

Norwegian Refugee Council

# Covid-19 Appeal



**NRC**

NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL

# NRC Covid-19 Appeal

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is asking partners and supporters to contribute **USD 100 million** to its 2020 response to Covid-19.

The response, which aims to **protect and assist 4.5 million people**, will:

- Reduce the spread and health impact of Covid-19
- Help those most affected by containment measures meet basic needs such as food and education
- Prevent violence, abuse and discrimination related to the pandemic

Our response will be continuously evaluated, adapted to changing circumstances and informed by mechanisms for organised feedback and advice from affected communities.

NRC's response complements and is fully aligned with the UN's **Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP)**. Our appeal is included in the overall GHRP figure, and funding allocated directly to NRC will be registered as a contribution to the GHRP.

With more than 15,000 humanitarian workers in 33 countries, we are committed to **stay and deliver** vital assistance to those most in need during the pandemic. We are adapting our programmes so that we can continue our activities while reducing the risk that they contribute to the spread of the virus.

With support from many of our partners we have **redesigned key programmes** to respond directly to the pandemic. Our global provider of expertise, **NORCAP**, is working to strengthen the humanitarian response capacity to the pandemic at global, regional and national levels.

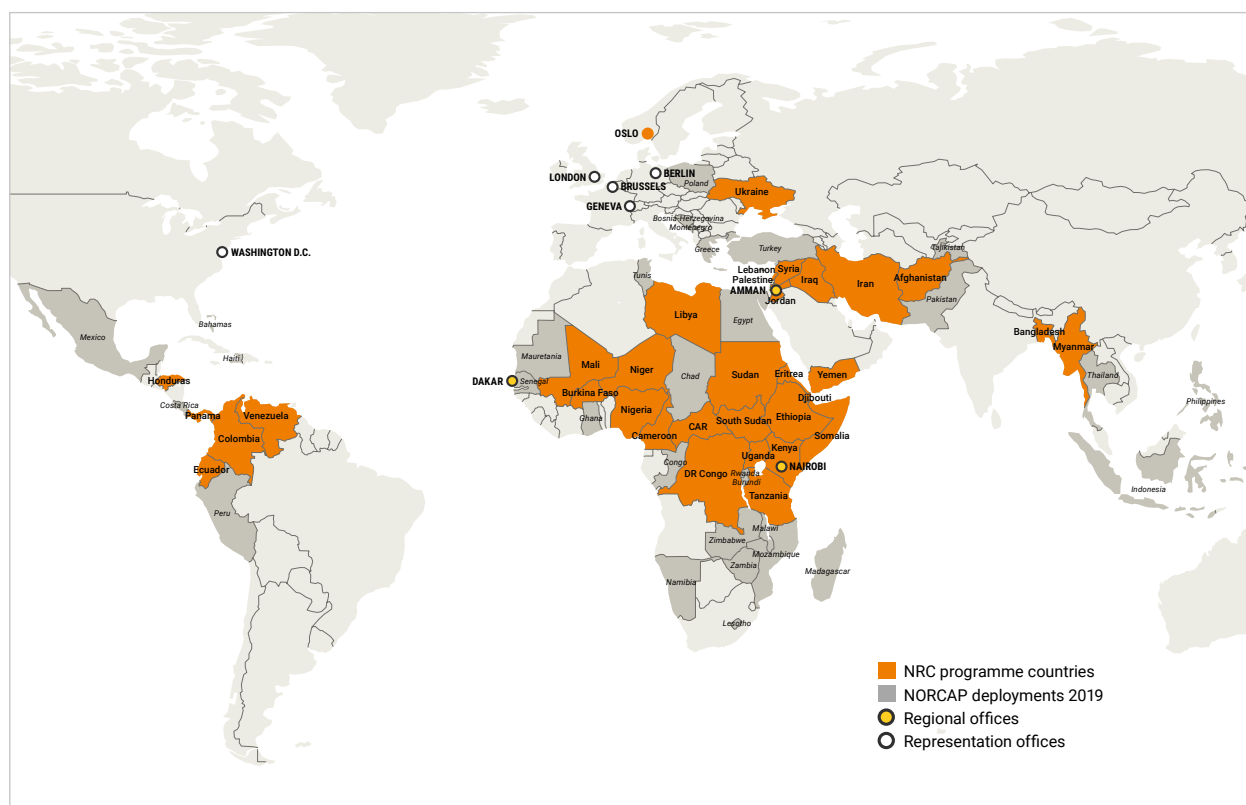
But **more is needed**. Displaced people are among the most vulnerable to the pandemic's immediate health impacts. They are also likely to be disproportionately affected by the economic and other secondary impacts of measures designed to counter the virus's spread. And finally, they are particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse and discrimination as a result of the pandemic.

There is no time to waste. We need to respond now – not only to the immediate public health emergency but also to the pandemic's secondary impact on people's basic needs and rights.

## NRC's Covid-19 response

NRC is well placed to respond to the Covid-19 crisis:

- **Reach:** NRC provided humanitarian assistance to nearly nine million displacement-affected people in 33 countries during 2019 (see table on page 15 for details). With our coverage and focus on hard-to-reach areas, we are able to reach some of the most vulnerable communities in the world.



- **Integrated approach:** Our expertise and programmes in camp management, shelter, legal advice, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) allow us to combine a wide range of activities that address the pandemic's immediate public health impact in a comprehensive way.
- **Secondary impacts:** For many displaced people, the secondary effects of the pandemic are likely to be just as devastating as the pandemic itself. NRC's expertise and programmes in education, food security, and livelihoods mean that we are also well placed to address the secondary impacts of Covid-19.
- **Tailored approach:** Our strategy is guided by continuous communication with affected communities. We also use epidemiological modelling and humanitarian health guidance to inform what we can realistically do to reduce mortality rates through preventive measures.

## Adapting ways of working

The Covid-19 pandemic poses new and extreme challenges to the way we do our work. While some of the solutions to these challenges are not new, it is crucial to accelerate their adoption so that we can respond as effectively and efficiently as possible. Some key elements include:

- **Community engagement and accountability:** Past public health emergencies have demonstrated the importance of including local communities in the response. Listening to and understanding communities' concerns, priorities and recommendations for how they would like to be better assisted – and adjusting programmes accordingly – result in more effective interventions and increased trust. Such two-way communication is a key objective in all of our operational response and in our efforts to improve the general response through expert deployments.
- **Cash:** Providing affected populations with multi-purpose cash instead of in-kind assistance gives them greater choice and ensures they can cover their needs in a dignified, effective and efficient manner. With government measures to prevent the spread of the virus significantly impacting local economies, using cash becomes even more important, as it supports those markets that are so critical to the survival and recovery of communities. We will use multi-purpose cash in our response when it is appropriate and will deploy experts to provide advice to the humanitarian community on how to use cash and vouchers and how best to support markets.
- **Technological solutions:** The nature and scale of the Covid-19 pandemic call for increased use of technological solutions. NRC's ability to use data to analyse the situation in real time will be essential in reacting to the rapidly evolving situation. We have been investing in ways of using technology to provide services for a number of years. Our education teams are already using a variety of technological solutions and our legal counselling teams have invested significantly in technology that makes information available to people in a user-friendly fashion. We will significantly scale up this work, including the creation of "digital communities' hubs" (see text box). Finally, as more information becomes digital, we will continue to invest in improving the security of our information.
- **Flexibility:** Lack of knowledge about the virus and its spread, restrictive government measures, and rapidly developing situations complicate the humanitarian response to the pandemic. Successful strategies therefore need to emphasise context understanding, agility and overarching objectives. Flexibility in programming also requires flexibility in funding. The flexibility that some of our key donors are granting us allows us to respond effectively and efficiently to the crisis and we will work with other donors to also increase their budget flexibility, simplify modification processes, and apply adapted due diligence procedures.



NRC distributing cash cards to vulnerable refugee families to cover food and other expenses in Lebanon. Photo: ERU team/NRC

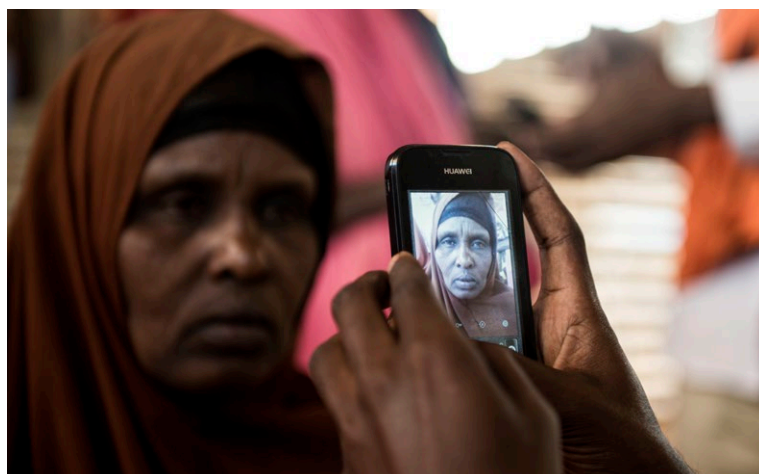
- **Partnerships and coordination:** Coordination and partnerships with organisations that complement each other’s knowledge, skills and activities will be crucial. Our response is aligned with the Global Humanitarian Response Plan and with in-country and regional Humanitarian Response Plans. We will continue our participation in the cluster system as well as country, regional and global-level interagency coordination mechanisms, and other platforms for humanitarian collaboration. This includes liaising and collaborating with development actors, especially in the health sector, to limit the secondary impacts of the pandemic. We are enhancing alliances and partnerships with our peers and the private sector to maximise the impact of our responses and when possible identify innovative approaches.
- **Do no harm:** The Covid-19 pandemic highlights the harm that we can do unless we are careful. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure that our response does not contribute to the spread of Covid-19, including by ensuring that our staff follow appropriate guidelines and wear protective equipment when necessary, changing the way we work to allow for social distancing, and temporarily suspending non-critical programmes.



Man reading information about Covid-19 in north-east Nigeria. Photo: NRC/Samuel Jegede

### **EXAMPLE: Community engagement through digital communities’ hubs**

With movement restrictions preventing, at least temporarily, much face-to-face engagement, we are setting up new channels for our teams to maintain contact with affected communities.



By setting up call centres, our staff – through SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and other digital channels – can send out information and provide support, but also collect information, alerts and feedback so that we can make decisions based on realities that we cannot access physically. Building on previous experience in countries like Colombia and Myanmar, we are currently preparing to set up hubs in ten NRC country operations, including Afghanistan, Kenya and Uganda. This would not have been possible without pro bono and financial support from our corporate partners.

## USD 50 MILLION: Reducing the spread and health impact of Covid-19

The world's 70 million displaced people, and many of their host communities, are among the most vulnerable to the immediate health impacts of the pandemic. Millions are living in overcrowded conditions where recommended physical distancing is all but impossible, access to soap and water is limited, and where health care and other basic services were overwhelmed even before the pandemic. Legal, bureaucratic, financial, and discriminatory barriers sometimes prevent people from accessing health services.

Through our programmes, and particularly those in camp management, shelter, legal counselling and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), we reach millions of people in camps, camp-like settings and densely populated urban neighbourhoods that host displaced people. These communities are particularly vulnerable to an outbreak.

We have already undertaken a range of activities to reduce the spread and health impact in places where we work, but funding is needed to roll out these activities systematically and provide a comprehensive response.

To complement our areas of expertise, we are increasingly partnering and coordinating with a range of medical organisations in our field operations.

### Global Humanitarian Response Plan for Covid-19

**1.3** Prevent, suppress and interrupt transmission: slow, suppress and stop virus transmission to reduce the burden on health-care facilities, including isolation of cases, close contacts quarantine and self-monitoring, community-level social distancing, and the suspension of mass gatherings and international travel.



NRC distributing hygiene kits and providing information about how to protect oneself against infection in Anbar governorate, Iraq. Photo: Maher Mohamed/NRC

NRC's response to the direct effects of the pandemic is based on the acknowledgement that lockdowns are practically impossible in overcrowded places like displacement camps, that transmission of the virus is a near certainty, and that the majority of low-risk people will only suffer mild symptoms. Protecting the most vulnerable (shielding high-risk people) will be the most effective use of resources to reduce the mortality rate. NRC's strategy is therefore to help slow the spread of Covid-19 through camps and camp-like settings to buy time for effective "shielding" (at a household level), and also to help increase displaced people's access to relevant health services.

**NRC will:**

- Improve hand hygiene practices and infrastructure
- Raise awareness about Covid-19 and how to avoid infection
- Reduce levels of overcrowding in displacement sites by expanding camps or shelters
- Help shield the most vulnerable by supporting community-led shelter upgrades and disinfection routines
- Expand, or build new, health service structures (including quarantine and isolation facilities) in partnership with health providers
- Reduce or remove legal, bureaucratic, economic and discriminatory obstacles to accessing health services
- Provide external expertise to lead, advise and coordinate the provision of lifesaving information and services in water, sanitation and hygiene, and public health
- Assist UN agencies, humanitarian country teams, and national authorities with information management in planning, implementing and monitoring responses

NRC distributing hygiene material and giving advice while recipients keep their distance to prevent infection in Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo: NRC/Enayatullah Azad



## **EXAMPLE: NRC's response in Azraq camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan**

Azraq camp in Jordan houses more than 35,000 Syrian refugees. NRC has worked in the camp and the surrounding host community since the camp was established in 2014.



Since the Jordanian government imposed movement restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19, an NRC team has stayed inside the camp to maintain essential services and to undertake a wide range of activities related to Covid-19.

In the camp, we are disseminating information on Covid-19 and the importance of washing hands. Our education programme is then reinforcing these messages through drawing competitions on the theme of handwashing.

With already received Covid-19-related funding, we will distribute hygiene kits and promotional material to all households in the camp and to at least 1,000 households in the host community.

In partnership with UNHCR, we have constructed an isolation area for people with symptoms of Covid-19.

In the host community, we also provide information about Covid-19 and how to seek medical assistance. We have set up a hotline service and a WhatsApp group that reaches more than 8,000 people. And we are working to improve access to municipal water services and the wastewater network for vulnerable households.

Additional funding would allow us to increase the number of households benefitting from our rehabilitation of the water and wastewater infrastructure, thus reducing the spread of Covid-19 and mitigating its impact.



## USD 40 MILLION: Reducing the secondary impact of Covid-19

Government-led public health containment measures, including closures of borders and schools, and restrictions on movements and businesses, will have a profound socio-economic impact in countries that are already struggling with the challenges of armed conflict and the burdens of hosting refugees and displaced people. These secondary impacts will affect everyone, but impoverished and displaced communities will be hit the hardest.

Emerging food crises are accelerating because of border closures and movement restrictions. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network estimates that 94 million people in 29 countries will be in need of humanitarian food assistance in 2020, a significant increase from previous years. We are extremely concerned about those countries that are projected to reach near-famine levels of food insecurity, including Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen, as well as countries that will be affected by desert locusts, such as Ethiopia.

Movement restrictions will shrink both the labour market and displaced people's access to it, starving vulnerable households of a basic income and rendering them unable to meet basic needs such as food, rent, water and hygiene throughout the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2019, we assisted nearly two million people with programmes to ensure that they had access to food and livelihoods. In our Covid-19 response we will seek to increase the number of people we help and target those who are most affected. In doing so, we will ensure that we protect and strengthen local markets, using cash when appropriate and where there is a functioning market, to support economic recovery. In line with our focus on durable solutions we will seek to promote long-term solutions for the affected population.

The closure of schools is interrupting children's education, which in turn reduces learning outcomes, increases the number of children dropping out of school, and deprives many of school meals. Schools that have shut will need to be reopened as soon as practicable, and this will necessitate water and hygiene upgrades, disinfection, and catch-up classes.

Most of the 1.2 million children and youth that we helped through our education programmes in 2019 are currently not receiving any education because of school closures. We will work to find ways to help them continue their education.

### NRC will:

- Distribute food and provide cash to those most affected to help them survive
- Protect people's livelihoods by providing grants to small- and medium-sized enterprises and supporting employment protection for refugee workers
- Support smallholder agricultural production and home-based, fast-growing micro-gardening enterprises

### Global Humanitarian Response Plan for Covid-19

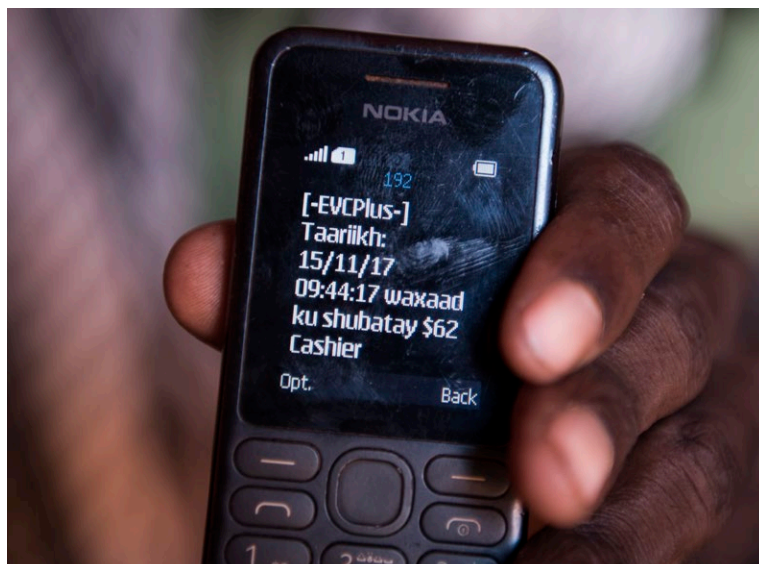
**2.1** *Preserve the ability of the most vulnerable and affected people to meet the additional food consumption and other basic needs caused by the pandemic, through their productive activities and access to social safety nets and humanitarian assistance.*

**2.2** *Ensure the continuity [...] of essential services including [...] water and sanitation, food supply, nutrition, protection, and education for the population groups most exposed and vulnerable to the pandemic.*

- Support and maintain the functioning of local markets and services that people rely on for accessing food, goods and services
- Support the development and implementation of remote education programmes
- Help ensure the safe reopening of schools as soon as appropriate
- Promote cash and markets as a safer and more effective way to deliver assistance
- Provide expertise to support transportation, distribution and coordination of services

### **EXAMPLE: Cash distribution in Somalia**

Somalia is among the countries with the highest combined food insecurity and pandemic risk in the world. A Covid-19 outbreak will compound the already protracted and complex humanitarian crises in the country, with immense humanitarian consequences including for existing widespread food insecurity.



In a rapid survey of 164 people across 82 displacement sites and host communities in early April 2020, a third of respondents (32.9 per cent) identified issues relating to anticipated economic hardship, difficulties sustaining casual labour, inflation and inability to access basic needs as their primary concern related to Covid-19.

NRC plans to extend multi-purpose and unconditional cash transfers to 10,000 of the most vulnerable households to help them overcome the crisis. We will use updated criteria for selecting the most vulnerable households. The programme will help households cover 60-80 per cent of their essential needs.

### **EXAMPLE: Remote learning in Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, the closure of schools is affecting about 10 million children, including one million children who were expecting to enrol in schools during this new academic year. Schools are likely to be closed for another three months.



In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, we are developing methods of remote learning. Using a combination of distance learning through television and radio programming, and self-learning through regular distribution of learning materials to 15,036 children (including 7,860 girls), we are trying to ensure continuity of education for the children that we supported with education before the crisis.

NRC distributing hygiene kits to informal settlements in Kabul, Afghanistan.  
Photo: NRC/Enayatullah Azad



## USD 10 MILLION: Preventing violence, abuse and discrimination

Displaced people will likely face increased threats to their rights and physical safety as a result of the pandemic. Violence and hostilities continue to drive people away from their homes, leaving not only individuals but also whole communities exposed to the pandemic because of increased movement.

Governments around the world have closed their borders and introduced new measures aimed at preventing or reducing transnational transmissions of Covid-19. These restrictions are already having a negative impact on vulnerable people seeking safety, leaving them more exposed to violence, or forcing them to resort to dangerous trafficking routes.

In some countries, governments are using Covid-19 as pretext to close displacement sites without viable alternatives and without consulting affected populations. Panic and distress caused by the spread of Covid-19 are likely to increase social tensions, particularly between displaced and host communities, which could lead to both violence and discrimination. Finally, displaced people are at increased risk of eviction at a time when having safe, secure and adequate housing is essential for the containment of the pandemic.

### NRC will:

- Advocate for ceasefires, humanitarian pauses, maintaining the civilian nature of the response, a reduction in violence, and humanitarian access
- Advocate to preserve access to asylum and prevent coerced returns, including through the premature closure of camps
- Use skilled negotiators and mediators to conduct humanitarian mediation, social cohesion promotion and dispute resolution activities to reduce tensions between communities
- Provide legal counselling, assistance and policy advocacy to prevent evictions of displaced tenants during the pandemic, and support people in obtaining civil documents, including death certificates in cases of mass fatality situations in camps

Our protection expert deployments have a particular focus on gender-based violence and children. The pandemic has exacerbated gender-based violence and those who were already vulnerable are now at much greater risk. Quarantine and isolation measures have led to a spike in domestic violence as well as reduced access to services such as psychosocial support and protection case referrals.

### Global Humanitarian Response Plan for Covid-19

**3.1** Advocate and ensure that the fundamental rights of refugees, migrants, IDPs, people of concern and host population groups who are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic are safeguarded, and that they have access to testing and health-care services, are included in national surveillance and response planning for Covid-19, and are receiving information and assistance.

**3.2** Prevent, anticipate and address risks of violence, discrimination, marginalization and xenophobia towards refugees, migrants, IDPs and people of concern by enhancing awareness and understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic at community level.

Covid-19 has created specific protection risks for children. Their caregiving burden has increased while their access to education is limited. Children are also more exposed to exploitation and abuse, such as transactional sex and child marriages, due to their separation from or loss of caregivers.

Through our expert deployments we will:

- Advocate for and support the appropriate inclusion of gender and protection in Covid-19 responses
- Contribute to the protection of rights for men, women, boys and girls through the provision of child protection officers and protection advisers

### EXAMPLE: Evictions in Somalia

Following advocacy engagement with Baidoa District officials in Somalia in April 2020, mayoral and municipal authorities have agreed to a formal, indefinite moratorium on evictions of displaced people, through the peak of Covid-19. In addition to being a positive measure for infection prevention and control, this also helps to ensure that displaced families – now unable to work – have some security of tenure throughout this uncertain period.

NRC demonstrating proper handwashing techniques, explaining what to do in case of symptoms and debunking myths in north-east Nigeria. Photo: NRC/Rose Dauda



# ANNEX 1

## NRC capacity and reach, 2019

Country	Total beneficiaries	Camp management	Education	Information, counselling and legal assistance	Livelihoods and food security	Shelter and settlements	Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion	Other
Afghanistan	667 099	223 476	61 676	118 765	64 480	77 316	98 229	23 968
Bangladesh	6 193		2 297	3 490		565		
Burkina Faso*	7 626					7 626		
Cameroon	280 753		66 979	18 022	9 705	80 564	167 393	
Central African Republic	181 780		33 552	40 784	25 398	13 193	47 618	12 878
Colombia	262 522	1 999	89 003	87 413	7 386	37 219	66 784	885
DR Congo	687 637		85 168	38 257	179 493	147 093	36 314	297 580
Djibouti	30 357					1 200	29 970	
Ecuador	184 854		1 040	97 130		52 916	142 074	
El Salvador	1 632		1 314	269		49	735	
Eritrea	1 786		1 788					
Ethiopia	637 378		46 358	20 263	42 187	136 236	259 044	15 429
Honduras	10 066		6 737	3 343		1 190	3 019	
Iran	89 519		29 282	1 329	137	37 749	25 925	24 087
Iraq	293 609	67 702	71 988	29 972	2 762	18 344	120 019	16 547
Jordan	303 499		59 155	130 322	2 489	120 877		
Kenya	202 014		4 150	13 233	207		191 500	
Lebanon	330 314	24 542	13 227	199 112		12 741	104 223	
Libya	27 295		3 648	3 615		26 764		408
Mali	236 729		66 686	28 855	73 466	128 204	46 662	1 111
Myanmar	176 243	14 786	23 948	111 158	2 402	22 465		3 836
Niger*	14 085					14 085		
Nigeria	192 624		2 344	40 117	73 629	11 297	23 219	42 018
Palestine	89 527	2 441	39 612	22 454		2 285	24 984	
Panama	7 727			7 519		819	119	
Somalia	596 576		35 786	79 376	150 392	153 759	181 132	
South Sudan	855 037		173 484	7 269	440 844	240 125	134 762	
Sudan**								
Syria	508 109		95 884	95 613	64 677	66 273	264 209	
Tanzania	185 399	153 959	1 397	16 942		9 212	154 684	
Uganda	263 028		30 160	34 966	5 183	10 903	192 891	
Ukraine	32 802			19 920	10 965	2 259		
Venezuela	72 313		10 293	6 809	28 944	225	30 758	2 682
Yemen	1 659 312		104 850	270 376	738 468	112 062	638 298	134 450

\* New country office 2019 \*\* New country office 2020



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