

People with special needs

December 2023

The crisis in Syria has had a significant impact on the well-being of many people in the country. Being uprooted from their homes and experiencing destruction, loss or separation from families has created physical and psychological burdens for many Syrians including internally displaced people.

According to the 2023 [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#), there are **2.6 million people with disabilities in Syria (17 per cent of overall people in need)**. However, emergency and post-operative rehabilitative care remains inadequate in an already fragile and overwhelmed health system.

UNHCR Syria provides specialized assistance based on identified needs for people with disabilities. This includes medical in-kind assistance, home-based rehabilitation programmes, case management, and awareness-raising sessions for people with disabilities and their caregivers.

15,905
people

received medical in-kind assistance in 2023

8,189
people

benefitted from rehabilitation programmes in 2023

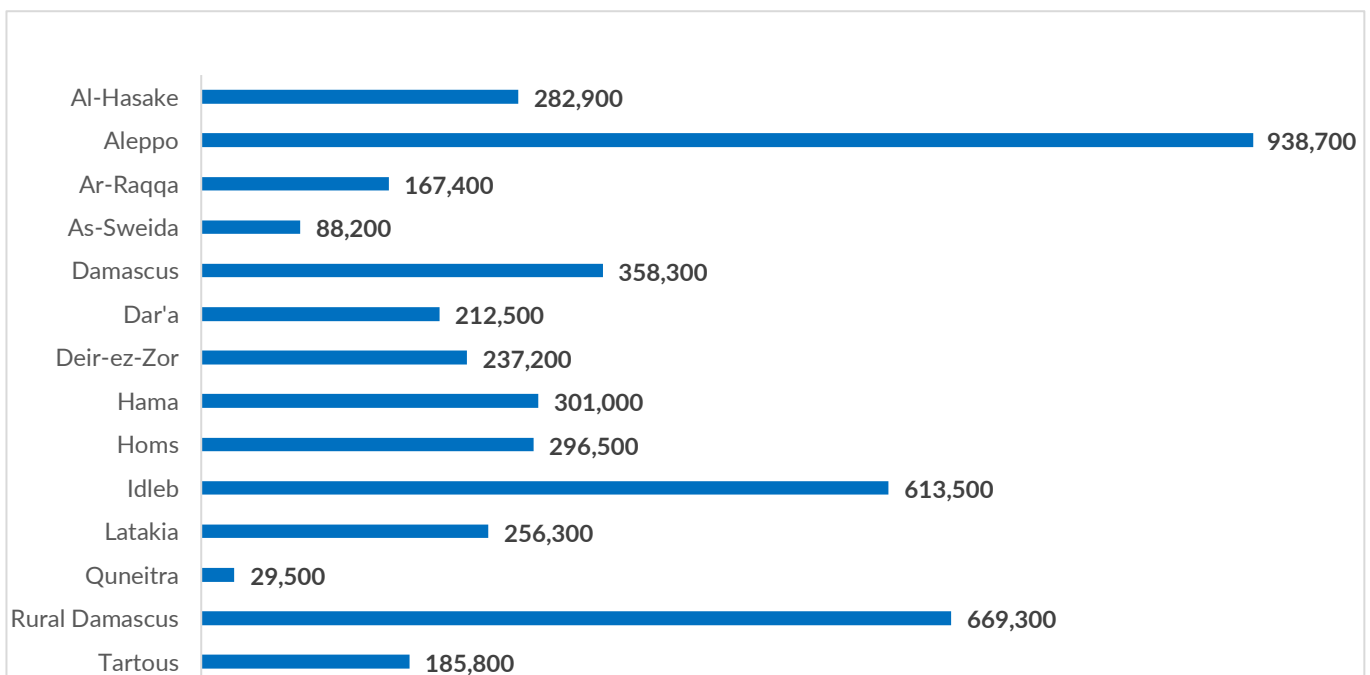
204,976
people

reached by awareness-raising sessions on mental health and psychosocial support in 2023

Operational Context

The crisis in Syria has continued to impact the protection and well-being of people in the country. The security situation in parts of the country remains unpredictable, and the economic situation is increasingly dire. The devaluation of the Syrian pound has led to an increase in the price of basic commodities and shortages in fuel, gas, and electricity, coupled with the impact of the 6 February earthquakes, has brought additional constraints and further deteriorated the daily lives of Syrians.

Number of people in Syria living with a disability

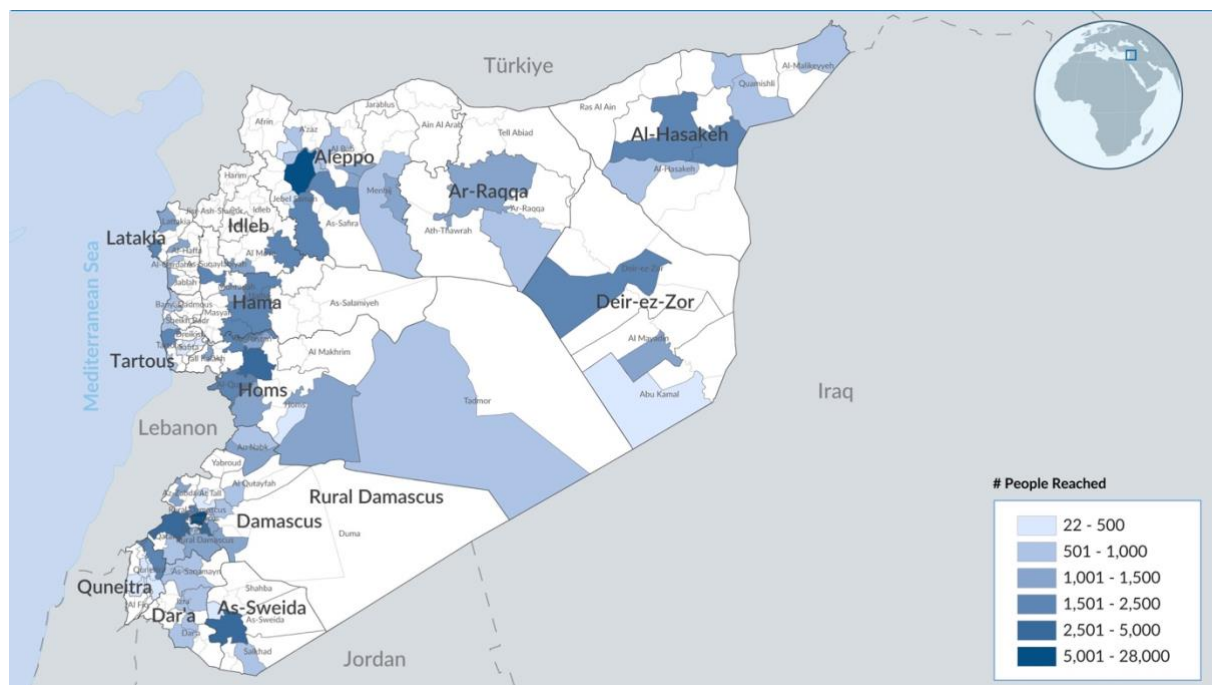


People with special needs require continuous support. Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, several people experienced traumatic incidents and are currently living with physical impairment and/or psychosocial distress. They are often at higher risk of violence, exploitation and abuse, face barriers to access basic services, and are often excluded from education and livelihood opportunities.

According to a 2019 nationwide [survey](#), more than half of the surveyed returnee households included at least one member with a disability. Nearly 30 per cent of Syrians aged 12 and above have disabilities, which is double of the global average of 15 per cent. In addition, over a third (37%) of internally displaced people aged 12 and above and 40 per cent of heads of households have disabilities. Furthermore, it is [estimated](#) that one in ten people is living with a mild to moderate mental health condition while 75 per cent of people with mental health conditions in Syria do not receive any treatment.

UNHCR's assistance for people with special needs

People with special needs reached by UNHCR in 2023



People with special needs experience a wide range of limitations and restrictions in their daily activities, depending on their level of impairment or disability. In some communities, they still face stigma and discrimination. Some do not receive assistance (such as mobility aids) or have any caregivers, which hampers their access to service providers. Even those with access still face physical, emotional, and financial challenges.

To improve the quality of life of people with special needs while ensuring their protection and promoting their inclusion in society, UNHCR provides assistance in different forms, as exemplified below.

1. Medical in-kind assistance

In 2023, UNHCR distributed medical in-kind assistance items to **15,905** people, including to persons with disabilities. UNHCR distributed medical assistive devices, which are critical to eliminate or alleviate health risks, including positioning and mobility aids, pressure modification devices, visual and hearing aids, and diabetic, respiratory, and orthotic devices and supplies. UNHCR and its partners also provided small easy-to-use devices to monitor health conditions, such as blood pressure. All these devices ensure that people get basic healthcare at home without having to visit health facilities.

The medical in-kind assistance is also a key tool for rehabilitation and long-term home-based medical which reduces the impact of the disability and restores the dignity of people with special needs.

Amira, 45 years-old, lost her leg in a land mine in 2020. She received a silicone prosthetic limb and compression socks from a UNHCR partner.

“I no longer feel the pain that I used to feel. I am happy that can now rely on myself completely and become again an active person in my family,” says Amira.



2. Rehabilitation programme

In 2023, UNHCR's home-based rehabilitation programme provided support to **1,919** people with disabilities and **6,270** older people. The rehabilitation programmes are implemented by trained focal points working in UNHCR-supported community centres across the country. The home-based rehabilitation programme trains the caregivers of people with disabilities at the UNHCR-supported community centres. The programme includes training persons with disabilities on acquiring skills to enhance their independence and ability to perform daily tasks, thus enhancing their motoric, communication and learning skills and strengthening their social and emotional skills. The programme also consists of several specialized home-based training modules, including modules on autistic children and children with developmental delays and disorders, and enhanced parenting skills. The programme provides opportunities for everyone to get involved in creating a positive, inclusive society for all and enhances the independence of displaced people.

3. Case management for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

According to the UNHCR partners' MHPSS case management database for **2022**, the most reported psychological disorders included mood disorders such as depression and anxiety, impacting adults (66%), but also children (18%) and older people (5%).

UNHCR provides mental health and psychosocial support services through a network of **117 community and satellite centres, five specialized clinics and mobile teams**, and a team of **720 outreach volunteers in 14 governorates**.

In 2023, UNHCR and its partner provided mental health and psychosocial support services, including case management services and individual and group counselling for **12,537** people. Following assessments, **2,219** people were referred to specialized mental health service providers, including psychiatrists and psychotherapists.

4. Awareness-raising

In 2023, UNHCR conducted around **3,211** awareness-raising activities through mental health and psychosocial support facilitators, benefiting over **204,976** vulnerable people including persons with disabilities and their caregivers, and community members. This total includes **22,470** older people. This aimed to raise awareness among community members on how to prevent and respond to the protection risks faced by persons with disabilities, their rights, as well as basic principles of working with them.

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