



International Geneva
Directory of Geneva Global Health Actors

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | UNHCR

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BACKGROUND AND MISSION

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 and is mandated by the UN to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees. It works to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, and strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or resettle in a third country.

AREAS OF INTEREST

- Humanitarian assistance in situations of displacement
- Protection of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people
- Protection and advocating for stateless people
- Provision of healthcare, education and nutrition for refugee populations
- Protection of human rights of displaced people and fighting discrimination
- Assisting and monitoring voluntary repatriation to ensure sustainability

HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITIES

UNHCR aims to ensure that all refugees are able to fulfil their rights in accessing life-saving and essential health care, HIV prevention, protection and treatment, reproductive health services, food security and nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene services. UNHCR has to ensure that refugees are able to access essential, cost-effective primary and emergency health, nutrition and WASH services in accordance with international and national standards. UNHCR advocates and works with relevant national government ministries, regional or local departments and municipalities to ensure that refugees are integrated within national systems whenever feasible. UNHCR also works closely with partners to provide services that complement government services where there are significant gaps, lack of capacity or need for temporary additional support to be provided. The coordination and technical guidance of assistance and service provision between state and non-state actors is an important part of UNHCR's public health role in ensuring that health needs of refugee populations are met in an equitable, affordable, cost-effective, efficient and sustainable way.

UNHCR has built substantial technical expertise and capacity. UNHCR has been at the forefront of advocating for the inclusion of refugees and displaced populations in national and regional disease programmes such as HIV, TB and malaria and immunization programmes. Increasingly UNHCR has been working towards including refugees in national

social health protection systems where these exist. UNHCR is working within international technical fora to develop operational guidance and standards in humanitarian settings on nutrition, infant and young-child feeding, non-communicable diseases, mental health and psychosocial support, HIV and reproductive health, water sanitation and hygiene, often going beyond conventions to break down barriers hindering the achievement of impact for displaced populations. Moreover, UNHCR's expertise in health information system management, monitoring and disease surveillance in refugee settings spans more than 10 years. The UNHCR standardised Health Information System (HIS) is being used in 18 countries, 170 sites by over 250 partners, monitoring the health status of approximately 4.0 million refugees.

GOVERNANCE AND STAFF

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees is Filippo Grandi. UNHCR is governed by the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The organisation has its headquarters in Geneva, and has a national and international staff of more than 10,900 working in 130 countries, with most operations based in the field. The headquarters oversee areas such as operations, human resources, external relations and finance.

FUNDING SOURCES AND BUDGET

UNHCR is almost entirely funded by direct, voluntary contributions from governments (87% from governments and the European Union); NGOs (3%); foundations, corporations and individuals (9%). It receives a limited subsidy (1%) from the regular budget of the UN for administrative costs, but raises its own funds for most of its operations. The annual budget for 2017 was USD 7.7 billion.

PUBLICATIONS

To view the latest annual report on public health, see: <https://his.unhcr.org/ar2018/>

UNHCR has several useful online resources on public health, including the Health Information System and the UNHCR Public Health website.

For all other UNHCR publications, see: <http://www.unhcr.org/resources-and-publications.html>

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