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ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020

Swedish Resettlement Programme

Cover photography

A Syrian refugee girl returns to school at Zaatari camp in Jordan after an easing in restrictions related to covid-19. More than 11 million Syrians have fled the country, and 5.5 million are registered with UNHCR in neighboring countries.

Picture and text: UNHCR: Shawkat Alharfosh

The Swedish Resettlement Programme for 2020

This report will consider the Swedish resettlement program for the year 2020. It is based on the original Swedish version and is abbreviated in order to focus on the aspects of the program that is of essential value to the Swedish Migration Agency's external partners. The report centers on four main points of resettlement: the submission of a case, the legal processing of a case, and the transfer as well as the reception process.

The report on Sweden's resettlement programme for 2019 is available [here](#).

The Swedish resettlement program of 2020 encompassed places for 5,000 quota refugees. However, the covid-19 pandemic caused major difficulties for all actors within the resettlement process and at the end of the year 3,599 places had been filled. Due to local restrictions, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had difficulties to operate, and the Swedish Migration Agency decided to pause the transfer of individuals to Sweden for about five months (March–August). Since the mission to resettle people in need of protection is of utmost importance, the Swedish Migration Agency resumed transferring people to Sweden in the middle of August and the rest of the year. In order to successfully operate during the pandemic the Swedish Migration Agency had a close dialogue with essential stakeholders such as the receiving municipalities, and the Public Health Agency of Sweden. The Swedish Migration Agency met with IOM every second week to solve logistical issues caused by the pandemic. One of the first adjustments to the transfer process was to schedule all arrivals to Arlanda airport in Sweden. This is a quarantine airport with methods to handle persons who show symptoms of covid-19. In addition, the Swedish Migration Agency developed an action plan in order to handle arriving quota refugees with symptoms of covid-19. This action plan was enforced in two cases. However, test results showed that these individuals did not have an ongoing covid-19 infection. The Swedish Migration Agency also commissioned IOM to conduct an enhanced *Pre Embarkation Check* (PEC) in order to check every persons who were to be transferred for symptoms of covid-19, as well as to investigate their recent contacts with infected persons. When necessary, transfers were postponed. IOM was also assigned to prepare every person that were to be transferred with information about Swedish general recommendations pertaining to the virus, as well as with protective equipment for the travel.

All actors within the resettlement process have shown the utmost flexibility throughout the year. The almost complete stop in transfers between the middle of March and the middle of August caused a lag in initial planning of transfers per month. Thus, the volumes of transferred persons increased drastically in the autumn, and despite harsh and unpredictable hindrances caused by the pandemic, 3,599 resettlement spots were filled.

Initial planning and result in the number of transfers per month during 2020

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Plan	450	500	550	550	500	450	350	350	350	450	450	50	5 000
Result	684	558	116	2	0	0	0	26	107	748	655	703	3 599

The initial planning of the resettlement quota for 2020 encompassed, as mentioned, 5,000 individuals, and the distribution of places focused on the largest and most intense refugee situations identified by the UNHCR, as well as vulnerable groups. The distribution of places aimed to mirror the global needs of resettlement. As persons originating from Syria represent the population with the highest global resettlement needs, and as the large numbers of refugees put high pressure on neighboring states, the Swedish program reserved 1,800 spots for Syrian refugees residing in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. In addition, bearing in mind the immense need of resettlement in some African countries, 1,400 places were reserved for refugees stranded in countries along the so called Central Mediterranean route, and 1,300 places were reserved for resettlement from host countries that are the focus of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). Vulnerable minorities, women and children, as well as individuals who have survived violence and torture were prioritized groups within all the above-mentioned refugee situations. The remaining 500 spots were earmarked for persons in need of urgent resettlement within the Prioritized Global Quota (PGQ), which normally encompass a great variety of nationalities.

Due to the pandemic, the initial planning naturally had to be revised. The main issue of the year was the cancelling of eight out of nine planned field missions. It was only possible to conduct one mission, which took place in Turkey in January 2020. During this field mission the Swedish Migration Agency's personnel mainly investigated Syrian and Somali cases. Such cases cannot be assessed solely on written material according to Swedish regulations. The cancelled field missions caused a situation where 1,500 submissions could not be investigated or assessed. Therefore, UNHCR had to submit other nationalities, and a greater share of dossier cases, than initially planned.

Examples on discrepancies between initial planning and result in submissions

	Uganda	Egypt	Sudan	Libya	ETM*	Malawi	Namibia	South Africa	Zambia
Plan	800	300	200	200	200	0	0	0	0
Result	583	366	208	283	234	64	4	59	50

* ETM (Emergency Transit Mechanism) in Rwanda and Niger

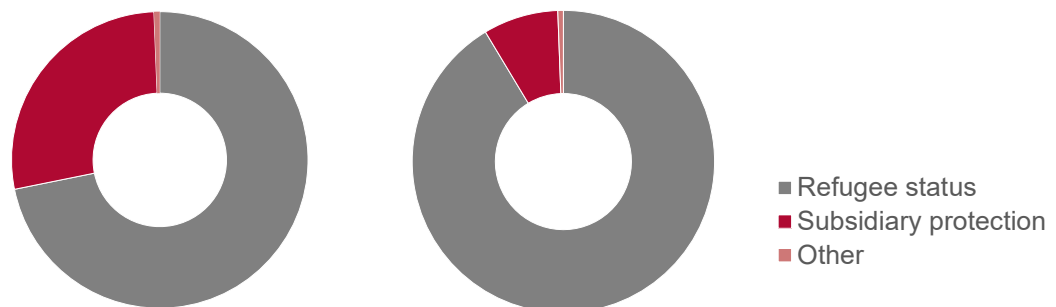
The consequences of the pandemic, and the significantly decreased amount of Syrian and Somali cases due to the cancelled field missions, led to great differences in the statistics of 2020 compared to previous years.

In 2020, the UNHCR submitted 4,840 individuals for resettlement to Sweden, which constitute a shortage of 660 cases compared to a normal year of operation. The acceptance rate were about 95 percent, which is an increase with five percentage points in comparison to previous years. The increase of accepted cases can be explained by the change of nationals submitted to Sweden. Normally Syrian and Somali nationals are subjected to a higher rate of non-acceptances. In total, 89 persons were not accepted for resettlement to Sweden in 2020, which constituted a decrease of 260 non-accepts compared to 2019.

In 2020, a total of 2,937 individuals (91 percent of all accepts) were granted refugee status, and 258 (8 percent) were granted subsidiary protection. The share of individuals receiving subsidiary protection status declined significantly compared to previous years. Once again, the impossibility to process Syrian cases can explain this outcome. In 2019, Syrian nationals constituted about 97 percent of all individuals that were assessed as being in need of subsidiary protection.

Major discrepancies between 2019 and 2020

Classification of accepts in 2019 Classification of accepts in 2020



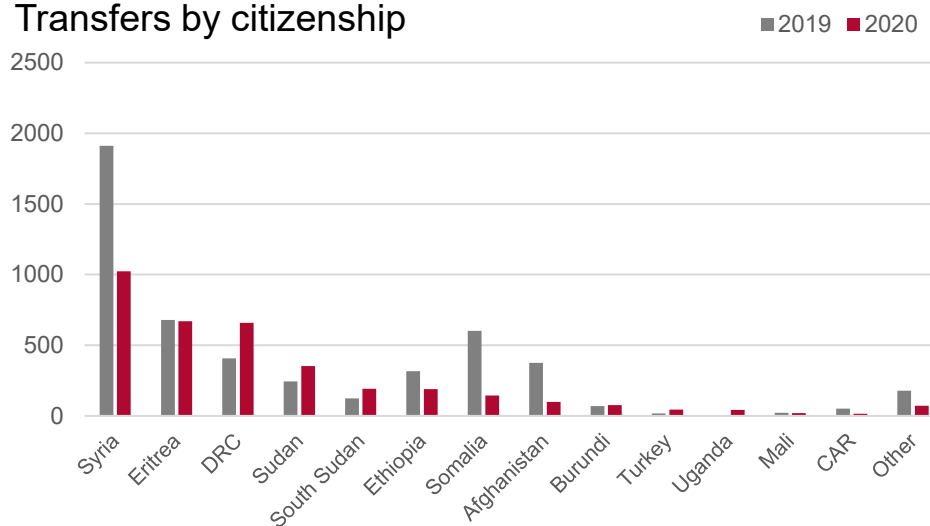
Year	2019	2020
Submissions	5 541	4 840
Field missions	10	1
Expedited cases	5 814	3 391
Accepts	5 245	3 214
Non-accepts	349	89
Refugee status	3 767	2 937
Subsidiary protection	1 445	258
Transfers	5 002	3 599

Except for Syrian cases (investigated in 2019 or during the field mission in January 2020) the main groups among processed cases were persons originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan. Many cases concerned vulnerable women risking gender based persecution and vulnerable ethnic minorities. Persons originating from Eritrea constituted an exception, since a vast majority were granted refugee status due to political opinion or ascribed political opinion as oppositional to the Eritrean political rule.

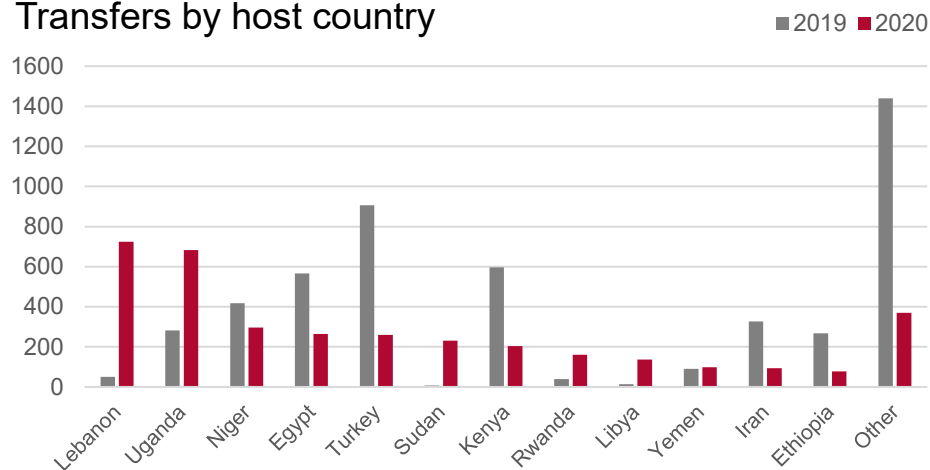
In addition to the effects of the pandemic, a major challenge in the transfer process was the instability in Ethiopia at the end of 2020. Clashes between central and regional forces caused logistic hinders for quota refugees to reach the capital for investigations, biometrics and exiting the country. In addition, the Ethiopian authorities stopped issuing exit permits from December 2 making the transfer of quota refugees to Sweden impossible.

Similar to previous years, persons originating from Syria and Eritrea were the biggest groups among transferred persons in 2020. However, the proportion of persons from DRC, Sudan and South Sudan increased drastically compared to 2019. Because of the cancelled field missions, persons originating from Somalia decreased compared to previous years. The number of persons originating from Afghanistan also decreased. This was not, however, relatable to the pandemic but rather to a change of focus in areas of resettlement.

Transfers by citizenship



Transfers by host country



The most common household constellation of 2020 were families with children (45 percent) and single parents with children (21 percent). As mentioned, vulnerable groups were prioritized. Many were women and children assessed as vulnerable and this group make up a great share of the transfers each year. In 2020, about 46 percent of all transfers consisted of women or girls, and about 49 percent of all transfers consisted of children, mainly between 6 and 12 years of age. Unaccompanied children consisted of about 7 percent of all transfers in 2020, which is an increase with 2 percentage points compared to 2019. Unaccompanied children mainly originated from Eritrea (107 children), followed by DRC (34 children) and Sudan (34 children).

Vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities were also prioritized in the resettlement program of 2020. The Swedish Migration Agency do not register ethnic belonging or religious belief in any statistical program but can conclude that at least twenty minorities from Sub-Saharan Africa are represented in the refugee quota of 2020, and at least four minority groups originating from Syria.

Persons with high medical needs constituted about 3 percent of all transfers in 2020, which is a normal volume compared to other resettlement countries. In numbers, however, Sweden remains one of the countries that accepts the most cases of persons with medical needs internationally.

Looking forward, the pandemic continues to challenge the capacity of international resettlement. The mission to transfer 5,000 individuals in 2020 fell short with 1 401 persons. Therefore, the Swedish government has decided to give the Swedish Migration Agency the opportunity to fill these spots in 2021. This means that the Swedish Migration Agency's resettlement mission has increased with about 28 percent for 2021. In order to fulfill the mission of transferring 6,401 individuals in 2021, the Swedish Migration Agency has to initiate field missions as soon as possible, or initiate remote investigations via video link.