

# Syria crisis



## Regional activity highlights

The Syrian crisis is the world's largest refugee crisis, having recorded the highest number of refugees for the past two decades. The conflict, which has been going on for three years now, has directly affected almost ten million people inside Syria, of which 6.5 million are displaced internally; 2.5 million are women and girls of reproductive age and an estimated 372,000 are pregnant. Meanwhile, there are more than 2.5 million refugees in neighboring countries where host communities that were already vulnerable before the crisis are being overwhelmed by serious economic and social challenges.

The Syrian crisis is affecting the civilian populations in the region, particularly women and children, who are not only vulnerable inside their country but also as refugees. More refugees are crossing Syria's borders every day with their trauma and psychological wounds; they are exposed to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, and are struggling to survive in often difficult conditions.

UNFPA and partners are scaling up efforts to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health (including family planning), promoting reproductive rights, reducing maternal mortality and improving the lives of youths and women by advocating for human rights and gender equality and by promoting the understanding of population dynamics. UNFPA and partners face a complex operational environment and a shortage of funds to implement the programmes called for in the Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6).

- **Syrian Arab Republic:** UNFPA revealed the findings of needs assessments in Aleppo, Homs and Tartous. UNFPA provided reproductive health services to 23,600 women in the most affected areas, supported Caesarean-section deliveries for 1,470 women through reproductive health vouchers, reached 12,500 people in the crisis areas to raise their awareness on reproductive health issues, delivered psychosocial support services and psychological first aid services to around 4,250 women residing in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Idlib and Homs. UNFPA procured obstetric medicines and supplies which will enable up to 780,000 women to receive emergency obstetric service and provided dignity kits to 72,200 women and 19,500 men in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Idlib, Hama, Tartous and Latakia and supported 59 static clinics, medical points and mobile teams of the Syria Family Planning Association in Hab Nemra in Homs with staff, equipment, and medicines.

- **In Lebanon:** The listening and counseling centre in Bekaa is now fully operational providing a variety of GBV and other services. During the reporting period, UNFPA distributed 700 hygiene kits, conducted 81 sessions in 17 schools,

as part of interventions targeting youth affected by the Syrian crisis for healthier and more active youth, along with 98 parenting sessions. UNFPA conducted regional training on family planning and counseling for 150 service providers and twelve awareness sessions on GBV for 200 humanitarian frontline workers.

- **In Jordan:** A total of 17,548 women and girls received reproductive health services; 6,446 Syrian refugees benefited from UNFPA-supported GBV services; 36,698 Syrian refugees benefited from community outreach activities in Zataari camp and host communities. UNFPA distributed thirteen reproductive health kits to NGOs to cover the needs of 180,000 persons for up to three months, kicked off a three-month reproductive health awareness campaign in Zaatari camp on reproductive health and GBV-related issues and to promote available services. UNFPA supported Syrian young women in Zaatari camp to produce animation videos on harassment and early marriage, which are being used as a prevention communication tool to educate Syrian refugees.

- **Iraq:** UNFPA launched the first personal reproductive health booklet for Syrian refugees. The UNFPA supported the reproductive health

clinic in Domiz II as well as the primary health centre in Qushtupa and the women's space in Gawilan camp for the provision of reproductive health services. UNFPA provided GBV services to 990 women, reproductive health services to 4,961 persons, including supporting the safe deliveries of 134 cases.

- **Turkey:** UNFPA developed 600,000 brochures on GBV and protection of the family and expanded its GBV programme outside the camps through the national and international NGOs serving Syrian refugees with psychosocial programming in Urfa, Hatay and Gaziantep provinces. UNFPA trained 36 service providers on first level psychosocial support for survivors of violence. Around 300 persons participated in UNFPA-supported community awareness events.

- **Egypt:** UNFPA provided reproductive health services to 84 Syrian women and trained 228 doctors and nurses providing reproductive health services to Syrian refugees in Egypt and distributed 1,000 copies of a training manual for primary health care units with the slogan of "better service for Egyptian citizens and the Syrian guests".

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## A story from the field, Lebanon.

### Domestic violence - a hidden aspect of the crisis

"Are you going to talk about violence happening at home?" a middle aged woman asked in a polite yet anxiously shy manner. The other participants had cleared the room leaving the woman and the social worker. The social worker's response was affirmative; in fact, for the Syrian displaced women and girls residing in Lebanon this was the main purpose of these psychosocial support sessions. After the social worker's reassurance, the middle aged woman began to open up. "I have a situation, but I cannot talk about it in front of the other ladies, because they will know about it and it will no longer be a safe secret".

The secret-bearer, known by most as Wiam, is a 39 year-old displaced Syrian woman. She got married at 18 and had her first baby 9 months later. She fled her home in Homs 18 months ago, due to the escalating violence. She is currently residing with a Lebanese host family in Bani Sakher, a small village in North Lebanon.

Thanks to Wiam's abusive husband, she has been subject to various forms of domestic violence. Abuse cases like Wiam's are not rare exceptions. According to UNFPA needs assessment in 2012, 7 per cent of Syrian displaced women had suffered sexual aggression and 21 per cent of women reported having a female family member slapped or hit. International Rescue Committee's assessment

(IRC, 2012) identified intimate partner violence, early marriage and survival sex as other forms of violence experienced by women and girls after arriving in Lebanon.

Unfortunately, violence is not new to Wiam. It has been present throughout her marriage. It is not the result of her displacement to Lebanon. However, since her family's displacement, violence has increased and it is now taking various new forms of brutality. "He hits me often with anything at hand, his shoes, his belt, a dish. When I ask him why, he says: if you are not happy, the door is wide open, I can divorce you and you can go back to your parents". She adds, "Such things can be said to his girlfriend, but to me? The mother of his children!?". Her eyes full of tears, she continues, "Recently, he returned to Syria for four days to work, he left me with only 30,000 Lebanese Pounds (equivalent of \$20), and when he came back, he hit me hard because I had spent them all! How was I supposed to feed the five children? A mere mankousheh and a Bonjus cost L.P 2,000! "I cannot even ask for money to buy medication for myself."

In cases like Wiam's, providing psychosocial support and equipping women with coping mechanisms can be one of the best ways to ensure the health, security and well-being of families and entire communities. In 2013, with the support efforts of UNFPA Lebanon, more than 3,700 women and girls benefited from raising awareness of gender-based violence and more than 800 women and girls were provided with psychological support with focus on gender-based violence and parenting strategies.

"The worst is when he whispers to my brother and sisters that I hit him back" reveals Wiam. "My brother does not believe him because he knows me. But in our culture a woman will never respond back to her husband's violence."

It is not every day, that a woman has the strength to discuss her own personal case of domestic violence. It takes an extra dose of courage for a refugee woman to tell her story because of social constraints. These awareness programs and psychosocial program are key to supporting women who experience violence.

#### Syrian Arab Republic

9,300,000	Number of people in need
372,000	Estimated number of pregnant women
2,300,000	Estimated number of women of reproductive age

#### Lebanon

980,731	Number of people in need
15,898	Estimated number of pregnant women
223,920	Estimated number of women of reproductive age

#### Jordan

581,535	Number of people in need
10,241	Estimated number of pregnant women
144,240	Estimated number of women of reproductive age

#### Iraq

221,791	Number of people in need
3,056	Estimated number of pregnant women
43,053	Estimated number of women of reproductive age

#### Turkey

700,000	Number of people in need
24,000	Estimated number of pregnant women
216,000	Estimated number of women of reproductive age

#### Egypt

135,684	Number of people in need
2,421	Estimated number of pregnant women
34,102	Estimated number of women of reproductive age