

Syrian Arab Republic

December 2022

The Syria crisis is currently in its twelfth year. The UN estimates that 15.3 million people need humanitarian assistance across the country, a 5 per cent increase from the previous year.

The security situation in parts of the country is unpredictable and the economic situation is increasingly dire. Economic deterioration is a major driver of needs.

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

HIGHLIGHTS

125,400

Vulnerable families received winter core relief item assistance in 2022

6,100

Refugee and asylum-seeker families were supported with the first round of winter cash assistance in December

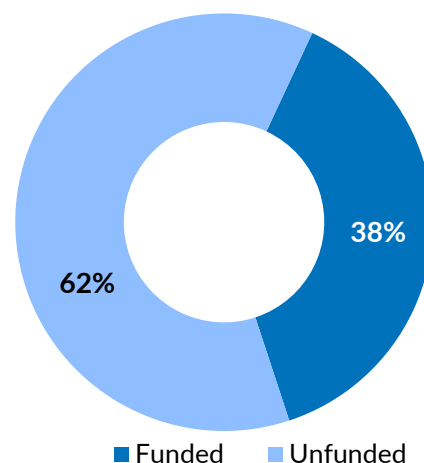
6,900

Farmers were supported with agricultural inputs (such as seeds) and livestock assets in 2022

FUNDING (AS OF 29 DECEMBER 2022)

USD 465.2 million

requested for the Syria Operation in 2022



POPULATION OF CONCERN



UNHCR and its partner opened a new community centre in Kafr Dael village, rural Aleppo Governorate. The centre provides protection services to IDPs, returnees and the host community. ©UNHCR/H. Maarouf

Internally displaced people*	6.8M
Stateless persons**	160,000
IDP returnees***	102,300
Refugee returnees****	51,000
Refugees & asylum-seekers*****	18,700

* Source: 2023 HNO

** Estimated

*** Source: OCHA, October 2022

****Source: UNHCR verified returns in 2022 as of 31 December

***** Source: UNHCR, 31 December 2022

Operational Context

The [2023 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#) estimates that over 15.3 million people need humanitarian assistance inside 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 in the world with 6.8 million people internally displaced. The 2023 HNO finds that humanitarian and economic indicators in the country continue to deteriorate, basic services are collapsing, and the ongoing cholera outbreak and climatic shocks are compounding an already dire situation.

UNHCR supports refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees (refugees and internally displaced people 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.

As of December 2022, UNHCR was working with 28 partners which include government ministries, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national NGOs and UN agencies.

persons in Aleppo Governorate, making winter clothes for vulnerable families in Aleppo, Homs and Rural Damascus Governorates, and completing light repairs to schools in Aleppo and Rural Damascus Governorates.

- To mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (25 November-10 December), UNHCR partners launched several activities across Syria under the national theme of "Count me in: Working together to ensure accountability to address gender-based violence!". Activities included bazaars displaying items made by women as well as legal awareness sessions, interactive theatre sessions, group activities, exhibitions and discussions on gender-based violence.
- UNHCR and its partner completed the restoration of a citizen services centre in Ghasem, Dar'a Governorate. The centre issues various civil statements/certificates serving Ghasem and the surrounding villages and will extend its services to over 12,000 people living in the area.
- UNHCR completed the retrofitting of five community centres in Aleppo Governorate to improve accessibility of persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs to the services of the centres. Works comprised installation of ramps, handrails and specialized bathrooms.
- To mitigate the impact of ongoing power shortages in Syria, UNHCR completed the installation of solar panels in 110 community centres across eight Governorates (32 in Aleppo, 20 in Homs, 17 in Tartous, 13 in Damascus, 13 in As-Sweida, 11 in Qamishli and two in Deir-ez-Zor).

Operational Updates



Protection

- In line with its community-based protection approach, as of end-December, UNHCR was supporting 127 [community/satellite centres](#) and 121 mobile units across the country. UNHCR also engaged around 2,900 community outreach volunteers in all 14 Governorates. In December, UNHCR and its partner opened a new community centre covering Kafr Dael and Khan Al-Assal villages in rural Aleppo Governorate.
- In December, 90 community-led initiatives were approved to be implemented by local communities and through partners. They aim to foster better community relations as well as address the needs of IDPs, returnees and host communities. The initiatives will aim to support approximately 70,400 people in seven Governorates. Examples of some of the initiatives include establishing a safe place for elderly



Core Relief Items

- In December, UNHCR assisted around 53,400 vulnerable families (236,000 people) with winter items such as high-thermal blankets, plastic sheeting, and warm clothes. Out of this total, around 7,400 families were located in areas that had not previously been reached with assistance in Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa Governorates. In addition, UNHCR distributed more than 8,800 carpets to families in camps.
- Also in December, UNHCR assisted around 7,200 IDP and returnee families with regular core relief items such as plastic sheets, mattresses, solar lamps, blankets, sleeping mats, jerry cans and kitchen sets.
- In total in 2022, UNHCR assisted 95,600 families with core relief items and 125,400 families with winter assistance (89,200 families supported so far this winter between November and December).



Shelter Interventions

- In 2022¹, UNHCR and partners completed minor repairs to 1,860 damaged houses and installed 11,800 shelter packages consisting of materials to install doors and windows in Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Quneitra and Rural Damascus Governorates. UNHCR has also helped repair 194 common areas such as building entrances, stairs and roofs to improve the safety conditions of vulnerable families in Aleppo Governorate. In total, 15,140 families were supported with these types of shelter interventions in 2022.



A family in Al-Qusair, Homs Governorate, received materials to repair doors and windows. ©UNHCR/S. Sawas

- UNHCR completed the removal of 95,300 cubic metres of debris in 2022 to improve safe access to public roads and enable other small-scale repair works to basic services. UNHCR also installed almost 4,200 solar streetlights in 2022 in Damascus and Rural Damascus, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama, Homs and Idlib Governorates to improve security conditions in poorer neighbourhoods.
- In 2022, UNHCR through its partners repaired more than 6,000 metres of sewage network and distributed 235 solid waste bins in Aleppo, Lattakia, Rural Damascus and Tartous Governorates to contribute to solid waste management. UNHCR also helped repair 1,250 meters of the water network in Aleppo Governorate to benefit vulnerable households. In addition, UNHCR and its partner completed the repair of two rainwater networks, one in Lattakia Governorate to prevent flooding in a poorer neighbourhood and one in Tartous Governorate to help provide water for irrigation.
- In north-east Syria, as part of its emergency shelter response in 2022, UNHCR rehabilitated seven collective shelters and replaced 2,837 tents in camps. Ongoing construction works include the upgrade of accommodation facilities in Al-Hol camp (Al-Hasakeh Governorate) which aims to benefit over 6,000 families once completed.
- UNHCR also contributed to mitigating the water crisis in Al-Hasakeh Governorate, north-east Syria, by digging 19 boreholes in urban areas and equipping them with a solar power system to help ensure they will not be affected by electricity cuts.



Livelihoods

- In 2022, UNHCR completed minor repairs to four vocational training schools in Aleppo, Lattakia and Rural Damascus Governorates. The schools are expected to benefit more than 2,300 returnee students living in the surrounding areas. The schools will allow students to attend vocational training courses and improve access to livelihood opportunities. Depending on the centre, some of the courses include sewing, clothes design, metal welding and solar power maintenance.
- UNHCR restored the capacity of an Agricultural Guidance Unit in Al-Haffa sub-district in Lattakia Governorate by providing furniture and equipment. These units provide technical guidance to farmers as well as subsidized inputs such as seeds as well as veterinary support for livestock.
- UNHCR completed minor repairs to eight handmade carpet workshops in rural areas of Tartous Governorate. The units will help provide job opportunities to an estimated 670 people.
- In total this year, UNHCR restored eight irrigation canals and two water reservoirs in Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama and Lattakia Governorates. The projects will support around 30,300 farmers, including returnees, by supporting job opportunities in agriculture.
- UNHCR provided start-up business training to more than 2,100 vulnerable people in 14 Governorates in 2022. Out of this total, 1,200 people were selected based on vulnerability and capacity assessments and received support to start their businesses.
- UNHCR supported over 5,800 people in rural areas in Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Lattakia, Quneitra, Rural Damascus and Tartous Governorates with agricultural inputs (such as seeds) and livestock.



Education

- In December, UNHCR and its partner completed minor repair works to a school in Qastal Maaf, Lattakia Governorate, which will support around 400 students from the area.

¹ Final year-end reporting for 2022 may be adjusted as beneficiary verification was still ongoing at the time of writing.



Refugee Response

- **Registration:** As of end-December, some 18,700 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. The decrease of around 4,000 registered refugees from November is the result of a verification exercise during which UNHCR inactivated 'no show' or 'unreachable' individuals. Meanwhile, in December UNHCR renewed identification cards for more than 1,300 refugees. The card will protect them against *refoulement*, ensure access to basic rights and services, and facilitate freedom of movement.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD):** In 2022, 118 asylum-seeking families (comprising 236 individuals) were interviewed to determine if they are refugees. In 2022, 102 families comprising 243 individuals were recognized as refugees, ensuring that they could be protected from *refoulement* and detention due to irregular stay and could access basic services. UNHCR also provided counselling on the RSD process and individual cases through its hotline. Inquiries received during December were primarily related to the status of individual cases and requests for cash assistance.
- **Resettlement:** In December, UNHCR interviewed four families comprising 13 individuals to determine resettlement eligibility. Out of those cases, two refugees were accepted for resettlement to two different countries (the departures had not yet taken place as of end-December). In addition, UNHCR facilitated the departure of one Iraqi family comprising three individuals through the Emergency Transit Centre in Romania.
- **Cash-Based Assistance:** UNHCR continues to provide regular multi-purpose cash grants (MPCG) to the most vulnerable refugee families. More than 1,540 refugee families received cash grants in December. For more information on the MPCG programme, please refer to the [UNHCR Syria Factsheet](#). In addition, UNHCR started the distribution of cash grants for winter to refugees and asylum-seekers in December. As of end-December, a total of 4,784 refugee families and 1,271 asylum seeker families (in total 17,057 individuals) received assistance during the first round of distribution. The second round of winter cash assistance distribution is planned to start on 22 January 2023.

UNHCR Co-led Inter-Agency Sector Updates

- UNHCR leads the inter-agency Protection and Shelter/Non-Food Item (NFI) Sectors as part of the Syria and Whole of Syria inter-agency response.
- Partners in the Protection Sector submitted 43 projects for the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (including projects under the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)-coordinated response as well as Whole of Syria projects with an HCT-coordinated response component), with a total budget of more than USD 295 million. A review committee composed of UN, INGO, NGO and sector staff reviewed and provided feedback on all projects. Final approval is expected to take place in January 2023.
- The Protection Sector contributed to an updated contingency plan for possible military operations and displacement in north-east Syria. This includes preparedness plans as well as details on the planned protection response for three months following the start of an eventual emergency.
- The Protection Sector held meetings with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and key protection partners to strengthen the sector's strategy and response plan for people with disabilities, with a view to improving coordination and minimizing gaps. This will be followed by a workshop in January 2023 involving key stakeholders.
- Fuel scarcity in Syria is seriously impacting the protection response, particularly compromising the implementation of partner activities in hard-to-reach areas and staff attendance in community centres, among others. The Protection Sector surveyed 120 partners between 29 December and 3 January. As a result of the lack of fuel, 67% of the respondents reported that their organizations had to reduce the number of targeted geographical areas, 56% reported that their organizations reduced the number of targeted beneficiaries, and 45% said that the number of services provided had to be reduced. Meanwhile, 43% of respondents had to suspend their activities conducted through mobile teams and 41% suspended their outreach activities.



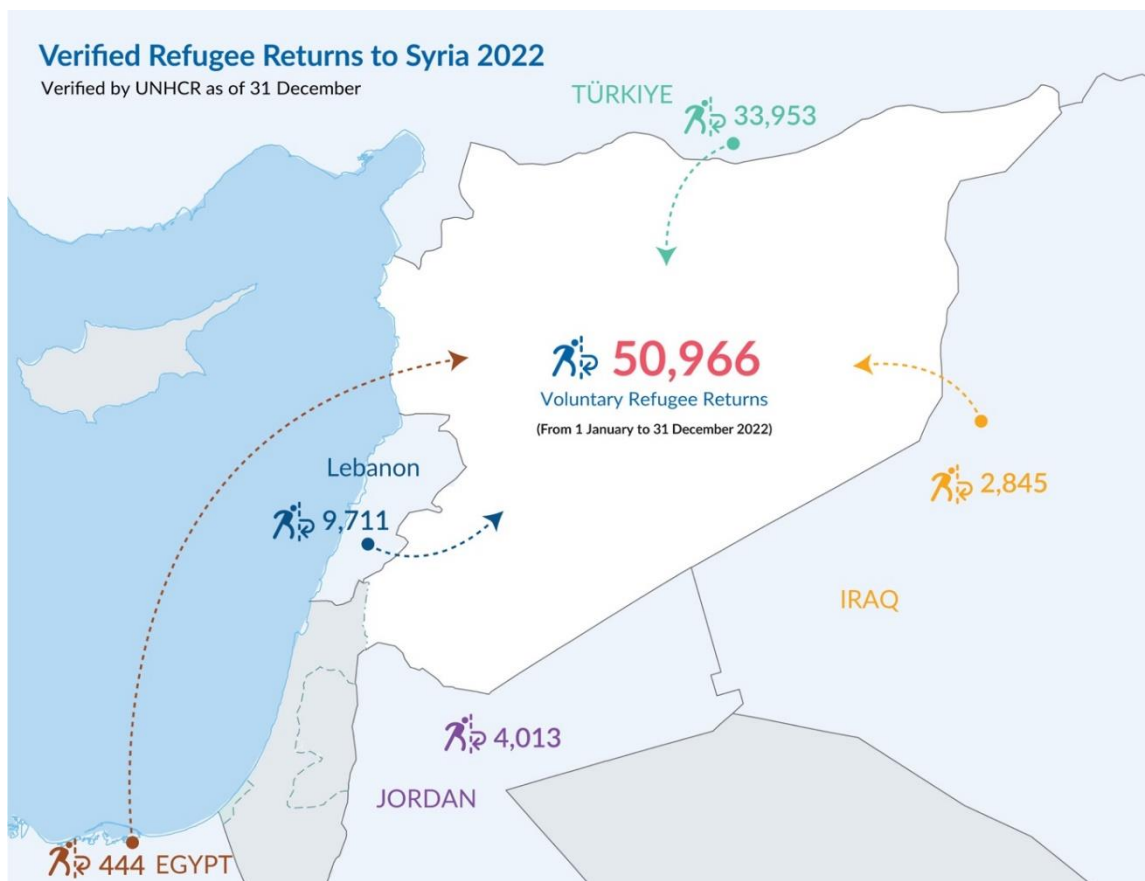
Return

- In December, UNHCR verified or monitored the return to Syria of over 3,400 individual refugees from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. This brought the total number of refugee returnees verified or monitored by UNHCR in 2022 to almost 51,000 (compared to 35,580 in 2021). In total, between 2016 and 2022, UNHCR verified or

monitored the return to Syria of some 354,000 individual refugees².

- In December, the Technical Working Group (TWG) of the Return and Reintegration Working Group (RRWG)³ held a technical workshop to further capacitate field staff for the roll-out of the area-based return support approach, including orientation

on conducting context analyses, protection risk assessments and participatory planning. The workshop followed on from a similar workshop held in April during which principles, objectives and next steps for the roll-out were agreed. At present, context analyses and protection risk assessments are being completed for the preliminary selection of roll-out areas suggested by the field.



RECENTLY PUBLISHED:

- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet: Community Centres](#) (January-September 2022)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet: Child Protection](#) (January-September 2022)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet: Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response](#) (January-September 2022)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support](#) (January-September 2022)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet: Education](#) (January-September 2022)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet: Legal Assistance](#) (January-September 2022)
- [UNHCR Syria Factsheet: Refugees and Asylum-Seekers](#) (January-September 2022)

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² The numbers reported are only those verified or monitored by UNHCR and do not reflect the entire number of returns, which may be significantly higher.

³ The Syria Return and Reintegration Working Group (RRWG) and its Technical Working Group (TWG) are the main fora for developing and implementing the area-

based return support approach. UNHCR serves as Secretariat of the RRWG and as Co-Chair (with UNDP) and Secretariat of its TWG.