

15 July 2022 – The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and World Health Organization (WHO) signed a letter of understanding on 6 July 2022 to enhance health services for refugees and host communities in Sudan. Building on a 2020 global memorandum of understanding, the agreement enacts the 2 agencies' first comprehensive partnership in the country beyond the response to emergencies.

Sudan's fragile health system is buckling under recurrent multiple emergencies, with the current economic crisis further exacerbating health and nutrition conditions for refugees and the communities which host them. Areas in which refugees live often have limited health infrastructure and suffer shortages of medical personnel and supplies.

Among the main joint achievements in 2022, UNHCR and WHO have supported early warning systems to detect potential disease outbreaks in a timely manner, in order to effect swift action and avoid further spread. The agencies continue to provide medicines and medical supplies to primary health care facilities in refugee locations across the country, with about 32 such facilities also accessible by local populations.

"We are glad to officialize our continuing collaboration at a time when multiple emergencies and the ongoing economic crisis are undermining a fragile health system," said Dr Ni'ma Saeed Abid, WHO Representative in Sudan. "The Sudanese health system will also benefit from the know-how and from our renewed joint efforts towards health for all," Abid added.

The United Nations agencies will also strengthen advocacy efforts to the Government of Sudan on key health issues affecting refugees, such as their full access to national health services.

"Health is a fundamental right for everyone. This agreement will help us support refugees access vital health services in the country," said Axel Bisschop, UNHCR's Representative in Sudan. "Increasing access to health care for forcibly displaced populations is one of the pledges Sudan committed to at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. Therefore, this agreement is a good opportunity for UNHCR to continue its support to Sudan in meeting their commitments," Bisschop added.

The new partnership defines UNHCR and WHO roles and strategic areas of collaboration, maximizing coordination, including with national authorities, and optimizing resources when responding to refugee influxes and other emergencies affecting both refugees and implicated Sudanese populations.

Sudan hosts one of the largest refugee populations in Africa. As of 31 May 2022, over 1.1 million refugees are hosted in the country, mainly from South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic.

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