

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa region remains complex and volatile, with multiple conflicts triggering massive levels of displacement. Safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access remains challenging across the region, hampering the ability of UNHCR and its partners to deliver life-saving assistance, while political solutions to the conflicts remain elusive.

Syrians continued to be the largest refugee population under UNHCR's mandate. While countries neighbouring Syria remain at the forefront of the crisis, hosting a large majority of this population, their generosity has put increasing strain on national infrastructure, making it increasingly difficult for refugees to access basic services. Consequently, the number of Syrians seeking refuge beyond the Middle East and North Africa region has risen. Instability and displacement also continue in Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

Over the past year, refugees and asylum-seekers continued to travel within large-scale mixed movements, undertaking dangerous sea travel in order to reach Europe. The number of refugees and migrants using the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece decreased following the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016. The Central Mediterranean route from North Africa to Italy is now the main passage across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, with 90 per cent of sea arrivals to Italy departing from Libya. These trends are in line with 2015. By October 2016, some 145,000 people had arrived in Italy by sea, the majority of them from sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa, along with small numbers of Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans.

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Middle East and North Africa

Syrian girls in Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan having an animated discussion during a meeting of TIGER (These Inspiring Girls Enjoy Reading).



MAJOR OPERATIONS

Syria situation

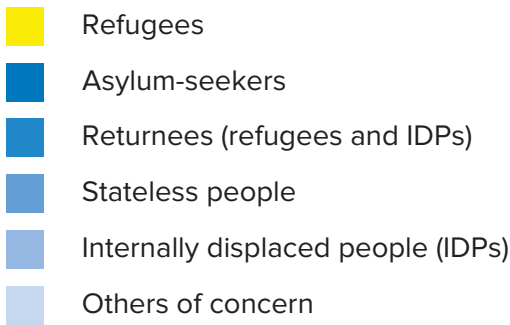
The Syrian crisis has continued to take a severe toll on the Middle East and North Africa region, with 6.1 million IDPs and over 4.8 million refugees in the neighbouring countries of **Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon** and **Turkey**. Intense fighting in northern Syria has displaced over 400,000 people since February 2016. The humanitarian situation in the city of Aleppo and its surroundings has severely deteriorated, with some 275,000 people in the eastern part of the city in need of assistance and facing restrictions on their movement. Water, shelter, food and health care remain the highest humanitarian priorities. Overall, safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access in the country remains challenging, with an estimated 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 5.47 million in besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

Despite the generosity of host governments and communities, refugees in neighbouring countries continue to face difficulty in accessing services. Many have exhausted their savings and are sinking further into poverty. In Lebanon, 70 per cent of refugee households currently live below the poverty line, with

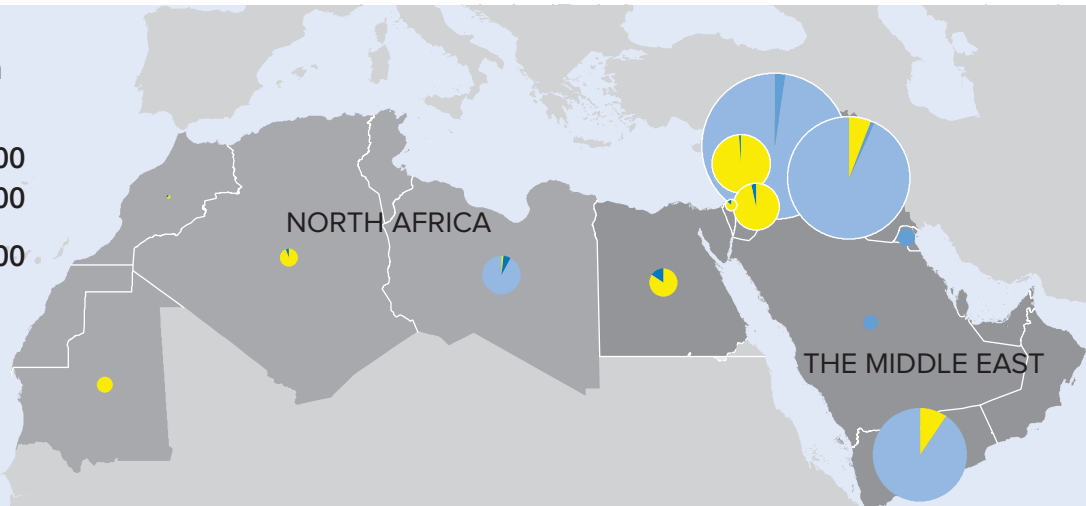
more than 52 per cent living in extreme poverty. In Jordan, 90 per cent of the 513,000 registered Syrian refugees living in urban areas are below the national poverty line. Together with UNDP, UNHCR continues to lead the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), a coordinated response by more than 200 partners in support of the national response plans of the five main refugee-hosting countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey).

Iraq situation

Since January 2014, the escalating violence in Iraq has led to the internal displacement of more than 3.3 million people. Humanitarian partners estimate that more than 10 million Iraqis currently require some form of humanitarian assistance. While **Turkey** continues to host more than half of the over 230,000 registered Iraqi refugees in the region, 2016 has seen hundreds of thousands of Iraqis take to the sea in an attempt to reach safety in **Europe**. Returns continue to be hampered by widespread destruction of infrastructure and the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance. Anticipating large-scale displacement from Mosul, UNHCR's emergency response will focus on the establishment of new camps, upgrading existing camps, and increasing the capacity for protection interventions.



Population of concern as of January 2016



Yemen

An estimated 82 per cent of the 27 million people residing in Yemen are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.2 million IDPs and almost 950,000 IDP returnees. Around 3 million Yemenis are in need of immediate life-saving assistance. Moreover, Yemen continues to host nearly 280,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from Somalia. A cessation of hostilities in April 2016 allowed humanitarian actors to assist previously unreachable civilian populations by distributing CRIs and emergency shelter kits; however, overall insecurity and the resumption of hostilities continues to impede humanitarian delivery. UNHCR is working to support national authorities to provide life-saving protection and assistance to refugees, covering legal services, RSD, detention monitoring and resettlement activities.

Libya

The conflict in Libya continues to have severe consequences for people of concern to UNHCR, with some 350,000 IDPs, 300,000 returnees and an estimated 100,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in need of protection and humanitarian assistance. However, international staff for UNHCR's programmes in Libya are still based in Tunis since their evacuation from Libya in 2014. While access remains challenging, UNHCR will continue providing life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers through partners and national staff in Benghazi and Tripoli. The Office also monitors the situation at the border, updating its contingency plan accordingly.

REGIONAL STRATEGY

Maintaining protection space

UNHCR's strategy in 2017 will focus on maintaining protection space for all refugees in host countries in the Middle East and North Africa, including by ensuring that refugees are protected against refoulement and that people of concern to UNHCR have access to basic services. To reduce the strain on countries hosting Syrian refugees, the Office will continue to coordinate and implement the 3RP alongside host governments and humanitarian partners, and will aim to expand the engagement of development actors in supporting host communities. UNHCR will continue conducting individual biometric registration for those in need of international protection while also investing in the capacity of refugees and communities as agents of community-based protection.

Supporting the development of national asylum systems

UNHCR will continue working with several countries in North Africa to establish national asylum laws and procedures, providing governments with technical advice on related legislative matters.

Strengthening refugee protection in mixed migration movements

UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, will continue promoting a comprehensive human rights-based approach to mixed migratory movements, centred on four objectives: preventing refoulement; improving access to territory and to asylum; empowering refugees to make informed decisions; and enhancing protection space, including the quality of stay arrangements and access to protection.

Emergency response

UNHCR will maintain up to date contingency plans to allow for swift and coordinated responses for new and deteriorating situations. In Libya's neighbouring countries, UNHCR will coordinate with host governments to ensure that people in need of international protection can reach safety, taking into consideration both protection and security concerns in a mixed migration environment. It is envisaged that emergency humanitarian support for Yemen will be maintained, alongside continuing support for emergency operations in Iraq and Syria.

Providing safety from violence and exploitation

UNHCR will continue implementing its strategies for the protection of children, and the prevention of and response to SGBV. Responding to the need for longer-term care arrangements and durable solutions for unaccompanied and separated children, addressing child labour, and improving children's access to safe learning environments is crucial, as is the achievement of active and equal participation of women in leadership and management structures, as well as equal access to livelihood opportunities. The Office will work with authorities to strengthen national protection mechanisms, including by reinforcing communication with communities and supporting those with specific needs.

Durable solutions

With resettlement needs continuing to rise globally in light of the increasing numbers of refugees and growing vulnerabilities, UNHCR will continue advocating for increased resettlement capacity, while at the same time advocating other pathways for admission, including humanitarian visas, community-based private sponsorships, labour mobility schemes and family reunification, including for extended family members.

Strengthening partnerships

UNHCR will work to further strengthen its partnerships with emerging civil society institutions and NGO networks, as well as with the Gulf Cooperation Council,

the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the League of Arab States. Strategic partnerships will be strengthened with the private sector, local and regional media outlets, and academic institutions in the region to mobilize public support and inform public debates.

Preventing and ending statelessness

Interventions aimed at addressing statelessness, including through the implementation of the regional multi-sectoral strategy which is designed to support the “Global action plan to end statelessness” will continue receiving high priority. This will include working with governments to increase birth registration for refugees and IDPs, and providing guidance on nationality laws.

CONSTRAINTS

Across the Middle East and North Africa, volatile and insecure environments will be the operational norm. In several of them— including Libya, Syria, and Yemen— UNHCR faces difficulties in reaching and assisting displaced populations, as well as in maintaining the high level of funding required to respond to the region's needs. Staff and people of concern are living in increasingly insecure conditions. State asylum policies, in response to the context, are growing more and more restrictive, dominated by security concerns, leading more people to travel as part of mixed movements on risky and perilous journeys. ■

Financial information

The continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region has led to a massive surge in humanitarian and protection needs. Reflecting this, UNHCR's budget in 2016 for the Middle East and North Africa region reached \$2.1 billion, three times what it was five years ago. The proposed budget for 2017 stands at \$2.17 billion, a net increase of \$74.6 million, or approximately 4 per cent, when compared to the 2016 current budget. Approximately 88 per cent of the total increase in 2017 is in the Middle East subregion, reflecting an increase of some \$65.5 million, or 3 per cent, as compared to the 2016 current budget. In the North Africa subregion, there is an overall increase of approximately \$9 million, or 5 per cent, for 2017 when compared to the 2016 current budget.

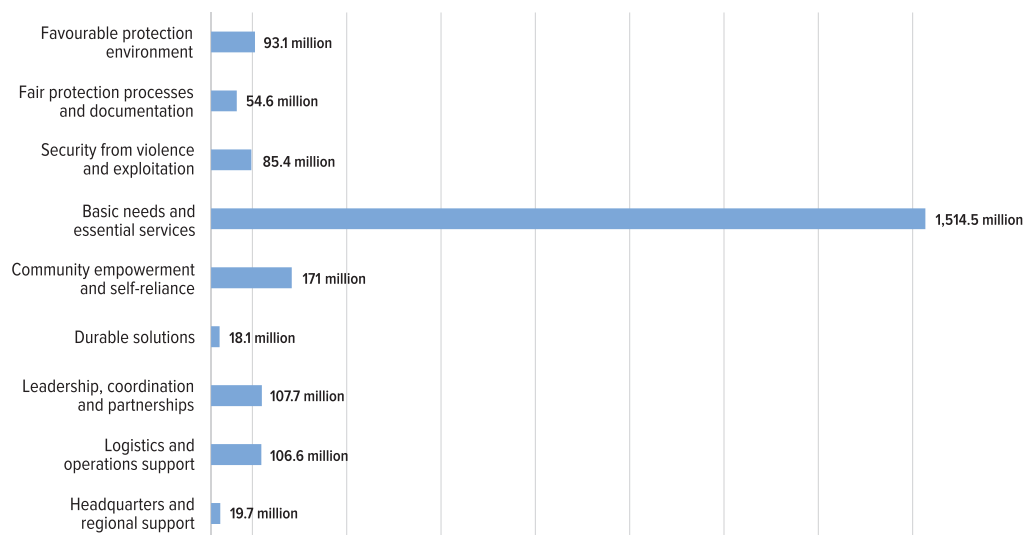
With the majority of funding reserved for emergency situations,

funding gaps will continue having a significant impact on lesser-known crises. Programmes for the Sahrawi refugees, for example, in the camps near Tindouf, Algeria face persistent funding shortfalls. In Egypt there are more than 60,000 urban refugees also severely affected by chronic funding shortfalls and massive inflation that erodes the value of UNHCR's cash assistance programmes. A similar trend has developed in Mbera Camp in Mauritania where some 50,000 Malian refugees have remained since 2012, and where funding gaps have led to shortages in the shelter, water and education sectors.

Shortfalls remain even in the most publicized emergencies in the region, despite them receiving most of the region's funding. The unmet needs under cash assistance were calculated at

68 per cent and 82 per cent for the Syrian and non-Syrian populations, respectively. In real terms, 7,000 non-Syrian families in Jordan were identified as vulnerable and eligible for assistance, however, only 2,400 families were provided with it. In Iraq, only 10 per cent of vulnerable families were able to receive one-time cash assistance, and 63 per cent of assessed needs in the shelter sector are unmet. In Lebanon, health care assistance is prioritized to meet primary health care needs, with secondary health care reserved for those in need of emergency life-saving care only. This means that many thousands of refugees in need of longer-term care simply do not receive it. Income support is reserved for only the extremely vulnerable. The rising number of IDPs in Syria is amplifying the gap between identified needs and available assistance.

Middle East and North Africa 2017 budget by rights group | USD millions



BUDGETS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA | USD

Operation	2016 Current budget (as of 30 June 2016)	2017					Total
		Pillar 1 Refugee programme	Pillar 2 Stateless programme	Pillar 3 Reintegration projects	Pillar 4 IDP projects		
MIDDLE EAST							
Iraq	562,945,954	137,531,146	623,739	0	418,938,876	557,093,761	
Israel	3,079,904	3,669,782	0	0	0	3,669,782	
Jordan	318,803,538	321,355,004	0	0	0	321,355,004	
Lebanon	463,421,995	534,122,072	606,298	0	0	534,728,370	
Saudi Arabia Regional Office ¹	4,486,936	4,958,487	175,288	0	0	5,133,775	
Syrian Regional Refugee Coordination Office	55,281,275	18,124,373	0	0	30,079,617	48,203,990	
Syrian Arab Republic	353,462,237	48,799,999	211,000	0	303,989,069	353,000,068	
United Arab Emirates	2,761,923	3,618,979	0	0	0	3,618,979	
Yemen	124,063,058	49,245,685	0	0	50,323,542	99,569,228	
Regional activities	33,018,892	60,500,000	0	0	0	60,500,000	
Subtotal	1,921,325,712	1,181,925,528	1,616,325	0	803,331,105	1,986,872,958	
NORTH AFRICA							
Algeria	28,964,766	35,784,755	0	0	0	35,784,755	
Egypt Regional Office	83,187,895	79,251,293	0	0	0	79,251,293	
Libya	21,765,039	24,552,689	0	0	2,958,777	27,511,466	
Mauritania	19,432,361	19,090,331	0	0	0	19,090,331	
Morocco	5,880,726	6,034,300	0	0	0	6,034,300	
Tunisia	5,900,784	5,498,915	0	0	0	5,498,915	
Western Sahara: Confidence Building Measures	7,519,239	7,701,761	0	0	0	7,701,761	
Regional activities	2,201,095	3,000,000	0	0	0	3,000,000	
Subtotal	174,851,905	180,914,044	0	0	2,958,777	183,872,821	
Total	2,096,177,616	1,362,839,573	1,616,325	0	806,289,882	2,170,745,779	

¹ Includes activities in Kuwait

Budgets for the Middle East and North Africa 2008-2017 | USD millions

