

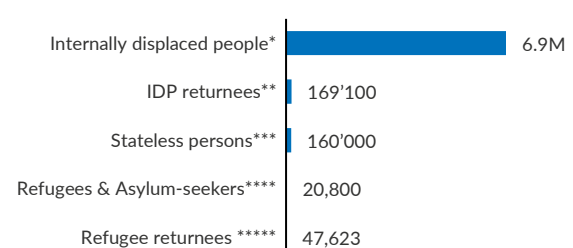
Area-Based Programming and Humanitarian Early Recovery

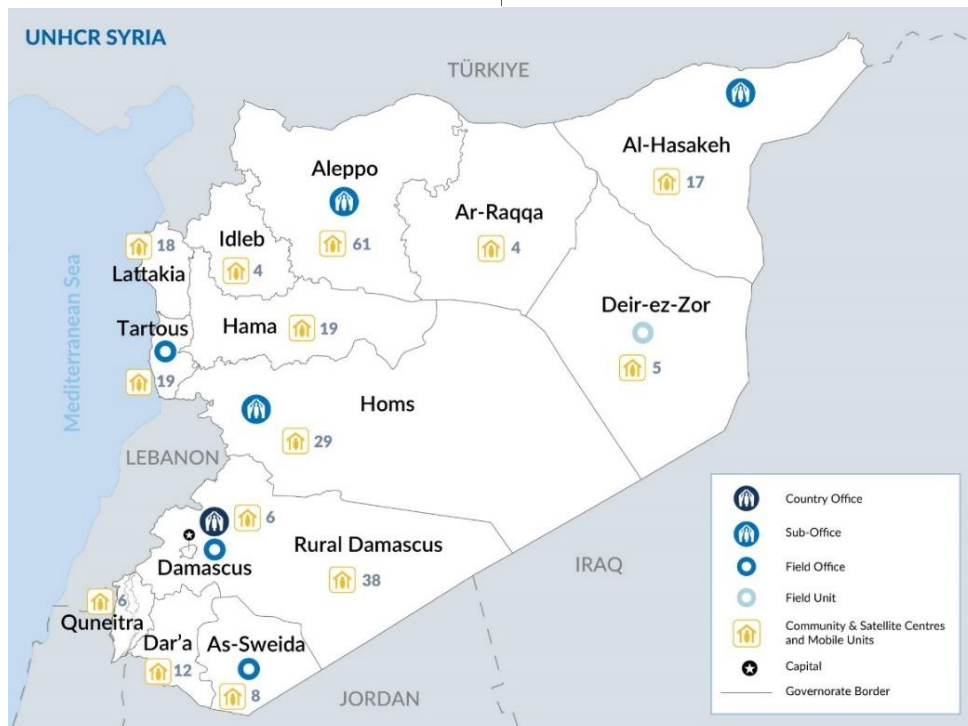
December 2022

The Syria crisis is now in its twelfth year. The UN estimates that 14.6 million people need humanitarian assistance across the country, a 9% increase from the previous year (2022 HNO). While the security situation in some parts of the country is unpredictable, the economic deterioration is pushing millions of people into poverty.

Access to basic services and livelihoods is limited. Syrians are increasingly unable to cope and meet their basic needs. The UN estimates that 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line, 76% of households are unable to meet basic needs, and an estimated 12 million people - roughly 54% of the Syrian population - is food insecure (2022 HNO).

UNHCR provides protection services and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees, stateless people and host community members based on their identified needs and vulnerabilities. In line with UN and donor policy, UNHCR has responded by expanding its humanitarian early recovery activities.

KEY FIGURES	POPULATION OF CONCERN
<p>9.6 million people in Syria are in severe need of humanitarian assistance*</p>	
<p>75% of people in need of assistance are women and children*</p>	<p>* Source: 2022 HNO ** Source: OCHA, December 2021 *** Estimated **** Source: UNHCR September 2022 ***** Source: UNHCR verified returns in 2022 as of 30 November</p>
<p>90% of people in Syria live below the poverty line* <small>*Source: 2022 HNO</small></p>	



Area-Based Programming

UNHCR defines **area-based programming** as a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach that responds to the inter-related needs of all population groups living in a defined geographic area.

(Source: Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement)

UNHCR is committed to working with all forcibly displaced and stateless persons and to promote the socio-economic inclusion of people under its mandate. In line with these commitments, and in partnership with other agencies, UNHCR seeks to maximize opportunities to respond through area-based approaches and integrated programming that are inclusive of all relevant population groups in a given operational context. This includes situations where populations of concern to UNHCR live together (e.g., IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries, returning refugees and IDPs), and/or with host communities.

As outlined in UNHCR's [Policy on Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#), the aim of area-based approaches and integrated programming is to leverage opportunities and resources available to UNHCR and partners to advance protection and solutions in a manner that builds on and promotes local systems, including the capacities, knowledge, and resources of local communities, using a bottom-up and participatory age, gender and diversity-sensitive approach.

UNHCR programmes are aligned with the objectives developed with the UN and Humanitarian Country Teams and are informed by joint assessments and analysis. UNHCR's programming and resource allocation are directed towards the greatest needs and risks, while taking into account relevant inter-agency arrangements.

Key characteristics of area-based programming

- Implemented within a **defined geographic area**
- Developed to **target communities rather than specific population groups**
- Conceived in a **community-driven and participatory manner**
- Based on inter-agency **needs assessments and analysis**
- Involves interventions across **multiple sectors**
- Brings on board **multiple actors with comparative advantages**

Area-based programming in Syria

UNHCR Syria's strategic directions are aligned with the overall priorities of the UN in Syria and with the [UN Strategic Framework for the Syrian Arab Republic 2022-2024](#). UNHCR identifies areas of interventions based on joint inter-agency needs assessments, for example the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, which informs the Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan.

In Syria, UNHCR leads the Protection and Community Services, Shelter and Non-Food Item sectors and participates in joint multi-sector needs assessments with UN agencies and other international and national partners. Needs are assessed for each sector based on specific criteria and defined priorities. Such criteria may include availability of basic services, local markets and accessibility, among others. Area Humanitarian Country Teams help define the most vulnerable geographic areas across all the sectors, in consultation with sector focal points in Damascus, to inform planning and response.

Community-based protection

In line with UNHCR's community-based and area-based approach, UNHCR supports 126 community and satellite centres and 120 mobile units in all 14 governorates in Syria and engages 2,800 outreach volunteers to strengthen its protection activities. For more information on protection services offered at UNHCR-supported community centres, please refer to the [UNHCR Syria Factsheet](#).

Besides the community centres, satellite centres (smaller versions of community centres providing only some services) and mobile units offer protection services based on identified needs in underserved or remote locations. The latter respond flexibly to population movements and increase outreach to the most vulnerable populations who do not have easy access to the community or satellite centres. UNHCR may also relocate centres to areas with the highest needs to improve the availability of services to vulnerable communities.

UNHCR's community-based approach adheres to the [accountability towards the affected populations frameworks](#) which places people at the centre of programme development for example during assessments, in the design of projects/activities and during feedback/monitoring of these projects/activities. Participation is also enabled through outreach volunteers who not only identify common problems in communities, but also facilitate conversations on how to address these. The information provided by outreach volunteers is analysed and helps define UNHCR's response.

Area-based return support

One of UNHCR's strategic directions for 2023-2025 is to foster an environment for voluntary, dignified, safe and sustainable return of IDPs focusing on supporting those who have returned spontaneously and their communities. This objective is pursued through UNHCR's own interventions as well as through various inter-agency efforts. Refugees who have returned spontaneously might also benefit from these interventions, but these are not linked to specific refugee return movements.

UNHCR plays an active role in the Syria Return and Reintegration Working Group (RRWG) chaired by the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, where UNHCR is responsible for coordinating the refugee return area pillar and serves as Secretariat. UNHCR also co-chairs the RRWG's Technical Working Group (TWG), together with UNDP. Through these fora, UNHCR has been steering and informing inter-agency efforts to strengthen support to communities experiencing high returns and high needs.

The concept of **"area-based return support"**, endorsed by the RRWG in 2021, is an organising framework in which UN agencies, INGOs and their partners seek to align multi-sectoral interventions aimed at addressing the immediate needs of communities receiving returnees, while promoting humanitarian early recovery and resilience, and therefore the sustainability of return and reintegration. Drawing on single-agency and joint-agency experiences in Syria, the area-based return support concept seeks to employ a truly integrated approach to area-based programming, using a bottom-up participatory and inclusive, context and protection-sensitive approach. This approach is seen as key for effective support since no single agency, organisation or sector can alone address the multi-faceted challenges facing communities experiencing high returns and high needs. As such, the area-based return support approach reaffirms the principles of recent high-level UN initiatives, including the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#).

Humanitarian Early Recovery

Humanitarian early recovery is a form of humanitarian assistance that aims to reduce immediate and protracted humanitarian needs by strengthening the self-reliance of affected populations, primarily focused at the household level.

UNHCR's support for humanitarian early recovery efforts in Syria include interventions related to shelter and re-establishing lifesaving services, livelihoods, technical capacity building and community resilience.

- **Shelter and basic services:** Shelter and support to basic services projects focus on areas with the highest needs, including where spontaneous returns of IDPs are taking place. UNHCR adopts a multi-sectoral area-based approach to support access to shelter and basic services in areas where needs are the highest to enable dignified returns. Minor shelter repairs target the most vulnerable families to ensure basic conditions and safety. Activities include the installation of doors, windows, toilets and kitchens. The repair of household-level water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services focuses on neighbourhoods where minor shelter repairs are also being implemented to ensure homes are habitable. Minor repairs to schools, primary health care centres, markets, and individual farmer irrigation channels also support people who have spontaneously returned to settle down. Support to civil registries is a key protection intervention to facilitate access to civil documentation – a crucial means for vulnerable Syrians to have freedom of movement and access services.
- **Livelihoods:** UNHCR livelihoods support focuses on providing assistance to vulnerable people who are demonstrably skilled and wish to become engaged in particular key economic sectors. The start-up support for small businesses provides entrepreneurship training to selected beneficiaries followed by an in-kind contribution to their businesses. In addition, agricultural assets support provides agricultural-related inputs and services to farming households such as small livestock (including poultry, bees and sheep) and other ancillary inputs and supplies (including coops, hives, fodder and veterinary drugs).
- **Capacity building:** Capacity building aims to support institutions to resume the provision of basic humanitarian services. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of UNHCR's capacity-building activities related to health care and provision of essential medical equipment. UNHCR also provides protection training to government counterparts and lawyers on a regular basis in order to improve access of persons in need to protection services.
- **Community resilience:** These activities aim to empower communities to build resilience. Community health volunteers help increase health awareness and in turn reduce health risks of communities. The support to community-led initiatives, youth-led initiatives, and the community-based organizations help build up community leadership. These initiatives can include for example organizing knitting skills trainings for internally displaced women, installing streetlights, providing mental health and psychosocial support services to older people and organizing skills development activities for children, amongst others.

Further information

[UNHCR Syria Global Focus page](#) | [UNHCR Syria website](#) | [UNHCR Syria Data Portal](#) | [UNHCR Syria Factsheet](#)

Contact

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