

Annual Results Report

2023

Syrian Arab Republic

Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

Section 1: Context and Overview

- 1.1 - Changes to the Operational Context
- 1.2 - Progress Against the Desired Impact
- 1.3 - Challenges to Achieving Impacts
- 1.4 - Collaboration and Partnerships

Section 2: Results

- 2.1 - Outcomes and Achievements
- 2.2 - Age, Gender and Diversity

Section 3: Resources

- 3.1 - Financial Data
- 3.2 - Resources Overview

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

- 4.1 - Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Section 1: Context and Overview

1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

After twelve years of crisis, Syria plunged into further despair in 2023, as the country was hit by a series of earthquakes on 6 and 20 February. The earthquakes claimed the lives of 5,900 people and injured another 12,800, causing further displacement and damage to infrastructure and property that was already affected by years of conflicts. Households lost their homes and source of income, increasing the vulnerability of millions already unable to meet their most basic needs.

The conflict, economic turmoil and natural disasters have led to widespread poverty, malnutrition, and reliance on aid, the cost of which has increased due to sharp inflation. Between January and October 2023, unstable security conditions in parts of the country resulted in 454 deaths of civilians including women and children. This also led to the displacement of whole communities, damage to civilian infrastructure, and obstruction of humanitarian access. As of October, the situation in Gaza has further worsened Syria's humanitarian crisis by exacerbating regional tensions and indirectly impacting humanitarian funding priorities and supply routes; UNHCR prepared a contingency plan for the possible arrival of Syrian refugees and others from Lebanon to Syria.

By the end of 2023, 16.7 million people were estimated to need humanitarian assistance in Syria, the highest number of people in need since the beginning of the crisis and an increase of 1.4 million from 2022 (+9 per cent). A 2023 World Bank report underscores this trend, highlighting a steep decline in the welfare of Syrian households and a rapid deterioration in the country's socioeconomic conditions since 2019. The country continues to host one of the largest numbers of internally displaced people in the world, namely, 7.25 million people (2023 OCHA Population Task Force update). During 2023, UNHCR verified or monitored the return of some 38,000 refugees from neighboring countries, a 25 per cent decrease compared to 2022. According to OCHA, almost 155,000 internally displaced people returned to their place of origin between January and July 2023.

To address the increasing needs in the context of dwindling resources and in response to the 2023 earthquakes, the operation strengthened its protection, shelter and core relief activities and scaled up cash assistance.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

By 2025, all asylum seekers have better access to safe and equal asylum procedures, and risk of refoulement reduced

By 2025, people UNHCR serves enjoy improved access to documentation

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.89%	97.89%

The Syrian Arab Republic is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and it does not have a national legal framework governing refugee protection. UNHCR conducts registration and refugee status determination.

In 2023, the Government of Syria maintained an open border policy, imposing no restrictions for people to access UNHCR international protection procedures. Indicatively, the Government committed to applying the same policy for the potential arrival of refugees from Lebanon due to the Gaza war.

Asylum-seekers have access to UNHCR registration centres where they can be individually registered and referred for Refugee Status Determination. In general, refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR, and especially those that have residence permits, enjoy freedom of movement in Syria. However certain security-related movement restrictions apply in certain locations to everyone including refugees and asylum-seekers.

In general, the Government respects the principle of non-refoulement, though UNHCR's efforts to prevent refoulement of five detained refugees and asylum-seekers was unsuccessful.

Overall access to civil documentation continued improving. The Government promulgated a time-limited amnesty for fines and fees for the delayed registration of vital events, benefiting Syrians living in Syria and abroad as well as refugees. During the nine-month waiver period, 673,545 civil documents were issued free of charge, including to Syrian refugees abroad.

2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

By 2025, all people UNHCR serves identified in need, receive timely assistance

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	IDPs	74.21%	72.00%
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	74.21%	72.00%
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Returnees	74.21%	72.00%
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	91.69%	97.68%

In 2023, Syria's economic downturn persisted, compounded by ongoing conflicts and the February 2023 earthquakes. The currency value halved against the US dollar, and the minimum expenditure basket rose by 120 per cent, from Syrian Pound (SYP) 1.05 million to SYP 2.41 million (source: WFP). With over 90 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, many households faced multiple displacements mainly due to the earthquakes, security concerns and heightened economic vulnerability. As one of the major humanitarian actors in Syria, UNHCR plays a crucial role in alleviating the dire humanitarian situation of Syrians, including responding rapidly to the earthquake emergency, while also addressing the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers, for whom UNHCR is a lifeline.

UNHCR supported 20,405 refugees and asylum-seekers with multi-purpose cash grants or winterization assistance. Notably asylum-seekers were included in the distributions of multi-purpose cash grants for the first time to ensure fairness. UNHCR also assisted 79,788 Syrians (returnees, IDPs and host community) through cash assistance for the first time.

As highlighted in the 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview, 6.8 million people require adequate shelter, surpassing the existing humanitarian capacity. In 2023, UNHCR's shelter programme assisted 11,250 households with essential repairs to urban and rural dwellings, improving safety and living conditions especially for returning families. Additionally, UNHCR enhanced access to basic infrastructure for affected communities, serving around 225,000 families, including IDPs, returnees, and host communities.

UNHCR supported health services at the primary and secondary level, enabling access for approximately 98 per cent of targeted refugees in 2023. Despite the challenges, there was a 2 per cent increase to the number of beneficiaries of primary healthcare and a 3 per cent increase at the secondary level compared to 2022.

3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

By 2025, all people UNHCR serves, particularly women and girls, are empowered to access their rights, are equally engaged and participate in their own protection

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	0.00%
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	IDPs	77.00%	77.00%
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	80.20%	70.00%
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Returnees	77.00%	77.00%
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	IDPs	77.00%	77.00%
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	45.92%	70.00%
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Returnees	77.00%	77.00%

In 2023, refugees and asylum-seekers continued to not be able to work legally in Syria. UNHCR is actively working to raise awareness among refugees on the existing labour law and work permit procedures, while also advocating for enhanced access to formal employment.

Registration data of refugees and asylum-seekers is disaggregated by sex and age, and women have access to assistance in their individual capacity. UNHCR ensures equal engagement of men and women in decision-making and leadership structures. All consultations with the communities UNHCR serve, including

assessments, focus group discussions, post-distribution monitoring, and client satisfaction surveys conducted by UNHCR and partners equally involved men, women, boys and girls.

In 2023, UNHCR provided education grants to 5,712 refugee and asylum-seeker children (2,850 male, 2,862 female). Post-distribution monitoring revealed a 70 per cent average enrollment rate in primary and secondary schools among refugee children aged from 5 to 18. Compared to 2022, there was a 58 per cent increase in education grants, as asylum-seeker children received them on par with refugee children for the first time. These grants helped families to cover expenses such as books, uniforms, and stationery, facilitating continued school enrollment.

Additionally, UNHCR facilitated access to education for 6,000 children through rehabilitating 14 schools that were damaged by conflict and the earthquake. This included the provision of learning equipment and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene facilities. Moreover, UNHCR supported community-led initiatives and outreach volunteers with a strong gender focus. In 2023, 38 community-led Initiatives, led by female self-managed groups, addressed various protection issues faced by women, offering vocational training in winter attire production for pregnant women and establishing women's sports clubs to promote well-being.

Through these initiatives, a total of 321,888 individuals with disabilities were reached. Among them, 43,448 were directly benefited from the UNHCR community-led initiatives.

4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

By 2025, an increased number of people UNHCR serves have enhanced access to safe and dignified durable solutions

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	1
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	23	19
4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	17	45
4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,729	6,683

UNHCR assessed voluntary repatriation possibilities, offering guidance on conditions in refugees' countries of origin. In 2023, UNHCR assisted the voluntary return of one refugee. While Syria lacks a resettlement quota, vulnerable refugees were submitted for resettlement through the regional unallocated quota, resulting in 19 resettlements and 45 departures via complementary pathways. UNHCR supported complementary pathway efforts by facilitating remote interviews, providing travel documents and advocating for travel waivers to Lebanon or Jordan for visa interviews.

To address statelessness in Syria, UNHCR sponsored the attendance of four officials of the Government of Syria at a four-day workshop on statelessness hosted by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy. Significant advances were made in 2021 and 2023 by the Government to prevent statelessness, particularly by enabling birth registration for children of Syrian mothers with unknown fathers and through enacting Legislative Decree on children of unknown descent, which facilitating the birth registration of children of unknown descent.

Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR should apply for annual residency permits at the Immigration Department. As of December 2023, some 2,708 (16 per cent) refugees and asylum-seekers hold valid residency, with the majority being unable to obtain annual permits due to the absence of valid national passports. However, following UNHCR's advocacy with the Ministry of Interior, a new 2023 law allows refugees and asylum-seekers without or with expired passports to obtain residency permits with the Ministry's approval and waiving application fees. UNHCR conducted extensive legal awareness campaigns, providing the latest legal updates and offering direct legal assistance to over 5,300 individuals on residency,

exit visas, and other pertinent legal matters. UNHCR's advocacy for a harmonized residency issuance process across the country continued during the year.

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

Protect: Limited access to border areas hinders monitoring of access to asylum and territory, including refoulement concerns both for refugees and for Syrians being returned from neighboring countries. National security concerns, inconsistent implementation of national laws, widespread housing, land and property issues and obstacles to documentation and unhindered access remain major concerns.

Assist: Humanitarian assistance remains grossly inadequate compared to the humanitarian needs in the context of widespread poverty and rapid inflation. The February 2023 earthquakes significantly worsened the situation, including shelter conditions, leading to an estimate in the 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview that 6.8 million people live in inadequate or unsafe shelters.

Empower: Existing labour regulations restrict access to decent work for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons, limiting chances of self-reliance. For IDPs, returnees and host communities, inadequate legal aid schemes and vocational training opportunities, including for women, equally reduce possibilities of self-reliance.

Solve: Voluntary repatriation for refugees in Syria is almost impossible, given conditions in their countries of origin, while resettlement opportunities are very limited. For Syrian refugees abroad, most continue to express no intention to return to Syria in the near future due to security and livelihood concerns. Large-scale destruction and economic deterioration remain significant obstacles.

Prospects for overcoming challenges: While Syria remains in an intractable political stalemate, the Statement of Intent issued by the Government in October 2023, committing to continue working with UNHCR to address fundamental concerns of Syrian refugees concerning their voluntary return, would go a long way to addressing some of the above challenges if implemented. Accession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees would address many of the specific challenges facing refugees in Syria.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

UNHCR is the lead agency of the Protection and Shelter & Non-Food Items Sectors in the Humanitarian County Team, coordinating the Whole-of-Syria response. UNHCR-led Sectors included 302 partners.

The Sectors advocated with donors, authorities and other stakeholders for improvements, and coordinated preparedness, needs assessments and responses.

In line with its commitment to develop partner capacity, strengthen protection expertise and foster localization, the Protection Sector delivered 26 trainings to 1,011 protection staff on protection mainstreaming, gender-based violence, coordination in emergencies, child protection, disability inclusion, protection risk analysis and identification of persons with specific needs, especially in the context of the earthquake emergency response. UNHCR also participated in all six Area Humanitarian Country Teams, with four UNHCR heads of sub-offices acting as Area Humanitarian Coordinators.

UNHCR co-led several inter-agencies working groups, including the in-country network on prevention from sexual exploitation and abuse with UNICEF and the Accountability to Affected Population Working Group with WFP. UNHCR participated in updating the Strategic Framework (the equivalent to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in other countries), co-leading its third Pillar on 'returns' with UNRWA. UNHCR also co-led the Return and Reintegration Technical Working Group with UNDP which developed an area-based return support approach. UNHCR co-led the Housing, Land and Property and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Working Groups with UNHABITAT, NRC and WHO.

As part of the earthquake response, authorities established operations rooms in affected areas to facilitate and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid. UNHCR supported the operations rooms in Aleppo, Latakia and Hama to conduct damage assessments of buildings and data collection, which was critical for scaling up cash assistance for Syrians. UNHCR worked together with the World Bank to evaluate the earthquake's impact and explore potential avenues for additional financial support.

Section 2: Results

2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

By 2025, identified affected people have enhanced access to effective civil documentation

By 2025, UNHCR's registration procedure improves in effectiveness and efficiency

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	81.34%	100.00%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	66.85%	100.00%	76.16%
1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90.16%	100.00%	95.56%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR Syria conducts individual registration of all asylum-seekers and refugees including children registered in Syria, and issues individual UNHCR identity documents to every registered person. Registration and identity management procedures are now standardized across the country. The alignment of the operation's biometric system with the UNHCR global biometric identity management system ensures refugees' identities can be verified by the system in less than five seconds and eliminates identity fraud and multiple registration. Similarly, the global proGres (UNHCR's IT case management tool) migration to the cloud has improved the protection of refugee data and case management.

Approximately 96 per cent of all registered individuals (over 16,100 refugees and asylum-seekers out of 16,880) have valid UNHCR-issued identity cards. Although the UNHCR-issued ID cards are recognized by the Government of Syria as valid identification documents, immigration law obliges refugees and asylum-seekers to obtain residency permits to legalize their stay in Syria. As of December 2023, 16 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers are reported to have residency documents.

UNHCR extended its legal aid programme on civil documentation and housing, land and property rights to IDPs, returnees, and host communities, with over 407,000 persons benefiting from legal representation and counselling, 62 per cent of them being women. IDPs and host communities equally benefited from legal assistance [38 per cent each]. Some 46 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers received legal assistance on various legal matters. As a result of the legal interventions, 31,000 individuals obtained personal ID cards, 5,450 individuals received family booklets, 7,000 individuals (mainly women) had their marriages documented by the courts and 3,340 children, including 552 refugees and asylum seekers, obtained birth certificates. In addition, some 14,800 individuals obtained documents that allowed them to enjoy their housing, land and property rights. Refugees and asylum-seekers also benefitted from the legal aid programme, with over 7,800 refugees and asylum-seekers receiving legal assistance on various legal matters. civil documentation and registration of vital events, including birth registrations with support of legal assistance partners.

So far, UNHCR has supported the rehabilitation of a total of 65 civil registries and cadastral affairs and immigration offices where civil documents are recorded and issued, benefiting over 1.9 million Syrians.

2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

By 2025, Refugee Status Determination is conducted in a strategic manner, pursuant to transparent and fair procedures and enhanced efficiency

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,008.00	540.00	773.00
2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR implemented the global guidance on the “strategic use of refugee status determination procedures” applying individual refugee status determination procedures only in situations where a refugee status determination decision provides the best means of achieving protection improvements or outcomes for individuals or safeguards the integrity of individual case management.

Criteria for identification and prioritization of cases for refugee status determination became more systematic, consistent and predictable and well-defined in standard operating procedures. All asylum-seekers, regardless of their nationality, have equal access to refugee status determination based on protection needs identified per each individual or group. Refugees and asylum-seekers have been sensitized on the strategic use of refugee status determination, resulting in a reduced number of asylum-seekers who request refugee status determination. Similarly, the strategic use of refugee status determination improved case processing.

The processing time between registration and first instance decision was considerably reduced by almost 30 per cent, compared to 2022, due to the strategic use of refugee status determination in Syria. UNHCR issued 220 refugee status determination decisions for asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen, topping the list of nationalities that underwent the refugee status determination process in 2023.

All asylum-seekers and refugees are informed about their right to legal representation during refugee status determination procedures by UNHCR. However, while this choice is given to asylum-seekers, no asylum-seeker utilized this right, and thus no legal representatives participated in the refugee status determination process in 2023.

In 2023, 93 asylum-seekers whose asylum claims were rejected by UNHCR were notified of their rejection in writing. The decision letter explained the reasons for rejection and provided information about the appeal process. Rejection letters were handed over in person during a face-to-face counseling session carried out in a language they understand, and explaining the reasons for rejection, and appeal procedures.

3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

By 2025, local laws and policies are developed and more favorable to affected people

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Progressing towards alignment: 70-89 points	Progressing towards alignment: 70-89 points	Progressing towards alignment: 70-89 points
3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	Stateless Persons	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In coordination with relevant governmental counterparts, UNHCR continued to advocate for legal improvements to enhance protection of people under UNHCR's mandate in Syria and to ensure better access to rights and freedom of movement.

For instance, UNHCR successfully advocated for residency procedures for refugees and asylum-seekers, especially those with no or expired passports. Consequently, Law #4/2023 was issued in April, amending law no 2/2014 related to residency matters and allowing refugees and asylum-seekers, who do not possess passports or whose passports are expired, to obtain residency permits upon the approval of the Minister of Interior. The mentioned law also provided a permanent exemption for refugees and asylum-seekers and their family members (spouses and minor children) from residency fees.

To enhance the capacity of the Government in fulfilling its primary protection responsibilities to identify, reduce and prevent statelessness, UNHCR supported the participation of four staff of the Ministry of Justice in the 2023 statelessness course offered in Arabic by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo.

While the Government of Syria took note of the 2021 Universal Periodical Review recommendations to adopt the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness little to this effect has been done. UNHCR continues advocating the adoption of the said Conventions. Meanwhile, UNHCR has prioritized activities related to the prevention of statelessness, especially through access to civil documentation and birth registration of children. Further to UNHCR's advocacy, Amnesty Decree 24/2022 waived penalties related to certain misdemeanors and offenses. While the amnesty initially excluded fines for late registration of civil status events, UNHCR's advocacy resulted in two subsequent Circulars issued by the Ministry of Interior, covering also late registration of civil status events, with in total some 674,000 events recorded during the nine-month period, among which 85,113 were related to the recording of (delayed) birth events.

UNHCR continued advocating for alignment of the national legal framework regulating housing, land and property (HLP) rights with international standards, yet no tangible progress was made. However, the Statement of Intent of Syria during the UNHCR Executive Committee session in October included HLP issues for deliberation with UNHCR. HLP topics for discussion include demilitarization, depoliticization and de-securitization of HLP issues through legislative reform, and closing legal gaps, such as promulgating laws on property restitution and HLP issues arising from natural disasters.

4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

By 2025, the risks of gender-based violence are reduced, survivors have adequate and timely access to quality services and prevention programming effectively addresses root causes of gender-based violence.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	IDPs	82.73%	83.00%	68.38%
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	82.73%	83.00%	68.38%
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Returnees	82.73%	83.00%	68.38%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	IDPs	39.78%	50.00%	86.87%

4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2.39%	8.00%	97.92%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Returnees	33.98%	40.00%	87.79%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

An assessment by the Gender Working Group shows that children and women constitute 75 per cent of the population in need (45 percent children and 30 per cent women respectively). One in every three women make up a female-headed household. The assessment also indicates that women suffer from increased violence against them, high levels of food insecurity, and have fewer opportunities to secure income and access to financial, basic health and educational services. A survey done by UNICEF shows that 13 per cent of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18. Women and girls face gender-specific barriers to labour markets, with women most likely to hold precarious jobs and face disruptions in livelihoods and income-generating activities increasing their risks of sexual exploitation and abuse.

In 2023, UNHCR Syria delivered 7,643 gender-based violence (GBV) response services including referrals and case management by 16 partners in 14 governorates to 3,009 IDPs, 2,824 returnees, 157 refugees and asylum-seekers, and 1,653 host community members. Multi-sectoral referrals to health care, psychosocial support, legal and safety assistance were ensured upon consent. 15 gender-based violence survivors at heightened life-threatening risk were referred to safe accommodation following safety assessments and case action plans. Case management is complemented by a client satisfaction survey administered upon the closure of the case. Out of 4,609 cases closed, over 60 per cent participated in the survey with over 90 per cent satisfaction. UNHCR continues to advocate through the sector for a unified inter-agency reporting tool to measure the impact of GBV interventions.

For GBV prevention, UNHCR informs communities on how and where to access support and services through awareness-raising interventions. In 2023, some 132,000 women, men, boys and girls of diverse age and backgrounds from IDPs, returnees, refugees and host communities attended awareness-raising sessions on tackling GBV root causes, women's empowerment to claim rights, and forms and consequences of GBV. Additionally, UNHCR trained 86 staff on the Girl Shine curriculum and rolled it out in 11 locations, focusing on gender transformative programming to tackle the causes of gender inequality, improving the conditions of women and girls and their social position and thus paving a path towards gender equality. In total 44 groups were conducted as part of the Girl Shine curriculum, targeting girls and caregivers.

The engagement of the community was enhanced through the establishment of 158 community-based committees (130 women's committees, 28 men's committees) and training 43 partner staff on Engaging Men Through Accountable Practice. In total, with 1,639 members who played vital roles in mobilizing communities to combat GBV, the community-based committees enhanced women's role in leadership and linked women and girls to GBV service centres. UNHCR trained 667 humanitarian workers (including UNHCR and partner staff) on various topics on GBV prevention and response.

5. Outcome Area: Child Protection

By 2025, children UNHCR serves have access to enhanced child protection systems, procedures, and services

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	41.41%	41.00%	42.20%
5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	IDPs	4.65%	7.00%	49.23%
5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	78.00%	78.00%	62.80%
5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Returnees	9.23%	10.00%	49.23%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Children face specific risks after 13 years of the crisis combined with the earthquake emergency that hit Aleppo, Latakia and Hama governorates in early 2023. During 2023, 12,161 children from refugee, IDP, returnee and host communities were provided with child protection case management services (5,458 girls, 6,703 boys) as a response to specific concerns. The main types of child protection concerns reported included child labour, being unaccompanied or separated from caregivers, emotional distress, violence, abuse, and neglect.

Prevention is a fundamental component of UNHCR's child protection strategy, as it enhances community awareness on protection risks faced by children, as well as identification of abusive behaviors towards children. In 2023, UNHCR and its partners conducted awareness-raising sessions reaching 148,010 children (83,515 girls, 64,495 boys) and 47,051 caregivers (44,859 female, 2,192 male). Sessions covered various topics including the rights of children, violence against children, harmful effects of dropping out of school, child neglect, and mine risk education. Also, in 2023, parts of the prevention programme were shifted to curriculum-based interventions. 162 groups of adolescent children participated in the "Adolescent Empowerment and Life Skills" programme and 53 groups of children engaged in "Supporting Children Rights through Education, Art and Media" programme. In addition, seven groups of caregivers were established as part of the "Parenting Care" programme.

To enhance community engagement and ownership of child protection, UNHCR established and supported a total of 212 child-friendly spaces, children's clubs and child welfare committees. These community-based structures are a tool to spread awareness on topics related to children's rights within their communities. Participants received training to identify cases at risk and refer them to partners' child protection teams. The engagement of the children and their caregivers through structures or other prevention programme aligned with a community-based approach to address the needs identified and deliver interventions is coordinated by the child protection sector Interventions targeting refugee children are primarily coordinated by UNHCR and its partners as UNHCR is the only UN agency targeting the refugee population.

During 2023, 574 UNHCR and partner staff received training on the basics of child protection and case management. UNHCR in collaboration with UNMAS conducted training on explosive ordnance/mine risk education. UNHCR also worked with UNICEF to facilitate the training and rollout of the "Parenting Care" curriculum targeting caregivers which aims to help them with parental approaches towards children challenges, difficult behaviors, children rights and their protection.

7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

By 2025, community groups and outreach volunteers are empowered, and community participation is enhanced

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	IDPs	83.32%	85.00%	83.97%
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	83.32%	85.00%	100.00%
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Returnees	83.32%	85.00%	84.98%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	IDPs	66.03%	66.00%	72.23%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	51.75%	55.00%	56.49%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Returnees	66.03%	66.00%	69.51%
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	IDPs	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Returnees	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR maintained an active network of 2,551 outreach volunteers, out of which 1,278 are female. The outreach volunteers played a vital role in linking with IDPs, returnees, host communities, refugees, and asylum-seekers. Outreach volunteers in affected communities facilitated information dissemination and enhanced the ability to capture community needs and capacities and to identify vulnerable individuals in need of protection services, playing a particularly crucial role during the earthquake response.

Throughout the year, 436 UNHCR staff, partners and Community Centre coordinators underwent training on UNHCR's Accountability to Affected People policy and Feedback, Complaint, Response Mechanisms. The training emphasized the importance of community participation, engagement and feedback. Customized Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms posters were distributed in Arabic, English, Farsi, and Somali. UNHCR addressed and responded to 4,813 feedback and 2,800 complaints received from concerned populations regarding. Most queries were about inclusion in the assistance programme and were considered when adapting interventions.

UNHCR initiated a satisfaction survey in 117 community centres across 14 governorates. The survey aimed to evaluate various aspects of the centres, including outreach, safety, accessibility, service effectiveness, accountability, Feedback, Complaints, and Response Mechanisms and community engagement. The survey results will enhance understanding of the functionality and programme effectiveness of the centers in 2024 as well as assisting offices in future reviews and rationalization.

The operation conducted a participatory assessment, comprising 566 focus group discussions across all 14 governorates and involving 6,138 participants from various age groups, nationalities and genders. These discussions included asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs returnees, and host communities. Each discussion had 5-10 participants, with a gender-sensitive approach ensuring balanced representation (57 per cent female, 43 per cent male). Adults (25-59 years, 39 per cent) formed the largest age group, targeted for their ability to provide valuable information reflecting community needs, followed by youth (18-24 years, 17 per cent), children (10-14 years, 16 per cent), adolescents (15-17 years, 13 per cent), seniors (60-79 years, 12 per cent), mixed ages (2 per cent) and 80 and above (1 per cent).

UNHCR initiated a collaboration with sister UN agencies (UNFPA, WFP, UNFPA and UNDP) in UNHCR-supported community centres. UNHCR continues to coordinate with Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor

(MOSAL) to explore referrals to MOSAL's rural/development centers and support capacity building of MOSAL staff in rural areas.

8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

By 2025, vulnerable people are assisted to meet basic and specific needs

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	IDPs	33.00%	53.00%	63.00%
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	55.00%	68.00%	86.00%
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Returnees	53.00%	53.00%	60.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

The provision of core relief items played a vital role in meeting the basic needs of forcibly displaced people and vulnerable host communities. Additionally, it provided a space for discussions with the governmental counterparts on extension of CBI initiatives to those impacted by the earthquake, which was approved by the High Relief Committee (HRC). In 2023, the regular distribution programme reached 476,179 individuals, while emergency responses assisted 204,100 individuals in earthquake-affected areas. Thanks to its emergency stock, UNHCR could distribute blankets and winter clothes within eight hours after the earthquakes. Additionally, crossline interventions reached 3,870 individuals in north-west Syria, while 1,797 internally displaced persons in Deir ez-Zor received assistance.

UNHCR stepped-up its efforts to provide cash assistance to asylum-seekers by integrating them into the bi-monthly multi-purpose cash grant and education grant programme. Monthly multi-purpose cash grants were extended to 5,795 households (16,673 individuals). Additionally, 5,952 households (16,687 individuals), including asylum-seekers, received cash assistance for winterization. 2023 marked the first year in nearly a decade during which cash assistance was provided to Syrian nationals. Following the earthquakes, UNHCR swiftly obtained government approval to implement multi-purpose cash assistance for the earthquake-affected population, reaching 64,525 individuals (13,718 households). The cash pilot project, monetizing existing in-kind assistance, was approved and implemented in the last quarter of the year, benefiting 3,392 individuals (896 households) in 2023.

As part of the response for persons with specific needs, medical and general in-kind assistance was distributed to 59,436 persons, with 46 per cent being medical assistive devices and 54 per cent general items aimed at preventing, mitigating and responding to protection risks. Additionally, 17,729 older persons and individuals with disabilities received adult diapers, while 9,493 benefited from the inclusive care programme. UNHCR and its partners organized 15,805 social and recreational events, reaching 248,612 individuals. As part of the response for persons with specific needs, mental health and psychosocial support services reached 10,100 individuals, with 23 per cent referred to specialized mental health services. Additionally, individual and group counseling sessions were provided to 4,436 people. UNHCR conducted client feedback surveys targeting 1,577 MHPSS beneficiaries and 1,342 inclusive care programme participants. Mental health and psychosocial support interventions contribute to the overall well-being and inclusion of persons with specific needs in society.

9. Outcome Area: Sustainable Housing and Settlements

By 2025, people in need have access to more sustainable shelter solutions and UNHCR's capacity for emergency response is maintained

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
9.1 Proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing	IDPs	74.21%	80.00%	72.00%
9.1 Proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	19.72%	55.00%	36.54%
9.1 Proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing	Returnees	74.21%	80.00%	72.00%
9.2 Proportion of people that have energy to ensure lighting	IDPs	48.00%	50.00%	72.00%
9.2 Proportion of people that have energy to ensure lighting	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	48.00%	50.00%	72.00%
9.2 Proportion of people that have energy to ensure lighting	Returnees	48.00%	50.00%	72.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview, an estimated 5.7 million people in Syria required shelter support, with 34 per cent living in 'sub-standard' conditions. People in need of shelter support include returnees, newly displaced and those in living in inadequate collective shelters or tented settlements. To address the diverse shelter needs, UNHCR delivered assistance in different forms, such as physical repair of houses and shelters, provision of construction materials, and cash for shelter repair. In addition, UNHCR distributed tents as a short-term solution camp in north-east Syria.

As the lead agency of the Shelter/NFI Sector, UNHCR played a pivotal role in advocating with the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment for streamlining of approval processes for all sector partners. As a result, 6,932 households (33,695 individuals) received support, including the repair of 2,270 damaged houses and the provision of 4,662 shelter material packages for minor repairs. Moreover, 255 common areas in damaged buildings were upgraded to ensure safe shelter access.

An integrated approach was adopted to support UNHCR's housing programme, which included rehabilitation or upgrading of basic communal infrastructure to complement individual shelter assistance, thereby ensuring communities' access to essential services and a safe living environment. This encompassed sustainable cross-cutting activities such as road repairs, street lighting installation, and support for schools and health centres. 4,343 solar streetlights were installed along with two transformers, and 52,626 cubic meters of debris were disposed, benefiting 247,460 individuals. Capacity-building initiatives were also conducted for partners and government counterparts, targeting technical staff responsible for managing humanitarian programme across all governorates with 1,260 staff members receiving training in project and data management.

As part of its emergency response, UNHCR provided emergency shelter to 104,915 individuals, including the rehabilitation of nine collective shelters, provision of 8,381 tents as well as operation and maintenance of 10 camps in north-east Syria. UNHCR also assisted people affected by the February earthquake with cash for shelter repair in Aleppo and Latakia, benefiting 2,243 households (10,259 individuals). Seven collective shelters were established in Lattakia and Aleppo as a temporary accommodation choice. Additionally, two shelters in Lattakia were restored to accommodate internally displaced persons experiencing prolonged relocation.

10. Outcome Area: Healthy Lives

By 2025, the health system's capacity is strengthened to support continuity of care and community resilience

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	IDPs	75.62%	78.00%	80.00%
10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	75.62%	78.00%	80.00%
10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Returnees	75.62%	78.00%	80.00%
10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	IDPs	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%
10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%
10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Returnees	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In line with UNHCR's global public health strategy, the operation continued providing a basic package of health services to nearly 18,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, encompassing approximately 23,000 health care and 700 specialized Mental Health and Psychosocial Support services. Notably, 59 per cent of these services were for females, 13 per cent for children under five and 17 per cent for older individuals. While the north-east region accounted for 83 per cent of the services provided, only 17 per cent were allocated to Damascus and Rural Damascus, contrasting with 29 per cent in 2022. This difference can be explained by UNHCR's disengagement from partner-managed primary health care facilities in Damascus and Rural Damascus, completed by mid-2023. Despite this, the total number of refugees accessing primary health care witnessed a 2 per cent increase compared to 2022, indicating amplified needs and improved access.

Negotiations with health authorities resulted in the inclusion and integration of refugees into the national package of primary health care services, with a pilot project approved in Damascus and Rural Damascus. This initiative aimed to cover refugee-populated areas through seven public primary health care facilities, employing a family medicine approach. During the first half of 2023, partner-managed primary health care facilities reached 45,630 IDPs before the disengagement of UNHCR, offering 1,900 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support services.

Secondary health care services were extended to 3,445 refugees through public universities and private hospitals supported by UNHCR, a 3 per cent increase compared to 2022, signifying heightened demand. Notably, over 70 per cent of referrals to secondary care were from the north-east region, underscoring the concentration of health care needs in this area.

UNHCR contributed to the emergency earthquake response by rehabilitating, furnishing and equipping three impacted primary health care centers in rural Latakia, ensuring the resumption of services and coverage for 79,000 affected individuals.

Support for returnees and IDPs in community health, in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA, encompassed a network of 41 health points, 104 community health workers, and 534 health volunteers, benefiting 320,042 returnees and IDPs. Although this represented a 31 per cent decrease in coverage compared to 2022 due to a reduced budget, community health initiatives played a vital role in responding to public health risks, including outbreaks, and supporting immunization campaigns. Moreover, the health personnel promoted health of pregnant women and neonates by training 412 women in pregnancy and neonatal care skills, while also identifying protection risks such as child protection, Gender Based Violence and lack of legal documentation. A significant increase in female volunteers in neonatal home care by 400 per cent compared to 2022 facilitated lifesaving and monitoring activities for over 3,500 pregnant women and neonates, particularly in return areas.

11. Outcome Area: Education

By 2025, access to quality primary, secondary, and tertiary education for all affected people is enhanced

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20.34%	20.00%	21.31%
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	IDPs	77.00%	80.00%	77.00%
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	73.55%	80.00%	94.82%
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Returnees	77.00%	80.00%	77.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarship programme and the Ministry of Higher Education, UNHCR supported 84 students to continue their university studies in six public universities during the academic year 2022/2023. As a result, 10 scholarship holders successfully graduated from Syrian universities, 11 students, however, discontinued their university study due to different reasons. For the academic year of 2023/2024, 25 new enrollments are registered, making the total number of 88 students supported. The higher education scholarship grants covered university tuition fees and pocket money to support the students with other expenses such learning materials and transportation costs. To enhance access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children and reduce the escalating risk of school dropout, UNHCR provided unconditional education cash grants to 5,712 students, aged between 5 and 18 years old. This includes 2,862 female and 2,850 male students, all of whom are refugees or asylum-seekers residing across all governorates. Out of the total, 4,403 students are of primary school age, while 1,309 are at secondary school. The grants allowed refugee and asylum-seeker families to cover various school-related expenses such as books, uniforms, stationery, and other necessities, to keep their children enrolled in school. Following the cash distribution, a post distribution monitoring exercise was conducted in Damascus and Qamishli. The results reflected a high enrollment rate reaching 70 per cent across primary and secondary schools.

In 2023, a total of 55,600 internally displaced, returnee, refugee and asylum-seeker students benefitted from remedial and catch-up classes in UNHCR-supported community centres and governmental facilities. 17,220 students (about the seating capacity of Madison Square Garden) benefitted from homework café activities provided in the network of community centres supported by UNHCR across different governorates. The catch-up classes and homework café activities played a pivotal role in enhancing the students' academic performance, facilitated re-integration of newly returned students into the public education system and contributed to preventing school dropouts. Students in catch-up classes received a kit of stationery.

Four damaged schools were rehabilitated in the returnee areas during the reporting period. This has benefited not only the returnees, but also other children affected by the crisis in Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Dar'a, and Homs. In the wake of the earthquake, to meet the immediate educational needs in the affected areas, UNHCR undertook the rehabilitation of ten additional schools in Aleppo and Latakia which benefited approximately 6,054 children. The rehabilitation process involved the repair of damaged classrooms and WASH facilities. Furthermore, some schools were provided with necessary equipment, ensuring adequate access to the school premises for all students.

12. Outcome Area: Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

By 2025, affected communities have improved access to clean water and satisfactory sanitation/hygiene

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
12.1 Proportion of people using at least basic drinking water services	IDPs	75.00%	79.00%	60.00%
12.1 Proportion of people using at least basic drinking water services	Returnees	75.00%	79.00%	60.00%
12.2 Proportion of people with access to a safe household toilet	IDPs	75.00%	76.00%	60.00%
12.2 Proportion of people with access to a safe household toilet	Returnees	75.00%	76.00%	60.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Though the main support for the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector in Syria is provided by UNICEF and ICRC, which cover various objectives including emergency access to water, sanitation, hygiene promotion, and sustainable access to water and sanitation, in 2023, UNHCR contributed to the Sector's strategic objectives in different ways.

UNHCR supported 80,075 individuals with improved access to water, sanitation and hygiene. To ensure inter-sector complementarity, UNHCR mainly focused rehabilitation of water and sanitation basic services in areas of return where UNHCR also provided shelter assistance. UNHCR rehabilitated 4,738 linear meters of damaged sewage networks, repaired 1,000 linear meters of water network and repaired and equipped 3 boreholes in Aleppo and in Rural Damascus.

13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

By 2025, identified vulnerable people have access to sustainable livelihood opportunities and services

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	IDPs	23.00%	25.00%	25.00%
13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%
13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Returnees	23.00%	25.00%	25.00%
13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	IDPs	21.00%	21.00%	21.00%
13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90.41%	80.00%	90.41%
13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	Returnees	21.00%	21.00%	21.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR implemented new initiatives in collaboration with FAO, WFP and UNDP, such as restoring access to irrigation and improving access to education and training facilities. Additionally, a workshop on financial inclusion with relevant stakeholders resulted in formulating context-specific action plans emphasizing collaboration to facilitate access to financial services. UNHCR's role in this plan includes providing supplementary support to IDPs and returnees, such as training on financial literacy, provision of start-up resources for businesses, and awareness-raising on financial services and regulatory procedures.

During the reporting period, actions to improve the design and implementation of livelihood support programme were prioritized. New tools and modalities, including a unified business training manual, a pilot project for cash for livelihoods as well as regular analysis of supported programme to align with the identified needs and enhance the self-reliance and livelihoods of refugees, IDPs and returnees were developed.

UNHCR supported the rehabilitation of six livelihood-related infrastructures, benefiting over 60,000 refugees, IDPs, returnees and host community members. These include the restoration of irrigation systems, an agriculture support extension unit, a bakery and a market.

UNHCR also provided start-up business training to some 2,800 individuals. 1,657 refugees, IDPs and returnees were qualified for business start-up support following vulnerability and capacity assessments. UNHCR also supported 6,200 IDPs and returnees with agricultural inputs and services in rural communities where farmers and pastoralists/herders are particularly vulnerable. Additionally, 488 IDPs and returnees engaged in apprenticeship and temporary employment schemes.

Under this outcome, the early recovery and livelihood sector partners directly supported some 116,000 people through a wide range of livelihoods interventions, leading to positive changes in livelihood indicators and income levels. Additionally, 25 productive infrastructures were rehabilitated in six governorates. Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Syria issued a number of resolutions aiming to improve financial inclusion. ESCWA and UNDP launched various initiatives to improve collection of employment data in collaboration with relevant authorities. The data will positively inform evidence planning and provide detailed unemployment information.

14. Outcome Area: Voluntary Return and Sustainable Reintegration

By 2025, a more enabling environment for the voluntary, safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration of refugees and IDPs will be created

By 2025, enhanced advocacy and evidence-based policies will have contributed to an enabling environment for voluntary, safe and dignified return of asylum-seekers and refugees

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR counseled 19 refugees who expressed a desire to return to their countries of origin, out of which 14 were Iraqi. UNHCR provided information on the conditions in their country of origin to ensure that refugees make informed decisions on their intentions to return. UNHCR has adopted phone counselling for such inquiries as a preliminary form of information sharing. For requests for detailed counselling, UNHCR conducted counselling interviews. In the end, only one refugee voluntarily returned to the country of origin in 2023 through a UNHCR-facilitated return scheme.

Interest in voluntary repatriation also served as a basis for UNHCR to initiate engagements with countries whose nationals are refugees or asylum-seekers in Syria. In the last quarter of 2023, the Iraqi embassy and representatives of the Government of Iraq engaged UNHCR Syria in a preliminary discussion about the views towards voluntary repatriation within the Iraqi refugee community in Syria. Given the interest of refugees and Iraqi authorities, deliberations on the possibilities of voluntary repatriation will continue to be explored in 2024.

UNHCR actively advocated with government counterparts on refugee and IDP return-related issues, leading to a Statement of Intent by the Government that provided a framework for engagement and formalized a bilateral dialogue to discuss protection concerns raised by Syrian refugees in host countries and returnees.

The operationalization of the Jdeidet Yabous protection-health border post has enabled UNHCR, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, to offer returnees essential information on available assistance in their areas of return, providing insights on return profiles, trends, common needs and challenges faced. This will inform evidence-based programme and protection planning, and advocacy with the Government.

New digital tools and approaches were developed to leverage data analysis. Existing analyses on key issues affecting return dynamics were frequently updated. Regular exchanges of return-related information were maintained with neighboring operations.

At the inter-agency level, UNHCR continued to co-lead the Strategic Framework and the Technical Working Group of the Return and Reintegration Working Group. The area-based return support approach was decentralized to respective Area Humanitarian Country Teams and roll-out accelerated to seven locations. Successful advocacy with donors was reflected in specific funding for area-based return support and increased visits to relevant locations by donors.

15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

By 2025, increased advocacy efforts result in more resettlement opportunities and avenues for complementary pathways

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	22	150	55
15.2 Average processing time from resettlement submission to departure under normal priority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,590.00	360.00	1,178.00

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR's submission of refugees for resettlement consideration increased by 150 per cent from 22 individuals in 2022 to 55 in 2023, with refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia being referred for resettlement. UNHCR will continue advocating for a dedicated resettlement quota for refugees in Syria.

The submission of highly vulnerable cases under urgent and emergency priorities ensured timely decisions from resettlement countries and expedited departure proceedings in 2023. Consequently, the processing times between submission and departures dropped by 26 per cent to 1,178 days in 2023 from 1,590 days in 2022.

2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

Communities and people with whom and for whom UNHCR works, accessed integrated protection services provided through 117 UNHCR-supported community centres. Upholding the UNHCR Age, Gender, and Diversity policy, UNHCR and partners ensured equitable access to services, addressing and responding to the needs of women, girls, men, and boys. Vulnerability identification and case management records were

regularly analyzed to monitor service provision from the Age, Gender, and Diversity perspective.

In 2023, UNHCR promoted equality, empowerment, and inclusion for women and girls by ensuring their equal participation in management and leadership roles as well as their active engagement in community matters, with 1,278 out of 2,551 outreach volunteers being women. UNHCR supported 775 community groups, including community and youth-led initiatives, equipped with technical and material assistance. Led by 6,856 self-managed groups, these initiatives benefited some 1,321,000 women and girls out of 2,390,000.

During the year, 18,511 persons with disabilities (51 per cent female) participated in community-led initiatives across the operation. Two community-led initiatives were led by persons with disabilities. In collaboration with the Association for People with Disabilities based in Qamishli, UNHCR established a training centre to empower people with disabilities, benefiting 100 beneficiaries (of whom 63 per cent were female). In Latakia, another community-led initiative trained 40 women with serious or difficulty to hear and speak in cosmetics.

In 2023, UNHCR strengthened its accountability to affected people (AAP) through a nationwide training programme targeting over 400 staff of UNHCR, partners as well as frontline staff at the community centers. UNHCR completed the review of partners' Standard Operating Procedures on Feedback, Complaint and Response Mechanisms in community centres as well as collective shelters during the earthquake response.

Section 3: Resources

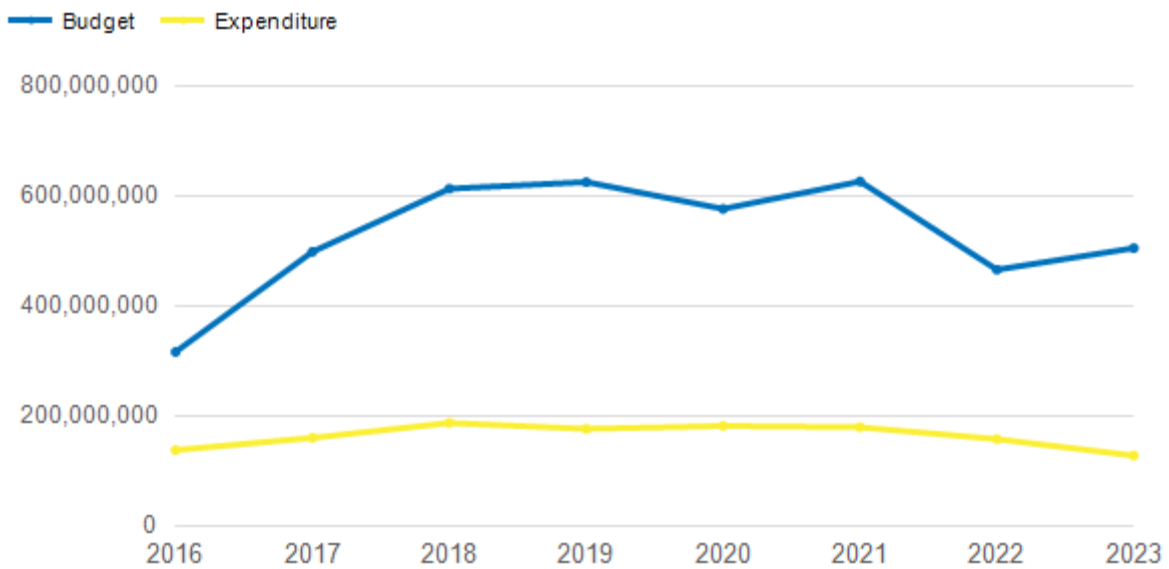
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

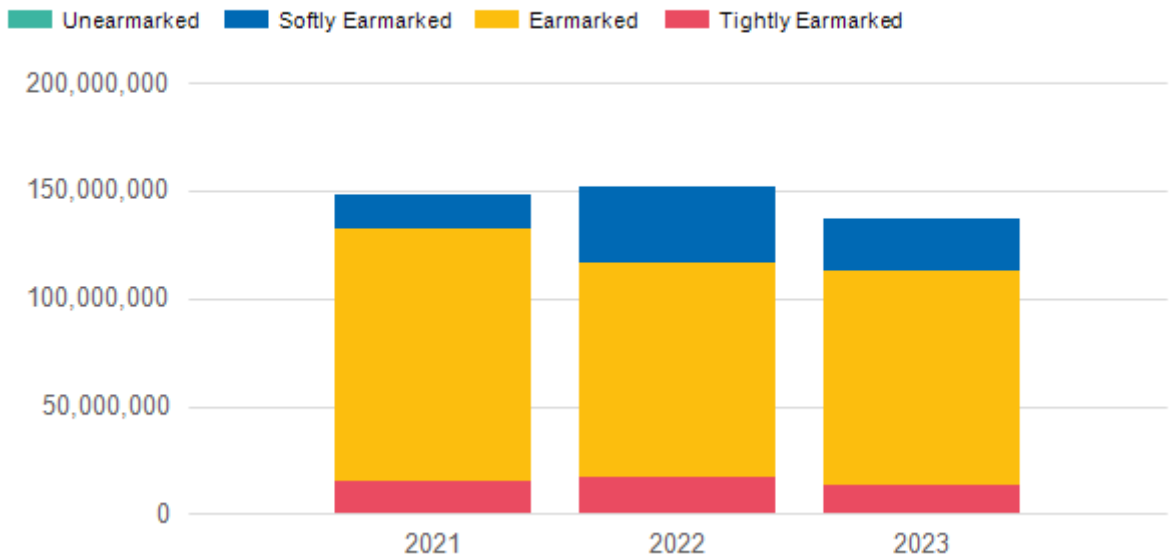
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	36,444,840	6,746,370	18.51%	6,746,370	100.00%
IA2: Assist	368,639,668	80,283,089	21.78%	80,283,089	100.00%
IA3: Empower	96,862,427	40,204,235	41.51%	40,204,235	100.00%
IA4: Solve	2,348,187	167,640	7.14%	167,640	100.00%
All Impact Areas		21,843,955			
Total	504,295,122	149,245,288	29.59%	127,401,333	85.36%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	35,309,261	6,286,559	17.80%	6,286,559	100.00%
OA2: Status	206,527	34,669	16.79%	34,669	100.00%
OA3: Policy/Law	929,052	425,142	45.76%	425,142	100.00%
OA4: GBV	6,869,638	4,772,096	69.47%	4,772,096	100.00%
OA5: Children	4,449,702	5,474,195	123.02%	5,474,195	100.00%
OA7: Community	35,160,087	11,683,345	33.23%	11,683,345	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	241,064,243	47,119,202	19.55%	46,680,129	99.07%
OA9: Housing	96,844,540	25,138,852	25.96%	25,135,419	99.99%
OA10: Health	21,390,063	6,068,515	28.37%	6,068,515	100.00%
OA11: Education	13,808,178	3,502,645	25.37%	3,502,645	100.00%
OA12: WASH	9,340,823	2,399,025	25.68%	2,399,025	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	21,136,157	7,835,238	37.07%	7,835,238	100.00%
OA14: Return	2,233,071	126,119	5.65%	126,119	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	115,116	41,520	36.07%	41,520	100.00%
EA17: Systems	14,464,889	6,222,393	43.02%	6,222,393	100.00%
EA20: External	973,776	714,324	73.36%	714,324	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		21,401,450			
Total	504,295,122	149,245,288	29.59%	127,401,333	85.36%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

Due to the funding decrease, budget constraints, soaring inflation and severe deterioration of the economic situation, UNHCR was compelled to scale down activities and allocate available resources to mitigate the impact on targeted beneficiaries at the onset of 2023.

UNHCR prioritized its programme based on the urgency of the needs and projected impacts of individual interventions across all sectors, with a focus on interventions linked to UNHCR's core mandate (i.e. protection, emergency preparedness and response, solutions).

While the earthquake response allowed the operation to address some of the identified gaps in affected areas (i.e. Aleppo, Tartous, Latakia, Homs and Hama) and paved the way for new types of activities such

as cash assistance for Syrian nationals, other areas faced significant budget reductions, as a substantial portion of received funds were intended for the earthquake response only.

Outcome Area 8 - Well-being and basic needs: critical gaps were identified in sourcing, procuring and distributing the required quantity of core relief items to sustain regular distribution and winter assistance.

Outcome Area 9 – Sustainable housing and settlements: gaps persisted and expanded due to the operation's inability to address the long-term impact of the earthquakes on affected people and communal infrastructures in 2023.

Outcome Area 7 - Healthy live: Community was affected as sustaining the established network of 117 community centres, and consequently outreach capacity became more difficult. Operational costs remained significant, prompting plans for a comprehensive review of the network in 2024 to enhance efficiency and explore the possibility of engaging other UN agencies in providing services in community centres.

While the contributions from some donors decreased, the operation minimized the funding gap by engaging with new donors (both public and private). The resource mobilization efforts of the operation also resulted in the reception of in-kind contribution of clothes, worth (16 million).

With respect to its own staff, UNHCR carried out a comprehensive staffing review to align its staffing levels with re-prioritized objectives for 2024 (resulting in the discontinuation of some positions, conversion of some international positions to national and adjusting office structures and reporting lines).

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

The political impasse will remain, with the economy deteriorating and security issues escalating. Humanitarian needs will continue to grow while the capacity of UNHCR will be stretched by the dramatic reductions to humanitarian funding, to the detriment of social cohesion.

Greater engagement with non-traditional donors and partnerships with UN sister agencies are needed for complementary outcomes through the area-based return support approach. Assistance should be monetized where possible and core relief item distribution beyond emergencies should be reviewed. Data collection and analysis is needed to support evidence-based approaches to prioritization and targeting. Partnerships should be rationalized and engagement with community-based organizations expanded to reduce operational costs.

Stocktaking from the earthquake response highlighted good practices such as early-stage local engagement, building emergency preparedness of governmental entities, limiting outside missions and the criticality of access to relevant data, reaffirming the need for UNHCR to retain its emergency response capacity for sudden displacements.

Although the operational environment will likely remain restrictive, there is room for constructive engagement with the Government, especially under the commitments made in the Statement of Intent in late 2023. Opportunities include scaling-up cash assistance, expediting partnership approvals, strengthening post-distribution monitoring and data sharing mechanisms. Ongoing dialogue with the governmental counterparts, which proved to generate positive impact on implementation of planned activities and responses, should continue with further expansion.

Political interest for refugee returns will grow but spontaneous Syrian refugee returns will be limited while the key concerns of security and livelihoods remain. IDP returns will stay at consistent levels.

Despite significant progress, there is a need to further enhance direct engagement with the communities UNHCR works with. Engagement by senior management in the inter-agency in-country Network on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) will continue to be pivotal both to raise awareness and sanction perpetrators.



UNHCR
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