

North-west Syria

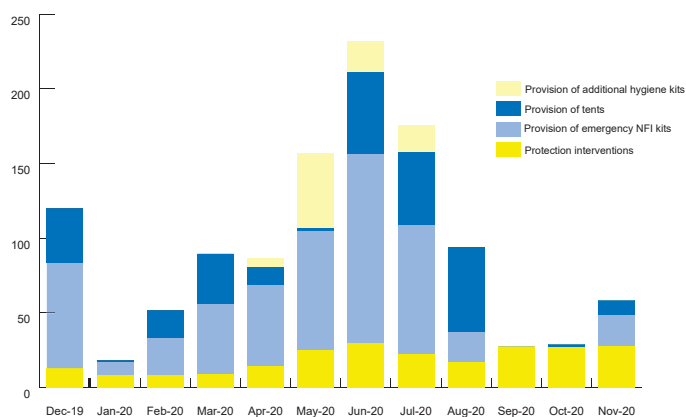
November 2020

Since January, UNHCR has sent across the border 170,000 core relief items kits and shelter materials to assist over **890,000 individuals**.

UNHCR's protection partners have been able to adapt their activities to the COVID-19 situation, **without disrupting protection interventions**.

In 2020, through its partners, UNHCR has provided protection services, such as psychosocial support and referrals, to more than **200,000 individuals**.

Protection, CRI, Emergency Shelter Assistance



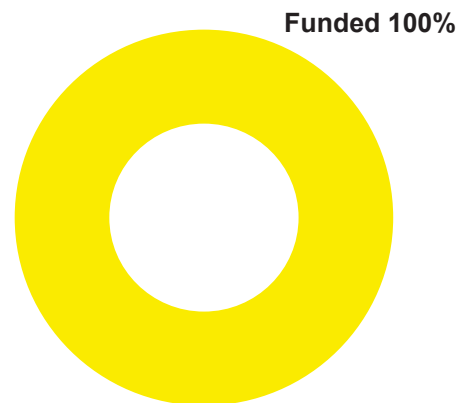
Number (in thousands) of individuals who received humanitarian assistance as tents, emergency core relief item (CRI) kits, hygiene kits and who were assisted with protection interventions per month.

Despite the limitations caused by the measures put in place against COVID-19, UNHCR's partners worked tirelessly to provide the humanitarian aid coordinated by UNHCR. During the year, more NFI kits and tents than before were distributed to IDPs and other conflict-affected people. Moreover, additional hygiene kits were distributed during protection interventions, as part of COVID-19 mitigating measures. These kits contained an increased quantity of soap to help preventing the spread of the virus. During protection interventions, UNHCR's partners also shared information to raise awareness on COVID-19.

Funding Level as of 9 December 2020

USD 56.7 million

requested for the UNHCR cross-border humanitarian response



Main Objectives

1. Support the coordination of the cross-border humanitarian response through the Cluster system
2. Identify protection risks and assistance needs and inform the overall response
3. Provide protection services and emergency assistance with core relief items and shelter solutions
4. Build capacity of (local) humanitarian organizations
5. Fill critical gaps in the basic needs of IDPs where required and feasible

Major Developments

Of a total population of 4 million people in north-west Syria, there around 2.7 million IDPs, who are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance. New and protracted IDPs share the same urgent needs, in an area that has limited shelter options and where the fighting has caused the destruction of civilian infrastructure, including health facilities, schools, bakeries, and has disrupted the provision of basic services. With the Syrian Pound losing value in comparison to other currencies, and with an increase in hostilities, the population is now facing more difficulties in addressing their basic needs.

On 11 July 2020, the UN Security Council Resolution that enables the cross-border humanitarian response through the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing was renewed for twelve months until 10 July 2021. Bab Al-Salam, the other border crossing utilized for transshipments to north-west Syria, was removed.

The number of positive COVID-19 cases rose steadily in north-west Syria in November. As access to health and adequate sanitation in the context of continuous displacement remains limited across the region, the humanitarian community is actively operating to deliver lifesaving assistance while ensuring the safety of the people.

Background

Following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2165, UNHCR established its cross-border activities from southern Turkey in July 2014. In 2020, through its own programme, UNHCR has partnerships with nine organizations - IRC, ACTED-REACH, WATAN, Bir Dünya Çocuk Derneği (Children of One World; BDC), SHAFAK, NRC, Maram Foundation, SEMA and SRD - to assist displaced people by providing core relief items (CRIs), shelter support, and protection services. In addition, UNHCR is leading the Protection, Shelter/NFI (SNFI) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Clusters. All Clusters closely follow the humanitarian developments in the conflict areas in north-west Syria and contribute to emergency preparedness response plans accordingly.

UNHCR Programme

With the spreading of COVID-19 in the region that has added to the ongoing hostilities, inadequate shelter conditions and a deteriorating economic situation, in 2020, UNHCR provides basic assistance and protection services to IDPs and conflict-affected vulnerable host community members in north-west Syria under the cross-border operation from Gaziantep, Turkey. Following the renewal of the UN Security Council Resolution that allows for the delivery of cross-border humanitarian assistance in July 2020, UNHCR has been coordinating with its partners, as well as the other humanitarian actors, to continue responding to the humanitarian needs of the population in the region.

In November, **UNHCR's partners assisted over 21,000 conflict-affected and displaced people in Idleb and Aleppo with 4,245 non-food item (NFI) kits.** UNHCR's partners also distributed **tents to 1,560 families** in Idleb. All distributed tents were also gravelled. **Eight transshipments** were organized to transport 3,100 tents, 10,000 NFI kits and 1,000 units of semi-permanent shelter, through Bab Al Hawa border crossing. Those items will be distributed to some 75,000 displaced people.

UNHCR and its partners focused on **protection interventions for IDPs and vulnerable host community members.** Community-based protection interventions, such as awareness raising and psychosocial support sessions, identification and referral of cases to basic services, reached 23,494 people. In addition, 4,437 displaced and vulnerable people received protection services such as awareness raising on civil status documentation and housing, land and properties, legal counselling and assistance, case management and referrals.



A community network meeting in Idleb. ©Shafak



The **Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster**, led by UNHCR and co-led by Global Communities, coordinates the efforts of 78 member organizations providing cross-border assistance in north-west Syria; in November, 41 members actively responded to the needs of the displaced population. Activities focus on coordinating and monitoring the Cluster members to cover the multi-sectoral needs in **1,214 IDP sites that host over 1.5 million IDPs** (more than 289,000 families) in north-west Syria and, on behalf of the humanitarian community, track IDP movements. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the population in these sites is comprised of women and children; over 22,000 IDPs are persons with specific needs. Most sites are concentrated in Dana. In November, 54 new sites were added to the ISIMM and 12 sites were inactivated for reasons such as depopulation of sites and their subsequent closure. The majority of these sites are self-settled and lack camp management systems. To identify gaps and facilitate the coordination of multi-sectoral services, the Cluster is prioritizing monitoring and collecting information as part of its coordination response, which is particularly important in the implementation of the COVID-19 response and mitigation measures. In addition, the Cluster continues to monitor, report and coordinate the respond to multiple incidents in IDP sites. In November, 7 families had their tents destroyed in 5 fire and weather-related incidents. Some of the reasons behind the high number of incidents recorded in the past few months relate to an increased reporting capacity of Cluster member, but also overcrowding in IDPs sites, lack of awareness of risks, bad use of gas and electric cooking or heating equipment. Working with the Education Cluster, the CCCM Cluster has been using the ISIMM to share important information on access and obstacles to education (including remote education) in IDP sites.

The total reported IDP population in November 2020 is 2,692,529 IDPs. The number of displacement movements was nearly 30,000 mostly to A'zaz, Afrin and Dana sub-districts, whereas the number of IDPs who were reported as having returned to their community of origin is around 4,500 IDPs, with Ehsem, Ariha, and Idleb sub-districts recorded as the top three returnee destinations. The Cluster tracked over 1.9 million individual displacements between January and November 2020, which include second or third displacements, meaning that some people may have been forced to move multiple times within the same period and that the reasons for movement may vary.

In coordination with other humanitarian actors, the Cluster has been collecting data on COVID-19 cases inside camps. By November, there were more than 1,700 cases reported in camps, more than 5 times the cases reported in October. Overcrowding and lack of camp management remain major challenges in the fight against the pandemic in IDP sites.



The **Shelter/Non-Food Items (SNFI) Cluster** is led by UNHCR coordinating the efforts of 74 member organizations in the cross-border operation who have implemented shelter and/or NFI activities since the beginning of 2020. Specifically, 37 member organizations actively responded to shelter and/or NFI needs in November. The Cluster addresses emergency shelter and NFI needs by providing in-kind assistance as well as cash or voucher assistance. It promotes household and community resilience. The Cluster also raises awareness and provides technical guidance on housing, land and property rights relevant for humanitarian shelter activities. The Cluster is co-chaired by CARE.

Cluster members continue to actively respond to the needs of the newly displaced population as well as protracted IDPs in north-west Syria. In November, more than 244,000 individuals received NFI assistance, mainly seasonal and supplementary NFI distribution such as stoves, fuel and winterized NFI kits containing mattresses, jerry cans, carpets, solar lamps, tarpaulin and thermal blankets. Shelter needs of over 43,500 people were addressed during the month, with the provision of emergency shelter, shelter rehabilitation and transitional shelters. During 2020, Cluster members have reported reaching **almost 1.2 million people with shelter assistance**, including rehabilitation of infrastructure, provision of emergency shelter, shelter rehabilitation and transitional shelters, and seasonal shelter assistance, and **more than 2 million people with NFI assistance** like seasonal and/or supplementary, and core NFI distributions. There is still a significant gap in funding of infrastructure, especially for the new sites that have been established by the IDPs themselves. Improving infrastructure in camps and IDPs sites is essential to avoid floods that happen regularly, particularly during the winter months.

The Cluster is active in the coordination of the winterization response to ensure that plans are implemented in an efficient and timely manner to target over 1.4 million people. As several partners have reported that they will receive top-up funding for winterization, the Cluster continues to identify gaps and guide members to uncovered and underserved areas. In October and November, Cluster member reached **over 288,000 individuals with winterization assistance**.

As part of the COVID-19 response, as was recommended in March in coordination with the WASH and Health Clusters, Cluster members provided over 436,000 people with additional soap with their NFI distributions.



The **Protection Cluster** (co-led by UNHCR and IRC) brings together 62 member organizations, which include actors of the three Sub-Clusters: Child Protection (led by UNICEF and World Vision), Gender Based Violence (led by UNFPA and Global Communities) and Humanitarian Mine Action (directed by UNMAS and Halo Trust). The Cluster also convenes the Protection Monitoring Task Force (led by UNHCR and IRC) and a Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Technical Working Group (co-led by UNHCR and NRC) regularly, as well as a Technical Working Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, formed in February 2020 (co-led by UNHCR and HI). The Cluster continues to prioritize the provision of lifesaving emergency protection services to newly displaced populations and to deliver specialized protection services to communities and individuals in need and at risk, including using outreach capacity and mobile teams. Besides, the Cluster continues to inform advocacy and the overall response through protection monitoring, while also supporting capacity building of cluster members to strengthen programming, information collection and advocacy on protection concerns, and do-no-harm efforts.

In November, Cluster members reported to have provided **362,402 protection interventions to IDPs and affected host community members** in Aleppo, Idleb and Ar-Raqqa. Key interventions were: psychological first aid; legal awareness-raising sessions focusing on housing, land and property and/or civil status documentation; integrated/comprehensive case management services; community mobilization and community-based protection initiatives, and referrals to other services. Partners of the **Protection Monitoring Task Force** conducted a total of 85 key informant interviews (43 men, 42 women) in Idleb and Aleppo, reaching 29 communities.

Dynamics around housing, land, and property rights remain of concern, with local authorities reportedly increasingly expropriating property from absent landowners who are known to be out of Syria or in territories under the control of the Government of Syria. **Forced evictions of displaced persons** from residential, commercial and public properties such as schools are being increasingly reported, suggesting a concerning upward trend. These forced evictions of IDPs are assessed to be linked to a consistent increase in rental prices due to the Syrian Pound devaluation as well as the intention to revert to the original use of schools and other public buildings. With the local authorities' plan to reopen schools in the new curricular year, thousands of IDP families are facing risk of evictions with lack of shelter alternative or structured and meaningful assistance. In response, the Protection Cluster HLP TWG finalized *Guidelines on Mitigating Harm and Suffering during Forced Eviction* aiming to minimize negative impact of evictions on affected individuals and is rolling out an eviction monitoring tool, aiming to increase understanding of forced eviction trends and adapt the response; advocacy efforts ongoing for a comprehensive multi cluster joint response and prevention plan.

External and Donor Relations

Thanks to UNHCR's donors for supporting the humanitarian response in north-west Syria:

Germany | Japan | United States of America | CERF | International Organization for Migration