

MOROCCO

September 2020

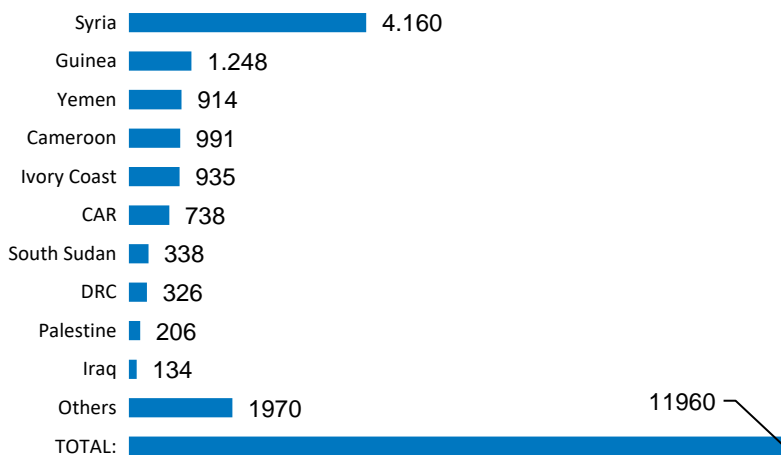
Morocco is both a transit and a host country with 11,960 refugees and asylum seekers from over 40 countries.

UNHCR ensures access to asylum procedures and protection of refugees in Morocco while working closely with Moroccan authorities under the framework of the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum (SNIA).

With the progressive lifting of movement restriction measures, UNHCR and its partners have worked actively to make sure that their services continue to be accessible both physically and remotely for refugees in Morocco.

POPULATION OF CONCERN UNDER UNHCR MANDATE

7,561 refugees and 4,399 asylum seekers, a total of 11,960 people of concern (as of 1st of September 2020)

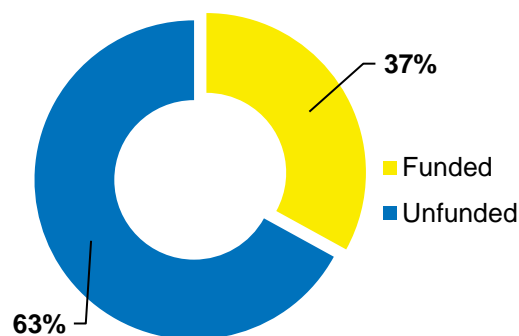


Refugees are located in **74 localities** across the kingdom.

2020 FUNDING (AS OF 08 SEPTEMBRE 2020)

USD 8.5 million

Requested for UNHCR Operation in Morocco



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 32 National Staff
- 7 International Staff
- 2 UNV
- 1 IV (Monaco)

Offices:

- 1 Branch Office in Rabat



Mokhtar & Alâa, Syrian refugees and pastry chefs in Rabat's medina.

Working with Partners

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is UNHCR's main government counterpart. UNHCR also collaborates with key ministries, the Royal Gendarmerie, academic partners and other institutions.
- UNHCR is actively engaged with its partners: Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO), Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF), Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH), Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise (AMAPPE) and Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme (CNDH).
- In Oujda, Tangier and Casablanca, UNHCR has established Protection Working Groups (GTP) to better identify and protect refugees and asylum seekers. These groups are composed of civil society actors, institutional partners, regional human rights commissions and UN agencies.
- Alongside UN agencies, UNHCR is involved in the UNDAF process as well as in the thematic groups on migration, gender, AIDS, youth, communication (UNCG) and monitoring and evaluation. In September 2016, UNHCR and other UN agencies jointly signed a common programming framework with MCMREAM to support the implementation of the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum (SNIA).
- UNHCR is also actively collaborating with journalists, civil society members and the private sector to improve the protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers.

COVID-19 context

In response to the COVID-19 situation and to fight its spread, the Government of Morocco has taken early and decisive public health measures, as of 19 March. These measures were accompanied by a national health response plan which included all individuals living in Morocco.

In support of, and in complement to the measures taken by the Government of Morocco, **UNHCR rapidly adapted its operational posture to respond to the increasing specific protection and assistance needs of refugees and asylum seekers.** These populations, working mainly in the informal sector, were particularly affected by the crisis with little to no income sources, an exacerbation of already existing vulnerabilities and an increasing number of refugees in need of humanitarian assistance.

With the progressive lifting of movement restriction measures, UNHCR and its partners have worked actively to make sure that their services continue to be accessible both physically and remotely for refugees in Morocco. Protection hotlines continue to be active and are an important point of contact for refugees and asylum seekers (over 2000 counseling sessions conducted). Registration and RSD procedures are implanted remotely or directly at the office with prior appointment.

Main Activities

Protection

- **Registration & RSD** : Pending the establishment of a national asylum system, UNHCR continues to register new asylum-seekers and conduct refugee status determination (RSD). All positive cases are referred for verification to the *Bureau des Réfugiés et des Apatrides* (BRA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Inter-Ministerial Commission in charge of the regularization process in Rabat. UNHCR is present at Commission hearings and introduces the cases. Auditions by the commission have stopped since the beginning of the crisis. **Despite the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR adapted its procedures for remote pre-registrations. As of August 31, UNHCR registered and pre-registered 3,200 new asylum applications for 2020.**
- **Legal assistance** : UNHCR works with a private law firm (Cabinet Lemseguem) to provide legal aid services to refugees and asylum-seekers (e.g. for issuance of birth certificates, for filling complaints against physical assault and for representation before the Moroccan court). **100 people received legal assistance from January to August 2020.** That being said, non-urgent procedures had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Emergency housing** : Through the FOO, UNHCR has an emergency shelter and protection programme. Emergency housing is meant to meet immediate needs, while protection houses respond to longer-term needs. This programme benefits refugees and asylum-seekers with extreme vulnerabilities : unaccompanied minors, at-risk women, single mothers, victims of trafficking, and members of the LGBTI community, etc. In 2019, 57 refugees and asylum seekers with specific needs found shelter through UNHCR-FOO's housing programme. **As of August 31, 2020, UNHCR was hosting 23 refugees and asylum seekers in these accommodations.**
- **Protection of victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**: A referral and support system is in place for survivors and people at increased risk of SGBV to ensure their access to healthcare, psycho-social support, legal assistance, as well as livelihoods through the services of UNHCR's partners, civil society and public services. Prevention is also carried out through awareness raising campaigns and community activities. As a response to the accumulated risk of violence during the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR has a specifically dedicated phone number for women on its Protection Hotline. From the onset of the pandemic in March until September 15, all lines have received about 570 calls from female refugees and asylum seekers, accounting for 27% of calls. Their requests included housing assistance and financial assistance. There was an increase in the number of cases linked to violence, particularly domestic violence, a form of SGBV particularly difficult to detect before confinement.
- **Outreach and community-based activities** : UNHCR works in close collaboration with Protection Working Groups (GTPs) in Oujda, Tangier and Casablanca to identify and refer people with specific needs to concerned services. During the COVID-19 crisis, GTPs strengthened their coordination for the distribution of humanitarian assistance.
- **22 refugee community agents** of different nationalities share information among refugee communities across 7 localities in the Kingdom, relaying their needs and concerns to UNHCR and its partners. All these actions were strengthened during the crisis in coordination with UNHCR.
- **In response to the COVID-19 crisis**, the Refugee Protection Hotline, with its 6 numbers in 3 languages (Arabic, French and English) was immediately established and has allowed to respond to some 2,000 protection requests from refugees and asylum seekers since the 19th of March

(one line being specifically dedicated to women). Two additional phone numbers are dedicated to registration and refugee status determination related matters, which allowed to respond to some 1,700 requests from asylum seekers. Finally, one additional phone number is specifically used for emergencies (arrests, follow-up of access to movement authorizations etc.).

Financial assistance for the vulnerable

- UNHCR contributes to the cost of housing and food for the most vulnerable refugees (unaccompanied minors, single women, victims of gender-based violence and people with medical needs) through financial assistance based on assessments carried out with the FOO. From January to August 1,100 families were assisted monthly.
- In response to the increasing number of testimonies of extreme precarity received from refugees, UNHCR has temporarily and exceptionally adapted its financial assistance program. Vulnerable refugees benefiting from financial assistance (based on specific needs identified by UNHCR and its partner, Fondation Orient Occident - FOO), received a combined payment of two months of assistance (April and May) at once in April.
- Exceptionally and in a spirit of solidarity, every refugee registered with UNHCR benefited from financial assistance in April, May and July. **4,557 families benefited from financial assistance each month.** In order to enforce these urgent measures, UNHCR had to reevaluate its programs and reallocate conditional cash assistance for education and professional training for the months of April and May towards this solidarity intervention.

Education

- **90% of refugee children have been enrolled in elementary schools in 2020** thanks to UNHCR's education allocation programme and through collaboration with the implementing partner Fondation Orient-Occident (FOO). Despite the challenging conditions, the success rate in primary and secondary education has reached 90%.
- Ensuring equitable schooling from a gender perspective remains one of UNHCR's priorities. **In Morocco, 48% of refugee children enrolled in schools are girls.**
- Due to the COVID-19 crisis, classes have been suspended from the 16th of March until the upcoming academic session in September, in all kindergartens, educational and vocational training institutions, public and private universities. The Ministry of National Education (NEM) has set up various tools to ensure remote learning education as an alternative. **73% of enrolled children are currently taking online classes.** As support classes were suspended, the children's academic monitoring was provided by refugee students from the DAFI program.
- During the month of August, UNHCR and its partners actively promoted the importance of schooling for refugee children and helped the parents prepare the "back to school" period. 80% of households chose to put their children in school physically rather than remotely. A conditional cash assistance for education to cover school supplies is being distributed.
- From January to August, some 1,300 families received monthly cash assistance to support their children's nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Moreover, **74 refugees benefit from DAFI's scholarship programme in Morocco.**

Health

- Through its partner Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF), UNHCR facilitates the referral of refugees to public primary health care centres in which services are delivered free of charge. Pending the extension of the national insurance medical system (RAMED) to refugees,

UNHCR ensures the medical coverage for refugees, including expenses related to drugs, lab tests and specialized medical treatments.

- From January to August, the medical program **assisted 4,755 refugees**. During the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR and its medical partner adapted their services to ensure the continuity of UNHCR's health programme despite movement restrictions. Refugees suffering from chronic diseases have received medication supply in AMPF's health centers or directly at their doorstep. **1,754 general medical consultations have been carried out** and **3,720 specialized medicine consultations**.
- To respond to the emergency and the requests for psychological assistance that increased rapidly from the start of the pandemic, FOO created a remote psychological support cell. This cell is operational Monday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The team was able to record a total of 780 calls from 538 refugees and migrants: with 168 people for 199 follow-up consultations for Tangier and Oujda's region, 147 people for 253 follow-up consultations for Rabat's region, 223 people for 324 follow-up consultations for Casablanca's region.
- **UNHCR signed a partnership agreement on the 20th of May 2020 with the National Council of Doctors (CNOM)** to facilitate access to specialized health care and mental health for refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco.

Livelihood and self-reliance

- With the Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise (AMAPPE), UNHCR supports refugees' enrolment in vocational trainings and the creation of income generating activities through micro financing. The creation of micro-enterprises for the benefit of refugees continues in 2020 with the involvement of two state partners, namely l'Agence Nationale de la Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences (ANAPEC) and l'Office de Développement de la Coopération (ODCO).
- In 2020, 425 refugees were received for orientation and counseling sessions. 8 micro-projects for the benefit of 8 refugees, including one L.L.C, were created on the territory to facilitate socio-economic integration; **49 micro-projects are being financed and 55 micro-projects have been financially supported following the impact of the crisis. In total, 801 microprojects were created since 2007**. Moreover, **104 refugees were enrolled in vocational trainings** in 2019-2020. The goal for 2020 is to fund 100 new micro-projects and strengthen 100 existing ones that have been impacted by the COVID crisis.
- **Private sector:** Since 2017, **180 refugees have been placed in enterprises by UNHCR and AMAPPE** across the country, including 23 in 2020. In 2020, 9 new companies recruited one or more refugees, for a total of 48 different businesses since the start of the employability program. **91% of refugees lost their source of income following the COVID-19 crisis**. The goal is to register at least 120 new laureates for the start of the 2021 school year.

Capacity building and sensitization

- Capacity building is a key element of UNHCR's strategy to support the Moroccan authorities and civil society in the implementation of a fair and efficient asylum policy. UNHCR organizes on a regular basis workshops on the protection of refugees in a context of mixed migration flows and collaborates with the National Council on Human Rights (CNDH) to strengthen civil society's asylum-related capacities. **Several training courses were held by UNHCR** in various locations in Morocco for judges (Higher Institute of the Judiciary), lawyers, legal clinics, university students,

Royal Gendarmerie, National Police as well as civil society organizations and the Protection Working Groups in Oujda, Tangier and Casablanca.

Durable Solutions

- UNHCR implements a resettlement programme for refugees with specific protection needs. In 2019, 102 refugees were resettled to third countries (Canada, USA, Sweden and France). Due to the COVID-19 situation and the closure of borders, 11 refugees were resettled to the United States in early 2020.

External / Donors Relations

UNHCR is grateful for the generous contributions received in 2020 by the European Union, Switzerland, the United States of America, Italy, Japan, Monaco, United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, Germany and France.

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Sweden | Netherlands | Norway | Denmark | United Kingdom | Germany | Private donors Spain | Switzerland | Private donors Republic of Korea | Canada | United States | Finland | Ireland | Private donors Australia | Private donors Germany | Private donors Japan

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