

UNAIDS 2024

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

2022-2023 Organizational report

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HIV in UNHCR's mandate

UNHCR is mandated to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection and well-being of refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless persons. UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, and to return home voluntarily.

To support implementation of the 2021–2026 Global AIDS Strategy and advance progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, UNHCR engages in holistic, multisectoral actions, including life-saving public health and nutrition programming, along with advancing gender equality and universal human rights in humanitarian settings world-wide.

UNHCR works in over 130 countries together with governments, civil society and other partners in a multisectoral approach that contributes to: healthy lives and well-being (SDG 3); ending poverty (SDG 1); eliminating hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2); ensuring quality education for all (including refugees) (SDG 4); promoting gender equality (SDG 5); water, sanitation and hygiene for all (SDG 6); economic empowerment and inclusion (SDG 8); reducing inequalities (SDG 10); and climate action (SDG 13).

UNHCR aims to ensure that all forcibly displaced and stateless individuals are able to fulfil their right to access life-saving and essential health care; HIV prevention, protection and treatment; sexual and reproductive health services; food security and nutrition; and water, sanitation and hygiene services. In 2022–2023, UNHCR supported continued HIV services for refugees and stateless persons in over 50 countries. UNHCR's 2023 annual public health inclusion survey found that refugees were included in the national health plans and policy frameworks of 80% (49 countries) of the surveyed countries.

Key UNHCR strategy for HIV

UNHCR's [Global Strategy For Public Health \(2021–2025\)](#) contributes towards the health-related SDGs by translating evidence into action for both quality health service provision and addressing the social determinants of health. The right to health requires that health services are equitable, available, accessible and adapted to meet the needs of all people with particular attention to the organization's [age, gender and diversity policy](#). UNHCR works with governments, partners and communities to design and monitor quality, essential public health services that promote and support equitable outcomes for forcibly displaced women and girls, children and adolescents and young people, men and boys, people living with HIV,¹ persons with disabilities, individuals engaging in transactional sex and LGBTQI+ persons.

¹ UNHCR's Global public health strategy 2021–2025 proposes an inclusive approach with early priority action in emergencies while rapidly expanding services to ensure comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and HIV care to all refugees and where relevant other persons of concerns.

The [Global Compact On Refugees](#) is a framework for achieving more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing to ensure that host communities and refugees can lead productive and dignified lives. It aims for the inclusion of refugees in national policies, strategies and plans, while simultaneously also strengthening those systems. As most refugees reside in low- and middle-income countries with weak health systems, UNHCR and partners adopt combined approaches to advance universal health care.

Top results in 2022-2023

Access of all refugees to HIV testing, treatment and care was enhanced. In 2022, UNHCR supported the scale-up of national HIV prevention and treatment programmes in humanitarian settings. According to its public health survey, 47 (98%) countries have adopted a universal HIV test-and-treat approach in their national policies, and 42 (89%) countries have introduced this approach in refugee settings. HIV self-testing has been included in the national policies of 26 (54%) of 48 countries and has been introduced in refugee settings in 14 (54%) countries where a national policy was in place. In addition, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV has been included in the national policy for 32 (67%) countries, of which 20 (63%) countries have introduced it for key populations in refugee settings.

In 2023, UNHCR further supported refugees with HIV prevention, treatment and care services. It reached over 2.3 million people with community awareness sessions; provided over 9100 people from key populations with HIV services; enabled over 2000 people to access PrEP; and assisted more than 16 300 men to access voluntary medical male circumcision. More than 160 000 pregnant women and adolescent girls who attended antenatal care were tested for HIV, and 1 133 women who had acquired HIV promptly initiated antiretroviral therapy.

Access to essential health and nutrition services, including antiretroviral therapy for people forced to flee, was improved throughout the displacement cycle. For example, in countries hosting Ukrainian refugees, refugees accessed health-care services, including continued HIV treatment, through Blue Dots hubs for children and family support (UNHCR and UNICEF), internet portals and hotlines. In 2023, results from the inclusion survey found that 94% (50 countries) surveyed provided access to refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless persons with access to antiretroviral therapy through the national health system. UNHCR is working with partners on the ground to ensure continuity of care for people living with HIV who are fleeing Sudan into neighbouring Chad, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda. The security situation and ongoing conflict in Sudan poses a serious threat to health and HIV services.

Increased support was mobilized for HIV prevention, treatment and care among refugees/forcibly displaced populations. UNHCR enabled refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless persons to access HIV prevention, treatment and care through governments, partners, communities and major donors, such as the Global Fund, including medicines (such as antiretroviral drugs), condoms, laboratory diagnostics and counselling. The inclusion of refugees in Global Fund proposals has increased significantly across HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria programmes (for HIV, it increased from 15% in 2017 to 60% in 2021).

Equitable provision of health-care services was promoted and supported through strengthened capacity building and multisectoral collaboration. [UNHCR scaled up cash-based interventions](#), 95% of which are unrestricted. Evidence shows that cash transfers can help strengthen people's dignity, personal agency and life options. In 2022, UNHCR delivered US\$ 977 million to some 10 million people in more than 100 countries, including in challenging contexts (e.g., Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Syria and Ukraine).

All UNHCR-supported public health programmes for refugees and displaced persons are in line with the rights-based principles of primary health care. They are people-centred, adopt a whole-of-society approach, provide care in and through the community, and improve individual, family, community and public health. UNHCR and partners strengthened related knowledge and skills building tools in several activities and publications, including:

- [“Good practices on cash-based interventions and health” \(2022\)](#);
- [“Tuberculosis prevention and care among refugees and other populations in humanitarian settings: interagency field guide”](#) (with CDC, UNHCR and WHO);
- an updated UNHCR maternal and newborn health operational guideline (2022), including integration of HIV;
- [“Operational guidance: community health in refugee settings” \(2022\)](#);
- training and learning packages on LGBTQI+ individuals in displacement; and
- a high-level call for action issued at the 2022 [International AIDS Conference's](#) special session on HIV in armed conflict, focusing on protecting those “most left behind”.

Gender equality was advanced through a high-level summit. In June 2023, UNHCR, along with the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, UNICEF and UN Women, cosponsored a “Global summit on gender equality in nationality laws” to advance gender equality and end discrimination in nationality laws.²

Inequalities were reduced and progress was made towards leaving no refugee behind. UNHCR leads globally in strategic interagency initiatives to improve the well-being, security and dignity of refugees and displaced persons, including by advancing gender equality and addressing [gender-based violence](#) through multisectoral actions, such as the provision of medical and psychosocial services, and protection and legal services. UNHCR undertook post-exposure prophylaxis access, awareness-raising and capacity-building interventions at community level in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways. For example, in Moldova, UNHCR, UNFPA and UNICEF, through the refugee response coordination forum, conducted a [“gender-based violence safety audit”](#), which noted and achieved several risk reduction actions through coordination among humanitarian actors.

Refugees were included in national health, social protection and education systems, and policies and programmes enhanced. Host countries are taking greater responsibility for addressing the needs of refugees, with increasing support from donors (including the Global Fund, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the World Bank). UNHCR is playing a key role

² [High Commissioner's statement at the High-Level Global Summit on Gender-Equality in Nationality Laws | UNHCR](#)

in facilitating the related transition processes.³ For example, Mauritania is conducting a nationwide health sector reform (with World Bank support), where 67 000 Malian refugees were included in the national system, previously supported by UNHCR.

In 2022, UNHCR completed the analysis of a public health inclusion survey, which showed important progress in refugee inclusion. Among the 46 countries which reported on their national health plans in 2021, 35 (76%) stated that the plans included refugees, an improvement over the 29 (of 47 countries, or 62%) which did so in 2019. Refugees' access to services was generally on par with that of nationals for primary health care (94%), while equitable access to secondary care among refugees improved over time (from 75% in 2019 to 83% in 2021). The 2023 survey revealed further improvement: of the 49 countries with national health plans, 39 (80%) reported inclusion of refugees.

Multiagency approach and commitments to advance equitable access and strengthening of health systems. UNHCR and Switzerland co-hosted the Global Refugee Forum, the world's largest gathering on refugee issues, in December 2023, co-convened by Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan and Uganda. More than 14 000 people participated (including over 4000 in person) from 168 countries including over 300 refugee delegates. Linked to this, UNHCR and WHO convened the Group of Friends of Health for Refugees and Host Communities to advance efforts in refugee inclusion in national health systems and multi-sectoral provision of mental health and psychosocial support. The meeting generated 235 pledges (from over 40 States) on health, integration of mental health and psychosocial support, and health system strengthening for HIV prevention, care and treatment.

³ [More countries are including refugees in national health systems, and development partnerships are key to the process. UNHCR blog, 7 December 2022](#)

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