Core Relief Items
October 2022

Many people fled their houses during the Syria crisis, often leaving their belongings behind. When returning to their homes, many found their houses damaged and without essential items. Core relief items (CRIs) enable people to meet their immediate basic needs and to rebuild their lives in dignity.

According to the 2022 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview, the overall number of people in need of core relief items increased in 2022 by 5 per cent to 4.9 million. Due to the deteriorated economy and severe inflation, 67 per cent of the population cannot afford the essential items available in the market.

UNHCR Syria prioritises the provision of core relief items to vulnerable people as a life-saving activity. In particular, the distribution of seasonal items such as blankets, winter clothing and plastic sheeting is critical to protect people from harsh weather as winter approaches.

90,600 families received core relief and seasonal items so far in 2022

168,500 families assessed to be in dire need of winter core relief items

90% of the population in Syria lives below the poverty line

The crisis in Syria has continued to impact the protection and well-being of the population. The security situation in parts of the country remains unpredictable, and the economic situation is increasingly dire. The devaluation of the Syrian Pound, an increase in the price of basic commodities, shortages in fuel, gas and electricity, and the impact of COVID-19 brought additional constraints and further deteriorated the daily lives of Syrians. The situation has been further aggravated by developments in Ukraine.

According to the 2022 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview, 90 per cent of the population in Syria lives below the poverty line. Vulnerable families in Syria are facing a dangerous combination of protracted crisis and economic downturn on livelihoods. The deteriorating socio-economic situation combined with widespread poverty, lack and loss of livelihoods, protracted and multiple cycles of displacement, and the breakdown of family or community support structures have depleted the coping abilities of individuals and communities.

Under the circumstances, people are struggling to afford basic items and prepare for the harsh weather conditions both in winter and in summer.
Core relief items assistance

Following assessments carried out by UNHCR and its partners and based on identified needs, UNHCR distributes core relief items (CRIs) to internally displaced persons, returnees, and host communities in all 14 governorates in Syria.

Priority is given to:
- Newly displaced families, especially those displaced multiple times
- Families living in hard-to-reach areas
- Returnees
- Vulnerable individuals (unaccompanied minors, older persons, single women or women-headed households, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic diseases, people at risk due to inadequate shelter conditions, vulnerable host community members)
- Families with unmet needs not addressed by other agencies
- New arrivals, families who have not been reached, and emergency cases in last-resort sites.

As of September 2022, UNHCR had distributed CRIs to a total of some **90,600 families** (approximately 450,000 people) across the country.

The standard UNHCR CRI kit for a family of five members consists of plastic sheets, mattresses, sleeping mats, blankets, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, jerry cans and solar lamps. These items help improve somewhat the quality of daily life and maintain dignity.
Families receive the standard CRI kit at the time of displacement and/or return to their homes. Vulnerable host communities also receive CRI kits. Families usually have their CRIs replaced every few years based on needs.

As part of its preparedness planning to respond to the urgent needs for CRIs in case of emergencies, UNHCR reserves around 20,000 CRI kits in its warehouses in the governorates of Aleppo, As-Sweida, Homs, Rural Damascus, Qamishli and Tartous. Prepositioned CRIs in different locations across the country enable UNHCR to release the items in a timely manner and respond quickly to people's needs in emergencies. As of August 2022, UNHCR had released CRIs for 7,500 families (33,000 individuals) as part of its emergency response, including to IDPs in north-east Syria and returnees from Al-Rukban (in south Syria, near the border with Jordan).

In line with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, UNHCR also participates in inter-agency cross-line missions to north-west Syria to deliver CRIs to vulnerable people. In 2022, UNHCR has so far participated in three cross-line inter-agency missions delivering 1,500 core relief items to families in Idleb Governorate.

**Seasonal item assistance**

In some parts of the country, the weather conditions are excessively harsh during summer and winter. Besides regular CRIs, UNHCR distributes supplementary seasonal items to provide additional protection against extreme and life-threatening weather conditions.

**Summer items**

Temperatures often exceed 45 degrees Celsius in some parts of Syria during the summer months. To prepare for these conditions, UNHCR distributes mosquito nets and rechargeable solar fans. Since the beginning of 2022, over 36,200 families have received summer items. Priority is given to:

- Displaced and returnee families who lost their belongings during displacement

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**Standard UNHCR CRI kit**

- Jerry can
- Solar lamp
- Kitchen set
- Blanket
- Plastic sheet
- Mattress
- Sleeping mat
• Families residing in hard-to-reach locations with very high temperatures
• Families residing in locations where there is no other source of power supply.

**Winterization Programme**
In winter, temperatures fall below zero degrees in many areas of the country. The inter-agency Non-Food Item (NFI) Sector estimates that **3.2 million people in Syria are in urgent need of winter assistance in 2022, an increase of 28 per cent from 2021.**

UNHCR’s winter assistance targets the most vulnerable people, including those recently displaced, newly returned, living in hard-to-reach or newly accessible areas, or in sub-standard shelters as well as persons with specific needs.

![Winter items are distributed to displaced persons in a collective shelter in Al-Hasakeh. ©UNHCR](image)

The winter items include extra **high thermal blankets, sleeping bags, waterproof floor covers, extra-plastic sheeting, portable heaters, rubber boots and winter jackets.**

UNHCR’s last winterization programme (September 2021-March 2022) **assisted** 139,600 Syrian families (close to 640,000 people) in 14 governorates. Some 1,400 asylum-seeker
families (around 5,000 people) also benefited from additional winter assistance. For this year’s winterization programme (September 2022-March 2023), UNHCR is planning to support over 168,500 vulnerable families (around 842,500 people). This represents approximately a 20 per cent increase from the previous year. New displacement, surging economic inflation, fluctuating currency, limited livelihood opportunities, and unpredictable weather patterns have diminished people’s purchasing power and increased their vulnerability.

Challenges

The operational environment in Syria poses various challenges to UNHCR’s activities, particularly CRI and seasonal assistance. These challenges have caused delays in assistance delivery and impacted on the quality of life of people of concern:

- **High prices of items**: The depreciation of the Syrian currency, global inflation and rising prices of oil and other commodities drastically increased the production and procurement costs of the required core relief items.
- **Economic coercive measures**: Under the current measures, only a limited number of containers can be imported to Syria making the delivery of goods unpredictable and often resulting in delays.
- **Administrative delays**: Delays in obtaining the required administrative and security approvals by the relevant authorities sometimes hinders the delivery of assistance, particularly for cross-line missions.
- **Lack of funding**: The costs of distributing core relief items have increased significantly due to inflation, impacting UNHCR’s planned response. At the same time, due to the challenging global context and multiple competing emergencies, funding from the international community to the Syria operation decreased in 2022. As a result, UNHCR will be unable to respond to urgent needs this winter unless additional funding is urgently received.

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USEFUL DOCUMENTS

UNHCR 2021-2022 Regional Winterization Programme – Final Report
UNHCR Regional Winterization Assistance Plan 2022-2023

LINKS

UNHCR Global Focus – Syrian Arab Republic
UNHCR Syria Website
UNHCR Syria (@UNHCRinSYRIA) / Twitter
UNHCR Syria | Facebook
Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022
Syria Humanitarian Response Plan 2022