

Syrian Arab Republic

August 2023

The Syria crisis entered its thirteenth year in March 2023. The UN estimates that **15.3 million** people need humanitarian assistance across the country, a 5 per cent increase from 2022.

The February earthquakes further exacerbated the situation in Syria. An estimated **8.8 million** people in Syria were affected by the earthquakes, and UNHCR has been responding to this additional emergency.

UNHCR continues to provide protection and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, returnees, stateless people, and host community members based on identified needs and vulnerabilities.

HIGHLIGHTS

2,656

Outreach volunteers are engaged in providing support to vulnerable people in 14 Syrian Governorates

3,413

Families affected by the earthquakes received emergency cash assistance as of end-August

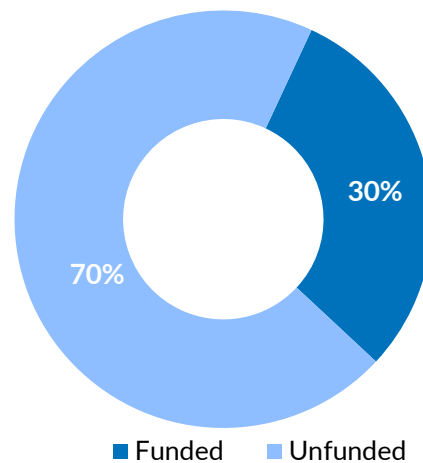
21,729

Elementary and secondary level students attended summer courses in 2023

FUNDING (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2023)

USD 504.3 million

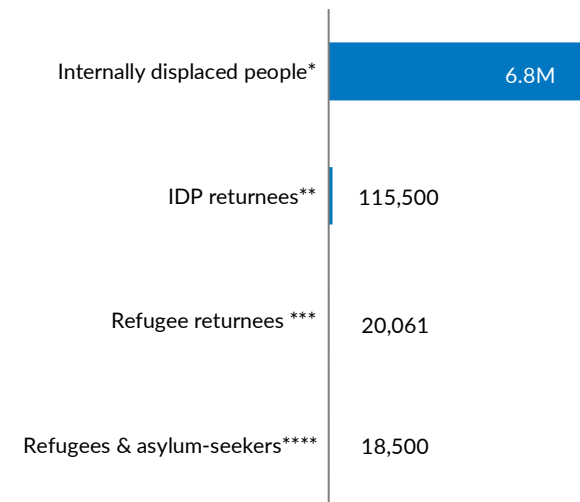
requested for the Syria Operation in 2023



PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT IN THE WHOLE OF SYRIA



Volunteer women in Tartous Governorate attending a six-day training course supported by UNHCR, WHO, and UNICEF on reducing neonatal mortality and preparations for childbirth and breastfeeding. After the course, the volunteers will be able to identify any risks during their visits to pregnant women and will link them to available health services if needed. ©UNHCR/E.Kabbas



* Source: 2023 HNO

** Source: OCHA, January-December 2022

***Source: UNHCR verified returns in 2023 as of 31 July

**** Source: UNHCR, July 2023

Operational Context

The [2023 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#) estimates that over 15.3 million people need humanitarian assistance in Syria. This is the highest number of people in need since the beginning of the crisis. Syria also has the largest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the world with 6.8 million people internally displaced. The 2023 HNO states that humanitarian and economic indicators in the country continue to deteriorate, and many basic services have collapsed. The February earthquakes have further compounded existing needs in a country that has experienced more than 12 years of crisis.

UNHCR supports refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, host community members, and returnees (refugees and IDPs who have returned to their home areas) by providing assistance to those most in need using a [community-based](#) and [area-based approach](#). UNHCR's [community-based approach](#) focuses on community mobilization and building self-reliance. It aims to reduce vulnerabilities and protection risks by providing services through community-based structures and networks. UNHCR's [area-based approach](#) entails working with partners to enhance support in geographic areas where the needs are greatest.

In 2023, UNHCR is working with 29 partners including international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and national NGOs.

Operational Updates



Protection

- In line with its community-based protection approach, as of end-August, UNHCR was supporting 115 [community/satellite centres](#) and 113 mobile units across the country. UNHCR also engaged over 2,650 community outreach volunteers in all 14 Governorates.
- Several community-led initiatives were successfully completed in August in Quneitra, As-Sweida, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Idleb, Latakia, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama Governorates in collaboration with partners. These initiatives are proposed and managed by communities to respond to challenges while contributing to social cohesion, life skills development, and poverty reduction. Examples of these initiatives implemented in August include the repairs of a local school; a water network, the sewage system, street lighting, a public park, a sports stadium, and a community-friendly space; as well as constructing a small bridge to facilitate the movement of people.



Education

- UNHCR in coordination with its partners concluded summer courses for over 1,950 elementary and secondary level students in the community centres of Dweilaa (Damascus), Beit Saber, Harasta, Qudsia, Qara, Drousha, and Dmaer (Rural Damascus Governorate). Students are provided with catch-up classes covering the main school subjects, while being involved in recreational activities in a safe and nurturing learning environment during the summer.



Students attending a summer course in collaboration with UNHCR partner in a school in Rural Damascus Governorate. ©UNHCR/SARC



Core relief items

- In August, under its regular programme, UNHCR provided core relief items to around 11,190 vulnerable internally displaced and returnee families (over 58,694 individuals) in Rural Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Dar'a, Hama, Damascus, Homs, and Tartous Governorates. In total this year, around 38,390 families (almost 207,194 individuals) received core relief and seasonal items. In addition, some 42,710 households (206,000 individuals) have been supported with core relief and winter items as part of the earthquake emergency response. UNHCR also distributed around 1,180 solar fans to the affected families by the earthquakes in rural Latakia and Aleppo Governorates.



Shelter

- In August, UNHCR completed the repair of 500 linear meters of sewage network in Daraya (Rural Damascus Governorate) benefitting around 1,000 families.
- UNHCR distributed and installed 312 shelter packages (out of the total 449 planned) including doors, windows, water tanks, and electrical cables

benefitting 1,560 individuals in Deir Balbeh (Homs Governorate).

- In addition, UNHCR continues to support the construction works in Zone 3 in Al-Hol camp (Al-Hasakeh Governorate) including new communal units, each of which contains four kitchens, four showers, and four latrines. As of end-August, UNHCR completed and handed over 390 of those units (out of 484).
- UNHCR started the assessment for the cash for minor repair interventions in Latakia and Aleppo Governorates, which will support around 4,500 families whose accommodation was affected by the earthquakes.



Livelihoods

- Under the UN-to-UN agreement for improving returnee livelihoods and access to basic services, UNHCR and FAO rehabilitated irrigation sites in drought-stricken locations in Ar-Raqqa Governorate affected by the reduced level of water of the Euphrates River. These locations are areas in which returnee communities are living. The inter-agency rehabilitation included civil works such as the installation of irrigation water intakes on riverbanks, concrete foundations, irrigation pipes, and mechanical and electrical works for the 11 installed small-scale pumping sets. With this intervention more than 11,700 individuals now have access to farming using irrigation.
- In Al-Hasakeh Governorate, UNHCR supported a self-managed community group of seven families to run a greenhouse livelihood project. The group started to produce and sell off-season vegetables, generating an income.



Cash Assistance

- UNHCR continued to provide **multi-purpose cash assistance** to people affected by the earthquakes in Aleppo, Latakia, and Hama Governorates in line with the recommendations of the Cash Working Group. In August, 1,048 households (5,101 individuals) in Aleppo, 339 households (1,674 individuals) in Hama, and 1,354 households (6,584 individuals) in Latakia and Tartous received cash assistance. As of end-August, 3,413 families benefitted from the multi-purpose cash assistance as part of the earthquake emergency response.



Refugee Response

- **Registration:** As of end-August, some 18,500 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR. The majority of the registered refugees are from Iraq and reside primarily in urban areas in Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Homs, Tartous, and Latakia Governorates. Meanwhile, in August, UNHCR renewed identification cards for some 1,470 refugees. The identification cards will protect against *refoulement*, ensure access to basic rights and services, and facilitate freedom of movement.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD):** In August, eight asylum-seeking families comprising 16 individuals were interviewed to determine if they are refugees. During the same period, four families comprising 12 individuals from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Pakistan, and Sudan were recognized as refugees, helping to ensure their protection from *refoulement* and detention due to irregular stay, and access to basic services. UNHCR also provided counselling on the RSD process and individual cases through its hotline. Inquiries received during August primarily related to the status of individual cases and requests for cash assistance.
- **Resettlement:** In August, UNHCR facilitated departure arrangements for one individual for resettlement, while 10 individuals departed under complementary pathway arrangements****.
- **Cash Assistance:** UNHCR continued to provide regular multi-purpose cash assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers for the months of July and August, supporting in August a total of 2,055 families (5,474 individuals). UNHCR also supported 2,010 students aged between six to 17 years with education grants.
- UNHCR faced challenges in providing cash assistance to the refugees and asylum-seekers in August due to the newly added documentation requirements for identity verification by financial institutions, as well as the liquidity restrictions in Syrian banks. Advocacy efforts are ongoing to resolve these issues.



Health

- Following UNHCR's advocacy, Government approval on inclusion and integration of refugees in the primary health care national package of services was given. UNHCR will initiate a pilot project in nine primary health facilities in Damascus and Rural Damascus Governorates.

**** Complementary pathways are safe and regulated avenues for persons in need of international protection that provide for a lawful stay in a third country where international protection needs are met.

- After the successful implementation of the neonatal home care programme through health points/community health workers in one of UNHCR's community centres, 15 UNHCR and partner staff become members of the national team of trainers for the programme, which is supported by WHO and UNICEF, to reduce the mortality rate among newborns.



Return

- In August, UNHCR verified or monitored the return to Syria of 4,325 refugees from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, an increase of 682 from July.^{*****} This brought the total number of refugee returnees verified or monitored by UNHCR in 2023 to 24,383 individuals. In the same period in 2022, the total number of those verified or monitored was 32,574. In total, between 2016 and August 2023, UNHCR verified or monitored the return to Syria of some 378,243 individual refugees.^{*****}

RECENTLY PUBLISHED:

- [UNHCR Syria - Key Figures and Achievements](#) (June 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet](#) (June 2023)
- [Eighth Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions & Intentions on Return to Syria](#) (May 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria: Education Fact Sheet](#) (Q1 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria: Legal Aid Fact Sheet](#) (Q1 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria: Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response in Syria](#) (Q1 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services](#) (Q1 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria: Child Protection Fact Sheet](#) (Q1 2023)
- [UNHCR Syria: Refugees and Asylum-Seekers](#) (Q1 2023)

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LINKS: [UNHCR Global Focus](#) | [UNHCR Syria Data Portal](#) | [UNHCR Syria Website](#) | [UNHCR Syria Twitter \(@UNHCRinSYRIA\)](#) | [UNHCR Syria Facebook](#)

^{*****} Provisional figures pending further verification

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