



29 June 2021 – Abutalib Ibrahim describes his journey when he first fled from Sudan to Egypt in 2015 as one that he had to undertake in order for him and his family to live in a safe place.

Unfortunately, that is not Ibrahim's story alone but that of the 26.6 million refugees around the world who were forced by war, conflict, natural disasters, environmental degradation, or economic crisis to flee their homelands in search for safety and better living conditions.

Being safe is a fundamental universal human right, a binding concept that has inspired the

theme for the World Refugee Day 2022: “Whoever. Wherever. Whenever. Everyone has the right to seek safety.”

When Ibrahim learnt about the community event that WHO Egypt was co-organizing for refugees in Egypt on the occasion of the World Refugee Day with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNHCR, the Egyptian Ministry of Youth and Sports, Terres Des Hommes and Etijah, he was very eager to join.

The event was not only an opportunity for Ibrahim to meet with and get to know other refugees as a community leader but also an opportunity to connect with different organizations that offer assistance to the refugees’ communities, he explains.

Driven by a genuine desire to help other people, Ibrahim had been active in community work and founded his own initiative in Egypt “It’s my duty to help” to help refugees with the different services they may need through coordinating with local authorities, and civil society and international organizations. “We work with all nationalities, not a specific one,” he explains. “Even Egyptians, if we can help them, we will offer any assistance we have,” he adds jokingly.

Ibrahim, among other hundreds of refugees, were also able to benefit from the different sessions at the event including sessions about gender-based violence, and mental health and psychosocial support awareness. In fact, studies show that 1 in 5 refugee or displaced women experience sexual violence. Moreover, the stressful and uncertain experiences they have been through might leave them more prone to poor mental health such as depression and anxiety disorders.

Throughout the event, Ibrahim had also been eagerly calling for and encouraging the refugees to get vaccinated at the COVID-19 vaccination unit provided at the event by the Ministry of Health and Population, in cooperation with WHO.

“When I tell people about the vaccination unit here and that COVID 19 vaccines are offered, I am helping them. This is a deadly virus, and we have to encourage all people and make them aware.” He adds that he shares the messages on Ministry and WHO social media pages with his community to spread awareness about the importance of getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

Through ensuring that refugees are integrated in national health planning and implementation, such as vaccinations rollout and universal health insurance system, WHO Egypt works closely with all stakeholders to accelerate the end of the coronavirus pandemic and make sure that Ibrahim and everyone living in Egypt have an equal chance at a healthy life and have access to the quality, affordable, safe, and effective healthcare services they need.

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