and resettlement will, as UNHCR's mandated activities, remain a priority for urban refugees in Yemen. Registration is an ever-important activity to provide for protection against *refoulement* and for documentation to access services. The successful completion of the RSD process is vital to individual refugees' self-reliance and hope for integration into the Yemeni society. UNHCR is fast-tracking and differentiating procedures for specific applications in an effort to reduce the backlog. In partnership with the General Department for Refugee Affairs, UNHCR will further enhance registration capacities. Resettlement remains a limited though important part of UNHCR's work to find an urgent protection response to the needs of extremely vulnerable refugees.
- **Nutrition and health services:** The provision of healthcare for refugees alongside Yemenis will be further developed throughout 2015 after beginning in 2014 with a view to improving quality and expanding coverage of health care services for refugees. During the same period, complementary food supplements will be distributed to 9,000 refugees in both camp and urban areas. Furthermore, UNHCR and its partners will provide supplementary feeding for 3,000 children suffering from moderate malnutrition and pregnant and lactating mothers and patients with chronic diseases.
- **Education for urban refugee children and young people:** In 2015, UNHCR will continue to focus on facilitating access and retention of refugee children in public schools as well as adolescent and adults in higher education institutions. UNHCR will work closely with the public education authorities to improve the quality of education and promote a safe learning environment at a primary, secondary and tertiary level. Particular efforts, with the close involvement of the refugee communities, will be aimed at tracking out-of-school children and bringing them back into schooling.
- **Livelihood opportunities:** UNHCR will prioritize the creation and promotion of livelihood opportunities for urban refugees through micro-credit loans based on a market survey, which is expected to identify market needs and available opportunities for refugees. It will also revisit its baseline data and impact assessment for livelihood opportunities.
- **Support for Syrians in Yemen:** In 2015, UNHCR protection and assistance activities will be extended to Syrian refugees with a focus on their unmet needs after the 2014 roll-out of the Temporary Protection scheme. Self-reliance, access to education and health care, support for the most vulnerable, provision of domestic items (in cash form), awareness raising as well as support for victims of *inter alia* SGBV, trafficking and forced marriage, will be among the key issues addressed.
- **Child protection:** In partnership with key ministries as well as other actors, UNHCR will continue to implement its five-Year Child Protection Strategy in 2015 in order to ensure that children will receive proper documentation and access to educational and other services. Priority will be given to strengthening a community based response to child protection issues; capacity building of government counterparts, partners and the community; support for unaccompanied minors and separated children, including victims of trafficking, as well as family tracing and family reunification where feasible.
- **Community mobilization of refugees:** UNHCR will continue supporting the self-management of refugee services by community groups. In Sana'a, the Somali, Oromo, Ogadeni, Eritrean, Iraqi and Syrian communities as well as youth and children's groups will be involved. UNHCR will continue to build the capacity of refugee community structures in the areas of leadership, self-management and communication skills, by addressing SGBV, child protection, education, nutrition, childcare, detention and other topics of concern. This will ensure that communities actively participate in regular assessments as well as monitoring and evaluation of services for continuous improvement.

- **Detention monitoring:** In 2015, UNHCR will further strengthen the current detention monitoring system *inter alia* through the expansion of its area of coverage in three additional governorates. UNHCR, through its partners and with the assistance of the Yemeni authorities will continue to gather information related to individuals in detention (disaggregated by sex and age) in order to ensure appropriate follow up. UNHCR will continue its efforts towards reducing the risk of arbitrary detention through public advocacy and training of law enforcement officials and the judiciary. Furthermore, to enhance protection for persons of concern in detention, UNHCR will conduct capacity building and provide technical support to Protection Monitoring Officers, lawyers and detention/immigration authorities. The refugee community will be included in trainings on human rights and refugee law so that persons of concern are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- **Capacity Building of the authorities:** UNHCR will continue to support the Government of Yemen through capacity building and advocacy initiatives. UNHCR will particularly build the capacity of the General Department for Refugee Affairs in the area of registration and RSD in view of a handover of these activities in the future. UNHCR will continue to coordinate activities with key ministries and government institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Interior, National Committee for Refugee Affairs, National subcommittee for Refugees Affairs, General Department for Refugee Affairs, Immigration, Passport and Naturalization Authority, the Coast Guard, and law enforcement entities to enhance the identification, referral and protection of asylum seekers and refugees. UNHCR, with the support of the University of Sana'a and the University of Aden, will focus on training the judiciary and students in the faculty of law, the police academy and the diplomatic institute, in the promotion of refugee and human rights law principles.

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Links:

UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas www.unhcr.org/4ab356ab6.pdf