

Syrian Arab Republic

COVID-19 Response 2020

1,084,853

individuals received COVID-19 information and personal protective equipment.

USD 2.8 million

The value of medical equipment purchased for health care facilities across the country.

12

quarantine and isolation sites renovated or rehabilitated in eight governorates.

POPULATION OF CONCERN (end-December 2020)

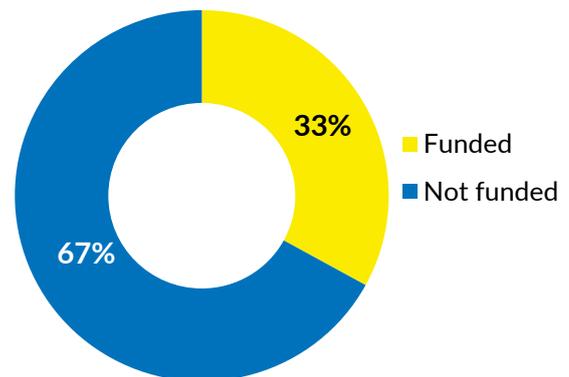


*IDP returnees recorded during 2020 (Source: OCHA)

FUNDING (end-December 2020)

USD 575.6 M

requested for the Syria operation in 2020



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

402 National Staff

62 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Damascus

3 Sub Offices in Aleppo, Homs and Qamishli

2 Field Offices in As-Sweida and Tartous

1 Field Unit in Damascus



UNHCR equipped a special COVID-19 ward in a primary health care facility in rural Homs, Syria. UNHCR/B. Diab

COVID-19 in Syria

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented socio-economic impact on people in Syria and the rest of the world. In Syria, the impact is further compounded by ongoing hostilities in parts of the country, together with pre-existing economic fragility impacted by additional external shocks, resulting in a significant depreciation of the Syrian currency and shortages of essential commodities. The humanitarian needs of internally displaced people, returnees and refugees in the country – already substantial – have increased as a result.

In March 2020, the Government of Syria, like much of the world, enforced a two-month lockdown affecting airports and land borders. Only essential services such as pharmacies, grocery shops, and bakeries remained open and a partial curfew was imposed. Simultaneously, the government requested agencies including UNHCR to suspend their regular activities and sought support to respond to the public health crisis. UNHCR was one of the first agencies to support the government's efforts to respond to the pandemic, swiftly re-directing resources to respond with specific COVID-19 related interventions such as providing medical equipment, personal and protective equipment (PPE), setting up isolation and quarantine sites, capacity building, developing relevant guidelines and offering multi-purpose cash grants for refugees. UNHCR Syria's specific COVID-19 appeal of USD 4 million was fully funded thanks to the generous contributions from Austria, Estonia, Japan, Norway, and the United States of America.

By end-2020, the Ministry of Health announced the total number of registered COVID-19 cases had reached 11,344. Of this total, just under half (46.5%) had recovered and 704 had reportedly died. In the northeast of the country authorities reported that the number of cases had reached almost 7,000 by year-end.



A Syrian IDP boy uses the newly installed communal hand-washing area in Al Hamediyeh Camp in Tartous Governorate, Syria. UNHCR.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR worked closely with the Ministry of Health and the Health Sector partners to coordinate the support needed for the government's COVID-19 response in Syria.
- For its regular programme, UNHCR works with **28** partner agencies which include **six** international non-governmental organizations (NGO), **20** national NGOs and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment and Ministry of Higher Education.

Achievements

Assistance to Refugees

- UNHCR provided **511** refugee households a one-time emergency cash grant of approximately USD **50** (SYP **65,000**) per family to support them address income losses as a result of COVID-19 preventive measures.
- In addition, **4,851** refugee households received a monthly multi-purpose cash grant of approximately USD **74** (SYP **98,000**) per family throughout the year as part of UNHCR's regular cash programme.

Health

- UNHCR procured critical medical equipment such as ventilators, oxygen cylinders, and hospital beds valued at some USD **2.8 million** for health facilities across the country.
- **10** ventilators and **200** pulse oximeters were provided to **10** hospitals under the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education in Damascus, Aleppo, and Latakia Governorates.
- **12** pulse oximeters were provided to Syrian Arab Red Crescent clinics across the country.
- **1,000** oxygen cylinders were delivered to the Ministry of Health isolation centres in Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Hama, Dar'a, As-Sweida, Quneitra, and Deir-Ez-Zor Governorates.
- **225** hospital beds with mattresses, **225** intravenous poles, and **four** water coolers were provided to the Al Faihaa COVID-19 Centre in Damascus Governorate.
- UNHCR procured a GeneXpert machine with **100 testing** kits for the government's COVID-19 testing capacity at the Syrian Lebanese borders.
- **116** health professionals were trained on case definition, management, referral, and reporting of COVID-19 cases.
- UNHCR and its partners provided **63,493** medical consultations to persons of concern at **14** primary health care centres and health points.
- UNHCR distributed 200,000 surgical masks to COVID-19 isolation centres in addition to **235,100** pairs of gloves, **283,339** face masks, over **1,400** bottles of surface disinfectant and **11,189** alcohol hand sanitizers to outreach volunteers, partner health facilities, and emergency teams to strengthen infection prevention and control practices in community centres.



Syrian IDP women distribute washing powder to vulnerable families as part of a community-led initiative in Maskaneh, Homs Governorate. UNHCR.

Community-based protection

- 1,084,842 individuals were reached through different communication means and projects including social media, bulk text messages, and leaflets distributed in public places to raise awareness on the importance of personal hygiene and social distancing to prevent infection.
- 8,000 WhatsApp groups were established by outreach volunteers to regularly communicate with persons of concern while community centres were closed between March and June 2020.
- 140,353 people benefitted from community-led initiatives such as clean-up campaigns, organizing social distanced lines in bakeries and public buildings, producing face masks and disinfectants.
- 144,943 calls were received at hotlines seeking support on child protection, gender-based violence, and mental health related issues. Referrals to specialized services made when necessary.



A health worker fumigates a UNHCR tent in Al-Hol Camp, Al Hasakeh Governorate, Syria. UNHCR.

Infrastructure and shelter support

- 12 isolation and quarantine centres were rehabilitated or renovated in Al Hasakeh, Deir-Ez-Zor, Ar Raqqa, Hama, Homs, Lattakia, Rural Damascus, and Tartous.
- 590 emergency rooms in eight collective shelters in Hama, Lattakia and Tartous Governorates were rehabilitated or renovated in response to COVID-19.
- UNHCR installed 15 Rubb halls with equipment and rehabilitated two halls in Al Dweir Centre in Rural Damascus Governorate to serve as quarantine/isolation sites for returnees. These sites can host up to 2,500 individuals.
- 30 collective shelters were rehabilitated or renovated as a decongestion measure in Lattakia, Homs, and Hama.
- 11 formal and informal camps and collective shelters in North East Syria were fumigated and sterilized.
- 1,100 emergency shelter kits comprising wood, MDF boards, and sheets were distributed benefitting more than 7,200 individuals in Aleppo, Al Hasakeh, and Idlib Governorates to improve the living conditions.
- Two isolation centres to accommodate up to 70 individuals were set up in Al-Hol Camp in Al Hasakeh Governorate.



School children in Mleiha village receive facemasks and hygiene kits in Rural Damascus Governorate, Syria. UNHCR.

External Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as donors who have contributed directly to the Syria operation in 2020:

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CONTACTS

Tom Winston Monboe, Reporting Officer, UNHCR Syria

Email: monboe@unhcr.org

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