

DJIBOUTI Newsletter



TOWARDS EFFECTIVE INCLUSION IN THE COUNTRY OF ASYLUM



UNHCR Staffs providing assistance to a refugee woman in Djibouti city
@UNHCR/Deka Hassan Nour

Djibouti, an oasis of peace in the region



Markazi Refugee Village

The Republic of Djibouti is considered an oasis of peace in a region in perpetual conflict and maintains a generous open-door policy for refugees.

As of October 30, 2024, Djibouti offered international protection to 31,891 refugees and asylum seekers, comprising more than 3% of the total population.

UNHCR supports government efforts for refugee

Inclusion, resilience and facilitates voluntary repatriation to countries of origin.

In line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), UNHCR partners with humanitarian organizations, donors, development actors, and private sector and affected communities themselves to support authorities in coordinating the response to people in situations of forced displacement.

PARTNERSHIPS

UNHCR participated in UN open day .



UNHCR ran a stand to provide information on its work in Djibouti @UNHCR/Sonia Karibagiza

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) participated in the open day of all United Nations agencies in Djibouti, organized on the occasion of United Nations International Day celebrated on 24th October 2024.

Like other United Nations agencies, the UNHCR held an information and visibility stand. Brochures and notebooks summarizing Protection and Solutions activities in Djibouti were distributed, and photos showing several UNHCR activities on the ground were viewed. UNHCR also participated in the production of a video retracing the work carried out by the United Nations. Concerning Protection and Solutions, the video showed the testimony of a young refugee who was able to finish his university studies thanks to the support of the Djiboutian government and UNHCR.



relations at the ministry of foreign affairs and international cooperation, took a picture at UNHCR stand in solidarity with refugees @UNHCR/Sonia Karibagiza

With a view to strengthening visibility and encouraging the public to become more involved in the Development Goals (SDG) by 2030, and always standing in solidarity with refugees in their communities,

the UNHCR hosted a photo session with a UNHCR photo frame which had the message: “With Refugees” in English and Arabic. These photos were shared on social networks to make the Protection and Solutions actions legible and visible, and the impact of UNHCR and partners work to the social, economic, and environmental transformation of refugee hosting areas.

The UNHCR stand received a visit from His Excellency Mr. Guelleh Idriss Omar, Ambassador and Director of Multilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who was the guest of honor at the event. The stand also received other officials including ambassadors, international military personnel, musicians, government agents, young students, and UN agents.

The World Bank vice president for the Middle East and North Africa visited Ali Addeh refugee village

UNHCR works with the support of key development actors including the world bank.



The world bank vice president and his delegation during the visit in Ali Addeh refugee village.

On 17th September 2024, the World Bank Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, Mr. Ousmane Dione, conducted a field visit to Ali Addeh refugee village. He was accompanied by the director of the International Finance Corporation for North Africa and the Horn of Africa, Mr. Cheick Omar Sylla, by Mr. Stéphane Guimbert, country director of the World Bank for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti, and Ms. Fatou Fall, representative of the World Bank in Djibouti. Challenges and opportunities were discussed with a view to strengthening collaboration in the refugee hosting areas.

UNHCR supported ONARS with computers and other communication tools to strengthen protection

With a view to improving protection services and solutions implemented by UNHCR partner the national office for refugees and disaster management (ONARS), for the well-being and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in national systems, On 15 August, UNHCR provided computers and communication tools on the fight against fraud and Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) to ONARS. “This support is a contribution from UNHCR to strengthen the IT ecosystem of ONARS and is part of UNHCR contribution to the achievement of Djibouti vision 2035, and on the national development plan 2020- 2024, launched under the name Djibouti ICI for Inclusion Connectivity and Institutions” announced the UNHCR Representative, Mr. Philippe Kuessan-San Creppy.



“This support is a contribution from UNHCR to strengthen the IT ecosystem of ONARS and is part of UNHCR contribution to the achievement of Djibouti vision 2035, and on the national development plan 2020-2024, launched under the name Djibouti ICI for inclusion and connectivity and institutions.”

—
 M. Philippe Kuessan-San Creppy, UNHCR Representative

The ceremony was led by the Secretary General to the Ministry of the Interior, Mr. Souleiman Moumin Robleh and was attended by the Representative of UNHCR, Mr. Philippe Kuessan-San Creppy, the Executive Secretary of ONARS, Mr Mohamed Ali Kamil and refugee leaders. The event was an opportunity for the UNHCR Representative in the Republic of Djibouti to thank the Djiboutian people for their hospitality towards the forcibly displaced people, to the country's authorities, in this case ONARS, for its unwavering support to the host populations and refugees, without forgetting H.E. the President of the Republic, Ismaël Omar Guelleh for his foresight and enlightened leadership regarding the protection of forcibly displaced people.

“UNHCR is a reliable partner, which has improved the way it works with us, both through material and technical assistance and helping to strengthen our capacities and skills”, underlined Mr. Mohamed Ali Kamil, Executive Secretary of ONARS. For UNHCR and ONARS, this material handover ceremony was a success, thus strengthening an environment of collaboration to ensure the protection and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers in the Republic of Djibouti.

PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS

Access to Registration, an essential step in realizing the fundamental rights in asylum seeking



Iris verification, one of the techniques used by UNHCR to register refugees and asylum seekers @UNHCR/Sonia Karibagiza

Since July, UNHCR and its protection partner ONARS have resumed registration activities for refugees and asylum seekers. Registration activities have resumed for all refugees and asylum seekers living in refugee villages and in Djibouti city.

Access to this service is essential to the realization of the fundamental right to seek asylum and is given on a voluntary basis to all persons seeking international protection without discrimination in Djibouti.

UNHCR and ONARS carry out the registration jointly, once the application has been approved after an interview, biographical and biometric data are collected by taking fingerprints and Iris prints from all asylum seekers and refugees. These steps help to strengthen the integrity of services offered to refugees and asylum seekers with a view to mitigating cases of fraud.

The registration is free, and no fees are charged for related activities, such as taking photos and documentations. Since the resumption of registration activities, a total number of 676 new individuals have been registered.

UNHCR, in collaboration with ONARS, has also resumed the printing and issuance of refugee identity documents, to guarantee access to documentation. The phase of renewing expired documents has also started. Since the resumption in July, UNHCR and ONARS have produced 445 asylum seeker family certificates, 532 refugee family certificates and 5 refugee identity cards.

Refugee cards are provided to refugees aged 16 and above and asylum seekers' files are transferred to the eligibility commission to review their cases.

UNHCR launched hygienic kits assistance for refugee women and girls



Women and young girls receiving assistance for hygienic kits in Djibouti city @UNHCR/Sonia Karibagiza

Refugees and asylum seekers are among the most vulnerable members of society, particularly women and girls. This is why UNHCR, and its partners pay particular attention to their well-being. On September 18, 2024, UNHCR launched a cash distribution for refugee girls and women aged between 12 and 49 in urban areas to facilitate the purchase of hygiene kits. This is part of UNHCR's protection solutions and efforts to promote the well-being of refugees. The distribution was based on fingerprint authentication through the BIMS identification system to ensure that the right people have received the kits and to avoid fraud attempts.

As a prelude to the launch of the activity, information and awareness sessions were provided to refugee community leaders, camp and section leaders from different refugee sites, namely Ali-Addeh, Holl-Holl, Markazi and Djibouti-city. Each refugee woman or girl aged 12 to 49 was able to receive an amount of 7,000 FDJ (or 40 USD).

The story of Arzak Salem Mohamed

Arzak, who has been in Djibouti since 2015, fled Yemen with her family following the civil war in her home country and settled in the Djibouti capital.

The family, composed of five daughters and two parents, is from Sanaa in Yemen. Almost 14 years old when she arrived in Djibouti, Arzak, like the rest of her school-age sisters, decided to resume and continue her studies without interruption and enrolled at the Yemeni school in Djibouti-city. Today, she has a degree in accounting from the University of Djibouti.



Arzak receiving money for hygienic kits @UNHCR/Deka Hassan Nour

On the question of what she is doing now, she explains that she has started a small artistic production project consisting of making homemade decorations. ***"The 7,000 FDJ that I received as part of the distribution of hygiene kits will allow me to cover my needs for hygiene kits and use the money that I would have spent on hygiene kits to buy products to expand the production of my business,"*** she said after receiving her money for assistance.

Resettlement – a complementary pathway for vulnerable refugees

UNHCR continues to explore all possibilities for durable solutions including resettlement in a third country. In 2024, UNHCR continued to support the Resettlement Support Center Africa (RSC Africa) and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) by mobilizing refugees, conducting fingerprint checks, and providing up-to-date lists of community interpreters.

During its mission to Djibouti from August 5 to September 4, the Resettlement Support Center (RSC)

In addition, another Canadian immigration team also carried out pre-selection interviews for 7 households of 40 people between 25 August and 6 September 2024.

As part of its Resettlement procedures, UNHCR has put in place the necessary arrangements to ensure integrity in the selection of eligible candidates, and verification systems have been strengthened to avoid fraud.

The story of Someya Ahmed, Yemeni refugee in Djibouti city since 2015



Sumaia at Djibouti airport upon her departure accompanied by the UNHCR protection team.

Through the resettlement program of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the French Republic welcomes particularly vulnerable refugees who have obtained international protection in initial asylum countries, such as Djibouti, where they cannot find neither suitable and effective protection, nor local integration solution. In October 2024, UNHCR assisted 6 households of 12 individuals to reach France as part of the resettlement program.

Someya Ahmed Ali is one of the refugees living in Djibouti who was resettled in France. Originally from Yemen, Someya took refuge in Djibouti with her mother in 2015 but found herself alone when the latter died. Someya suffered a spinal injury during Yemen's civil war and has since lived with a severe disability, making her even more vulnerable.

Despite her worsening medical situation, she did not benefit from appropriate medical care in Djibouti. After nearly a decade in Djibouti, her first country of asylum, Someya began her new life in France on October 17, 2024.

When asked what she plans to do once arrived in France, Someya smiles and says her priority is to seek treatment first and after her health improves she will go back to school and then find an employment to contribute in some ways to support the French people who have welcomed her into their country.

In Djibouti, many other refugees are in vulnerable situations like that of Someya; UNHCR continues to work

REFUGEE INCLUSION INTO NATIONAL SYSTEMS

Refugee education- A commitment honored by the Djibouti government



Children from Markazi High School @UNHCR/Sonia Karibagiza

For three decades, the Republic of Djibouti has hosted refugees and asylum seekers fleeing neighboring countries including Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Yemen. In 2007, the country adopted the asylum Law No. 159/AN/16/7th L and Decree No. 2017-410/PR/MI, which provide refugees and asylum seekers with rights like those of nationals meaning they enjoy the same rights as nationals, except for the right to vote.

In 2017, a framework agreement was signed between the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFOP) and the UNHCR to allow young refugees to access the national education system. In 2020, the Djibouti secondary school leaving certificate was adopted, allowing refugee students to access a certificate for higher education, pending the completion of the translation of textbooks into English in June 2025.

After this date, the refugees will take the national baccalaureate, which will also mark the end of the framework agreement, which constituted the transition phase.

Thanks to this favorable logical framework, refugee students have the same access to education as their national peers. More than 4,369 refugees, including 2,818 from Ali-Addeh, 1,127 from Holl-Holl and 424 from Markazi, returned to school during the 2024-2025 academic year. Furthermore, more than 130 refugee students were admitted to the University of Djibouti. In June 2023, the first class of refugee students graduated from the University of Djibouti and received scholarships from the Government of Djibouti to continue their master's studies in Turkey - a tangible demonstration of Djibouti's commitment to integrating refugees into national systems.

The story of Abdiwasac Abshir Abdi

Abdiwasac Abshir Abdi was the highest performing refugee student for the class of 2024. Originally from southern Somalia, Abdiwasac fled to Djibouti with his family and lived his entire life in the refugee village of Holl-Holl. We asked him about his years as a refugee student and how he overcame his challenges. Abdiwasac told us that being a refugee was not a handicap and that he had always seen education as the only way to change his destiny.

“Being a refugee is not a handicap. I have always considered education to be the only sure way to change my destiny”.

Abdiwasac Abshir Abdi

He added that he was always top of his class from 1st to 12 grade, citing the example of early exams where he achieved top marks despite an illness that occurred during the exam period, from then on, the school principal and his teachers encouraged him to be first at national level in the high school leaving examination, or at least be the top among the refugee students.

He is proud to recall that on the day of the graduation ceremony, the Djiboutian Minister of Education and Vocational Training personally gave him a laptop to encourage him to pursue his dreams.

When asked about his future, he says he wants to continue getting good grades at university to qualify for a scholarship to continue his master's studies abroad. His plan B is to become a teacher to give back to the Djiboutian community that welcomed him and his family as well as his refugee community in Holl- Holl.



Abdiwasac, on his graduation day in Djibouti city.

Refugees in Ali Addeh hired as workers in the construction of Community Development Center

With the aim of improving social cohesion between refugees and host communities, the Djibouti government through the Ministry of Youth & Culture in collaboration with IGAD is building a community development center in Ali Addeh. This center will provide a venue for community activities, recreation, social services, collaboration and learning.

Mohamed-Kader arrived in Djibouti at the age of 2 as a young refugee and has since lived in Ali- Addeh refugee village, in Ali-Sabieh region, in the northern Djibouti. originally from southern Somalia, coming from a large family of 11 children, he was recruited as a worker in this project to build the community development center in Ali-Addeh. He is one of 27 refugees recruited under this project, representing almost the majority of staffs recruited under this project.

He says he felt great pride in being able to work in his own village. He remembers that he had immediately submitted his application and thanks the local authorities including the sub-prefect, the head of the Ali-Addeh camp for the information and awareness. He proudly shared that he worked as a coolie for a full month but is learning a lot from practice and dreams of working as an engineer one day. More than 85% of the workers hired for this construction project are refugees this is a big step towards inclusion and empowerment of refugees in the country of asylum.



Mohamed at the construction site @UNHCR/Deka Hassan Nour.

“Today, I am an unqualified worker, but in the future with the support from UNHCR and partners my dream is to become a qualified engineer”

Mohamed - Somali refugee.



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