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UN Volunteer Janet Simion (second from left) with beneficiaries near a solar-powered water pumping system in Girba refugee camp, eastern Sudan.

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Renewing hope: UN Volunteers supporting UNHCR's work for refugees in the Arab States

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates the number of forcibly displaced people at 79.5 million worldwide. Of these, 20.4 million refugees are under the agency's mandate. The scene in the Arab States region is complex, with multiple emergency situations in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya posing overwhelming challenges on an unprecedented scale. The region is also affected by some of Africa's largest refugee crises of South Sudan and Somalia, and is a main point of entry for refugees heading to Europe.

To support UNHCR in delivering its mandate, more than 310 UN Volunteers have served with in the Arab States during the period 2016-2019, over 50 per cent of them women. This group of diverse and well-trained practitioners strengthened UNHCR's capacity to provide protection and critical emergency assistance for refugees, instilling hope and trust in hard times.

COVID-19 has stalled economies, closed schools and overrun hospitals. As a result, access to healthcare, livelihoods activities and training centres has been limited and uncertain for many refugees. Yet in both this pandemic and larger emergency response for refugees, UN

Volunteers are a source of solidarity.

Most recently, UN Volunteers serving with UNHCR have been engaged in [helping refugees brace themselves for COVID-19 in Sudan](#).

Janet Simion (Kenya), who has been serving as a UN Volunteer Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Officer with UNHCR in Kassala, coordinates water supply for 100,000 persons of concern in nine refugee camps in Eastern Sudan.

She helps ensure access to sanitation services such as household latrines, soap and other hygiene kits, which are all essential for COVID-19 prevention.

In Jordan, UN Volunteers have been [supporting one of the biggest refugee-focused operations ever](#). Jueun Jung (fully funded by the Republic of Korea), who is currently serving as a UN Youth Volunteer Associate Livelihoods Officer, is supporting efforts to make information on livelihoods public and more accessible for around 750,000 refugees in the country. These efforts are especially critical amidst the current COVID-19 crisis.

Additionally, Jueun collects data from both national and international organizations throughout the country. She also provides technical assistance in the delivery of an up-to-date, virtual information centre. This information center allows the UNHCR network to create services in areas where refugees need them most and promote careers that are otherwise unavailable to refugee women and persons with disabilities. It also helps refugee job seekers use the internet to find training and employment opportunities.

“ Inclusive partnerships are a source of motivation for me, because as refugees look forward, I look forward with them. The long-term recovery of refugees depends on finding a livelihood that covers the costs of health care and good nutrition, especially in a pandemic. -- Jueun Jung, UN Youth Volunteer Associate Livelihoods Officer with UNHCR, Jordan

Fiona Allen, Senior Development Officer at UNHCR Jordan commends Jueun's commitment, noting, "It's really interesting to see how she's found her path and taken the time to learn and understand in a thoughtful way."

This linkage between the livelihoods and health sectors was also made in Djibouti, where UN Volunteer Alain Rodrigue Zoure (Burkina Faso) supports UNHCR as a Public Health Coordinator.

Alain has participated in the COVID-19 response, leading training sessions, awareness

campaigns and nutrition programmes for the most vulnerable. He ensured healthcare facilities had the medicines required to treat refugees diagnosed with the Coronavirus and the relationships with refugee leaders who could promote healthy behaviors. These efforts also resulted in community-wide gardens that simultaneously addressed food security and livelihoods.

For Evert Saver (Belgium), who serves with UNHCR Jordan as a UN Volunteer Refugee Status Determination Associate, the role of UN Volunteers is about "bringing renewed hope to someone's life". He likes to view his work as a contribution to the possible resettlement of refugees, which makes him feel connected to the global effort to promote recovery for refugees.

“ The opportunity to speak to refugees, hear their voices and recognize them as people, rather than dealing with numbers, is very motivating. You get to hear their vivid recollections of triumph and resilience, as much as hardship and displacement. --Evert Saver, UN Volunteer Refugee Status Determination Associate with UNHCR, Jordan



Arab States

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)