

# Syrian Arab Republic

March 2021

The decade-long crisis in Syria continues to affect millions of lives. Humanitarian needs and protection risks are increasing. The security situation in parts of the country remains volatile and unpredictable and the economic situation is dire including nationwide fuel shortages.

According to the 2021 Needs and Response Summary, some 13.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated an already precarious situation.

UNHCR in Syria provides protection and in-kind or cash assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless people based on identified needs and vulnerabilities.

## KEY INDICATORS

**394,373** people

Supported by outreach volunteers

**625,642** people

Benefited from winterization programme

**1,870,597**

Seasonal items distributed

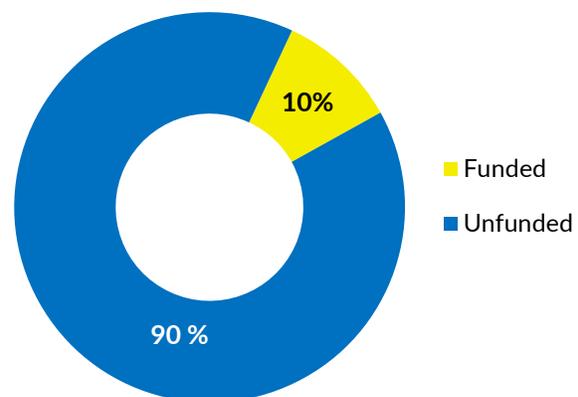
**12,166** refugees

Received multi-purpose cash grants

## FUNDING (AS OF 30 MARCH 2021)

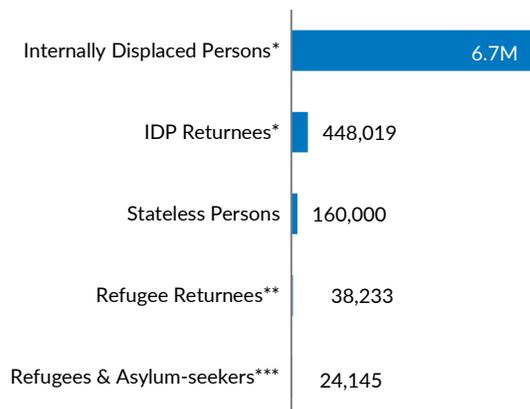
**USD 628.6 million**

requested for the Syria Operation in 2021



UNHCR-supported community centre in Tal Daman, rural Aleppo Governorate, provides a wide range of protection-related services to IDPs, returnees and the host community. UNHCR/B. Diab

## POPULATION OF CONCERN



\* Source: OCHA, December 2020, IDP returns in 2020

\*\* Source: UNHCR verified returns in 2020

\*\*\* UNHCR, 20 March 2021

## COVID-19 Situation Update

On 24 March, Syrian health authorities reported **17,743** confirmed COVID-19 infections since the pandemic started, an increase from **15,179** a month earlier. Of the reported number, **1,183** people died while **11,794** people recovered. In North-East Syria the number of confirmed cases reached **9,018** up from **8,592** reported a month ago. On 7 January, the partial curfew imposed by the self-administration in North-East Syria in November 2020 came to an end.

On 26 January, the Syrian Cabinet reportedly approved access to the COVAX facility through the World Health Organization (WHO). In the first phase of the AstraZeneca vaccination campaign, the Syrian Ministry of Health will prioritize health workers and humanitarian frontline staff, including the UN. Following extensive advocacy by UNHCR, it was confirmed that refugees and camp-based IDP populations will be included in the priority categories in the government's rollout of the COVAX vaccine.

UNHCR is liaising with UNICEF and WHO to ensure that the modalities for obtaining the vaccine facilitate their access in practice. The Syrian Ministry of Health is currently finalizing planning. The vaccine is expected to reach the country in coming months. A local vaccine deployment plan for UN staff is underway with a team comprising different UN agencies overseeing the modalities of planning for communication, pre-registration, administration and logistics.

## Update on Achievements

### Operational Context

The 2020 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) estimates that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria is over **13.4** million, including **6.7** million internally displaced people. Of that number, approximately **5.9** million people are in acute need of humanitarian assistance (a **20%** increase from 2020). Considering the protracted nature of the crisis, UNHCR and partners provide initial support to returnees and vulnerable people through an area-based approach, which includes immediate shelter repair, rehabilitation of community infrastructure, livelihood support, legal aid, community-based protection, primary health care, and education.

Returns of IDPs and Syrian refugees are ongoing. According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), over **448,000** IDPs returned to their areas of origin in 2020. Meanwhile, UNHCR verified **38,233** refugees returns during 2020.

Through the area-based and village-support programmes, UNHCR is assessing the needs of high return areas to implement integrated interventions including protection, education, shelter, and core relief items (CRIs).

### Highlighted Achievements



#### COMMUNITY CENTRES AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

UNHCR Syria has a wide network of community and satellite centres, mobile teams and outreach volunteers that functions as the main gateway to reach communities and affected populations. The centres provide protection-related services, including community mobilization, child protection, education, legal aid, prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), livelihoods and services for persons with specific needs for the benefit of IDPs, returnees, host communities and other crisis-affected individuals in **14** Syrian governorates.

### Achievements and Impact

- As of 31 March, UNHCR is supporting a network of **90** community centres, **38** satellite centres and **106** mobile units. With over **2,678** community outreach volunteers (ORVs), the centres provide a set of integrated protection related services to persons of concern.
- During the first quarter of 2021, **559,329** persons of concern were supported by ORVs. In line with UNHCR's COVID-19 safety protocols, the majority of the ORVs' activities were conducted virtually through different online platforms including approximately **735** WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms (such as Telegram, messenger). A total of **203,977** persons of concern were reached through awareness raising and information dissemination on COVID-19 and protection-related topics. This was in addition to follow-up on **64,638** individual/household protection cases and **290,714** persons who approached ORVs for various protection issues.
- Exceptional physical visits/meetings were conducted to reach the most vulnerable individuals, including unaccompanied persons in need of support, who could not be accessed through other modalities. A total of **32,365** visits were conducted between January and March.
- From January-March, UNHCR and partners continued 2020 community-led initiatives (CLIs). The conducted initiatives covered the response to COVID-19, health and hygiene, WASH, child protection, GBV, community empowerment, and education.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to COVID-19 restriction measures, community centres continued operating at reduced capacity during the reporting period. In addition, delays in obtaining approvals for the signing of partnership agreements in first three months of the year affected the implementation of the activities within the community centres as well as ORV activities.
- The prevailing economic situation, currency fluctuation and nationwide fuel shortages are causing a steep increase in the costs of transportation, thereby posing challenges to the ORVs, mobile team members and persons of concern commuting.



### WINTER ASSISTANCE – CORE RELIEF ITEMS

UNHCR provides CRIs to IDPs, returnees and vulnerable host community members based on needs. The standard family kit of CRIs includes high thermal blankets, sleeping mats, mattresses, jerry cans, plastic sheets, kitchen sets and solar lamps. Supplementary and seasonal items are also distributed and can include winter jackets, rechargeable fans and hygiene kits.

### Achievements and Impact

- The winterization programme started on 1 September 2020 and was concluded on 28 February 2021 with **666,407** people receiving **2,003,595** seasonal items.
- Between January and March, UNHCR provided **248,102** people with at least one core relief and supplementary item.
- CRIs and supplementary items included sleeping bags, jackets, winter clothing kits, high thermal blankets, plastic sheets, solar lamps, mattresses, kitchen sets, and jerry cans.
- Distributions of CRIs took place in Aleppo, Deir Ez-Zor, Ar-Raqqa, Homs, Idleb, Tartous, Hama, Rural Damascus, Quneitra, Dar'a, As-Sweida, and Lattakia.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Challenges related to the provision of CRIs included the local currency depreciation, market price fluctuation, as well as logistic obstacles in international shipment due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.



©UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf  
 CRI distribution to newly returned families in Hwair Al Aiss, in rural Aleppo Governorate. In the last few months, formerly displaced families from this village have started returning as the security improved. UNHCR/H. Maarouf.



## ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

### Achievements and Impact

- In January and February, UNHCR conducted a review of refugees interviewed for Refugee Status Determination (RSD) for 21 individuals (7 families). Of that number, 7 individuals (2 families) were recognized as refugees.
- In February, **33** persons called the resettlement hotline for counselling on their resettlement application status.
- UNHCR Syria uses cash-based interventions to help the most vulnerable refugees meet their most urgent needs. Monthly multi-purpose cash grants (MPCGs) of about USD 78 per family are provided to refugees through an over-the-counter modality. Similarly, eligible refugee families receive education grants to encourage school attendance by covering costs of transport, uniforms, and education materials.
- For the first three months of 2021, **12,211** refugees (**4,316** families) received MPCGs at least once. UNHCR also provided cash-related hotline support to **1,246** families during the same period.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Over 1,600 refugees are in need of resettlement in Syria but COVID-19 restrictions have impacted face-to-face resettlement interviews for large numbers of people in need.



*Formerly displaced 54-year-old Syrian, Ahmad, has returned home to Tal Al Daman in rural Aleppo Governorate. Ahmad and his wife Nafeesa have 13 children. They were displaced in 2017 to Afrin and when they returned they found that their house had been damaged and looted. Through the community centre in Tal Al Daman, UNHCR supported them with 20 chickens and 600 kilos of seeds to grow. UNHCR/B.Diab.*

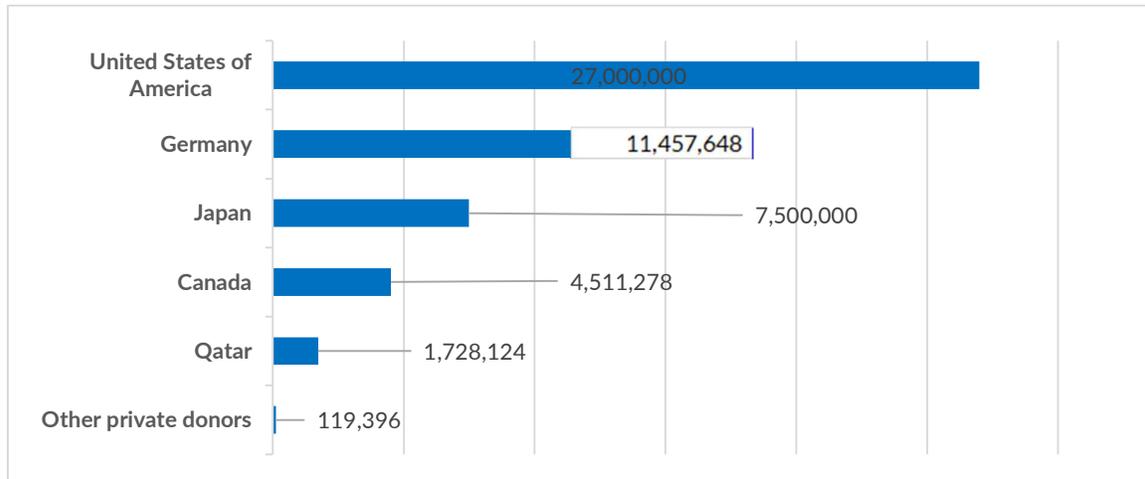
# Financial Information

As of 30 March 2021

UNHCR Syria is grateful to all donors for the critical support provided with earmarked and unearmarked funding.

## EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Earmarked contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 61,077,203**



## OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Germany 23.7million | Sweden 5.4 million | United States of America 4.2million

## UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD<sup>1</sup>

Norway 80 million | Sweden 66.9 million | Netherlands 36.1 million | Denmark 34.6 million | Germany 22.1 million | Switzerland 16.4 million | Private donors Spain 13.3 million | Ireland 12.5 million | Belgium 11.9 million

## CONTACTS

Tom Winston Monboe  
 Reporting Officer  
 UNHCR Syria  
 Email: [monboe@unhcr.org](mailto:monboe@unhcr.org)

## LINKS

[www.unhcr.org/sy](http://www.unhcr.org/sy)  
<https://twitter.com/UNHCRinSYRIA/status/1118150319341436928>  
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# Annexes

## Annex 1

Syrian Arab Republic Funding Update – as of 30 March 2021